

More Letters From the Sand

In 1991 the U.S. Postal Service published a book titled *Letters From the Sand*, stories told in letters written by service men and women stationed in the Middle East during Operation Desert Shield/Storm. Today American soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines are again fighting a war in the Middle East, and letters to and from family and friends at home are still important.

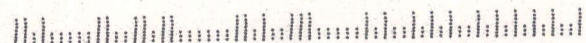
PFC wells, stacey
HHC 1st ID, (FWD) HQ
Fob Danger
~~PO~~ Operation Iraqi Freedom 2
APO, AE 09392



freemail

Couronne letter
5545 Adeline Ct.
Agoura Hill, Ca
91301

91301+4022 27



Rodeo #9, a mobile helicopter service providing base exchange merchandise and postal service to troops at remote locations. Forward Operating Base (FOB) "Danger" was located at Tikrit, Iraq.

The purpose of this exhibit is to examine a selection of covers, rather than the letters in them, mailed from military units in Iraq and nearby countries during the years 2003 to 2005. The covers were sent to a senior citizens center in California, in response to a campaign of writing letters of support to service personnel abroad. In the 21st Century, such mail is unusual, for today the more common means of communication are email and cell or satellite phones.

The Department of Defense's Military Postal Service Agency manages overseas military mail, operating post offices at bases and transporting mail to and from overseas locations. Military post offices outside of the United States are classified as Army/Air Force Post Offices (APO) and Navy Fleet Post Offices (FPO). Under current law, ordinary letters mailed by those stationed in designated combat zones may be sent back home free of postage.

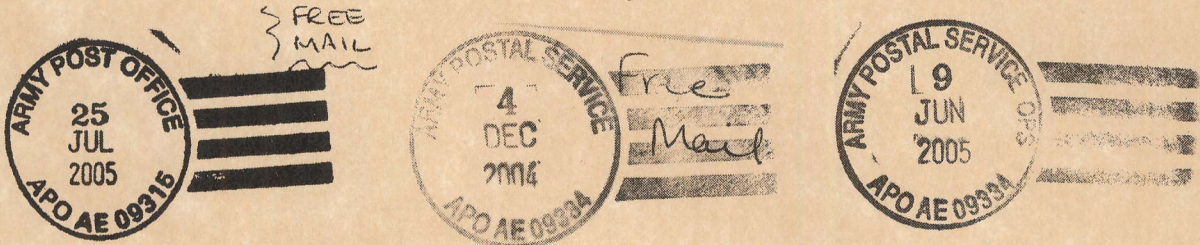
The exhibit examines the styles of postmarks in current use, then displays covers from Army, Marine Corps and Air Force units in Iraq, and in adjoining countries. Covers from "Rodeos" conclude the exhibit. The military nature of the sender's unit, and its approximate location, where determinable, is provided for each cover.

More Letters From the Sand

Postmark Types

Today there are no official standards for the styles or wording in postmarks, but long-time customs prevail. Military post offices abroad do not include the name of the country in which they are located, but identify the post office by its branch of service and assigned APO/FPO ZIP Code. State code "AE" is for Armed Forces Europe (Middle East and Africa). "AP" is for the Pacific; "AA" the Americas. ZIP Code group "093" are contingency numbers for short-term use.

Army



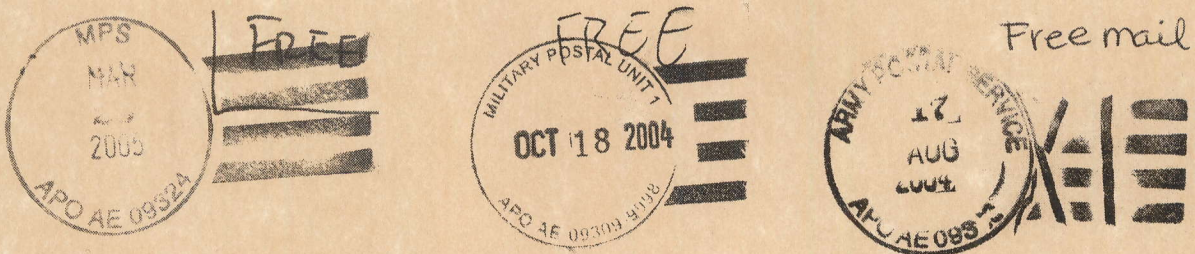
After more than a century, the "four-bar" postmark remains the standard hand cancel for United States mail. The bars are intended to deface the stamp, but are not needed for free mail.

Air Force and Marine Corps



Both services use a mix of four-bar hand cancels, and round daters. Today most round daters, which are actually intended for use on postal paperwork, are self-inking devices. Those with the date in a straight line incorporate a thumbwheel date setting mechanism into the cancel.

Other



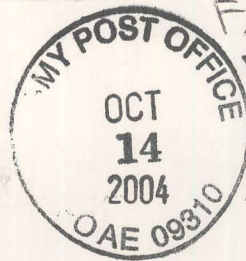
"MPS" undoubtedly stands for Military Postal Service. The "Military Postal Unit" marking is a modern self-inking cancel, with a thumbwheel dater built into the device. Vertical lines and cross-hatching on the killer bars of the cancel at the right are caused by rubber bands used to hold the cancel together in the dry desert heat.

More Letters From the Sand

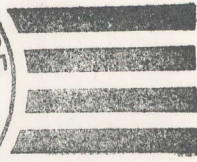
Iraq

The 68th Chemical Co. was the first to enter Iraq in 2003. In addition to providing protection against the expected poison gas attacks, the unit made chemical smoke screens to hide the invading troops. Here it is based in the Al Rashid district of southern Baghdad.

SGT Khiem Tran
68th Chemical Co
APO AE 09310



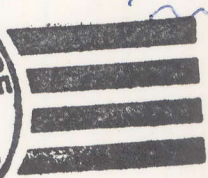
Free Mail



Capt Rebecca Nagel
332 AEW/EMDG
APO AE 09315-9997



FREE MAIL



Hugs From Home/RSVP
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The 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing supported F-16 air supremacy fighters and A-10 close air support jets from Balad Air Base, Iraq.

PFC Harkleroad, Trisha
HHC 2-101 ATKHB
APO, AE 09334



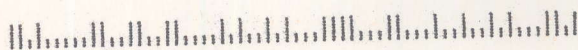
FREE MAIL



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The 101st Attack Helicopter Battalion flies AH-64 Apache attack helicopters for the 101st Airborne Division. Mailed from Camp Diamondback, Mosul, Iraq.

0012



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Iraq

Support units play an important role in any military undertaking. The 3rd Soldier Support Battalion provides computerized personnel management systems at Camp Victory Base North, near Baghdad.

CPT Mike Johnson
B Co, 3d SSB
APO AE 09352

Free Mail



Modified substitute postmark is probably 09344.

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Norman A Brown SFC
CMATT 3DIU 4BDE 10 Bn
ABT MCOIC Fort TALL AFAR
APO AE 09334

Free Mail



Corienne Cotter
5545 Adelina Ct.
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

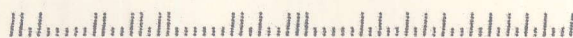
The Coalition Military Assistance Training Team of the Army's 10th Battalion, at Camp Diamondback, near Mosul, Iraq

MSgt Gascot Huraw
332 ELES/ESCORTS
APO AE 09315-9997



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The 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron at Balad Air Base, northern Iraq.



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Iraq

Camps and Forward Operating Bases (FOB).

120th ENGBN. HSC
FOB CAMP ALTAQADDUM
APO AE 09381
Penke Tischer



FREE MAIL

CORIENNE COTTER
5545 ADELINA Ct.
AGOURA Hills, CA. 91301-4022

Sgt ISAISON
Hco. 2-3 ACK
Camp SYKES
APO AE 09320



FREE MAIL

Camp Al Taqaddum, an air base 35 miles north of Baghdad.

Hugs From Home/RSVP
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Camp Sykes in Tall Afar Province, 40 miles from the Syrian border, one of the most dangerous and inaccessible bases in Iraq. Postmarked at Camp Diamondback, Mosul.

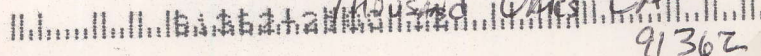
SSG Chuck Lasham
HQB 2-8 FA
FOB Endurance
APO AE 09345



FREE MAIL

FOB Endurance, at Qayyarah Airfield West, 180 miles north of Baghdad.

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Iraq

Camps and Forward Operating Bases (FOB).

CPT Matthew Holmes
CJTF 7/III C/A
Camp Victory, Iraq
APO, AE 09342-1400



Corienne Cotter is The Busy Bees
5545 Adelina Ct.
Agoura Hills, CA 91301-4022

Stacey Norris
E CO TO1 MSB
OIF 2 Fob Speicher
APO AE 09392



ZLT JOSHUA WEAKLAND
B CO 1-151N, OIF III
FOB WILSON, APO AE 09393

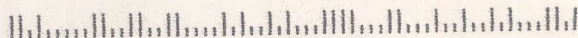


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Camp Victory, a sprawling base complex surrounding the Baghdad International Airport.

FOB Speicher, at Al Sahra Airfield near Tikrit, in northern Iraq.

FOB Wilson, at Ad Dawr, the city where Saddam Hussein was captured. Postmarked at Tikrit, Iraq.



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Abu Ghraib

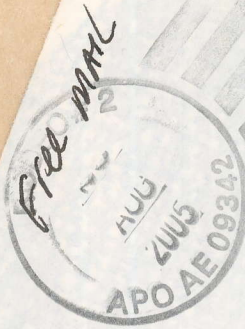
The Abu Ghraib prison complex 20 miles from Baghdad became known as "Saddam's Torture Central," and had a world-wide reputation as a place where some of the worst cases of torture in the modern world were conducted under Saddam Hussein's regime. Unfortunately, the torture history of the facility seems to have inspired some American soldiers to continue the practice after the prison was captured early in the war, and was used to hold detainees.

SGT DUANE, NOUNA
TF 344th MED
Prison Hospital ABU Ghraib
APO AP 09342



"Busy Bees"
R SVP Program
Orchel Senior Center
1385 E. Janss Rd.
Thousand Oaks, CA 91362
U.S.A.

91362+2100-85 0012



~~Free~~ Mail



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Marine Corps

The Marine Corps uses five-digit "Unit Numbers" as mailing addresses to simplify the routing of mail. It also avoids the need for mail handling personnel to understand the Marine Corps' occasionally obscure unit titles. FPO ZIP codes are 09502 or 09509, for deployed units, plus the last four digits of the Unit Number.

The 2nd Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion deploys shoulder-fired Stinger missiles against low-flying enemy aircraft.

Capt. Simms, Jeremy
2D LAAD BN Det. A
Unit 78087
FPO AE 09502-8087



Free

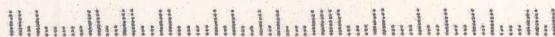
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SGTMAJ ANDRE JOHNSON
TASK FORCE RHINO
2D LAR BATTALION
UNIT 73505
FPO AE 09509-3505



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The 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion drives LAV-25 armored personnel carriers.



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Marine Corps

Marine Expeditionary Forces

I Marine Expeditionary Force based at Camp Pendleton, California, operating from Camp Fallujah, Iraq. FPO AP 96426 is assigned to the Marine Force Pacific in Baghdad.

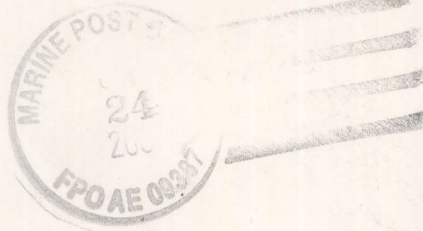
FPO AE 09387 is assigned to Camp Fallujah.

I MEF G-4
VIC 42540
FPO AP 96426-2540



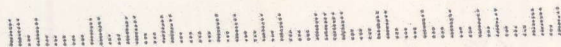
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Gunnery Sergeant Ernest Aguayo (U.S. Marine Corps) Free
II MEF FWD SSEC PSD
Unit 73920
FPO AE 09509-3920



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II Marine Expeditionary Force, from Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, also at Camp Fallujah.



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Marine Corps

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 142, deployed from Naval Air Reserve Station in Atlanta, flew F/A-18 Hornet aircraft from Al Asad Air Base, near Al Anbar, Iraq. They were supported by Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron (MALS) 26, and Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 26. All use their Marine Corps deployment ZIP Codes, FPO AE 09509, as a return address. In-country ZIP Code at Al Asad is 09389.

GySgt Johnny McDaniel
VMFA-142 Det A /Maintenance Control
Unit 72080
FPO AE 09509-2080



MSGT SWANSON
MALS-26 QA
UNIT 77141
FPO AE 09509-7141



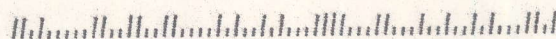
BUSY BEES/RSVP PROGRAM

LCPL Hass Justin E.
MAG 26 S-3 USMC
Unit 77141
FPO AE 09509-7141



INTER
362

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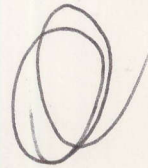
Support Units

Cpl JAVIEREZ, MARTIN
MWSS-271 DET A
HQ / Comm
Unit 78102
FPO AE 09502-8102

FREE MAIL

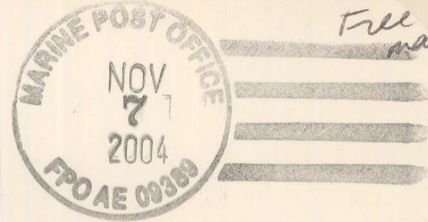


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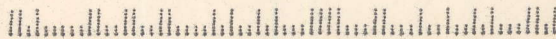
271st Marine
Wing Support
Squadron from
Cherry Point,
North Carolina,
operating from
Camp Al Asad,
Iraq.

HM1 (FMF) TRINA C. DRUMMOND
FDPMU-EAST
UIC 91505
APO AE 09333-1505



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91362#2100



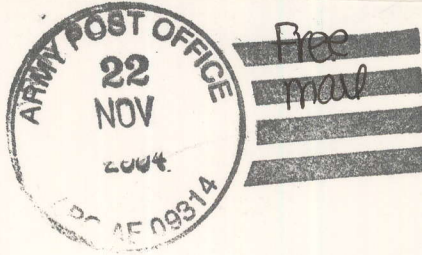
The Forward Deployed Preventable Medical Unit worked from Camp Copperhead, with mail through Camp Al Asad, Iraq. The unit eventually returned home and was soon redeployed to New Orleans to provide assistance in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

More Letters From the Sand

Afghanistan

The War on Terrorism actually began in Afghanistan, which was viewed as the home of the terrorists who staged the attack on New York's World Trade Center.

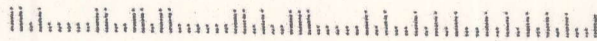
A. Urbatsch
HHB Divarty
APO AE 09314



Corienne Cotter
5545 Adelina Ct.
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Division
Artillery
headquarters
at Salemo,
Khost
province,
Afghanistan.

27



SPC Stanley Morrison
551 MP CO "Wolfpack"
APO AE 09354



551st Military
Police Co., an
Army reserve unit
from Fort
Campbell,
Kentucky, based at
Bagram Air Base,
Afghanistan.

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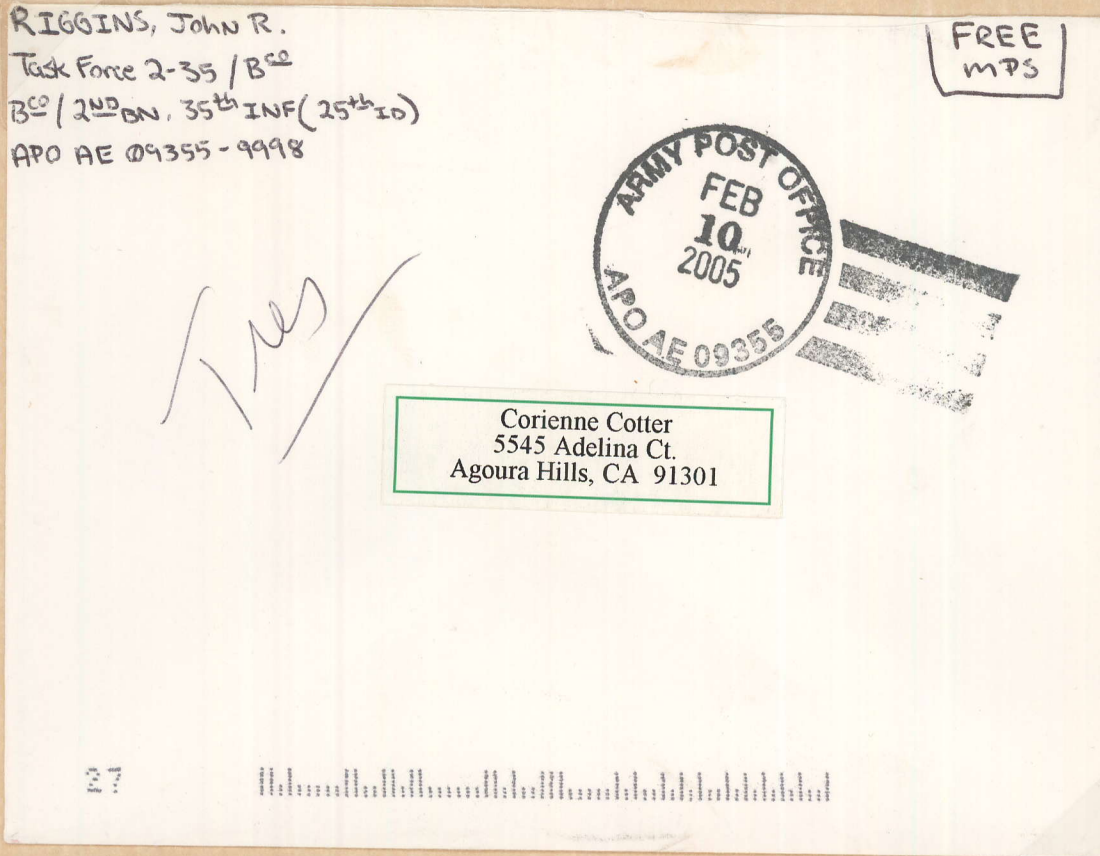
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More Letters From the Sand

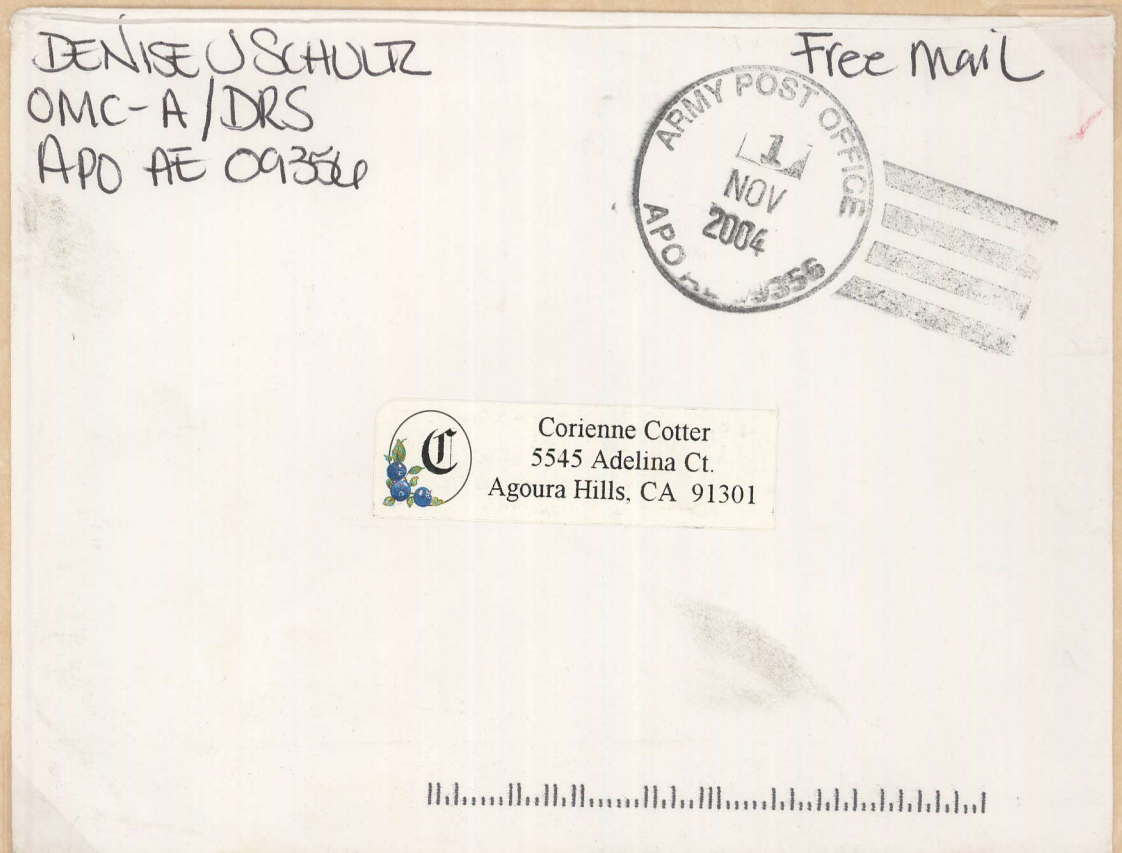
Afghanistan

The names of several bases in Afghanistan have become familiar from regular news reports on activities conducted from them.



Task Force 2-35, from the Army's 35th Infantry, based at Kandahar, Afghanistan.

The Office of Military Cooperation - Afghanistan, part of the Defense Resource Sector, at Kabul, Afghanistan.



More Letters From the Sand

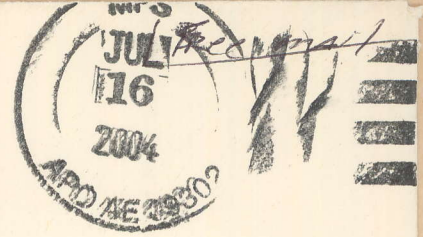
Georgia & Uzbekistan

Supporting troops are also based in near-by countries.

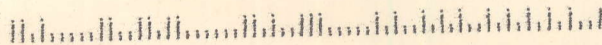
The Army's 116th Engineers, operating from a base at Batumi, Tbilisi, Georgia.

The republic, formerly part of the Soviet Union, is a coalition partner in the War on Terrorism.

Sgt. Cottam
116th ENGR
APO AE 09391



Corienne Cotter
5545 Adelina Ct.
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

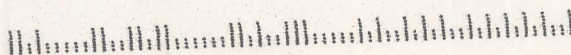


Kylie Stephens
841st AG Postal
APO AE 09311



Corienne Cotter
5545 Adelina Ct.
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

A platoon of the 841st Adjutant General Company (Postal), managing the post office at Karsh-Kha, Nabad, Qarshi, Uzbekistan



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Air Force

There are few Air Force units actually located in Iraq, because of a lack of suitable airfields and difficulty in protecting aircraft. Strategic bombing and close support missions tend to be flown from more secure bases in nearby countries.

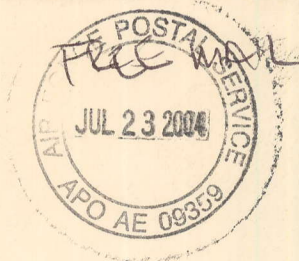
The Army's 125th Military Intelligence Battalion (Combat Electronic Warfare Intelligence) using the Air Force post office at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

F Lafayette
HHOC 125 MI BN
APO AE 09354



Corienne Cotter
5545 Adelina Ct.
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

RETS W.K.
B.Co. 125th SIG BN.
APO AE 09347-9998



Corienne Cotter
5545 Adelina Ct.
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

The Army's 125th Signal Battalion using the Air Force postal facility at Kirkuk, Iraq. The Army has a large logistics center at Kirkuk, in northern Iraq.

When two or more services share a base, both may have post offices operating there with the same APO ZIP Code.

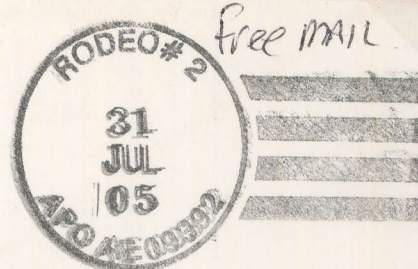
More Letters From the Sand

Rodeos

The origin of the term "Rodeo" is not certain, but they have become very popular with service men and women stationed in the dusty deserts of the Middle East far from large bases. They are mobile service units brought by helicopters, offering base exchange services, such as music tapes and CDs, personal items, and snack foods to the troops. Each Rodeo also carries personnel and payroll clerks to resolve administrative needs, and a postal clerk to help with mail.

Forward Operating
Base Brassfield-
Mora, located
north of Samarra,
Iraq.

3/69 AIDSTATION
3/69 AR 1 BCT
MEDIC PLT
FOB BRASSFIELD MORA
APO AE 09393



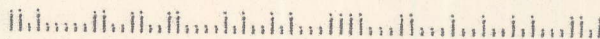
RSVP Program

Alvin Ravitz Ravitz
Blavo 336 MP BN
Camp Anaconda, Iraq
APO AE 09391



Busy Bees / RSVP Program c/o
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12



336th Military Police Battalion, a reserve unit from the Pittsburgh area, operating from Camp Anaconda, a sprawling logistics support center at the Balad Air Base, Iraq.

Both senders were probably on maneuvers out in the field rather than at the large bases that they used as return addresses.