

American Expeditionary Forces Armbands

During World War I the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) instituted special armbands to identify special staff members. These were three-inch wide silk strips of cloth with double tongue, French made buckles. The armbands came in various colors to show the headquarters the officer represented. Officers from the AEF headquarters had a red, white, and blue armband. Numbered armies had red and white, numbered corps headquarters had white and blue, and at the division level, they were blue, except for the General Staff Corps members who had an all red armband.

Some of these armbands had bullion embroidered devices in the center but most were without any special central insignia. An army level plain armband used by the AEF is shown below.



General Staff Corps members had armbands with a central bullion GSC insignia, as shown next.



For use in the trenches, to avoid the large bright colors, the AEF issued miniature armbands, approximately 4 inches long and one inch wide with a clip on the back. The wearer could simply slip the spring-backed "trench clip" onto the front of his coat between the second and third buttons. The staff associated with the artillery had armbands and clips embroidered with crossed cannons. An example for a division artillery staff is below.



All staff officers except for those of the General Staff Corps and of the artillery had silk armbands without any device. These included those officers associated with the Tank Corps, chief engineers, chief signal officers, and infantry brigade staffs. A summary of these armbands is in the table.¹

AEF 1918 Staff Armbands and Trench Clips.

Armband or Trench Clip Colors	Device on Armband or Clip	Worn By
Red, White, and Blue	General Staff Corps	AEF GHQ General Staff Corps members
Red and White	General Staff Corps	AEF Army General Staff Corps members
White and Blue	General Staff Corps	AEF Corps General Staff Corps members
Red	General Staff Corps	AEF Division General Staff Corps members
Red and White	Crossed Cannons	Chief of Army Artillery Staff
White and Blue	Crossed Cannons	Chief of Corps Artillery Staff
Blue	Crossed Cannons	Chief of Division Artillery Staff
Red, White, and Blue	none	AEF Tank Corps Commander's Staff
		Tank Center Commander
Red and White	none	Army Chief Engineer
		Army Chief Signal Officer
White and Blue	none	Corps Chief Engineer
		Corps Chief Signal Officer
Blue	none	Division Engineer Officer
		Division Signal Officer
		Infantry Brigade Staff

¹ HQA, AGO, General Orders No. 15, Feb 18, 1903.