



MILITARY POSTAL SERVICE AGENCY
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(Updated: 12 March 2003)

1. How long does it take for letters or packages to get to a service member? How does it get there?

Standard Transit Times (days)

	<u>Letters</u>	<u>Priority Parcels</u>	<u>SAM Parcels</u>	<u>Surface Parcels</u>
Kuwait	7 - 10	10 - 15	24	N/A
Afghanistan	10 - 12	10 - 14	20 - 25	N/A
Germany	5 - 7	5 - 7	18 - 22	30 - 45
Japan	5 - 7	4 - 7	18 - 21	30 - 45
Korea	5 - 7	4 - 7	18 - 21	30 - 45

Listed transit times (from the chart above) are measured from the local post office (Anywhere, USA) to arrival at a military postal unit overseas. This transit time includes three to four days to go from the local post office to the U. S. Postal Service "gateway" (New York or San Francisco). Parcel post, however, can take 7 to 10 days to reach the gateways. At the gateway mail is sorted, bagged, and tagged to arrive at a military postal unit overseas. While commercial aircraft are very consistent, there could be a large variation in transit times due to military aircraft schedules, weather, transportation and military operations in theater, or movement of a service member's unit.

****Late breaking news (10 Mar 2003)**

USPS has chartered a 747 freighter on behalf of the military, from Newark, NJ to Kuwait. The freighter started service on Sunday, 9 March. It currently leaves three times weekly and has only an ops stop for fuel in Europe. It takes 18 hours from NJ to Kuwait. It stays on the ground long enough to unload mail and load return outbound mail for NJ and NY. Although not on a seven day a week schedule, their reliability will overcome the many problems we had with the airline connections we had all over Europe. These connections were a nightmare to manage with airlines increasingly unable to move mail on a reliable basis. The 747 freighter will help tremendously and if mail volume increases, frequency of flights will increase.

can't provide names and addresses of service members. The USDA publishes guidance on food items recommended for care packages. Also, care packages must comply with customs regulations for the country in which the service member is located.

11. What are the different classes of outbound and inbound military mail?

a. Outbound (US to foreign) mail is called "prograde" mail and is divided into seven (7) categories.

- (1) Express Mail Military Service
- (2) First Class letter, flats, and sound recordings
- (3) Priority Mail
- (4) Military Ordinary Mail (MOM) parcels
- (5) Parcel Airlift Mail (PAL)
- (6) Space-Available Mail (SAM)
- (7) Surface, second-class, third-class, and fourth-class mail

b. Inbound (foreign to US) mail is called "retrograde" mail and is divided into five (5) categories.

- (1) Express Mail Military Service (EMMS)
- (2) Priority/First-Class Letters & Flats
- (3) Parcel Airlift Mail (PAL)
- (4) Space-Available Mail (SAM)
- (5) Military Ordinary Mail (MOM) parcels

12. What special military mail services are generally available?

Most USPS special services, such as certified mail, registered mail, insured mail, certificate of mailing, return receipt, restricted delivery and return receipt for merchandise are available in the military postal service. Collect on delivery (COD) and delivery confirmation services are not available (EMMS).

2. How is mail routed to Navy ships and Marine Corps units?

After processing at the Military Gateway, mail for Navy and Marine forces on board ships is flown to a Fleet Mail Center such as the one in Bahrain or Sigonella (Italy). FPO mail is sorted and transported to the individual ships by various means (often by small aircraft called Carrier Onboard Delivery (COD), to an aircraft carrier), often in conjunction with a supply mission.

3. Has any mail arrived in theater? If not, when?

Mail is currently arriving in theater for all services assigned in support of Future Operations.

4. Have Zips been given out to units?

Contingency ZIP Codes have been issued, and activated to units for all Services (Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps) in support of Future Ops. Additional contingency ZIP Codes will be issued if later warranted.

5. Are there mail restrictions for deployed service member?

Yes, each country has customs regulations that apply to all mail (including U.S. military mail) coming into that country. These may include prohibitions on certain kinds of food or entertainment products. Also, some military units may have additional restrictions imposed by the theater commander, such as size and weight restrictions, to ensure logistics support can handle the mail without delays. Military ZIP Code restrictions may change as military units move to different locations. All applicable restrictions for approximately 3,000 overseas military ZIP Codes are entered into the U. S. Postal Service computer terminals and published in the Postal Bulletin. The general public may review details of all applicable restrictions by going to any branch post office or the USPS public web page <http://www.usps.com>. Here's how to access this file:

- a. The customer should click on the USPS web site.
- b. Type "Postal Bulletin" in the search engine, this will bring up the page for the bulletins.
- c. Click on Bulletin, On this screen the customer will see "VIEW ISSUES."

Coast Guard Mutual Assistance at <http://www.cgmahq.org/>

Donate to "Operation USO Care Package" at <http://www.usometrodc.org/care.html>

Support the American Red Cross Armed Forces Emergency Services at <http://www.redcross.org/services/afes/>

Volunteer at a VA Hospital: <http://www.va.gov/vetsday/>
to honor veterans who bore the lamp of freedom in past conflicts.

Reach out to military families in your community, especially those with a loved one overseas.

Please do not flood the military mail system with letters, cards, and gifts. Due to security concerns and transportation constraints, the Department cannot accept items to be mailed to " Any Servicemember: http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Nov2001/b11282001_bt603-01.html.." Some people have tried to avoid this prohibition by sending large numbers of packages to an individual servicemember's address, which however well intentioned, clogs the mail and causes unnecessary delays.

The support and generosity of the American people has touched the lives of many servicemembers, over 300,000 of whom are deployed overseas.

http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec2002/b12122002_bt632-02.html

-- News Releases: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/releases.html>

-- DoD News: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/dodnews.html>

-- Subscribe/Unsubscribe:

<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/dodnews.html#e-mail>

-- Today in DoD: <http://www.defenselink.mil/today>

10. How can I send a care package to the men and women of FUTURE OPS?

The general public can't send care packages to deployed service members as they did during past conflicts. Families and friends may still send packages to servicemembers if they have a name and address. MPSA

d. At "VIEW ISSUES" click current issue and this will bring you to the PDF file.

e. Click on PDF file and this will bring up the Postal Bulletin.

f. At this point the customer can navigate to the Postal Bulletin page that contain the Military ZIP Code information.

6. What is permissible and not permissible to be mailed to servicemembers of FUTURE OPS?

Host country customs regulations mostly prohibit the entry of alcoholic beverages of any kind, narcotics, munitions, pork and pork by-products, pornography, and material contrary to the Islamic religion. Letter mail is not being opened unless it appears unusually bulky, in which case it may be examined to see if it contains contraband, such as drugs. Parcel mail is being examined on a spot check basis to determine conformity with host country customs regulations and for terrorist type mailing.

7. Are there plans to censor mail to and from the theater?

The DOD does not, nor have any plans to censor mail. Current laws protect the privacy of mail once it is placed within the postal system. Custom officials under customs laws may open packages.

8. Is there "Free Mail" from the theater?

Yes, most areas of the Middle East have been authorized Free Mail for personal correspondence being sent from the service member overseas back to the U.S. Family members sending mail to service members in a free mail zone must include postage. Service members are briefed on the Free Mail procedures when they are deployed to a Free Mail area. A current list of Free Mail area is attached. However, this list should not be made available to the public.

9. Is there "Any Servicemember Mail"?

No. With large numbers of servicemembers deployed overseas this year, family members, friends and other Americans who want to support the military are asking about military mail service. A Department of Defense (DOD) News Release highlighted the cancellation of mail programs that allowed the general public to send mail addressed to "Any Service

Member". While these programs were very popular with the public, security concerns and transportation constraints with military mail led to their cancellation. As an alternative, the DOD News Release noted web sites that will post messages of encouragement and highlighted opportunities to support veterans and military families.

**NEWS RELEASE from the United States Department of Defense
No. 623-02**

(703) 697-5131(media)

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 12, 2002

(703) 428-0711(public/industry)

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

With the holidays approaching, thousands of Americans are again asking what they can do to show their support for servicemembers, especially those serving overseas in this time of war. Below are Web sites for several organizations that are sponsoring programs for members of the Armed Forces overseas. While it would be inappropriate for the Department to endorse any specifically, servicemembers do value and appreciate such expressions of support:

Donate a calling card to help keep servicemembers in touch with their families at Operation Uplink at <http://www.operationuplink.org/>

Send a greeting via e-mail through Operation Dear Abby at <http://anyservicemember.navy.mil/> or <http://www.OperationDearAbby.net>

Sign a virtual thank you card at the Defend America:
Web site at <http://www.defendamerica.mil/nmam.html>

Make a donation to one of the military relief societies:
<http://www.aerhq.org/links.htm>:

Army Emergency Relief at <http://www.aerhq.org/>

Navy/Marine Relief Society at <http://www.nmcrs.org/>

Air Force Aid Society at <http://www.afas.org/>