

K.I. Legkov (1877–1958) – doctor, healthcare organizer and social activist

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Abstract. The article presents information about the life and work of K.I. Legkov (1877–1958) – one of the healthcare organizers on the territory of the modern Republic of Buryatia and the Trans-Baikal Territory. The son of a priest, Legkov successfully graduated from the medical faculty of the University of Tartu and worked as an assistant at the university clinic. During the Russo-Japanese War, he volunteered for the front as a military doctor. In 1907, Legkov became assistant to the chief physician of the Verkhneudinsk Red Cross hospital. In addition to clinical work, he was actively engaged in teaching activities and showed great organizational skills, being elected mayor. From April 1917, he worked as a senior registrar at the Berezovsky military hospital, and was appointed head of the Baikal department of health after the formation of the Far Eastern Republic. In November 1921, he was appointed head of the Trans-Baikal military medical district. In June 1923, Legkov resigned. He became an easy target for political repression: in 1938, he was arrested by the Primorsky district NKVD on charges of espionage and was interned at a prison camp (1938–1954). In 1955, during his lifetime, he was rehabilitated.

Keywords: K.I. Legkov, Russo-Japanese war, the Verkhneudinsk Red Cross hospital, Zabaikalsk Society of Physicians, the Far Eastern Republic, the history of medicine

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Konstantin Ivanovich Legkov was born on May 20, 1877 in the village of Vasilyevo, Taurida Governorate (now Ukraine's Kherson region), into the family of an bishop. His father was a teacher, a supporter of public education and organized primary (folk) schools for the peasants. Influenced by his father, Konstantin entered a seminary, from which he graduated in 1897. The young man also took an active role in teaching activities at the folk school organized by his father.¹

K.I. Legkov dreamed of becoming a doctor. However, in pre-revolutionary Russia, seminary

graduates could enroll only in the Yuriev and Tomsk Universities. The young man did not want to travel to distant Siberia, and in 1897 entered the Medical Faculty of Yuriev University (now Tartu, Estonia). He studied hard, and showed himself to be a capable and promising student whose successes were repeatedly noted by teachers. In 1902, K.I. Legkov received a doctor's graduation certificate, and after practicing in a clinic (1903) – a medical degree.² Professor K.K. Degio offered him the post of assistant at the Yuriev University Medical Clinic. At the request of the Director, K.I. Legkov conducted practical clinical training for students.

The Russo-Japanese war began, and K.I. Legkov submitted a request to be sent to the

¹ State Archive of the Republic of Buryatia (SARB). F. 10. Op. 1. D. 2932. L. 2-2 ob.

² SARB. F. 10. Op. 1. D. 2932. L. 2.

army. On November 23, 1904 he was called up for active duty, went to the front, and on December 24, 1904, arrived in Harbin under the command of the field inspector of the second Manchurian Army.³ Legkov participated in combat operations against Japanese forces (1904–1905). During the battle of Mukden⁴ in the harshest of conditions he organized the evacuation of the wounded and sick on the Fushunsk train line.⁵ In the beginning of March 1905, K.I. Legkov was appointed commandant of the temporary military hospital train No. 286 (such trains were formed in the event of a lack of field and logistical military hospital trains) travelling from Telin station to Harbin. On March 13, he was transferred to the position of junior doctor of the main military hospital train (subordinate to the military district troop command). On May 29, 1905, he became the junior doctor of the Turkestan military hospital train. On November 19, 1905, the train was disbanded, and Legkov received a new appointment – as junior doctor of the 18th Siberian military hospital train. On December 7, 1905, he was made senior physician of the newly-formed Turkestan military hospital train, which on March 4, 1906, was again disbanded. On March 21, 1906, he returned to Yuriev.⁶

In 1904, in connection with the outbreak of war with Japan in the city of Verkhneudinsk (now Ulan-Ude),⁷ the Verkhneudinsk hospital of the Russian Red Cross Society was opened (RRC). Its infirmary was organized by her Imperial Majesty Empress Alexandra Feodorovna “for combat fatigued and wounded soldiers”.⁸ From 1905

the medical institution was headed by Dr. August Genrikhovich Leger.⁹ He wrote K.I. Legkov a letter asking him to come to work in the hospital. Professor K.K. Degio gave K.I. Legkov a good character reference and recommendation and he left for the city of Verkhneudinsk.¹⁰ By the Order¹¹ of the Trans-Baikal region (No. 820 dated March 7, 1908) he was confirmed as assistant chief physician of the Verkhneudinsk hospital of the Red Cross in the civil service.¹² On the same grounds with the infirmary was the Verkhneudinsk Community of Sisters of Mercy (nurses)¹³: nurses were assigned to the infirmary and worked there. Since 1867, when Russia joined the Geneva International Red Cross organization, training of nurses became one of the main activities of the RRC (Russian Red Cross). In 1911, additional nursing courses were started at the hospital in Verkhneudinsk.¹⁴ A huge contribution to their creation and operation was made by A.G. Leger, who invited K.I. Legkov to Verkhneudinsk.¹⁵

From 1910, K.I. Legkov was in charge of the courses of the Sisters of Mercy and until 1917 actively engaged in teaching activities. On March 31, 1912, by order of the military governor of the Trans-Baikal region, he was appointed chief doctor of the hospital in Verkhneudinsk.¹⁶ On April 1, 1912, he became senior physician of the Verkhneudinsk RRC Community of Sisters

³ SARB. F. 10. Op. 1. D. 2932. L. 3.

⁴ Battle of Mukden – 19 February – 10 March 1905.

⁵ This branch extending 46 kilometers was laid by military railway workers of the Zamuisky railway brigade (October 1904); it passed through a coal mine up to Fushun station and was intended for the transport of coal on the Chinese Eastern Railway.

⁶ SARB. F. 10. Op. 1. D. 2932. L. 4–5.

⁷ In 1776, special Udi Province was organized as part of Irkutsk province with its center (1775–1783) in Udinsk (Verkhneudinsk, Ulan-Ude) [1, p. 12, 15]. In 1822, due to reforms being conducted in Eastern Siberia, management of the territory of Western Transbaikal was transformed into one Verkhneudinsk district, and up to 1851 Verkhneudinsk was the district city of Irkutsk province, the second largest (after Irkutsk) in Eastern Siberia. On October 22, 1851, the Trans-Baikal region was formed. [2, p. 42].

⁸ SARB. F. 101. Op. 1. D. 2. L. 103.

⁹ SARB. F. 101. Op. 1. D. 1. L. 2.

¹⁰ On March 23, 1906, the infirmary was placed at the disposal of the Verkhneudinsky local Red Cross Committee (SARB. F. 101. Op. 1. D. 1. L. 14). On February 27, 1908, the Verkhneudinsk local committee was renamed Verkhneudinsk local administration of the Red Cross (SARB. F. 101. Op. 1. D. 3. L. 83–83 ob.), which in turn became part of the Trans-Baikal local administration (SARB. F. 101. Op. 1. D. 1. L. 8.) and subordinated to the General Directorate of the Russian Red Cross society.

¹¹ The order established the position of senior staff resident of the hospital and salary, according to the Table of Ranks.

¹² SARB. F. 10. Op. 1. D. 2932. L. 6.

¹³ The Holy Cross community of the Sisters of Mercy, founded during the Crimean War (1854) by N.I. Pirogov, marked the beginning of training in Russia of this very important element of qualified health workers to care for the sick and wounded [3, p. 141].

¹⁴ SARB. F. 101. Op. 1. D. 6. L. 24. D. 7. L. 8–21.

¹⁵ At the beginning of the First World War, A.G. Leger, together with the Sisters of Mercy, went to the front. Unfortunately, his subsequent fate is unknown.

¹⁶ Note, however, that this order (No. 1979) was dated May 15, 1912.

of Mercy.¹⁷ In addition to medical and teaching activities, Legkov took an active part in the social life of the city. In 1915, he “was appointed mayor of Verkhneudinsk for four years” [4, p. 78]. By order of the Military Governor of the Trans-Baikal region dated May 1915 (No. 615), K.I. Legkov was made chief doctor of the Red Cross hospital.¹⁸ Under the leadership of Legkov a men’s private gymnasium, School of Commerce and Industry, the 2nd Higher Primary School and several primary schools were opened. He took an active part in the Board of Trustees of the girls’ school, in which he served as school doctor free of charge. He also was the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the School of Commerce and Industry and the boys’ gymnasium. He worked hard to open a girls’ vocational school in Verkhneudinsk,¹⁹ however was unable to bring this idea to fruition.

K.I. Legkov was the initiator of the organization and the opening of the infectious diseases department of the Verkhneudinsk city civil hospital, which was very critical given the difficult epidemiological situation at the time. Under him the Verkhneudinsk maternity hospital opened. The measures he took to improve the medical care of the population give witness to his professional competence, understanding of the topical issues of regional healthcare, and the practical orientation of his many and varied activities. He organized the construction of the House of Industry²⁰ and a new building for the Verkhneudinsk Hospital of the Red Cross, and took an active part in all the charity events in the city. He received state awards – orders and medals (St. Stanislav 3rd d., St. Anna 3rd d., St. Anna 2nd d., medal of the Red Cross in memory of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, a medal to commemorate the Russo-Japanese war, the silver medal “for the salvation of the lost”, a light bronze medal to commemorate 300 years of the Romanov dynasty, the Order of St. Vladimir 4th d., and the symbol 2nd d. of the Society of Aid to Soldiers Injured in War and

Their Families). He was awarded the sign of the Red Cross “for his hard work for the benefit of the Red Cross Society for the local government of Verkhneudinsk, especially manifested in the fire at the hospital on February 12, 1909”, and a “medal for the excellent implementation of the general mobilization in 1914”.²¹

On September 18, 1916, K.I. Legkov submitted a petition for dismissal from the post of head physician of the Red Cross Verkhneudinsky hospital and was called up for military service.²² He started work as a junior resident of the Berezovsky Military Hospital, which was located at the Division Station (Verkhneudinsk suburb), and from December 1916 – as a senior physician at the Cossack Army Hospital in Akshi (today the regional center of Trans-Baikal Territory). After the events of the February Revolution of 1917, K.I. Legkov, at a general meeting, was elected Chairman of the Akshinsk county executive committee, but he left for the city of Verkhneudinsk.

From April 1917, Legkov worked as senior resident at the Berezovsk Military Hospital and at the same time was the chief physician at the Verkhneudinsk Hospital of the Red Cross. In February 1918, he became a doctor at the Verkhneudinsk cooperative, and in September 1918, he was again called up for military service, and worked at the Berezovsk Military Hospital.

Legkov took the side of the revolutionaries changes. In 1918, he was chairman of the Verkhneudinsk health congress. He was appointed chairman of the Verkhneudinsk county medical executive committee, and then – representative of the medical units of the Red Army.

In early September 1918, the Soviet regime was overthrown in the Trans-Baikal region [5, p. 4]. A fierce struggle began against counter-revolutionary and foreign intervention. The well-armed Japanese army, US troops, and the rebellious Czechoslovak Corps were in the Far East. The Soviet government had to take into account the complexity of the situation in the east of the country, the threat of attack by the Polish gentry, and Denikin’s army located in Crimea, aided by Britain, France, and the US. Continued fighting in the east threatened the outbreak of war with

¹⁷ SARB. F.10. Op. 1. D. 2932. L. 8.

¹⁸ SARB. F.10. Op. 1. D. 2932. L. 9.

¹⁹ In the women’s vocational education system at the beginning of the twentieth century these schools prepared workers of various industries (including nurses), but they were very few.

²⁰ During the First World War, typhus barracks were located in this building.

²¹ SARB. F. 10. Op. 1. D. 2932. L. 2-3.

²² SARB. F. 10. Op. 1. D. 2932. L. 11.

Japan. With this in mind, the Soviet government decided to abandon the immediate Sovietization of the Far East and undertake the creation of a buffer state there. In March 1920, the Red Army entered Verkhneudinsk. Opened on March 28, 1920, the founding congress of the workers of the Baikal region on April 6, 1920 addressed all the governments and peoples of the world with the declaration of the formation of the independent democratic Republic of the Far East (RFE) [6, p. 140, 145]. On May 14, 1920, Soviet Russia officially recognized the RFE and from the beginning it provided financial, diplomatic, economic and military aid. Verkhneudinsk became the capital of RFE, and in October 1920, after the liberation of Western Trans-Baikal from the Semenov troops, Chita became the capital [7, p. 38].

After the formation of the RFE, Legkov was appointed head of the Baikal district health administration. On April 22, 1920, a branch of the health administration of the Trans-Baikal region was reorganized into the district department of health (later renamed the Regional Health Administration – Oblzdravotdel).²³ Order No. 17 of the Ministry of Health of the RFE dated 26 May 1920 stated: “Doctor Konstantin Legkov is relieved of his responsibilities as head of the Baikal health administration as of this date. Health Minister RFE Petrov”.²⁴ Legkov was sent to the Chita front as the division doctor.

K.I. Legkov was a participant in the administrative Congress in Verkhneudinsk created in August 1920 by the Ministry of Health of the RFE. After the Red Army liberated Chita, he was transferred to the post of head physician of the Berezovsk Military Hospital (November 17, 1920).²⁵ In 1921, Legkov was chairman of the medical-administrative Congress convened in Chita on the initiative of the Ministry of Health of the RFE.

On March 21, 1921, K.I. Legkov was appointed head of the Verkhneudinsk district evacuation administration. On September 2, 1921, he became authorized by the Ministry of Health RFE to be responsible for maintaining the medi-

cal property of the pharmacy base of the Central Warehouse, located in Verkhneudinsk. “For the purpose of determining the supplies on hand at the pharmacy base a commission is appointed composed of: Chairman Doctor K.I. Legkov and members – Doctor G.M. Berlinsky, a pharmacist appointed by Oblzdrav and one from Nachevak”. Work shall be carried out on an urgent basis, with the sending by telegraph of three-day summaries of the amount of property received. Signature, deputy Minister G.A. Levinson”.

On October 8, 1921, there was a meeting of specialists of the Ministry of Health of the RFE.²⁶ At that meeting, Legkov made a report “On the Verkhneudinsk district evacuation administration”. Here is a fragment from the report: “Under the jurisdiction of the Verkhneudinsk evacuation administration, residing in the village of Nizhne-Berezovka of the Baikal region, there were and are the following five garrisons: Nizhne-Berezovka, Verkhneudinsk, Troitskosavsk, Petrovsko-zavodsk and Barguzinsk (*part of present-day Buryatia and the Trans-Baikal Territory - . Note S.B.*).

All special medical and healthcare tasks were fulfilled with the help of: 1) two major medical institutions – Berezovsk Military Class III hospital and Verkhneudinsky local surgical hospital and the Hospital distributor, located in Nizhne-Berezovka; 2) using 4 garrison outpatient clinics – Nizhne-Berezovsk (at the hospital), Verkhneudinsk, Troitskosavsk and Barguzinskaya; 3) 5 police stations with combat and other units; 4) with the help of the Barak receiver station at Verkhneudinsk.

The Berezovsk Military Hospital, designed to accommodate 1160 beds, is located in the village of Nizhne-Berezovka at the Division station. It has the following departments: therapeutic, surgical, dermatological and venereal, ophthalmic, aural, infectious diseases, and for those under arrest. It is located in 18 huge single-storey wooden barracks. The floors are asphalt, the walls plastered. Lighting for the hospital is provided by electricity from the garrison power station. A chemical and bacteriological laboratory is also in operation.

The local surgical hospital (Verkhneudinsk) was a building built in 1909-1910 at the expense of the Red Cross and the late Empress Alexandra Feodorovna for the local hospital of the Red

²³ On November 22, 1920, by a resolution of the Government of the RFE and the Trans-Baikal region the Pribaikalskaya region was detached with its center in Verkhneudinsk [7, p. 40-43].

²⁴ SARB. F.R-92. Op. 2. D. 5. L. 47.

²⁵ State Archive of the Trans-Baikal Territory (SATT) F. R – 1144. Op. 1. D. 3. L. 1.

²⁶ SATT. F. R – 1144. Op. 1. D. 22. L. 2.

Cross. The building was planned in accordance with the requirements of the clinic, equipped with running water, flush toilets and bathrooms. Water was obtained from a well by means of an electric pump. It had electric lighting, an X-ray room, a very good chemical and bacteriological laboratory, as well as an operating room. The infirmary was designed for 100 beds, and was currently deployed for 80 beds. All the above medical institutions during the first 8 months of 1921 did the following work: 104,340 sick days were registered; 161 major operations and 22 minor ones were conducted; 22,530 patients were treated on an outpatient basis. In total, there were 1088 people of the first category evacuated, along with 22,234 others”.²⁷

In November 1921, K.I. Legkov was transferred to the post of Head of the Trans-Baikal Military-Health District.²⁸ In May 1922, he was appointed Assistant Head of the Main Military Medical Administration of the People's Revolutionary Army (PRA), and in November, upon the merging of it with units of the 5th Red Army – assistant to the head of the medical unit of the renamed 5th Red Banner Army. While in Chita, Legkov took an active part in the organization of medical aid to the local population. He was also editor of the periodical health journal “*Zdorove krasnoarmeysa*” (“*Red Army Soldier Health*”) and the medical journal of the Trans-Baikal Medical Association.²⁹ In November 1922, the first issue of this magazine came out [9, p. 224], and in it there was an article by K.I. Legkov, “*Плоды народной темноты*” (“*The Fruits of Folk Darkness*”). (Later he wrote a number of articles of a scientific and sanitary-hygienic nature.) In the preface of the members of the editorial board to the first issue it stated: “Eight years of war, destruction and hostility has led science to silence. Young doctors who have completed study in such circumstances, because of the conditions, have not been able to supplement their knowledge, and older doctors

are living on memories of past experience. By founding “*Meditsinsky zhurnal*” (“*Medical Journal*”), we cherish the hope of it providing an opportunity to help the more experienced to share their experiences with younger and less trained colleagues”[8].

The years of the Civil War brought new themes and new concerns to the Trans-Baikal Medical Association. The main issue was the fight against infectious diseases. In 1921, during an epidemic of plague in Manchuria and Trans-Baikal, K.I. Legkov released a special brochure and a leaflet about the disease. The fight against it was complicated by the fact that the RFE did not have enough doctors and material resources. The Trans-Baikal Medical Association for the provision of financial assistance to the families of colleagues who died in the fight against the epidemic was created by a special commission to organize an aid fund. On February 6, 1922, the Head of the Department of Health of the RFE, D.M. Mukhortov, reported that during 1921, 17 doctors were killed in the republic.³⁰ This was a huge loss (especially with a deficit of specialist graduates). In 1922, K.I. Legkov headed the anti-plague detachment in the village of Kharanor (Chita region). Working conditions were extremely difficult, and the possibility of infection was so great that Dr. Legkov, assistant physician Pavlov, and medic Rodygin conducted examination of material brought in in complete isolation [10, p. 48]. The anti-plague team, having fulfilled its task, returned safely to Chita. On the Chita front K.I. Legkov organized and conducted courses for nurses. In 1922–1923, in Chita he opened “continuing education” courses for military paramedics and nurses of the Sisters of Mercy Hospital, because he understood that the quality of medical service depended on periodic professional supplemental education.

K.I. Legkov went to eastern Russia with the Red Army units. In June 1923, he was discharged in Vladivostok. He participated in hostilities against the White Army, and was personally acquainted with V.K. Blucher. On the recommendation of the commander, I.P. Uborevych, he was appointed chief physician of the Primorskaya provincial hospital. In this position, Legkov took an active part in the organization of public health care to the local population. An impor-

²⁷ SATT. F. R – 1144. Op. 1. D. 24. L. 2.

²⁸ SATT. F. R–1144. Op. 1. D. 3. L. 65.

²⁹ The Trans-Baikal Medical Association was created in Chita on January 14, 1893 [8]. Its purpose, according to the charter, was to study the health and epidemic situation of the Trans-Baikal region, as well as the preparation of medical topography and health field maps of the region, assist the local administration in building rural medical facilities, and healthcare and educational activities [9, p. 220].

³⁰ SATT. F. R –181. Op. 1. D. 9. L. 74.

tant problem at that time remained a shortage of qualified professionals in the field. At the end of 1923, Legkov participated in the creation and opening of a first aid/obstetric college, was a lecturer in the departments of diagnostics, clinical pathology and therapy. He was also elected to the Bureau of the medical section of Medsantrud. In the same year, he created “continuing education” courses for nurses at the Primorskaya provincial hospital, which operated successfully until 1926. From 1925, Legkov, on behalf of the medical section of Medsantrud, organized healthcare and medical-diagnostic events for the Young Pioneers.

In 1937, K.I. Legkov retired. He continued to live and work in Vladivostok, and was on the military register of Primorsky Oblvoenkomata (regional military registration and enlistment office). In his military card there are regular notations that he continued military registrations. The last entry was made February 8, 1938: “Removed from registry due to old age”.

At that time he was 61 years old. In 1938, Konstantin Ivanovich worked as chief physician at Vodzdrava. On July 15, 1938, he was arrested by the Primorsky Regional Office of the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs: “...Being hostile to the Soviet system, he conducted treasonous espionage activities for the benefit of Nazi Germany...” In accordance with the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, the offense was qualified under Art. 58-1a (treason: punishable by shooting, with confiscation of property, or 10 years imprisonment with confiscation of property). K.I. Legkov was held in custody in the Vladivostok prison. On November 21, 1938, the Military Court of the Pacific Fleet (PF), in a closed court session, found that “the accused Legkov in May 1936 established a relationship with a representative of a foreign consulate in Vladivostok, and began to visit the apartment of the latter. Being hostile to the Soviet power, Legkov, in the month of December 1936, agreed to conduct espionage work for a foreign government”.³¹ K.I. Legkov was sentenced to capital punishment – shooting, with confiscation of personal property. The Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR, having considered on March 11, 1939 the appeal

³¹ Archival information certificate of the FSB in the Primorsky Territory dated 08.07.2014 № 78/14/17.

of K.I. Legkov of the verdict of the Military Court of the Pacific Fleet dated November 21, 1938, made the following determination: “... Not seeing under the circumstances of the case the need for execution of the convicted Legkov, we change the sentence to 15 years of imprisonment in a correctional labor camp, with deprivation of political rights for 5 years, and with confiscation of all property privately owned by him”.³²

The exact date of the return of K.I. Legkov from the camp is unknown. His daughter, Tatiana Konstantinovna Drokina, recalled: “Father returned to me in 1954. He was already 77 years old. He worked in the logging camp in Taishet. His health was poor. We lived together happily, but he died in 1958. He was buried in the town cemetery in Ulan-Ude. Father never told me for what actions he was sent to prison”.³³ It is possible that Legkov, understanding the current political situation in the country and wishing to protect his loved ones, did not tell the true reasons for his arrest. According to the head of the therapy department of the Regional Hospital Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in Verkhneudinsk (Ulan-Ude) M.V. Tang,³⁴ Legkov returned home from Magadan.

On June 11, 1955, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR, reviewing the materials of the investigation file, determined: “the sentence of the Military Court of the Pacific Fleet dated 21 November 1938, and the determination of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court dated 11 March 1939 in respect of Legkov Konstantin Ivanovich is cancelled and the case closed for failure to prove the charges ..., K.I. Legkov is to be released from custody”.³⁵

K.I. Legkov died in 1958, and was buried in the town cemetery in Ulan-Ude.

Doctor K.I. Legkov, combat veteran, took an active part in the organization of medical care in Verkhneudinsk. He was instrumental in the opening of the infectious diseases department of the Civil Hospital, and the maternity clinic. He devoted particular attention to the training

³² Archival information certificate of the FSB in the Primorsky Territory dated 08.07.2014 № 78/14/17.

³³ Personal archive of the author of the article.

³⁴ SARB. F. R– 1778. Op. 1. D. 38. L. 246.

³⁵ Archival information certificate of the FSB in the Primorsky Territory dated 08.07.2014 № 78/14/17.

of nurses. K.I. Legkov considered it a priority to improve general and specialized medical education, contributing to improvement of the quality of medical care for the population. The measures he took contributed to reducing tensions regarding epidemics, and reducing maternal and child mortality in the region. Legkov supported the opening of schools and gymnasia, and courses allowing the acquisition of professional working skills. He participated in the work of the Trans-Baikal Medical Association, and is

the author of many publications in its medical periodical. During the military operations in the east (1920–1923), he was one of the coordinators of the Baikal District Health Department, evacuation administration, hospitals, military units and health monitoring of the army. In all spheres of activity, both civil and military, K.I. Legkov was distinguished by his perseverance and professionalism. He made a significant contribution to the healthcare development of the Trans-Baikal region.

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