

THE US ARMY AND ITS POSTAL SERVICE ABROAD DURING WORLD WAR II

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Army Censorship

Censor Devices Standard for Certain Areas
Australia (and New Guinea)



U.S. Army Examiner

U.S. Censor

Opened by U.S. Censor

OPENED BY U.S. CENSOR

AFTER 5 DAYS, RETURN TO

Paul E. Phillips 131763 84

A.P.O. 24

San Francisco

4. Col. Ward W. Roney 0235727
My base Sec. 4
A.P.O. 924.

EXAMINED BY
BASE CENSOR

470-726163
Bomb Sq. (H)
20-928 To Postmaster
San Francisco, Calif.

U.S.A.F.I.A.
40
PASSED BY CENSOR

Mail Free
AMERICAN BASE FORCES
DEC 20 1942

Hendricks
Division
Master,
Michigan.

Mrs. Virgil J. Harris Jr.
1436 Chestnut Street
San Francisco
California

US Army Forces in Australia used several types of locally produced censor tapes. Unlike the locally produced handstamps, which gave way to standard handstamps in 1943, local tape usage is recorded into late-1944 is recorded. These tapes are also found on mail from New Guinea (which may have been taken to Australia for censorship).

APO 703, Milne Bay, New Guinea. APO 24, Rockhampton, Australia.. APO 924, Melbourne, Australia. APO 928, Milne Bay, New Guinea.

Army Censorship

Censor Devices Standard for Certain Areas
Hawaii (et al.)

Pvt. Joseph T. Komperda, ASN33142819,
Hq. Btry., 24th Div. Arty.,
APO #957, c/o Postmaster,
San Francisco, Calif.



Likely mailed between 23
December 1941 and mid-
January 1942 based on rate
and lack of postmark dial (a
security measure).



AIR MAIL

Earl B. Clark, Chaplain,
251 C.A. A.P.O. 913,
% P.M. S.F. California.

Mr. Fr
K
Pr
Me



Pres. (Omaha) Theological Seminary,
21st and Lothrop Streets,
Omaha, Nebraska.

Cpl. Thomas Olszanowski
A.S.N. 330513928
58th Bomb. Sqdn. (L)
A.P.O. 914 % Postmaster
San Francisco Calif.



Miss W. Domzalska
2336 C. Harris St
Philadelphia
Penna.

No objection matter

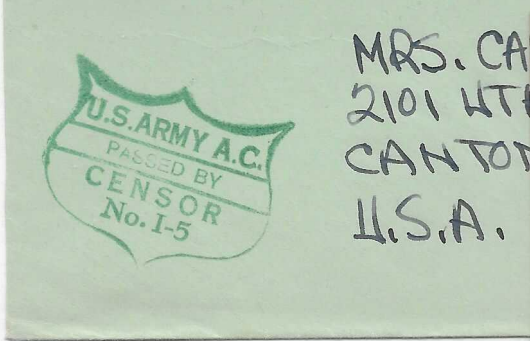
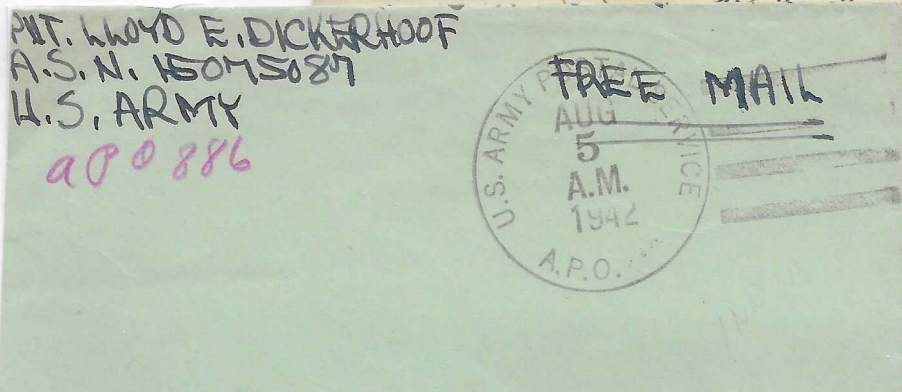
Charles & Ruby 2nd 2A, 95.

The double circle handstamp shown above was the standard unit censor device for Army troops in the Hawaiian Islands from early January through late 1942. It was also used by Army units in Fiji, Canton Island and Christmas Island.

APO 957, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. APO 913, Nadi Airbase, Fiji. APO 914, Canton Island.

Army Censorship

Censor Devices Standard for Certain Areas
Canal Zone, India, New Caledonia

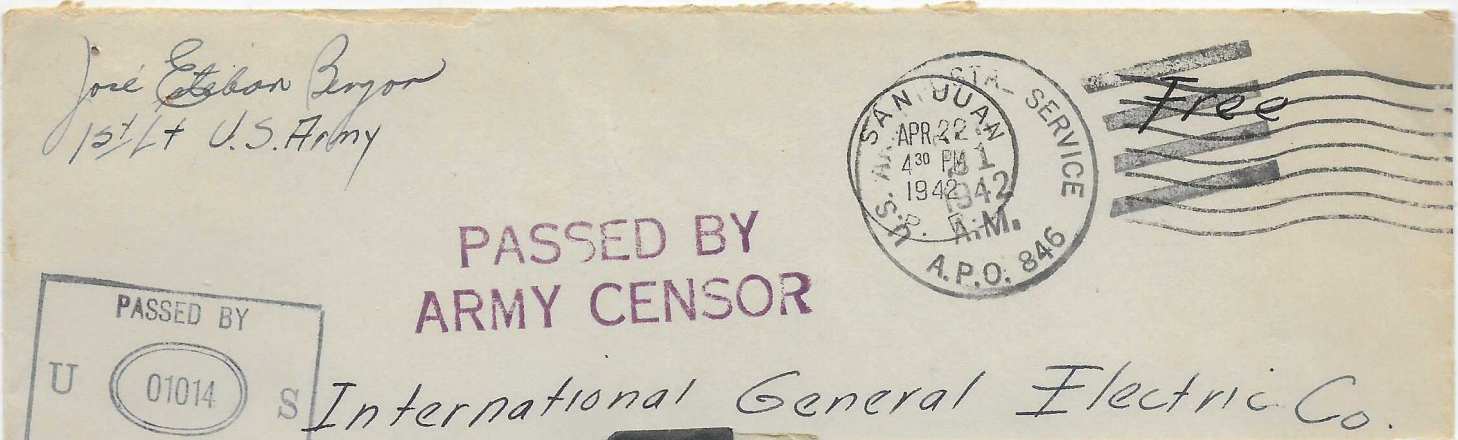


US Army troops in the Canal Zone used a single type of censor handstamp. For reasons unknown, each had part of the frame trimmed off. Several varieties of shield censors were used by US Army units in India. (The A.C. in the handstamp above stands for Air Corps.) Task Force 6814 brought with it to New Caledonia "Force Censor" handstamps, numbers 1 through 8.

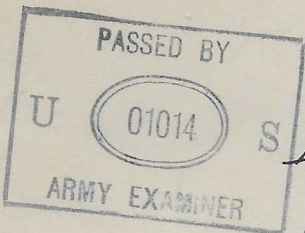
Ft. Clayton civilian post office. APO 886, Karachi, India (APO number required in return address apparently supplied by postal clerk). APO 502, Noumea, New Caledonia.

Army Censorship

Censor Devices Standard for Certain Areas
Puerto Rico



PASSED BY
ARMY CENSOR



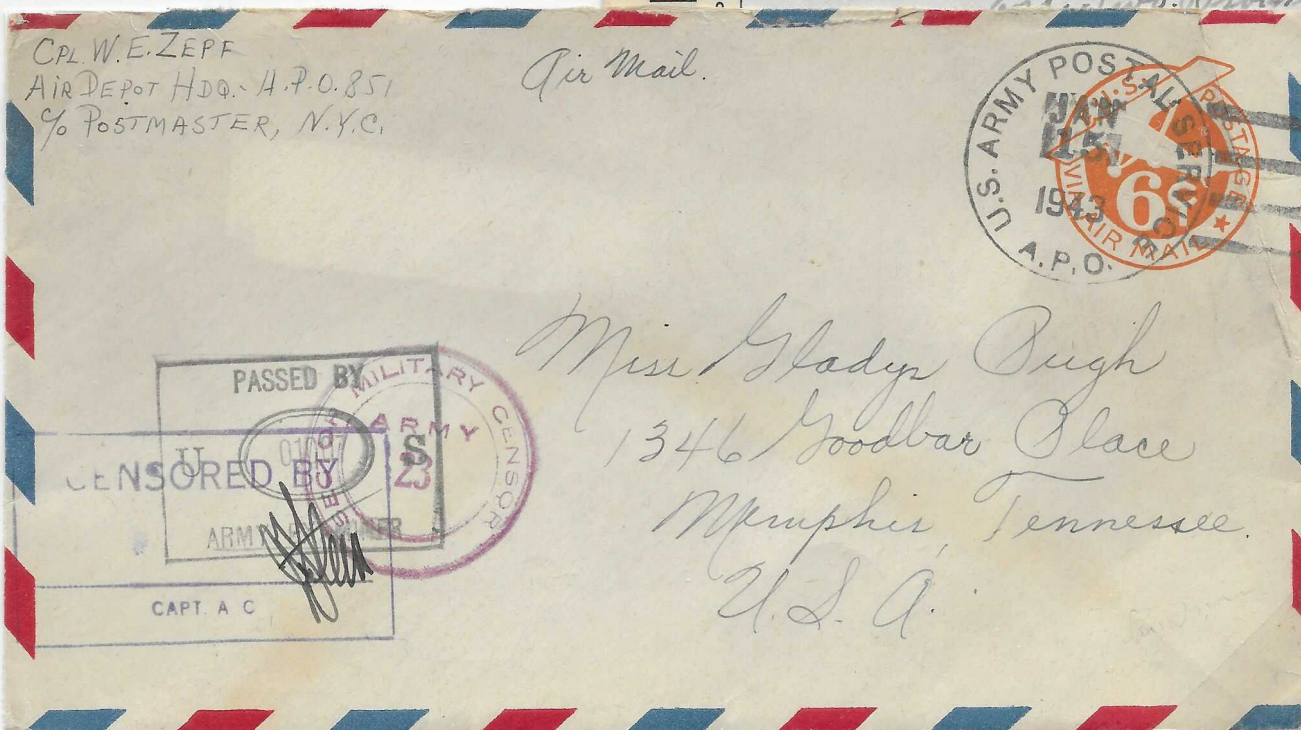
International General Electric Co.

83 Solva

San Ju

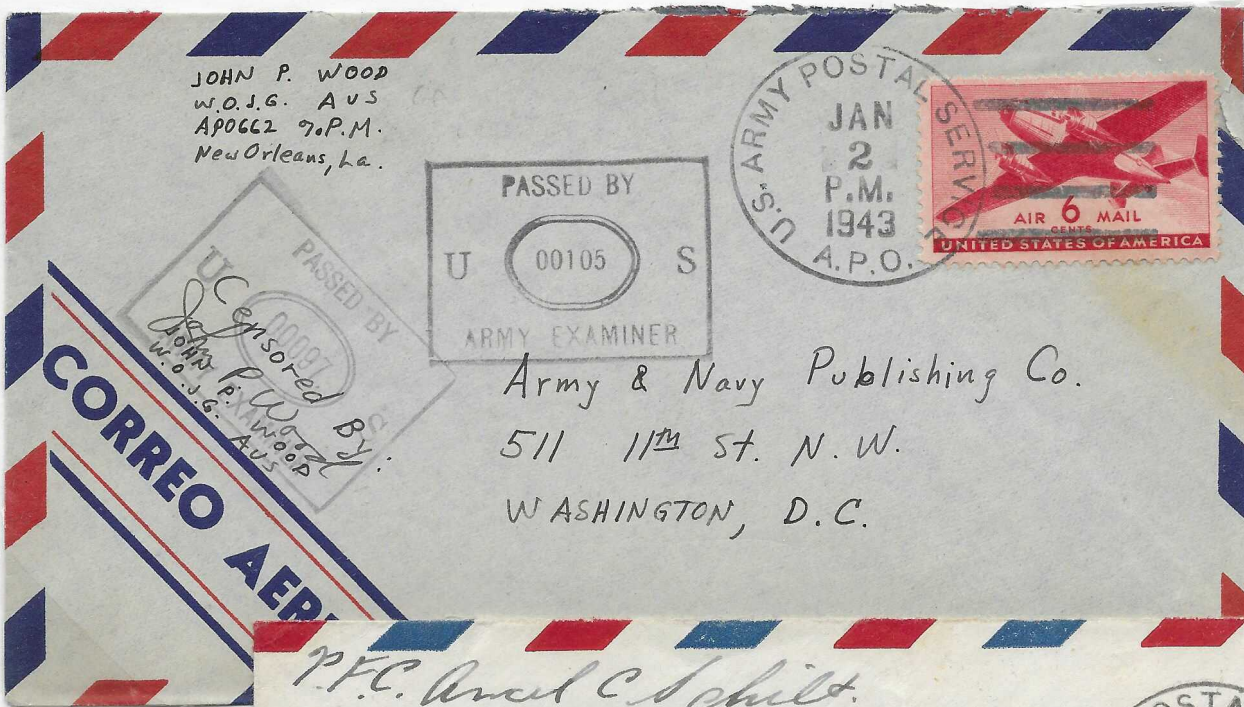


INNER NO. 6

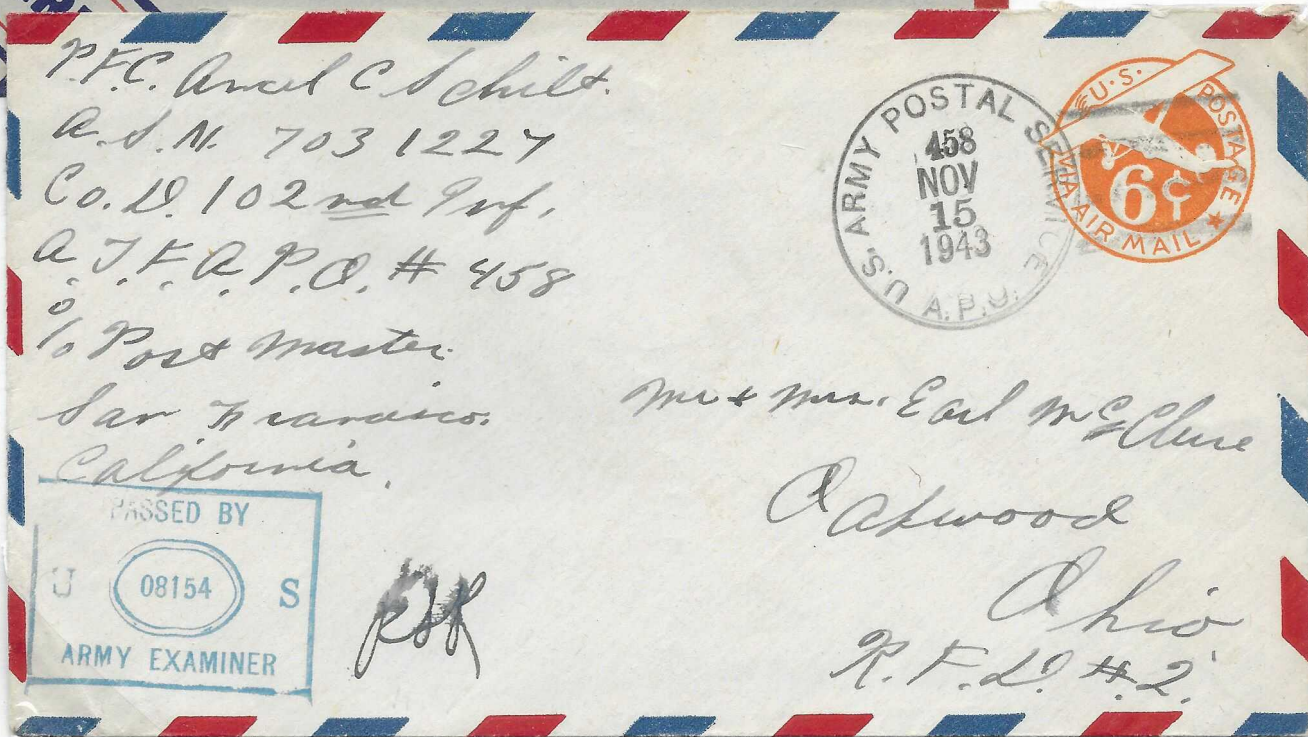


Puerto Rico used a variety of handstamps even, as shown here, after the racetrack censor handstamps became available.

APO 846, Ft. Buchanan. APO 847, Henry Barracks. APO 851, Ft. Brooke.



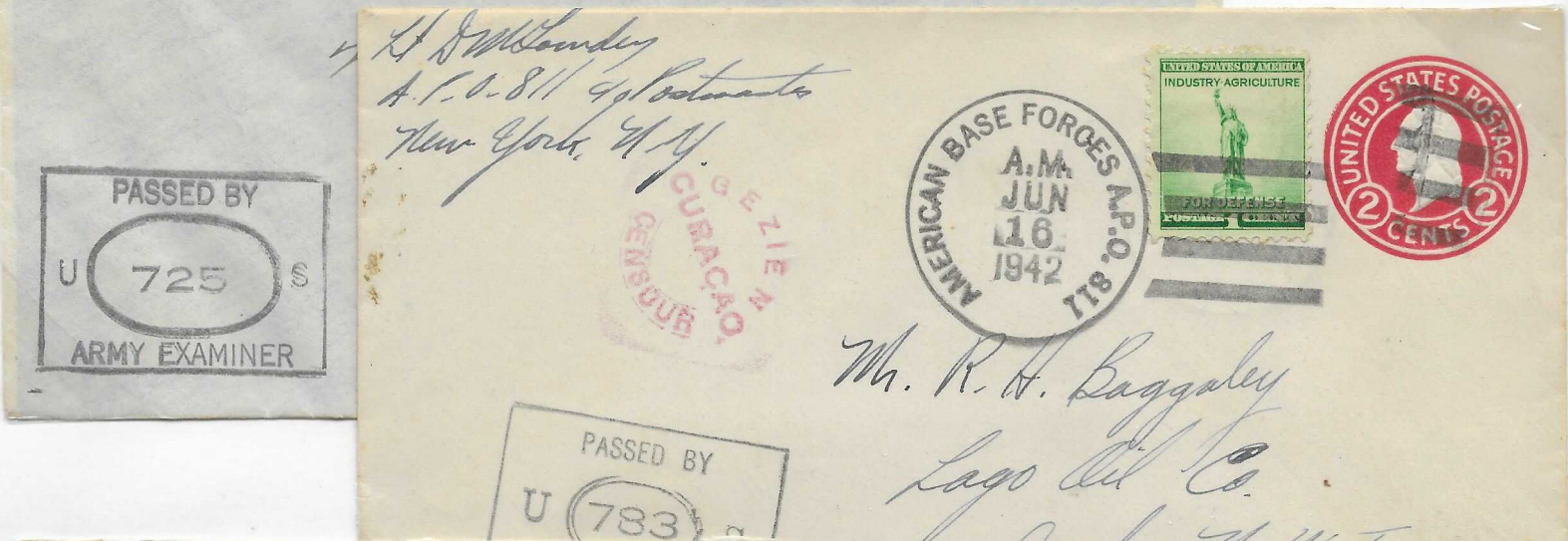
APO 662, Galapagos Island, Ecuador (the presence of 2 different unit censor handstamps on one cover is unusual).



APO 458, Palmyra Island (open 6 months only; scarce).

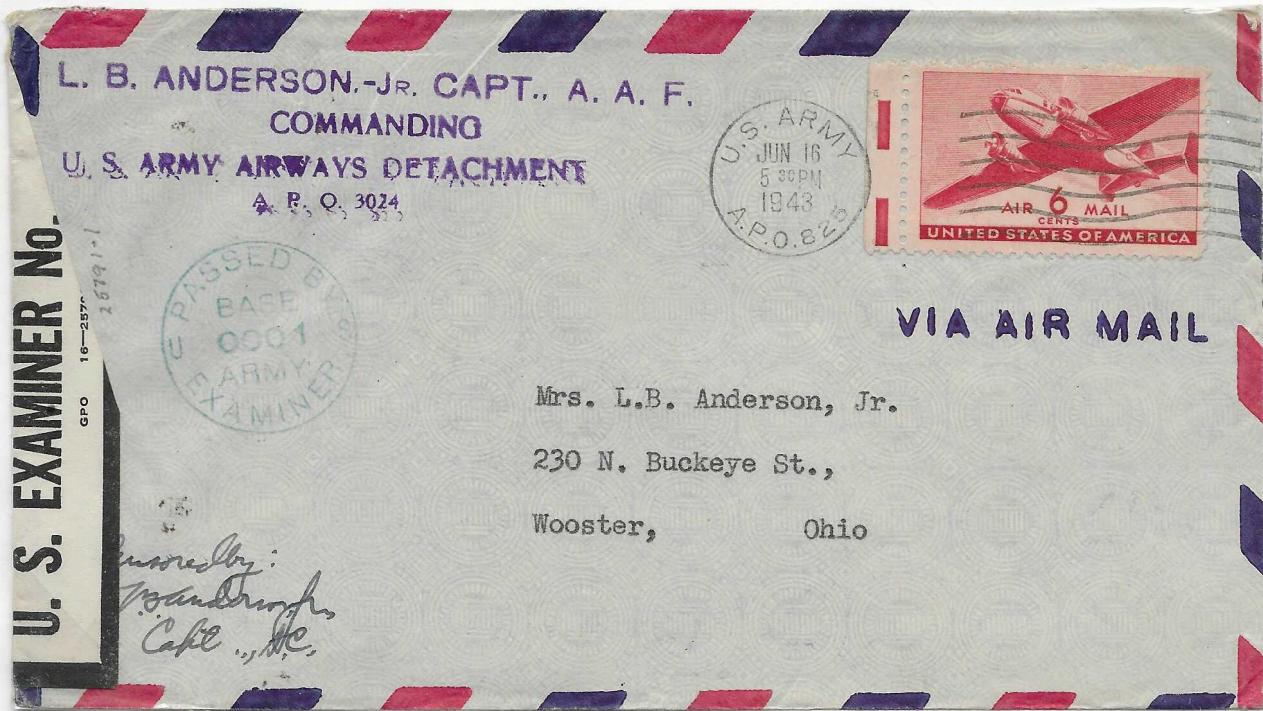
Most Army censorship was carried out by unit censors -- usually a junior officer within the unit, but occasionally a Chaplain or even an officer patient at a hospital, etc. The procedure was to have the unit censor indicate his approval of the contents by signing his name rank on the cover, at which point the cover would be passed to the holder of the unit censorship handstamp for handstamping. Thus, one censor number may appear over various signatures.

The standard army unit censor handstamp employed a "racetrack" design (for the -- usually -- oval in the center. As will be seen on this and the following 2 pages, there was considerable variation within this basic design. Most of the handstamps used were of the patterns shown on this page.



APO 876. Las Piedras, Venezuela (scarce APO). APO 811, Aruba, Netherlands West Indies. APO 868. Port of Spain, Trinidad.

The large-oval, low-number varieties nearly all occur in early US bases, mainly in the Caribbean. There are very few "#-A" handstamps. These may represent replacements for lost or damaged handstamps. Use of a unit censor handstamp to seal a censor tape is very unusual.

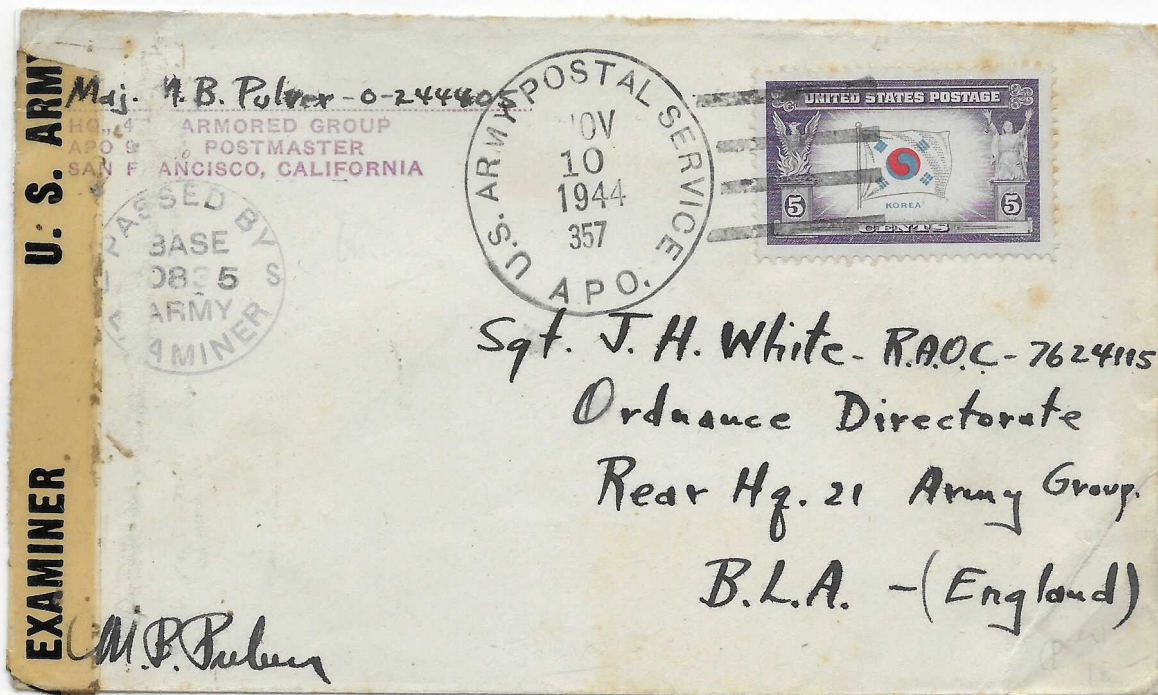


APO 825, Albrook Field, Canal Zone (cover from APO 3024, Mailing Address Only -- i.e., no postmark or fiscal facilities -- APO for Managua, Nicaragua).



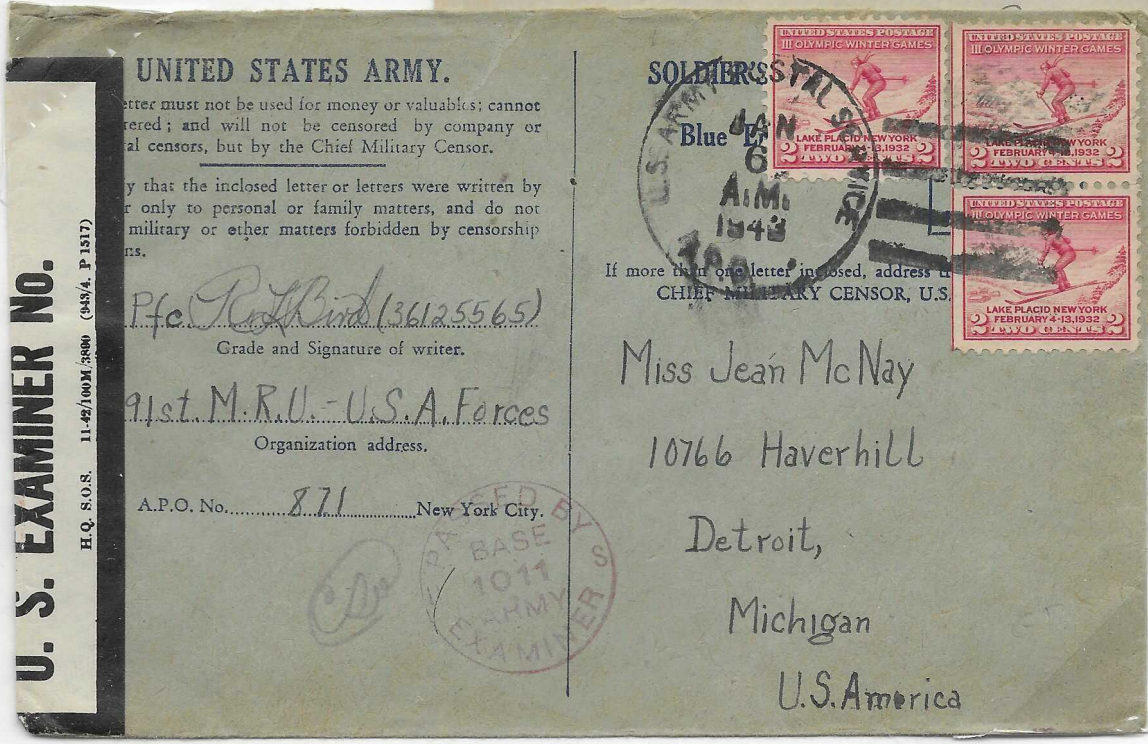
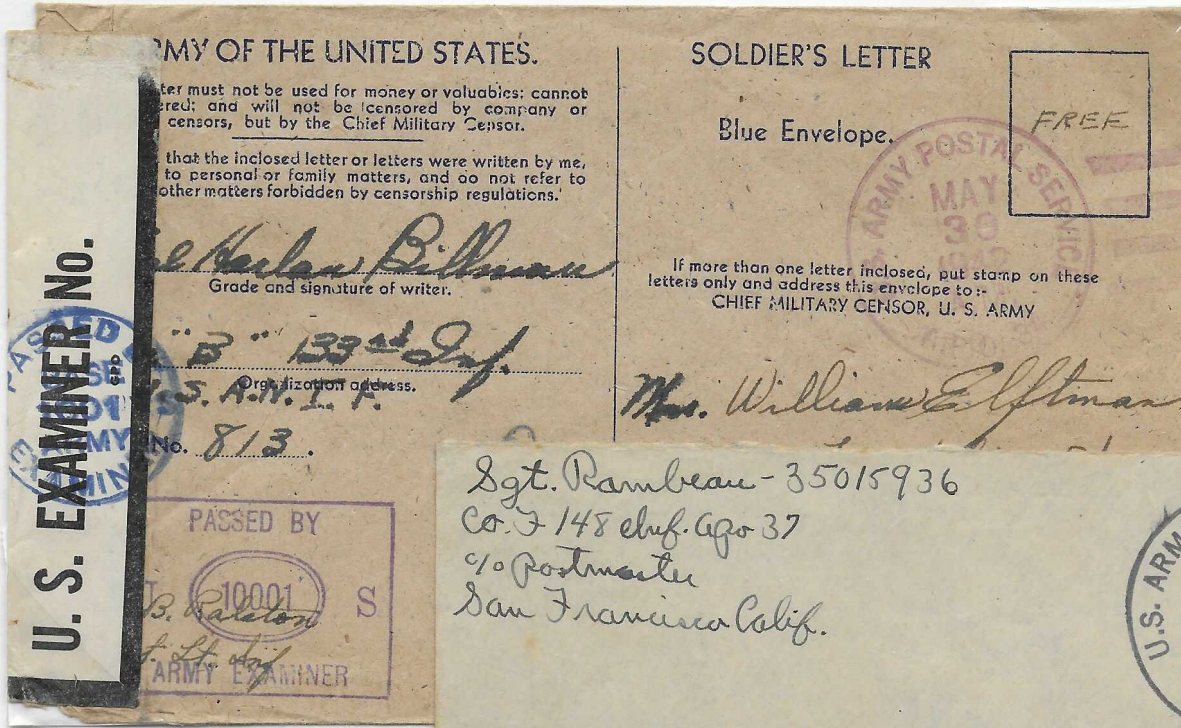
APO 772, Marseille, France (Undoubtedly a collection point for APO mail to/from Poland -- though APO 777, Vienna is more logical, and the sender may have copied his return address incorrectly -- as no US APO operated in Poland during or after WWII. Cover back-stamped Warsaw and with Polish censorship, addressed to Jugoslavia.)

Base Examiners handled mail that was not censored at the unit level (either because of lack of language facility or the sender's desire not to have it unit-censored). The handstamp design shown at top above was used throughout the world. Only one sub-type, shown on the lower cover, is recorded.



There were 2 standard types of US Army Examiner tapes used during World War II. The cellophane tape appears to have replaced the paper tapes in mid-1943. Nearly all Army censor tapes were applied by base censors.

APO 856, Ft. Bell, Bermuda. (Bermuda is unusual in its application of manuscript numbers to the examiner tapes). APO 357, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.



No sub-types of the cellophane tape have been recorded, but there are at least 3 sub-types of the paper tapes, based on the printing information (bottom line of text).

APO 813, Belfast, Northern Ireland. APO 37, Mboutini, Fiji. APO 871, Cheltenham Park, England.

Army Censorship

Specialized Handstamps
Directional Handstamps

Major C. L. Lancaster
530th Quartermaster Group
Delta Base Section
APO 772, % Postmaster, N.Y.



RETURN TO SENDER
By request of CENSOR

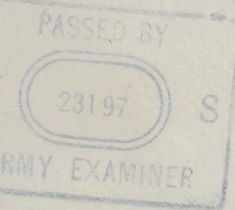
Mr. Charley Steele
Dutch Kitchen
Puerto Gorda
Florida

C. L. Lancaster

S/Sgt. Wm. A. V
73rd. Ord. Depo
APO 465 c/o PM

AIR -MAIL

RETURN FOR
CENSORSHIP



Mr. and Mrs. L.B. Wallen
126 S. 8th. St.
Philadelphia
Penna.
U.S.A.



Hq 101st at N Rept

Apo 502 % Post master

SAN FRANCISCO CALI

Opened by U.S. C

STAMPS REMOVED BY CENSOR
MPS REMOVED BY CENSOR

APO 772
Marseille, France.
APO 465, Calcutta,
India. Plus un-
known APO in
Australia (no return
address.)

Probably because censorship regulations were so thoroughly drilled into the enlisted personnel (and the junior officers who had to enforce them), instructional markings are very seldom encountered.

U. S. EXAMINER NO.

ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES.

Letter must not be used for money or valuables; cannot be registered; and will not be censored by company or organizational censors, but by the Chief Military Censor.

I certify that the inclosed letter or letters were written by me, and refer only to personal or family matters, and do not refer to other matters forbidden by censorship regulations.

Mark V. Woodman
Grade and signature of writer.

53rd Am. Bn.
Organization address.

No. 887

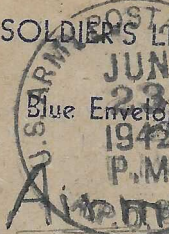


OPENED BY

SOLDIER'S LETTER

Blue Envelope

If more than one letter inclosed, put stamp on these letters only and address this envelope to:-
CHIEF MILITARY CENSOR, U. S. ARMY



"Blue Envelopes" (which were not necessarily blue) were issued for troops who did not wish to have their mail read by someone in their unit. They are almost exclusively used in the United Kingdom and, after D-Day, continental Europe.

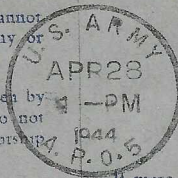
UNITED STATES ARMY.

SOLDIER'S LETTER.

This letter must not be used for money or valuables; cannot be registered; and will not be censored by company or organizational censors, but by the Chief Military Censor.

I certify that the inclosed letter or letters were written by me, and refer only to personal or family matters, and do not refer to military or other matters forbidden by censorship regulations.

Sgt Paul Rene 15014385
Grade and Signature of writer.



Blue Envelope.



If more than one letter inclosed, address this envelope to:-
CHIEF MILITARY CENSOR, U.S. ARMY.

OPENED BY

UNITED STATES ARMY.

Letter must not be used for money or valuables; cannot be registered; and will not be censored by company or organizational censors, but by the Chief Military Censor.

I certify that the inclosed letter or letters were written by me, and refer only to personal or family matters, and do not refer to other matters forbidden by censorship regulations.

W. Joseph A. Mooney
Grade and signature of writer.

471st Bn.
Organization address.

A.P.O. No. 645



SOLDIER'S LETTER.

Blue Envelope.

If more than one letter inclosed, address this envelope to:-
CHIEF MILITARY CENSOR, U.S. ARMY

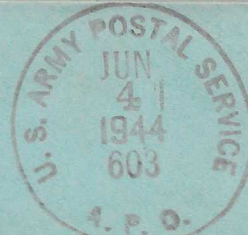


BLUE ENVELOPE MAIL
ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES

This envelope must not be used for money or valuables; cannot be registered and will not be censored by unit censors but by the Chief Base Censor. A SEPARATE ENVELOPE MUST BE USED FOR EACH LETTER.

I certify that the enclosed letter was written by me, refers only to personal or family matters, and does not refer to military or other matter forbidden by censorship regulations.

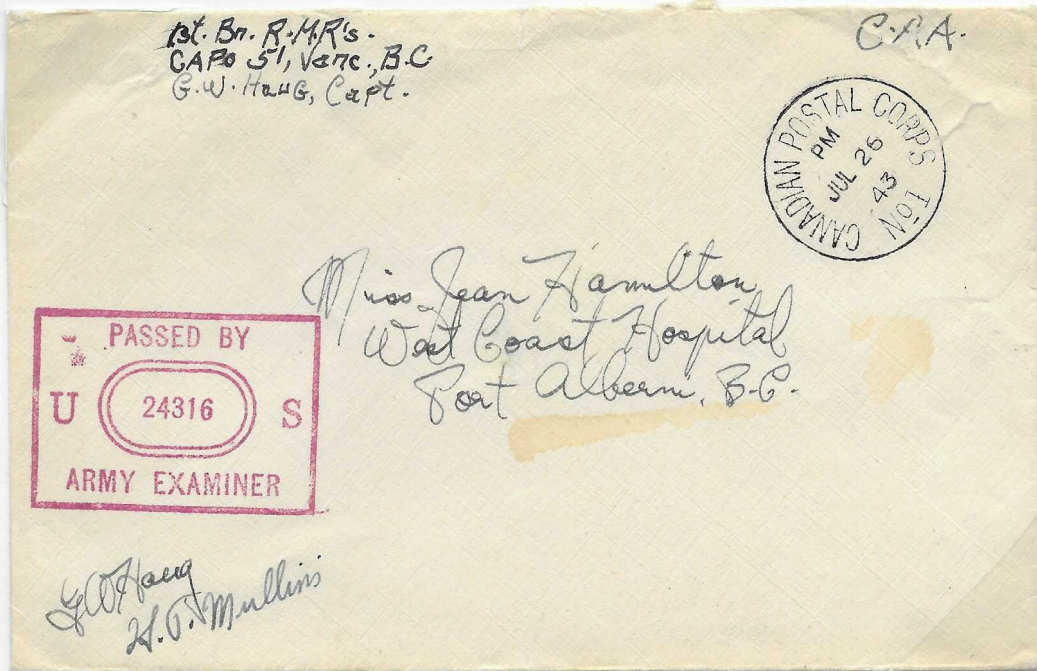
Sgt Bl Steinberger
(Grade) (Name)
44423905 (Serial number)
Miami Fla (Organization)
A.P.O. No. % Postmaster



ADDRESS

*St John J. Benson
Lhas Station.*

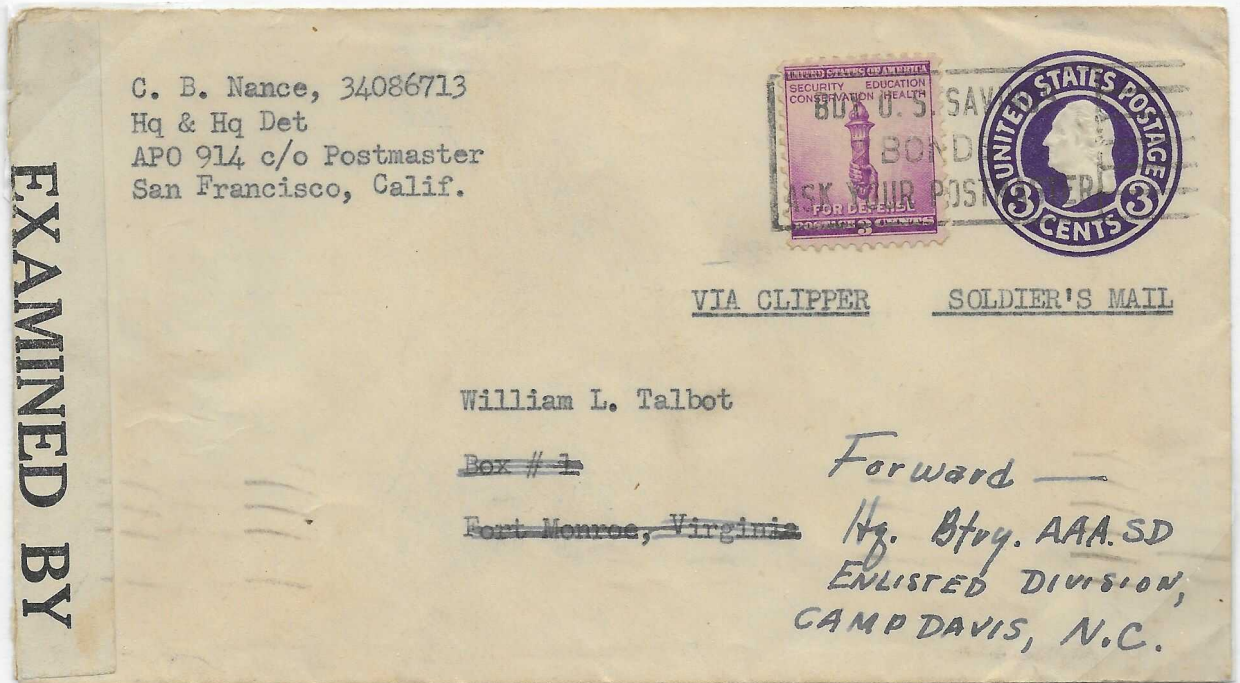
APO 887, London, England.
APO 5, Newcastle, Northern Ireland.
APO 645, Silvenham, England.
APO 603, Belem, Brazil.



US Army unit censor handstamps do not usually occur on the mail of foreign forces serving under US command. Canadian Army troops serving in Alaska in conjunction with the counterattack against the Japanese in the Aleutian Islands provide the exception.

When the volume of mail exceeded local Army censorship capabilities, the excess was bagged and sent to the US for examination at Office of Censorship stations. Cover from APO 914 (Canton Island) backstamped 6 June 1942. Enclosed letter makes it clear that writer has been at this location for some time, so not a case of in-transit mailing.

EXAMINED BY



DO YOU KNOW?

- When planes are hard-pressed for space, regular air mail is held up until later, or sent by ship. V-Mail always flies.
- 43,000 V-Mail letters will fit into a bag that holds only 300 regular letters.
- 1,800 V-Mail letters on microfilm can fit into a space the size of a cigarette pack.
- 1,000 ordinary letters weigh 22 pounds; 1,000 V-Mail letters weigh only 4 ounces.
- A V-Mail form has space for 200 to 250 handwritten words, about 500 typewritten words.
- Over 750,000,000 V-Mail letters have been handled since this special service was started.
- One plane can carry as many letters written the V-Mail way as would fill 49 planes, if written for air mail.
- A letter mailed in a Midwest town, an East Coast city, or a Texan hamlet may travel 15,000 miles to reach a man in a distant overseas theater.
- Equipment to reproduce V-Mail letters went into Tarawa with the second wave of assault troops. Eniwetok and Kwajalein became V-Mail depots within a day and a half of American action.

LB-X-71-RPB-12-15-44-5M



How YOU Can Help the Mail Go Thru ...

American mails always go through — but in time of war, many unpredictable factors delay them. Troop movements, secret fleet operations, and the constant shifting of all types of military activities in this vast global war are factors that cause mail delay.

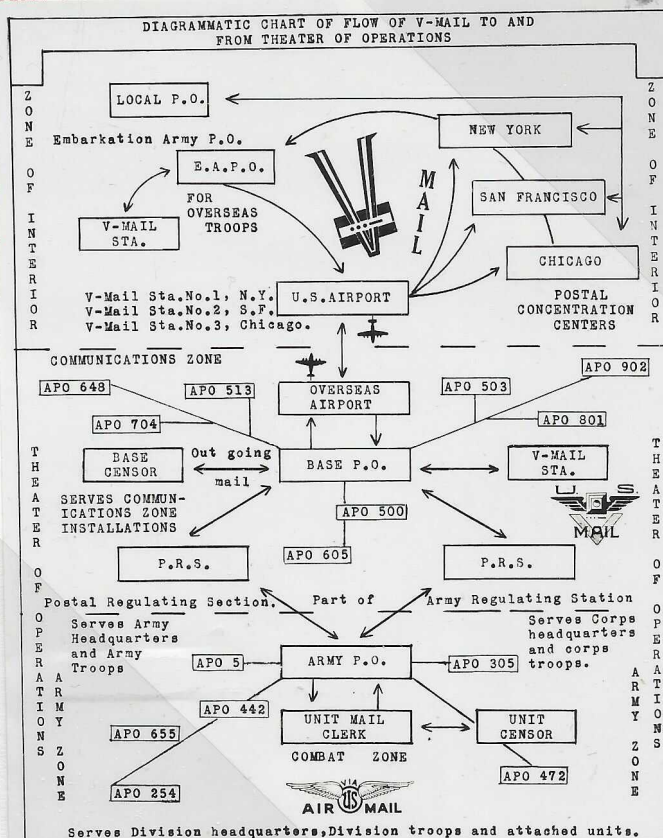
But there is one thing that you and you alone can control — the matter of the address. The most discouraging and usual cause for long delays is an incomplete or incorrect address.

Address your mail completely — clearly — legibly. If possible, print with a substance that will not run, mar, streak, fade, or smudge. Address as follows:

- FIRST LINE — Name, Rank, (and Serial Number if Army)
- SECOND LINE — His Army Organization, or ship or Naval Station
- THIRD LINE — His A.P.O. (Army Post Office) number or Fleet Post Office
- FOURTH LINE — Port of Embarkation Post Office

Pvt. John T. Jones, 1604321

Army
Navy
John J. Jones
U. S. N
Fleet P
San Francisco



V-mail was adopted to solve a critical shortage of air cargo space early in the war. The 6¢ military airmail rate resulted in huge volumes of mail both to and from troops overseas. Since mail was considered critical to morale, its expeditious handling was given a high priority. While the film and labor involved in processing V-mail made it much more expensive for the government than regular airmail, the fact that film, cameras and the people to use them were available, and extra aircraft were not, made the financial aspects of its use irrelevant.


Official publications promoting and explaining how V-mail helped the war effort and how it was routed.

From: _____

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 5

V...-MAIL

Print the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No. 	Address should be complete as follows	
	Pvt. John Doe ASN 23456789 Btry. B 227th FA BN APO 29 % Postmaster New York, N. Y.	MRS. J. C. DOE <small>(Sender's name)</small> 286 Sanderson St. <small>(Sender's address)</small> Columbus, Ohio. Sept. 9, 1943 <small>(Date)</small>

"BACK THE ATTACK"
WASHINGTON, D. C. SEPTEMBER 9 to 27
MORE LETTERS FROM HOME MEANS HIGHER MORALE -
"OVER THERE"
USE V-MAIL

Here are the advantages of using V-mail for all correspondence to our men (and women) in military service overseas.

1. Requires only a small fraction of the shipping space necessary for ordinary mail.
2. V-mail has priority over all except official mail for shipment overseas.
3. Your letter gets there - If the V-mail film is lost in transit the original letters are re-photographed and the new film is dispatched immediately.
4. More war supplies can be shipped in the space saved by using V-mail.
5. Strict privacy is assured - V-mail letters are photographed in a semi-automatic machine at the rate of 1500 per hour.

IT'S PATRIOTIC TO USE V-MAIL

V...-MAIL

unication. If addressed to a
nal letter will be dispatched

de within marginal lines.
ded. Addresses of members
Military or Naval address,
assigned or attached and
er or appropriate Fleet Post

drop or street letter box.

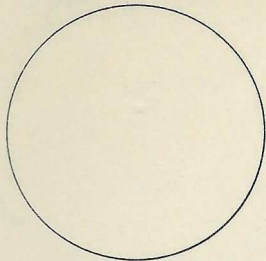
V-mail was based on the pre-war "Rekordak" process used by banks to microfilm checks and other documents. This technology was first applied to mail by the British, under the name "Airgraph," and the Americans copied the British procedures. Special V-mail forms were printed (8½ x 11" plus sealing tab) that provided an address and message area that fit the film used. Letters were first sorted by destination and then all legible V-mails for one destination were photographed onto 16mm Kodak safety film. The film was then flown to the destination (with the originals to be kept for 30 days in case a re-shoot was required, then destroyed), and printed onto special photographic paper.

Original V-mail (in this case privately printed under Post Office Department Permit; others were printed by the Government Printing Office, but they could not fill the demand) plus government-issued promotional V-mail showing the size of the processed from and the frame of film from which it was printed.

- (5) V-Mail letters may be sent free of postage by members of the Armed Forces. When sent by others postage must be prepaid at domestic rates (3c ordinary mail, 6c if domestic air mail service is desired when mailed in the U.S.)

Print the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No. _____



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

Four horizontal lines for the sender's address.

(Sender's name)

(Sender's address)

(Date)

AFTER _____ DAYS RETURN TO _____

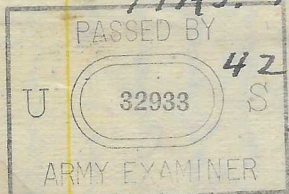
Pfc. Robert Morrison - 31230652

*3rd Bomb. Maint. Sq.
APO 631 7/8 PM. NY, NY.*



V MAIL

MRS. MARTHA MORRISON



*42 STEDMAN AVE,
BRAINTREE, MASS
U. S. A.*

Troops overseas were usually able to obtain the red/white V-mail forms printed in the US. However, especially at holiday times, shortages resulted in the issuance of non-standard forms by local commands, some of these in unusual colors. The yellow/white color scheme has been found so far used only from India. The black/white form (without a printed back) above was issued in Hawaii, but such forms have also been found from other locations, mainly in the Pacific Theatre.