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Manual of Army Postal Services

WAR

1937

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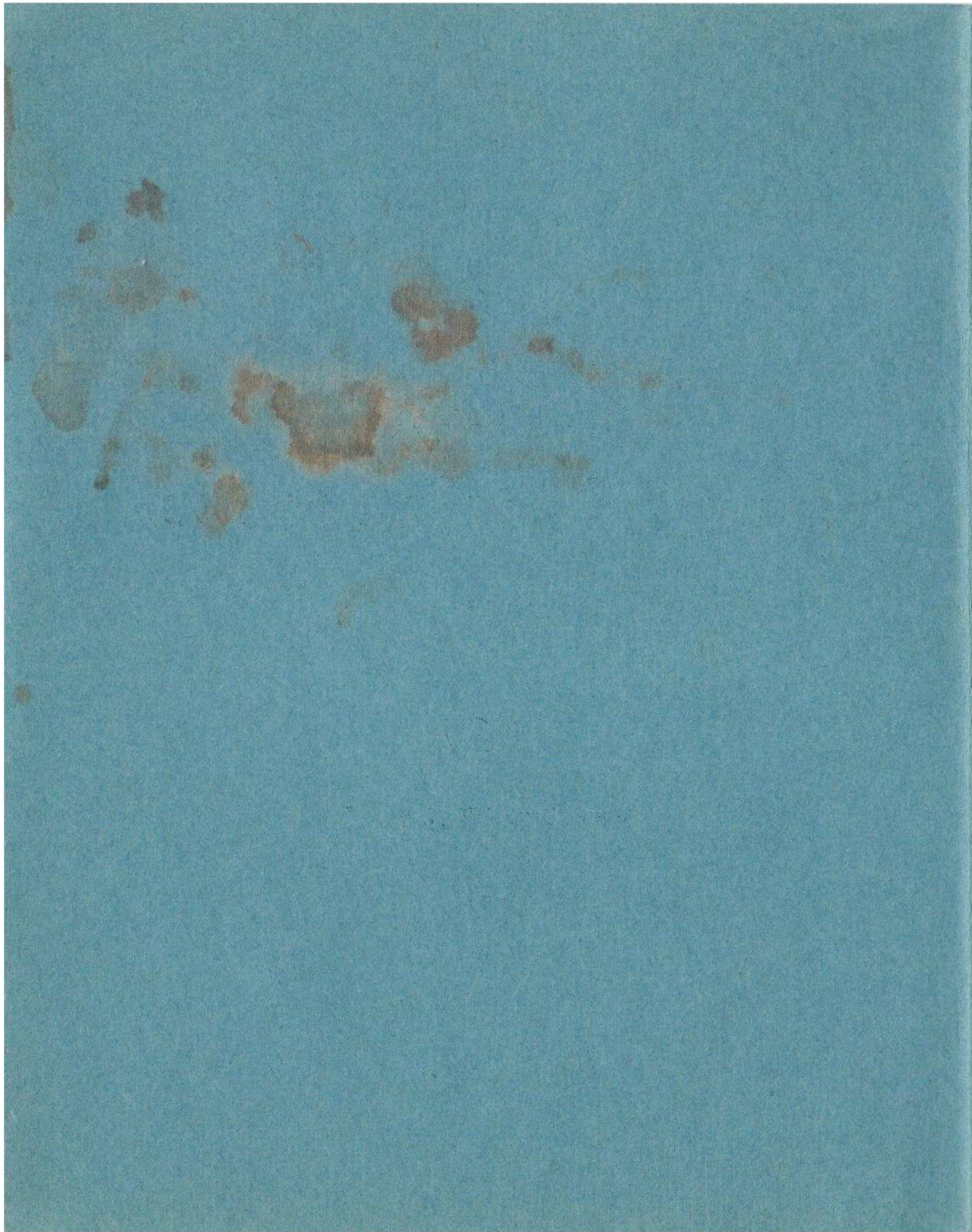
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By Command of the Army Council,

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THE WAR OFFICE,
30th September, 1937.

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THE ARMY POSTAL SERVICE IN WAR

CHAPTER I

1. Object and General Organization

1. The head of the Army Postal Service is the Director of Army Postal Services in London (D.A.P.S.).

2. The Army Postal Service in the field is under the general control of the D.Q.M.G. The direction of the service is the immediate responsibility of an Assistant Director of Army Postal Services (A.D.A.P.S.) or, if justified, a Deputy Director of Army Postal Services (D.D.A.P.S.).

3. The personnel for this service is provided by the Royal Engineers (Postal Section), which is drawn on mobilization from the Supplementary Reserve, Royal Engineers, and is officered by and recruited from members of the staff of the General Post Office.

4. The function of the Army Postal Service is primarily to maintain the efficient and expeditious postal communication between the home country and the land and air forces in the field necessary to the well-being and morale of the troops. The Army Postal Service also

carries official communications of which the urgency does not justify the employment of telegraphy or of special despatch riders. In addition, it conveys in the field, so far as transport permits, the traffic of the military forwarding organization.

5. In a friendly country, the military postal service, although quite distinct from and independent of the civil postal administration, may work in co-operation with the latter if considered desirable by the Commander-in-Chief. In a hostile country in occupation of the Army, and in districts where martial law is in force, the civil postal service is wholly controlled by, and in charge of, the Assistant Director of Army Postal Services.

6. All facilities provided by the Army Postal Service are at the disposal of foreign attachés and of civilians employed by or accompanying the forces.

7. In order to conform with the general organization of a force engaged on active warfare, the personnel of the Army Postal Service is divided into units as follows :—

Headquarters of Directorate.

G.H.Q. Postal Unit.

Corps Postal Unit(s).*

Lines of Communication Postal Unit(s).

Divisional Postal Units.†

Base Post Office.

* The corps postal unit is controlled by a D.A.D.A.P.S. included in corps headquarters establishment.

† For divisions, cavalry division or mobile division.

These units furnish the personnel for attachment to—

R.A.S.C. Railhead Supply Detachments.

R.A.S.C. Supply Columns.

Field and Army Post Offices * (as required).

In addition there is a home sorting and training depôt which is on the home establishment. At this depôt all letters and parcels sent by post from home to the forces are sorted, and reinforcements for the Royal Engineers (Postal Section) are enrolled and trained. The officer in command of the depôt acts as liaison officer between the War Office and the General Post Office.

* Post offices established at headquarters of formations are known as field post offices (F.P.Os.); those established on the lines of communication or at bases are known as army post offices (A.P.Os.).

CHAPTER II

2. Responsibilities of the Assistant Director of Army Postal Services

1. The A.D.A.P.S. is responsible to the Commander-in-Chief, through the D.Q.M.G., for the provision and administration of all postal communications. He is the adviser on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief on all technical matters connected with postal services. His headquarters will be at G.H.Q. or at such other place adjacent thereto as the Commander-in-Chief may direct.

2. In order to ensure the efficient distribution of mails to the forces, it is essential that the A.D.A.P.S. and his representatives at formation headquarters are furnished with advance information of all moves and the sources of supply of all units and are afforded the necessary railway transport facilities. (Road transport normally necessary in the field is included in War Establishments.)

3. He will arrange for the reception and despatch of letters and parcels posted in the field, taking care that any requirements of the general staff as to censorship are complied with.

4. He will establish intercommunication mail services in the field for official and private correspondence.

5. He will arrange, where desirable, for intercommunication between the Army Postal Service and the civil

postal service of the country or countries in which operations are being conducted.

6. He will provide, so far as is practicable, for the sale of stamps and registered envelopes, for the sale and encashment of postal orders and for such other postal facilities as may be appropriate in the field.

7. He will arrange with the Paymaster-in-Chief for the handing over to field cashiers of money received at field or army post offices surplus to requirements and for the supply to those offices of small change in local currency, if necessary.

3. Duties of Deputy Assistant Directors of Army Postal Services

1. *At headquarters of the directorate.*—The D.A.D.A.P.S. will be a general assistant to the A.D.A.P.S.

2. *At corps headquarters.*—The D.A.D.A.P.S. will be technical adviser to the corps commander on postal matters. He will co-ordinate the duties of the officers commanding divisional postal units. So far as the corps area is concerned, he will exercise the responsibilities described in Section 2, subject to the technical control of the director.

3. *At the base post office.*—

(i) The D.A.D.A.P.S. at the base will receive mails (a) from England and (b) from other postal administrations.

(ii) He will forward the mails from England to the

field or arrange for their collection if addressed to units in the locality. Headquarters, base sub-area, will be responsible for facilities for forwarding mails from the base.

(iii) He will receive mails from the field and, after complying with any instructions regarding the censorship requirements of the general staff, will arrange for their despatch to England, or to the country of address if such country is one with whose postal administration it is permitted to exchange correspondence direct.

(iv) He will arrange such internal road and rail mail services as may be directed by the A.D.A.P.S. (*Any necessary road transport in addition to that provided for in War Establishments will be supplied by the R.A.S.C. at the base.*)

(v) He will arrange appropriate post office counter facilities within the base area.

(vi) He will accept from the military forwarding organization, for transmission to the field, such traffic as he considers can be carried at all stages by the transport at the disposal of himself and of the Army Postal Services in the field. (*See Section 9, Cross posts.*) In the case of M.F.O. traffic (*e.g.* bulk gifts and general supplies of newspapers) which is not addressed to individuals or to units the M.F.O. will be held responsible for indicating or segregating the number of items to go to each unit or formation.

(vii) He will dispose, according to the addresses, of M.F.O. traffic coming down from the field, *e.g.* items for England will be handed to the M.F.O., while those proper to the D.A.G. will be collected from the base post office by a representative of the D.A.G.

4. *Duties of the officer commanding a Lines of Communication postal unit*

1. He will arrange under instructions from the A.D.A.P.S. for the conveyance and distribution of mails from England or other postal administrations to units and detachments stationed in the L. of C. area.

2. He will arrange for the forwarding to the base of mails for England, etc., posted by units and detachments in the L. of C. area.

3. He will arrange, so far as the personnel at his disposal permits, for appropriate posting and counter facilities in the L. of C. area, by means of stationary and travelling army post offices.

4. He will arrange for such cross post services as the A.D.A.P.S. may direct between places in the L. of C. area and between those places and the forward area or the base.

5. *Duties of the officer commanding a divisional or cavalry or mobile divisional postal unit*

1. He will act as technical adviser to the divisional commander on all postal matters and will exercise in the divisional area the general responsibilities of the A.D.A.P.S. as defined in Section 2, paras. 2, 3, 4 and 6, subject to technical supervision by officers of the Army Postal Service in higher formations.

2. Subject to the approval of the divisional commander, it will be within his discretion to retain the N.C.Os. and other ranks of the R.E.(P.S.) with the divisional (or cavalry or mobile divisional) supply column R.A.S.C.

(see War Establishments) or to detach therefrom N.C.Os. and other ranks for the establishment of field post offices at the headquarters of brigades or elsewhere in the divisional area, in order to facilitate postal working and meet the convenience of units.

6. Duties of N.C.Os. in charge of field post offices or army post offices

1. The N.C.O. and other ranks forming the establishment of a field or army post office will be attached to a formation headquarters, or to a unit, which will be responsible for their accommodation, rations, discipline and movement. Technical instructions and general directions will, however, be issued to them by the responsible officer of the R.E.(P.S.).

2. When a N.C.O. of the R.E.(P.S.) is on detached duty, he will notify to the R.E.(P.S.) officer concerned any movement of his F.P.O. and/or movement of units served by that F.P.O. that involve changes in the routing of mails. The information will be transmitted with appropriate secrecy; and the headquarters or unit concerned will, if it is considered desirable, encode the message. (The signal service will accept telegrams or D.R.L.S. letters signed by N.C.Os. of the R.E.(P.S.) who are on detached duties.)

3. The general responsibilities of the N.C.O. are as follows :—

- (i) To receive and distribute mails for the troops within the area of the headquarters or unit to which his F.P.O. is attached.

- (ii) To satisfy himself that the mails are handed over only to properly authorized persons, and to obtain a receipt for them.
- (iii) To obtain on Form F.F. 49 a signature for any registered letters or parcels handed over to post orderlies.
- (iv) To secure the return in due course of all mail bags sent on to units.
- (v) To accept for the post from members of the Field Force and attached civilians all letters that comply with the published censorship regulations.
- (vi) To accept for any available cross post services all official correspondence and also all private correspondence complying with the censorship regulations.
- (vii) To maintain at all reasonable times counter service for the sale of stamps, registration of letters, posting of parcels (which must conform to censorship regulations), sale and payment of postal orders and any other classes of authorized postal business.
- (viii) To ensure that cash in excess of immediate requirements is remitted, together with a Form F.F. No. 28 in duplicate, either to a field cashier or to some other post office: and that surplus stock is transferred to the base or any other appropriate post office.
- (ix) To render weekly accounts of his cash and other transactions.

- (x) To ensure that post office moneys and stock are adequately protected by himself and by the other members of the R.E.(P.S.) under his command ; or, in exceptional circumstances, to apply to the headquarters or unit to which he is attached for special protection or guards for such cash and stock.
- (xi) To keep a diary recording postal and general events with which his F.P.O. is concerned.

CHAPTER III

ROUTING OF MAILS

The method of conveying mails to and from the troops which is indicated in these instructions is the normal method; and, where a condition of mobile warfare obtains, it is likely that no other method will prove possible. Nevertheless an officer of the R.E.(P.S.) is not by these instructions relieved of the obligation to consider at all times whether he can accelerate the mails by the employment of the transport at his disposal or of such further transport as the appropriate military authority may, on representation of the facts, be prepared to provide.

7. Mails from home

1. Correspondence for the forces in the field will be collected into the home sorting office and training depôt, where it will be sorted, so far as possible, for individual units, according to information supplied from time to time by the War Office, and will be forwarded to the base post office as directed.

2. Correspondence will be made up into unit bags, or unit bundles, according to the amount of correspondence for each unit. Registered correspondence is not included in unit bags or bundles but is forwarded to field post offices and army post offices for distribution under signature to unit post orderlies.

3. Telegraphic advice as to the number of bags or bundles and the method and time of despatch will be sent to the base post office.

4. On arrival at the base, mails will be checked and any censorship requirements will be observed. Mails will then be dealt with as described in Section 3, para. 3 (ii).

5. On arrival at railhead mails will be taken over by the R.E.(P.S.) personnel allotted to the respective railheads, by whom any shortage or apparent violation of mail bags will be reported immediately to the M.C.O.

6. The R.E.(P.S.) personnel referred to in the preceding paragraph will be responsible for the safety of their respective mails until the arrival of the lorries allotted for mails in the formation supply column, R.A.S.C., when they will hand the mails over to the R.E.(P.S.) personnel with that transport.

7. After mails are loaded in the supply column at railhead, the postal personnel attached to the column will accompany the vehicles to the selected supply refilling point. Unregistered mails for individual units will at that point be distributed with the supplies on to the individual unit vehicles in the supply column. The R.A.S.C. loader with each unit's vehicle will sign for all sealed mail bags, bundles of letters or parcels handed over to him. His signature will be on one copy of a duplicate list prepared by the R.E.(P.S.) personnel. On the other copy the loader will obtain the receipt of the post orderly of the unit. When the loader's receipt has been obtained, the responsibility of the postal personnel in respect of ordinary unregistered

mails ceases and is transferred to that of the supply column, but, in order that the R.E.(P.S.) may hold a record of unregistered mails having reached their respective units, the unit post orderly's receipt will be handed over to the R.E.(P.S.) personnel by the loader on his next visit to the supply refilling point. Such mails are handed over to units at delivery point with the supplies.

8. Registered mails will remain in the custody of R.E.(P.S.) personnel. They will either be in charge of an R.E.(P.S.) N.C.O. travelling on the divisional headquarters supply vehicle or will be taken from rail-head to divisional headquarters by R.E.(P.S.) transport. On arriving at the divisional headquarters, F.P.O. registered correspondence will be sorted and will be taken by R.E.(P.S.) transport to field post offices or such other points as may be arranged for handing over to units. The postal personnel will prepare in duplicate a form (F.F. 49) detailing the items handed over for each unit. The original of F.F. 49 will be signed as a receipt by the post orderly receiving the registered mail.

8. Mails from the field

1. Correspondence from troops in the field will be handed in at field post offices or at such other points as may be arranged by the O.C. postal unit with the consent of the divisional commander. Unregistered mails handed in at brigade F.P.Os. will either be placed on the returning brigade headquarters supply vehicle or will be transferred to divisional headquarters F.P.O. by R.E.(P.S.) transport. All registered correspondence handed in at F.P.Os. will be transferred by the R.E.(P.S.)

to divisional headquarters F.P.O. and will be taken to railhead, in the custody of an R.E.(P.S.) N.C.O. travelling in the divisional headquarters returning supply vehicle; or in R.E.(P.S.) transport. The R.E.(P.S.) N.C.O. travelling in the divisional headquarters supply lorry will also be responsible for any unregistered mails on that vehicle. Receipts will be given by the R.A.S.C. loader concerned for any unregistered mails received by him from F.P.Os. ; similarly a receipt will be obtained by the R.A.S.C. loader from the R.E.(P.S.) personnel at railhead.

2. Only correspondence which conforms with the censorship regulations will be accepted by the Army Postal Service.

3. Correspondence will be date-stamped at the F.P.O. at which it is handed in. After date-stamping correspondence will be sorted in such manner or at such F.P.O. as the R.E.(P.S.) officer concerned may direct.

4. It will be at the discretion of the R.E.(P.S.) officer concerned whether correspondence for home and other postal administrations circulates to the base by returning supply train from railhead or by such road, air or other rail services as may be in existence and be available for the purpose. (For correspondence between formations, see Section 9, *Cross posts.*)

5. On arrival at the base, mails for home will, after censorship requirements have been met, be despatched to England as opportunity occurs. Mails for other postal administrations will be disposed of as directed by the A.D.A.P.S.

9. *Cross posts*

1. The term "Cross posts" is applied to services which provide intercommunication between formations, units or individuals within the area of operations. Although these services, as their name implies, carry correspondence from one part of the front to another, the term is also applicable to services carrying correspondence intended for, or originating from, the base, even though such correspondence may, within the theatre of operations, travel with the mails addressed to or from home.

2. Cross post services are intended (a) for the conveyance of correspondence not of such urgency as to warrant the use of a special despatch rider; (b) for the conveyance of parcels and items consigned by the M.F.O. to the field or items despatched from the field for ultimate conveyance by the M.F.O.; and (c) for the conveyance of private correspondence between individuals serving in the field.

3. So far as geographical and other considerations permit, the A.D.A.P.S. will endeavour to organize regular and frequent cross post services providing intercommunication between all headquarters and units within the theatre of operations.

4. For this purpose he will, as far as possible, establish air, rail and road services which may be suitable. The motor transport provided for the Army Postal Service in War Establishments will also assist in maintaining such services. In the base and L. of C. areas where the volume of cross post correspondence, parcels, etc.,

becomes considerable, it may be necessary to provide for this branch of the service special road transport not shown in War Establishments.

5. Time tables showing the working of the cross post services will be issued with headquarters administrative orders at the request of the R.E.(P.S.) officer concerned as and when circumstances permit. Such time tables must be regarded as cancelled when sudden tactical moves occur in the areas concerned, but every endeavour will be made to maintain communication.

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL

10. *Duties of post orderlies*

1. *Responsibility for the delivery of mails.*—The responsibility for the distribution of all letters, newspapers and parcels addressed to a unit is transferred to the regimental authorities on delivery to the post orderly.

2. *Credentials of post orderlies.*—Post orderlies, who should be carefully selected N.C.Os. or men, must be furnished with written authority, signed by their commanding officer, to obtain mails from the Army Postal Service.

3. *Registered correspondence.*—

(i) Post orderlies will be called upon to sign for all registered letters handed to them by the Army Postal Service.

(ii) Post orderlies must enter in Army Book 426 particulars of all registered letters received by them for delivery, and they must obtain a signature in these books for each item before parting with them. Where possible, each registered letter should be delivered by the post orderly direct to the addressee, and the latter's signature obtained in Army Book 426. Responsibility for registered articles received from the Army Postal

Service rests with the post orderly who signs for them, until he in turn obtains a valid receipt for them.

(iii) Registered correspondence which cannot be delivered will be endorsed as directed in para. 6 below and returned without avoidable delay to the Army Postal Service, a signature being obtained for each item.

(iv) Commanding officers are responsible that the instructions contained on the cover and pages 1 and 2 of Army Book 426 are fully understood and carried out by post orderlies. Where a post orderly is changed, steps should be taken to ensure that he hands over the Army Book 426 in use, together with any registered letters not signed for therein to his successor.

4. *Addresses of absentees.*—A careful record should be kept at the headquarters of the unit or department of all requests from officers and men for the re-direction of their letters and parcels, and such correspondence should be re-directed accordingly.

5. *Undelivered correspondence.*—Letters and parcels which cannot be delivered owing to the absence of the addressee will be dealt with as follows :—

- (i) If the addressee's address is known, they will be clearly re-addressed accordingly.
- (ii) If the addressee's address is not known, they will be endorsed "Left . . . (unit), address not known."
- (iii) If the addressee is in hospital, but the name of the hospital is not known, they will be clearly endorsed with the word "Hospital" in the top left-hand corner of the address.

- (iv) If the addressee is deceased or missing, they will be endorsed "Deceased" or "Missing", as the case may be, in the top left-hand corner of the address, the endorsement being signed by an officer, giving his rank.
- (v) If the addressee is not known to belong to the unit to which the letter, etc., is addressed, they will be endorsed "Unknown in . . . (unit)."

All re-directions and endorsements must be initialled and dated, and all earlier re-directions or endorsements must be struck out.

All undelivered correspondence should be re-directed or endorsed as described above and handed back without delay to a field post office.

6. *Mail bags*.—Officers commanding units are responsible that all mail bags are returned to the Army Postal Service with the least possible delay, and also for seeing that mail bags are on no account used for purposes other than the conveyance of mails.

7. *Labels*.—For reasons of secrecy, the labels of all mail bags received by post orderlies must be destroyed as soon as the bags have been opened.

11. *Miscellaneous*

1. Posting bags or boxes will not be provided by the Army Postal Service. All letters or parcels must be handed to R.E.(P.S.) personnel, who will not accept any item unless satisfied that the censorship requirements have been met.

2. Letters, not exceeding 4 oz. in weight, and post-cards emanating from the troops, from foreign attachés

and from civilians employed by or accompanying an army in the field will, if addressed to places in Great Britain (including the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands) and Northern Ireland, be carried free. Parcels will be prepaid and a fee will be charged for the registration of postal matter. All unregistered matter will be carried at the sender's risk.

3. Private correspondence for the forces in the field will be addressed with the addressee's number (if any), rank, name and unit (or appointment). In the case of a large unit, such as a regiment or battalion, the squadron or company should be specified.

4. Postal orders presented by civilians other than those officially attached to a Field Force will only be paid if, after full enquiry, it is clear that they have been accepted from soldiers in good faith and in ignorance of the fact that they were not currency or negotiable. Civilians presenting postal orders will be warned of the position and will be informed that it will be necessary to impound any further orders presented.

12. *General accounting instructions*

1. The N.C.O. in charge of each army post office and field post office will (on mobilization) be supplied with a stationery box containing a working supply of stamps, postal orders, etc. This fixed stock value must not be varied without the written authority of an officer of the R.E.(P.S.). Replenishment of this stock will be made by requisitions to:—

The Accountant General's Department,
Overseas Mails Branch II,
G.P.O., London, E.C.1.

When time will not admit of applications being made direct from post offices to the Accountant General's Department for stock, the standard arrangement will be that a main stock will be held at the base post office, or some other suitable army post office on the L. of C., the accounting for which will be direct to the Accountant General's Department, and the field post office stocks will stand as credit stocks in the account in respect of the base post office.

2. Requisitions for further supplies must be made in ample time to ensure that inconvenience is not occasioned to the Army by the absence of appropriate quantities of the various items stocked. Only in very exceptional circumstances may telegraph requisitions be sent.

3. Replenishments of stock must, immediately on receipt, be checked by the N.C.O. in charge of the post office.

4. A weekly account form (F.F. No. 26) will be completed and sent to the Accountant General's Department, G.P.O., London, or base accountant, etc., as the case may be, at the close of business each Saturday evening.

5. When the cash taken over the counter at an army or field post office is insufficient to meet demands for payment of postal orders, application will be made by the N.C.O. in charge to the nearest field or base cashier for an advance of cash not exceeding £20 (or the equivalent for local currency) for any office in any one week. Applications for advances of greater value must be made by an officer of the R.E.(P.S.). Forms for the purpose will be supplied to army or field post offices.

6. The amounts due in respect of surcharges raised on letters for the troops will, when collected, be entered on the receipt side of the weekly account and the entry will be certified by a second member of the army or field post office staff.

7. Any shortage of cash or stock must immediately be reported in as much detail as possible to the formation R.E.(P.S.) officer.

8. The accounts of each field or army post office should normally be checked once a month by an officer of the R.E.(P.S.).

9. Detailed accounting instructions are issued to each N.C.O. in charge of an army or field post office and these must be kept in the office.

