Making Sense of the Unknown: The AEF in Siberia

A Monograph

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Abstract

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<td>Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure, Physical Environment, &amp; Time</td>
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Introduction

On 1 April 1920, Major General William S. Graves and the last remaining elements of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in Siberia stepped foot upon the Great Northern and departed from Golden Bay in Vladivostok, Russia. In route back to the United States (US), they had plenty of time to dwell over the last twenty months spent in Siberia. Sent to execute the American policy in revolutionary Russia, they faced a variety of obstacles during their time there. The greatest of which was being sent headlong into a situation of which they had no understanding. It is through this initial fog that the AEF had to fight to comprehend and make sense of its environment. On reflection, General Graves mentioned that he thought, “ignorance was not only bliss in such a situation, but was advisable.”

The AEF in Siberia, along with a separate command, the American North Russia Expeditionary Force, was the United States’ contribution during the First World War toward the Allied Powers’ efforts in dealing with the consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution and subsequent Russian Civil War. Both swept across Russia from 1917-1922. The unforeseen change in the Russian government and the spread of Bolshevism required the United States to act in places that had previously held little national interest. Paramount to the AEF’s operations was developing a proper understanding of the environment in Siberia before it could begin to take effective action. The AEF’s challenge then was to make sense of the foreign world around them. To call this a daunting task was an understatement. A Lieutenant S. Chadwick of the 8th Infantry Division summed up the typical proclamation of the men at the time by stating, “who in the hell knows anything about Siberia!”

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On 2 August 1918, Major General Graves was in Camp Fremont, Palo Alto, California, preparing the 8th Infantry Division to deploy to France. He anticipated leaving in October in support of Allied efforts against the Central Powers. Just before the largest military maneuvers held at Camp Fremont were to occur he received an urgent coded message. In it were instructions from the Chief of Staff of the US Army, Major General Peyton C. March, to depart immediately for Kansas City, Missouri. General Graves was to travel to the Baltimore Hotel and meet with Secretary of War Newton D. Baker. The message contained no further information; not the purpose of the meeting, how long he should expect to be absent, or if he was to even return to Camp Fremont.3 Graves quickly looked up the train schedule, hastily packed his bags, and was on his way within two hours en route to Kansas City.4 Upon arriving at Union Station, he was escorted to a nearby Pullman car where Secretary Baker was waiting. There, Baker gave him the news that would change the course of the war for Graves over the next two years. Instead of traveling to France to fight the Germans, he was to immediately travel to Siberia. President Woodrow Wilson had made the decision to join the other Allied powers in intervention in Russia and selected Graves to command the expedition. Secretary Baker then handed Graves an envelope that contained the aide memoire; a letter typed by Wilson which described the reasons for intervention, the policy of America, and Graves’ orders. As he handed over the envelope he told Graves to “watch your step; you will be walking on eggs loaded with dynamite.”5

The complications presented by this last-minute assignment cannot be underestimated. General Graves now found himself preparing to go to Siberia, a land far unlike the fields of France that the 8th Division had expected. Though Chief of Staff March had made mention of the possibility of sending a small contingent to Siberia, he assured Graves that this was unlikely and

3 Stobridge, 21.
4 Graves, 4.
5 Ibid.
thus no further preparation had been made toward that endeavor. In being given this command Graves now had no clear concept of what he was to face; the situation was murky, the threat unclear, and intelligence limited. In essence, Graves faced an unknown operating environment, one filled with uncertainty, for which he was completely unprepared.

This uncertainty did not delay the AEF; President Wilson had committed the United States to intervention. Within eight days of returning from his meeting with Secretary Baker, General Graves and the first 1,800 soldiers of the eventual 5,000 men from Camp Fremont would depart from San Francisco, sailing under the Golden Gate on their way to the Golden Horn. Understrength regiments from the Philippines were already under way and en route to Vladivostok. While it may have been beneficial to pause and gather some manner of information, this was not possible. General Graves reflected on the days following his receiving the aide memoir and believed that “it was unfortunate I did not know more of the conditions in Siberia than I did when I was pitch-forked into the melee at Vladivostok.” The efforts they took and the sum of their action in trying to understand the conditions they faced were what was to eventually be christened as America’s Siberian Adventure. Make sure that you include maps and a line and block chart or order of battle.

The Unknown Operating Environment

The events that General Graves and the AEF-Siberia encountered were not dissimilar to the situation that the modern military professional may face today and in the future. Rarely are the facts of conflict known ahead of time. Although a number of plans may exist to try and

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8 Stobridge, 51.

9 Graves, 55.
account for potential realities, a myriad of interlocking and unforeseen variables requires those plans to be broad in scope. It is impossible to forecast the exact future.

As it was in Siberia with the AEF, the US military has had a history of engagements for which it is unprepared. The United States’ involvement in the Pacific following the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the commitment of the Chinese forces on the Korean peninsula in response to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur’s drive to the Yalu, and the rise of the insurgency in Iraq following the collapse of the Saddam regime are all examples of situations where the US military found itself in an increasingly complex situation that forced it back on its heels due to an unknown environment. So rare is a satisfactory and informed understanding of the environment that in one of the few instances this occurred, where the Army believed itself adequately informed to defend the Fulda Gap, that conflict in question did not arise.

During the Cold War, the Fulda Gap represented one of the few avenues of approach that the Soviet Union could take to attack into West Germany. The terrain and enemy became the focus of intense study. Planning scenarios were continually tested resulting in new doctrine to better meet the Soviet threat. The United States even had the time and understanding to develop new capabilities and systems to replace obsolete equipment and counter new Soviet developments. This resulted in the introduction of the Big Five: Abrams main battle tank; Bradley fighting vehicle; Apache attack helicopter; Blackhawk utility helicopter; and Patriot air defense system. In sum, the United States believed itself prepared for such an encounter. The German reunification in 1990 and eventual collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 removed the Soviet threat and what may have been one of the most prepared for conflict in recent history did not actualize. The preparation and understanding of a specific instance was an anomaly in the history of US conflicts. It is more often the case for the army to be thrust drastically into an unknown environment.
General David D. Perkins addresses this problem in the preface to the latest Army Operating Concept, *Win in a Complex World*. General Perkins stipulates that one of the prevailing problems for the US Army in the next iteration of future armed conflict will be the fact that the “environment the Army will operate in is unknown.” This dilemma is far from being historically unique; rarely has the US Army gone into any conflict fully confident of its knowledge of the enemy, location, or the coalitions involved. The preface continues that the “Army cannot predict who it will fight, where it will fight, and with what coalition it will fight.”

The operating environment is a mixture of one’s allies, potential enemies, and the physical location. While *Win in a Complex World* does not address how to resolve the issues of the unknown, it describes the necessity of being prepared to present adversaries with multiple dilemmas once found in such a situation. It describes a path forward for how the US Army can achieve these goals in shaping the future force. While methods of defeating adversaries once the situation has been understood are useful, it does not allay the initial concern of an unknown environment.

There exists a further lingering question. If the conflicts that lie ahead are unknown, how much can truly be done to prepare for them? This problem is somewhat reminiscent the concept of known unknowns. Though existing previously in another format used by psychologists, it was brought to more widespread usage when then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld responded to a question concerning the lack of evidence surrounding the Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi weapons of mass destruction program. A known unknown is the concept that there are variables that can

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11 Ibid.

affect a situation but one is unable to identify them beforehand. It is possible to predict the
genral form of an unknown event but past experiences are inadequate for qualifying such an
event. This is one of the fundamental truths of conflict. The event is foreseeable yet the exact
form is ever changing and unknowable until it is actualized. While it is impossible to draw from
past experiences to adequately predict the form of future conflict, it is feasible to draw from the
historical instances to gain some insight on approaching future dilemmas. Though past
experiences cannot provide predictive powers about future conflicts, they can provide the ability
to enlarge our experiences and thus possible methods on dealing with them in the future.\textsuperscript{13} In the
case of the AEF in Siberia, exploring how General Graves and others made sense of the
environment, potential adversaries, and allied nation actions can provide effective methods for
future understanding. This analysis is most useful when understood through the framework of US
Army doctrine.

Doctrine is the body of the US Army’s professional knowledge and provides the
language on how to conduct operations in the field. Mission command is the underlying
philosophy of how the US Army conducts those operations. It is the proper exertion of authority
and direction by a commander using mission-oriented orders to enable subordinates to exercise
disciplined initiative. Mission command allows commanders and their staffs to account for
uncertainty in the environment, rapidly developing threats, and unexpected opportunities.\textsuperscript{14}

The framework used to exercise mission command is the operations process.\textsuperscript{15} The
operations process details the activities performed in order to successfully execute operations.
Commanders and their staffs use the operations process to drive planning, decision-making and


action within the environment. Central to the framework is the role of the commander. His function is to drive the operations process through their understanding, visualization, description, direction, leadership, and assessment of activities. Understanding is the logical starting point of this process. Without grasping the significance, nature, and context of a situation, it is impossible to move towards effective action. The operational environment is the “composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decision of the commander.” It consists of the terrain, enemy, and allies. It is the operational environment that the commander must first understand before they can begin to visualize a desired end state and the operational approach necessary to achieve that end state.

Fundamental in the commander’s ability to comprehend a condition's context is situational understanding. Doctrine states that “situational understanding is the product of applying analysis and judgment to relevant information to determine the relationships among operational and mission variable to facilitate decisionmaking.” The operational variables are the Army’s method of examining complex operating environments. They provide a starting point from which to begin examination. The eight interrelated variables are broken down into the categories of: political, military, economic, infrastructure, information, physical environment, and time (PMESII-PT). Each variable has its own set of relevant sub-variables that requires consideration to assist in understanding. Using PMESII-PT as an analytical framework, it is possible to evaluate the operational environment to determine critical relationships. These assist in forming a clearer situational understanding and the first step of the Commander’s activities in the operations process.


17 US Army, ADP 5-0, (2012), 2.

18 Ibid., 5.
The PMESII-PT framework provides not only a lens for examining modern operating environments but can assist in determining the relevant factors of past event. While General Graves did not have the benefit of revisions in current doctrine and the associated analytical frameworks, they can provide a useful lens into determining how he and the Siberian expedition sought to shed light on the uncertainty that prevailed upon their time in Russia. The use of history in this manner, in exploring how the AEF in Siberia approached learning about their location, the enemy, and alliances, can provide insight on how to inform the modern professional when entering an unknown operating environment.

Strategic Setting

Three years into the Great War, in early March 1917, a workers’ strike in Petrograd led to large-scale demonstration and protests, resulting in the Russian Revolution. With many of his troops already committed in the war, Emperor Nicholas II was unable to suppress the rebellion and was forced to abdicate the throne by demands from the Imperial Parliament. The Provisional Government under the leadership of Alexander Kerensky replaced the old Romanov regime. Kerensky’s new provisional government attempted to take long desired steps towards introducing both political and social reforms. These appeared to the Western nations as the signs of the beginning of a new democratic government that they hoped would spread to Germany and Austria-Hungary, possibly hastening the end of the war. The West saw this as Russia turning a new leaf and widely praised the results of the revolution. The government however, did not take steps to alleviate two of the most pressing issues that weighed upon the Russian people; the continued involvement in the war and the famine sweeping across the countryside. That summer the Kerensky government launched an ineffective offense against Germany, which collapsed almost immediately.

Kerensky’s failed offensive proved to be the straw that broke the camel’s back and in November a second revolution, spearheaded by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, overthrew the Kerensky government, firmly placing the Bolsheviks party in power. In December, the Bolsheviks signed an initial armistice with Germany to cease hostilities. The following March,

21 Richard, 14.
22 At this time the various Russian groups were categorized by color. The Bolsheviks were the Red Russians, the Czarists were the White Russians, and those that sought for a more democratic country were considered Green Russians.
they signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The treaty signaled the end of Russia’s participation in the Great War. Shortly thereafter, with Russia no longer an issue, the Germans launched the Spring Offensive in the West. Designed to defeat the Allies before the United States could fully bring the additional promised resources to the Western Front, the Germans had the advantage almost of fifty additional divisions to commit to the fight.

Another consequence of the treaty was the question of the Czech Legion. There existed some sixty-five thousand Czechoslovakians spread throughout Russia along the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Unhappy with being conscripted into Austro-Hungarian service, they either deserted or defected upon capture. They eventually formed their own corps and fought with the Russians. With Russia’s departure from the war after signing the treaty, the Czech Corps had begun to make the journey eastward towards Vladivostok in an effort to find passage to France and continue to fight on the Western Front. On 14 May 1918 during transportation, an incident occurred at Cheliabinsk that drastically changed things for the Legion.

As the Czechs waited on the platform, a train carrying German prisoners pulled into the station. One of the prisoners hurled a piece of iron that struck the head of one of the Czech soldiers, killing him. The platform erupted into chaos with the Czechs storming the prisoner cars. The Red Guards present managed to impose some semblance of order and marched off witnesses to the local police station. A delegation of Czechs went to the station to demand the release of their compatriots, but was detained as well. The remaining Czechs, now furious that their delegation had been arrested, stormed the police station and took control of the train station. This minor incident proved to be a catalyst that resonated with all Czechs along the rail line. The

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Legion, already frustrated with how the Bolsheviks were treating them, seized key stations and towns across 4,500 miles of the Trans-Siberian rail, from the Volga River to Vladivostok. 

Figure 2. Czech Corps Disposition along the TSRR, May 1918.


It was against this backdrop that the Allies now had to make a decision. The collapse of the Eastern Front had strengthened Germany’s position in the West. The Czech Legion, a potential addition of sixty-five thousand additional Allied troops, now languished throughout Siberia. The Allies were in effect, “battling against time.” The longer they delayed, the more troops Germany could be ship from occupied Poland and Russia to continue the fight in Europe.

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Moreover, there were additional fears of the stockpiles of supplies in Vladivostok falling into Bolshevist hands. Calls for an intervention began to spread. Each of the Allied nations that participated in the eventual intervention had varying reasons for their commitments.

The French championed strongly for Allied intervention. Reeling from Germany’s advance just then pressing in on Paris, they advocated for reopening the Eastern Front using the Czech Legion to alleviate the mounting pressure. British Prime Minister David Lloyd-George and the Chief of Imperial General Staff Sir Henry H. Wilson, had other reasons for intervention. They feared the rising tide of Bolshevism and the potential implications if it spread. Bolshevism called for worldwide revolution and the British dreaded what might happen if this wave were to reach India.27 They also feared what would happen if the new regime were to align with Germany and re-enter the war. On a more pragmatic notion, the British also desired to maintain a favorable government in Russia. By this time, they had already loaned the provisional government over $7.5 billion dollars and were unlikely to get it back with a government that preached about the evils of capitalism.28 While they advocated for action in Russia, the British had few troops to spare and saw both Japan and the United States as potential contributors. Japanese interests in intervention stemmed from historical background. Flush from the successes of the Russo-Japanese War thirteen years earlier, they sought to continue the expansion of their sphere of interest in the Pacific. Vladivostok and Siberia represented an opportunity to displace Russian competition. The Japanese conditioned their commitment on the involvement of the United States. Count Terauchi Masatake, the Japanese Prime Minister, did not want to risk straining their forces while the United States conserved its military might in the Pacific and could gain from


28 House, 18.
Japan’s weakened state. With the backdrop of those nations lobbying, President Wilson agreed to commit the United States to intervention.

Initially, President Wilson believed that intervention in Russia would be a mistake. The Allied countries, for their own reasons, continued to place increasing pressure on Wilson to authorize intervention. Secretary of State Robert Lansing supported their stance. He firmly believed that the United States should work with the Allies to intervene in Siberia and stem the growth of Bolshevism. Wilson’s military advisors opposed intervention. Both Secretary Baker and Chief of Staff March opposed intervention on practical grounds. They did not believe a small force could accomplish much and feared American involvement would provide cover for Japanese ambitions. At first President Wilson sided with the military advisors, stating that he wished that he could take everyone out of Russia except the Russians to allow them to see to their own business. Over time however he came around and on 6 July 1918 decided in favor of intervention.

While President Wilson never gave his exact reasons for committing to the intervention, there are five possible theories to explain his decision. The first centers on the potential threat of German and Austro-Hungarian war prisoners. After the signing of the armistice with the Central Powers, the Bolsheviks released around 800,000 prisoners. There was a fear that they had the potential to go on the offensive again and seize strategic points in Siberia or even advance on Vladivostok and seize the nearly $1 billion dollars’ worth of military stores there. A second theory stipulated that Wilson interceded in order to provide a check on Japanese advances. The reasoning being that without the involvement of the United States, Japan could act without

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30 Unterberger, *America's Siberian Expedition*, 68.


32 Goldhurst, 17.
restraint and would not willingly give up gains within Siberia. A third theory suggests that significant and prolonged Allied pressure from the British and French eventually caused Wilson to acquiesce. A fourth explanation was that Wilson decided to intervene primarily to overthrow the Bolshevik government that continued to gain power. Lastly, it is suggested that Wilson intervened in order to rescue the Czech Legion. Using those additional troops, it would be possible to reestablish the Eastern Front or potentially finish their consolidation at Vladivostok and be transported to the Western Front.33

Regardless of the exact reason, on 17 July President Wilson drafted what was to be the policy of the United States toward Russia, this was the aide memoire as given to General Graves. Presented to the Allied Powers, it outlined the United States’ position and objectives pertaining to the expedition. In it, Wilson made it clear that the proposed US effort was not based on military intervention. It stated:

It is the clear and fixed judgment of the government of the United States..., that military intervention there would add to the present sad confusion in Russia rather than cure it, injure her rather than help her, and that it would be of no advantage on the prosecution of our main design, to win the war against Germany. It cannot, therefore, take part in such intervention or sanction it in principle. Military intervention would, in its judgment,... be merely a method of making use of Russia, not a method of serving her... Military action is admissible in Russia, as the Government of the United States sees the circumstances, only to help the Czecho-Slovaks consolidate their forces and get into successful co-operation with their Slavic kinsmen and to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defense in which the Russians themselves may be willing to accept assistance... the only legitimate object for which Americans or allied troops can be employed, it submits, is to guard military stores which may subsequently be needed by Russian forces and to render such aid as may be acceptable to the Russians in the organization of their own self-defense.34

It was this policy that guided General Graves and the AEF. He understood he had three main objectives deriving from the aide memoire. The first was to lend aid to the Czechs in whatever manner was necessary. Secondly, he was to support the efforts of the Russian government in establishing self-reliance or self-defense. Lastly, he was to guard the military stores, which the

33 Richard, 17-47.
34 Graves, 5-10.
Provisional Government had purchased and had begun to amass at Vladivostok before the Russian government could claim them. These instructions formed the basis for all actions of the AEF during its time in Siberia and colored how they went about interpreting and understanding the environment in Russia.

**Campaign Overview**

With President Wilson having committed to the intervention in Siberia, the US Army began to marshal its forces. Two understrength regiments from the Philippine Islands were designated as the core of the AEF, the 27th Infantry Regiment and the 31st Infantry Regiment. To augment the expedition, one field hospital, an ambulance company, and D Company of the 53rd Telegraph Battalion accompanied them. At the same time, General Graves selected five thousand men from the 8th Division to round out the force. The Philippines Regiments departed in early August 1918 and arrived between 18 and 21 August. General Graves departed on 14 August and arrived on 1 September in Vladivostok. The remainder of the 8th Division soldiers selected to accompany Graves departed later that month on the *Logan* and *Sheridan*. Total American forces in Siberia amounted to 253 officers and 8,644 soldiers.  

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35 Stobridge, 35-42.  

General Graves wrote, “the fact that we were not troubled by custom inspectors and quarantine officials was my first initiation into a country without a Government.” This foreshadowed the difficulties he would encounter throughout his Siberian adventure. Within three months of the AEF’s arrival to Siberia, the Allied Powers and Germany signed the armistice, thus ending the war. Shortly thereafter, Admiral Alexander V. Kolchak, a former naval officer and recent minister of war for the provisional government, overthrew the Provisional Siberian government at Omsk and declared himself the “the Supreme Ruler of all the Russias.” The British efforts in Siberia, led by Major General Sir Alfred Knox, support Kolchak and his new government as an alternative to the Bolshevik regime.

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37 Graves, 56.

38 Maddox, 67.
In early December, the US Congress asked President Wilson why the AEF was still in Siberia with the war having ended. Wilson responded that he desired to wait until after the Paris Peace Conference to make a decision. He had designs at the time to assist the anti-Bolshevik forces there and saw US troops as a potential check to the growing threat of the Japanese. By December, they had sent ten fold more troops to Siberia than initially agreed upon, totaling seventy-two thousand. In April 1919 the Allies concluded the Inter-Allied Railroad Agreement. The Agreement committed those nations to assisting in the reconstruction of the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern Railways. The AEF was now devoted to guarding key rail sites, the American Russian Railway Service Corps personnel, as well as protecting over five hundred miles of railway.39

The spring and summer of 1919 saw the AEF fighting mainly small Bolsheviki or partisan bands along the railroad. There was the occasional confrontation between Allied supported White Russian and Cossack forces that sought to antagonize the American troops. That same summer, Red Russians made continued advances on the city of Omsk, the seat of Kolchak’s power. The Czech Legion was somewhat aligned with Kolchak in its fight against the Bolsheviks but his firing of Czech General Radola Gaida caused the subsequent loss of support by the Czech Legion. That November, the Bolsheviks closed in on Omsk and Kolchak, with what remained of his government, fled East towards Vladivostok. During his flight, Kolchak quickly lost support both from the Allied nations who began to see his government as untenable as well as White Russian allies who were tired of the atrocities his forces committed across Siberia. In December, Secretary Lansing, seeing where the situation was going, requested to President Wilson that he approve a withdrawal. Before the new year, General Graves received instructions to begin consolidation at Vladivostok in preparation for a withdrawal. The Czechs promised Kolchak safe passage however, on 7 February he was betrayed by an independent unit, handed over to the

39 Richard, 71-86.
Bolsheviks and executed. The AEF began departing on 15 February with General Graves and the last of the AEF departing on 1 April 1920.\(^{40}\) In the end, the AEF suffered twenty-seven killed in action, fifty-two wounded in action with another eight passing of their wounds, one hundred and thirty-five dying due to disease and fifty desertions.\(^{41}\)

### Elements of the Unknown

Lack of situational awareness is a significant detriment to any endeavor and was no less an issue for the Siberian adventure. General Graves commented on his sad state of understanding when he wrote that it was “unfortunate [he] did not know much of the condition in Siberia.”\(^{42}\) This unfortunate set of circumstances breed a feeling of uncertainty, one that made it difficult for Graves to determine how best to approach accomplishing the policy objectives assigned to him. The *aide memoir* provided some guidance but was extremely broad and was quickly overcome by events in two of the three clauses.\(^{43}\) Current US Army doctrine states “uncertainty pervades operations with unknowns about the enemy, the people, and the surroundings.”\(^{44}\) It was against this uncertainty that General Graves and the AEF fought. Unlike today, they did not have the benefit of doctrine designed to conduct information gathering or intelligence preparation of the battlefield beyond simple reconnaissance. They struggled to fill in the gaps through trial and error, made all the more difficult by the immensity of the task laid before them. They had no

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\(^{41}\) March, 132.

\(^{42}\) Graves, 55.

\(^{43}\) In the first case, the Czech Legion no longer needed protection from Central Powers after the signing of the Armistice and in the second case, General Graves could not support the Russian government because it had not been agreed as to who was legitimately in charge.

information pertaining to the political, military, economic, social, or financial situation in Russia before departing.45

Location

The first great-unknown General Graves and the AEF faced was that of their location. In the operational environment, the search for the understanding of a location in not regulated to merely the physical terrain or weather. It encapsulates all of the individual variables that make localities unique. Beyond the physical environment itself, both the natural and man-made infrastructure, it includes socio-cultural norms, language, regional demographics, centers of religion and commerce, as well as the political leanings. All are some aspect of a location and are necessary to consider when trying analyzing a specific geographic area.

Siberia is vast and a land full of extremes. The Ural Mountains in central Russia form its westernmost limit and it stretches nearly four thousand miles to Vladivostok in the east. As a whole it encompasses almost five million square miles. Though not the largest city, Vladivostok was important because it sat over the protected the harbor off the Pacific Ocean, which was deep enough for use by any ocean going vessel. Icebreakers ensured year-round access to the vital port which was apt to freezing during the winter. 2,600 miles to the West of Vladivostok sat Lake Baikal, the western most limit of American troops advance. Lake Baikal is the world’s largest freshwater lake with a length of 400 miles and a depth of 5,700 feet. Between Lake Baikal and Vladivostok sat Eastern Siberia, characterized by low mountains and rough rolling hills. Heavily forested, it provided wood for building and fuel for the towns. Like the size, the weather in Siberia had its extremes; with highs reaching 100° degrees above zero and lows reaching 40° degrees below zero (Fahrenheit). The ground had he tendency to remain partially frozen throughout most of the year. The average precipitation was around fifteen inches a year with a majority falling during the summer months. The rail was the most expedient method of traversing

45 Graves, 55.
through Siberia as huge snow drifts in the winter and ever-present mud in the spring made any travel along the roads almost impossible.\textsuperscript{46}

Most of this was unknown to the American troops. From General Graves to the lowest ranking soldier, Siberia was imagined as a cold, dark, and foreboding place. Lieutenant Sylvian G. Kindall of the 27th Infantry Regiment put it pithily when he wrote that:

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it must be admitted that many of us arrived in Siberia expecting to find there a cruel, frost-blasted land, with sleighs bounding from dark forests chases by packs of hungry wolves, polar bears riding on chunks of ice, and salt mines deep underground where exiles toiled at forced labor—all as pictured in the old geography of our schooldays.\textsuperscript{47}

Their school day geography lesson would have to initially suffice. So quick was the departure of the 27th Infantry from the Philippines that they were unable to develop appropriate estimates for Siberia or acquire proper military maps, if these even existed. The best they could do was to search out driver’s atlases and road maps from local stores to supplement their misinformed impressions.

Upon arrival, one of General Graves’ first concerns was to tour the region and visit all of the units along the rail lines “to evaluate conditions and get a feeling for the land.”\textsuperscript{48} He traveled as far north as Khabarovsk, approximately 460 miles, and did an inspection of his units and the associated towns in the surrounding area.\textsuperscript{49} To augment their poor understanding, the 27th and 31st Infantry Regiments also conducted their own town assessments. These assessments provided an in depth study of all populated areas within their current area of operations. The purpose was to ascertain the military, political, and economic conditions as well as relevant local personalities of those they were likely to engage within the area. Incredibly detailed, the reports provided a full

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} C.G. Fairfax Channing, \textit{Siberia’s Untouched Treasure: Its Future Role in the World} (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1923), 164; Richard, 17; House, 41-46.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Sylvian G. Kindall, \textit{American Soldiers in Siberia} (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1945), 13.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Robert L. Willett, \textit{Russian Sideshow: America’s Undeclared War, 1918-1920} (Washington, DC: Brassey’s, 2003), 199.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Graves, 64.
\end{itemize}
picture of a town’s current state as well as the potential for civil improvement in the future. The reports were updated weekly as conditions changed within each town, providing the headquarters with a firmer grasp on their physical and cultural surroundings.  

Those surveys also provided valuable information on key economic locations beyond the primary cities. The Suchan Mine, located 75 miles east of Vladivostok, proved to be one of those key locations. The mine was the primary source of coal for all of eastern Siberia and provided the bulk of coal for the nearby TSRR. A state owned mine, it came under the control of the Bolsheviks after the November revolution. Friction and poor management caused daily tensions between the Red leaning workers and White leaning managers. Production dropped from around 2,160,000 lbs. daily to a meager 720,000 lbs.; a decrease of over sixty-six percent. Having identified the mine as a major economic driver for the region, General Graves agreed to take the necessary efforts to stabilize operations. The AEF participated in the Allied Mine Guard in order to calm tensions, return production to previous levels, and restore some semblance of order throughout the region. Graves sent his Chief of Staff, Colonel O.P. Robinson, to assist in ironing out the leading concerns. Robinson issued a proclamation to the workers that Allied troops were there to support the Russian citizens and that it was necessary to temporarily control operations for the sake of providing citizens with coal throughout the winter. He furthermore emphasized that the Allied Mine Guard would not interfere with the Local government in any manner. This soothed some of the tensions and was effective for some time.

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50 See memorandum concerning “Officers for Special Intelligence Work” by O.P. Robinson, 28 October, 1918, RG 395, file 21-27.2, Historical files of the American Expeditionary Forces in Siberia, 1918–1920, National Archives Microfilm, Washington, DC.

51 Maddox, 63; Westall, 12.


53 House, 79-81.
Aside from the process of understanding the physical region, General Graves believed it necessary to go further. He believed it was his “duty to study the people, their habits, their customs, their desires, and their aspirations.” In doing so he gained a greater appreciation of intertwined socio-cultural environment of Siberia, thus allowing him to shape how the AEF interacted with the populace. He continually stressed tolerance of the people and their beliefs. Like the town assessments, this was a continuous effort throughout the intervention. In July 1919 he was required to travel to Omsk to escort the American Ambassador to Japan, Ronald S. Morris, back to Vladivostok. Graves ensured that during their 3,700 mile return trip they made as many stops along the rail as possible. Both men had their interpreters engage with all manner of locals along the route to gauge the people’s attitudes on the intervention and towards Kolchak’s government. His understanding of the popular will confirmed his views and reinforced his decision to further refrain from outright support to the Kolchak government.

This effort to gain an understanding of the people was not limited to Graves; men of all ranks sought to seek “knowledge of the geography and geology of vast Siberia, its political disorders, and the language and daily life of the Russian people.” The long Russian winter kept many men indoors and provided the soldiers of the AEF plenty of time to seek such knowledge. Close proximity to the Russian women during the winter also led to intimate encounters that resulted in more than a few Russian brides accompanying the men home. Though this may seem superfluous, the connections those soldiers made to the people and the surrounding communities provided insight into local situations that would have been otherwise impossible. Learning the language became another important tool, or as Lieutenant Fairfax Channing put it, “to speak the

54 Graves, 100.
55 Ibid., 216.
56 Kindall, 22.
language is, therefore, an absolute essential for an American.”

Men became proficient enough in the Russian language to carry out intelligent conversations and soon found that local peasants would come and discuss a variety of matters with them, ranging from the mundane and casual to in depth conversations on economics and politics. The day-to-day interactions between the American troops and Russians were largely positive. Continued exchanges with the AEF soldiers, as well as Young Men’s Christian Association or Knights of Columbus affiliated groups, made favorable impressions on the Russian people. This resulted in beneficial circumstances. Lieutenant Channing noted that such a change of attitude led to “a good deal of useful information and, in some cases, actual co-operation from some… of the people.”

Though thrust into a strange and foreign land at a moment’s notice, the men of the AEF immediately sought to gain their bearings by exploring the surrounding region and conducting detailed reconnaissance of nearby locations. Constant monitoring and updates ensured that their assessments remained valid. However, it was not the physical environment that they primarily focused on. The location, important in its own right, was secondary to understanding the Russians in Siberia. Initially as displayed in actions from General Graves and subsequently followed by junior leaders down the ranks, the emphasis on getting to know the people and their motivations served the AEF well. It allowed efforts to be focused towards those areas that supported the local populace the most, such as raising the production capacity of the Suchan mine. The soldiers’ efforts at treating the people with decency rather than fear and hostility resulted in them gaining the confidence and support of many Russians. Aided by the United States’ stance on neutrality, the American troops came to be known as the most trusted nation of those intervening.

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57 Channing, 164.
58 Kindall, 132.
59 Channing, 123.
Enemy

The second unknown variable the AEF is Siberia faced was that of the enemy. Upon arrival, they had no clear idea who supported their efforts or who was against them. In conflict, one seeks to understand the location, disposition, equipment, training, and motivation of the adversary. It is also essential to understand other military or non-state forces within the area that may impact operations. In a conventional war, such that found on the Western Front, this was much easier. In Eastern Siberia however, conditions were fluid. The Allied forces were a mix of British, French, Japanese, Chinese, Canadian, and American troops with no clear structure or set political purpose. The concept of enemy was dynamic, transitioning from the German-Austrians, to Bolshevism, to none at all.

When initially deployed in the fall of 1918 the AEF had a well known and defined enemy, the Central Powers. Within Siberia, the main threat originated from the release of German-Austrian prisoners in accordance with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Early reports from the Allied nations suggested that there were nearly seventy thousand of these former prisoners throughout Eastern Siberia. An estimated fifty thousand Germans and Austrian prisoners were in the vicinity of Irkutsk ready to seize the multiple locations along the TSRR. Another fifteen to twenty thousand prepared to descend upon Vladivostok to seize the valuable military stores there. While some in the United States doubted the veracity of these numbers, the American Ambassador to Russia, David Rowland Francis, continually corroborated Allied reports and helped strengthen President Wilson’s decision for committing to the intervention.60

The 27th Infantry under Colonel Henry D. Styers were some of the first American elements to arrive in Vladivostok. Upon arrival he sought out the senior ranking Allied commander to inquire about the current circumstances. Colonel Styer was met by Japanese General Otani Kikuzo, who informed him that he was the Supreme Commander of the Allied

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60 Leipold, 6; Graves, 30-32.
forces and as such required the assistance of the 27th in engaging enemy forces to the north. Styer had some reservations, but having no orders to the contrary agreed to contribute to the mission. General Graves arrived a week later and allowed continued participation in the Khabarovsk and Ussuri offensives, believing that the United States and Japan’s purposes were aligned. Soon after, his tour of the area he discovered no trace of the supposed twenty thousand German-Austrian prisoner army. Concluding that the threat did not exist, he pulled all American troops back to Vladivostok. Continued investigation showed there were no large armies of German-Austrian prisoners running rampant anywhere throughout Siberia and the threat was indeed a fabrication designed to induce intervention. The AEF’s first attempt at understanding an enemy was a mirage and in fact at no time did American troops formally engage any Central Powers forces in combat.

The only encounters the AEF had with any German-Austrian soldiers were at the Red River war prison camp outside Khabarovsk. Here there remained some two thousand Austro-Hungarian prisoners who had been captured by the White Russians and had not yet been released. The contingent assigned there, E Company of the 27th Infantry, found conditions utterly appalling. Under the direction of Captain Larkins, the company made a concerted effort at immediate reorganization and improvement. What began as a deplorable and disease-ridden compound transformed into a clean and efficient community. He introduced arts and recreation as well as building a laundry, bakery, as well as other methods to keep the prisoners diligently employed and feeling useful. Conditions rapidly improved and prisoners began cooperating to such a degree that is became permissible to authorize some prisoners to spend their week-ends twelve miles away in the city of Khabarovsk. In fact, the AEF’s efforts lead to such a radical

61 Graves, 30-32, 62-64.

62 Maddox 62-63; Leipold, 6; House, 74-83.

63 Channing, 134-39.
change that it was now necessary to have a pass to get back into jail in order to keep unauthorized
persons out. The goodwill earned by the men of E Company paid dividends. On one occasion
there was a threat of a potential uprising and some inmates informed Captain Larkins of the risk.
Larkins immediately addressed the prison and eventually convinced the potential agitators to
agree that their conditions were not as bad as they could be and placated them. How the men of
the AEF understood their condition compared to their adversary and their humane actions
towards the prisoners compared to other actors shows much. In one case, a former German officer
mentions that he went from seeing the American soldiers as opponents to seeing them as
guardians. In a testament to the influence they had, many prisoners willingly clamored to enlist in
the American army when the AEF eventually transferred control of the camp to the Japanese.

The signing of the Armistice had a significant effect on the concept of the enemy and the
purpose of the intervention. Allied nations were no longer at war with the Central Powers and had
no declared enemy present in Russia. Lacking this, many of the Allied nations advocated that this
presented an opportunity for action against the Red Russians. Bolshevism was seen as a threat to
both their regional interests and their White Russian supported allies. General Graves however,
held firm to his policy of neutrality as interpreted from his understanding of the aide memoire. He
stated that he had neither the orders nor authority to fight the Red armies. The United States was
not technically at war with anyone, certainly not against the Russians or on Russian soil. If he
were to engage in such acts, it would be tantamount to a declaration of war.

A policy of non-intervention into the internal affairs of the Russian government did not
equate to a trouble free existence. Russia was now stuck somewhere between a civil war and an

64 Westall, 14.
65 Channing, 138; Leipold, 8.
66 Graves, 93, 356.
insurgency, with the AEF caught right in the middle. American soldiers found their main threat to originate from minor, but no less deadly, engagements with bands of partisans. Political loyalties of the people were notoriously unclear and could change quickly depending on varying circumstances. It was difficult to identify who the partisan bands were or for what reason they were fighting. Those that attacked the American troops included actual Bolsheviks, Russians both in support of, or those against the Kolchak government, and those who merely wanted foreign soldiers off of Russian soil. Identifying the partisans and understanding how to engage them became one of the AEF’s biggest challenges.

While Britain, Japan, and the White Russians continued to rally against the Red army forces, General Graves imparted that this was not the purpose of the AEF. Initially this was not understood by some of the officers and men; they saw the Bolshevik as the enemy and took action supporting this understanding. Graves would have none of this. Upon learning that an American officer had arrested a Russian because he was a Bolshevik, he proclaimed that the United States was not at war with the Bolsheviks and that “troops must take no part in arresting people, because of their political affiliations.” They were only to arrest those that had attacked them. Though confusing to some, many junior officer took his words to heart. They made efforts to reach out and interact with Bolshevik leaders near their camps. At times this lead to a tenuous sort of peace, where the American’s agreed if the Bolsheviks left the rail alone, the Americans would leave them alone. The AEF would then only occasionally have to conduct attacks against Bolsheviki strongholds in retaliation for direct attacks against American troops.

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67 House, 28.
68 Maddox, 102.
69 Graves, 95.
70 Unterberger, America’s Siberian Expedition, 90.
71 Kindall, 67-74; White, 273.
72 Leipold, 9.
Soon after the armistice, the railroad became the primary impetus for the AEF’s hostile engagement. Under the Inter-Allied Railroad Agreement, signed in April 1919, the AEF’s new task was to protect the TSRR and associated property.\textsuperscript{73} As Kolchak’s government was in primary control of the locomotives and train cars, this effectively gave Kolchak full control of rail operations and efforts to secure the TSRR by the Intervening forces indirectly supported Kolchak’s regime. This angered not only the Bolsheviks but also moderate White Russians who found Kolchak and his followers to be too oppressive in their efforts to consolidate power. The AEF was also required to conduct garrison duty at key junctions along the railroad to protect it from partisans destroying bridges, pulling spikes, tearing up tracks, and chopping down telegraph poles to cut the lines.\textsuperscript{74}

The difficulty in identifying partisans of any faction was a continual source of frustration for General Graves and the men of the AEF. Partisans easily blended in with the populace and for a foreigner such as the Americans, it was difficult to tell one from another. One incident at Spasskoe illustrates the AEF’s ability to identify adversaries. A company of Chinese troops ordered to report to the commander at Spasskoe and provide all necessary support. Upon reporting, the Chinese officer stated that he had his orders and was ready to fight with the Americans. The response from the Americans was simply “Fight whom.”\textsuperscript{75} Lacking a readily identifiable enemy, American troops attempted to win the support of the populace. Friendly overtures and efforts to build connections were however sometimes returned with less than positive feedback. The same Russians who welcomed them during the day would become attackers at night. American goodwill could be returned with spite. Gifts to the Russians, such as a can of American tobacco would sometimes be repaid with that same tin can used as the shell for

\textsuperscript{73} House, 107.
\textsuperscript{74} Kindall, 105.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 30.
a homemade hand grenade. The inability to identify, root out, or even properly engage with partisans was a common problem. Popular camp songs captured this feeling. One ran:

We came out from Vladivostok to catch the Bolshevik
We chased them o’er the mountains and we chased them through the creek
We chased them every Sunday and we chased them through the week
But we couldn’t catch a gosh darn one.76

This sense of difficulty in identifying a common enemy pervaded all ranks. At the end, in referencing hostile Reds, Graves himself admitted that he was “never able to determine who was a Bolshevik or why he was a Bolshevik.”77

Not all of the AEF’s adversaries were shrouded amongst the populace. One final hostile force that it was necessary to contend with was the White Russians Cossack leaders, Ataman Grigori Semenov and Ataman Ivan Kalmikov. These two Cossacks were ostensibly under Kolchak’s control but the Japanese contingent exerted some modicum of control by supporting them directly by through funding or supplying arms. They were scandalously brutal and General Graves described them as murders, robbers, and scoundrels; noting the only difference between the two was that Kalmikov killed with his own hands whereas Semenov ordered someone else to do it.78 There are many instances chronicling the Cossack forces harassing, arresting, or outright attacking American troops throughout their duration in Siberia. It seemed their primary purpose was to stir up trouble and drive out the neutral US contingent.79 In these instances, the Americans found encounters with their supposed allies could be just as dangerous as encounters with the Bolsheviks or partisans.

Regarding the unknowns, the biggest challenge the AEF encountered while in Siberia was that of identifying adversarial forces. Initially this was the threat of released German-

76 Maddox, 102-03.
77 Graves, 165.
78 Ibid., 86-91.
79 Nicholas, 14; Leipold, 10.
Austrian prisoners but was removed with the signing of the Armistice. American forces no longer had a declared enemy in Siberia that they could bring a fight too. General Graves’s stance of strict neutrality and the defense of the Kolchak run railroad resulted in angered parties on all sides. The AEF initially tried to mitigate attacks by seizing all weapons excepting only hunting rifles. This could accomplish only so much and had no affect on the Cossack forces. The lack of a defined enemy and the signing of the Inter-Allied Railroad Agreement eventually led the AEF to take a passive stance of defending the rail lines and only engaging those that attacked them, necessitating a wait and see approach. Their success in relating to the people did provide the occasional benefit of being informed of potential attacks, allowing the American troops to take necessary countermeasures and stop the attacks form happening. In the end, the AEF had only two significant engagements with the partisans, once at Romanovka and once at Kraefski.

Figure 4. Deployment of Troops in Siberia, 1918-1920.

Alliances

The final unknown that faced the AEF was that of the alliance structure of the Allied forces within Siberia. The primary goal of an alliance is to achieve a unity of effort; that is, the synchronization and coordination of activities to achieve a common desired end state. Unity of effort is supported through unity of command, the forces of allied nations under one commander. Effective coalitions on the ground however depend on multiple variables. In Siberia, General Graves had to be cognizant of the political and informational variable, both the intents of the governments involved and in what manner it was transmitted to other Allied actors.

While there was the potential for an overarching unified command, difficulties arose as soon as General Graves arrived to Vladivostok. In conjunction with the Japanese offensive that the 27th Infantry partook in, General Otani informed Graves that as the senior ranking allied commander on the ground that Otani was to be the Supreme Commander-in-chief of the Allied Armies. Otani further stated that this was at the behest of the American government as dictated by the State Department. Graves had not previously received any instructions from the War Department to validate this claim. Furthermore, he believed that his was merely the misconstruing of some staff member confusing the concept of the senior of Allied forces with that of the Allied commander. Unsatisfied with how the 27th Infantry was used to further Japanese endeavors rather than secure primary objectives. Graves stipulated that no American forces would operate subordinate under any other nations troops nor would they participate in any joint action unless he specifically approved. The issue of overarching commander did not arise again until Otani’s successor; General Oi Shigemoto took over command of Japanese forces and brought it up again with General Graves. As with the first instance, Graves summarily dismissed the notion.

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81 Graves, 59.

82 Ibid., 57-59; Maddox, 62-63.
Thus ended the first and last prospects of any notion of unity of command. It is interesting to note that no other effort was made by any other nations to enact anything similar; they chose rather to do as they pleased.

However, the lack of unity of command did not necessarily equate to a lack of a unity of effort. Allied commanders met regularly in an attempt to share information and coordinate activities. They developed joint committees to examine issues in depth. These committees covered such areas as materials, quartering, common financing, common purchasing, sanitation, martial law, and the best methods to execute the Inter-Allied Railway agreement.83 Though none of the agreements were technically binding, most commanders abided by them as long as their individual national policies regarding Siberia were not infringed upon. In this manner the Allied nations enacted generally acceptable results. Other informally developed relationships were likewise fruitful. The Russians and Allies selected Colonel Butenko as the Vladivostok Fortress Commander. Butenko, seeing the good the Americans were trying to achieve, approached Graves multiple times to provide information on potential threats that he believed could be useful. That intelligence allowed the AEF to outmaneuver both scheming allies and hostile forces alike.84

One of the primary disruptions in achieving coordinated effort was the growing division between Allied nations, specifically between the United States and the other nations. This was primarily based upon General Graves’ continued insistence on a policy of neutrality for the AEF, the resistance in fighting the Bolsheviks and Graves’ hesitance in supporting Kolchak. The British, French, and Japanese however continued to press for greater support towards Kolchak and military action with the White Russians against the Bolsheviks. He somewhat agreed that his refusal to support Kolchak could in effect be interpreted as support for the Bolsheviks but this did

83 House, 85.

84 Graves, 173, 251.
not matter. Siding with Graves were the Italians, who were instructed to align themselves with the American representative and the Chinese, who were extremely distrustful of the other three nation’s intents. The Canadians, though technically under the direction of the British, initially sided with Graves. They objected to the British’s actions, which violated the non-intervention clause and supported the actions of the White Russians. The Canadian contingent was recalled early during the expedition due to those differences of opinion. Graves quickly realized that the different nations, specifically the British and Japanese, were there for cross-purposes. He struggled to ensure the actions of the AEF did not contribute to ill effect caused by the others.

Those early divisions were sometimes exacerbated by differences of opinions coming from the US State Department and War Department. Secretary Lansing and those in the State Department was well aware of the atrocities that Kolchak and his subordinates were perpetrating throughout Siberia yet continued to support them in their drive to counter Bolshevism. They chastised their own operatives within Siberia when reports aligned with what Graves had been sending back rather than the approved anti-Bolshevik rhetoric. On one occasion the State Department told August Heid, a War Trade Board representative supporting the State Department in Siberia, that he was “not sending the kind of information out of Siberia we want you to send.” This was opposed to the continual support Graves received from the Chief of Staff and Secretary of War. They understood his position and actions in relation to the aide memoire and fully supported his efforts to remain neutral. Similar to Graves’ revelations about the different Allied nations, he realized that the State and War Departments had cross-purposes for being in

85 Graves, 272.
86 Ibid., 82-85.
87 Ibid., 256.
88 March, 131.
Siberia as well; the State to intercede against Bolshevism, the War to execute policy as stipulated in the *aide memoire* and no more.

The sum of these rifts led to significant strife between the AEF and Allied nations. General Graves had to fight through Allied hurdles in order to accomplish anything effective as they opposed him at almost every opportunity. Later on in the intervention, the British moved from indirectly trying to stymie American efforts to actively trying to have Graves removed. General Knox sent back reports to London arguing American ineptitude. He wrote to the American Consul in Vladivostok, John Caldwell, and recommended that Graves be relieved.89 This propaganda continued until it reached a high point where the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, personally engaged President Wilson concerning the supposed failings of General Graves. Wilson, concerned by these reports initially contemplated replacing Graves but retained him when both March and Baker advocated for Graves.90

While the Japanese did not advocate for the changing of American policy, their actions continually disrupted American efforts. White Russians forces, which were supported by the Japanese, continually put out malicious rumors in the local and international papers concerning American troops. White forces regularly challenged, and in a few cases openly attacked, American troops along the rail lines.91 Despite this, General Graves somehow maintained a cordial relationship with the senior Japanese leaders. He saw certain clashes as inevitable due to National stances and insisted on maintaining a level of mutual respect. He was successful to a degree. In the end, upon the departure of Graves and the remaining troops, General Oi sent a band to the docks to send off the AEF with the song “Hard Times Come Again no More.”92 Less than a

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89 Graves, 196; House, 170; Richard, 147.
90 Maddox, 98.
91 Graves, 108.
92 Ibid., 328.
day after the American departure the Japanese seized the city of Vladivostok and begun attacking Russian forces north to secure TSRR for their own purposes. They would remain in Siberia until October 1922.93

War is inherently a political act and the decision to send American troops to Siberia, while not a war in itself, was no less political.94 General Graves realized early on that what he assumed was joint action to benefit the Czech Legion and Russian people was simply not true for some of the participating countries. He observed that the British and Japanese sought to insert their own political desires into the outcome in Siberia and had no issue with advocating for positions contrary to the principle of non-intervention. His underlying belief that it was his duty to understand the people led him to decisions that supported the benefit of the Russians over those if the intervening nations. His understanding of the popular opinion combined with his own intuition influenced Graves’ notion that the Kolchak government was not going to last and resulted in limited support to that government. His refusal to enthusiastically support the Kolchak government caused significant turmoil that strained Allied relations. The White Russians were displeased that the AEF did not support them enough, the Allies were bitter due to the restraints Graves implemented on American backing against Bolsheviks, and the Japanese were particularly angry because the United States was obstructing their own objectives in Siberia. Graves eventually came to the conclusion that both Russian and Allied officials were hostile to him and American actions.95

Conclusion

General Graves lead the American Expeditionary Forces into Siberia with no more than a tenuous grasp on what they were to face. The operating environment was completely unknown to

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93 House, 172.


95 Bailey, 8; Graves, 230.
them. They had a vague understanding of the conditions within Siberia, factitious information of expected enemy forces, and an incomplete grasp of the intentions of their supposed allies. Despite this, their constant efforts help to uncover information and develop a more robust understanding of their surroundings allowed them to gradually make sense of the situation they found themselves in. Once key infrastructure was identified and properly protected the American troops shifted their energies into understanding the populace. The accumulation of positive daily interaction helped distinguish them from other allied troops that were in the country for less altruistic reasons. While these efforts would not erase all ill will towards the American soldiers, in many cases they were able to achieve more than expected just by maintaining friendly relationships and having empathy for the Russians they were there to assist.

Those Russians that fought them proved to be one of the enduring struggles for the AEF. General Graves was adamant that the AEF was not to interfere with Russian politics. This resulted with American troops interacting with and at times defending the very same Russians that might at a later point attack them. Caught between the Red Russians advocating for Bolshevism, the White Russians supporting continued czarism, the Green Russians who agreed with neither, and other partisans who sought to expel intervention troops from Russian soil, the AEF had to refrain from taking sides and could only respond in case of an imminent threat. It is not hard to imagine the difficulties the men faced in identifying an enemy when confronted by the prospect of multiple factions seeking to do you harm. The neutral stance and enforced by Graves ensured that the Soldiers stayed within the boundaries US policy and would be able to depart Siberia honorably.

The challenge of navigating the alliances with other intervening nations fell to General Graves. In paying close attention to the actions of the allied nations and their political proceedings, he was able to quickly determine at what points their interests converged or diverged from US objectives. Unfortunately they were often at opposite ends rather than aligning. Though this made a true unified effort impossible for the intervening nations, Graves took
advantage of when those interests aligned to make the most of what limited cooperation there was available.

General Perkins correctly states that future-operating environments will be unknown. This is a reoccurring fact from the annals of US military history and a likely prediction for the future. While modern technology will likely change the methods in which military forces are employed, it is unlikely to change the fact that the United States tends to send its military to other parts of the world with little to no warning. Even those conflicts, which are thought to be properly understood, have a habit of suddenly shifting and morphing into something completely different. These short notice events are surrounded by high levels of uncertainty that leads to confusion and indecision. It is therefore necessary to take efforts to understand what environment one finds themselves in and to recalibrate frequently.

As the US military leans more towards an expeditionary mindset, it needs to be able to confront future challenges of being engaged in an area without a clearly defined enemy, without clearly defined goals, or a complete understanding of setting. To accomplish this, the commander must be able to first understand the situation before he can begin to continue along the operations process. This is a daunting task yet not impossible. The story of the American Adventure in Siberia demonstrates the potential for successful understanding when using the current doctrinal framework of PMESII-PT for analysis. Though the AEF did not have access to this modern construct, its activities in gathering information geared towards making sense of the environment can be roughly aligned with those recommended by operational variables. Both driven from the top by General Graves and supported from the bottom through individual efforts of junior officers and soldiers, the AEF was able to develop a clear picture of the Siberian environment that assisted in the success of American endeavors.
Appendix A: AEF Siberia Order of Battle

AEF Headquarters
  Headquarters Company (-)
  Machine Gun Company
  Supply Company
  Company D, Training BN

27th Infantry Regiment
  Headquarters Company
  Company A
  Company B
  Company C
  Company D
  Company E
  Company F
  Company G
  Company H
  Company I
  Company K
  Company L
  Company M
  Machine Gun Company
  Medical Detachment

31st Infantry Regiment
  Headquarters Company
  Company A
  Company B
  Company C
  Company D
  Company F
  Company G
  Company H
  Company I
  Company K
  Company L
  Company M
  Machine Gun Company
  Medical Detachment

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96 CMH, 386-389.
Other Attachments
   Company D, 53rd Telegraph Battalion
   Field Hospital 4
   Evacuation Hospital 17
   Ambulance Company 4
   Medical Supply Depot 7
   Bakery Company 391 (-)
   Veterinary Field Unit
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