

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

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SGT. GEORGE J. KING A.S.N. 36529106
147 Q.M. BATTALION MOBILE
A.P.O. 758 6 P.M. N.Y.C., N.Y.

SEP 15 1944 21
U.S. ARMY A.P.O.
FREE
See Instruction No. 5

V...- MAIL

MRS. GEORGE
3742
AFTER _____ DAYS RETURN TO—
Private John N. Jones, 33153609
95th Chemical Company
A.P.O. No. 828, 9. Postmaster
New Orleans, Louisiana

ARMY POSTAL SERVICE
SEP 15 1942
P.M.



Via Air Mail

AFTER _____ DAYS RETURN TO— Robert W. Hoch A.S.N. 6647829

4074 7th St. S.E. 229 4th Bldg
San Francisco California

AMERICAN BASE FORCES
FEB 20 1943
A.P.O.

NOT SUITABLE FOR FILMING V...- MAIL

BY AIR MAIL

Jones

PASSED BY
U 00039 S
ARMY EXAMINER

Mrs & Mrs George Mueller
3640 Cassette Ave
Detroit
Michigan

PASSED BY 3640
U 16496 S
ARMY EXAMINER

W. S. ...
2nd Lieut., Air Corps

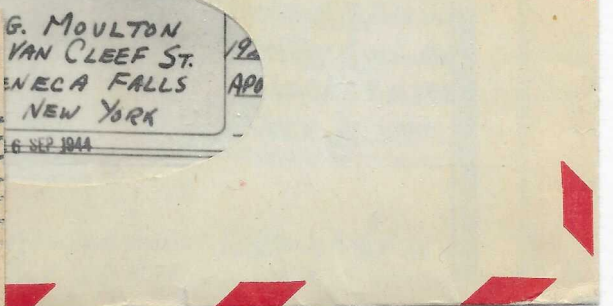
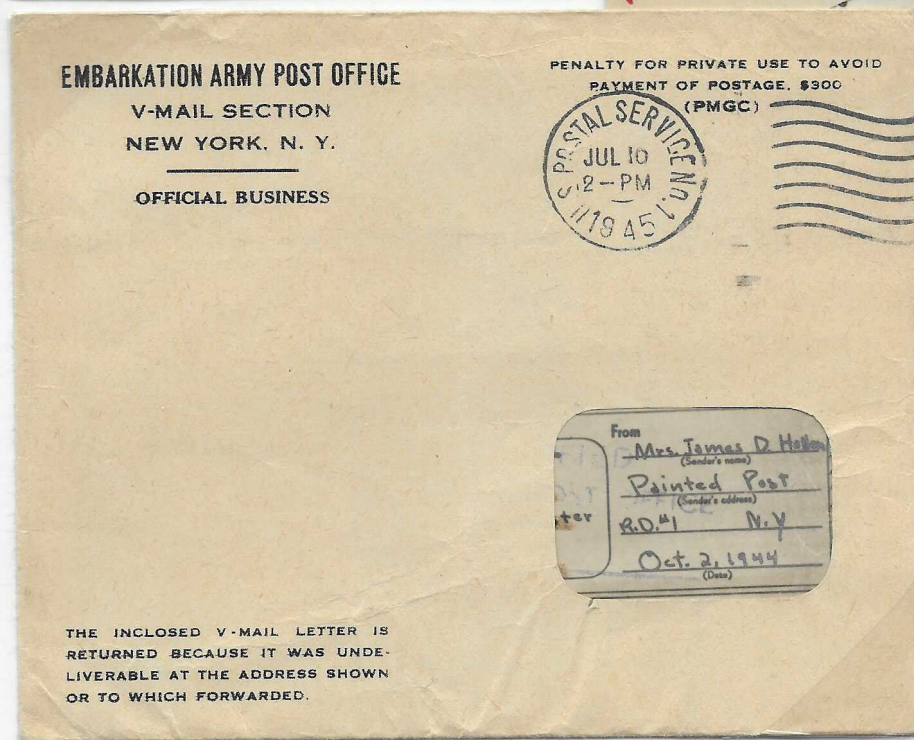
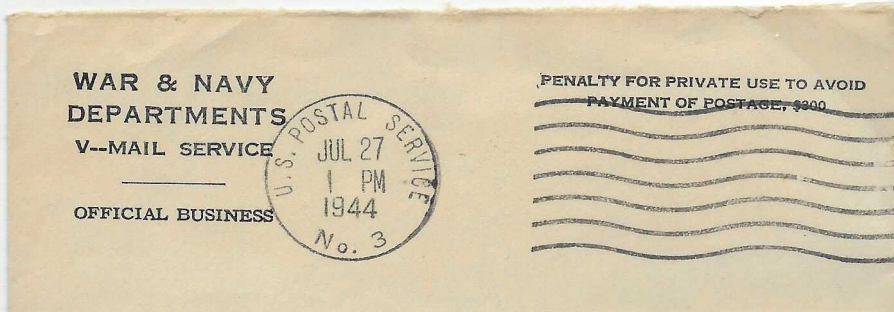
V-mail from servicemen could be sent free, in which case it would (normally) be filmed and the film would be airmailed the to a processing station in the US for printing. Free-franked V-mails would proceed from that point by surface mail while those that had been franked at the 6¢ rate would proceed by airmail.

Occasionally, when there was adequate air cargo space, or where the original was for some reason (e.g., text written in pencil, text outside filmable area, or lack of address on the inside), the original form would be sent on to the addressee.

Mail from France (APO 758), Canal Zone (APO 828) and New Guinea (APO 929).

Special Classes of Mail

V-Mail



The majority of processed (i.e., photographed and printed on photographic paper) V-mails to the United States was sent under the military free frank. These were placed in a special V-mail envelope with penalty indicium. (Many envelope types, differentiated by differences in die-cutting and typeface, exist.) Airmail envelopes for processed V-mails (used when the sender had affixed 6¢ in stamps to his form) are much less common. By far the scarcest of the Stateside V-mail envelopes, however, are the ones used to return a V-mail to sender after a failure of delivery abroad. These are specially die cut to show the return address, rather than the address.

Special Classes of Mail

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. _____

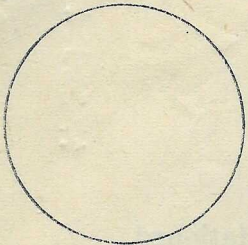
To *Joseph LACHOWICZ*
214 So. Warren St.
Berwick Pa.
U.S.A.

From *Lt. Col. LACHOWICZ*
C.M.F.
Polish Forces It.
26. XI. 44

(CENSOR'S STAMP)

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. _____



CENSORS STAMP

One on the house for

The Mirror,
235 E. 45th St.,
N.Y.C.

Pvt. Brendan M. Jones

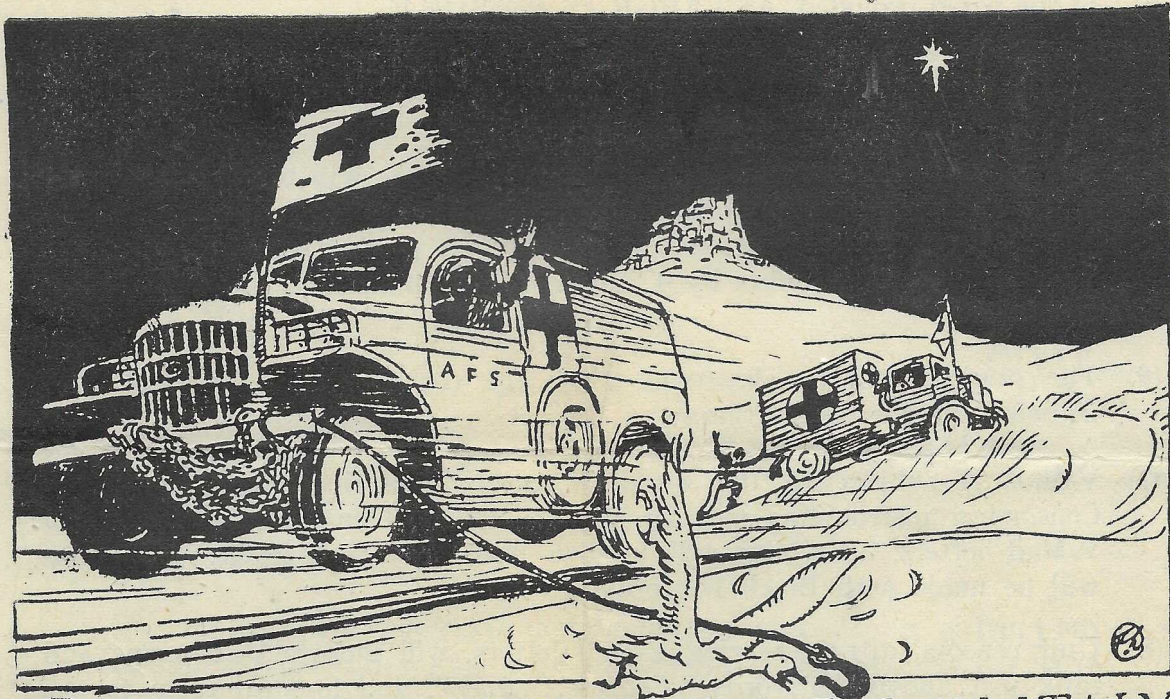
SENDERS NAME
AMERICAN FIELD SERVICE

SENDERS ADDRESS
A.P.O. 464, c/o Postmaster,

New York

Dec. 1, 1944

DATE



GREETINGS FROM THE A.F.S. IN ITALY

1

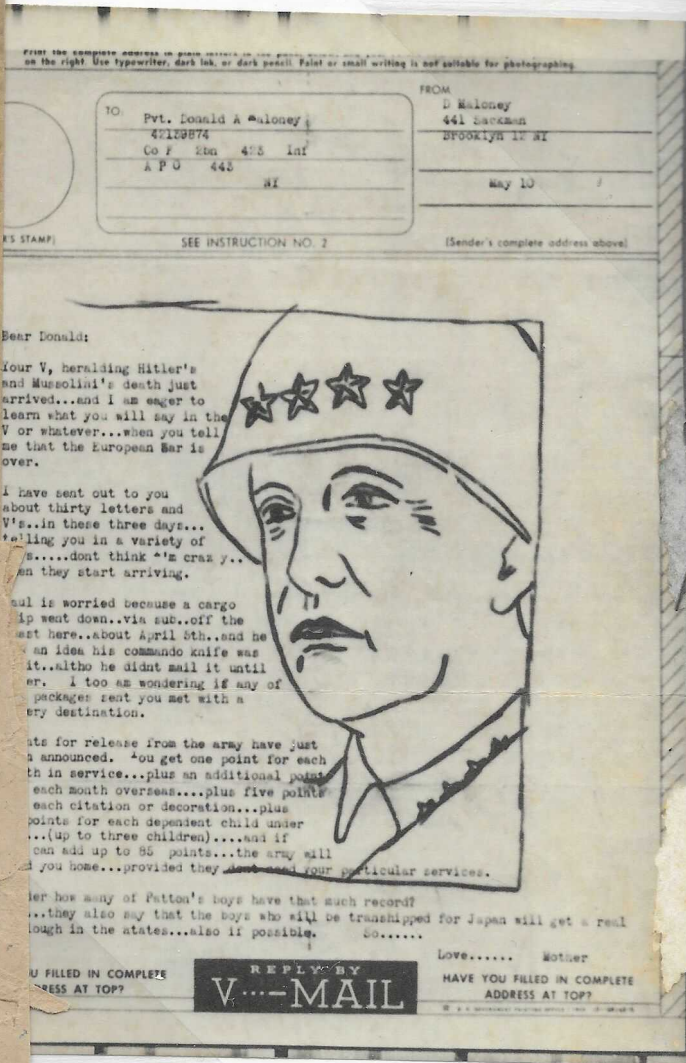
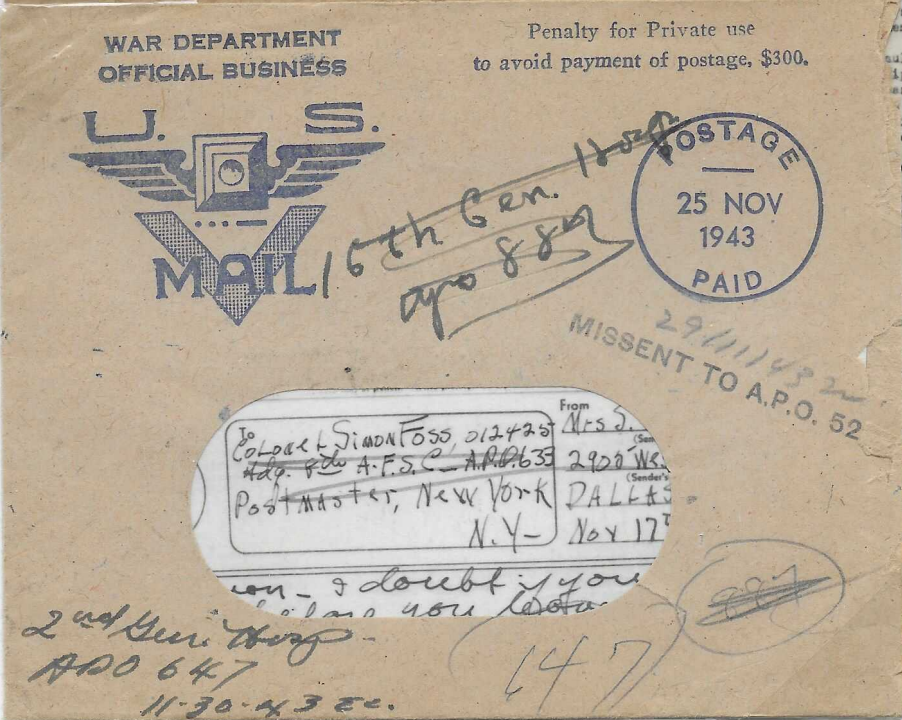
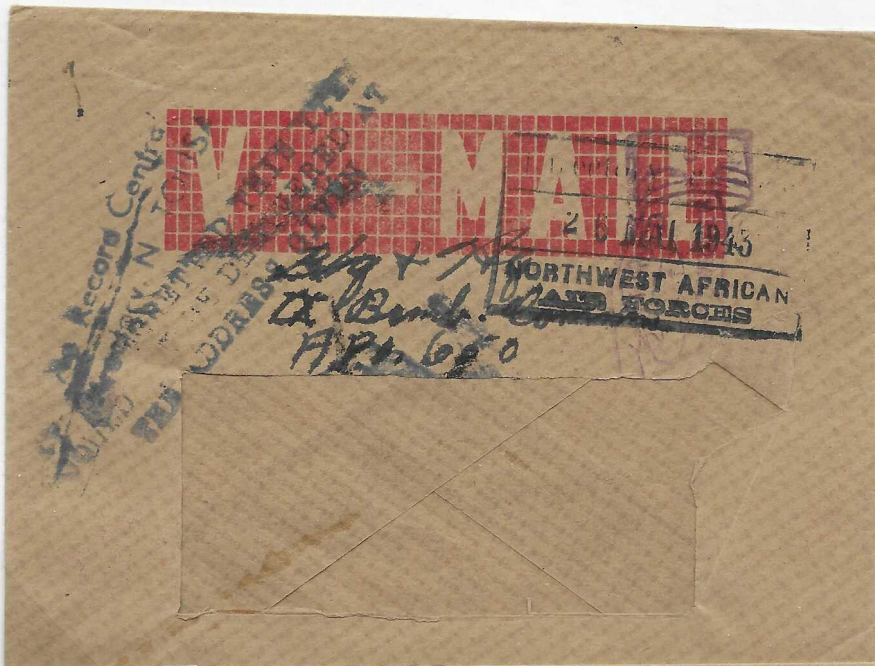
9

4

4

Beginning April 30, 1943, US civilians abroad who had APO privileges were also allowed to send V-mails. Through a series of 6 orders covering successively larger groups Allied troops were also allowed to use V-mails for correspondence to the US.

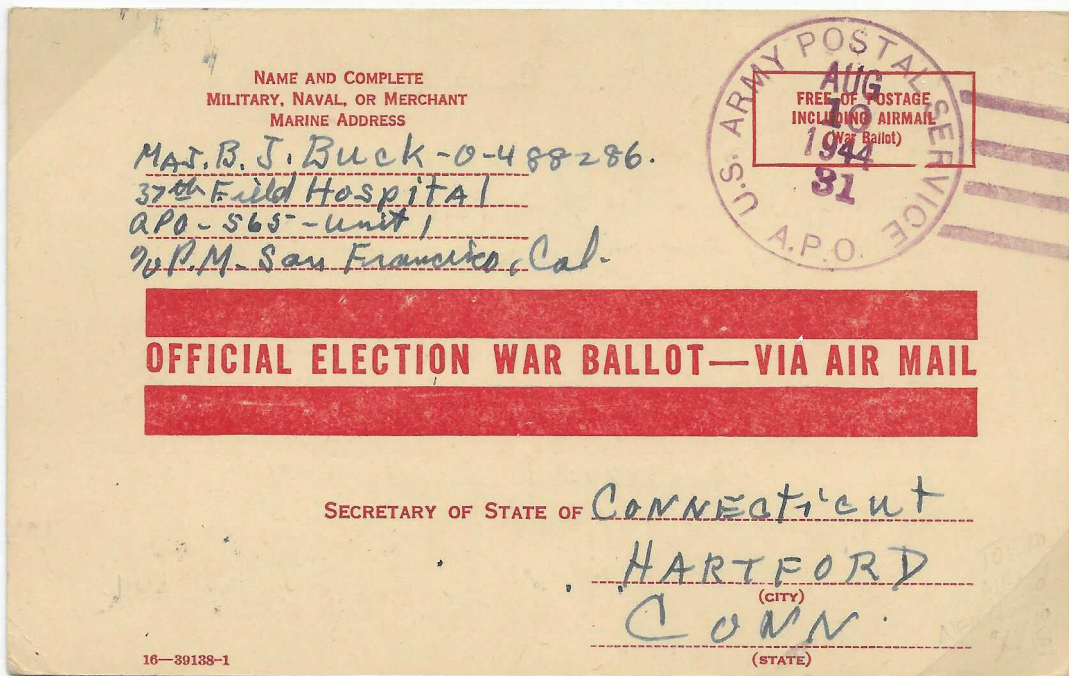
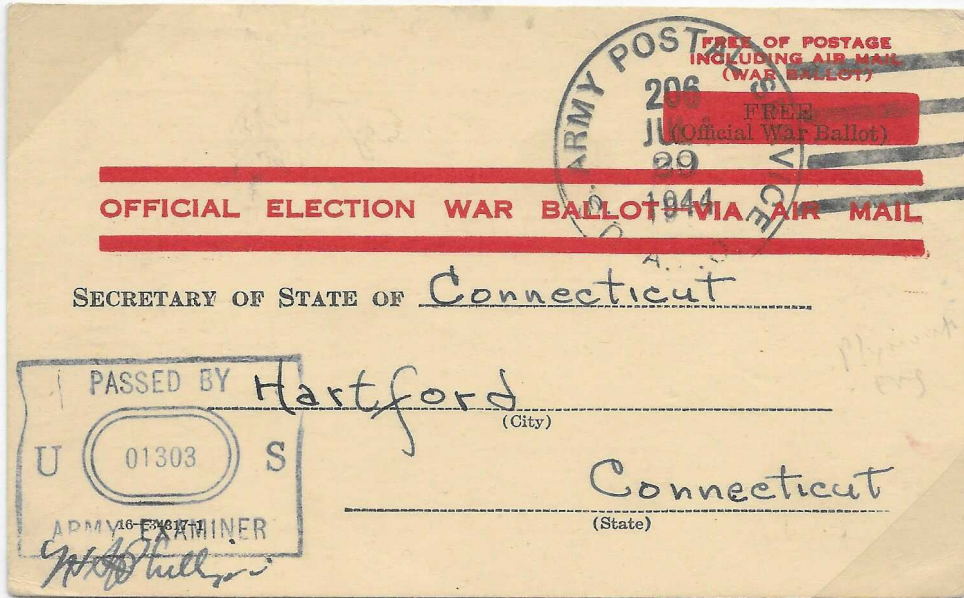
The American Field Service V-mail is rare. Shown above it is a processed V-mail from a Polish soldier in Italy.



Processed V-mails delivered overseas are relatively uncommon. Even troops in rear areas had weight limits on what they could bring back at the end of the war, and correspondence does not appear to have been high on the list for most of them.

Envelopes were used for processed V-mails in Great Britain on a fairly routine basis, and these had to conform to British postal regulations by showing "postage paid." Envelopes from other areas are very uncommon (top cover is most likely from Morocco,)

V-mails to soldiers on the European continent were usually delivered as self-mailers, being folded at the bottom rather than the top to cover up the message, with lines of glue at other side which make them appear to be faulty when they are not.



Legislation for military participation in the 1944 elections, in addition to being much more timely than that for the 1942 elections, took into account the need for airmailing of requests and ballots. The first request-for-ballot card shown above is a 1942 request form with additional printing added (in red) in 1944 to reflect this change. Second example was completely printed in 1944.

Special Classes of Mail

War Ballots

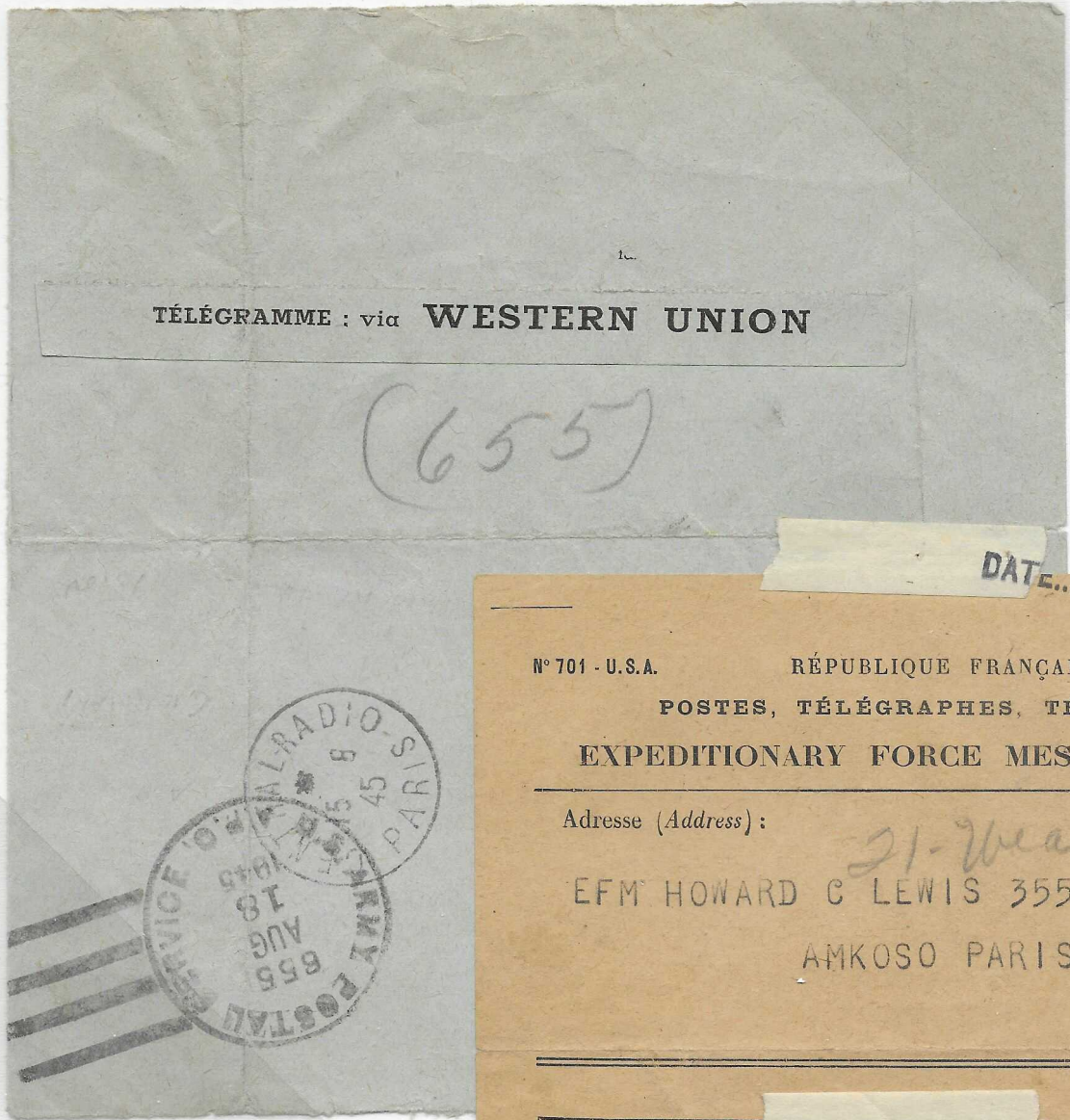
The addressee was killed during the heavy, often close-quarters fighting in the Huertgen Forest, Germany.



Envelopes used to send the requested ballots were also entitled to free airmail. Examples that were sent overseas are relatively scarce, and the typical example found today will be one that was returned due to the loss of the addressee.

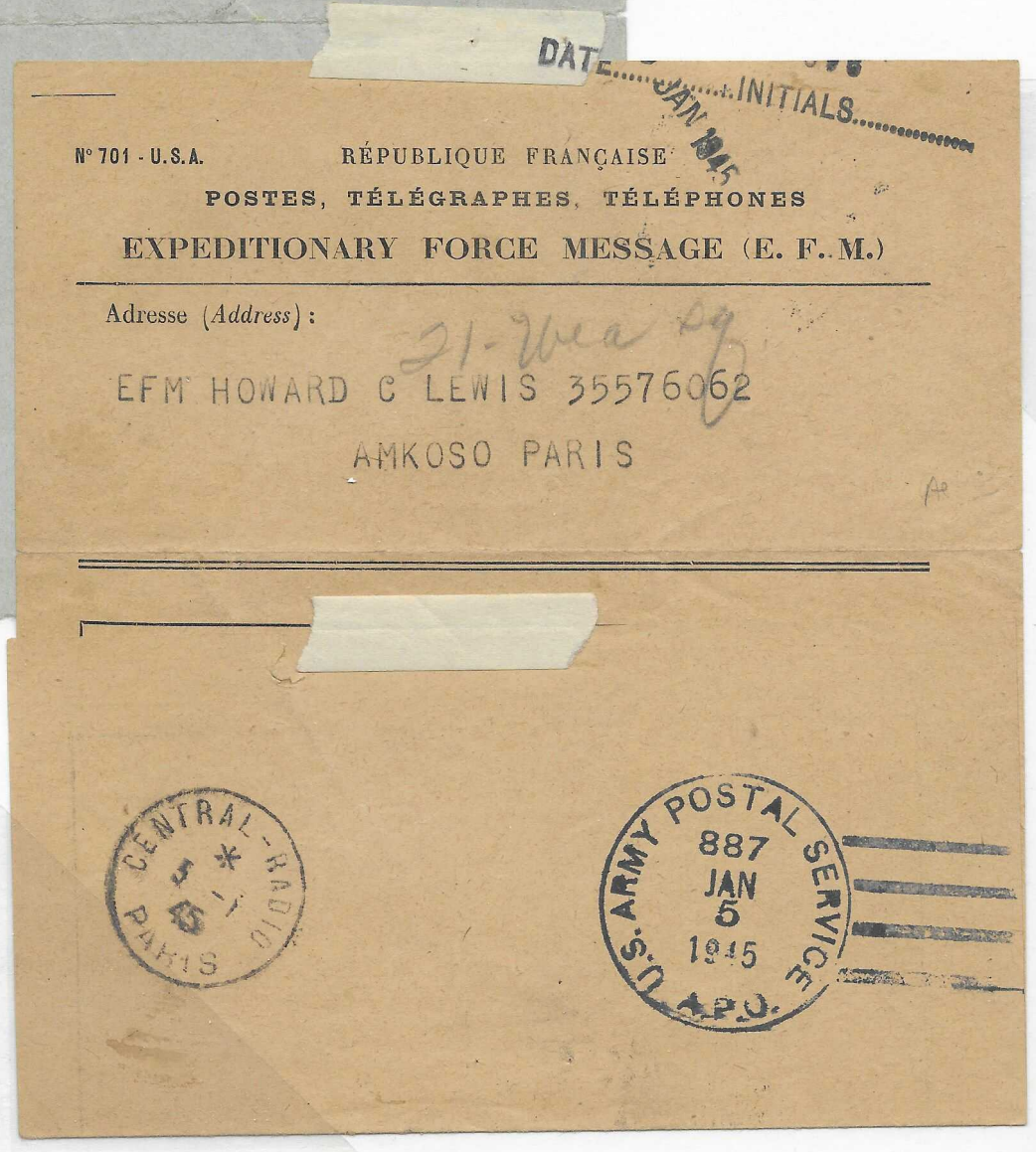
Special Classes of Mail

Telegrams



Top: Paris post office to 11 BPO (Paris) to APO 655 (Wiesbaden, Germany).

Bottom: Paris post office to APO 887 (Paris).



The US Army did not maintain a telegram service for its troops. However, it is clear that private telegraph companies benefited from the presence of US soldiers in areas that they served, and that they worked with the US APOs in their areas to get the messages delivered.

Special Classes of Mail

POW Mail
Mail To POWs

Mrs. Alvin Ferris
El Cajon, Calif.
% C. C. Cole.

Postage Free



11/30/44

Postmaster - Prisoner of War Air Mail
Via New York, New York.

Prisoner of War Mail

Postage free



St. Stanley H. Peters
American Prisoner of War -

8050

~~Oflag 64
Deutschland~~

RETURNED TO SENDER
Direction of the War Department
Undeliverable as Addressed.

Via New York N.Y.

Note: Bottom cover most likely not returned because of form of address. This handstamp is routinely encountered on mail to US POWs that had not been delivered prior to the end of the War. As the POW was no longer at the address indicated, the easiest disposition of the letter was by return to sender.

Mail from the US (and its possessions) to US POWs was initially required to show the addressee's name, branch of service, POW number and country of imprisonment. In late 1944, in response to German objections to patriotic stamps and slogans on POW mail, the Post Office Department directed that all POW mail be sent in an inner envelope so addressed, contained in an outer envelope addressed "Postmaster, Prisoner of War Mails, New York, New York." While some people did in fact follow this directive, more mail is seen addressed in the earlier manner, even from late-1944 until the end of the war.

Special Classes of Mail

POW Mail
Mail To POWs

PRISONER OF WAR POST
KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST
SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

Stalag II A
41
geprüft

BY AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

AFFIX
6c
POSTAGE

ARB. KDO. D-601
PARCHIM-STALAG IIE

RANK AND NAME (CAPITAL LETTERS) PFC. KENNETH M. KOLB,
UNITED STATES PRISONER OF WAR.

PRISONER OF WAR No. 078430
(SEE NOTE ON FLAP)

CAMP NAME AND No. II-STAMMLAGER IIE
NEUERBUNDENHOUSEN

SUBSIDIARY CAMP No. NEUERBUNDENHOUSEN, 1, MECKL
Direction of the War Department,
undeliverable if Addressed.

COUNTRY GERMANY,

VIA NEW YORK, N. Y.

5688

郵便 便 虜

PRISONER OF WAR POST
KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST
SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

POSTAGE FREE
G. BUHRENFREI
FRANC DE PORT

INDICATE NATIONALITY OF PRISONER OF WAR U. S. BRITISH CANADIAN OTHER (Specify)

NAME AND GRADE OF PRISONER OF WAR SGT THADDEUS TOMASZEWSKI
PRISONER OF WAR NO.

ADDRESS UNIFORMED JAPAN

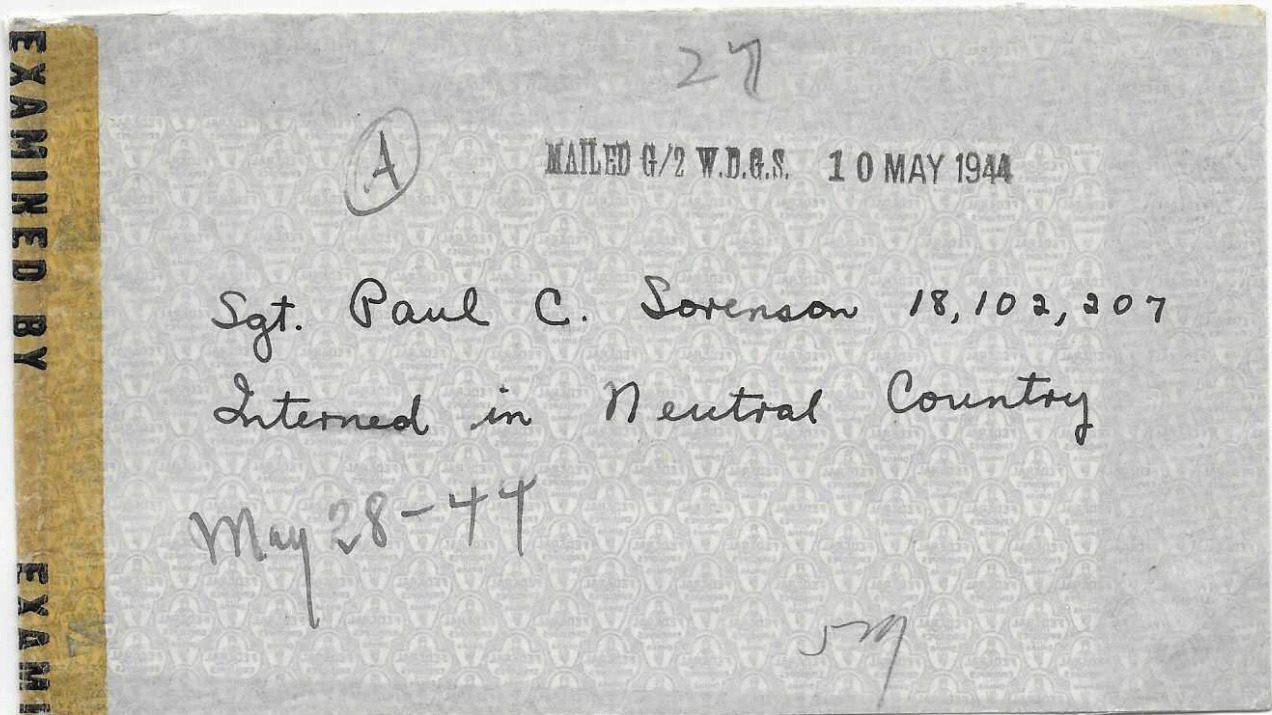
RETURNED TO WRITER
FUKUOKA
UNIFORMED JAPAN

SAN FRANCISCO CALIF. DEC 8 11 00 AM 1945

U.S. CENSOR

VIA NEW YORK, N. Y.

On 9 May 1944 an airmail lettersheet for use to US POWs was made available to the public. Initially these required 6¢ postage, but on December 14, 1944 they were allowed to be sent for free. Probably to reflect this change, but also to include the relevant text in Japanese, a revised lettersheet was issued in December, 1944. Examples of the later used to Asia are at least scarce, and no example has been seen which was actually delivered, due to the slowness of getting mail to Japan and the end of the war earlier than anticipated.



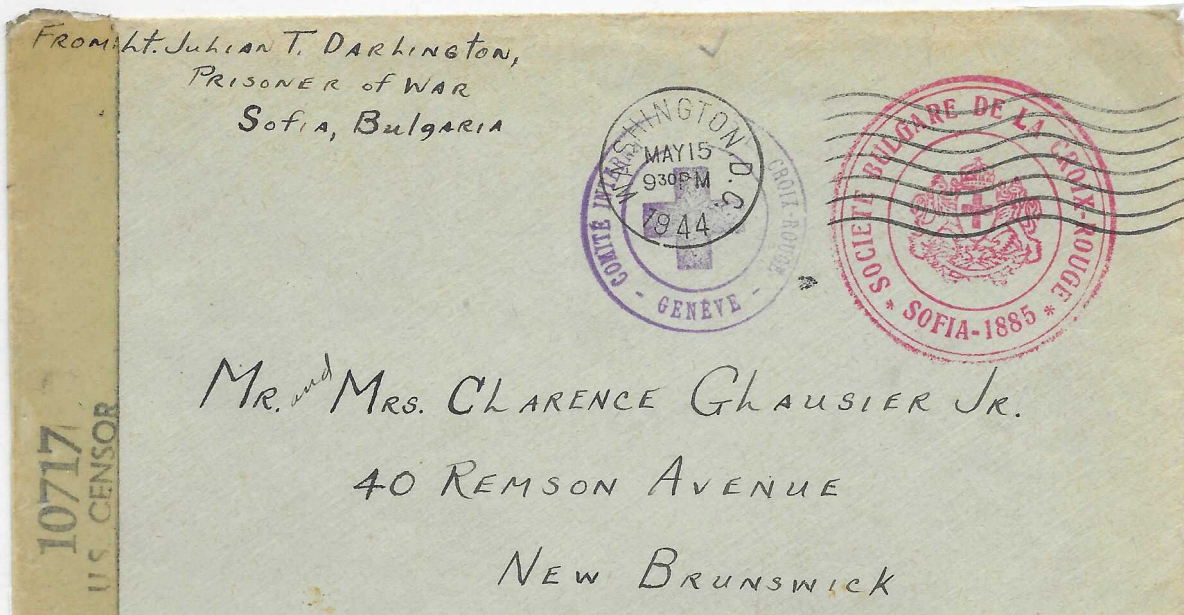
US soldiers who were found under arms in neutral countries were incarcerated as "Internees" rather than "Prisoners" of war. Practically, the neutral countries in which this occurred were limited to Switzerland, Sweden and Turkey, to which US airmen with a choice (that did not include returning to Allied territory) flew in preference to going down over Axis territory.

As both of these countries were subject to considerable German diplomatic pressures throughout most of the war, early mail to US military internees was handled differently than mail to POWs. While free postage was still allowed, the mail was directed through the G-2 (Intelligence) section of the War Department General Staff, without naming the place of internment.

Mail handled in this manner has been observed for the 1026 US internees in Sweden and the much more numerous group of US internees in Switzerland. Only by tracing the name of the Internee can an identification of the country of Internment be made. The above cover was for an Internee in Sweden, where the "Classy Chassy" carrying Sgt. Sorenson went down on April 9, 1944, due to weather and radio failure. **Fewer than 10 (and probably fewer than 5) covers from US internees in Sweden are recorded.** It is likely that the number of covers to US internees in Sweden is in this same range.

Special Classes of Mail

POW Mail
Mail From POWs



Under the Geneva Conventions, surface mail from US POWs (and military Internees) was sent free of postage. Airmail had to be paid for from Italian-controlled and (until December 1944) from German-controlled territory. Airmail was never allowed from Japanese-controlled territory, and the few examples of US POW mail from other Axis countries has all been surface mail.

Scarcity of US POW mail is, in ascending order, as follows: German-controlled areas, Japanese-controlled areas (scarcity varies widely within this group), Italy, other Axis countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia).

Special Classes of Mail

POW Mail
Mail From POWs

便 郵 虜 俘

Card at left is handstamped Ma Rai, for Malaya, and is from a member of the 131st Field Artillery Regiment, captured in the Dutch East Indies in February 1942. At the time he sent this card he was in the Changi POW camp, later made (in)famous in James Clavell's novel, *King Rat* and the film which followed it.

馬來
俘虜收容所
檢閱濟

11659
U.S. CENSOR

MRS. A. R. GORDON

From: Name *William Thomas*
 William Thomas
 Nationality American
 Rank Sergeant.
 Camp Philippine Military Prison Camp #1.

檢閱濟
俘虜郵便
比島俘虜收容所

10880

*Master Sergeant
Matthew S. Whitehurst
U.S. Army*

Soldiers Mail
No Postage Required

SERVICE DES
PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE

Miss Mary Austin
Tarboro,
North Carolina
U.S.A.

檢閱濟
俘虜郵便

11348
U.S. CENSOR

PRISONERS OF WAR
Information Bureau
War Department.
Tokyo Japan

Except in Japan and Taiwan, only General Officer POWs were allowed to send letters. On Taiwan, even the few enlisted POWs could send letters, as shown at right.

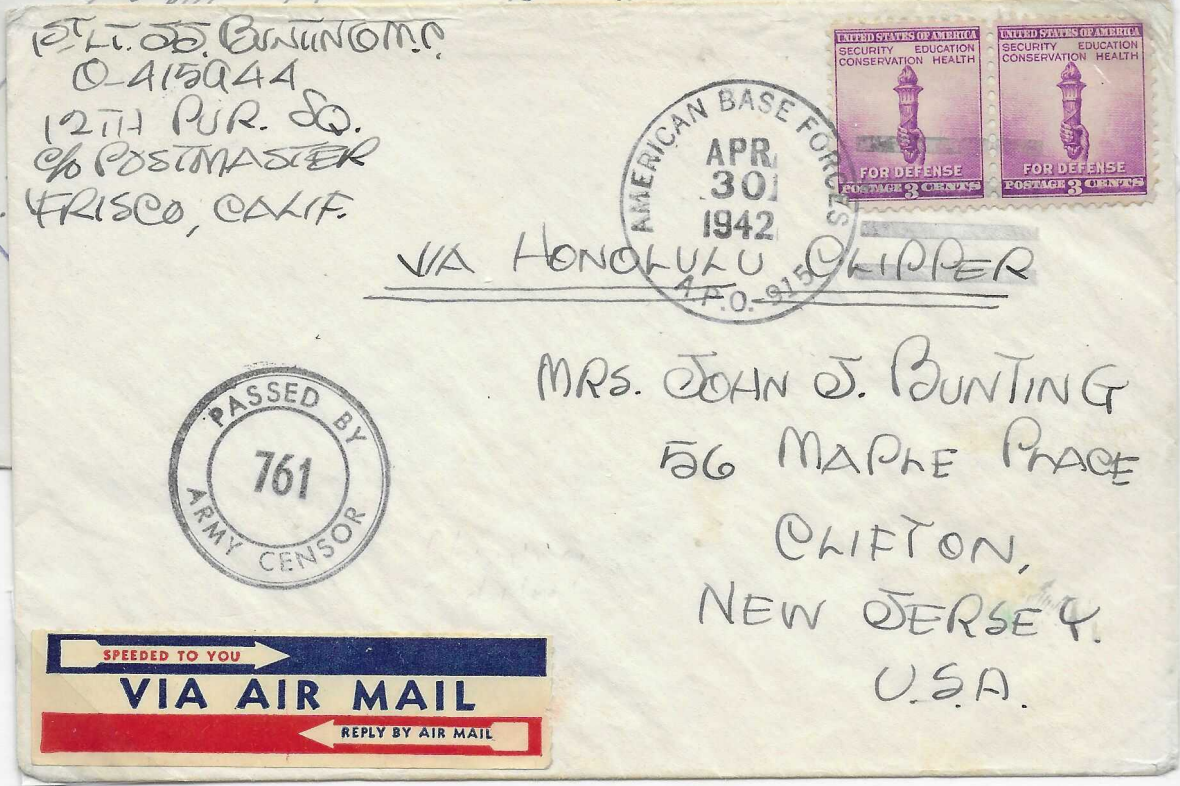
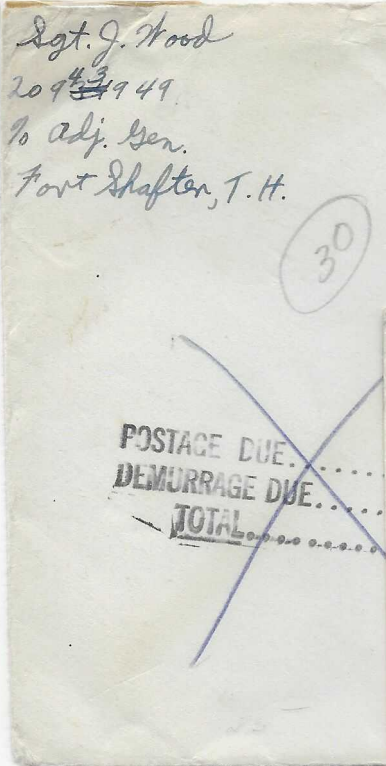
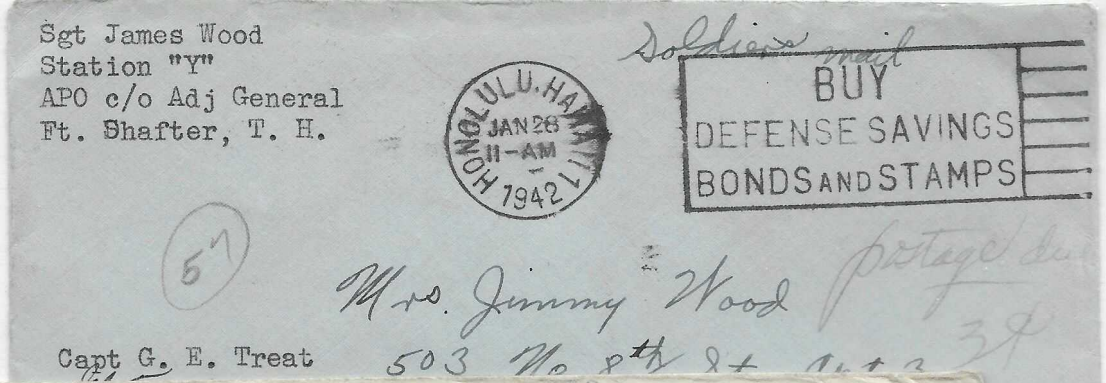
Mail from US POWs under Japanese control was largely confined to postcards. These are available from a wide variety of places, most commonly the Philippines and the Japanese home Islands, rarely (for US POWs) from camps in Southeast Asia.

**DEFENSE AND SUPPLY SYSTEMS
PACIFIC OCEAN WESTWARD**

The US Army at War

Christmas Island

Officially the first US troops landed on Christmas Island on 10 February 1942 and APO 915 opened there the following day. However, an Army unit was sent there in December 1941, presumably to ascertain its utility for an airfield.



The secrecy of the earlier operation may have related to the fact that at the time ownership of this atoll was disputed between the US and the UK.

In early 1942, with no reasonable hope of stopping the Japanese in the Philippines, Malaya or the Dutch East Indies, US policy focused on stopping their drive short of Australia and Hawaii. In addition to existing bases west of Hawaii (which were manned by US Marines), the US Army established a series of bases leading to Australia. These were, in progressively westward steps: Christmas Island and Bora Bora; Canton Island; Tonga and Fiji; New Hebrides and New Caledonia.

The US Army at War
Establishing Defense and Supply Systems

Pacific Ocean Westward
Dutch East Indies

Sgt. Gordon was recovered by US forces at the end of the war. Sgt. Reis was not.

*Sgt. Crawford E. ...
131st F.A.
U.S. ...*

*Should ...
mail*

*Mrs. A. R. Gordon
2019 Callogg Avenue
Fort Worth, Texas*

OPENED BY CENSOR

air mail

1007

CHICAGO, ILL.
FEB 22
10 PM
1942
AIR MAIL

UNITED STATES POSTAGE
3 CENTS 3 3 CENTS 3

BONDS AND STAMPS

*Rec. Sgt. George H Reis
2nd Bn. Hq. Btry - 131 F.A.
U.S. Forces*

Java, Dutch East Indies

Reason for nondelivery checked. Return to writer:
Unclaimed, Unknown,
Deceased, For Better Address,
Moved; left no address, Refused,

CLASSIFIED
DHC/37

In January 1942 the US committed a small number of P-40s and the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery Regiment, to the defense of Java. By 7 March all of the P-40s had been destroyed (some still in crates on the dock). On 9 March the Japanese conquest of Java was complete and the approximately 800 surviving members of the 131st F.A. became prisoners of war.

The US Army at War
Establishing Defense and Supply Systems

Pacific Ocean Westward
Australia



28th B.G. was transferred from the Philippines. From Australia it attacked targets in the Dutch East Indies. On 17 March 1942 it evacuated Gen. MacArthur and his family from Mindanao. APO 926, Canberra.

From:
1st Lt. Robert J. Speth 0-22857
28th Bombardment Sq.
19th Bombardment Group
Army Post Office No. 926
To: Command and General
P.O. S/Sgt. John Schumann 6668682
61st Material Sqdn.
A.P.O. 924 c/o Postmaster
San Francisco, Calif.

P.F.C. Robert J. Speth
15086042 - 2nd Service Sqd
APO 922 c/o Postmaster
San Francisco, Calif

**SPECIAL DELIVERY
VIA AIR MAIL**

Air Mail



Fee Claimed by Office
of First Address

Miss Anna Marie Speth
631 South Tenth St.
Vincennes, Indiana
U. S. A.



The first US troops to reach in Australia flew in the few remaining bombers from the Philippines, on 15 December 1941. On 22 December, Task Force South Pacific, originally intended for the Philippines, arrived. The initial War Department position (adopted 8 January 1942) was that only Air Corps, anti-aircraft and supply personnel were to be sent to Australia. However, in early April and early May the 41st and 32nd Infantry Divisions arrived, for training prior to commitment to New Guinea.

APO 501, Melbourne (opened January 1942; first US APO in Australia). In March 1942 APOs 922, 923, 924 and 927 opened in eastern Australian ports to facilitate supply operations to New Guinea. APO 924, Melbourne. APO 922 Townsville.