

THE U.S. SECRET SERVICE DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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On May 14, 1915, President Woodrow Wilson directed the Secretary of the Treasury to have the Secret Service investigate espionage in this country in regard to alleged violations of the President's Neutrality Proclamation, which noted in part that, "No person within the territory and jurisdiction of the United States shall take part, directly or indirectly, in the said war, but shall remain at peace with all the said belligerents and shall maintain strict and impartial neutrality."

FIGHTING ESPIONAGE



Secret Service agents with President Woodrow Wilson, May 1918. Library of Congress.

President Wilson wanted the Secret Service to break up a German sabotage network that was plotting against France, England, and the United States. As a result, Secret Service Chief William J. Flynn established an 11-man counter-espionage unit in New York City. Their most publicized investigation concerned the activities of Dr. Heinrich Albert and his infamous briefcase.

In July 1915, Secret Service agents placed a German sympathizer and his acquaintance, Dr. Albert, under surveillance. As they parted company, Dr. Albert boarded a train in New York City and in his haste to get off at his stop,

momentarily forgot his briefcase. An agent seized the brown case and managed to elude the panic-stricken Dr. Albert, who, realizing what had occurred, chased after him. Two days later an advertisement appeared in the newspaper offering a \$20 reward for the case. Unfortunately for Dr. Albert, the evidence in the briefcase was the breakthrough that the Secret Service was seeking. The contents exposed intricate, organized plots to undermine the Allied cause.

Dr. Albert was found to be the principal financial agent of the German empire in the United States. His account books revealed that he had received more than \$27 million from the German government to use in carrying out espionage-related activities. This included bombing munitions areas and factories manufacturing supplies for the allies, monopolizing the supply of liquid chlorine used for poison gas, and a plan to invade New York City.



Dr. Heinrich Albert plotted to create havoc in the U.S. True Detective Magazine, February 1940.

PREVENTING FOOD HOARDING, MONOPOLY ACTIVITIES, AND COMMODITIES TRADING

World War I brought other duties to the Secret Service. President Wilson established the U.S. Food Administration to prevent food hoarding and illegal food monopoly activity during the war years. On September 15, 1917, President Wilson authorized the Secret Service to investigate any related violations. Thousands of violations were uncovered, some of which were sufficiently aggravated to be the subject of criminal prosecutions. In addition, the Secret Service assisted the War Trade Board in investigating more than 1,800 individuals and corporations to ensure that there was no trading of food or commodities with the enemy.



Public notice relative to U.S. Food Administration regulations, circa 1917. National Archives.

A REMARKABLE STORY OF A SECRET SERVICE FATHER AND SON

Albert Routier was an orphan in Paris during the war when he took up with a U.S. Marine company. He traveled with the unit through France and Belgium until the war ended. At that time, Sergeant Thomas "Ted" Vaughan placed Albert in an orphanage, with the promise that when Ted returned to the U.S. he would send for him. Albert did not wait. He stowed away on a ship bound for Norfolk, Virginia. The only English words Albert knew were, "Ted Vaughan, Nashville, Tennessee." When Ted received word of Albert's arrival, he sent funds for Albert's travel to Nashville, where Ted, a single parent, raised him.

In time, both father and son became Secret Service agents. Ted served from 1935 until his untimely death in the line of duty on November 8, 1940, in an automobile accident while on official business to Nashville. Agent Albert Vaughan's career with the Secret Service spanned from 1928 until his retirement in 1960 while in the Nashville Office. Mr. Vaughan passed away on December 25, 2004, at the age of 99.



Credentials of Special Agent Albert R. Vaughan, Thomas "Ted" Vaughan/U.S. Secret Service.



U.S. Army veterans Robert L. Godby, James W. Hair, Robert K. Webster, and U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Thomas E. Vaughan. U.S. Secret Service. Hair's photo courtesy University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries.

VETERANS DAY: IN REMEMBRANCE

Among the men and women of the U.S. Secret Service who have died in the line of duty, four members previously served in the military during World War I. We remember former U.S. Army veterans Robert L. Godby, James W. Hair, Robert K. Webster, and U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Thomas E. Vaughan. Each is honored on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C.



U.S. Department of Homeland Security
United States Secret Service

The U.S.S. Jupiter which brought Albert to America, 1914. National Archives.

