



# POSTAL NEWS

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## **DRAFT** **OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM MAILING TIPS**

WASHINGTON – The Postal Service is reminding Americans that certain conditions and restrictions apply to mailing items to military and civilian personnel deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom in the Middle East and Persian Gulf areas.

Programs that allowed the general public to send mail addressed to “Any Service Member” were cancelled more than a year ago. While popular with the public during Desert Storm and other operations, the Department of Defense’s (DoD) concern with security and transportation constraints led to canceling this program. The DoD recommends that individuals and organizations wishing to mail letters and care packages to individual servicemembers overseas refocus their activities into supporting the servicemember’s family members at home.

The DoD recommends visiting [www.defendamerica.mil](http://www.defendamerica.mil) and clicking the “Support Our Troops” icon as an alternative means for the public to find out ways to support servicemembers.

### **Addressing Tips**

The DoD has requested that those who send mail use the servicemember’s full name (with or without rank or rating), unit and APO/FPO (Air/Army Post Office or Fleet Post Office) address. Mailers should print the name, military organization or unit, and the APO/FPO address with the nine-digit ZIP Code (if one is assigned) on the lower right portion of the package on one side only.

### **Prohibitions**

While there are specific restrictions for each five-digit military post office ZIP Code (APO/FPO), generally speaking, it is prohibited to mail the following to this region:

- obscene articles (prints, paintings, cards, films, videotapes, etc.);
- any matter containing religious materials contrary to the Islamic faith or depicting nude or seminude persons, pornographic or sexual items, or non-authorized political materials; and,
- pork or pork by-products.

Restrictions are updated every other Thursday at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com). Customers may also obtain this information by calling 1-800-ASK-USPS, or by visiting their local post office.

All military units are assigned an APO or FPO ZIP Code and in many cases that ZIP Code travels with the unit. The Postal Service places APO/FPO mail on special charter flights, commercial airlines, and military service aircraft at military and U.S. airports. When planes arrive overseas, the mail is tendered to the military and transported via local military transportation to delivery points.

According to the Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA), depending on where the servicemember is located, letters to Kuwait normally take 8 to 11 days. Priority Mail parcels will normally take 10 to 15 days. Surface Air Mail, or SAM packages, take longer since they don't travel by aircraft within the U.S. prior to dispatch from New York or San Francisco. There may be size restrictions and customs declaration form requirements to some locations as mail going through the MPSA can be subject to the host country customs requirements. The time to deliver varies depending on the category of mail and the country of destination. Delivery may also take longer when armed forces are on the move during periods of heightened activity.

### **Packaging Tips**

It's a good idea to keep the following in mind to ensure that packages are delivered promptly.

- **Extreme Temperatures:** Desert temperatures typically exceed 100 degrees.
- **The Box:** Select a box strong enough to protect the contents and large enough to accommodate cushioning. If reusing a box, cover all previous labels and markings with a heavy black marker or adhesive labels.
- **Cushioning:** Cushioning the contents with newspaper is a novel way to send news from home. Styrofoam and bubble wrap are also good choices. Close and shake the box. If it rattles, add additional cushioning to keep items from shifting.
- **Batteries:** Occasionally a battery powered item such as a radio or electric razor will turn itself on during shipment. Be sure to remove and wrap the batteries separately.
- **Sealing:** Tape the opening of the box and reinforce all seams with 2" wide tape. Use clear or brown packaging tape, reinforced packing tape or paper tape. Do not use cord, string or twine as it causes the package to get caught and possibly damaged in sorting equipment.
- **Include a card describing the contents:** Occasionally improperly wrapped packages fall apart during shipment. Including a card inside the package that lists the sender's and recipient's addresses along with a description of the contents helps in collecting items that have fallen open during processing.