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General Orders:
No. 17.

Enclosure for A-204

War Department
Washington, Feb. 13, 1918.

1. It is the desire of the Secretary of War, as it should be of all officers of the Army, to do everything possible for the comfort and welfare of the soldiers, and to make use of such agencies as are authorized and are in a position to contribute to that end, in addition to the provisions made by the Government. The American Red Cross is a body authorized by law to render services of this character. The following general statement outlining certain approved activities of the Red Cross, and methods for carrying them on, is published for the information and guidance of all concerned:

1. To distribute sweaters, mufflers, helmets, socks, comfort kits, etc., and to receive the assistance and co-operation of all officers in making the distribution fair, equal and where most needed.

2. To render emergency relief of every kind upon the request or suggestion of an officer in charge. All officers are instructed to avail themselves of this assistance whenever, in their opinion advisable. Officers should be none the less diligent in attempting to foresee the needs of their department in order that they may be supplied through regular Government channels. All such requests must be approved by the Commanding Officer, who will cause a record to be kept of all such articles.

3. To relieve the anxiety and to sustain the morale of soldiers who are worried about their families at home and to promote the comfort and well being of these families, authority is given to the American Red Cross to place one or more representatives of the Home Service Bureau of the Department of Civilian Relief at the service of the men of each Division of the Army wherever located. The soldier should be informed thru official orders of the presence of such representative or representatives and that the Red Cross is able and willing to serve both soldiers and their families when in need of any helpful service. This representative and his assistants will be accredited to the Division Commander and will be subject to his authority and to military laws and regulations. This representative of the Red Cross will have the status of an officer in the Army and will be provided quarters when available. Such assistants and clerks as may be necessary will be provided by the American Red Cross and must be males. These assistants and clerks, if any, will have the status of non-commissioned officers. All reports and correspondence of this officer will be subject to censorship of the Commanding Officer.

4. To conduct canteen service stations for furnishing refreshments to soldiers when traveling through the country, to furnish emergency relief to the sick and wounded when en route and to see that they are conveyed to a hospital when necessary and requested by the Commanding Officer. All commanders of troop trains are advised of this emergency service and are authorized to avail themselves of it whenever, in their opinion, advisable.

5. A representative of the American Red Cross may be attached to each base hospital to furnish emergency supplies when called upon, to communicate with the families of patients, to render home service to patients and such other assistance as pertains to Red Cross Work. The representative of the Red Cross so assigned, together with his assistants, will be accredited to the Commanding Officer of the Base Hospital and will be subject to the same regulations, as to status, privileges, assistants and censorship, as provided in preceding paragraph applying to the representative of the Red Cross Assigned to Division.

6. In order to render the above outlined service to the best advantage the accredited chief officer representing the American Red Cross at division headquarters will be a Field Director.

7. Officials of the Red Cross, assigned on duty with the military establishment as outlined above, will be required to wear the regulation uniform of the American Red Cross, together with the insignia, etc. as approved by the Secretary of War.

8. The Commanding Generals of all cantonments and national guard encampments and the Commanding Officers of all other encampments or organizations, to which Red Cross representatives may be assigned in accordance with this order, are authorized to furnish to the American Red Cross anything that they may request, within reason, such as warehouses, offices, light, heat, telephone, etc., in order to enable them to properly carry on the work for which they are assigned.

By order of the Secretary of War.

Official:

Acting Chief of Staff.