

# POSTAL



## Providing Sailors With A Little Piece Of Home

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MC3 AMBER SMALLEY

Mail call, mail call! During deployment, receiving a care package is a way for Sailors to get a taste of home. Aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) a small division of seven Sailors provides their shipmates with a piece of home one cardboard box at a time.

The routine out to sea can seem like groundhog’s day, but receiving mail can break up the repetition. Many Sailors compare receiving mail to receiving gifts on Christmas. From snacks to a resupply of needed items, mail call is an eagerly awaited time of the week to step back and appreciate the little things.

“In postal we get to raise Sailor’s morale,” said Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Joshua Dodson, a postal clerk aboard Abraham Lincoln. “You can tell the difference as soon as we get mail out. Receiving mail really makes a Sailor’s day immediately better.”

The logistics specialists who work in postal are dedicated to accountability when it comes to mail delivery.

“I am extremely proud of the effort that our Sailors in postal put in to getting mail on and off the ship,” said Chief Logistics Specialist Jennifer Lassen, leading chief petty officer of the post office. “They do hard work day in and day out to bring morale to Sailors without expecting to receive the thanks they deserve.”

Because mail goes through a long process, involving several larger Navy supply channels, before arriving aboard Abraham Lincoln, it takes longer to arrive than personal mail received on shore. All U.S. mail shipped to FPO AE addresses goes through Chicago O’Hare International Airport (ORD) to the closest Fleet Mail Center (FMC) per the current Mail Routing Instruction (MRI). The ship’s post office continuously updates the MRI throughout deployment to let the

head postal distributors at FMC Yokohama know where Lincoln is and where its shipping needs to go. Specific details included in these confidential naval messages include what AOR Lincoln is operating in, when RASs are scheduled, and when and where port visits will be.

FMC Yokohama and the Fleet Mail Routers use that information in conjunction with transportation routes, available lift capacities and transit times to every port worldwide, to determine the most expedient path for packages to take. FMC Yokohama uses other FMCs strategically placed across 6th, 5th and 7th Fleet AORs to warehouse and distribute that mail. (FMCs are located in Sigonella, Rota, Naples, Bahrain, and Yokohama.) Material is then taken from the FMC and sent via Carrier Onboard Delivery (COD) or to an in-port replenishment (INREP) location for a scheduled RAS.

Space permitting, mail is loaded onto CODs first, but that determination is made based on critical parts and passengers that are required onboard before the next RAS opportunity. If there are a lot of parts and passengers, mail gets sent from Bahrain to Jebel Ali (in most cases), where supply ships load out parts and mail for the next RAS. These INREPs are usually completed a few days prior to the actual RAS. Thus, material that gets to Jebel Ali on a Thursday may not make it to the ship until the following RAS, almost a week later.

The mail routers have to lean forward to ensure the mail does not lag behind us so we can receive it at every available opportunity. The ship’s schedule and any delays and extensions do throw wrenches into logistics movement as mail has to be sent days or a week in advance to meet the ship in the next AOR or at the next RAS event or port visit.

“Waiting for mail is a great opportunity to exercise patience,” said Lt. Andrew Stillerman. “Most people see only a palette count on RAS days, but in reality, getting mail onboard is a logistical orchestra playing its finest concerto. After understanding this process, Sailors can respect everything postal goes through to receive mail for their shipmates.”

During a RAS, qualified mail orderlies help sort and deliver mail to their departments which lessens the load for postal. During this deployment’s largest RAS, 311 tri-walls of mail were transferred to Abraham Lincoln.

“After the RAS, mail orderlies leave with their department’s mail, and we take the rest down to the post office and sort through it,” said Dodson. “We do a lot of research to figure out who the mail goes to if the mail is not labeled properly or if it is damaged.”

Additionally, on a routine basis, Sailors who work in postal carry heavy purple bags filled with packages up six steep ladder wells to the flight deck and load them into a C-2A Greyhound from the “Rawhides” of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40.

“I think most Sailors don’t realize we get mail more regularly than just RASs,” said Logistics Specialist 3rd Class Matthew Cowden. “It is a daily job of ours to sort through the incoming mail and call ‘mail call’ over the 1MC (the ships announcing system). Most of our mail orderlies help during our weekly RAS, but the biggest challenge comes when we need them to pick up their department’s mail or when we receive mail with incorrect labels.”

Postal also receives quite a bit of mail for Sailors who have left the command and whose information has changed. Hours are spent doing research with their directory cards, and if all other avenues are exhausted, they even reach out on Facebook to figure out where the

mail is supposed to be forwarded. For this reason and to prevent delays, it is important for all Sailors to ensure their address and information remains up to date.

“We often lose sight out here of our impact because we are not boots on ground, but watching the postal clerks work reminds me that we are out here supporting something bigger than the ship,” said Lassen. “It makes me proud to see the postal clerks out here making a positive difference to the Sailors aboard Abraham Lincoln while we are out here serving our mission.”

Through a process that begins long before packages are ordered or birthday cards sent, Abraham Lincoln’s postal team stays hard at work to maintain delivery channels and to keep Sailors connected to loved ones. They are and happy to contribute to morale onboard and thankful for the help from all other departments involved in this process.



- 1 Mail orderlies sort mail in the hangar bay during a replenishment-at-sea.
- 2 LS3 Ashanni Davis receives mail from YNSN Dominic Dublin.
- 3 LS2 Darryl Watson (left) and LS2 Joshua Dodson sort mail.



## Proper Address Format

Last, First, M.I Rate/Rank  
USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN CVN 72  
UNIT 100349 BOX \_\_ DIV \_\_  
FPO AE 09520

## Underway Hours

MON - SAT:

0930 - 1100

1300 - 1600

1800 - 2000