

(7th ind.)

NAVY DEPARTMENT, December 29, 1917.

1851-1:1

From: Chief of Naval Operations.

To: Chief of Embarkation Service, U. S. Army.

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

1. About the 5th of November, 1917, the question arose with the British Admiralty of an exchange of the *Beross* and *Scravoys* for two of their hospital ships which they proposed to turn into cargo carriers, the idea being that if alterations had not progressed too far it would save time and work for efficiency to effect the exchange.

2. The matter was taken up with the Secretary of the Navy and the reply to that inquiry outlined the policy of the Navy Department as regards the use of its hospital ships.

"The alterations to our hospital ships are so far advanced that no advantage would be gained by the suggested transfer. Some time ago the Army took up the matter of converting several cargo bottoms into hospital ships, this office discouraging the idea, and offered the use of its two hospital ships in mutual work for both services. The Army accepted this policy and the present intention is that no more cargo ships should be diverted from more urgent supply work."

This action was taken as the Navy Department deemed it extremely unwise, in view of the existing shortage of commercial bottoms, to withdraw any more ships for special purposes, especially as there was an increasing number of troop transports of great size, considerable speed, and comfortable quarters which might be made available, on their return voyages, for certain classes of the wounded and for those invalided home.

3. The above is still the Navy Department's policy and it expects to use its hospital ship jointly for the service of all our forces at the front.

(Signed) W. S. HAZEN, JR.

(7th ind.)

Office of the Chief of Embarkation Service, January 2, 1918. To the Chief of Staff.

Attention is invited to the preceding sixth indorsement from the Chief of Naval Operations.

It will be noted that it is still the policy of the Navy to utilize the hospital ships referred to in memorandum from this office of November 24, 1917, for the joint use of the Army and Navy in bringing home the sick and injured who are unable to travel on returning regular Army and naval transports.

This office concurs in the view of the Bureau of Operations, Navy, that, due to the existing shortage of commercial bottoms, it is inadvisable to withdraw more ships for special purposes. It is believed that it will be practicable to transport on the naval hospital ships *Scravoys* and *Beross* sick and wounded who are able to travel at all, and that suitable accommodations for certain classes of wounded and those convalescing can be given on returning Army and naval transports.

(Signed) CRAWFORD B. BAKER,

Brigadier-General, National Army, Chief of Embarkation Service.

(7th ind.)

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
Washington, January 7, 1918.

From: The Secretary of War.

To: The Secretary of the Navy.

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

Reference paragraph 3 of Admiral Benson's letter dated December 29, 1917, on above subject, I request that you please direct the Surgeon General of the Navy to confer with the Surgeon General of the Army to make the necessary arrangements to put the matter of the joint use of Navy hospital ships into effect.

Directions have been given to the Surgeon General of the Army in the matter.

(Signed) NEWTON D. BAKER.