

From: The Surgeon General of the Army.

To: The Secretary of War.

Subject: Transportation of sick and wounded of the American Expeditionary Forces.

1. Attention is invited to the following in reference to the transportation of sick and wounded from France to the United States:

It is proposed to bring back to the United States the following classes:

First: Cases of insanity and tuberculosis.

Second: Wounded officers and enlisted men who are permanently disabled and who have reached a stage where they would not require active surgical treatment while at sea.

Third: Officers and enlisted men permanently disabled from disease.

Fourth: Officers and enlisted men not necessarily permanently disabled from disease or injury but who will probably be under treatment for long periods.

2. In regard to the means of transportation, two methods are possible: (1) By utilizing the return trips of transports carrying troops and supplies, and (2) by means of regular hospital ships. The larger transports carrying troops could probably be arranged to carry sick and wounded, though not with the comfort and safety which would be afforded by hospital ships with special facilities and personnel.

3. In addition to the matter of comfort and efficient care, the question of safety and protection of sick and wounded becomes a great factor. Transports carrying large numbers of returning invalids, many of them helpless, and with Army nurses aboard will undoubtedly be liable to destruction by submarines, and the probable loss of ships carrying crippled men must be considered; nor could this attack by the enemy be held improper.

4. If hospital ships in sufficient numbers to undertake this duty be supplied, it is believed that the sick and wounded may be transported in much greater comfort, and it seems unquestionable that by proper arrangements their safety from submarines may reasonably be assured. In spite of reports to the contrary, it is believed that a hospital ship, traveling openly and marked by day and night, and not suspected of carrying any contraband articles, will not be intentionally sunk. A statement has been made that the policy of putting an officer of a neutral country aboard hospital ships has been considered by foreign countries, but it is not known whether this plan has been carried out. It is known that the New Zealand hospital ships have been in continuous operation without hindrance from the enemy.

The transportation of sanitary organizations and medical supplies on hospital ships, it is thought, would not be considered improper, and this method would relieve the transportation service.

5. The suggestion is made that the matter of protection be taken up by the State Department. Sick and wounded are entitled to every comfort, care, and protection, and it would seem that the use of hospital ships should not be abandoned unless the enemy should refuse to guarantee this protection or should show some specific hostile intention.

6. It is therefore recommended that this matter be given consideration and that the question of allotting a certain number of ships for use as hospital ships be considered, so that they may be properly prepared, or, in the event of a decision to the contrary, that the details of regulations for carrying sick and wounded on transports may be completed.

(Signed) W. C. GORGAN,
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