After Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare in early 1917, the U.S. entered the war. The port of New York was a primary staging area for the war effort, and Customs Service agents at major ports confiscated enemy ships in port, impounding luggage, and even inspecting personal correspondence. The service worked in conjunction with other agencies to protect international commercial interests, specifically concerning itself with export control. The government had the power to legislate what could be shipped abroad, and the Customs Service enforced the law. This meant increased responsibility in that the Customs Service had to expand its duties, which required more manpower. To meet that need, New York’s collector formed a War Port Squadron. By early 1918, it was folded into the Customs Intelligence Bureau (CIB), which searched vessels and issued and inspected seamen’s identification documents. The CIB ultimately replaced the Neutrality Board. It was only in operation at the Port of New York and fell directly under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Treasury. The CIB mission was mainly concerned with scanning non-mail communications like sketches, notes, records, photos, or motion pictures for sensitive information or enemy propaganda. The Bureau also searched ships and examined outbound passengers to ensure that they were not transporting valuable or sensitive goods and information. During the Spanish Influenza outbreak in 1918, agents even inspected passengers and fumigated ships to prevent its spread, a dangerous proposition at best.

**CUSTOMS AGENTS HELP TO WRAP UP THE WAR EFFORT**

After the November 1918 armistice, goods held back during the war began streaming into the country. Customs agents again supervised military imports and exports, charging the War Department a duty on items brought back from active service, and particularly on European made goods used for the war overseas and brought for postwar service at home. The American Expeditionary Forces were responsible for taxes on over $600 million worth of supplies, and the Customs Service wound down its war efforts by making the military pay the tax. The CIB’s contributions to the war effort were well-recognized with special commendations from the Secretaries of War and the Treasury, and the bureau was disbanded on July 7, 1919.