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Military Service-Conscription

**CONSCRIPTION IN WORLD WAR I
& U.S. CITIZENS ALREADY SERVING IN FOREIGN ARMIES**

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SELECTIVE SERVICE ACT SPECIFICS

The Selective Service Law, approved 18 May 1917, prescribed military service for "the existing emergency unless sooner discharged." This omnibus law covered the entire military establishment with the same obligation. Draftees, enlistees and officers served for the duration of the war. See:

U.S. War Department. Bulletin 32, 24 May 1917. 13 p. MilPub-Bulletins.
The Selective Service Act. See esp Section I, Para 2; Sec 3; Sec 7.

_____. Bulletin 49, 22 Aug 1917. pp. 4-5. MilPub-Bulletins.

Opinion of the Judge Advocate General on the effect of the SS Act on previous enlistments and discharge dates.

A U.S. citizen already in foreign service when this act was passed would have had to register with his local draft board before he could have been selected for possible induction. However, selective service registration for Americans residing abroad was voluntary, not obligatory. See Section 56, Selective Service Regulations, 1917 (UB343U56.1917).

See also Paragraph I(j) of the Compiled Rulings of the Provost Marshal General, dated 4 September 1917 (bound with Selective Service Rules..., 1917, Vol. 1; (UB343.U56). The Army's Provost Marshal General, who administered the draft system, ruled in September that registrants called by a local board who failed to report for their physical examination were technically in default and automatically inducted into U.S. military service. It is uncertain whether or not the ruling was meant to pertain to Americans who were in foreign armies before the passage of the Selective Service law, because those men would have been already residing overseas. The ruling, no doubt, covered men who joined foreign armies after the act became law.

Keep in mind, the number of American volunteers in the military service of an allied nation may not have been large enough to warrant much attention by the Selective Service System. In any case, many of the Americans in that status were voluntarily accepted by the American Expeditionary Forces in France. (See bibs on American Field Service in France (Medical) and on American pilots in the British and French air services (Air-WW1).

No information was found here concerning military records of foreign-serving Americans. I suppose, if registered, they would appear in SSS records and perhaps military service records.

GROVER C. BERGDOLL CASE

Some considered Bergdoll to be the "No. 1 draft dodger" of the First World War. He was the son of Louis Bergdoll, a wealthy Philadelphia brewer. With the assistance of his mother, Grover (then 23) hid from Army authorities and evaded them successfully until 1920. Subsequently convicted, he served six months of his sentence, then escaped and fled to Eberbach, Germany, his mother's hometown. He returned to the U.S. in 1939, at which time the government returned to him 80% of the \$535,000 worth of property seized earlier, and then sentenced him to three years at the disciplinary barracks, Fort Leavenworth, KS. In addition, the four-year term from his previous conviction remained. In Feb 1944, he returned to his 260-acre farm outside Downingtown, PA. See:

Davis, Edward. Memoir. Pp. 447-48. Arch.

New York Times (4 Feb 1944): p. 17. Microfilm.

And 5 Dec 1944, p. 38.

U.S. Congress. House. Investigation of Escape of Grover Cleveland Bergdoll from U.S. Disciplinary Barracks. Report, 87th Cong, 1st sess, 1921. 911 p. UB789U4.

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Grieves, Keith. The Politics of Manpower, 1914-18. NY: St. Martin's, 1987. 241 p. HD5765A6G77.

Hawtin, W. Grist. The Law and Practice of Military Conscription Under the Military Service Acts, 1916 to 1918. 2 vols. London, Harrison, 1917-18. UB345G7H38.

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