

MAIL SERVICES TO AND FROM VIETNAM

Statement by the Minister for the Army, the Hon.
Malcolm Fraser, M.P.

The importance of mail to the maintenance of high morale is fully appreciated by the Army and every effort is made to produce the most efficient mail service between our soldiers in overseas theatres and their families, friends and relations back in Australia.

The Minister for the Army, Mr. Malcolm Fraser, said today that the mail system now in operation was the result of experience gained during the past 12 months in an operational theatre of war.

Every effort was being made by our own and US military authorities to keep any delays in mail to an absolute minimum and continual reviews would be directed at improving, where possible, the mail service.

Basically the system provided two major facilities - all classes of mail, and for a telegraphic service.

MAIL Mail was divided into two main priorities.

Priority-one included letters, postcards and the like. Priority-two included parcels, newspapers and similar articles.

PRIORITY-ONE

All priority-one mail was treated as airmail.

From Australia, mail was despatched daily to Vietnam via Honolulu.

Between Australia and Honolulu, the mail was carried by Qantas and Pan American Airways.

At Honolulu, it was transferred to either military aircraft or civilian aircraft under charter to the American Armed Services.

From Honolulu it was flown direct to Saigon.

At Saigon, mail for Australian troops was passed directly to one of the two Australian Field Post Offices. One post office was located in Saigon, and the other at Vung Tau.

From the military post offices mail was delivered by the most expeditious means to Australian units.

From records, kept by both the Postmaster General's Department and the military post offices in Vietnam, the average transit time for mail between Australia and Vietnam was 3-4 days.

Allowing for distribution within the theatre and transit time within Australia, delivery from date of posting to date of receipt by the soldier should not exceed 5-6 days.

From Vietnam, priority-one mail was handled in just the reverse system.

It was passed by units to the military post offices. From there it was carried by military or charter aircraft to Honolulu and then by Qantas or Pan American Airways to Australia. Records show that the same transit timings apply.

PRIORITY-TWO

Priority-two mail is handled in a different manner. Although treated as surface mail it was carried to Vietnam as air cargo.

To give the best service this mail was segregated into two groups.

Newspapers and other articles which can be recognised by the P.M.G. Sorting Department as periodicals of dated interest were segregated from the remainder and were despatched once a week as priority cargo on Australian courier aircraft which operated between Sydney and Saigon.

The remainder of priority-two mail was carried under

arrangements made with the American Air Force between Richmond, N.S.W., and Saigon via Honolulu. This mail was despatched weekly from Richmond but could experience some delay in transfer at Honolulu. This was due to the fact that the aircraft used between Honolulu and Saigon were reserved primarily for operationally urgent stores and also priority-one mail.

Despite this, our records indicated that the delay between despatch Australian and receipt Saigon rarely exceeded 3-4 weeks. Allowing for transit time both within Australia and within the theatre of operations, delivery should be made within five weeks of posting in Australia.

From Vietnam, priority-two mail was carried aboard Australian courier aircraft as back loading cargo. Delivery time in this case should not exceed two weeks.

MAIL CHARGES

The charges raised for mail services between soldiers overseas and their families and friends in Australia were:-

<u>Concession Rate</u>	compared with	<u>Normal Rate</u>
<u>Air Mail (Priority-One)</u>		
<u>Letters</u> - five cents each half ounce		15 cents each half ounce
<u>Postcards and greeting cards</u> 3c each		8c each half ounce
half ounce		
<u>Parcels</u> 35c each 8 oz.		\$1.10 each 8 oz.

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MAIL CHARGES (Cont...)

<u>Concession Rate</u>	compared with	<u>Normal Rate</u>
<u>Surface Mail</u> (Priority-two)		
Letters, lettercards and postcards - 2c each ounce		Not over one ounce 7c. each additional ounce 4c.
Other articles, including newspapers 2c each 4 oz.		Not over 2 oz. 4c. each additional 2 oz. 3c.
Parcels Up to 2lb - 20c Up to 3lb - 25c Up to 7lb - 40c Up to 11 lb - 50c. Up to 16 lb - 65c Up to 22 lb - 80c		Parcels not exceeding - 3lb. - 90c. 7lb. - \$1.40 11lb. - \$1.80 22lb. - \$2.50
Books and similar articles registered at G.P.O. - 2c each eight ounce weight		No normal rate applicable to the postage of this material.

It was important, of course, to ensure speedy delivery, that letters and parcels should be correctly addressed and that the correct amount of postage was used.

The addresses for troops in Vietnam should be -

SAIGON - Number Rank Name

Unit

Armed Forces Post Office (AFPO) No. 1

c/- G.P.O. SYDNEY N.S.W.

VUNG TAU or TASK FORCE

Number Rank Name

Unit

AFPO No. 3

c/- G.P.O. SYDNEY N.S.W.

While the delivery times to Vietnam for parcels might appear excessive, our experience had shown that if it were sent by sea in the normal way, delivery would be longer and less certain.

In general terms, the units which were located in Saigon should bear the AFPO 1 address and those units located in Vung Tau, or with the Task Force at Baria, should carry the AFPO 3 postal address.

If in any doubt, families and friends should have their correspondents in Vietnam indicate precisely which address should be used.

A word of warning for those people in Australia who were writing to advisers of the Australian Army Training Team, Vietnam. They should continue to use the postal address as advised by their husbands, sons and friends with the team.

The 100 strong team of advisers was scattered throughout the northern areas of South Vietnam, attached to Vietnamese Army units and training centres.

TELEGRAPHIC SERVICE

Apart from the letter and parcel service, a concession telegram service known as Expeditionary Forces Messages (EFM) was also available to troops and families, friends.

This service permitted Australian servicemen based in Vietnam and their families and friends in Australia to send telegrams to each other at the ordinary inland Australian rate of 30 cents for the first 12 words.

The text of these messages was limited to a maximum of three phrases selected by the sender from a list of EFM standard texts which were available at post offices throughout Australia and at the Australian field post offices in Vietnam.

An example of the messages that could be sent -

138957 Sgt. J. Brown

5 RAR

Aust FPO No. 3

VIET NAM

Message - 303, 60, 38

Joan.

Which translated means - "Parcel was just what I wanted (.) Happy anniversary (.) Loving greetings from all of us (,) Joan.