

## Small Metal and Cloth Chevrons Worn on Collars and the Chest

During World War II, after the introduction of herringbone twill (HBT) work uniforms, some enlisted soldiers started to wear small metal insignia on their HBT caps. Often these were locally made. Two examples are shown. The circular device bearing the design for a technician 4th grade chevron (sergeant with T below) was made by smoothing the surface of an Australian florin coin, then further removing more of the material to leave the design. The other neatly made pin for a technician 3d grade (staff sergeant with a T) was perhaps made by someone associated with aircraft and who access to a machine shop. The gold colored background was neatly cut out and then aluminum pieces were applied to made the design. Both have a safety pin type fastener soldered to the back.



In the United States many jewelry firms made military pins during World War II for women to wear. Some had a small ring and chain affixed to a metal chevron so a larger pin would result—often at the other end of the chain was a small enameled insignia showing a patch or branch insignia. In some cases these small metal chevrons were sold individually. These saw some use on men's HBT caps and other work headgear. Three examples are shown.



After World War II the War Department took no action to implement use of small metal chevrons that had been used on headgear. This did not mean the need had gone away. In Korea, a demand for such devices arose.

On October 17, 1951, Major General Robert N. Young, commander of the 2d Infantry Division in Korea, wrote the Eighth Army commander, General James VanFleet, that there was a pressing need for metal chevrons for NCOs. General Young requested priority be given to the prompt development and issue of metal chevrons. The division had not received any chevrons for 3-1/2 months. General Young noted that the absence of such insignia on combat leaders resulted in the “serious disadvantage” that when malingerers went on trial, they were pleading non-recognition of superiors.

Two months later the 2d Infantry Division commander again requested the Quartermaster General adopt metal chevrons to replace cloth ones. The basis for this request was that when troops visited laundry near the front lines they did not receive

their own clothes back. The general noted someone had to remove chevrons from the old clothing and add chevrons to the new, then he pointed out that pin-back metal chevrons would solve these problems. The Corps commander personally and heartily indorsed the idea.

In Washington, DC, Arthur Dubois, in the Quartermaster General's Office, stated he had received requests for small metal chevrons since 1949. The Quartermaster General rejected the proposal from Korea. The staff in Washington concluded there was no satisfactory means of fastening the chevrons to sleeves and since the insignia would be made from brass, a metal that would not be readily available in wartime, manufacture of insignia using scarce metals during a war would be too difficult. By the summer of 1952 the Department of the Army concluded small metal chevrons were not the answer. Despite this, many men bought and began to wear locally made chevrons. One such device is shown at the right.



In Korea, IX Corps official reports noted that exchanges of clothing in forward field areas caused problems. "There is a noticeable lack of initiative on the part of combat soldiers to keep on hand the requisite needles, thread, and replacement chevrons to accomplish the sewing of their chevrons after each clothing exchange." Some soldiers painted chevron designs on their replacement clothing while others wore locally made small metal chevrons. In December 1952 the chief of the Field Observation Office, who reported to the Quartermaster General in Washington, joined the dispute when he recommended the adoption of metal or plastic rank insignia for the cap.

The army's G-3 office and the Office of the Quartermaster General astutely worked to developed two types of small prototype chevrons, one of black metal and one of plastic, and proposed they be worn on the field or pile cap and on the field uniform, perhaps on the chest, since the pieces were too large for a collar. The Department of the Army again rejected such requests.

Despite such need statements from the field, the Quartermaster General's Office continued to deny requests for small metal chevrons. In the 1950s many men wore metal chevrons in a variety of sizes, primarily on field headgear such as the winter pile cap. Examples of these are shown.



After the end of World War II, a parade ground look began to assert itself. To dress up uniforms, as well as respond to a functional need, unauthorized metal chevrons came into wide use. Men wore ad hoc miniature chevrons that varied widely in style and size on field caps and affixed them to helmet liners and scarves. Some designs were enameled or painted while others were simply cut out of metal. The insignia, especially the specialist's chevrons of the late 1950s and 1960s, often deviated considerably from the Department of the Army design. Eagles, size of the arcs and width of the bars, and the length of chevrons' sides, all fluctuated.



The war in Vietnam reopened the demand for pin-on metal chevrons. The Vietnam climate caused soldiers to roll up the sleeves of their jungle fatigues and this covered chevrons so soldiers began to use various small metal versions, usually on a shirt pocket flap. Soldiers wore many of these devices unofficially, but some units required the wear of these insignia. In 1965 the 1st Cavalry Division even published a local order in Vietnam requiring a small metal



chevron be pinned onto the pocket flap. The above metal chevrons, made from thin metal like that used in drink cans, resulted in these being known as "beer can" chevrons. Two photos of these chevrons that were pinned to a pocket flap, are shown.



Examples of some small metal chevrons simple cut out of metal and then painted black are shown below.



Most combat commanders either authorized locally made metal chevrons for the jungle fatigue pocket flap, or looked the other way when the soldiers wore them. This put pressure on the supply system and leaders, and finally in December 1967 General

Westmoreland authorized enlisted personnel in the Republic of Vietnam to wear metal pin-on rank chevrons on the collars of field clothing and white cook uniforms, and on field caps in lieu of distinctive insignia.

Based upon a December 1967 message and direction to The Institute of Heraldry, the army sealed samples of subdued metal chevrons for wear on the collar, on June 3, 1968. These 13/16 inch wide black metal chevrons appeared in regulations in May 1969 as required for wear on field jacket, fatigue uniform, and white work uniform collars, and on caps worn with these uniforms. These are first listed in AR 670-5, 1 May 1969, paragraph 15-5. An example is at the right.

Use of these metal chevrons grew. Women wore them on their blue chambray exercise uniform shirts. Soon these metal chevrons went on all work shirts and field jackets, cooks' whites, medical technicians' uniforms, overcoats, and windbreakers. After the introduction of bright brass chevrons and then shoulder marks for the green uniform, the black metal chevrons continued on food handlers' uniforms, field clothing, women's physical training uniforms, and similar work uniforms.

In January 1971 the army prescribed the chevrons with new white plastic backings for wear on the collars of overcoats, raincoats, and the new windbreakers. This special backing allowed the use of the existing black metal chevrons while increasing visibility. Army Regulations Number 670-5, 1 May 1969, showed how black metal chevrons were to be worn.

Both the army leadership and the troops had complained about the black metal collar chevrons and the white backings, both of which had created more demands upon



AR 670-5

1 May 1969

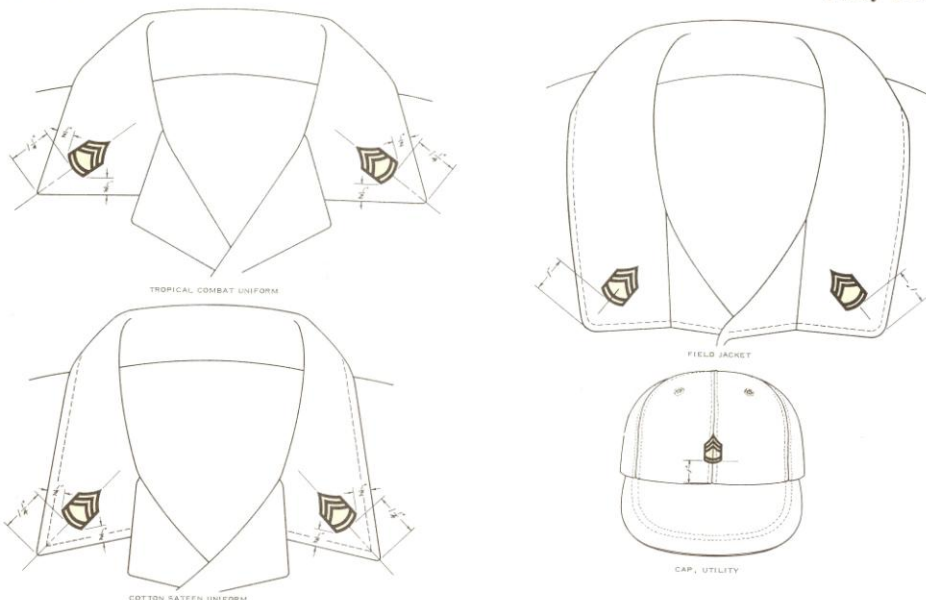


Figure 15-5. Wearing of subdued insignia on field uniform, platoon sergeant and sergeant first class.

the supply system. In the summer of 1973 troops at forts Myer, Sill, Devens, and McClellan began to wear bright brass metal chevrons in place of the black metal versions as part of a test. The shiny insignia were identical to the

subdued chevrons in design and size, differing only in the surface finish and in September 1974 Vice Chief of Staff Fred C. Weyand approved the use of bright brass metal chevrons on overcoat, raincoat, and windbreaker collars once the financing had been properly developed. Several months later, effective March 1, 1975, the army allowed soldiers to buy these bright brass chevrons at their own expense and use them at their own option, until April 1976 when the army required all enlisted personnel to change over to the bright brass chevrons by October 1, 1976. This eliminated the white plastic backing, although the black metal chevrons remained for wear on work clothing.



When soldiers started wearing the light green shirt as an outer garment in 1974, the repeated insertion and removal of the tines on the reverse of the brass chevrons caused damage to the shirt collar. As a result in 1981 NCOs switched to shoulder marks leaving only privates, PFCs, and specialists wearing brass metal chevrons on light

green shirt collars. This has continued with the switch to blue trousers and a white short sleeved shirt.

### Small Cloth Chevrons

After the army finally recognized the utility of standard sized subdued chevrons, followed by the advantages of removable small metal chevrons, in 1973 the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel began an action to replace the work uniform black metal pin-on chevrons with small black embroidered insignia. Finally in February 1975 these became available in Post Exchanges.

While these 1970s formal actions were ongoing, soldiers took things into their own hands. In many locations soldiers simply had small cloth chevrons made as a matter of convenience. Many locally embroidered were on the backgrounds intended for name tapes, both olive green and those for white food service uniforms. These were especially common overseas, in Germany and Korea, where soldiers were surrounded by local shops that made insignia. An example made in Germany in the mid 1970s for use on a cook's uniform is at the right.

When troops began to deploy to the Middle East to counter the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1990, soldiers wore desert colored battle dress uniforms, including small cloth chevrons on the collar. Many of the small cloth chevrons were made in the Middle East and as a result, often the stitching was uneven and the background cloth



was of a shade different from the desert work uniforms. Many of these designs were embroidered in various shades of brown (right) rather than the prescribed black. The staff sergeant chevron was embroidered in tan on name tape material.



The army authorized small embroidered cloth chevrons to be sewn onto the collars of some field clothing at the soldier's option. Cloth chevrons embroidered in black became the army's sole means of showing enlisted rank on a wide variety of work and field uniforms, including sun hats, soft patrol caps, cloth covers used on helmets, and other headgear. An example is below.



In 2004 Soldiers began to wear a single small embroidered rank insignia on a cloth background nominally 2 inches high and 1-3/4 inches wide, attached by Velcro, which the army also called "hook and loop attachment," on the center of the Army Camouflage Uniform (ACU) chest. Initially the background could be either olive green or the misnamed "universal camouflage pattern" that had small rectangles in a range of gray shades. Besides wear on the ACU shirt, soldiers could sew the rank insignia to the ACU patrol cap, ACU sun hat, and helmet cover. With new combat vests adopted in 2007, the army added a Velcro fastener for a single rank insignia in the center of the upper chest. In the summer of 2010 the army brought out a new ACU, commonly called "MultiCams" that had a slightly larger pattern and contained greens, browns, and black, for use in Afghanistan, replacing universal camouflage pattern clothing. The single, chest-centered chevron backgrounds changed to match this new ACU. Samples of these are below.



The left chevron for the sergeant major of the army is on the initial ACU universal camouflage pattern background. The other two are on the so-called MultiCam pattern introduced in 2010. Due to the larger pattern which was more effective at longer ranges, and the darker colors, the small chevrons were not as visible as demonstrated by these two examples where the PFC chevron is hard to discern.