

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS REGIMENT



COLONEL HEBER BLANKENHORN

Inducted
24 April 2014



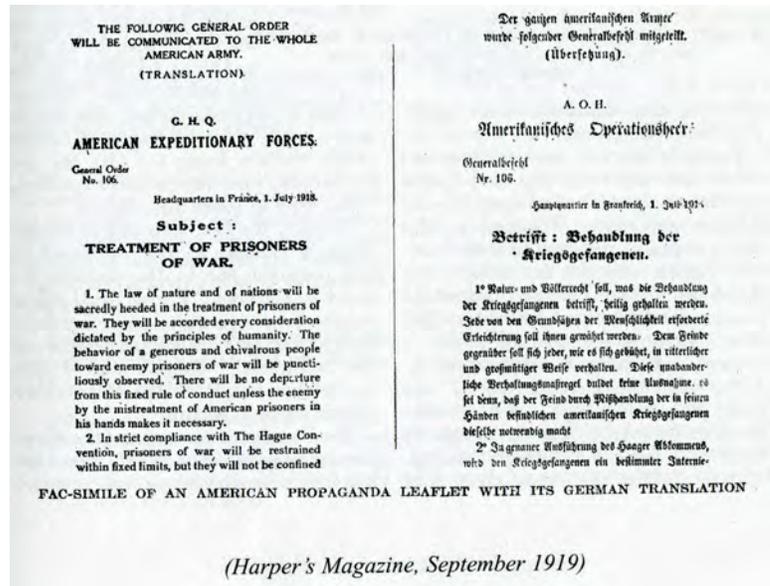
The PSYOP Regiment's Silver Knight

by Christopher Howard



In January 2015, U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School Commanding General MG Eric Wendt approved the “Silver Knight” Award for the Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Regiment. The Silver Knight captures the character of a mature, experienced PSYOP Soldier and goes to the heart of what is expected of all PSYOP Soldiers: eloquent persuasion--signified by the color silver--and the ability to act obliquely to influence all types of warfare--signified by the chess knight. Both of these symbols are drawn directly from the PSYOP Regimental insignia. The Silver Knight will be awarded to the longest serving member, Officer or Noncommissioned Officer, of the PSYOP Regiment currently serving on Active Duty. The first Silver Knights, when named later this year, will embody the legacy of the many honorable members of the PSYOP Regiment who have served with both longevity and distinction. This lineage begins with a little known figure from the First World War.

Heber Blankenhorn's (1884-1956) military experience in psychological operations covered both World Wars. Already a successful journalist prior to World War I, Blankenhorn first attempted to enlist in the Army in 1917 but was initially turned away for poor eyesight. He later received a commission as a Captain. He led the Psychologic Subsection [sic; also known as the Propaganda Subsection] under MI-2 in the Military Intelligence Branch, Executive Division, War Department General Staff from February to July 1918 and the Propaganda Section, G-2-D, General Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force from August to November 1918. Operating without established doctrine for, or formal training in, PSYOP, Blankenhorn's section of twenty-eight men improvised. While their total output of three million copies of twenty-one separate leaflets may seem meager compared with the PSYOP production of later wars, Blankenhorn attested to the fact that one out of every three German prisoners processed by one particular U.S. Army Corps had an American leaflet in his possession.



Blankenhorn returned to his civilian pursuits after World War 1 but was lured back into the service of his country by the rumblings of another World War. Blankenhorn's wife warned him against rejoining the military saying, “You may have done something in the last war, but history never repeats, and if you go into this one, you will fail; you are too old.” Initially, her prediction seemed accurate. At fifty-eight years old, he was rejected for military service.



After spending nearly a century in obscurity, Heber Blankenhorn was recognized in April 2014 as a Distinguished Member of the PSYOP Regiment (DMOR). As the sole DMOR who served in both World Wars, Blankenhorn epitomizes the tradition of distinguished lifelong service to the Regiment that the Silver Knight endeavors to capture. Furthermore, as an experienced, cross cultural communicator, functioning across the spectrum of war, he exemplified the traits that remain critical to the success of modern Military Information Support Operations. It is therefore only fitting to regard Heber Blankenhorn as the original Silver Knight.



Clayton D. Laurie, "The Chanting Crusaders: Captain Heber Blankenhorn and AEF Combat Propaganda in World War I," *The Journal of Military History* 59, no. 3 (July 1995): 458.

Heber Blankenhorn, *Adventures in Propaganda: Letters from an Intelligence Officer in France* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919): 163.

Heber Blankenhorn to William Donovan, April 1, 1944, Heber Blankenhorn Papers, box 3, Wayne State University (hereafter Blankenhorn Papers)

Laurie, 461

Headquarters, Military District of Washington, "SUBJECT: Promotion [for Blankenhorn]," 9 April 1946; "Military Record and Report of Separation Certificate of Service [for Blankenhorn]," 20 May 1946; and "Separation Qualification Record [for Heber Blankenhorn]," 20 May 1946, all in Blankenhorn Papers.