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Louis Fiset, Editor/Publisher
lfiset@outlook.com

Yet More Bomber Pouch Mail

by Louis Fiset



Figure 1: Bomber pouch (packet) mail originating at Paris and addressed to the editor of a news outlet in the U.S. Flown to Prestwick, Scotland via the British ADLS service, then onward to Washington, D.C. via a modified B-24 Bomber where it then entered the mail stream without censorship.

The cover in Figure 1 shows another example of Bomber Pouch mail that I first introduced in Issues 75 (Autumn 2016) and 82 (Summer 2018). The correspondence, originating in Paris, was mailed to the editor (Frank A. Hall) of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) weekly, located at 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, D.C. The masthead, in Figure 2, confirms the address.

Like the earlier examples, it bears a dated **PASSED**

FOR PUBLICATION boxed Field Press Censor censor marking, this one dated 15 November 1944, a “Bomber Packet” directive, and domestic postage canceled with a November 20, 1944 Washington, D.C. postmark. On the back (Figure 3) may be found U.S. Army Examiner translucent resealing tapes.

To review, the U.S. Air Transport Command operated a free transatlantic shuttle service using stripped down, long range B-24 bombers

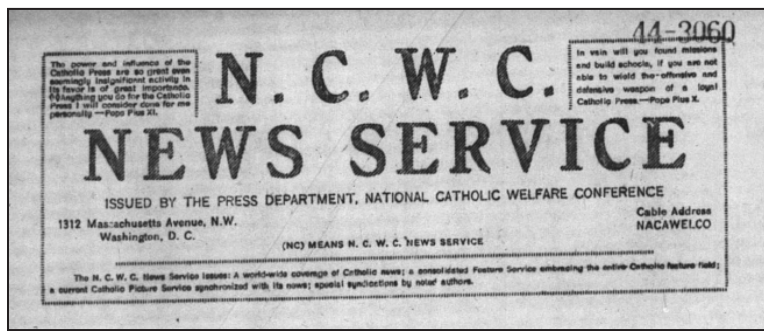


Figure 2: Masthead of the NCWC News Service weekly publication showing 1312 Massachusetts Avenue as the news media headquarters.

to transport important communications between Washington, D.C. and London, via Prestwick, Scotland. Eligible mail, which included copy for news outlets in the U.S., was to have a directive indicating it should be included as “bomber mail.” The Office of War Information underwrote the service, but correspondents had to apply postage for onward domestic postal service from Washington, D.C.

All covers shown in this article originated in France, which raises the question how such mail reached Prestwick for onward transatlantic transmission. The Royal Air Force provided

a service to ferry important dispatches between Europe and London, a service that lasted throughout the war using re-outfitted fighter planes. This service was known as the Air Despatch Letter Service (ADLS), and correspondents using this service often applied ADLS lettering to the front of the covers. This service suggests how Paris correspondents may have linked up their press copy with the B-24 bombers in Scotland.

While the postal history of expedited mail service between Europe and the U.S. provides collectors with an interesting side bar, the

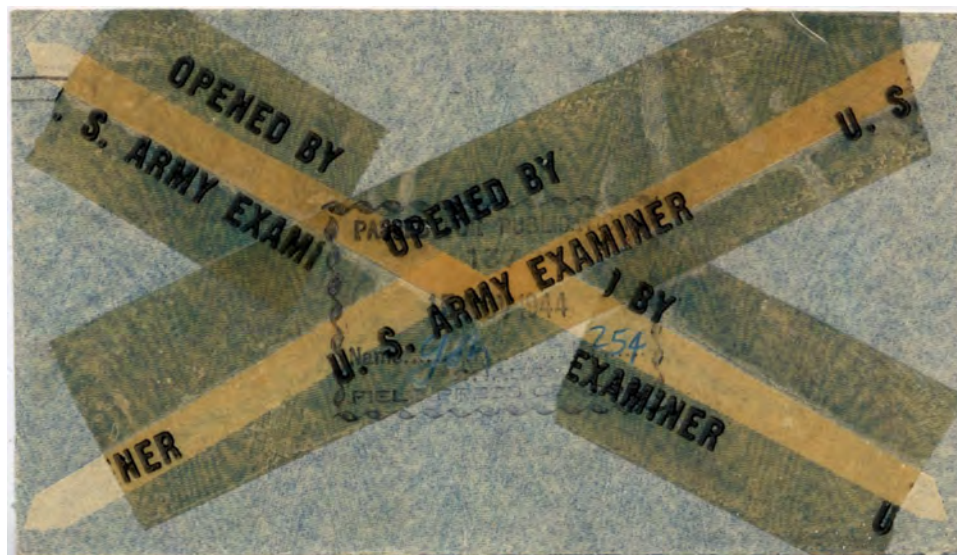


Figure 3: Reverse side of cover showing U.S. Army censorship resealing tapes. Covers may have been presented to the censors unsealed. Visible is the Press Censor’s rubber stamp marking dated 15 November 1944.

story of the originator of this particular correspondence is compelling from a personal view. The Rev. Anthony Coppens, a Jesuit Catholic, was the Belgian correspondent for the NCWC News Service during World War II and beyond. However, Coppens left Brussels in 1940 following the invasion of his country. He fled to Pau, in Vichy (“unoccupied”) France where he ran considerable risk forwarding copy to the NCWC regarding current events in Belgium.

Following the Allied invasion of North Africa resulting in the German occupation of the south of France in November 1942, Coppens was sent to safety at a convent in Sarlat, a village in Dordogne department north of Toulouse. Here it was hoped he would avoid capture and interrogation by the Gestapo. His whereabouts remained unknown until he showed up in Paris after the city’s liberation in August 1944.

The News Service copy enclosed in the cover above, postmarked Washington, D.C. November 20, 1944, was one of four short pieces Coppens mailed via bomber pouch in time to be included in the November 27, 1944 edition of the NCWC weekly paper.

Given the flimsy envelopes, likely each story was sent separately. These represent the first communiques since he resurfaced in Paris.

Reverend Coppens continued to submit copy to NCWC from Paris until he returned to Brussels shortly after the end of the war.

Bomber mail/ADLS covers

In my first article on this subject I asked readers if they could show a single cover bearing both ADLS and bomber pouch markings. There were no takers, but I have since found two examples hiding in publications I read with ongoing interest. Although neither author made reference to the ADLS directive, nevertheless, the documentation is there.

The first cover appeared in Thomas Boyle’s *Airmail Operations during World War II* and is illustrated in Figure 4. It shows official correspondence from the Public Relations Office (PRO) of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force at Paris (APO 887) to a news agency in New York. Postmarked October 9, 1944, the cover, likely contained an official press release. It bears the directive, ADLS/Via Bomber, which confirms the British

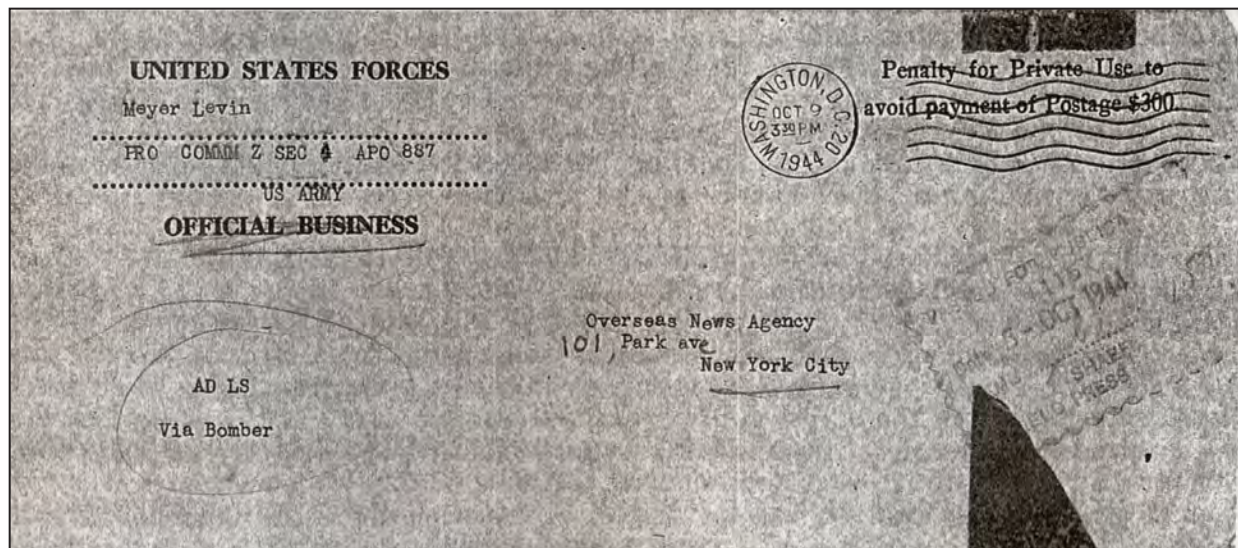


Figure 4: Press Relations Office (PRO) mail on official stationery containing an official press release to a news agency in New York City. Passed by Army press censors 5 October 1944. The cover details both ADLS and Via Bomber directives, thus linking the two services.

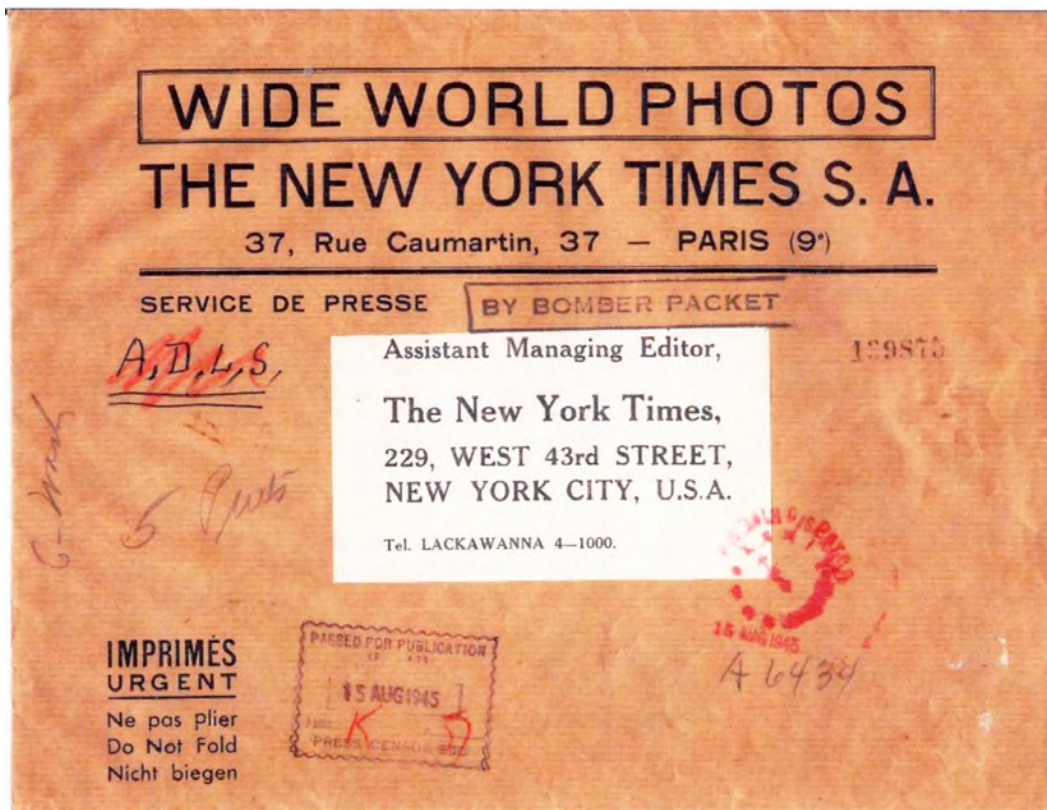


Figure 5: A New York Times oversized envelope of photos sent from Paris to New York by Bomber Packet. Passed for publication by Army press censors two weeks before the end of the war. Directives include both Bomber Packet and A.D.L.S. markings.

and US joint services role to expedite time sensitive mail.

The second cover (Figure 5) appeared in a *Military Postal History Society Bulletin* article by Dr. Thomas Richards, entitled “Bomber Pouch Mail & Press Censorship Markings.” The cover, with photos enclosed, bears both **BY BOMBER PACKET** and **A.D.L.S.** directives, although the latter inexplicably has been crossed out. Nevertheless, a relationship between the two services is confirmed here.

Too few examples of Bomber Pouch/ADLS mail has surfaced to draw definitive conclusions on how the two services operated jointly. However, what mail has surfaced shows how news of the war and postwar was conveyed to publishers in the U.S. prior to

resumption of fast and reliable mail service and uncensored cable traffic.

In addition, Prexie, Transport, and Win the War postal history collectors have a new opportunity to be on the lookout for additional examples of this mail, which will certainly dress up any collection or exhibit.

References

- Boyle, Thomas Jr. *Airmail Operations During World War II*. Mineola, NY: American Airmail Society, 1998, p. 132.
- Richards, Dr. Thomas. “Bomber Pouch Mail & Press Censorship Markings.” *Military Postal History Society Bulletin*, 51:2 (Spring 2012), pp. 6-8.

Civilian Public Service Camp Cover

by Stephen L. Suffet

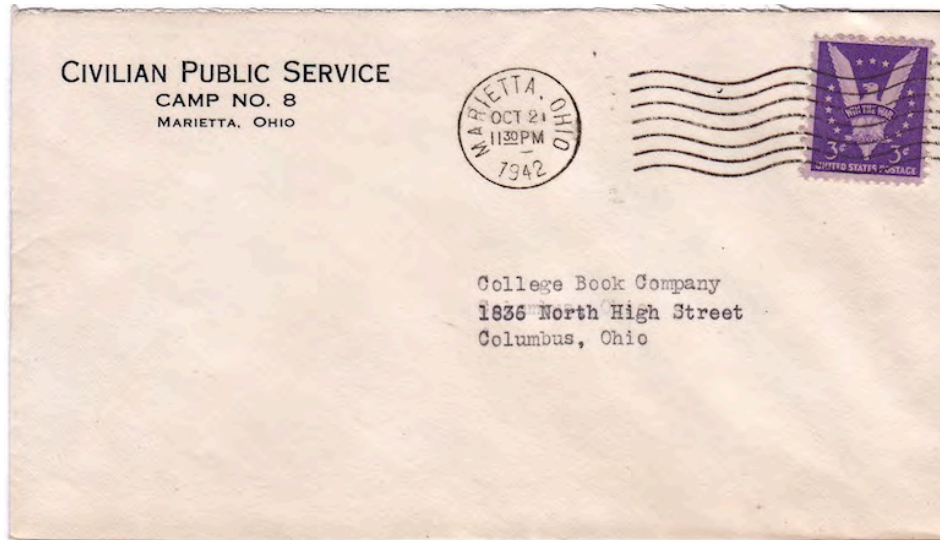


Figure 1: From the Menonite-run conscientious objectors Camp No. 8 near Marietta, Ohio, October 2, 1942.

According to Section 5(g) of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, the USA's first peacetime draft:

Nothing contained in this Act shall be constructed to require any person to be subject to combatant training and service in the land and naval forces of the United States who, by reason of religious training and belief, is conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form.

That section went on to say:

Any such person claiming such exemption from combatant training and service because of such conscientious objections whose claim is sustained by the local draft board shall, if he is inducted into the land or naval forces under this Act, be assigned to noncombatant service as defined by the President, or shall if he is found to be conscientiously opposed to participation in such noncombatant

service, in lieu of such induction, be assigned to work of national importance under civilian direction.¹

While about 25,000 World War II era conscientious objectors served as noncombatants within the United States Armed Forces, primarily in the Army Medical Corps, local Selective Service boards granted nearly 12,000 men the opportunity to do "work of national importance under civilian direction." Of these, approximately 2,000 worked as attendants or aides in mental hospitals, while the remaining 10,000 were assigned to one of the 152 Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps scattered throughout the USA and Puerto Rico. Most of these camps were located in rural, often very remote areas, although a few sat closer to urban centers. Some had been Civilian Conservation Corps camps. In most CPS camps the men worked on projects involving forestry, flood control, soil conservation, park maintenance, or fire fighting.^{2,3}

In addition, approximately 6,000 conscientious objectors went to federal prison during World

War II, either because their local Selective Service boards failed to recognize their claims, or because they refused to cooperate with the Selective Service System altogether.^{2,3}

The photo shows a cover from Civilian Public Service Camp No. 8, located along the Ohio River about seven miles southeast of Marietta, Ohio, and served by the Marietta post office. According to one report, “The men worked in the sixty-eight acre Forest Service nursery containing between 25-30 million pine seedlings. They sowed seeds, cultivated seedlings, transplanted young trees and prepared them for shipment to Ohio forests and farms.”⁴

Here are two quick observations regarding the cover:

Use of the 3-cent Win the War stamp is rather ironic.

Although this cover is from the camp administration rather than from an individual assignee, it is not an official business “penalty” envelope. While a handful of CPS camps for recalcitrant assignees were operated directly by the Selective Service System, almost all of the CPS camps were run by non-governmental agencies, in particular the historic pacifist churches. Thus, the postage had to be paid.



When it opened in June 1941, this particular camp was first run jointly by the Mennonite Central Committee and Brethren Service Committee. By the time the cover was postmarked in October 1942, the camp had been run solely by the Mennonites for five months. CPS Camp No. 8 closed in April 1943, whereupon its men were presumably reassigned to other camps.⁴

The Civilian Public Service program ended in March 1947 when the last extension of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 lapsed. The following year, when conscription was reinstated under the Selective Service Act of 1948, a provision for conscientious objection was again included. The Civilian Public Service program, however, was never revived. Conscientious objectors who did not serve in the United States Armed Forces as noncombatants were assigned to civilian alternative service jobs, most often in mental hospitals, but they lived in ordinary civilian housing rather than in special camps.

Footnotes (all retrieved December 3, 2018):

- ^{1.} <https://www.revolvy.com/page/Selective-Training-and-Service-Act-of-1940>
- ^{2.} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian_Public_Service
- ^{3.} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscription_in_the_United_States
- ^{4.} <http://civilianpublicservice.org/camps/8/1>

Figure 2: Photograph of CPS Camp No. 8 near Marietta, Ohio, circa 1941-1942. [Digital Image © 2011 Brethren Historical Library and Archives. All Rights Reserved.]

Development and Deployment - U.S. Atomic Bomb 1942-1945

by Joseph Bock

Part 2

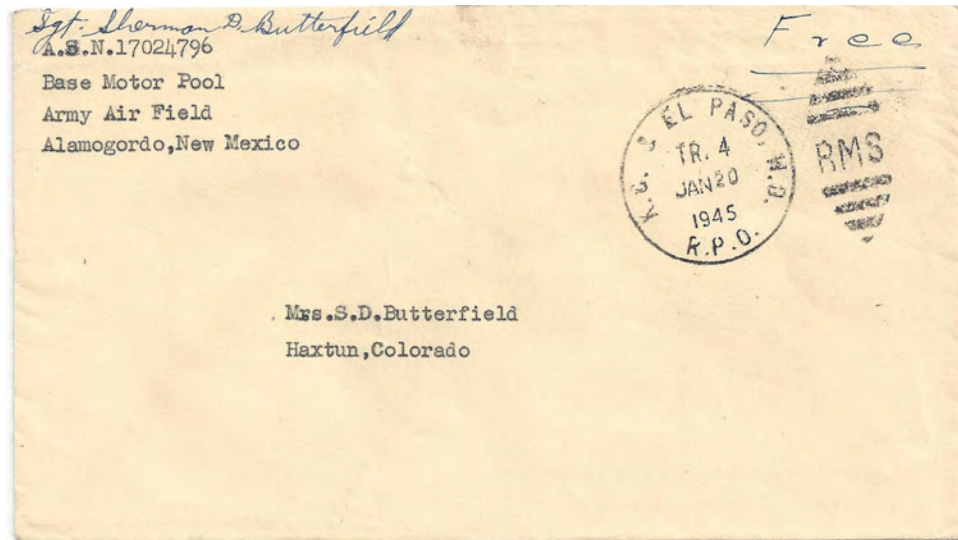


Figure 1: Free frank letter posted on 20 January 1945 from Army Air Field, Alamogordo, New Mexico. No outbound covers have been reported from participants associated with this historic atomic test, either at this location or specific date period.

Trinity Test 16 July 1945: In late 1944 a small group of Army Engineer troops were dispatched to Alamogordo Air Field in south central New Mexico to establish a base camp in a remote desert area of the base. On 16 July 1945 the first atomic bomb was detonated from a 150 foot steel tower. It produced a gigantic mushroom cloud that rose to a height of 10,000 feet. The brilliant flash of light was visible in Santa Fe, 180 miles to the northwest.



Figure 2: Photograph taken 20 July 1945 at the Trinity test site showing melted remains of the mostly vaporized 150 foot steel tower after detonation of the first atomic bomb. Present are two prominent test observers, physicist Robert Oppenheimer, who directed the Los Alamos Laboratory, and General Leslie Groves who served as the overall head of the Manhattan Project. Success of the test meant an atomic bomb using plutonium was feasible and could be readied for use by the U.S. military.

“Gadget”: The successful test of the first atomic bomb, nicknamed the “Gadget”, took place in a remote section of the very large and mostly uninhabited air base, abandoned immediately afterwards. Enrico Fermi, one of the observers,, calculated the explosion at 10,000 tons of TNT.

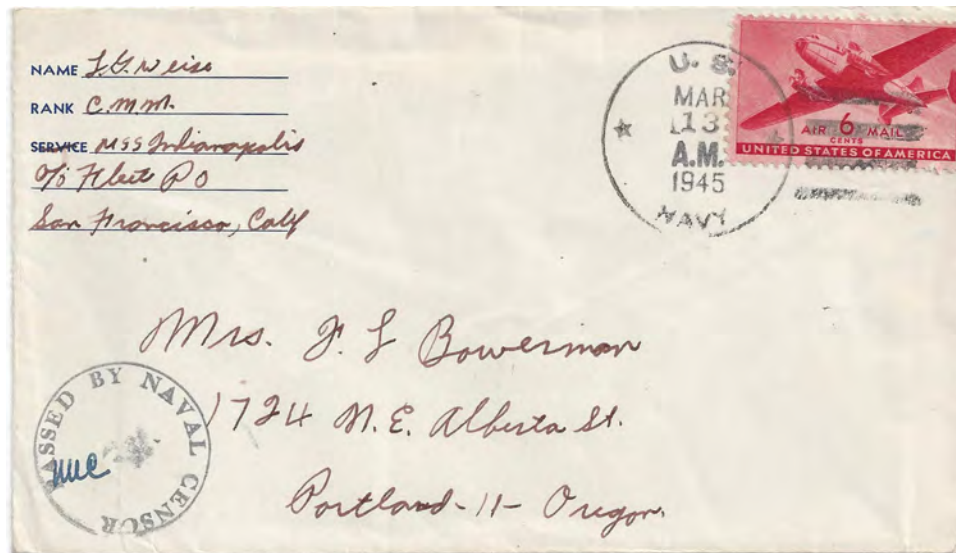


Figure 3: From a sailor aboard the USS *Indianapolis*, posted 13 March 1945. U.S. Navy censored. The sender, chief machinist mate L.G. Weiss, was not aboard the ill fated ship in July, and survived the war.

Transport of “Little Boy” to the Pacific: On the same day of the Trinity Test, the heavy cruiser, USS *Indianapolis*, CA-35, departed San Francisco under high security for Tinian Island in the northwest Pacific Ocean. Except for the Captain and one officer in charge, the crew was unaware of the special cargo consisting of enriched uranium components being transported for the “Little Boy” atomic bomb. Upon the ship’s return voyage to Leyte, on 30 July 1945 it was torpedoed and sunk in the Philippine Sea by a Japanese submarine. Of the 1,100 crewmen aboard, approximately 900 men escaped into the water, but only 317 survived the five-day shark infested ocean ordeal due to a much delayed rescue resulting from a tragic failure in communications.



Figure 4: Posted 28 April 1945 from Wendover Field, Utah. Sender Lieutenant Fred J. Olivi was the copilot on “Bockscar”, the B-29 that on 9 August, 1945 dropped the second atomic bomb, on Nagasaki.

Pilot Training: Under strict secrecy, a select group of Army Air Corps personnel known as the 509th Composite Group was activated on 17 December 1944. The pilots, under the command of Colonel Paul Tibbets, began bombing training in a remote desert location near Wendover, Utah to fly modified B-29 bombers in preparation for carrying the first atomic bombs.



Figure 5: 14 Feb. 1945 cover from APO 632, sent by Lieutenant Paul Ackerman, a member of the 509th Composite Group, whose pilots were undergoing high altitude bombing training over waters near Batista Field, Cuba.

Tinian Island, in the northern Mariana Islands, became the world's largest airfield in 1945 whose strategic location enabled almost daily aerial bombing of Japan. Following capture from the Japanese, the entire northern end was converted into runways to accommodate the entire 313th Bombardment Wing of Boeing Superfortress B-29 bombers. In May 1945 the 509th composite group was transferred to Tinian. Independent and secret from all affiliated military units on the island, it consisted of 1,767 military personnel, and 15 B-29 and five C-54 aircraft.

Figure 6: Posted 30 June 1945 from Tinian Island (APO 247). Sent by Lt. Fred J. Olivi, copilot on the B-29 "Bockscar" on the Nagasaki mission.



Nagasaki Target: Nagasaki was not the initial target for the deployment of the third atomic bomb, called "Fat Man". But weather obscured the target over Kokura and the alternate city of Nagasaki was bombed instead. The delays wasted precious aviation fuel, and the plane was unable to return to distant Tinian. Instead the B-29 made an emergency landing at closer Okinawa with one engine shut down and the fuel gauges reading zero.



Figure 7: Posted 7 July 1945 (APO 247 - Tinian) from Staff Sergeant George R. Caron, tail gunner on the B-29 "Enola Gay" that flew the Hiroshima Mission.

Photographing Hiroshima: Sgt. George R. Caron was an amateur photographer and with a small camera took the only surviving photo of the atomic mushroom cloud over Hiroshima. Caron's photo was released to the news services and seen all over the world. The original photo includes his handwritten signature "George R. Caron tail gunner - Enola Gay Hiroshima 6 Aug. 1945."



Figure 8: Posted at Tokyo Bay, where the Japanese formal surrender took place on 2 Sept. 1945 on board the Battleship USS *Missouri*. U.S. Navy cancel and "Tokyo Bay" cachet from USS *Siriana*, AKA-43, an amphibious cargo attack ship.

Tokyo Bay: In a massive show of force, naval ships of the U.S., Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand began assembling near Tokyo Bay during the last week of August 1945. Almost 300 battleships, destroyers, tenders, hospital ships and minesweepers awaited their turn to sail through the mine fields guarding the entrance to Tokyo Bay. The surrender itself, conducted by General Douglas MacArthur, took place on 2 September 1945 aboard the battleship USS *Missouri*. Several U.S. ships with postal facilities prepared their own cachets for the event, most of them dated between 29 August and 25 September 1945.