

# Rhodesia - Independence War Mail

## 1974-1980

### Purpose

This exhibit presents Rhodesia's government forces mail, detailing how mail operations worked and showing mail from campaigns of the war.

You would be BORED by this exhibit if it only showed you the covers: they are small, unfranked date stamped envelopes. To advance the story, photos are included, which are quality reproductions from contemporaneous books illustrating the time, place and situations.

### Timeframe

You will see mail from military post offices in 1974 through their close and transition to Zimbabwe in 1980.

### Background

In philately, the mail of this conflict has been called Rhodesia's Independence War Mail. Historically, the war is called the 2nd Chimurenga War, Rhodesia's Bush War, and Zimbabwe's War of Independence. This was a civil war pitting Rhodesian government under Ian Smith against multi insurgent forces with Cold War influences.

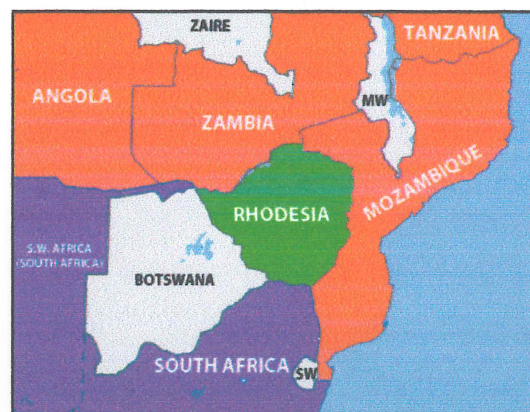
Ultimately, Rhodesia, a country the size of California, became a free black African nation re-named Zimbabwe.

Items of interest are double boxed, research is noted.

Map of Southern Africa in 1974 with Rhodesia in green →

### Exhibit Plan

Independence War Mail	Frame 1
Independence War Mail Types	Frame 1-2
Serving Units Mail	Frame 2-3
Military Communicating - Security	Frame 3
Campaigns of the War	Frame 4-5
Military Coordination—Elections	Frame 5
After the War & Independence	Frame 5



Rhodesia Army Official Free Forces Mail surface domestic letter to Bulawayo.

# Rhodesia - Independence War Mail Synopsis

## **Treatment:**

The organization is to first show the mail markings, then types of mail (inward, outward, etc.) in overview. From there, military mail is shown, identifying the troops and military locations established. The exhibit aims to simplify a complex military postal situation. Next shows mail from each of the military campaigns, which are organized by name and shown in order of their establishment geographically. This was a war fought on multiple fronts with the enemy crossing borders from all sides.

In describing the military aspects of the war, the exhibit is organized geographically by military operation, not chronology as the war was fought on many front simultaneously during the 1974-1980 timeframe. The covers are not organized chronologically for this reason. The Rhodesian military established its military operations geographically to fight enemy forces crossing borders.

Ephemera added to offset the "not much to look at" official free, unfranked modern mail. This helps distinguish the troops.

Photos are quality reproductions of war photos which are matched to advance the storyline. These are not direct unit by unit or soldier by soldier photos, they are the "tie" between the picture and the covers cannot be that precise. However, the pictures very much help to describe the conditions, technology of the time, troops who were engaged to help the viewer understand this mail.

## **Importance:**

The exhibit show military mail in modern era, which we don't often see and about a civil war conflict with Cold War influences.

## **Knowledge & Research:**

This is the only exhibit of its kind. The literature on the subject is limited to a few articles. My work has been to explain the conflict simply and show the material logically. Some personal study in interviewing soldiers as to how the mail was moved and delivered.

## **Rarity:**

More challenging items are highlighted. Generally, the mail is scarce as people did not generally keep the mail—it was unfranked, did not appear collectible and is modern mail. Since the troops were residents of the country, many times they could simply use the phone instead of send a letter. In addition, after the war there was a large scale exodus from Rhodesia after White Africans lost their government power, land and livelihoods.

The photos: these are not rare. The "zaps" are difficult to find, about forty types exist only, quantities unknown.

## **Highlights:**

Mail shown from particular units or engagements are highlighted, as are some election related items.

The "zaps" - these are postal items, put out by the military post office, available to affix to the back of envelopes.

## **Don't Look for:**

Lots of mail types—the military mail was **restricted to domestic letter mail**.

## **Condition:**

For every cover shown, a dozen were skipped for poor markings, tape stains and tears. The rubber markers did not hold up well, nor was the placement and practice of marking uniform or were markings of high clarity of strike.

## **Who were the soldiers and why this matters with the mail:**

Conscription: All white males to the age of 50, service was required for three months per year. Black African troop volunteers also served in large number alongside.

## **References:** Rhodesia Study Circle Journal articles:

"Military Post Offices: Rhodesian Army 1974-1979" ed George Stewart, RSCJ 196, September 2000, 105-111.

"Rhodesia's Independence War" by Jane Lashbrook, RSCJ 153, July 1990, 175-177.

"Fourteen Years of Forces Mail 1966-1980" by Cecil Russell, RSCJ 132, December 1985, 168-174.

The Postal History of Southern Rhodesia, Ted Proud

**General reference:** For Judges: Wikipedia for general historic info.

The Bush War in Rhodesia by Dennis Croukamp

Contact: A Tribute to Those Who Serve Rhodesia by John Lovett

South Africa's Destabilization of Zimbabwe, by John Dzimba

Frame 1  
Page 1  
Kathryn Johnson



# Independence War Mail

## Background of Conflict

### Rhodesian Forces Military

The Rhodesia government aimed to fight African Nationalists who for an advocated armed struggle to bring about black rule, primarily denouncing the wealth disparity between the races.

### Cold War Underpinnings and fighting forces

- ◆ Rhodesian Forces drafted white Rhodesian men and recruited western trained special forces, many were recruited Vietnam veterans from US.
- ◆ The Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and its military wing ZIRPA supported by Russia.
- ◆ Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) under leadership of Robert Mugabe and its military wing ZANLA were supported by China.

These groups fought separate and jointly against the Rhodesian security forces, with the conflict was waged at the borders.

### Rhodesian Forces Military Mail

The exhibit shows Rhodesian Forces Mail. This mail traveled through both the Rhodesian Post Office and Rhodesian Military post. Rhodesia's Military Post was established in February 1974 that carried mail to and from troops to the Rhodesian post for onward delivery.

### The Rhodesian Military Forces

All white males *to the age of 50* were required to serve in the Rhodesian military of white minority-led government of under Prime Minister Ian Smith for *three months per year*. The mail shown is predominately mail from the these white male citizens serving in the military.

### Perceptions

The Rhodesian government saw the conflict as a fight between the whites population on behalf of the whole population, including the Black majority, against externally financed parties made up of predominantly black radicals and communists.

The African Nationalists considered their country occupied and dominated by a foreign power, namely Britain, and sought black majority rule.

### The End of the Conflict

- ◆ A negotiated settlement led to a transition to internationally recognized black majority rule in 1980 under the leadership of Robert Mugabe, ending rule of Prime Minister Ian Smith.
- ◆ Rhodesia was renamed Zimbabwe in 1980.

Press Photo reproduction of Prime Minister Ian Smith addressing troops





## Independence War Mail

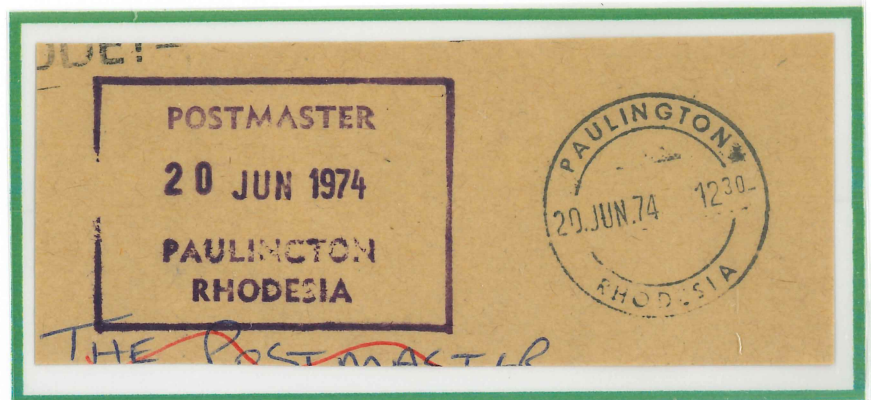
## Forerunner: Military Mail Postmaster Date Stamps

Small detachments of troops and police spread through the country. Village post office "Postmaster" rubber stamps were used to authorize Forces Free Mail for military with no access to military bases. As guerrilla activity increased along the Mozambique border, units of a newly raised Guard Force started taking over responsibility for protecting villages.

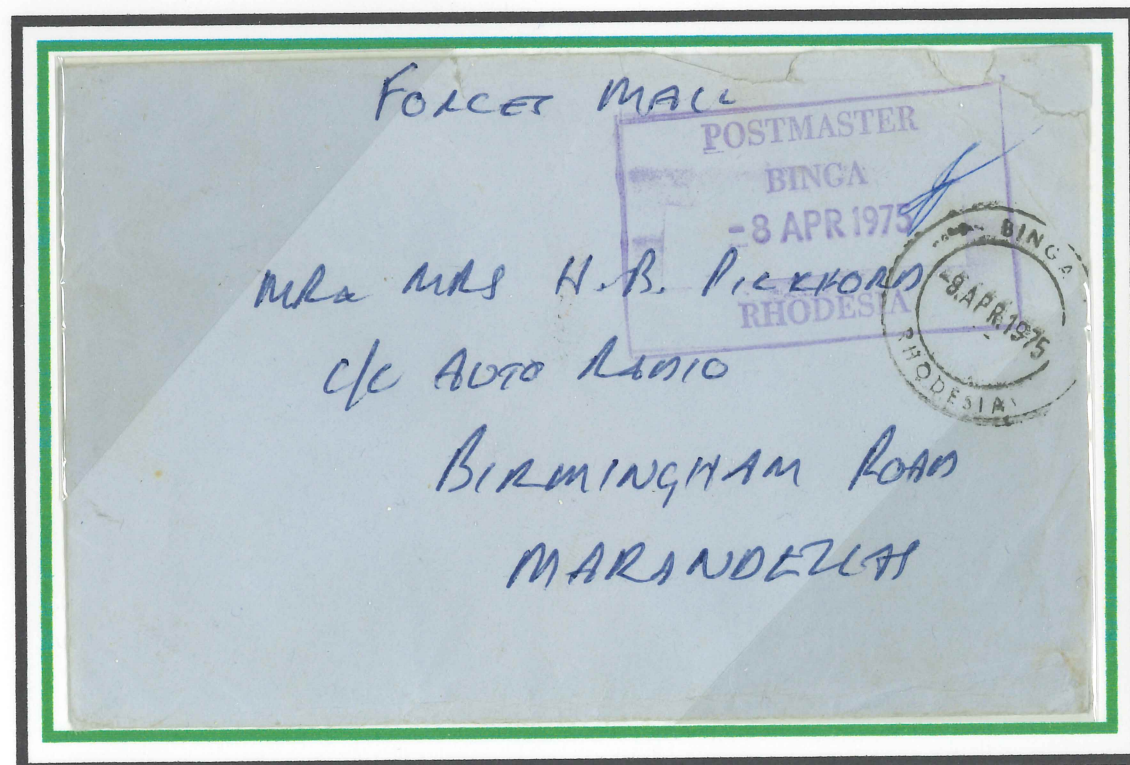
These interim "Postmaster" handstamps are the initial evidence of escalating terrorist tensions.

### Postmaster Date Stamps:

- ◆ Travel free of adhesive surface postage
- ◆ Authorized for military mail carriage
- ◆ Full letter (below) would also have inscription, "Forces Mail".



Postmaster date stamp, June 20, 1974, Paulington.



Forerunner Letter of Rhodesian Independence War: Forces Mail "Postmaster" date stamp Binga, April 8, 1975.



**Independence War Mail  
Rhodesian Army**

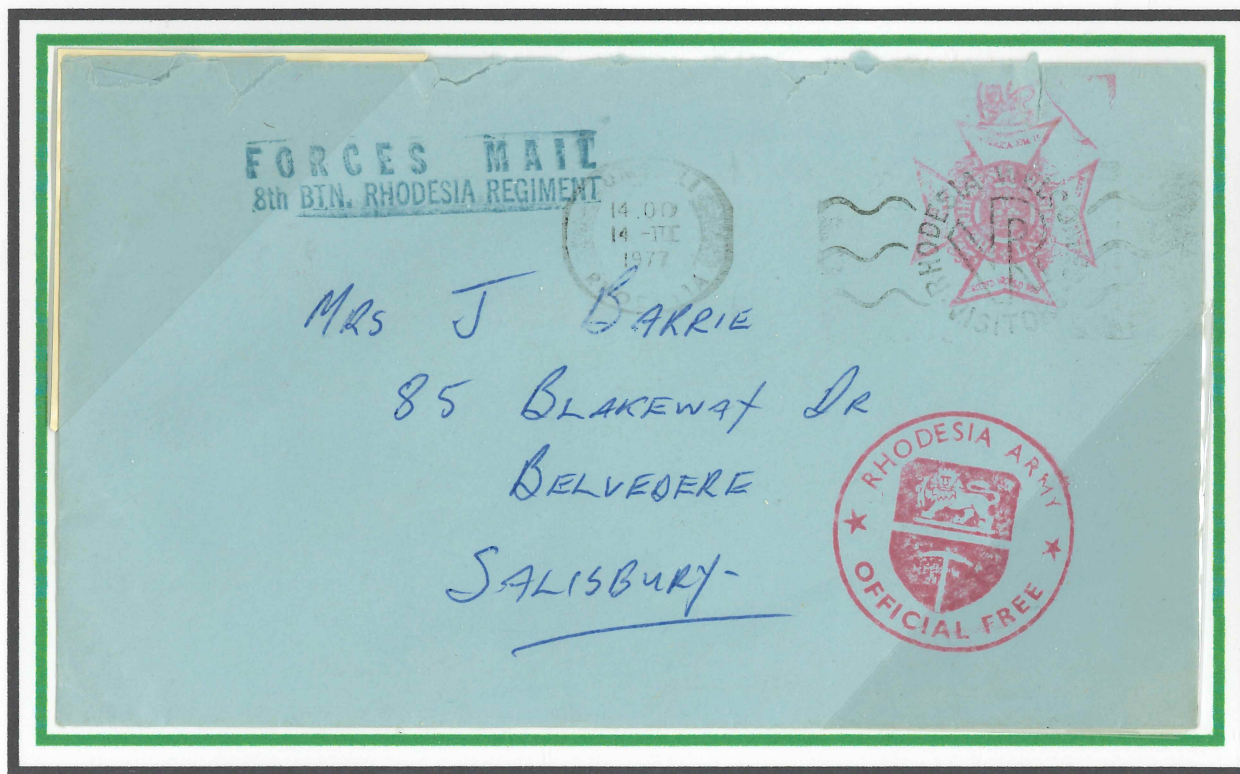
**Official Free Mail Markings  
Circular and Cross Markings**

Communicating that mail was "forces mail" and "Official Free" was needed for Civilian mail processing and to avoid postal franking charges. Regimental cross and circular markings as below were rarely used.

Circular Rhodesia  
Army Official  
Fort Victoria,  
July 1976 only



Rhodesian Army forces mail letter from Umtali to Bulawayo, entered Civilian mail at Chipinga, same day.



Rhodesian Regiment  
cross & unit  
battalion handstamp  
seldom seen.

8th Battalion Rhodesian Regiment, Regiment cross, slogan cancel, Causeway March 14, 1977, reverse date stamped, Army next day Salisbury.



## Independence War Mail Rhodesian Army

## Official Free Mail Markings Boxed Date Stamp and Shield

### Starting this Military Mail System

- ◆ Initiated February, 1974 for mail to and from troops, working in conjunction with the civilian postal system.
- ◆ Needed for operations in the remote and hostile environments and flexible to changes in troop locations where service members were located or passing through.
- ◆ **Only letter mail** was accommodated.

### Official Free Mail Markings

- ◆ Mail from service members with "Forces Mail" inscription relevant unit handstamp sent free of charge. Inward mail required surface letter franking.
- ◆ Appropriate labeled mail was initially processed at 2 Brigade Headquarters, Old Cranborne Barracks for onward delivery to M.P.O.s in the military positions.
- ◆ Mail was further delivered into the field by whatever Military Transport was available, field **helicopters** and **Land Rovers** most often used.

Rhodesian Army  
Official Free Shield  
colors vary



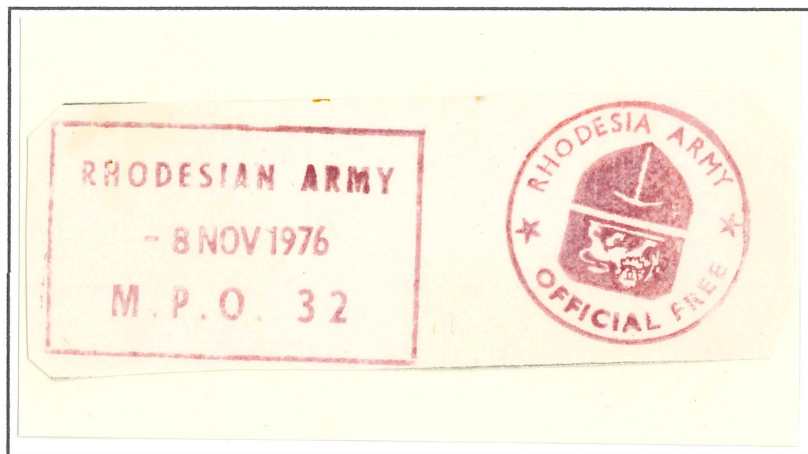
Inverted Rhodesian  
Army Shield  
Rhodesian Army  
boxed date stamp  
& M.P.O. address

Rhodesian Army forces mail letter from Umtali to Bulawayo, entered Civilian mail at Chipinga, same day.



**Independence War Mail  
Rhodesian Army**

**Official Free Mail Markings  
Inverted Shield**



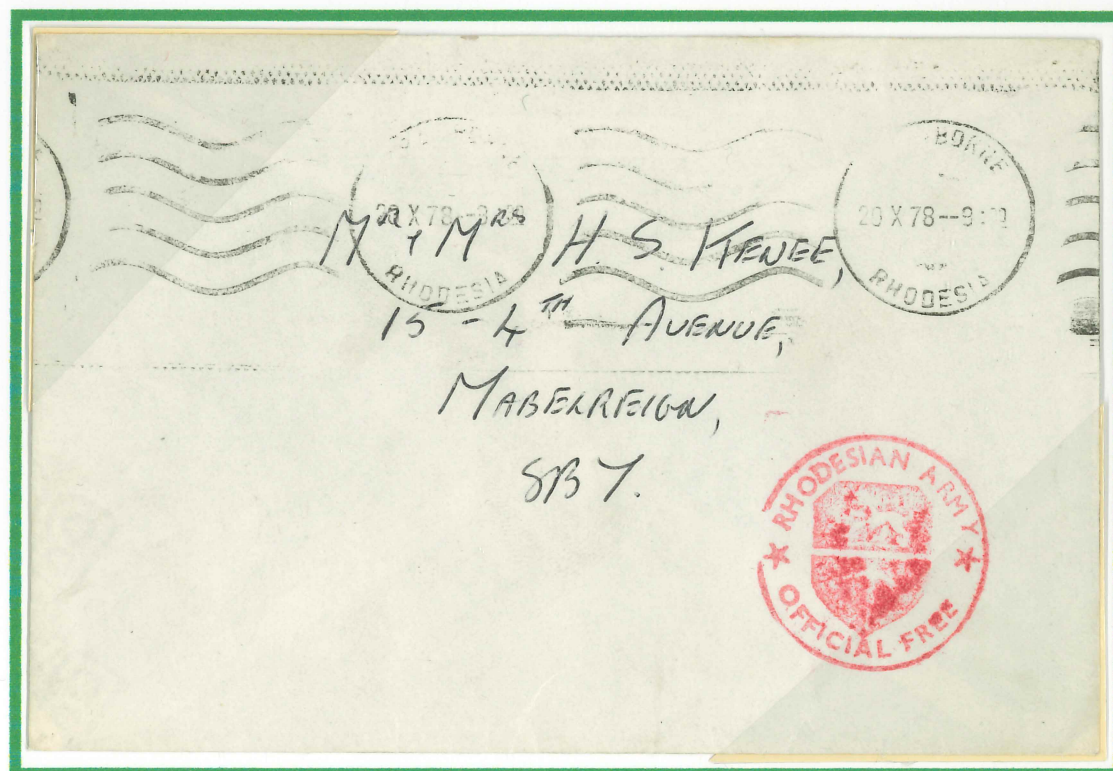
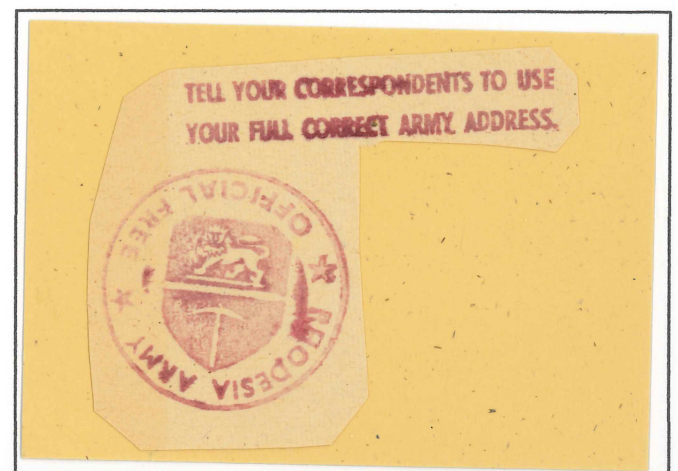
Rhodesian Army M.P.O. 32 , Umtali

**Three Interesting Characteristics:**

- ◆ Inverted Shield—base points at Rhodesia Army
- ◆ Rhodesia Army instead of Rhodesian
- ◆ Date stamp indicates Rhodesian Army - here the N is on Rhodesia.

**Here the Outer Circle Appears Inverted→**

- ◆ Rhodesia Army—Official Free circle is inverted in printing to allow the shield to be upright aligned with the text.
- ◆ Handstamp related to Army addressing not used on other letters seen.



Here with "N" Rhodesian Army Official Free, letter cancelled in Civilian mail. Note: Rhodesian Army

**Independence War Mail  
Rhodesian Army**

**Boxed Date Stamps  
Military Post Office—M.P.O.s**

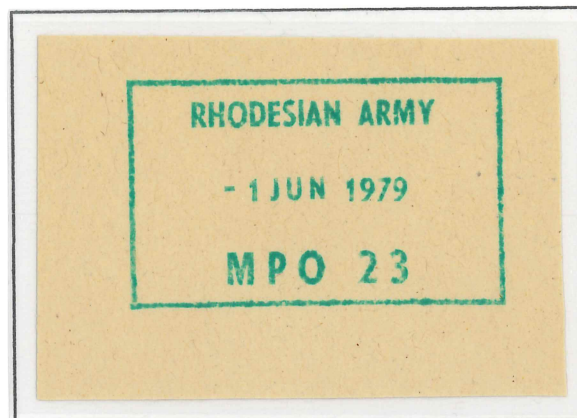
Rectangular date stamp were used on Rhodesian military mail in the mid 1970s. While layouts varied, as shown below, the content was:

Rhodesian Army

Date

M.P.O. and unit number

These M.P.O. unit numbers then were linked to Operation names, as below.



Rhodesian Army M.P.O. 23 , Salisbury

Location	Military Post Office	Major Units	Operation Name
Salisbury, North and East	M.P.O— Salisbury	Army, Air, Police	Operation <u>Hurricane</u>
Umtali, East	M.P.O— Umtali	Army	Operation <u>Thrasher</u>
Bulawayo, South and West	M.P.O— Bulawayo	Army, Police	Operation <u>Tangent</u>
Fort Victoria, Central	M.P.O— Fort Victoria	Army, Air	Operation <u>Repulse</u>
Gwelo, Central	M.P.O— Gwelo	Army, Air	Operation <u>Grapple</u>



Rhodesian Army date stamp sample impression from Rhodesian Army headquarters barracks. This shows M.P.O. 2, branches: M.P.O. 21, 22 to cover main operational areas with troops.

*only known example*

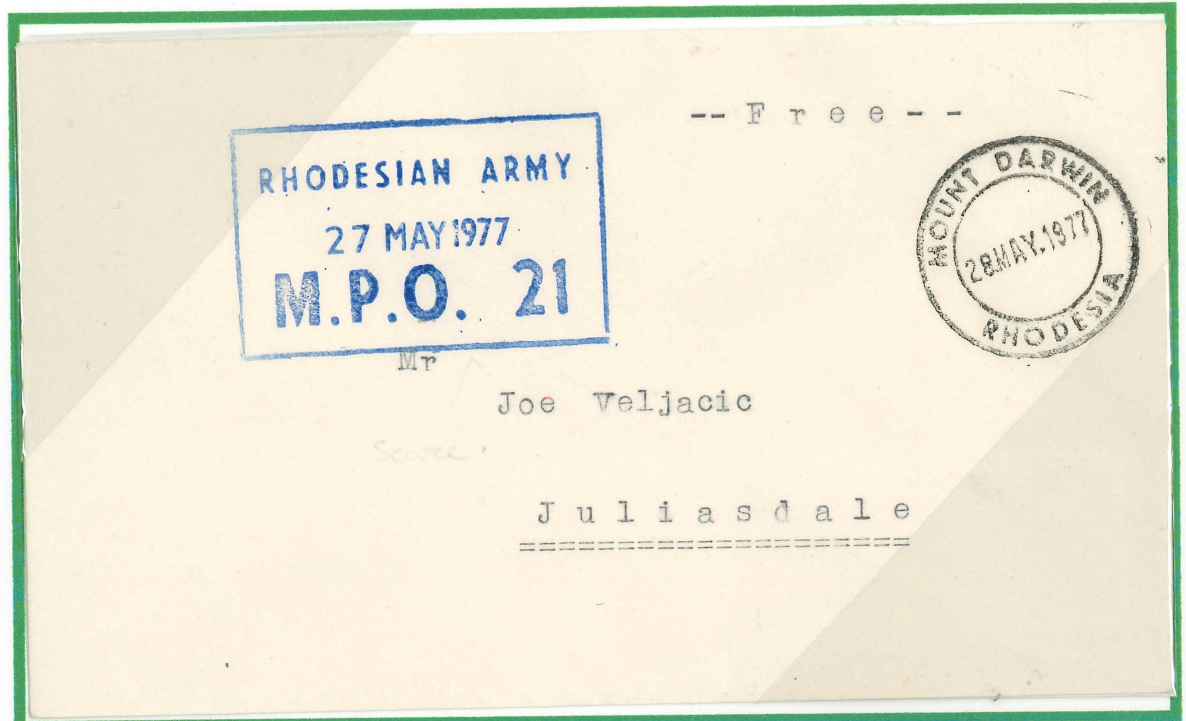


**Independence War Mail  
Rhodesian Army**

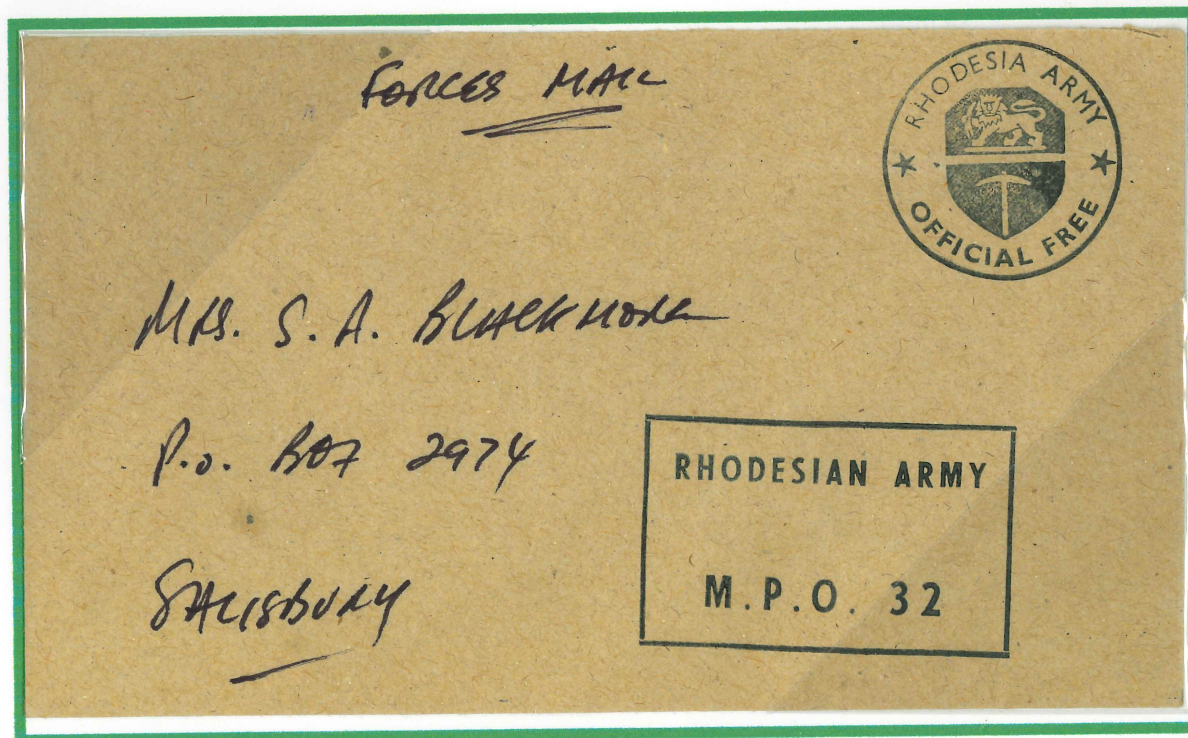
**Reading Boxed Date Stamps  
Military Post Office—M.P.O.s Covers**

Each M.P.O. area was divided into sub-M.P.O.s. Mails were sorted at each main M.P.O. into Company lots, and bagged according to the sub-M.P.O. for transmission.

Dated boxed  
marking →  
Large "M.P.O."



Rhodesian Army M.P.O. 21, Mount Darwin to Juliasdale with typed "Free" - typically "Forces Mail".



**Undated boxed  
marking.  
These were  
seldom used.**

Rhodesian Army M.P.O. 32, Umtali. Rhodesia (no "N") Army Official Free marking.



## Independence War Mail Rhodesian Army

## Boxed Date Stamps Composition & States of Wear



Rhodesian Army M.P.O. 42, Salisbury

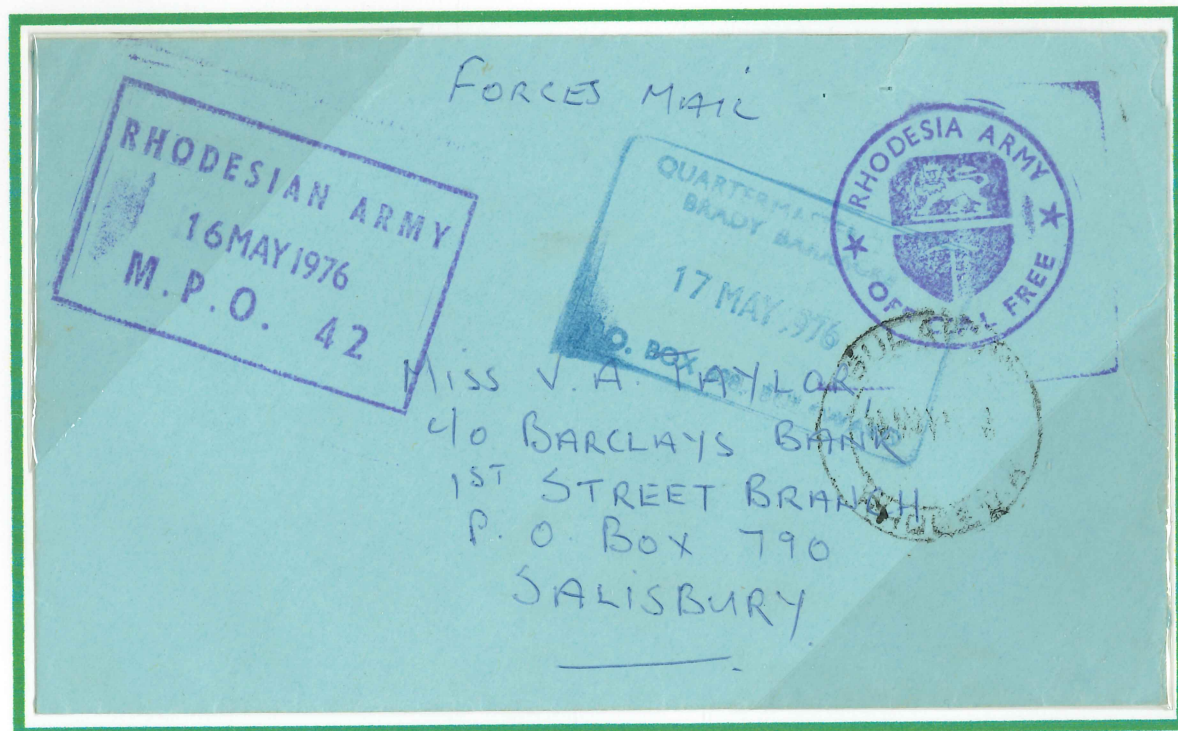
Rubber rectangular date stamp were used by the M.P.O. These date stamps often had incomplete strikes:

- ◆ Date strike incomplete or lightly inked
- ◆ Damage or wear
- ◆ Light or uneven strikes

Rubber date stamps of this type show wear quickly, often with the date itself becoming unclear.

The letter below has a very solid M.P.O. 42 strike of the Rhodesian Army, the pressure applied was strong, showing the ink on the base plate at the left.

The Quartermaster Brady Barracks date stamp is much less clear, showing wear and poor application. The postal circular date stamp is also unclear, indicating perhaps bulky item inside.



Rhodesian Army date stamp May 16, 1976, also applied with Quartermaster, Brady Barracks, May 17, 1976. Civilian post marked Bulawayo for mail to Salisbury.



**Independence War Mail  
Rhodesian Army**

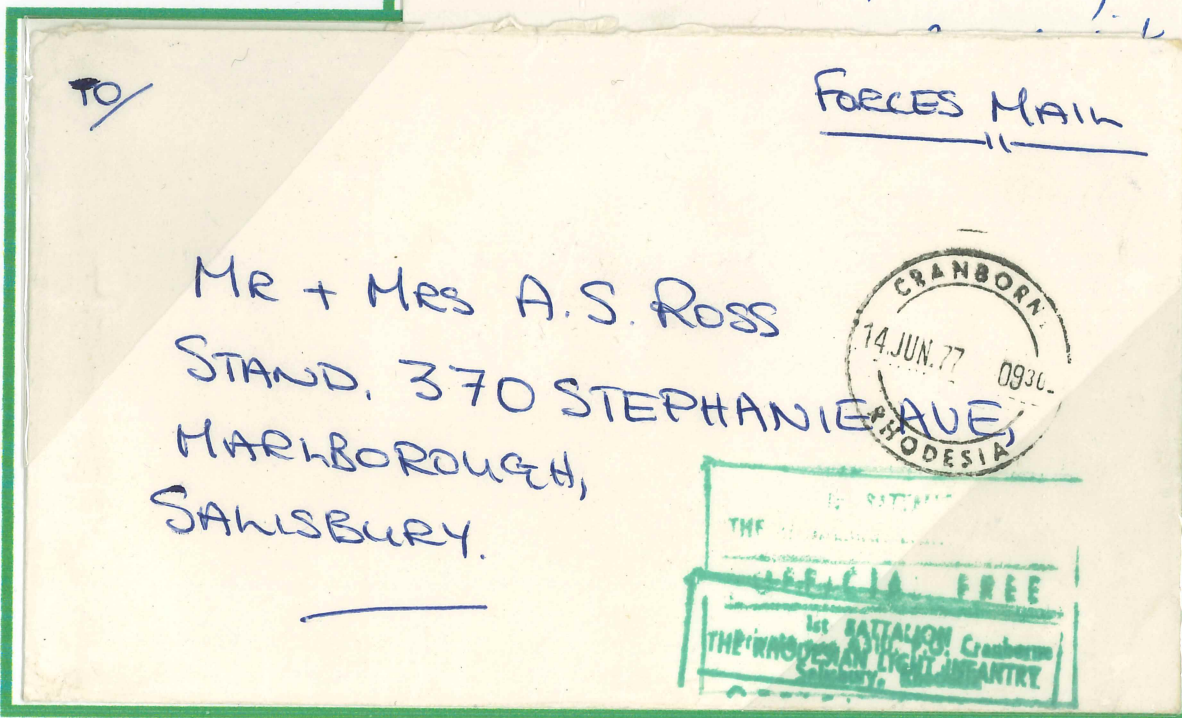
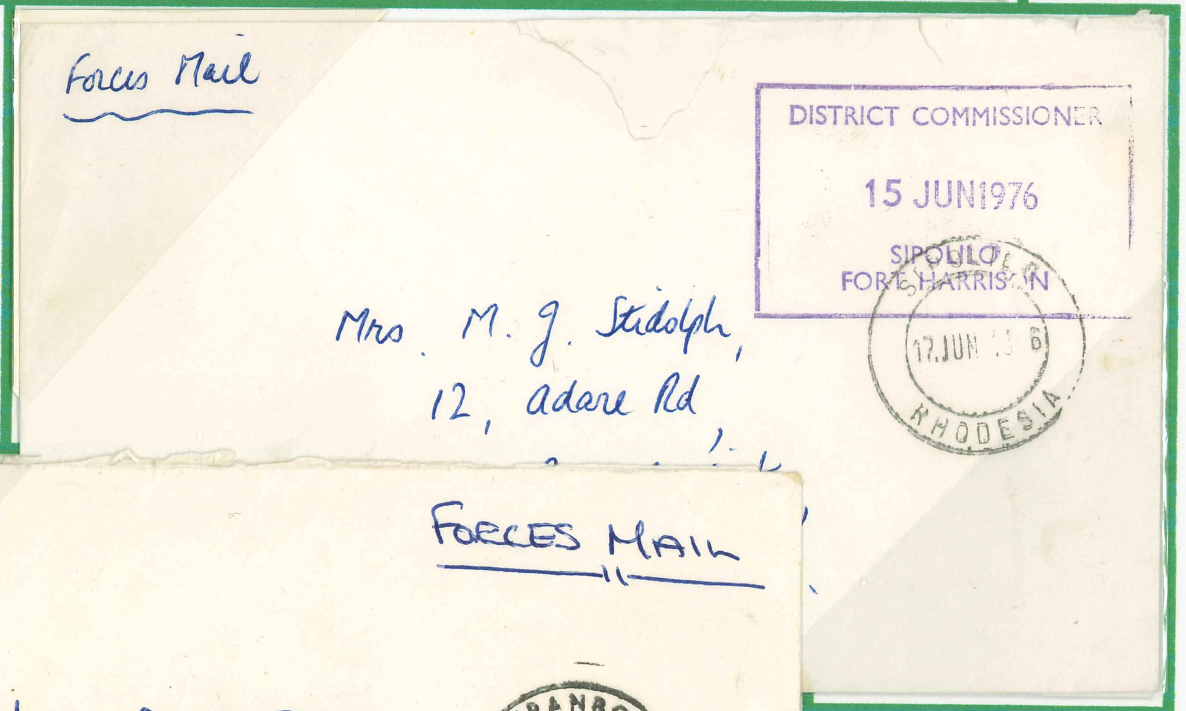
**Boxed Date Stamps  
Positioning the Marking**

There was no required placing evident in the date stamp marking. Shown are examples of the marking positioned where it fit best around the envelope addressing.

1 Forward Regiment  
(SRA) RHA, Armored  
Car Unit, Army,  
Cranborne  
November 16, 1976



District Commissioner, to  
Internal Affairs,  
Sipolilo, June 15, 1976



Two strikes, no space  
1st Light Infantry  
Cranborne, June 14, 1977



## Independence War Mail

## M.P.O. Labels

Correct labeling of inward mail to troops required specific **Military Post Offices (M.P.O.s)** designation by city location. With troops on the move, correct addressing by civilians was at issue. These labels were offered freely. Five sets of gummed **colored labels** were introduced.

No. .... Rank .....

Name/Initials .....

Coy. .... Unit .....

**M.P.O. 1 SALISBURY**  
**RHODESIA**

Three printings: July, 1976—May, 1977, green, M.P.O. 1, 2 & 3

No. .... Rank .....

Name/Initials .....

Coy. .... Unit .....

**M.P.O. 3 UMTALI**  
**RHODESIA**

Three printings: July, 1976—May, 1977, salmon

No. .... Rank .....

Name/Initials .....

Coy. .... Unit .....

**M.P.O. 1 BULAWAYO**  
**RHODESIA**

One printing: September, 1977, yellow

No. .... Rank .....

Name/Initials .....

Coy. .... Unit .....

**M.P.O. 4 FORT VICTORIA**  
**RHODESIA**

One printing: July, 1976, white

No. .... Rank .....

Name/Initials .....

Coy. .... Unit .....

**M.P.O. 5 GWELO**  
**RHODESIA**

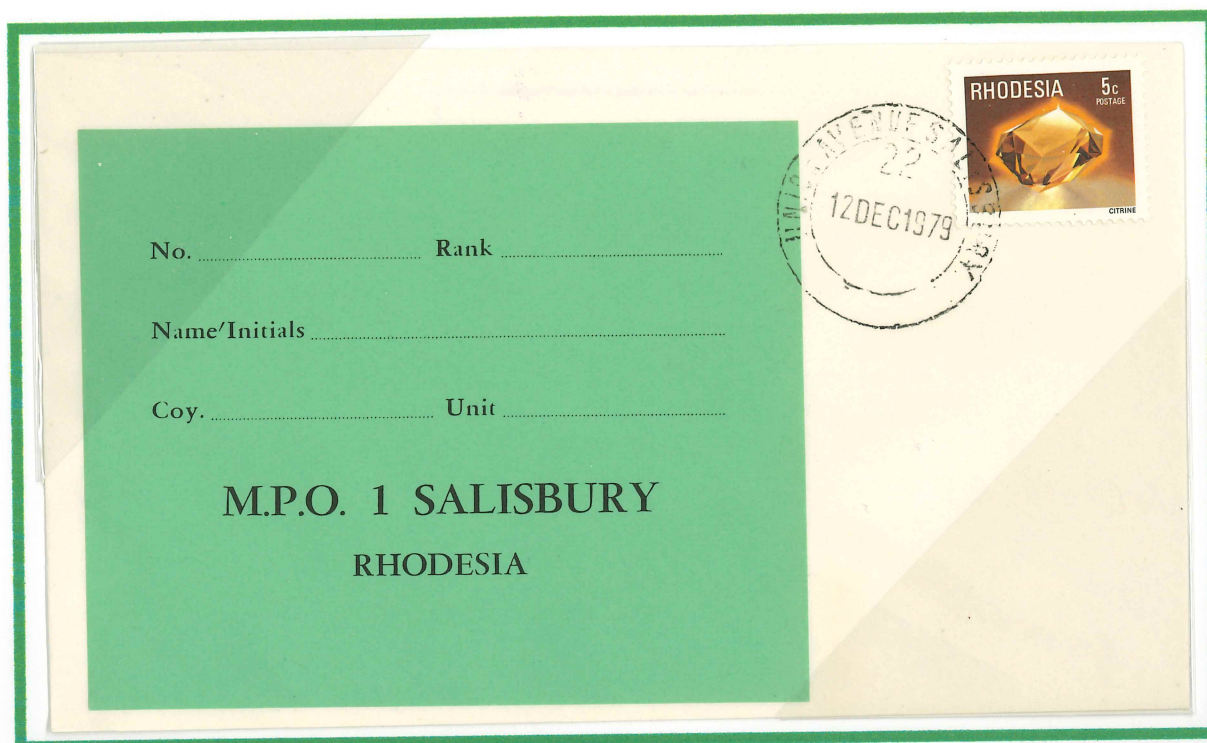
←One printing: November, 1977, blue



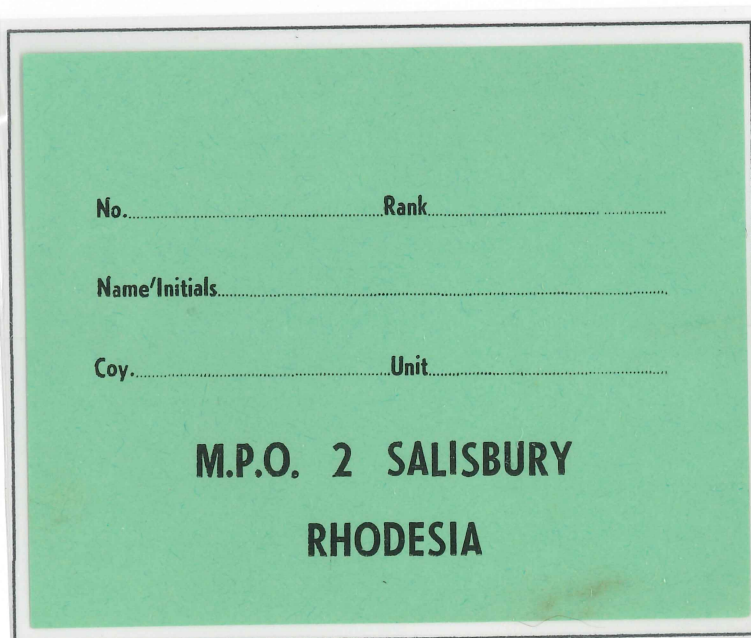
## Independence War Mail

## M.P.O. Labels

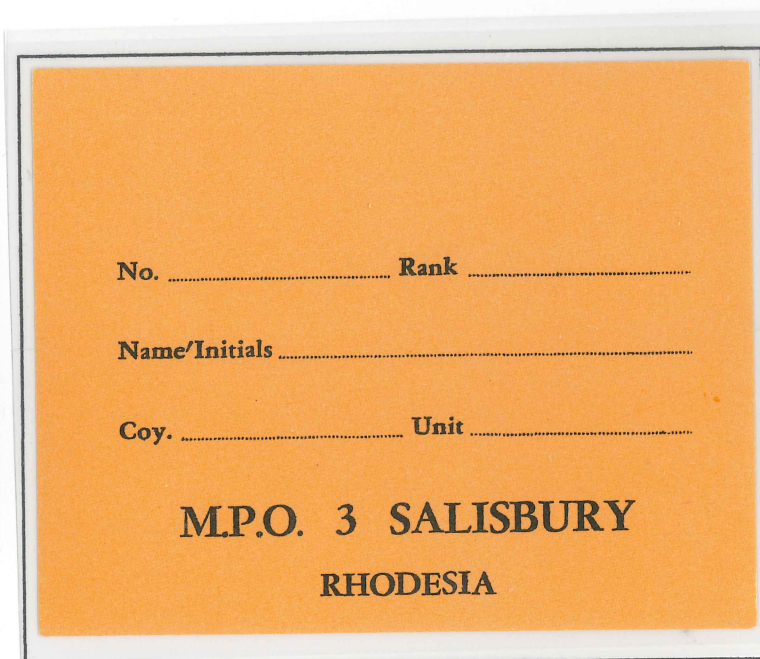
**Military Post Offices (M.P.O.s)** designation changed as did coloring and numbering. What was important, label or not, was accurate identification of troop location and those indications in addressing. Here Salisbury is indicated with M.P.O.s 1, 2 and 3, and printed in two colors.



M.P.O. 1 Salisbury on an unused civilian franked letter, hand stamp cancelled December 12, 1979.



M.P.O. 2 Salisbury, in new shade of green.



M.P.O. 3 Salisbury, in orange, used prior for Umtali.



## Independence War Mail Mail Delay to Troops

## M.P.O. Labels Communicating How to Use Labels

Addressing the problem of mail delay to troops, sample Military Post Offices (M.P.O.s) labels on envelopes were designation to get the message out.

- ◆ Franking for inward mail was required
- ◆ Correct addressing: Soldier number, rank, name, company and unit number
- ◆ Receiver date stamp will provide tracking



Sample courtesy franked  
2¢ and date stamped  
Salisbury May 12, 1978.

Sample courtesy franked  
2½¢ and date stamped  
Salisbury May 12, 1978.

Note: Same day—getting  
the message out that quick  
processing of mail was up  
to the sender by correctly  
addressing mail.

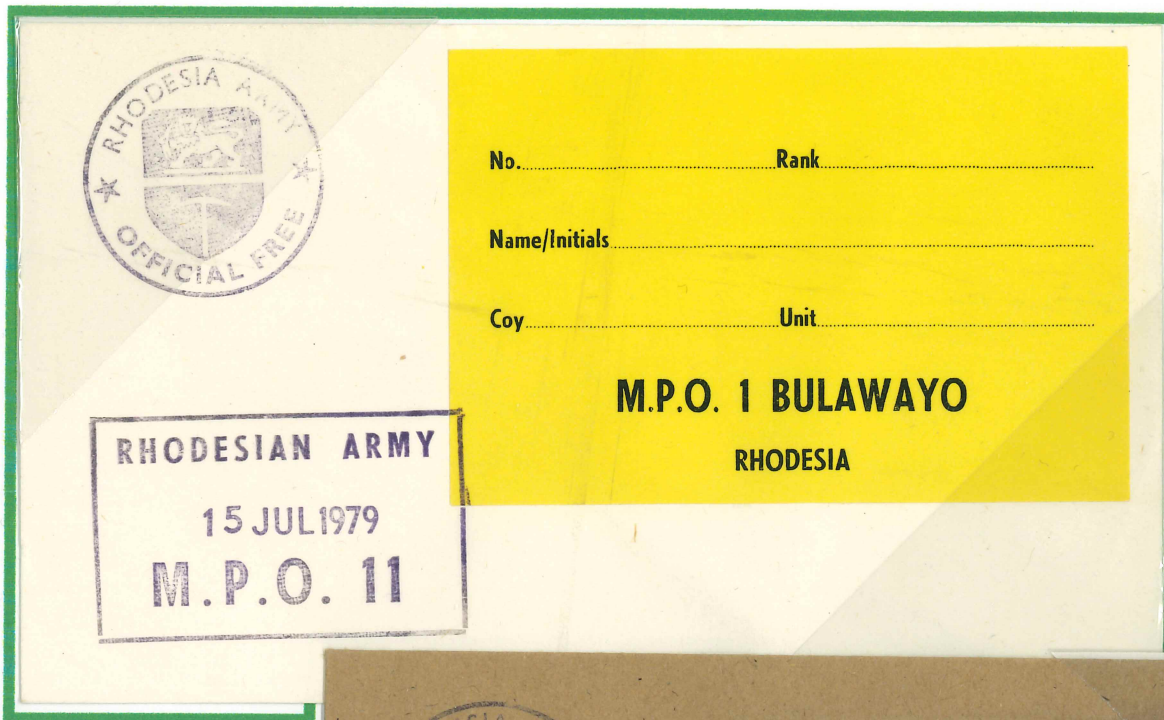




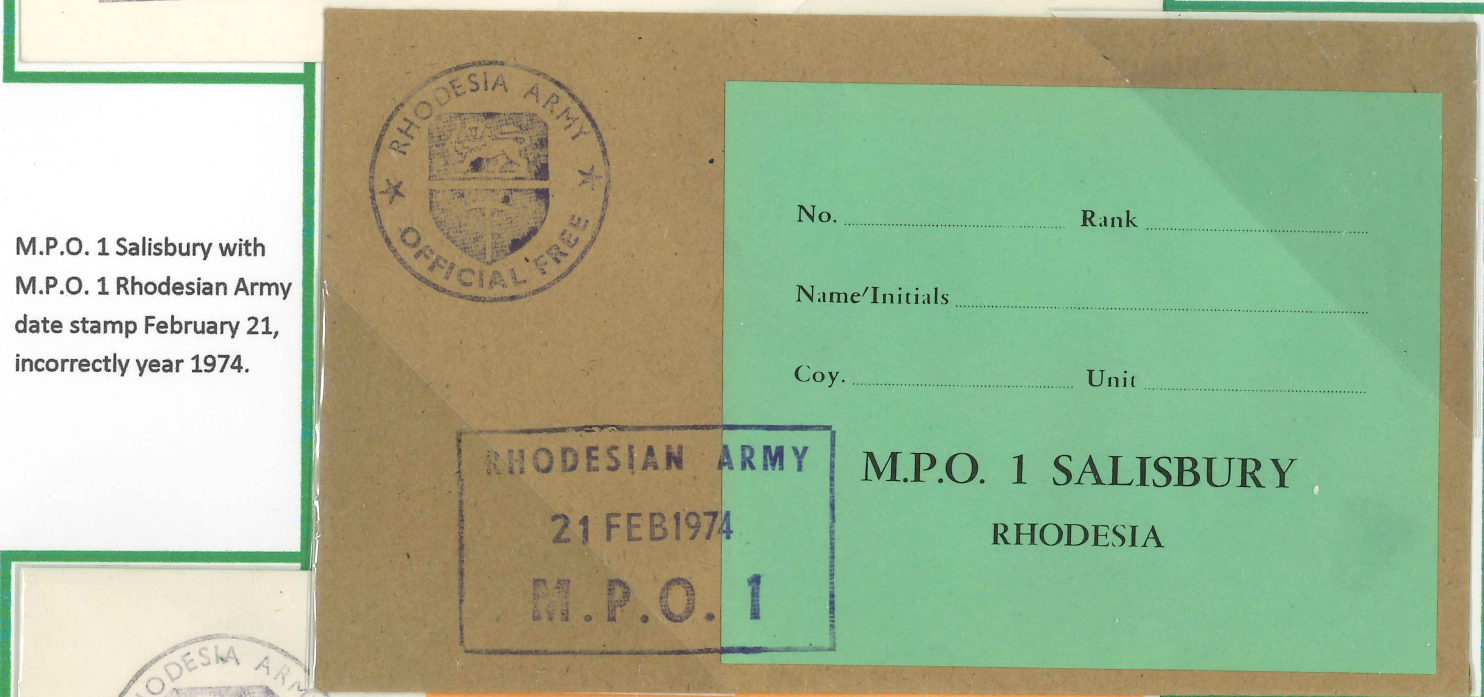
# Independence War Mail

# Mail Between Units

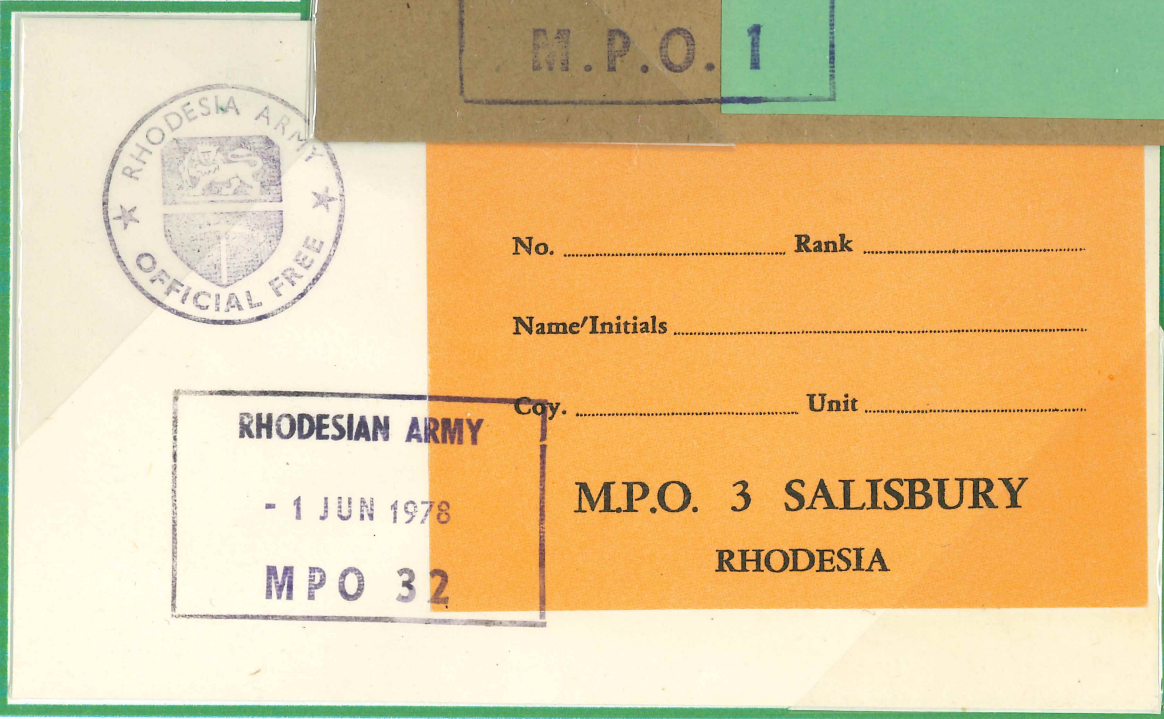
To encourage clarity in addressing, samples of "Official Free" M.P.O. Labeled envelopes were made up and date stamped.



M.P.O. 1 Bulawayo with M.P.O. 11 Rhodesian Army date stamp July 15, 1979.



M.P.O. 1 Salisbury with M.P.O. 1 Rhodesian Army date stamp February 21, incorrectly year 1974.



M.P.O. 3 Salisbury with M.P.O. 32 Rhodesian Army date stamp June 1, 1978.



# Independence War Mail Types

Mail Types

Mail to Active Deployed Troop Members

Inward Mail

Mail destinations processed by the Military Post Office:

<b>Inward</b>	Mail to active deployed troop members
<b>Internal</b>	Military mail between units
<b>Outward Domestic</b>	Forces Mail—letter mail sent free of postage
<b>Outward Foreign</b>	Military processed, post office further delivered, postage required

## Correct Label Use for Distribution of Inward Mail to Forces



Causeway, Rhodesia 4¢ surface letter to M.P.O. 3 Umtali, October 17, 1977 addressed to Company C, Unit 3.

Reverse, commercial stationery, "The Rhodesian Herald"

While distributed since printing in July, 1976, few mail labels are found intact on inward mail to active forces.

Generally, inward mail to troops on the move is mail infrequently found. In addition, these labels, while helpful, were not required or used with any frequency, indicating their limited availability to the troops at a time or place of need.



## Independence War Mail Types

Mail to Active Deployed Troop Members

## Inward Mail

Complexities of Delivery

**Rhodesian Light Infantry, Army  
Commando Units** were fighting in the bush.

Illustrated here is a Rhodesian Light Infantry  
fighter in full combat gear.

The abbreviated shorts were issued by the  
Rhodesian Army, an indication of the heat  
and conditions.

Mail delivery to forward troops deployed to  
the bush was pull in cart by Land Rovers.



### Correct Label Use for Distribution of Inward Mail to Forces

No. 121416 Rank TPR

Name/Initials M<sup>c</sup>KIBBIN B

Coy. 2 COMMANDO Unit L.R.L.I.

**M.P.O. 2 SALISBURY**

**RHODESIA**



Inward surface letter to  
M.P.O. 2 Salisbury,  
November 20, 1978  
addressed to:

**2 Commando Unit 1  
Rhodesian Light Infantry**



## Independence War Mail Types

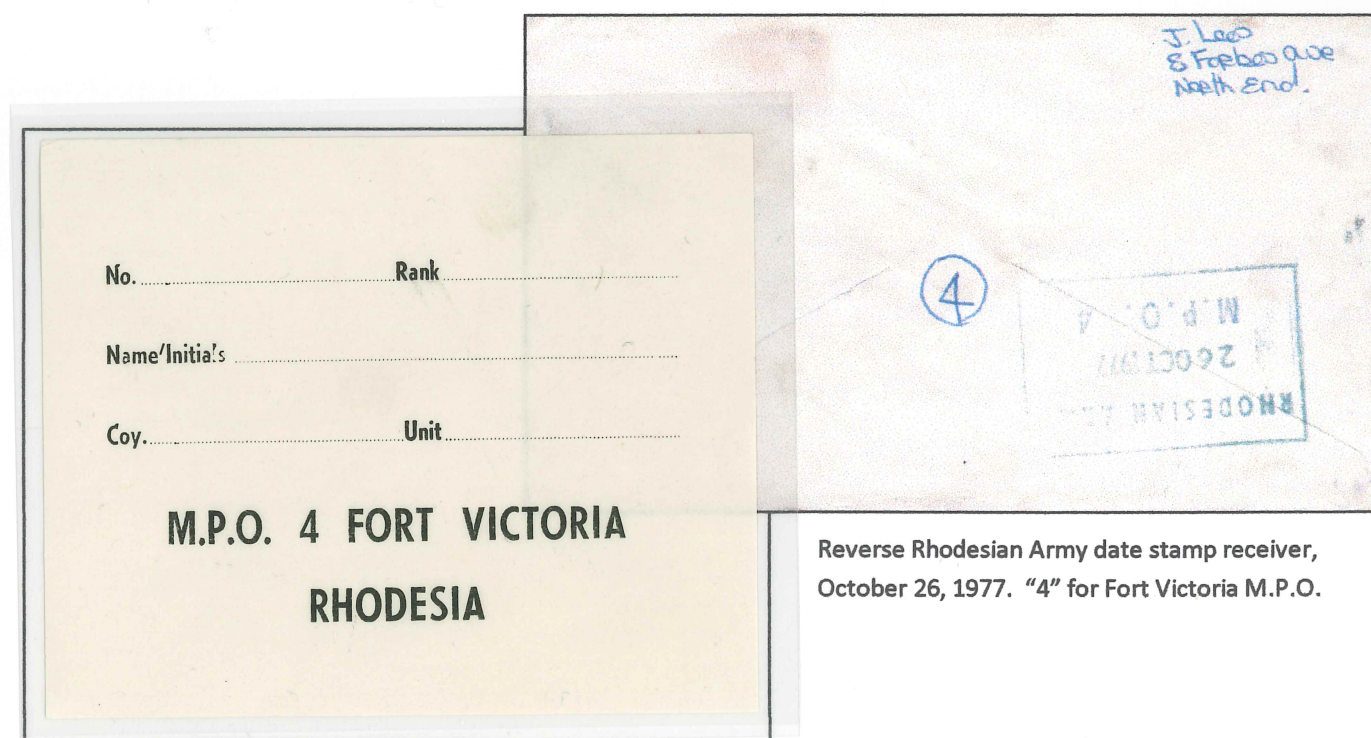
## Inward Mail

### Mail to Active Deployed Troop Members

Typical Inward mail to individuals in active service looks like most surface letters. The letter below is from Belmont Bulawayo paying the surface rate and is addressed to a Rifleman in "D" Company of the 2nd Battalion Rhodesia Regiment. The sender used correct addressing and order, with number and rank, followed by company unit and M.P.O.



Correctly addressed 4¢ surface letter to "D" Company, Rhodesian Regiment, Fort Victoria, from Belmont-Bulawayo sent October 24, 1977.



Reverse Rhodesian Army date stamp receiver, October 26, 1977. "4" for Fort Victoria M.P.O.

No. .... Rank .....

Name/Initials .....

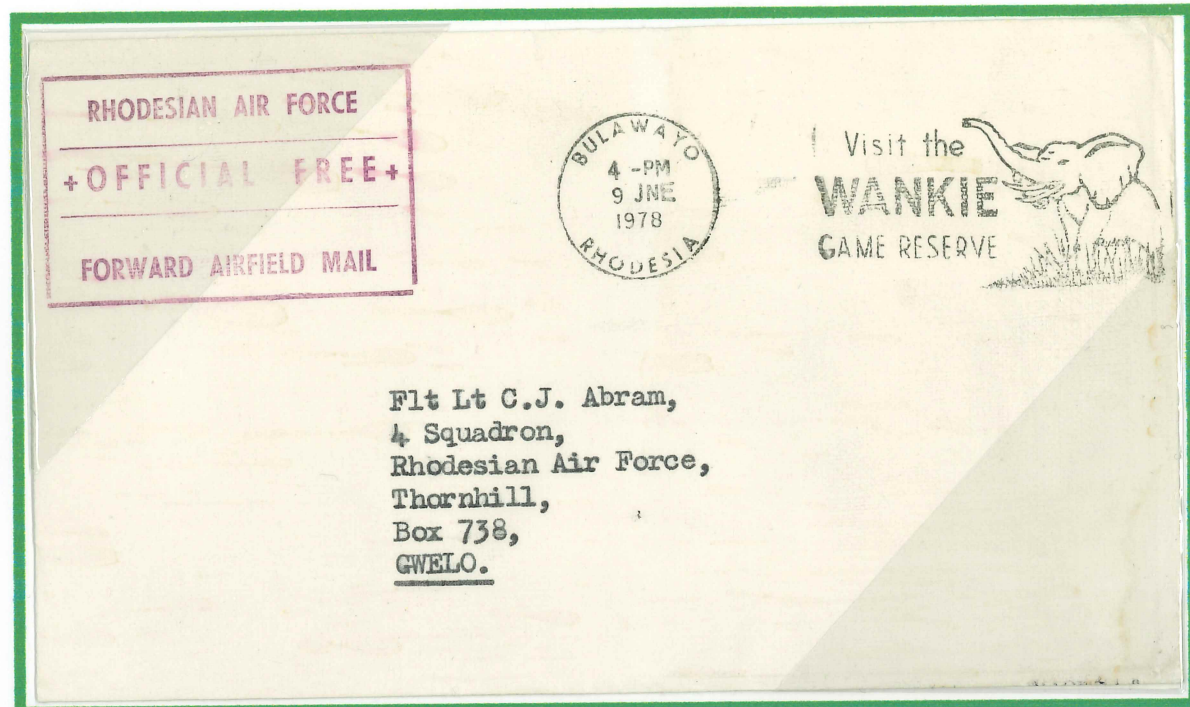
Coy. .... Unit .....

**M.P.O. 4 FORT VICTORIA  
RHODESIA**

M.P.O. 4 Fort Victoria unused mail routing label.

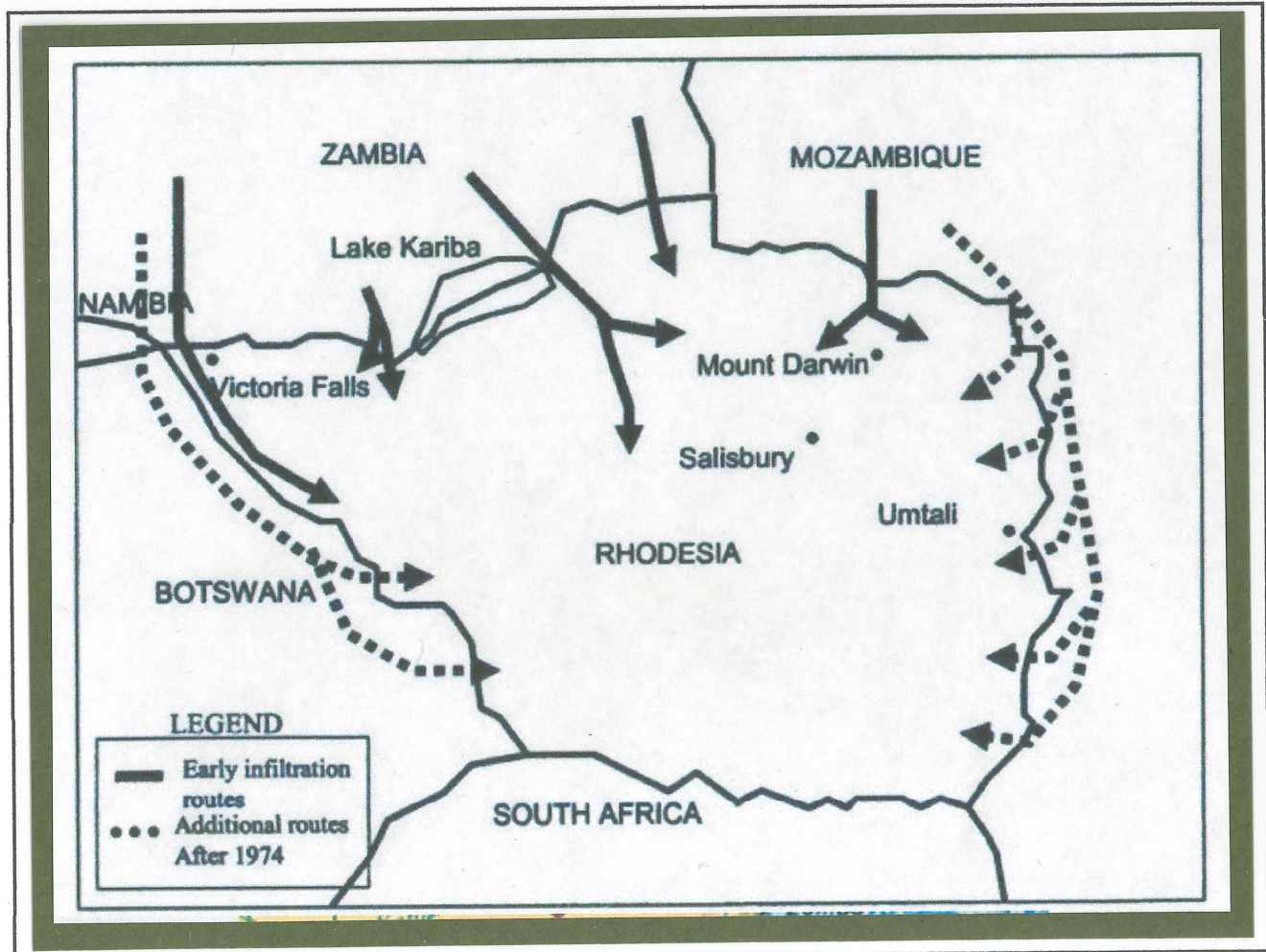


Air Force Internal Mail  
Bulawayo to Gwelo



Air Force mail dispatched through civilian mail, June 9, 1978.

Below: All country scope of Air Force operations.  
Map reproduction of terrorist infiltration routes.



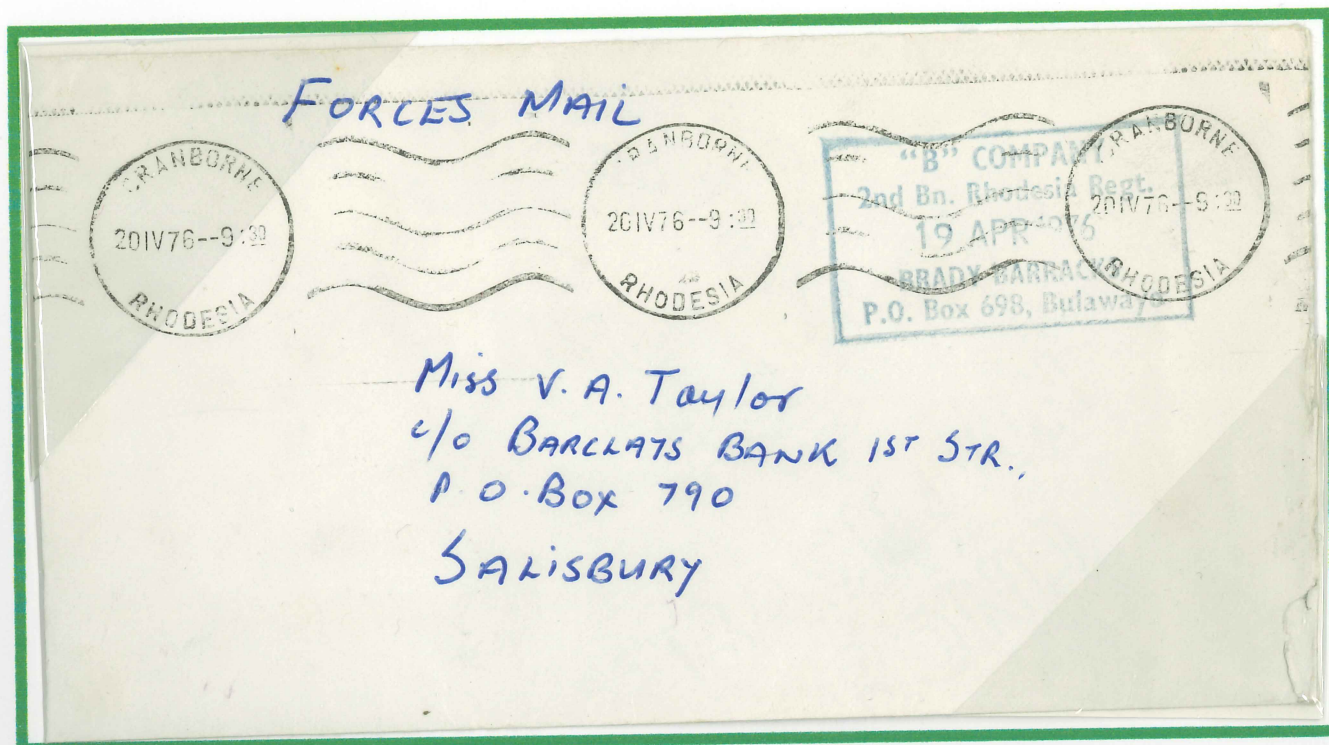


## Independence War Mail Types

## Outward Mail—Domestic Examples

### Mail from Active Military

Men were called-up into month's of active service during the year, and "Official Free" mail service allowed them to keep track of personal and business matters in a practical manner. Letters found include banking, education, pension, travel and personal mail.



Banking Correspondence: from "B" Company, 2nd Battalion Rhodesian Regiment, Brady Barracks, Bulawayo, April 20, 1976 to Salisbury, processed through Civilian mail at Cranborne.



Mail was encouraged,  
rather than discouraged.  
Preprinted holiday greeting  
from Rhodesian Light  
Infantry (R.L.I.)  
Christmas card, 1977.

*to Mrs McCallum & Family*  
*Best Wishes for Christmas*  
*and the New Year*  
*Sigal Smythe*  
*The Rhodesian Light Infantry*

**1st Battalion Light Infantry**  
holiday greeting, scan at 50%.



## Independence War Mail Types

## Outward Mail—Foreign Destinations

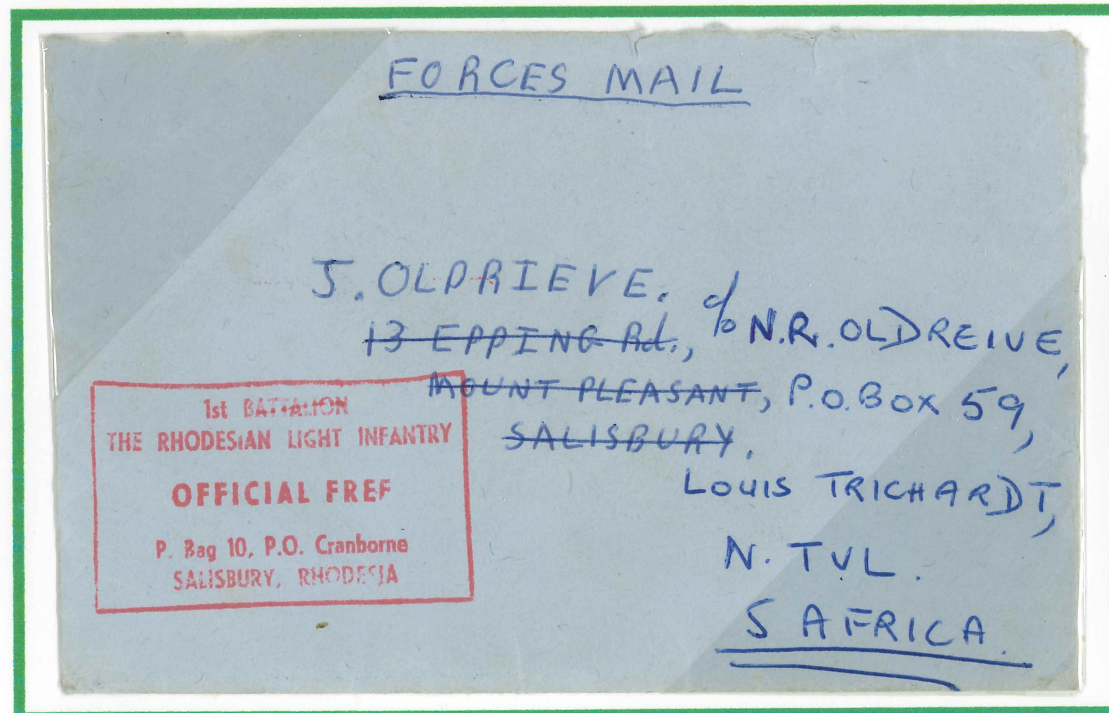
### Mail from Active Military

### Mail to South Africa

Through diplomatic arrangement, Official Free military mail would travel to South Africa without postal franking, an extension of the domestic military mail policy.



A Company 8th Army Battalion Rhodesian Regiment, Causeway, August 3, 1976 to Natal, South Africa, processed through Civilian mail at Chipinga.



1st Battalion Rhodesian Light Infantry (R.L.I.), Cranborne Barracks, Salisbury to N. Transvaal, South Africa, on redirection from Salisbury.



## Independence War Mail Types

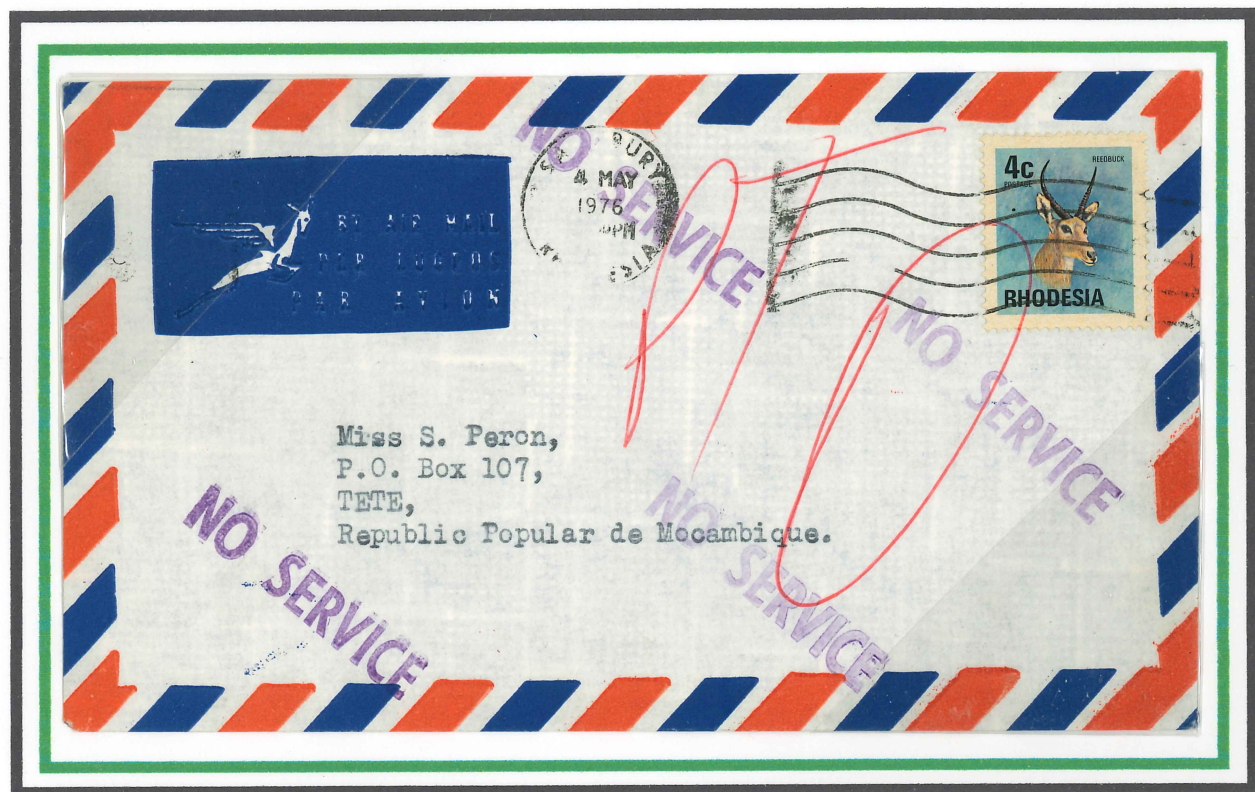
### Service Interruption

Rhodesian forces in May, 1976, attacked terrorists camps and positions in Mozambique in a major counter-offensive aimed at containing over 5,000 guerrillas and several hundred refugees from further cross-border action. At this time, cross-border mail was suspended.

## Outward Mail—Foreign Destinations

### War Zone—Mozambique Border

### Interruption of Cross-Border Postal Service



Salisbury, Rhodesia 4¢ letter to Mozambique May 4, 1976, marked P.T.O. (please turn over) and reverse R.T.S.—return to sender, hand stamped liberally "No Service". *Service interruption mail seldom seen.*

Note: no air service was available, and no surface mail service at this time.

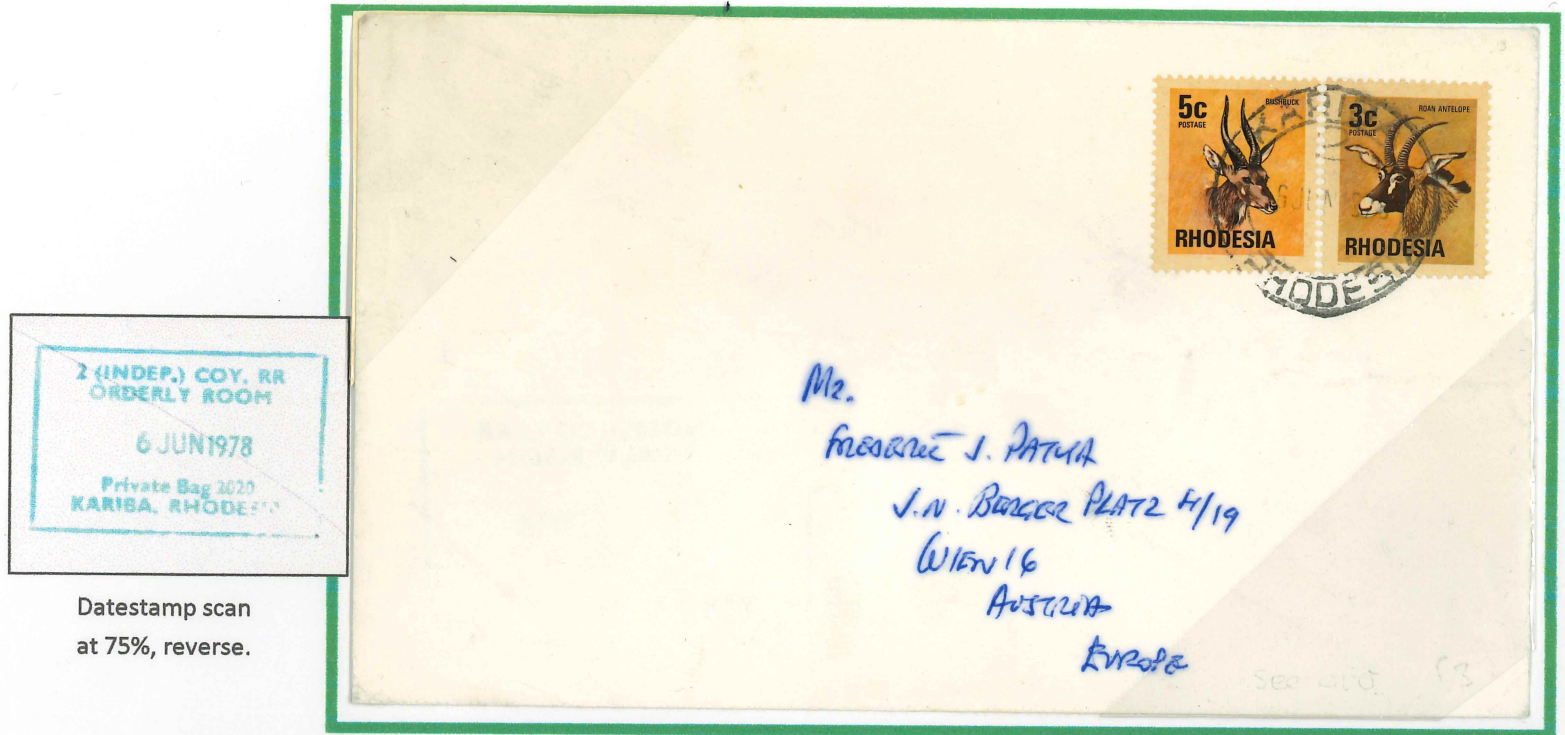


## Independence War Mail Types

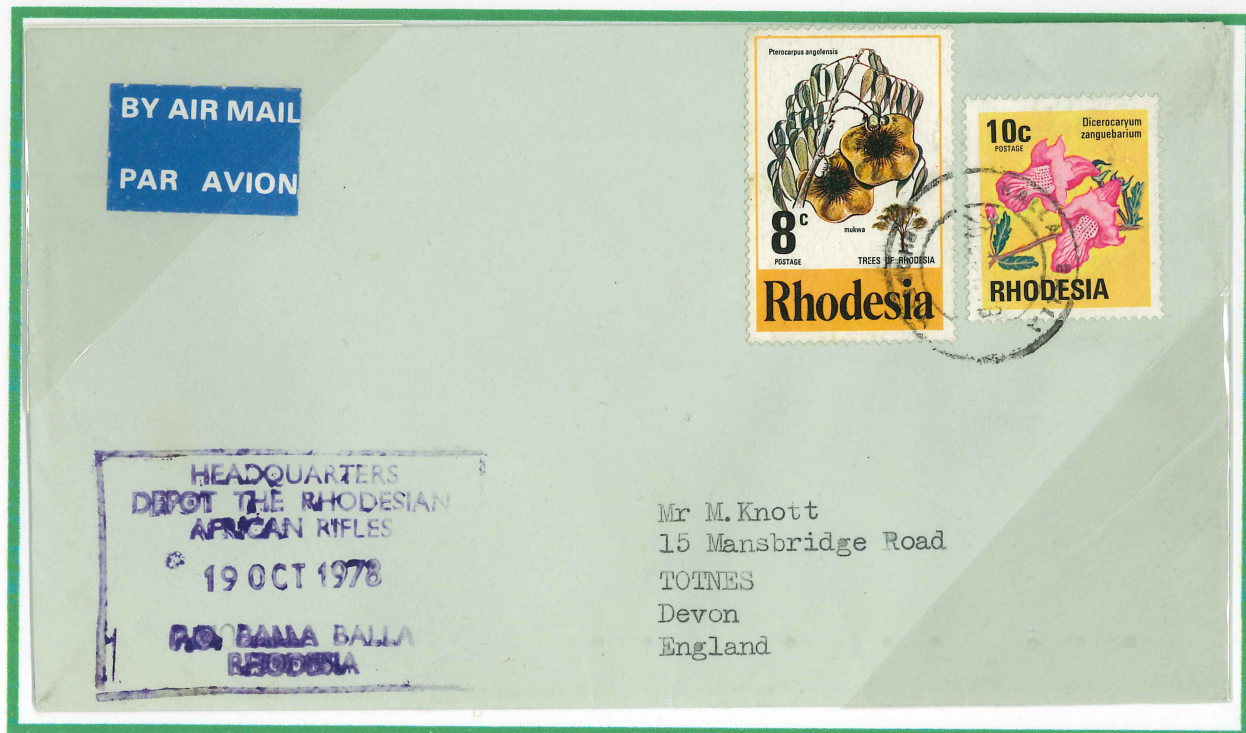
## Outward Mail—Foreign Destinations

### Mail from Active Military

Mail to foreign destinations could be directed through the Military Post Office for onward processing in the civilian post. As such, it was date stamped from the receiving unit. Full prevailing rate postage was required for foreign mail.



2 (Indep.) Company, Rhodesian Regiment, Orderly Room, Kariba, June 6, 1978 8¢ surface letter rate to Austria.





## Independence War Mail Types

## Outward Mail—Foreign Destinations

### Mail from Active Military

### Europe

Little philatelic attention was given to the war-time mail of Rhodesia. These three correctly rated 8¢ surface letters to Austria bear individual boxed datestamps and were sent to the same addressee from August—October, 1978.



Grey's Scouts

unit date stamp  
October 27, 1978.  
Civilian mail  
processing at  
Salisbury.

M<sup>r</sup> Frederic J. Patka



Rhodesian African Rifles  
date stamp August 11, 1978.  
Civilian mail processing at  
Fort Victoria.

du

Frederic J. Patka  
J.N. Berger Platz 4/19  
Wien 16

Wien 16

Europe



Orderly Room

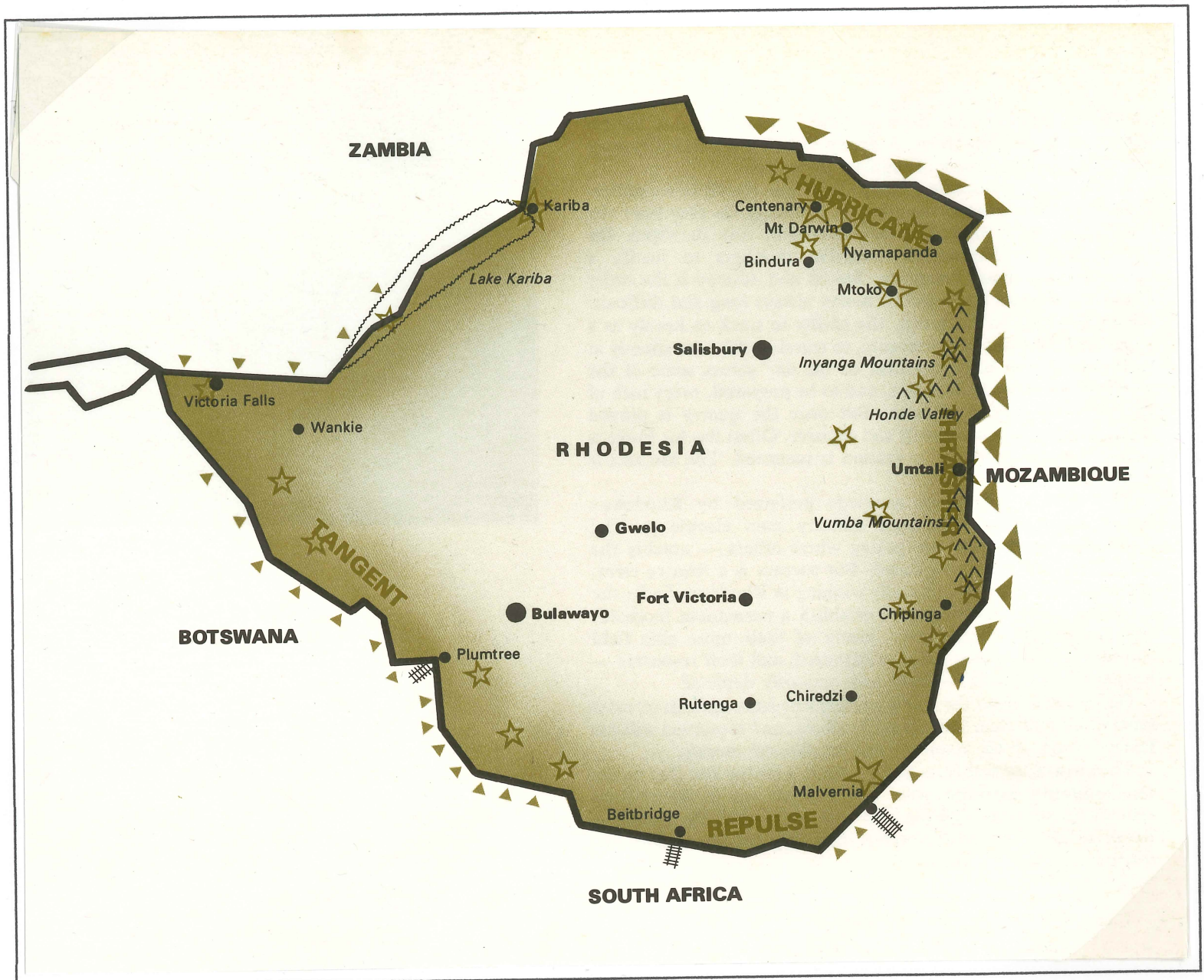
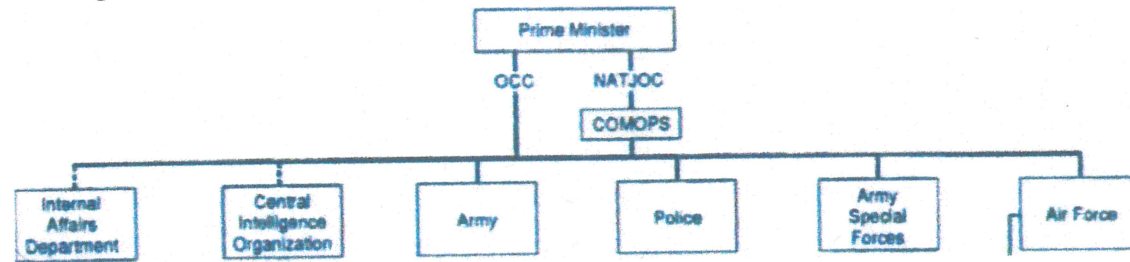
4th (Manicaland) Battalion  
date stamp August 8, 1978.  
Civilian mail processing at  
Umtali, operation Thrasher.



# Serving Units Mail

## The Battle Fronts

This section is organized to show the markings of the Serving Units of Rhodesian military forces, structured as shown.



Location	Military Post Office	Major Units	Operation Name
Salisbury, North and East	M.P.O— Salisbury	Army, Air, Police	Operation <u>Hurricane</u>
Umtali, East	M.P.O— Umtali	Army	Operation <u>Thrasher</u>
Bulawayo, South and West	M.P.O— Bulawayo	Army, Police	Operation <u>Tangent</u>
Fort Victoria, Central	M.P.O— Fort Victoria	Army, Air	Operation <u>Repulse</u>
Gwelo, Central	M.P.O— Gwelo	Army, Air	Operation <u>Grapple</u>



## Serving Units Mail Corps of Infantry

Army

The Rhodesian Army consists of ten separate corps, of which the Corps of Infantry is the largest. Included under the Army are Rhodesian African Rifles, Engineers, Police, Army Special Forces of Greys Scouts, Rhodesia Light Infantry, and more. The main Military Post Offices, M.P.Os, were operated by the Army, and the basic handstamps of Army units are shown below.



Rhodesian Army forces letter sent from M.P.O. 42, in Fort Victoria, to Bulawayo. Date stamped by military post December 1, 1976 and slogan cancelled in Fort Victoria same day.



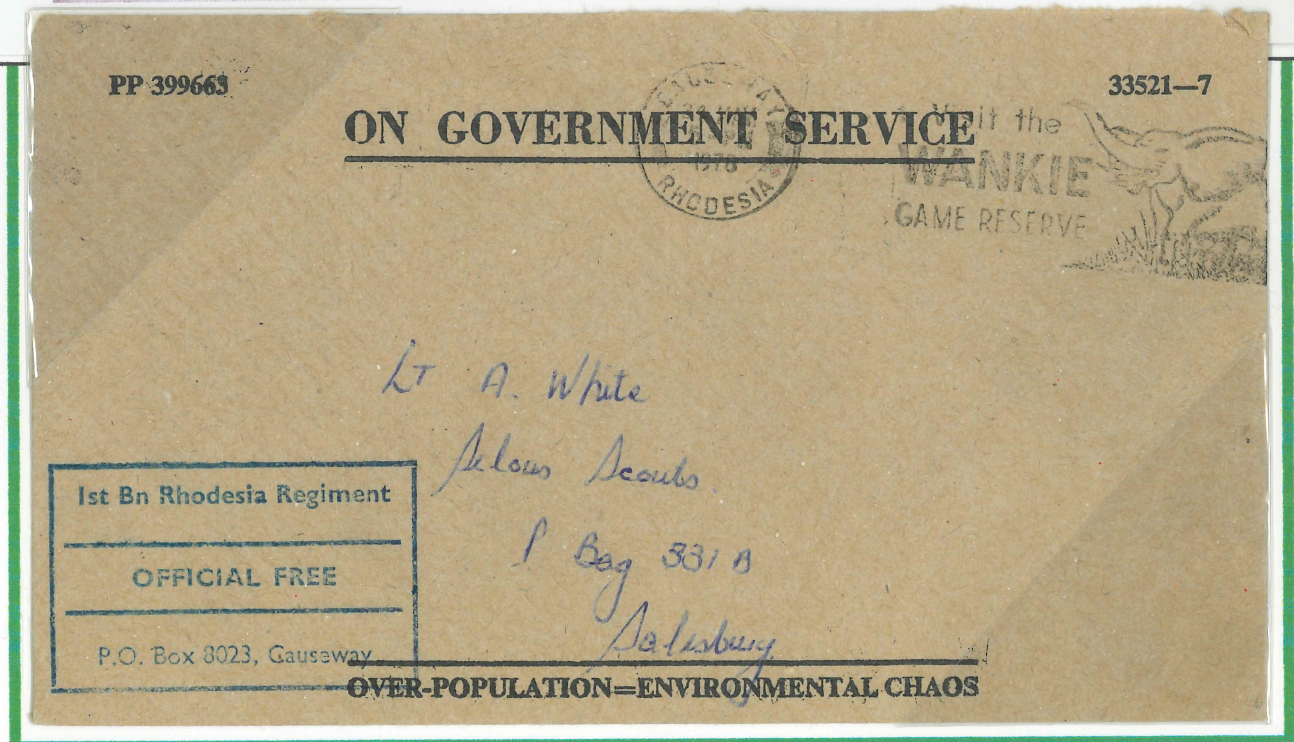
Rhodesian Army, Official Free, letter sent from M.P.O. 3, Military Post Office 3 in Umtali to Salisbury. Date stamped by military post September 8, 1978 in red and process through civilian post September 9th in Umtali.



**Serving Units Mail  
Corps of Infantry**

**Battalions of the Rhodesian Regiment**

Battalion Units 1st through 7th operated under the Army Corps of Infantry. Shown below, 1st Battalion Rhodesian Regiment, Causeway. Units operated in Infantry, photo of Infantry Medical Corps Hospital.



1st Battalion Rhodesian Regiment, Official Free, Government Service envelope sent from Causeway. Civilian slogan date stamped May 24, 1978.



**Serving Units Mail  
Corps of Infantry**

**Rhodesian Light Infantry**

Battalion Units of the Army Corps of Infantry bore the brunt of anti-terrorist operations. These foot soldiers frequently crossed the borders into Mozambique and Zambia on follow up search and destroy missions. Ian Smith, Prime Minister of Rhodesia at the time, called the Rhodesian Light Infantry the "Incredibles."



1st Battalion Rhodesian Light Infantry, Official Free, sent from Salisbury, date stamped April 1, 1977.



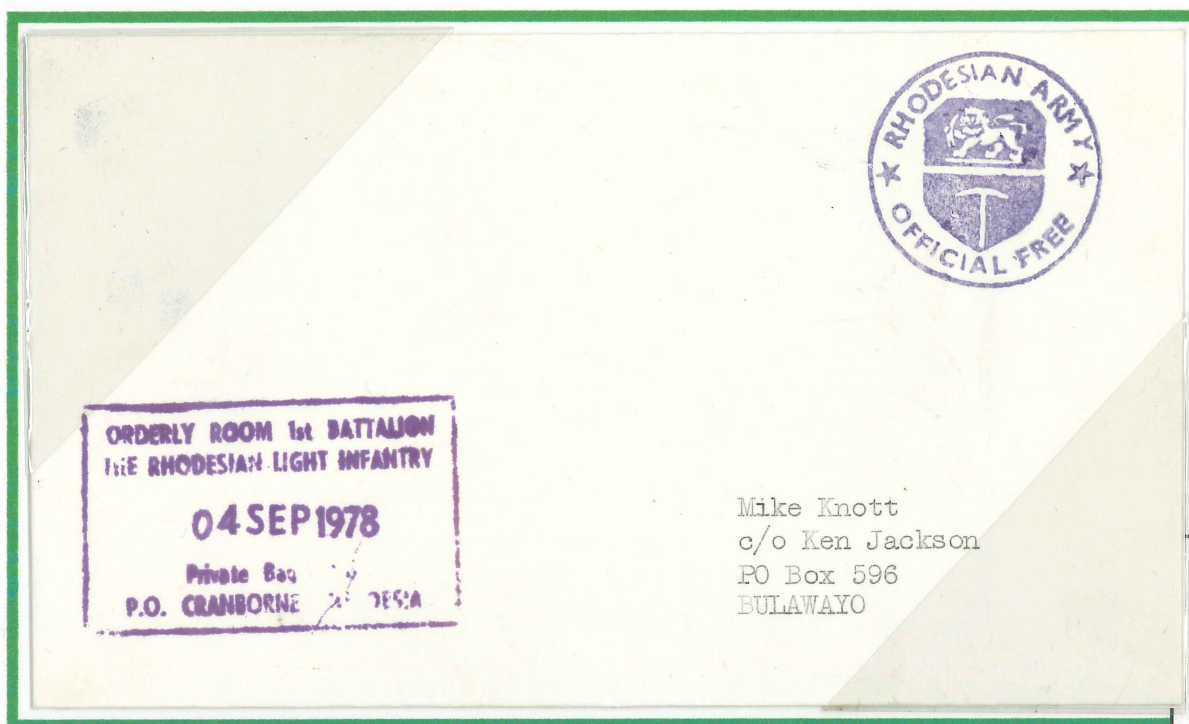
Rhodesian Light Infantry men posted for photo with Support Commando flag with Rhodesian Light Infantry insignia.



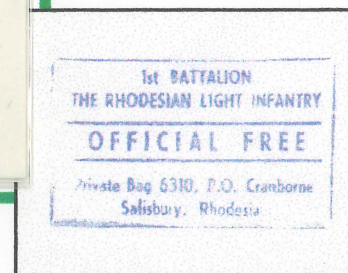
**Serving Units Mail**  
**Army Corps of Infantry**

**Rhodesian Light Infantry**

The Rhodesian Light Infantry Unit tended to be used in small sections, boosting up other units. Shown below in press photo, these ground troops also assembled for large cross border raids.



Reverse stamped:  
Official Free, sent  
Private Bag Salisbury.  
Scan at 75%. ↓



First Battalion, Rhodesian Light Infantry, Military Mail processing marks only, center date stamped September 4, 1978. Rhodesian Army Official Free letter to Bulawayo.

Rhodesian Light  
Infantry (RLI)  
unit press photo.

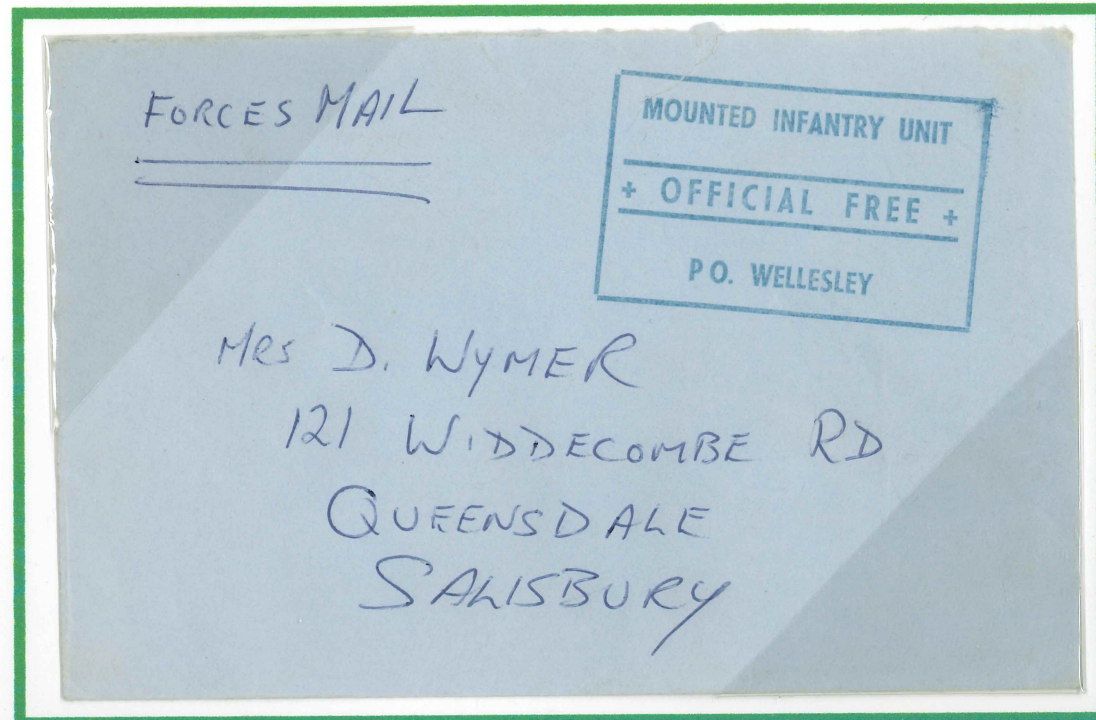




## Serving Units Mail Corps of Infantry

## Rhodesian Mounted Infantry Unit

The Mounted Infantry Unit came into being following disastrous rains in 1973-1974 when Rhodesian Security Forces found they had serious transport difficulties in securing their country borders. There were few passable roads and supply vehicles were bogged down. Horses proved immediately successful; fleeing terrorist in this difficult terrain could be easily caught on horse back. The Mounted Infantry Unit operations continued, called in for tracking in difficult country, where there were poor or no roads and with thin scrub and low Mopane forests.



Wellesley, Military Mail processing marks only, 1975.



Wellesley, Military Mail processing marks only, center date stamped August 12, 1977. The unit date stamp serves as the postal marking where the unit is unable to hand the letter in at a local postal office.

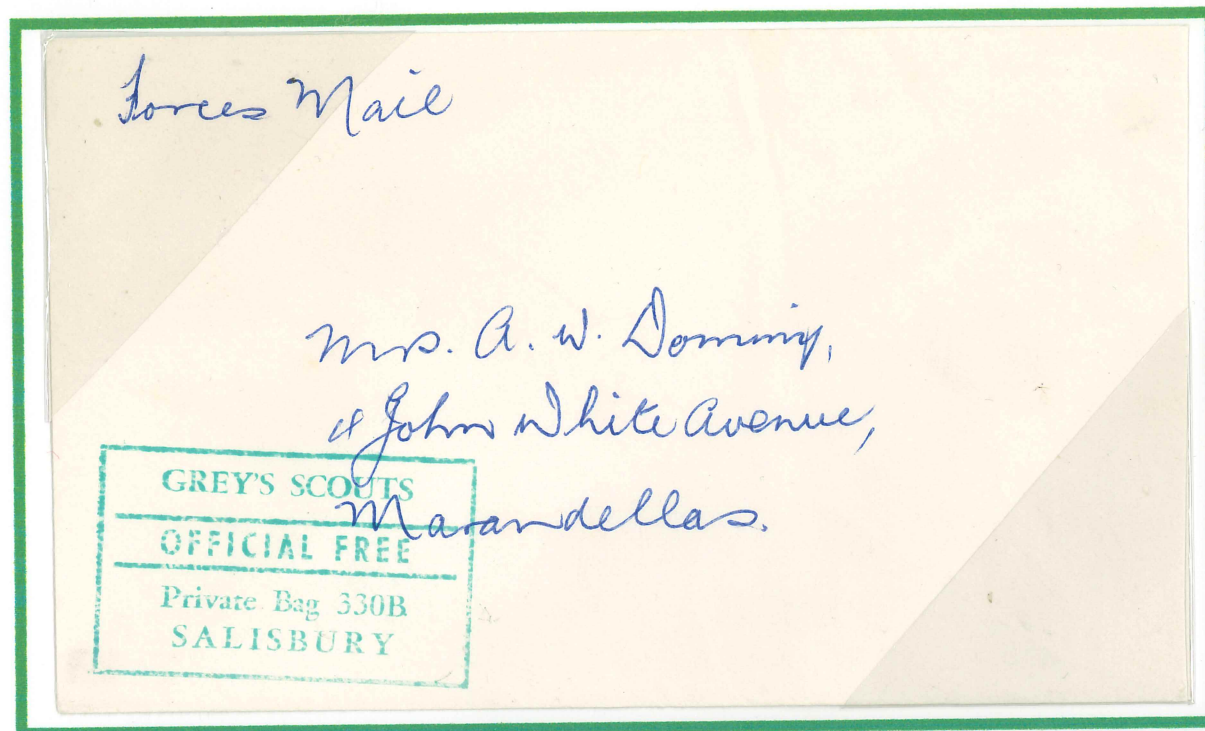


## Serving Units Mail

Grey's Scouts

### Corps of Infantry—Army Special Forces

Named for the 1896 first official mounted unit in Rhodesia, Grey's Scouts unit name was revived in October 1976 with men covering up to 40 miles of rugged border terrain, flushing out terrorists from areas inaccessible to vehicles.



Salisbury, Grey's Scouts Official Free, second hand stamp design.

#### Grey's Scouts:

200 man unit

Radio equipped

Patrolling several days at a time without resupply

In coordination with Rhodesia's mounted police

Infantry men with base operation 25 miles north of Salisbury.





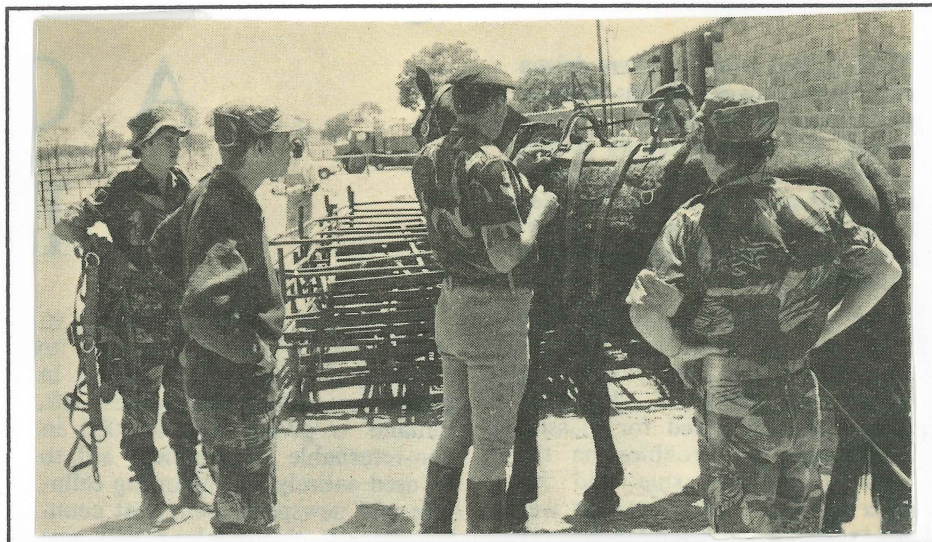
## Serving Units Mail Corps of Infantry—Army Special Forces

Grey's Scouts

The Grey's Scouts were a voluntary unit drawn from men from regular Command units and served out of a Salisbury base using trained horses. Horses must be trained to avoid panic in the midst of mortar and rocket fire from the enemy. The unit was especially successful in Rhodesia's bush combat areas.

### Horses in Combat

- ◆ Categorized Riding or Pack
- ◆ Horses can outpace fleeing enemy
- ◆ Are surefooted on rough terrain
- ◆ Hear sounds more than 1000 yards
- ◆ Pack horses can carry 175 pounds



Horse being outfitted with tackle by Grey's Scouts.



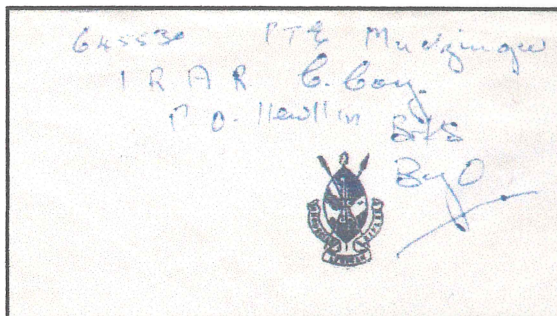
Salisbury, Grey's Scouts Official Free blue hand stamp, private bag mail to Bulawayo.



## Serving Units Mail Corps of Infantry

While the Rhodesian Army fought bitterly against the black nationalist guerrillas, the **Rhodesian African Rifles** was a black African volunteer battalion.

Little correspondence is found from members of the Rhodesian African Rifles.



↑ African Rifle Private Mudingue addressing,  
reverse scan at 75%

Rhodesian African Rifles soldier→

## Rhodesian African Rifles Letter *seldom seen*



Mount Darwin: African Rifles 1st Bn "C" Company, date stamped January 18, 1977 to Salisbury.



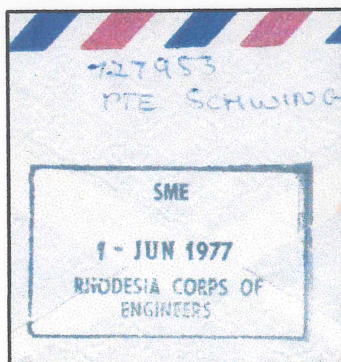
## Serving Units Mail Rhodesian Army

## Rhodesia Corps of Engineers

The Corps of Engineers served as a unit of the Rhodesian Army. The unit was called in for ground and logistic engineering support in difficult country, where poor, damaged or no roads made troop movement difficult.



Rhodesian territorial primitive roadways.



Reverse stamped:  
Rhodesia Corps of  
Engineers. Scan at 75%.



Forces Mail—Official Free for surface letter using an airmail envelope. Military Mail processing at Headquarters 1 Brigade, Bulawayo, reverse date stamped June 1, 1977, Rhodesia Corps of Engineers.



**Serving Units Mail**  
**Rhodesian Army**

**Rhodesia Corps of Engineers**

The Corps of Engineers was the building and repair unit of the Rhodesian Army, challenged to provide facilities to meet the changing needs of war.



3 Engineer Squadron, Official Free, sent from Umtali to the Medical Aid Society, date stamped May 17, 1979.

Engineers  
charged with  
building  
temporary  
facilities:

Hospital in  
background.



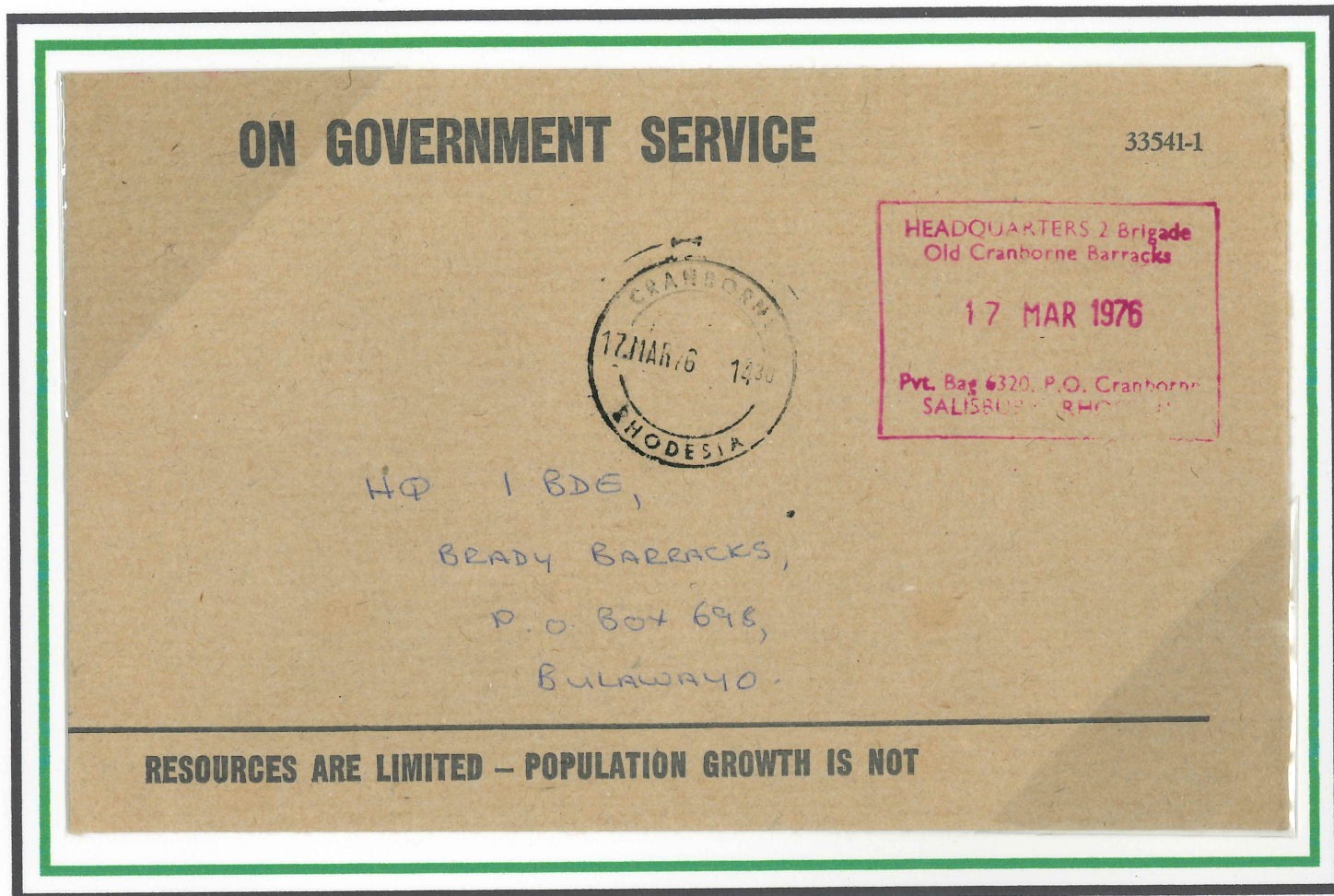


**Serving Units Mail  
Military and Civilian Processing**

**Army Headquarters  
Cranborne Barracks**

The 2 Brigade controlled and supplied units operating in the Salisbury area. The routing of this internal mail was through both military (internal) and civilian (post office) processing.

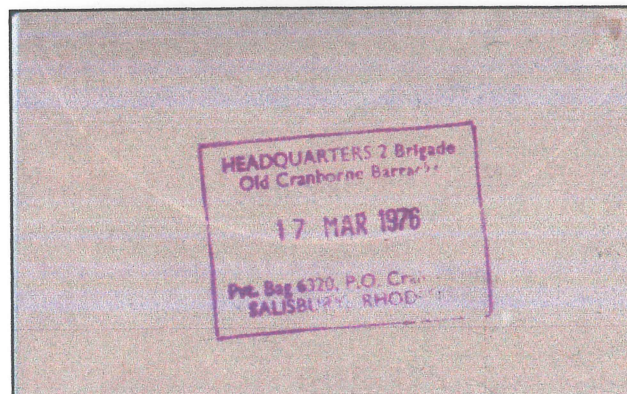
**Headquarters—On Government Service Internal Mail**



Sent from Headquarters 2 Brigade at Old Cranborne Barracks, Salisbury by private bag to Headquarters Building 1, Brady Barracks, Bulawayo. Cranborne Mail privately bagged, stamped front and reverse, and dispatched through civilian mail, March 17, 1976.

*Early evidence of military and civilian linked mail processing.*

Reverse stamped as security seal, scan at 75%.





**Serving Units Mail**  
**Rhodesian Army**

**Rhodesian Defense Regiment**  
**Cranborne Barracks**

The 1st Battalion of Rhodesia Defense Regiment operated from **Cranborne Barracks**, Salisbury. The Cranborne location was headquarters for early mail operations and is in the Rhodesian capital, now the Zimbabwe capital Harare.

Rhodesian Defense  
Regiment soldier raising the  
colors at Cranborne Barrack.  
The flag of Rhodesia used from  
1968 until 1980.



Cranborne: Army Official  
Free stamped and Military  
Mail carried by private  
bag, August 21, 1978.

Letter delivered to  
recipient's post office box  
in Bulawayo.



**1st BATTALION**  
**Rhodesia Defence Regiment**  
**21 AUG 1978**  
**Private Bag 6320, Cranborne**  
**Rhodesia**

Mike Knott  
c/o Ken Jackson  
Rhodesian Railways  
PO Box 596  
Bulawayo

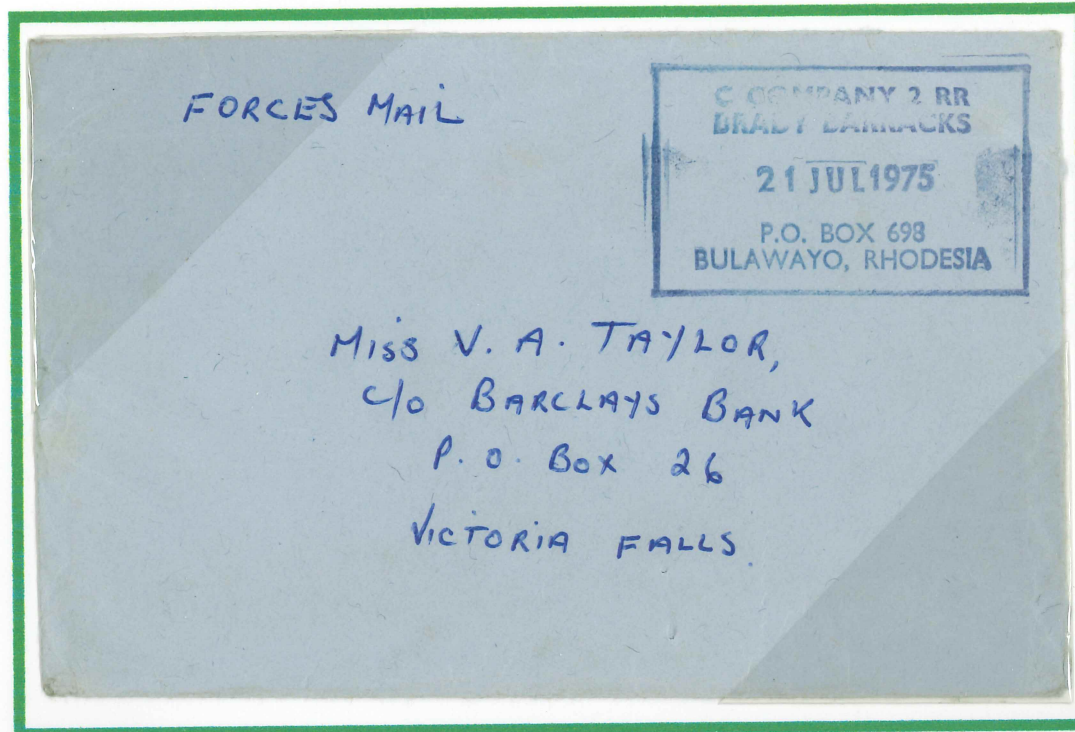


**Serving Units Mail**  
**Army Rhodesian Rifles—Bulawayo**

**Brady Barracks**  
**Llewellyn Barracks**

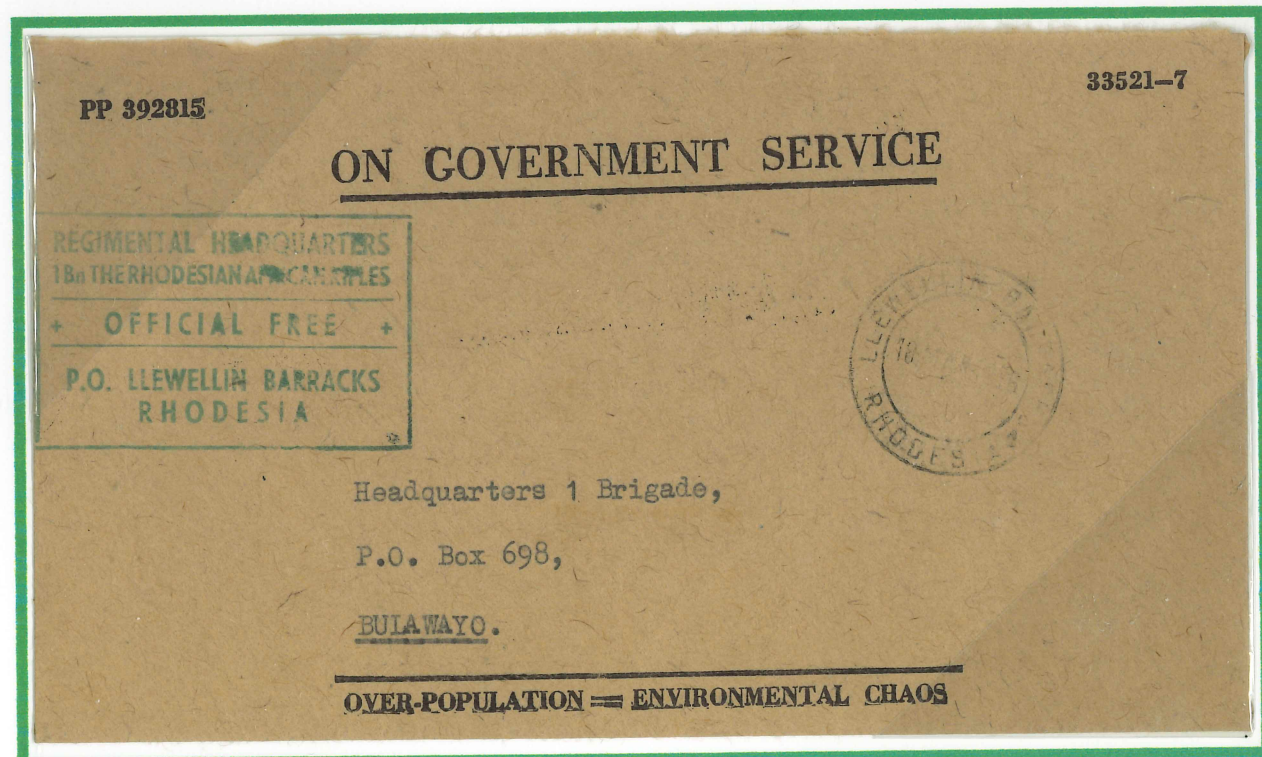
**Brady Barracks** housed light infantry units of the 2nd Battalion of the Rhodesia Regiment to cover the Bulawayo vicinity. The **Llewellyn Barracks** served as Regimental Headquarters for the Rhodesian African Rifles, outside of Bulawayo.

Brady  
Barracks



C Company 2nd Regiment Brady Barracks letter to commercial bank in Victoria Falls July 21, 1975.

Llewellyn  
Barracks



Government service envelope sent from African Rifles Llewellyn Barracks to Headquarters 1 Brigade, Bulawayo. Circular date stamp Llewellyn Barracks, March 18, 1978.

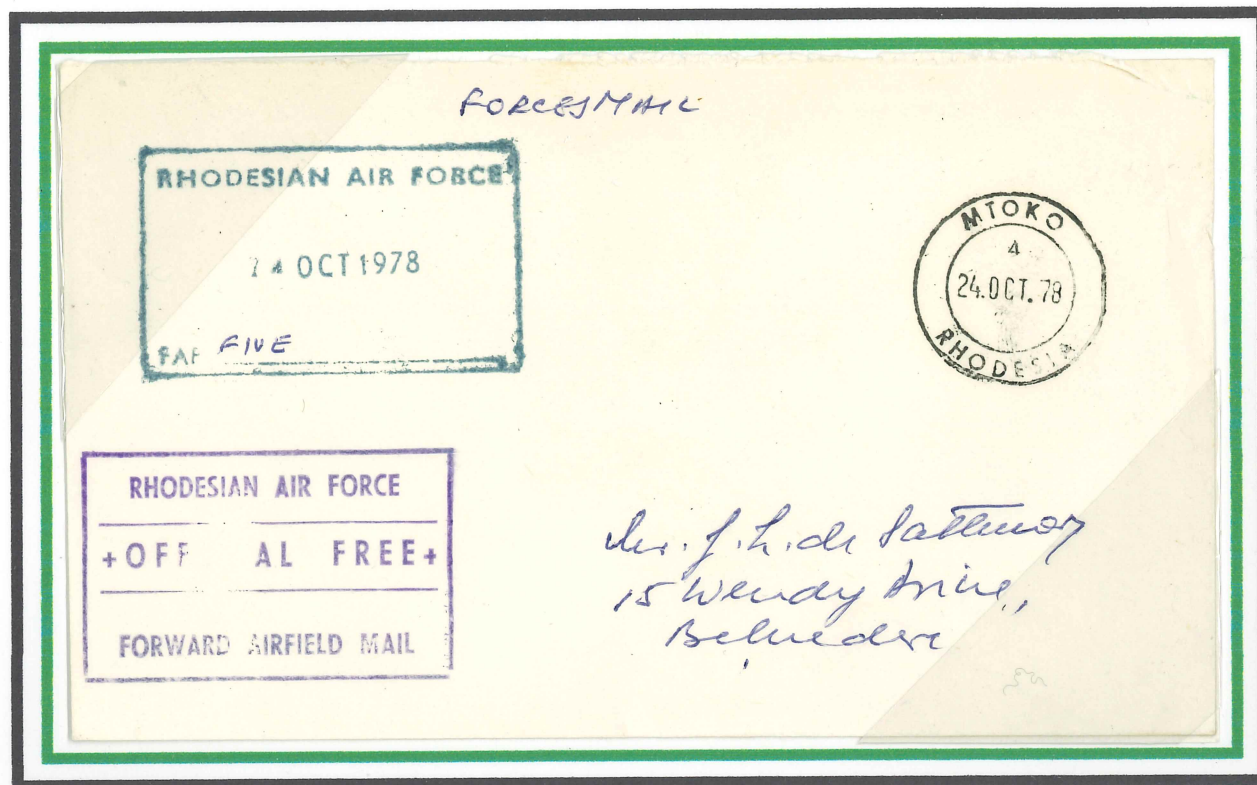


## Serving Units Mail

## Rhodesian Air Force

All Air Force operations were controlled by Air Headquarters at Causeway under Air Force Commander Air Marshal M.J. McLaren. Air equipment in 1976 included 34 Alouette III helicopters and Mirage aircraft transferred from South Africa.

Rhodesian Air  
Force →  
datestamp  
only known.



Mtoko Forward Airfield Mail, Official Free, handstamp marking without date. An additional date stamp, the only one known, was used: October 24, 1978 and indicates RAF unit five. Postal marking circular date stamp Mtoko same day.



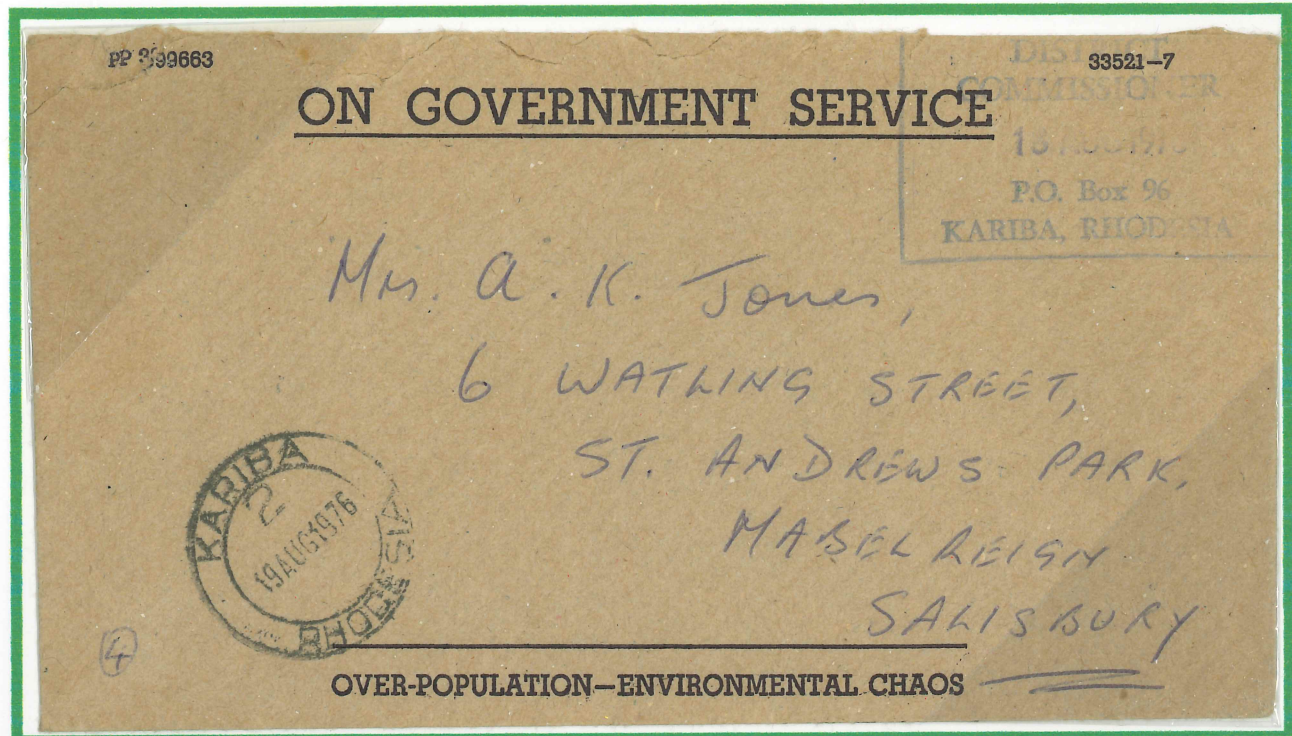
Causeway Air Headquarter letter to England bearing the rubber stamp dating March 5, 1979 and paying postage for out of country mail, cancelled in Causeway March 8th.



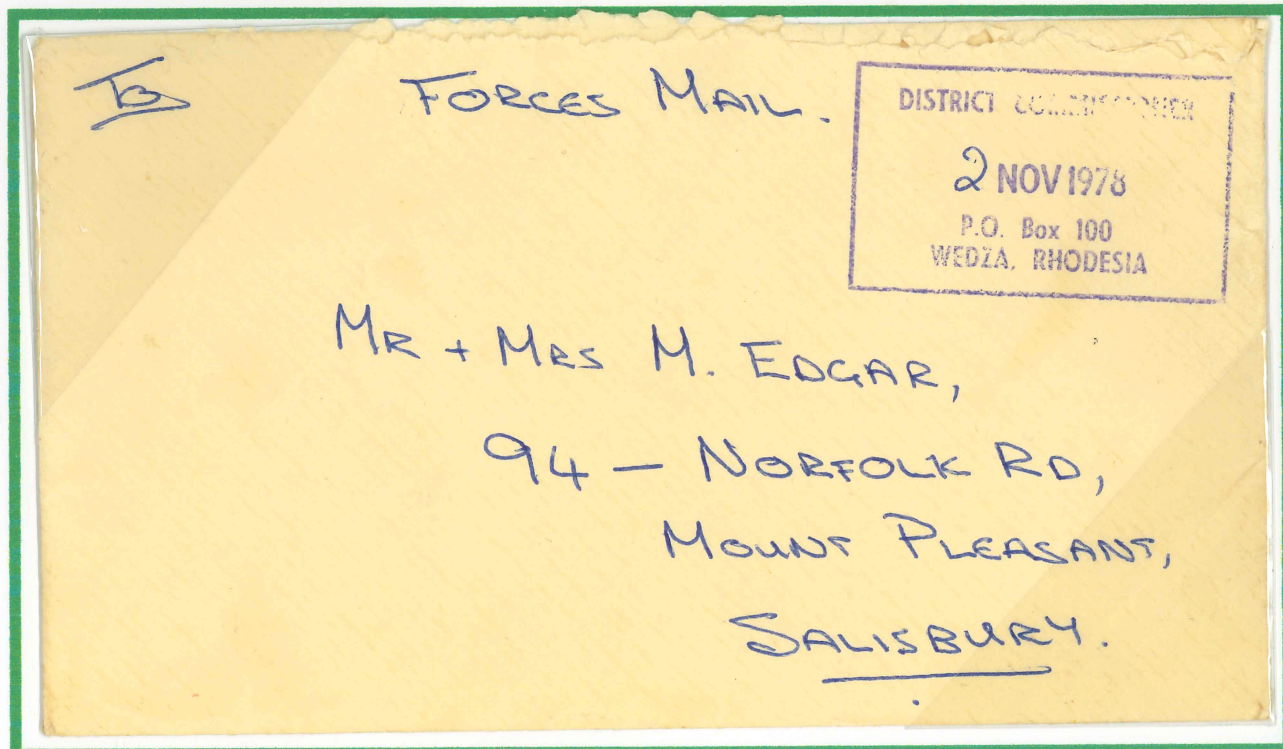
**Serving Units Mail  
Internal Affairs**

**District Commissions**

District Commissioners were appointed to serve in 54 areas, covering all of Rhodesia and reporting to the Department Internal Affairs. Within their districts, Commissioners protected newly constructed villages known as "keeps".



Government Service envelope, Kariba blue District Commission hand stamp dated August 18, 1979, transit through Kariba post August 19th to Salisbury.

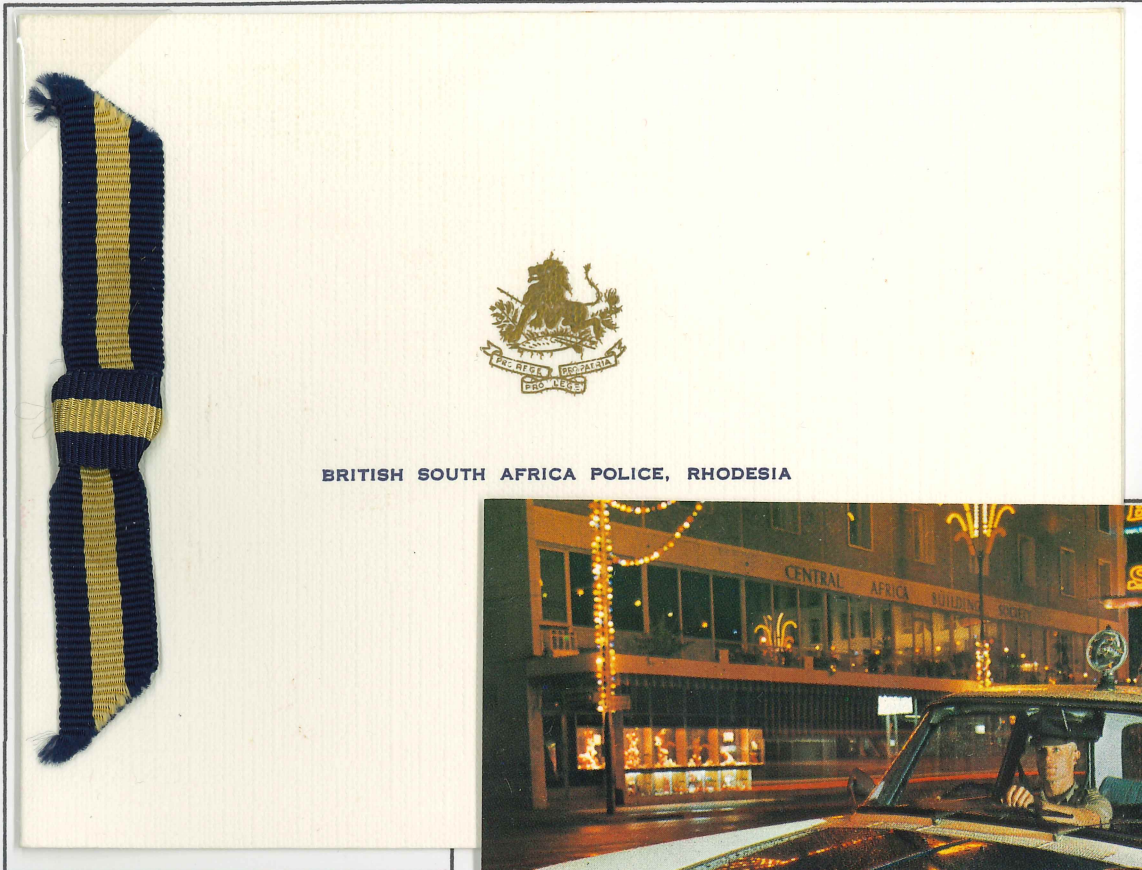


Wedza, District Commission post office box, sent to residential address in Salisbury, November 2, 1978.



## Serving Units Mail

## British South Africa Police



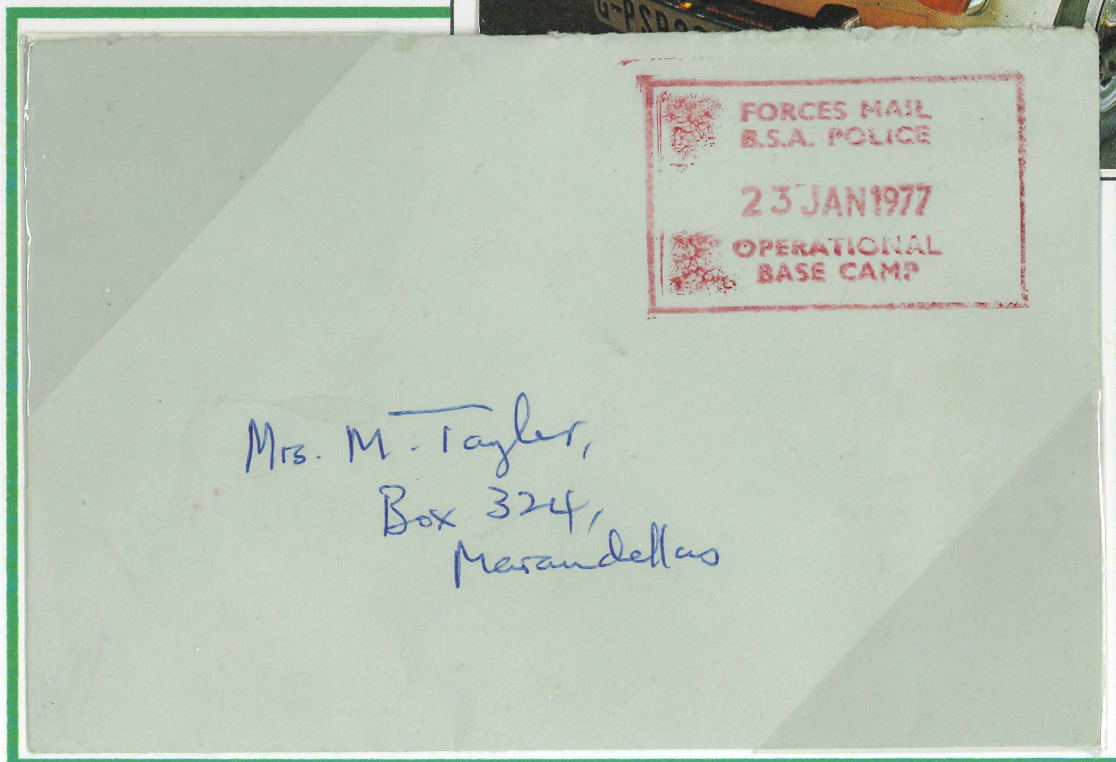
BRITISH SOUTH AFRICA POLICE, RHODESIA

Holiday thank you card and contents.



Security forces of the Police worked in a Joint Operational Command with the Army and Air Force.

Civilian Police and Reserve Military on active service worked as the Commission of the Police.



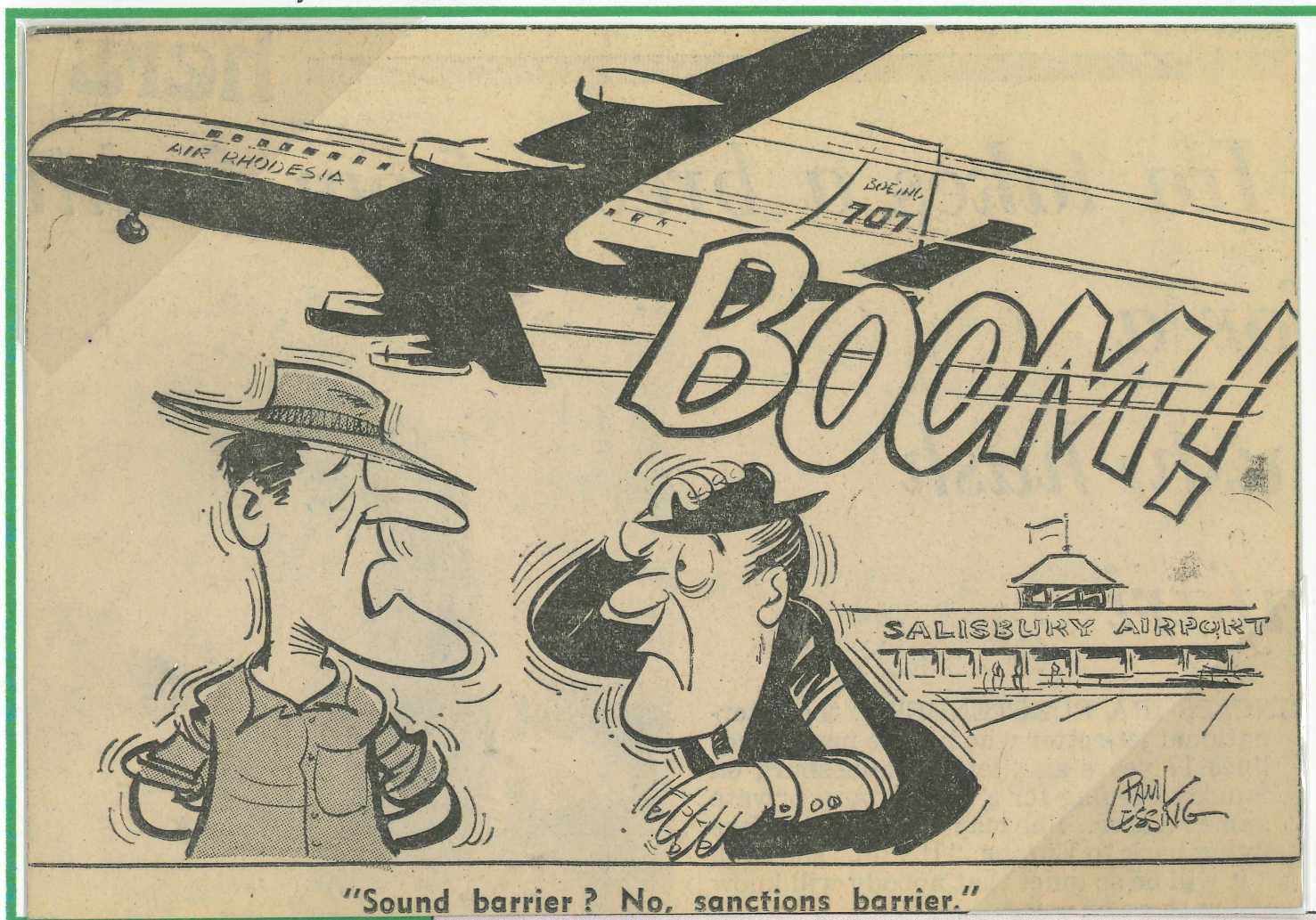
Operational Base Camp, border area, January 23, 1977. Unfranked and hand stamped Forces Mail—carried by military post.



# Military Communicating - Security

Sanctions

The confidentiality campaign underway, "Guard Against Gossip" below, and with an earlier a political cartoon with Air Rhodesian jet departing the Salisbury Airport and lampooning the United Nations Security Council sanctions against Rhodesia's break away from British rule.

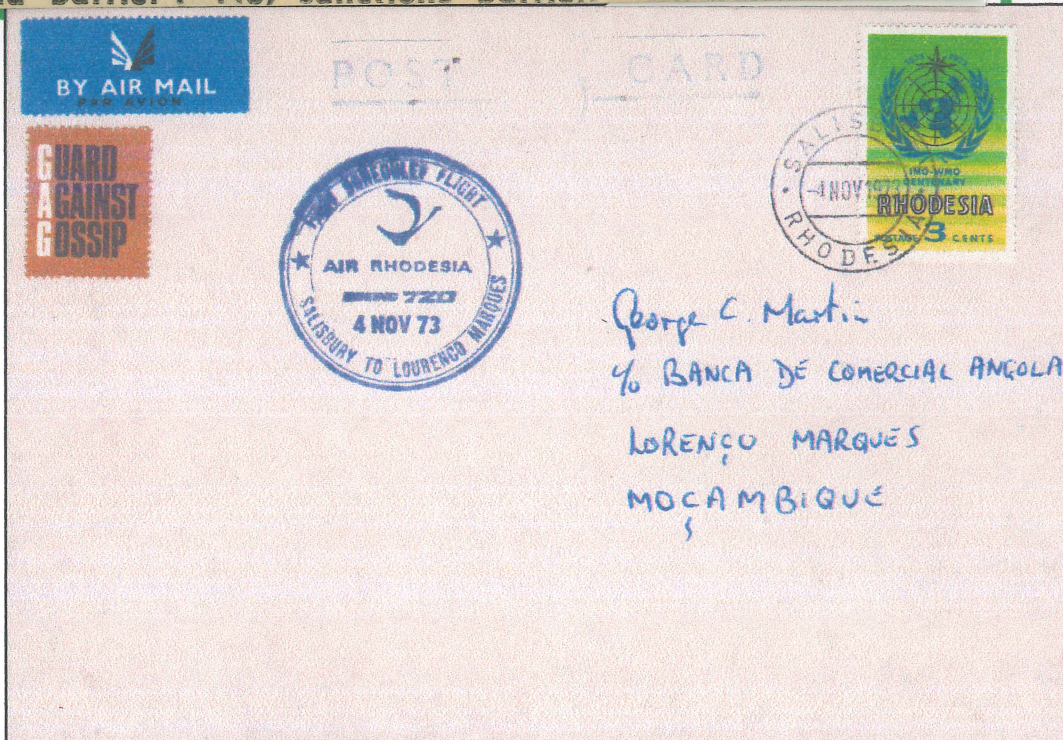


**Guard Against Gossip** →  
format like Security "Zaps"

Reverse at 75%

The "Unilateral Declaration of Independence" by the white minority government in November 11, 1965 triggered **sanctions** by the world community.

By March 3, 1976 mail service to Mozambique was suspended.



Salisbury, post card to Mozambique, November 3, 1973: Conflict and sanctions underway.



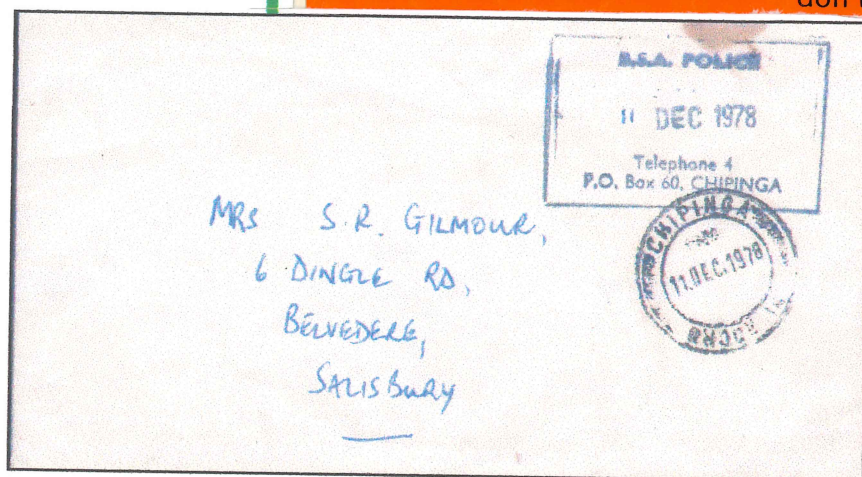
## Military Communicating

## Security Messaging Campaign— "Zaps"

The military used the postal system to spread the message of needed confidentiality through its campaign, "Think about national security, don't talk about it." The small envelope seals called the "Zaps" were used to get the message out.

**Drink a toast  
NOT A BOAST**

Think about national security —  
don't talk about it.



Security "Zap" label as security seal on reverse of a B.S.A. Police letter, Chipinga, December 11, 1978. Scan at 75%.

Aimed at female  
office staff  
workers.

*One of two Zaps  
aimed at women*

**down with  
women's lip**

Think about national security —  
don't talk about it.





**Military Communicating  
Security “Zaps” for Confidentiality**

**Terrorism and Anti-Communist Themes**

Spelling out Terrorism in the confidentiality reminders are the most specific of the Zaps, all were to be reminded to, “Think about national security, don’t talk about it.”

A play on the Chinese communist revolutionary Mao Zedong’s name.

**Have you  
got a  
Mao Tse Tongue**



Think about national security  
don't talk about it

**Verbalism Causes  
TERRORISM**

Verbalism’s  
very direct  
consequence.

Think about national security —  
don't talk about it.

An appeal to take  
confidentially  
seriously.

**Don't give  
lip service to terrorism**

Think about national security —  
don't talk about it.



**Military Communicating  
Security "Zaps" for Confidentiality**

**The Dangers of Talk**

Security messaging on these "Zaps" was a reminder that the enemy would use ill-gotten information—these messages are reminders of the land mines and explosives used.

**YOUR  
CONVERSATION  
COULD BE  
EXPLOSIVE!**

Think about national security —  
don't talk about it.

Imaging  
unwanted talk  
with explosive  
consequences.

Land mines  
along roadways  
had damaged  
many military  
vehicles.

**What you've just  
said may blow  
UP A TRUCK!**

Think about national security —  
don't talk about it.

**BIG TALK**

**BIG FUNERAL**

Think about national security —  
don't talk about it.

A simple statement  
to remind of deadly  
consequences.

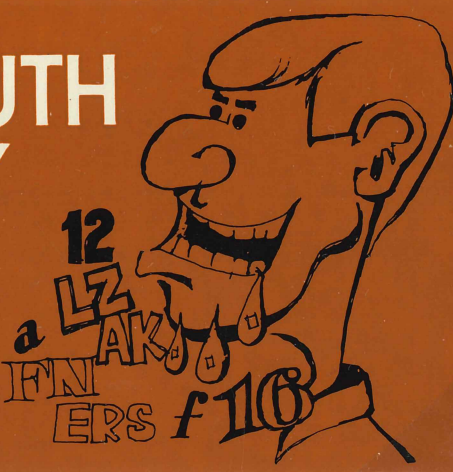


**Military Communicating  
Security "Zaps" for Confidentiality**

**Avoiding Careless Talk**

Security "Zaps" - as they were called - were distributed to troops and civilians. Approximately forty such messages were produced in total. These messages below are aimed to cut out careless talk, and to, "think about national security."

**IS YOUR MOUTH  
A SECURITY  
LEAK???**




Think about national security —  
don't talk about it.

Imaging  
unwanted talk  
with military  
equipment  
specifics.


A more generic  
"think first"  
message.

**ENGAGE BRAIN  
BEFORE OPERATING  
MOUTHPIECE**



Think about national security —  
don't talk about it

**THIS BOTTLE'S BUGGED**



Think about national security —  
don't talk about it.

A reminder that the  
enemy uses  
bugging devices.



The confidentiality campaign, "Think about national security, don't talk about it." included leaflets as well as the "Zaps".



**Beer talk  
is  
dear talk**

**PUBS  
HAVE EARS**

Think about national security —  
don't talk about it.

**THINK ABOUT  
NATIONAL SECURITY  
DON'T TALK ABOUT IT**

Security "Zap" and  
bi-color leaflet.



**Military Communicating  
Security “Zaps” for Confidentiality**

**Aimed at Office Workers and Army Clerks**

Security stickers were widely distributed to military and civilian offices during the war. Showing both women and men in non-uniformed caricatures aimed at letting everyone be reminded, “Think about national security, don’t talk about it.”

Aimed at female  
office staff  
workers.

*One of two Zaps  
aimed at women*



Men reminded  
to keep their  
mouths closed.

MINE refers to  
the placing of  
land mines on  
rural roads by  
the terrorists.





**RESTRICTED**

RIC JOC Untali

Grand Reef.

March 1978.

AIDE MEMOIRE FOR PATROL INTELLIGENCE BRIEFINGS

Coy intelligence clerks are to ensure that all patrol commanders are given the following information on the patrols area of operation before the patrol is deployed.

1. General.
  - a. Area to be covered.
  - b. Topography.
  - c. Known OP points.
  - d. Known river crossings.
  
2. Population.
  - a. Attitude of the local population.
  - \* b. Names and locstats of kraals that feed regularly.
  - \* c. Names of CT contact men.
  - d. Kraal heads names and locstats.
  
3. CT Tactics.
  - a. CT dress.
  - b. Weapons carried in the area.
  - \* c. Names of CT section comds and section PC's in the area.
  - \* d. Locstats of known CT base camp and the dates they were found.
  - e. Times CT's are known to move around.
  - \* f. Names, locstats and dates of the places where CT's were recently seen.
  - \* g. Size of CT sections in the area.
  - \* h. Any known habits of the CT's in the area.

## 4. Intelligence Map.

Each patrol commander is to be given (on signature) a copy of the int map provided by RIC at JOC. This map should contain kraal head's locstats and areas, CT incidents, regular feeders and contact men and recent sightings,

**Military Communicating****Intelligence Briefing**

Patrol Intelligence Briefing for patrol commanders.

\* Info obtainable from RIC at JOC Untali through the card index.

° Info obtainable from SB at Coy HQ.



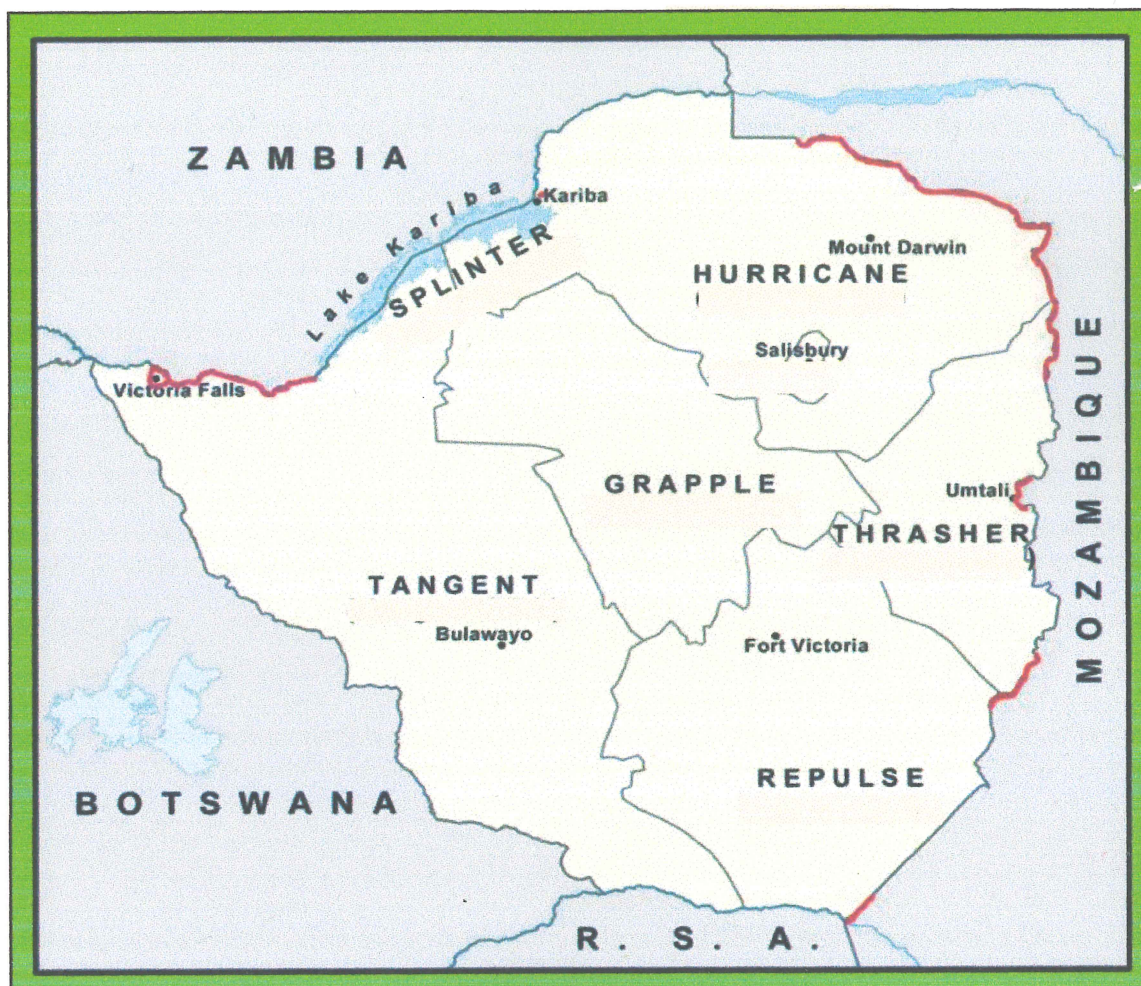
# Campaigns of the War

## Geographic Breakout

### Definitions and the Borders

The term **military campaign** applies to large scale, long duration, military operations or battles forming a distinct part of a larger conflict or war. This section is organized by the campaign of the Rhodesian Independence War. The borders with Mozambique and Zambia are especially important because of cross border operations.

**Red Lines →**  
Heaviest area  
of cross-border  
conflict



WorldPress.com

**Insurgency** - an organized rebellion aimed at overthrowing a constituted government

**Terrorism**—refers to the killing of innocent people by a non-government group

The Rhodesian Independence War pitted **three forces against one another**:

- ◆ The Rhodesian government security forces, led by Prime Minister Ian Smith.
- ◆ The Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army, (ZANLA) the military wing of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union who consisted primarily of Shona tribes.
- ◆ the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) of Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) consisted primarily of Ndebele tribes

The latter two forces were African nationalists who advocated armed struggle to bring about black rule.

**Cold War** politics played into the conflict. The Soviet Union supported ZIPRA and China supported ZANLA. Each group fought a separate war against the Rhodesian security forces.



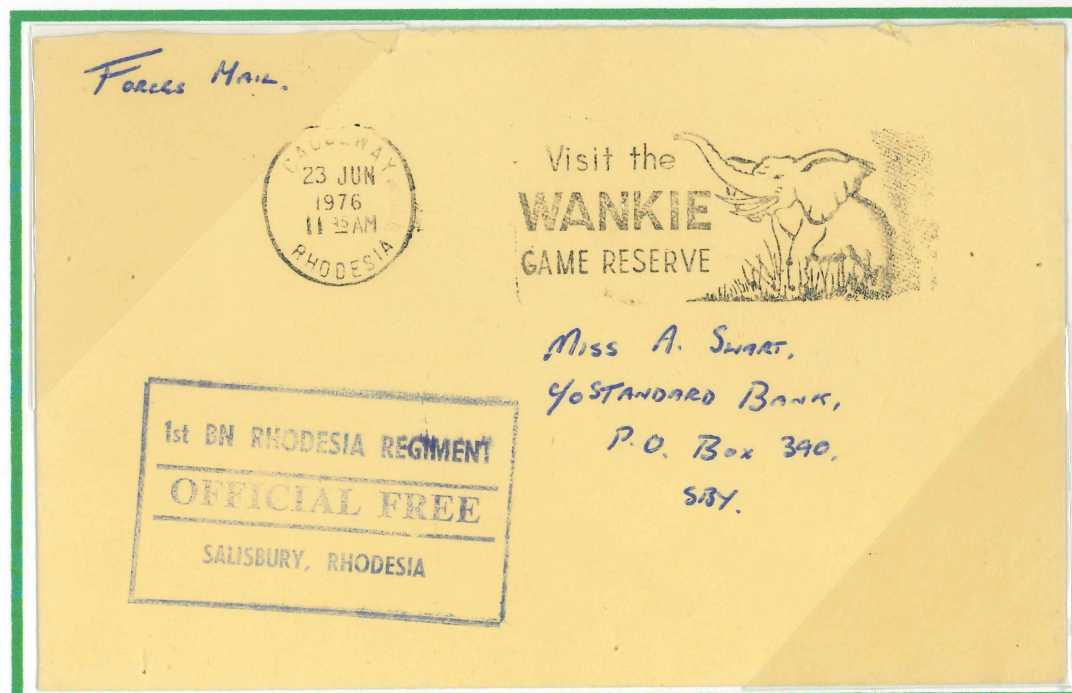
**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Hurricane**

**Combat in North-Eastern Rhodesia**  
**Causeway—Salisbury**

Fast chopper fire force was key to the Army's success in killing terrorists. The 1st Bn. Rhodesian Regiment, one of the fastest units on the front lines, posted from North East Operation Hurricane.



With a small force of helicopters, the 1st Bn of Rhodesia Regiment could reach the scene of a guerilla sighting.



1st Bn. Rhodesia Regiment Official Free, Salisbury, Civilian post slogan cancelled Causeway, June 23, 1976.



**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Hurricane—Defending Oil Supplies**

**Combat in North-Eastern Rhodesia**  
**Salisbury**

Terrorist from ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army), was the armed terrorist wing of the Zimbabwe African People's Union, in Rhodesia successfully fired on Salisbury's mail oil storage depot, destroying 22 storage tanks, ultimately destroying 24.5 million gallons in a massive loss to the economy and blow to the war effort. B.S.A. Police Support Unit, Salisbury, supported firemen and field troops were assigned to defending oil fields.



B.S.A. Police Unit Troops, Salisbury, August 16, 1977, air mail stationery envelope sent surface mail from Salisbury.



One Unit—Green printing, purple band



Five Units—Purple printing, green band

Petrol Coupons — issued coupons providing a right to buy fuel during war time rationing, May 1977.



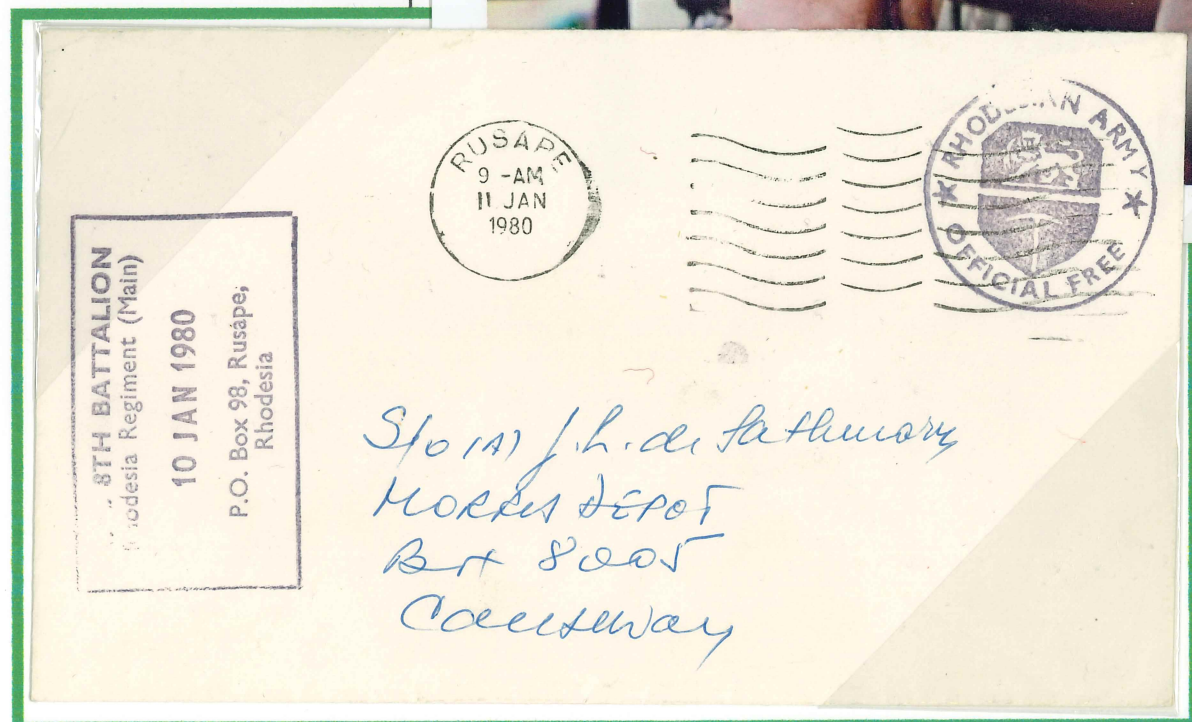
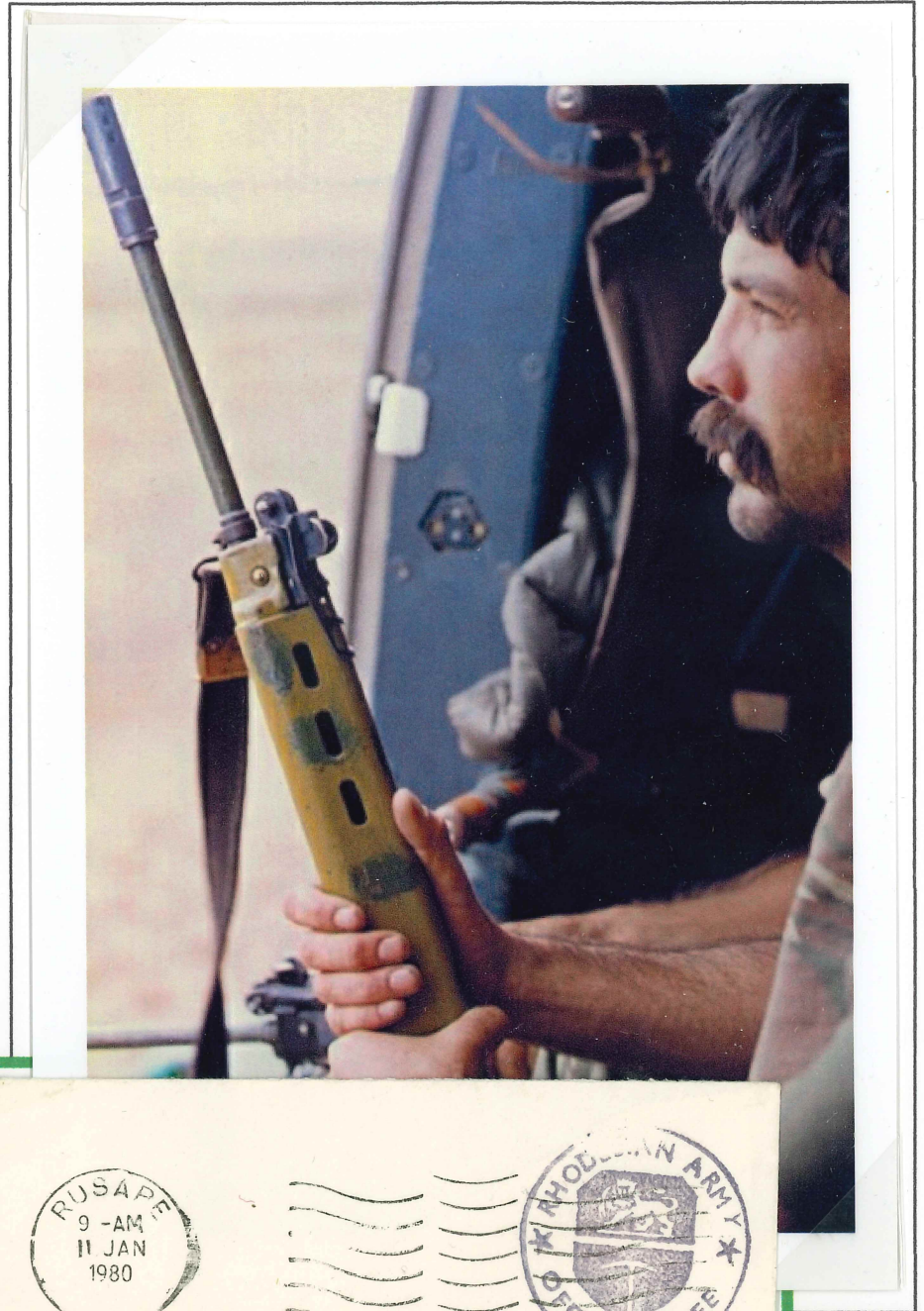
## Campaigns of the War Operation Hurricane

## Combat in North-Eastern Rhodesia Rusape

Later in the war, the 8th Battalion Rhodesian Regiment was deployed to Rusape where an escalation in fighting was underway.

Rusape, in North-Eastern Rhodesia, entailed cross-border fighting along the Mozambique border.

Light Infantry troops, like this one shown in the door of an Alouette helicopter, were radio dispatched quickly from base units.



8th Battalion Rhodesia Regiment Official Free, Rusape, Civilian post next day, January 11, 1980.



**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Tangent**

**Combat in Western Rhodesia**  
**Wankie**

Wankie, in the north west of the country, is surrounded by one of the largest game reserve parks in the country. Terrorists used this sparsely populated area to infiltrate south across the Zambezi river from Zambia. Troops from Independent Companies of the Rhodesian Regiment, based in Bulawayo, taking cross border raids in special operations.



← Date stamp marking "Llewellyn" excised from Llewellyn Barracks marking when the 4 Independent Company moved.

4 (Independent) Coy., Rhodesian Regiment Official Free letter, Wankie, October 13, 1976  
Civilian posted at Wankie.



Photo of cache from a raid deep into Zambia which produced captured terrorist arms and explosive devices taken from the Mkushi terrorist training camp.



**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Tangent**

**Combat in Western Rhodesia**  
**Bulawayo**

Having traditionally been a large military area, Bulawayo army bases were served by the existing civilian post offices by Llewellyn Barracks. M.P.O. 1 was activated in 1977 when **Operation Tangent** managed the border with Botswana.



↑ First Brigade, Official  
Free, Bulawayo May  
11, 1977.

Armored cars on patrolled  
in the bush: Many miles of  
rural lands to protect from  
terrorists crossing borders.

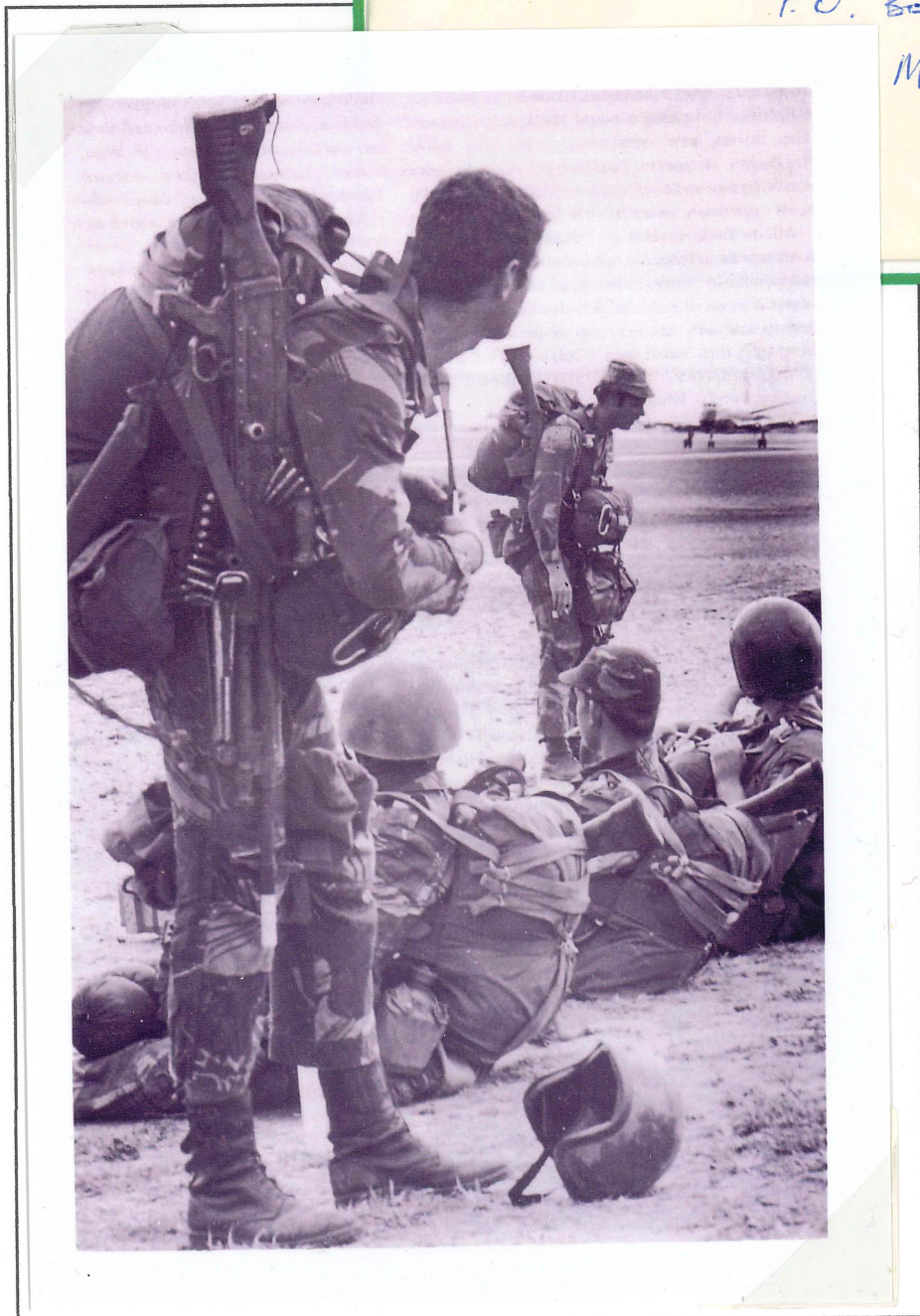
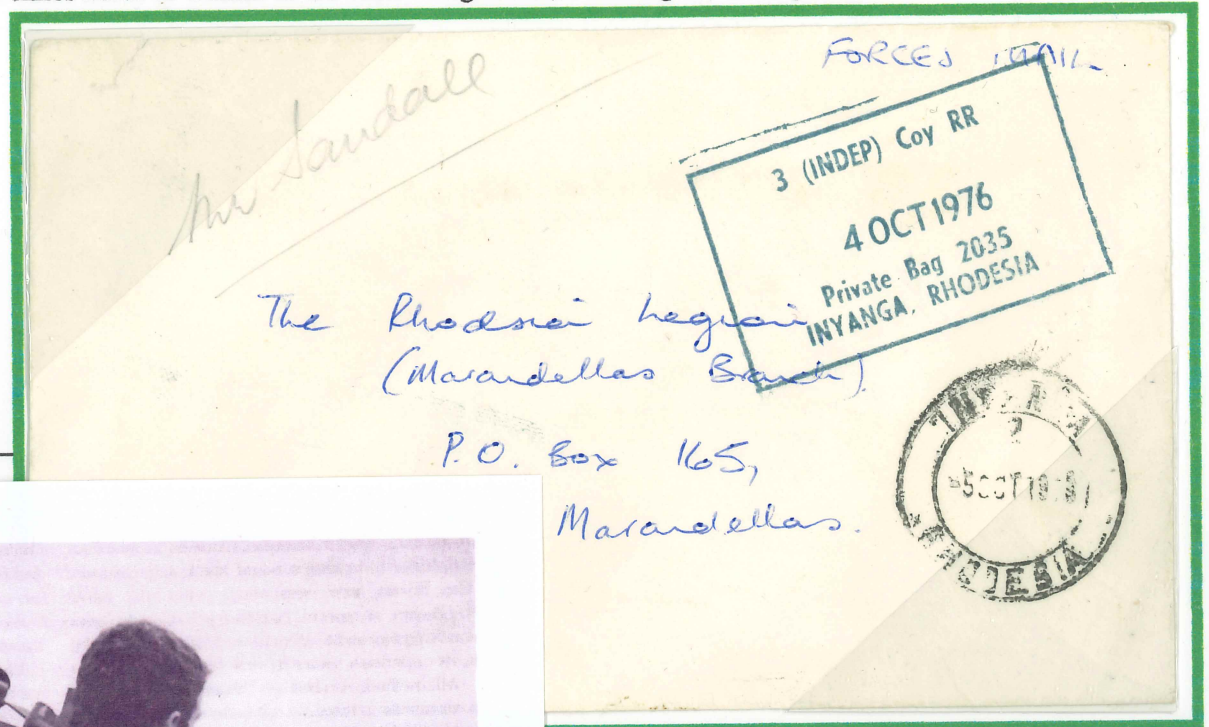




## Campaigns of the War Operation Thrasher

## Combat in Eastern Rhodesia Inyanga

The north east corner of Rhodesia from Umtali to Kariba was a key terrorist access point from camps in Mozambique and south east Zambia. Air strikes and ground cross border strikes were frequently mounted by 3 (Independent) Company and Light Infantry forces to take out insurgents before they could concentrate. 3 (Independent) Company was positioned at Inyanga 70 miles north of Umtali in the eastern highlands, watching the cross points.



3 (Independent) Company, Rhodesian  
Regiment, Inyanga, October 4, 1976,  
Civilian posted next day in Inyanga.

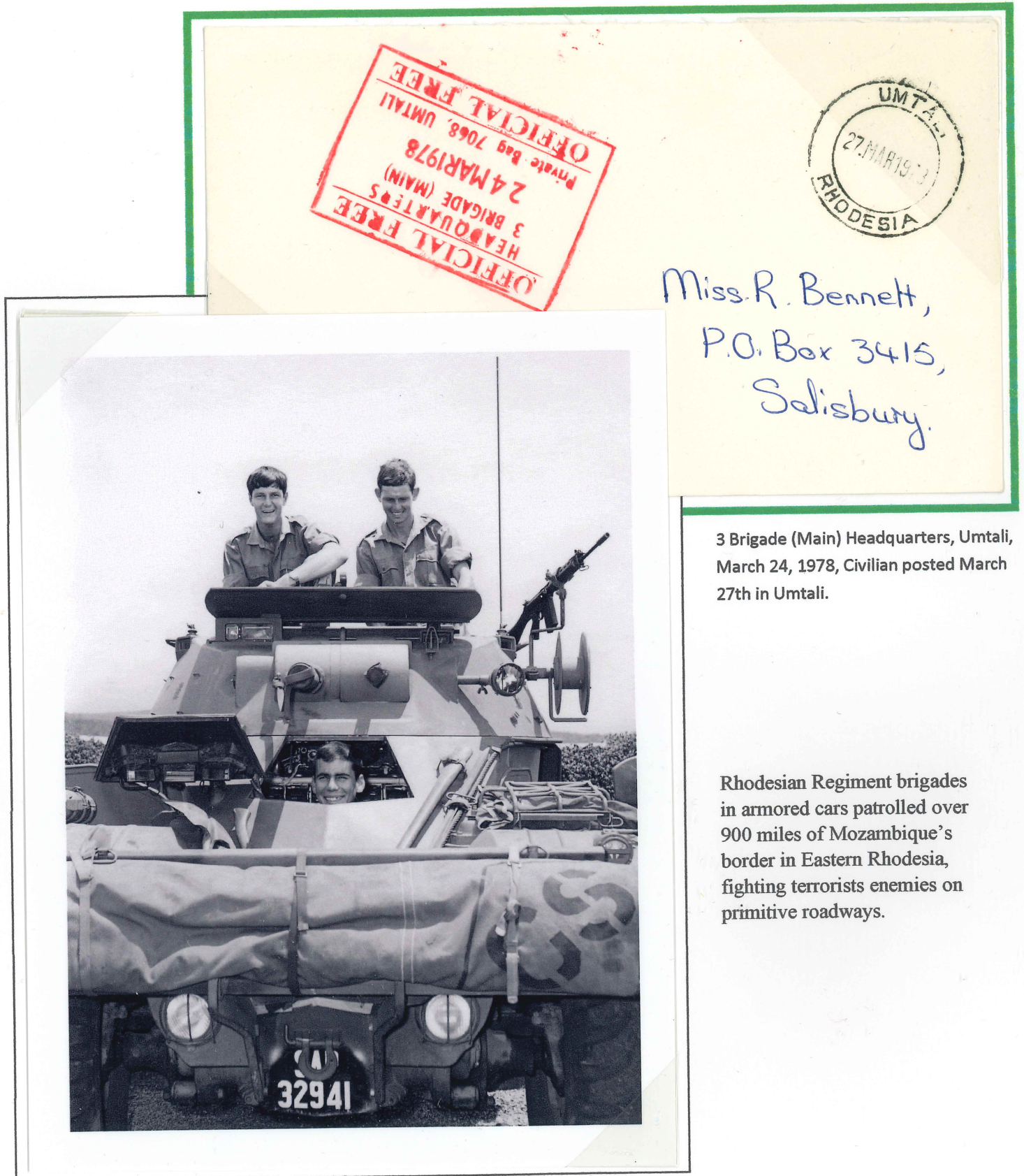
Rhodesian Regiment  
soldiers, pack, gear and  
weaponry.



**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Thrasher**

**Combat in Eastern Rhodesia**  
**Umtali**

The Headquarters of M.P.O. 3 was Umtali, capital of Rhodesia's Eastern District, the city is 3 Brigade headquarters for Operation Thrasher. Official mail was privately bagged at Umtali as indicated on the label on the cover below. From Operation Thrasher in Umtali the entire hostile border with Mozambique was monitored.



3 Brigade (Main) Headquarters, Umtali,  
March 24, 1978, Civilian posted March  
27th in Umtali.

Rhodesian Regiment brigades  
in armored cars patrolled over  
900 miles of Mozambique's  
border in Eastern Rhodesia,  
fighting terrorists enemies on  
primitive roadways.



**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Thrasher**

**Combat in Eastern Rhodesia**  
**Manicaland—Umtali**

The Honde Valley area of Rhodesia's rugged eastern highlands lies just north of Umtali and was a main infiltration routes from across the border Mozambique. This is the center of the prosperous tea growing industry and it was here in Manicaland that guerilla forces lined up the entire work force of 29 of one tea estate and shot them.



4th Rhodesian Regiment, Manicaland, sent October 1, 1979. Seldom seen mail from Manicaland.



Tea estate massacre, Manicaland, Eastern Highlands, photo from war yearbook entitled, **Contact** by John Lovett.



## Campaigns of the War

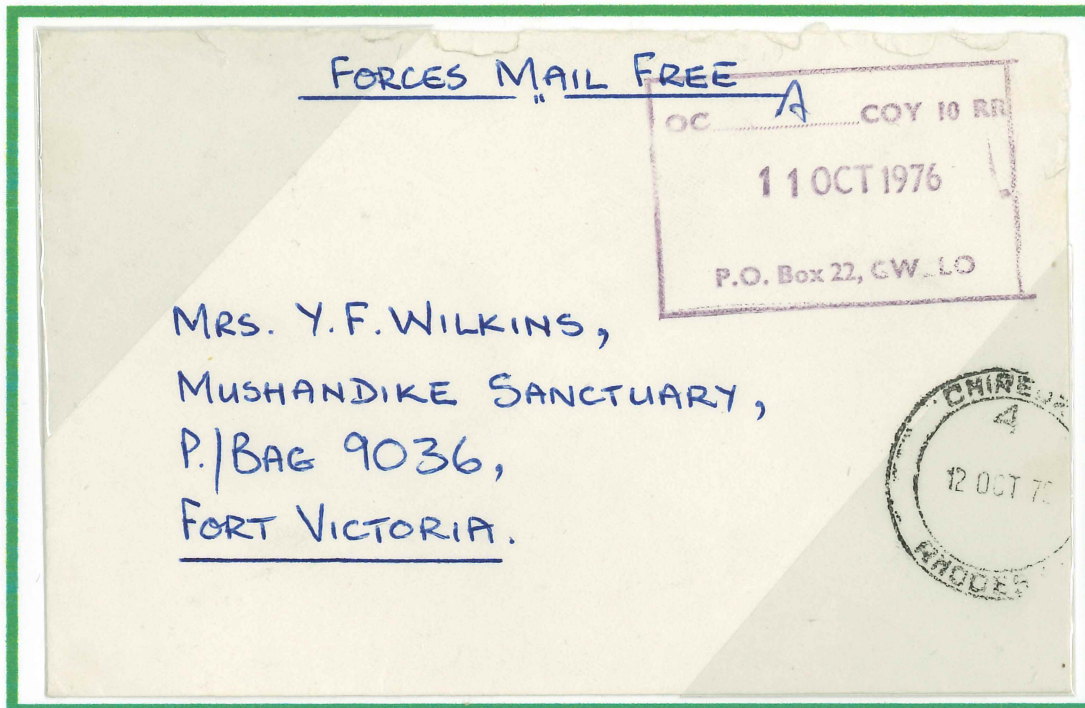
### Operation Repulse

## Combat in South Eastern Rhodesia

### Chiredzi

Operation Repulse operated in the South Eastern border area, where cross border raids into Mozambique were mounted. In 1976, at the time the cover below was posted, Rhodesian forces crossed the border near Vila Salazar and hit guerilla bases at Chiqualaquala south of Malvernia. Chitanga north of Malvernia and at Mapai some 55 miles south east of the border on the Limpopo River. None of the strike forces penetrated more than 60 miles into Mozambique.

The 10th Battalion Regiment, as below, was temporarily based at Chiredzi in the Hippo Valley on the Chiredzi River, as civilian mail posting at Chiredzi confirms on the cover.



←Adaption of marking, company "4" filled in.

10th Battalion Regiment, boxed date stamped October 11, 1976.

Mobilized from Gwelo to the south eastern border Civilian Mail processing at Gatooma May 10th for Salisbury delivery.

← Cancel: Evidence of troop mobilization, "4"

Troops mobilized:  
Operation Repulse  
drew from Gwelo.



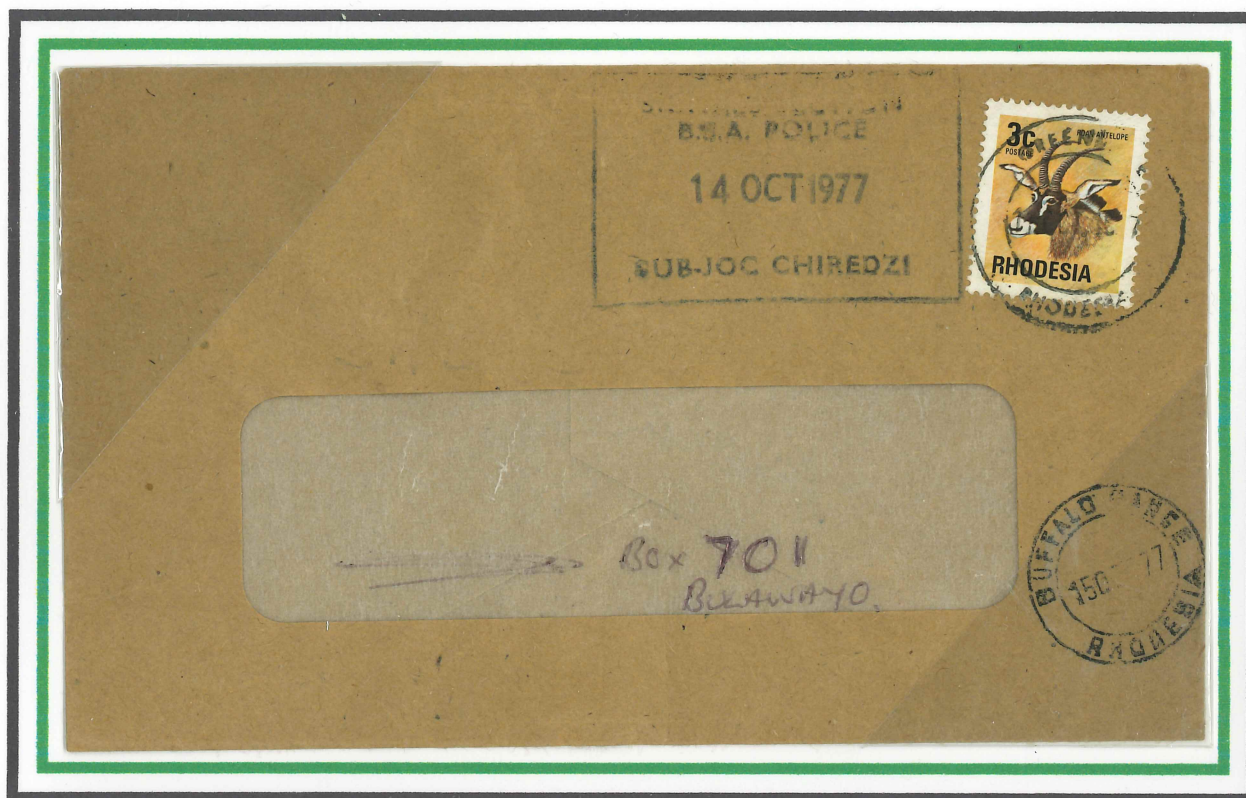


**Campaigns of the War  
Operation Repulse**

**Combat in South Eastern Rhodesia  
Chiredzi**

B.S.A. police were positioned in Chiredzi, a south eastern position for holding back terrorist from the south western Mozambique border. Civilian mail posting at Buffalo Range suggests nearby troop positions to the forward air field.

**Economy Reuse of Forces Mail Envelope**



Official Free B.S.A. Police Sub-Joc, Chiredzi window envelope forces letter sent October 14, 1977.

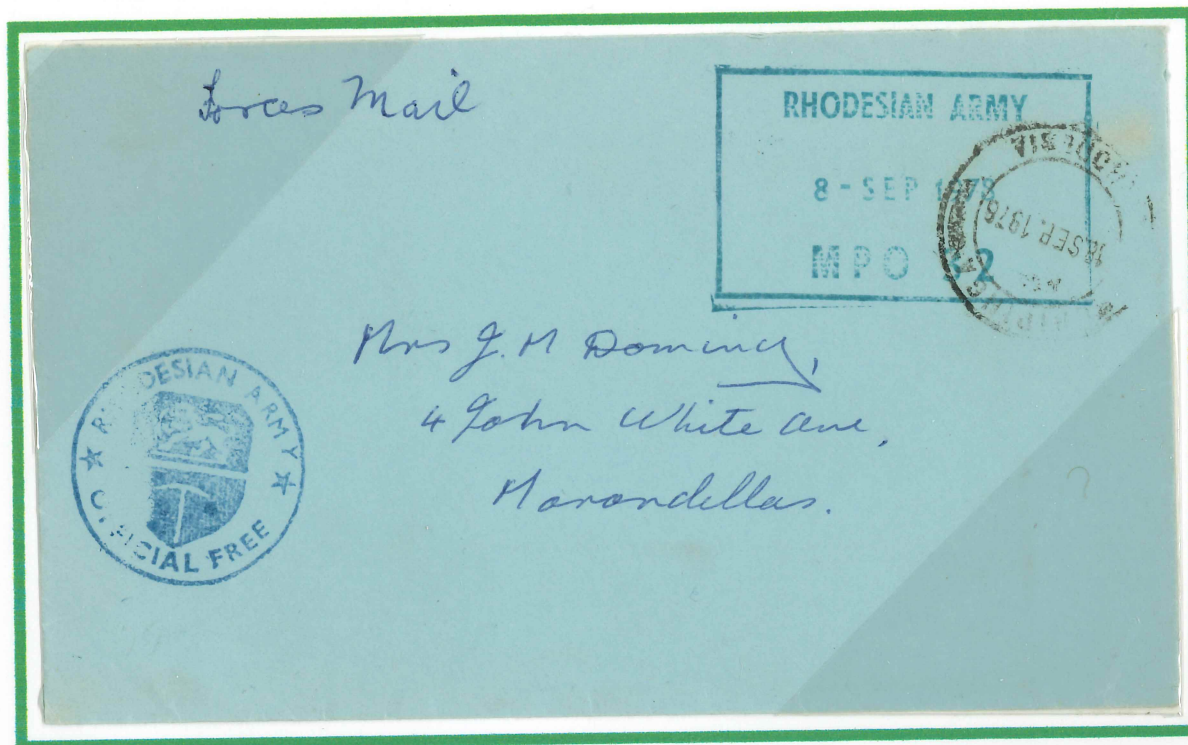
Re-mailed October 15, 1977 franked for surface mail from a civilian post at Greene, where postage would be required without a new date stamp, transit stamped at Buffalo Range, location of the airport, for forwarding address in Bulawayo.



**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Repulse**

**Combat in Central Rhodesia**  
**Chipinga**

Mobilized by Alouette helicopters to deploy troops, Operation Repulse used Army infantry forces to the south and eastern border area of Rhodesia. The one street town of Chipinga was home to protective troops as terrorist activities from the eastern border came to these farm lands. In response, 110 European farms were linked to the Police Station by "Agric-Alarms" to bring out BSA Police and Army infantry following two years of increase in terrorist activities.



Rhodesian Army Official Free, M.P.O. 3-2, September 8, 1978 to Marandellas, Chipinga same day posting.



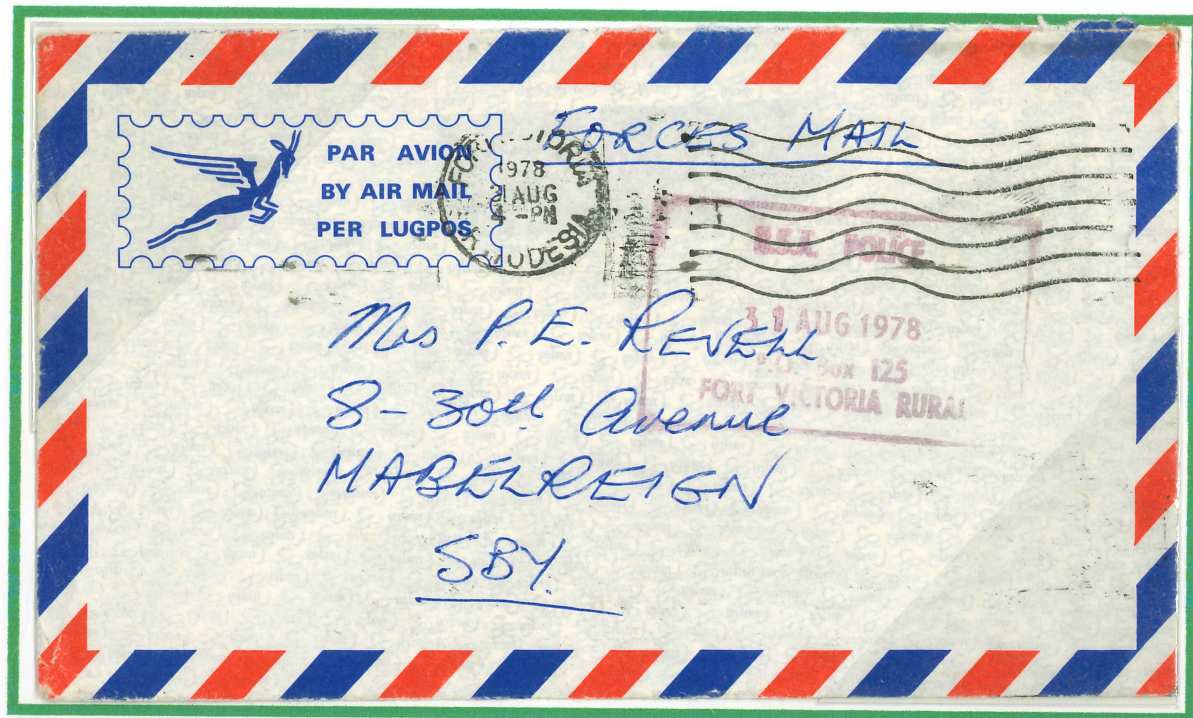
Troops mobilized:  
Operation Repulse  
repositioned Army  
Light Infantry from  
Fort Victoria to  
Chipinga.



**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Repulse – Base Camp Operations**

**Combat in Central Rhodesia'**  
**Fort Victoria**

Operational Base Camps were set up in the bush as needed. The image below is typical of this time and place.



Forces Mail B.S.A. Police Operation Base Camp, Fort Victoria, Rural, August 31, 1978 to Salisbury.

Base Camp in the bush: Operations Room in Rhodesia.

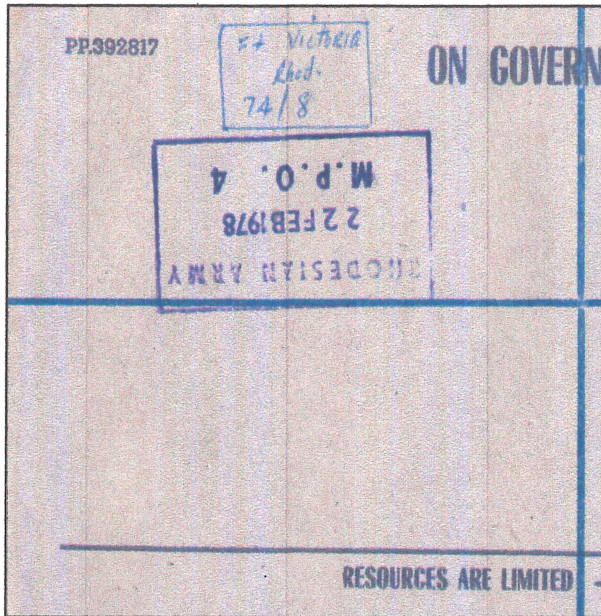




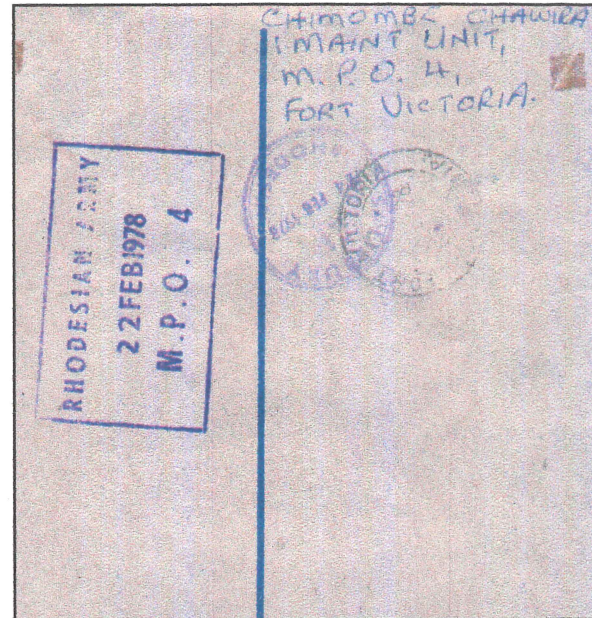
**Campaigns of the War  
Operation Repulse**

**Combat in Central Rhodesia  
Fort Victoria**

M.P.O. 4—Fort Victoria processed Operation Repulse mail. Rhodesian Army M.P.O. 4 opened May 1976. Heavy enemy (Zanla) infiltration through Chimanimani and Gaza in the east had prompted the Rhodesians to launch “Operation Repulse” based at Fort Victoria town (now Masvingo). The **Rhodesian** Army security forces came by Alouette helicopters.

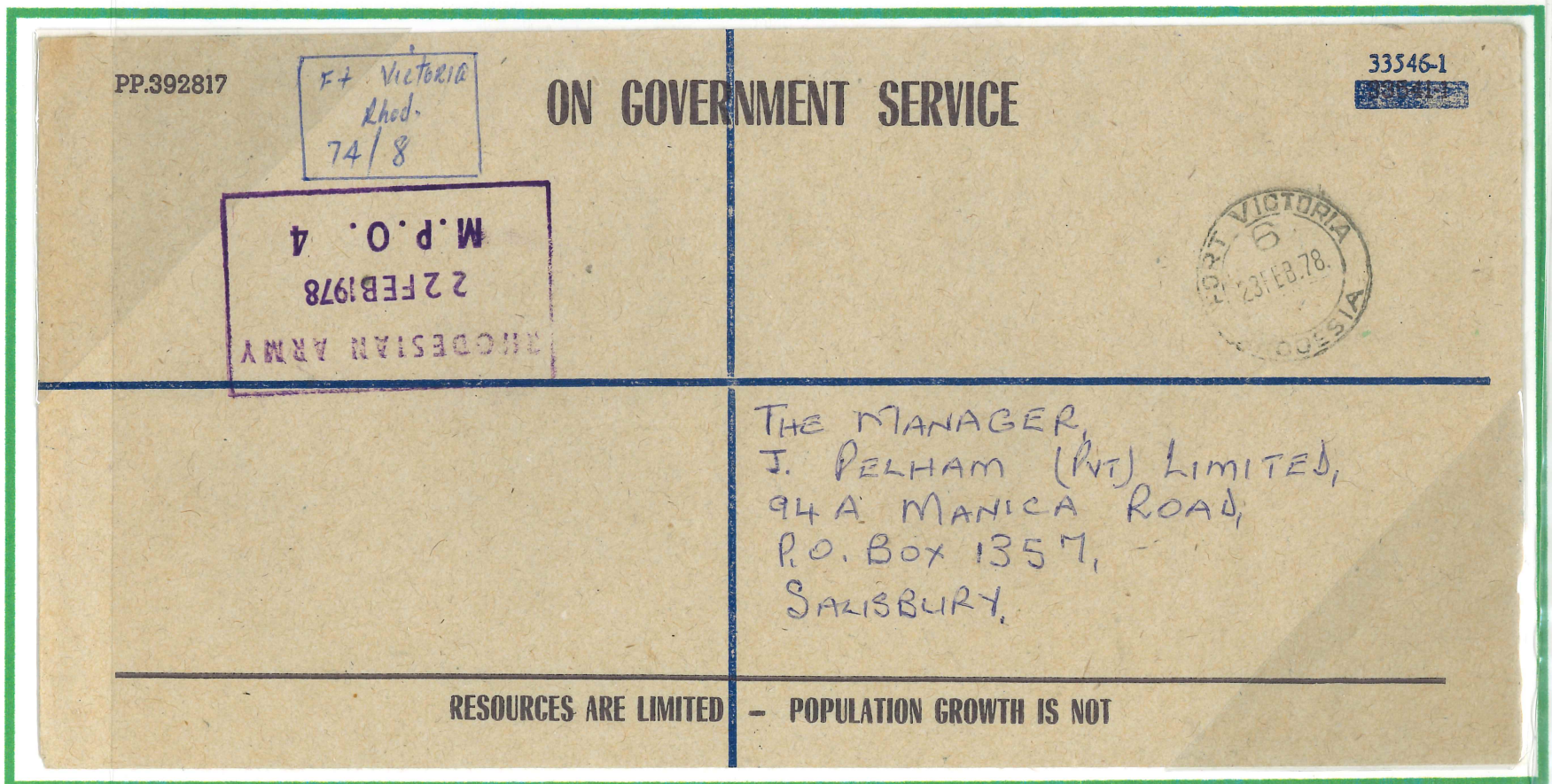


← Hand Drawn  
Registration Label  
Number 74/8.



Front: Boxed Rhodesian Army date stamp and added boxed Registration, scan at 75%.

Reverse: From Chimombe Chawira, a black African. Fort Victoria and Salisbury transits, two day delivery, at 75%.



Government Services envelope from 1 Maintenance Unit, boxed date stamped February 22, 1978. Next day Fort Victoria for Salisbury delivery.



## Campaigns of the War Operation Thrasher

## Combat in Eastern Rhodesia

### Umtali

The city of Umtali—capital of Rhodesia's Eastern Districts was awarded the Meritorious Conduct Medal for its part in defending Rhodesia in the terrorist war. Troops working under **Operation Thrasher** know the Citation, "The people of the city of Umtali have stood in the front line in the struggle against forces of barbarism and tyranny since the closure of the Mozambique border in March 1976. Their steadfastness, courage and fortitude in the face of perpetual danger from terrorist attack both within and outside Rhodesia have been deserving of the highest admiration." The city is 3 Brigade headquarters for Operation Thrasher. Several African nations suspended mail service to and from Rhodesia.



Franked letter from Salisbury sent to Quelimane, Mozambique, on the border of Rhodesia, May, 1976, and place of fighting in Operation Thrasher at Umtali. Marked "No Service" P.T.O. indication, "please turn over" and on reverse, R.T.S. for return to sender. Service interruption, *border closure mail seldom seen.*



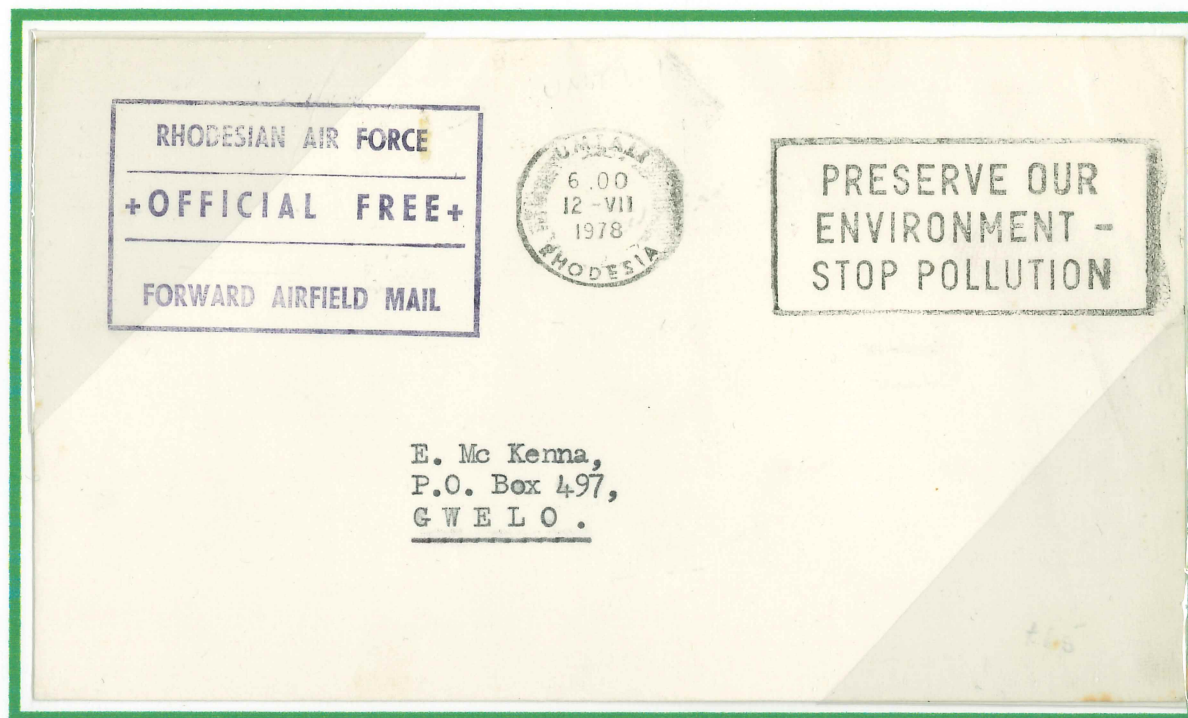
Rhodesian Regiment, 6 (Independent Company), Umtali, October 28, 1976 to Bulawayo. Security seal reverse.



**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Thrasher—Air Force Operations**

**Combat in Eastern Rhodesia**  
**Umali**

The Air Force, Forward Airfield Operations at Umali: This Eastern front operation entail counter terrorist troop movements.



Air Force, Forward Air Field Mail, Civilian post slogan cancelled Umali, July 12, 1978 to Gwelo.



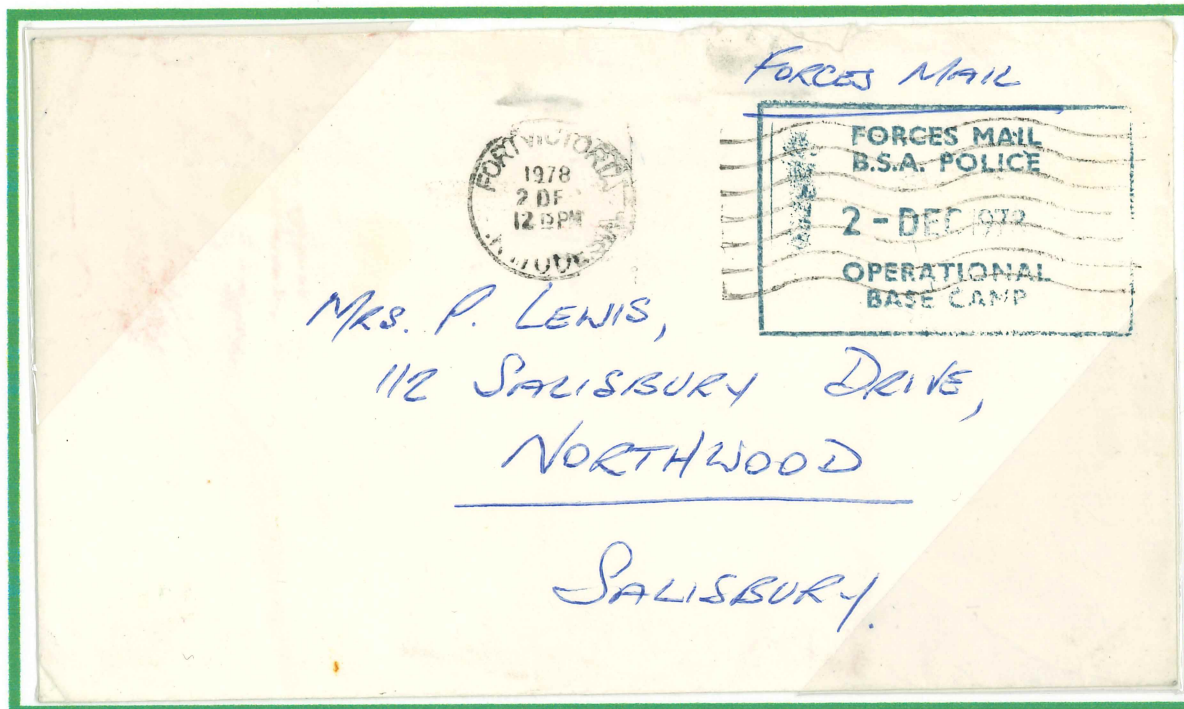
Paratroopers pose in front Rhodesian Air Force aircraft. Note the Royal R.A.F. insignia on this older plane pressed into service.



**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Repulse – Rail Guard**

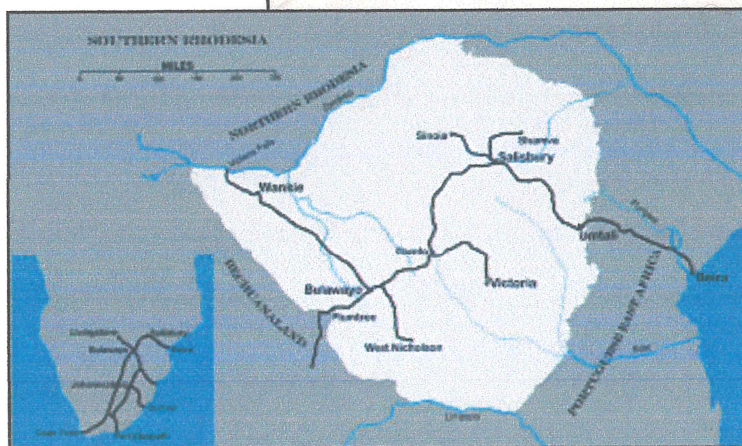
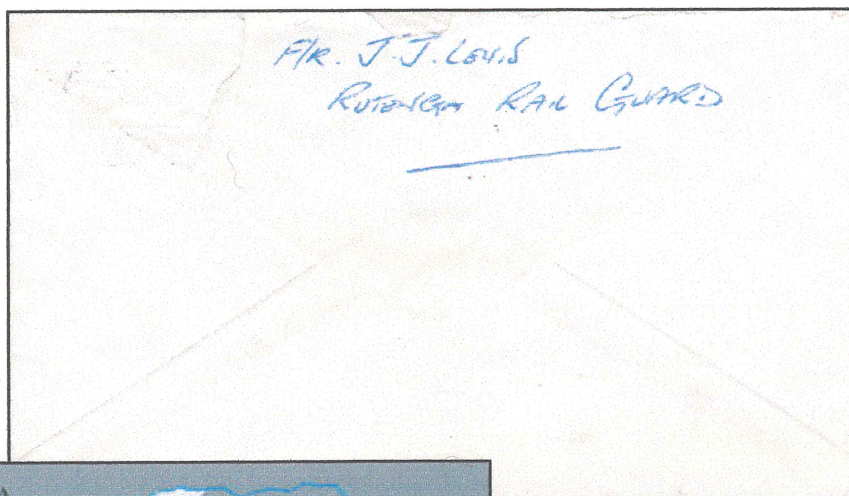
**Combat in Central Rhodesia**  
**Fort Victoria**

B.S.A. Police forces patrolled the rail lines, allowing mining industry to move goods. Terrorist disruption of rail lines, roadways and bridge was primarily carried out by planting land mines.



Forces Mail B.S.A. Police Operation Base Camp, Fort Victoria, December 2, 1978 to Salisbury.

Rutenga Rail Guard →  
 reverse scan at 75%.



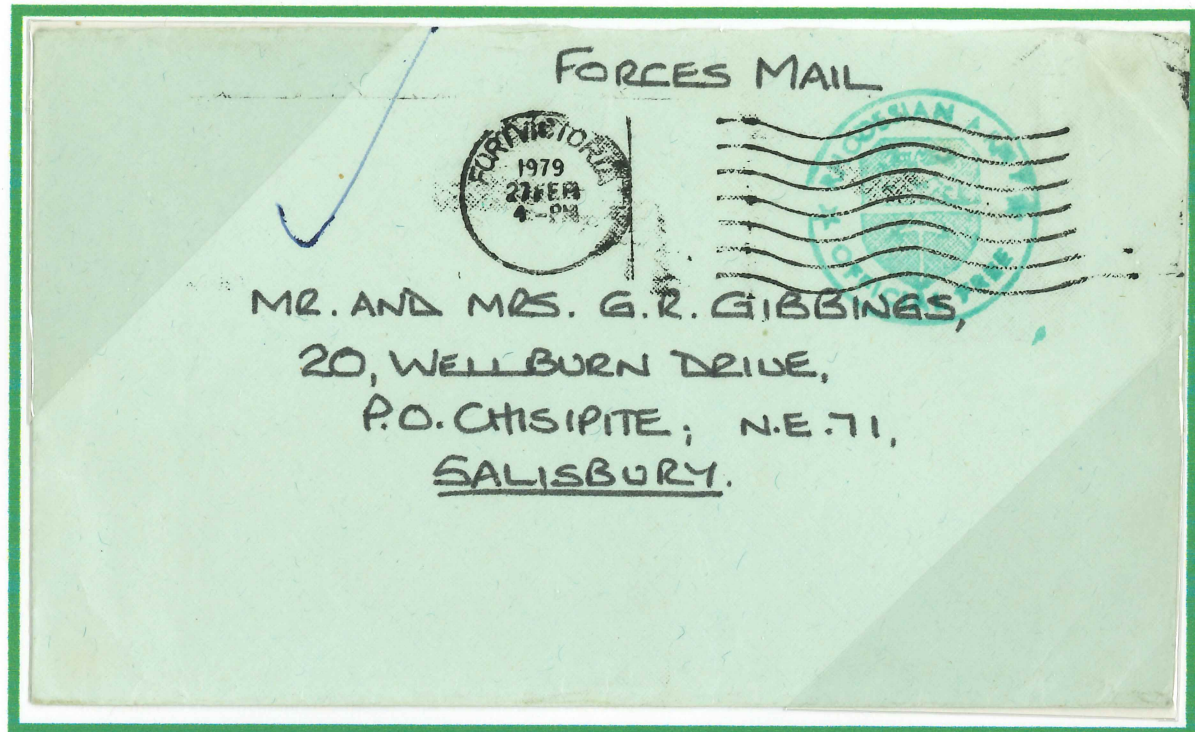
Rail lines - Rhodesia  
 ←Fort Victoria  
 Partial showing of rail.



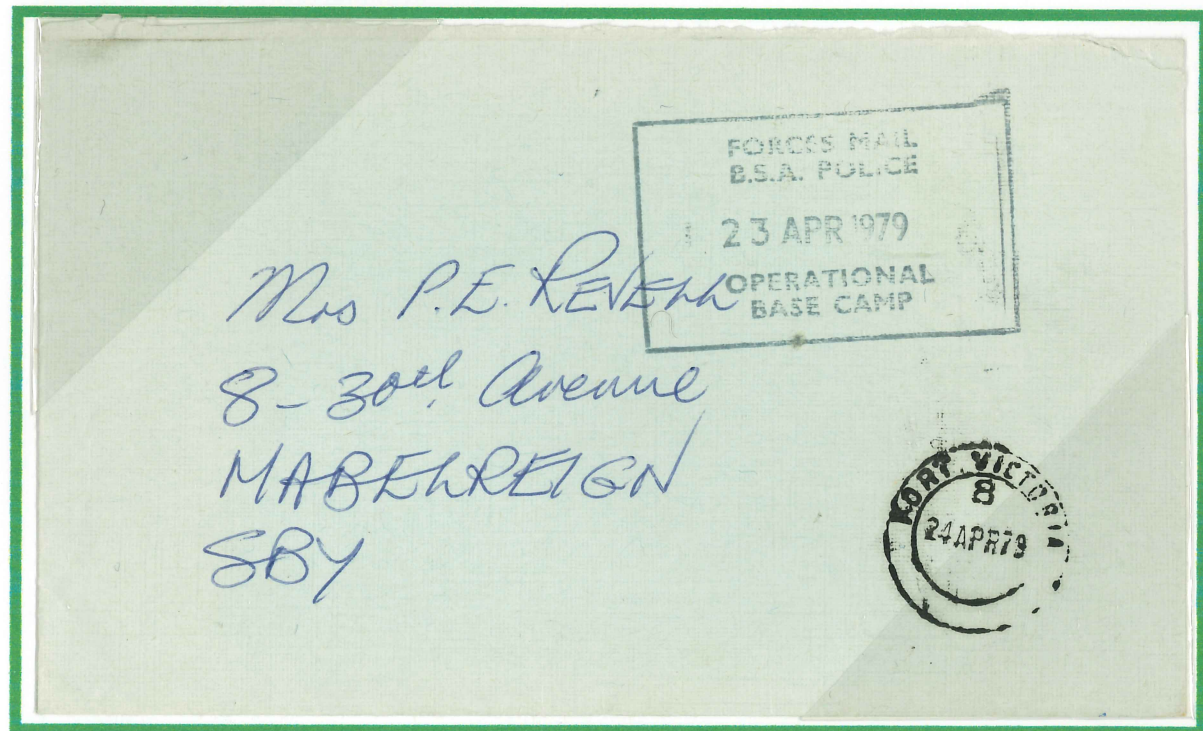
**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Repulse**

**Combat in Central Rhodesia**  
**Fort Victoria**

Operation Repulse used Army infantry forces to the south and eastern border area of Rhodesia, deploying troops to and from incident on transport aircraft.



Rhodesian Army Official Free, Fort Victoria, February 27, 1979 to Chisipite near Salisbury.



B.S.A. Police Forces Mail, boxed date stamped April 23, 1979, Civilian Mail processing at Fort Victoria next day for Salisbury delivery.



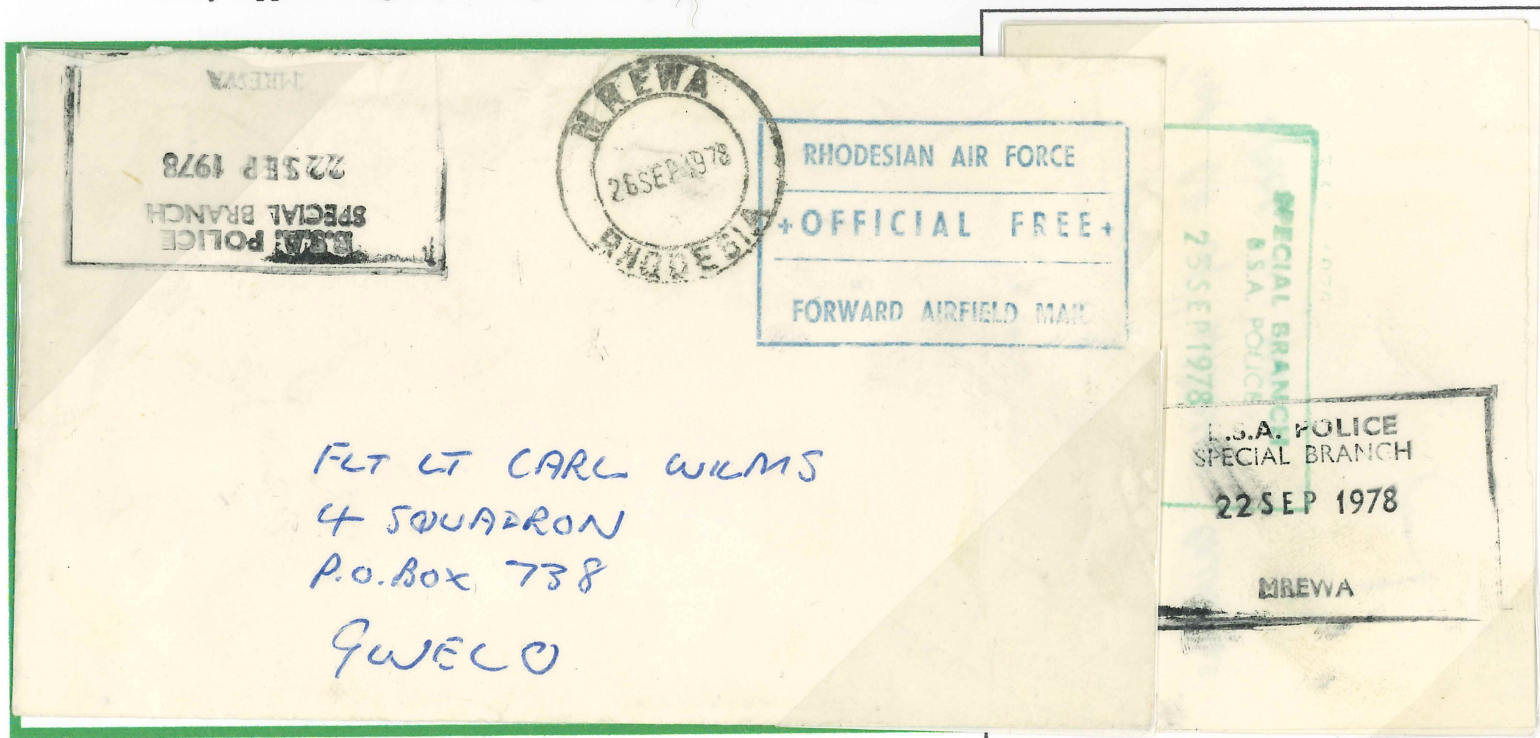
**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Grapple**

**Combat in North-Eastern Rhodesia**  
**Police, Special Branch**

Mrewa District was an important one on the main road from Salisbury towards the Mozambique border. Zanla used the area to infiltrate from Mozambique in the north. B.S.A. Police Special Patrols were stationed along the route, supported by Infantry and Air Force troops from to protect the border at Gwelo.



Infantry support brought by helicopters: keeping main roads open to keep terrorists at bay, cross border.



B.S.A. Police, Special Branch, Mrewa, September 22, 1978,

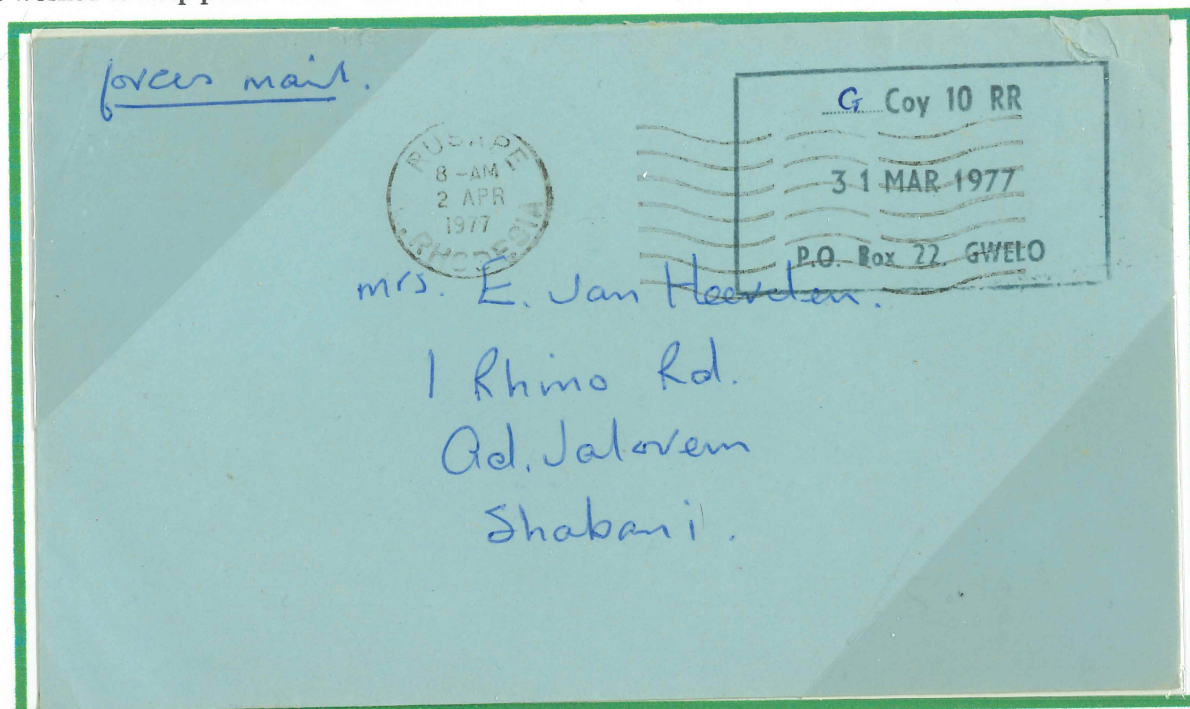
Above: Enclosure, also hand stamped.



**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Grapple**

**Combat in Central Rhodesia**  
**Gwelo**

Operation Grapple worked to keep peace in the center of the country. Foot patrols were supported by air as needed.



G Company 10th Rhodesian Regiment, March 31, 1977, Gwelo, cancelled at Rusape for Shabani delivery.



Rhodesian foot soldier carrying a Dragnov marksman sniper rifle.

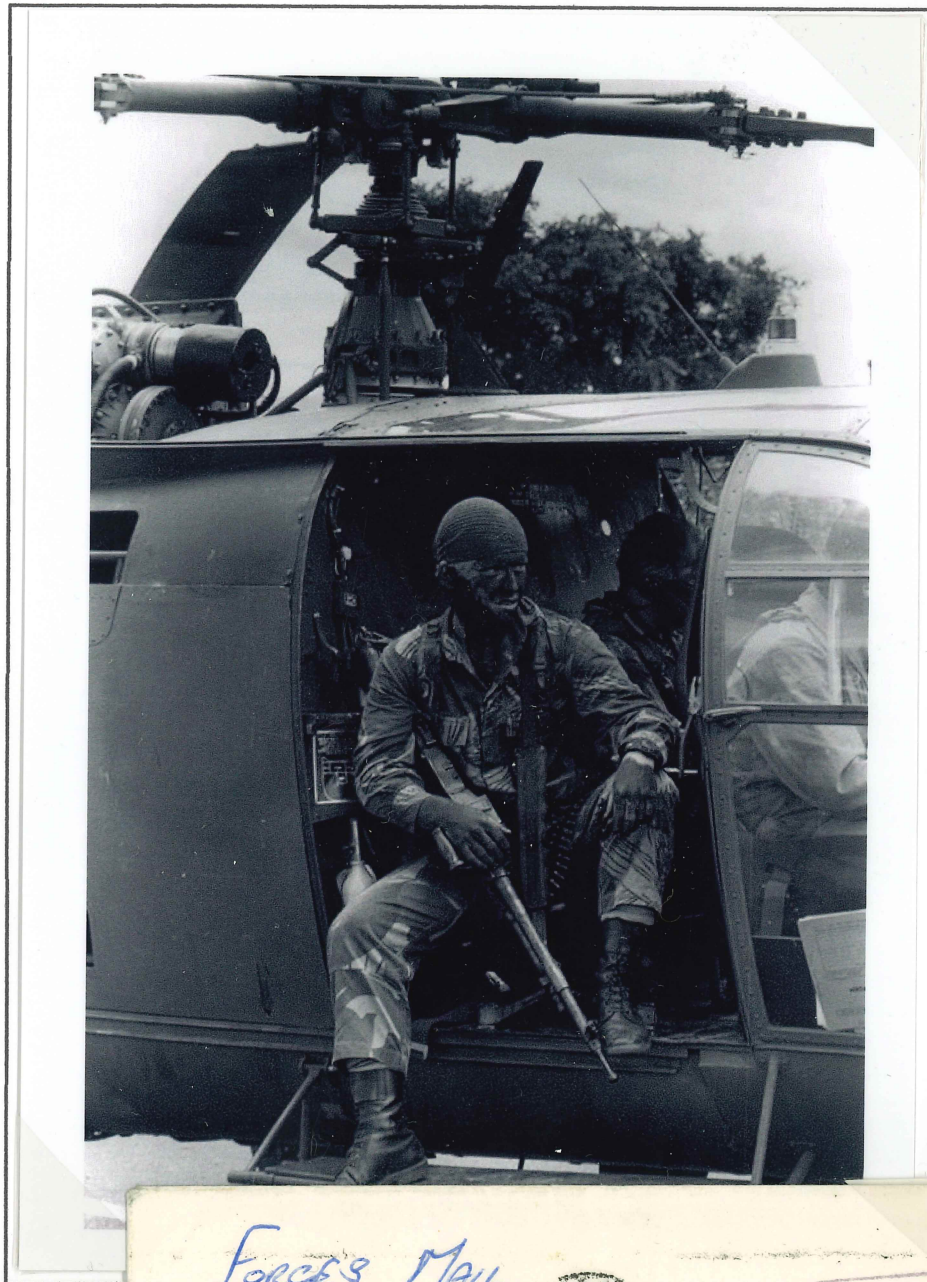
This rifle was developed in the Soviet Union and brought in from South Africa.



**Campaigns of the War**  
**Operation Grapple**

**Combat in Central Rhodesia**  
**Gwelo**

Operation Grapple had M.P.O. 5 with no sub offices, it was smallest operation but served a large geographic area with air support.



Infantry trooper in camouflage in an Alouette helicopter carrying a FN MAG machine gun.

10th Battalion  
Regiment, boxed date  
stamped May 7, 1976,  
from Gwelo.

Civilian Mail slogan  
cancelled, processing  
at Gatooma May 10th  
Salisbury.





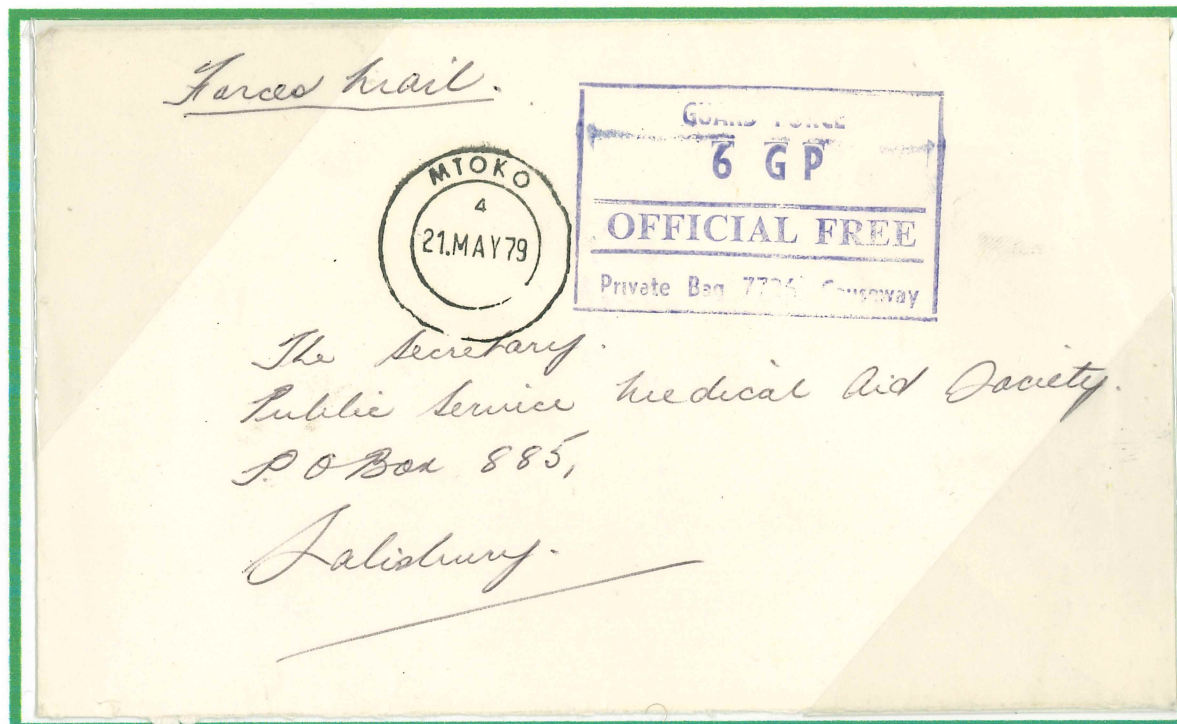
# Military Coordination—Election

Election and Security

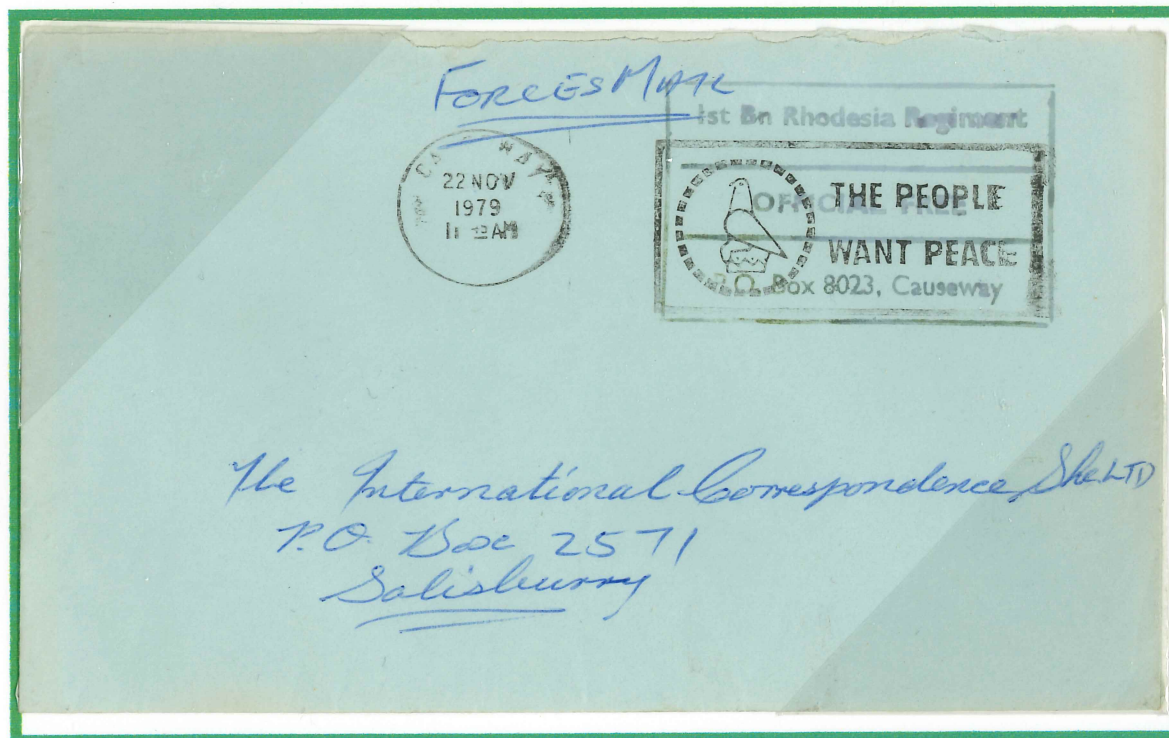
Following the April 1979 Zimbabwe Rhodesia general election, the Organization for African Unity declared the election “null and void”. In May 1979, the new foreign secretary indicated Britain wanted a new round of talks. Through a tumultuous year, the military remained in force as guerrilla operatives from Zambia and Angola moved aggressively into Rhodesia. The post office began a slogan campaign: “The People Want Peace” during this post-election time.

## Guard Force →

May, 1979—timing of the major unrest following the election.



Guard Force Army letter sent from Causeway, civilian cancelled Mtoko on May 21, 1979.



1st Battalion Rhodesian Regiment letter sent from Causeway on November 22, 1979, slogan cancelled.



**Military Coordination—Elections**

**Elections and Security**

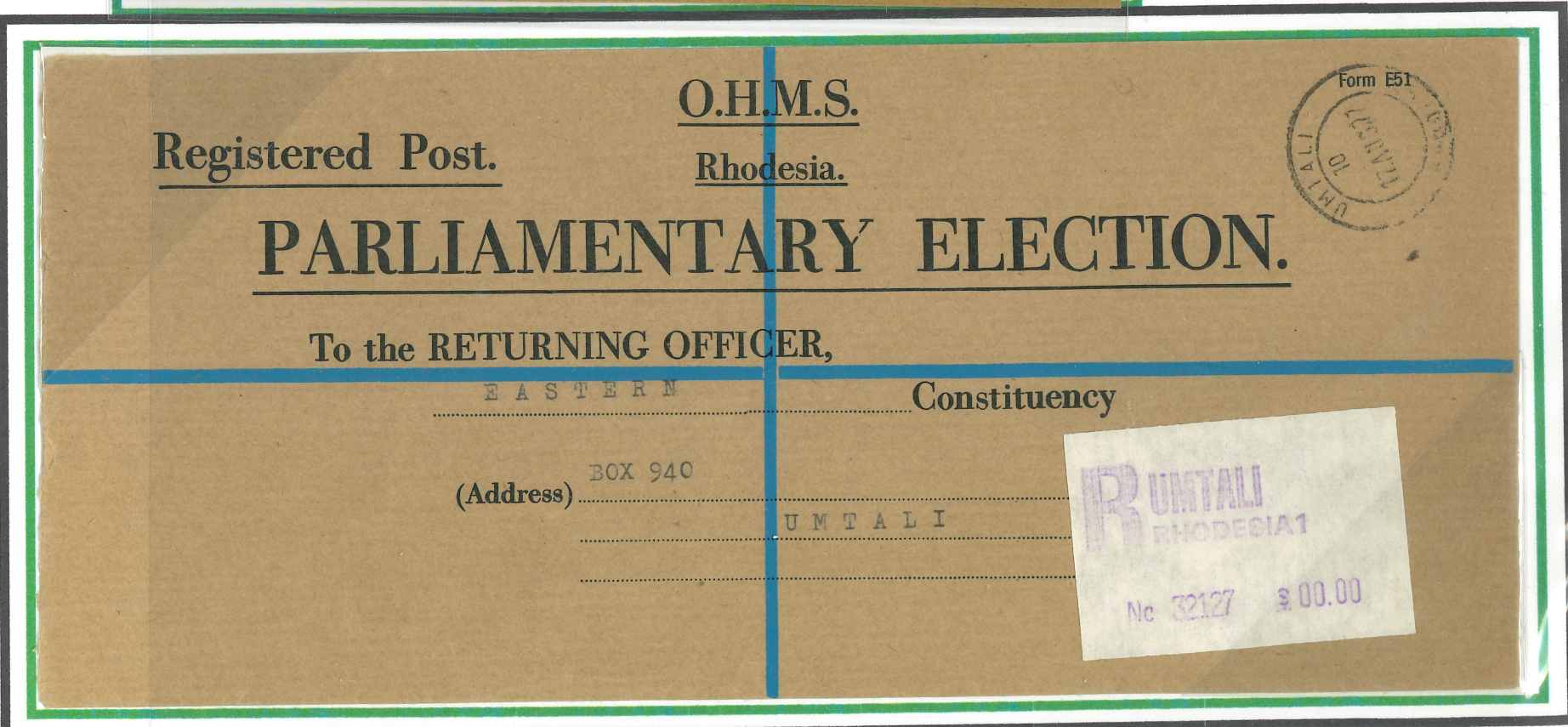
Elections during the war years involved threats and outright attacks at polling stations, even for district elections. Negotiations for constitutional change began in late 1977, leading to agreements in late 1978, which created a transitional government to draft a new constitution and organize the country's first one-man-one-vote free election in April, 1979.

The post office began a slogan campaign: "We Are All Going To Vote" leading up to the national election.

Army →  
Official mail  
with slogan  
cancel used  
March, 1979.



← Registry  
Headquarters  
Army Barracks  
Registry Salisbury  
Official used in  
late March 1979.




Government Services O.H.M.S. Registered letter, sent from Umtali on August 17, 1977, Parliamentary Elections letter to Eastern Constituency. Only election letter found.



**Military Coordination**

**Elections and Security**

ZIMBABWE  RHODESIA

GENERAL ELECTION — APRIL, 1979

Name: .....

of: .....

**115** International  
**OBSERVER**

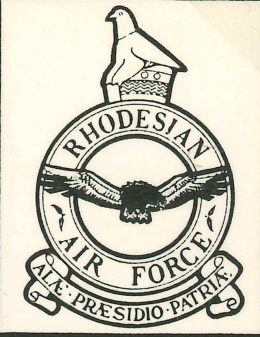
The Zimbabwe Rhodesia general election of April 1979 was held under the Internal Settlement. Free and peaceful elections were necessary in guiding Rhodesia to Independence.

**International Observers, Press and Officials** were escorted and to be kept safe by the Military.

**D**

**DAY FOUR**

**ZIMBABWE  
RHODESIA  
ELECTION 1979  
FLIGHT VOUCHER**



Name..... Observer / Press / Official

OUT: From..... ETD..... To..... ETA.....

IN: From..... ETD..... To..... ETA.....

← Air Force  
Provided Flights  
for Observers,  
Press and  
Officials

**International  
Observers:**

Rhodesian  
Consul's  
invitation

*Anthony Michael Golding,  
Consul da Rodésia, e Esposa  
têm a honra de convidar o Exmo. Senhor*

*para.....  
em sua casa, na rua Padre Baltazar Celes, 28,  
no dia..... pelas.....*

*R. S. F. F.  
Telefone 742828*



## After the War

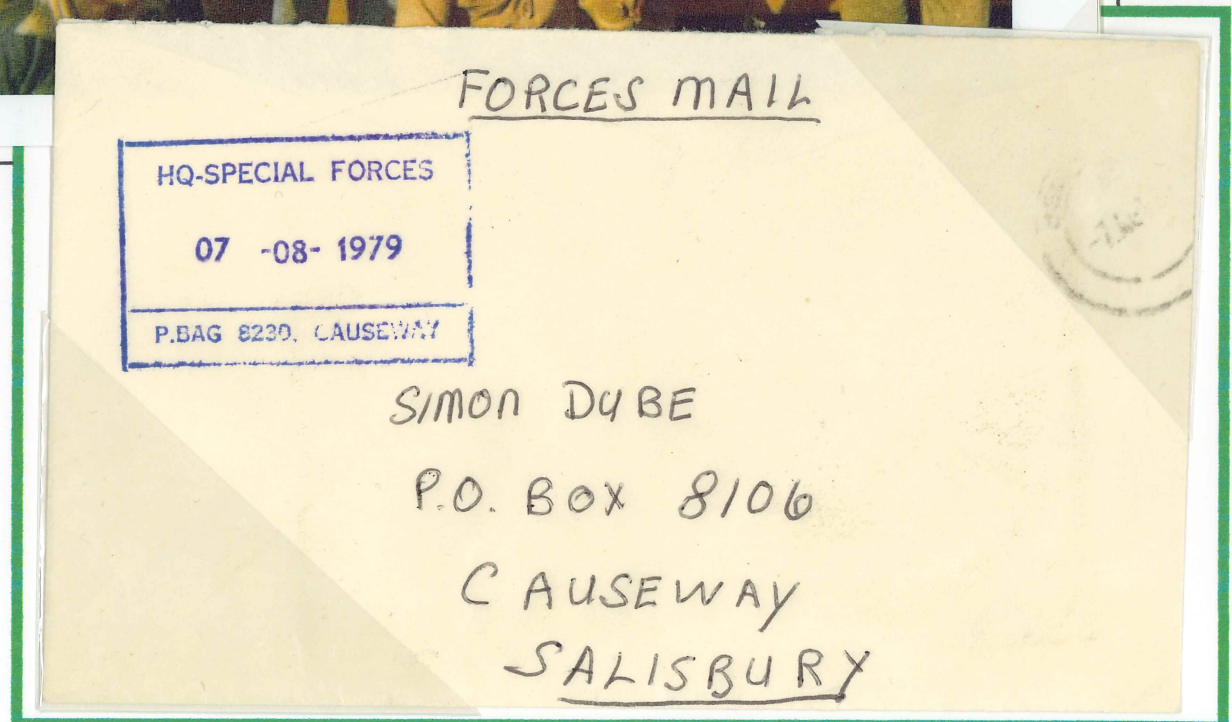
## Headquarters—Special Forces

The Selous Scouts Regiment, Headquarters Special Forces, an elite unit of highly trained counter insurgents, was configured to track and infiltrate enemy groups either to acquire intelligence. Letter addressee likely an official or influencer in the interim (unrecognized) government.

Camouflaged Selous Scouts patrol.



Black African's eyes ↑  
concealed by censor  
to avoid retribution to  
his family.



Cranborne: HQ Special Forces, Military Mail processing by private bag, center date stamped August 7, 1979.  
Letter carried by military post to the post office in Causeway, Salisbury, delivered to recipient's post office box.



**After of the War  
Rhodesian Army**

**Keeping the Peace  
Guard Forces**

At the draw down of the war, in early 1980, the focus turned from infantry combat to guard force peace keeping.



← Simplified box marking: undated and without unit number.

Rhodesian Army Guard Forces Official Free letter Nuanetsi to Salisbury sent January 7, 1980 prior to the final settlement of the war.



## After the War Rhodesian Army

## Dismantling Active Forces Employment & Training

Service members maintained their free franking privileges as long as the envelopes were appropriately marked.

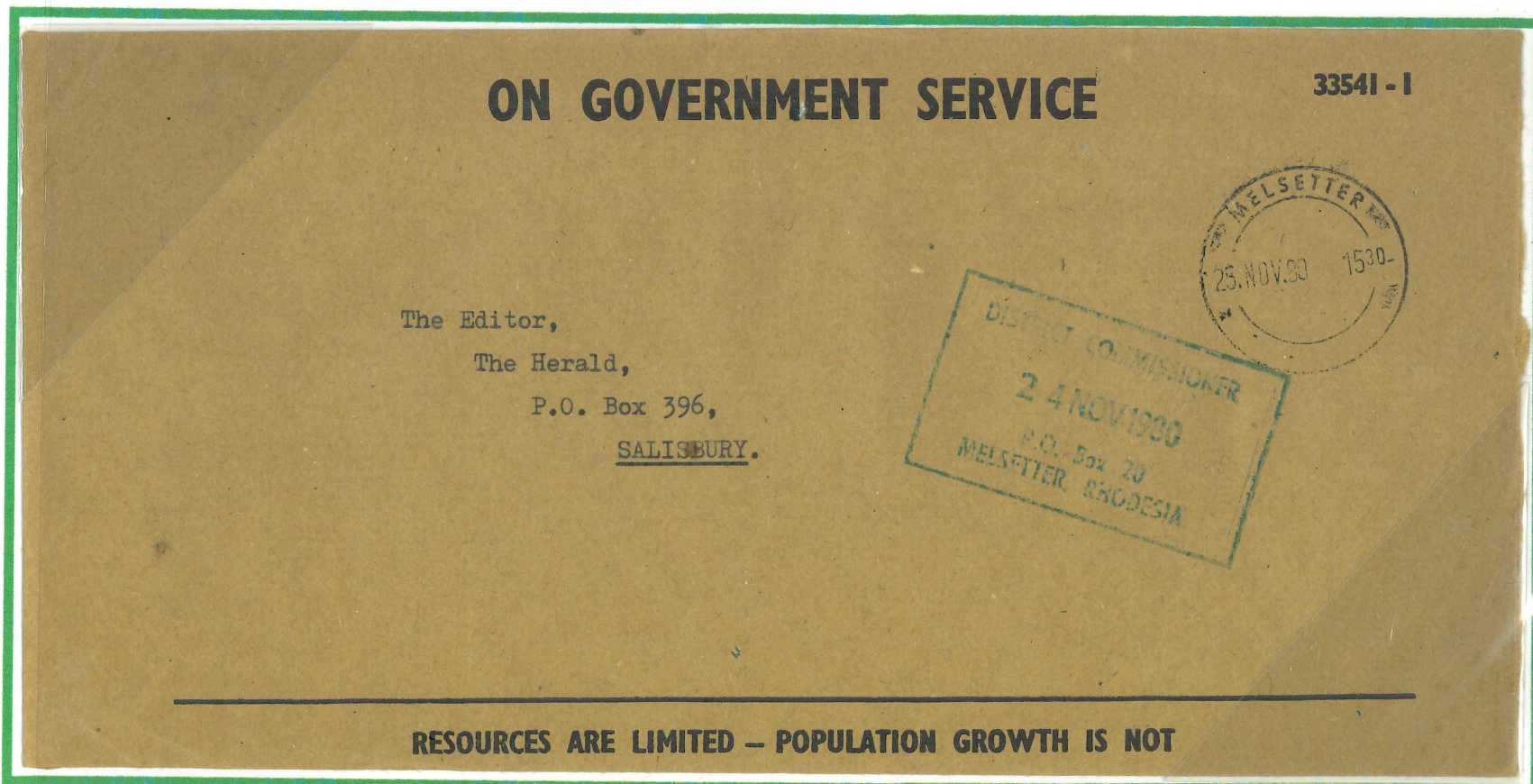
These two letters are sent free of surface postage after Independence to addresses that may regarding training or employment.



Addressed:

←Principal,  
International  
Correspondence  
School

Admin. Office, 4th Manicaland) Battalion, Umtali forces mail envelope addressed to Salisbury, Zimbabwe.



District Commissioner Government Services letter, sent from Melsetter on November 24, 1980. Letter sent to The Editor, The Herald.



**After the War  
Rhodesian Army**

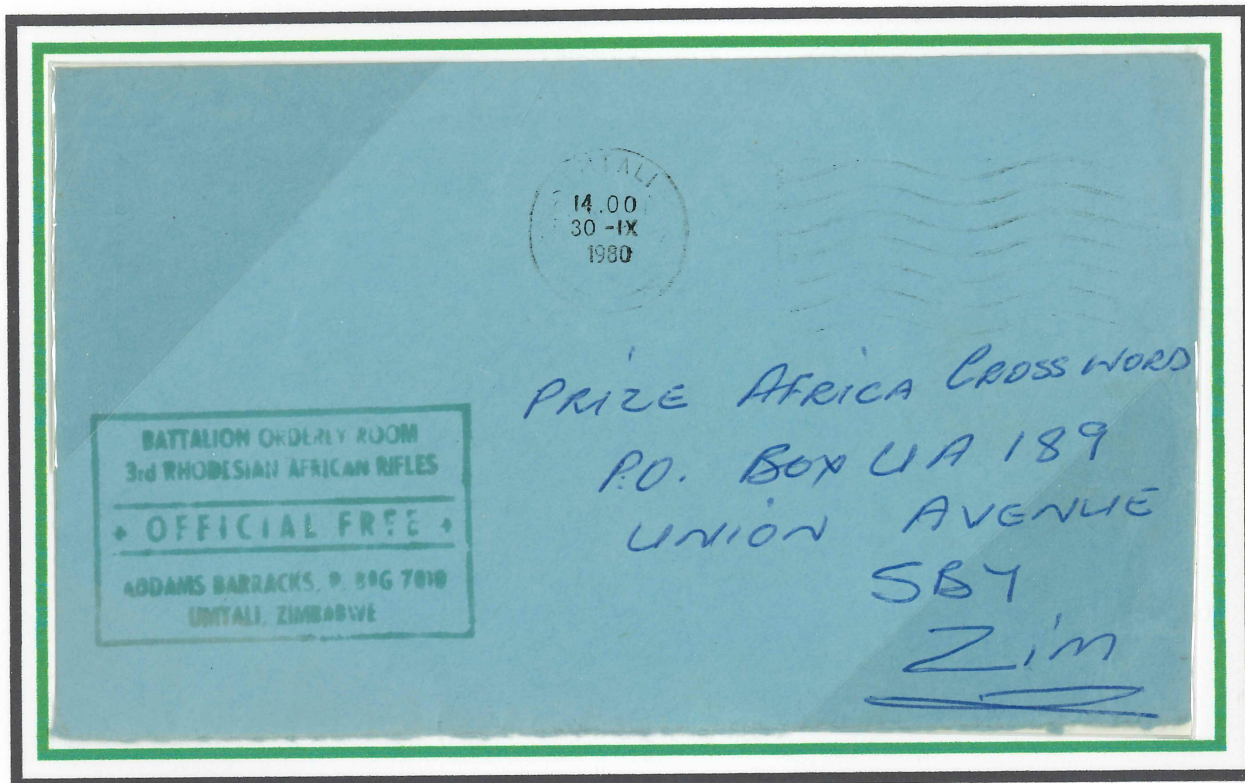
**Abuse of Franking Privilege  
Rhodesian African Rifles**

By September 1980, forces were drawn down and the majority of servicemembers had left active service.

Demand for use of the military post office system became less and less as regular units were re-organized or disbanded.

By the time of Independence in April 1980 the M.P.O. system had quietly become extinct.

**Post Forces Mail: Abuse of Franking Privilege**



**Addressee  
Prize African  
Crossword  
and mailed  
unfranked as  
"Official Free"**

Rhodesian African Rifles Official Free letter from Addams Barracks to Salisbury sent September 30, 1980.

Unit date stamp re-issued, "Umtali, Zimbabwe" letter addressed "Sby Zim" - Salisbury, Zimbabwe.

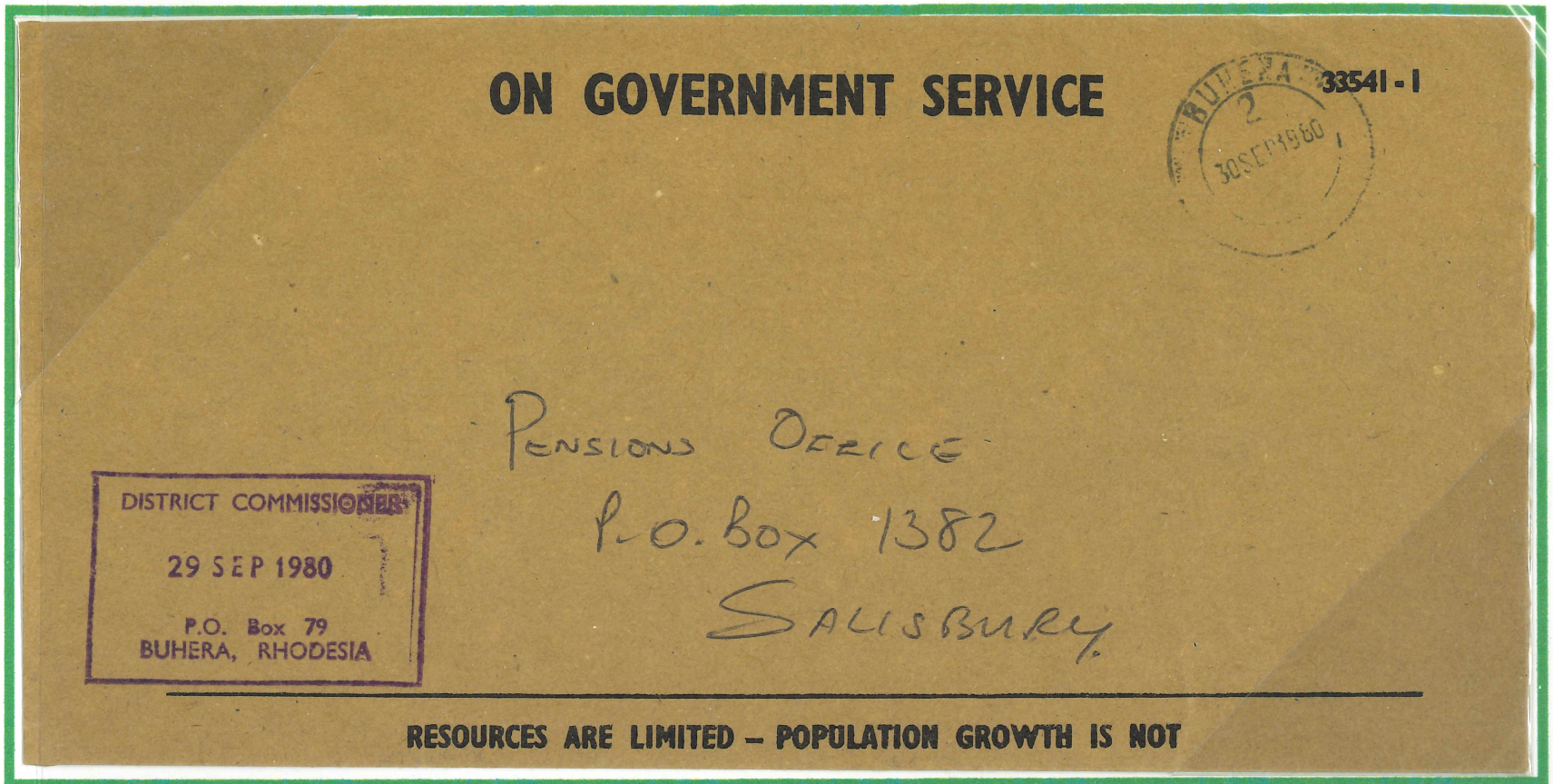
Letter does not include "Forces Mail" and was sent through the Civilian post after the M.P.O. system ended.



**After the War  
Rhodesian Army**

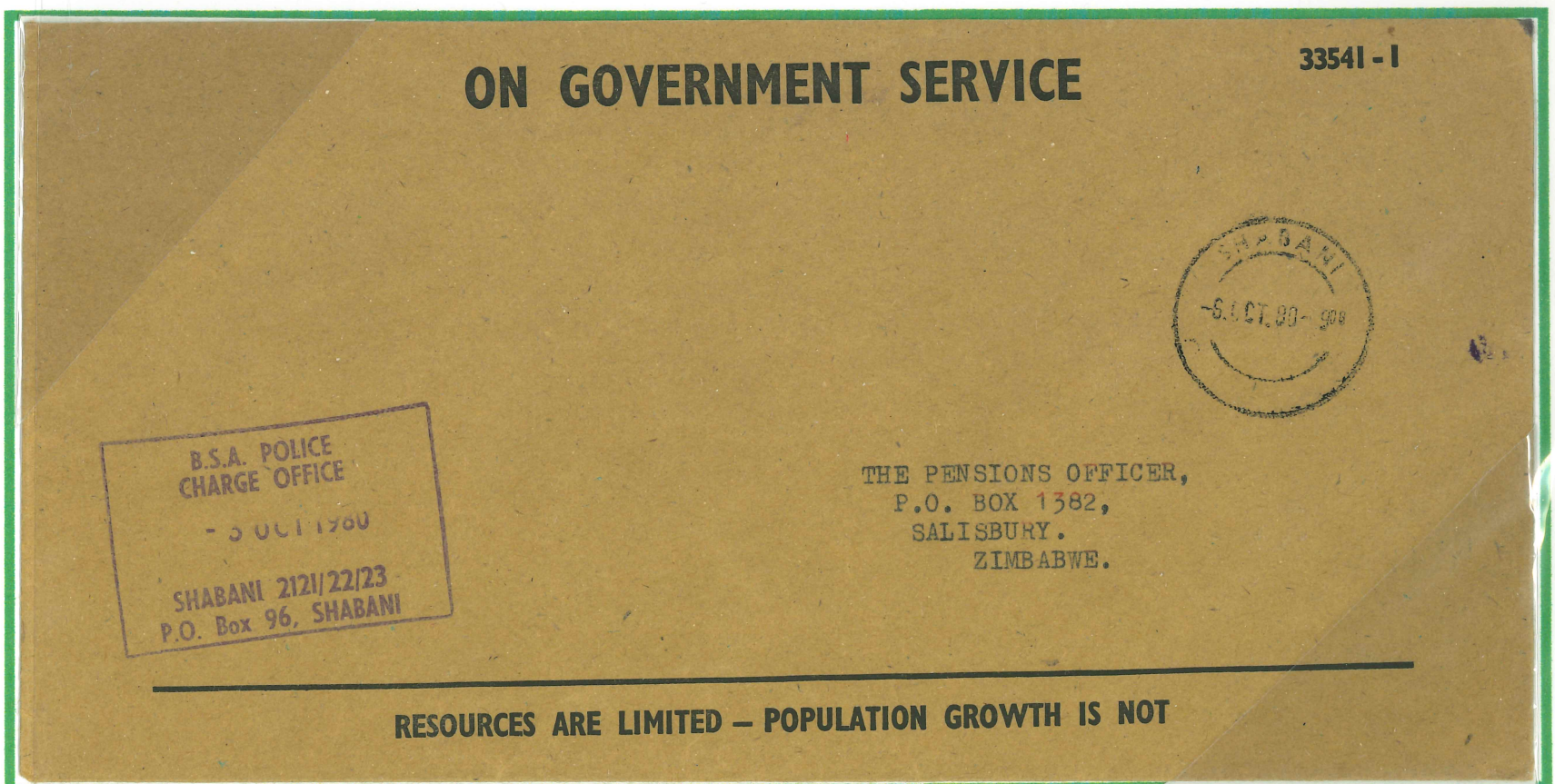
**Dismantling Active Forces  
Pension Letters**

These two letters sent days apart in 1980 differ in country naming: Above uses a Buhera Rhodesia date stamps, while the date stamp below has no country indication, but is addressed to **Zimbabwe**, the country's official name as of April 18, 1980.



District Commissioner Government Services letter, sent from Buhera on September 29, 1980.

↓ B.S.A. Police Charge Office Government Services letter, sent from Shabani on October 3, 1980.

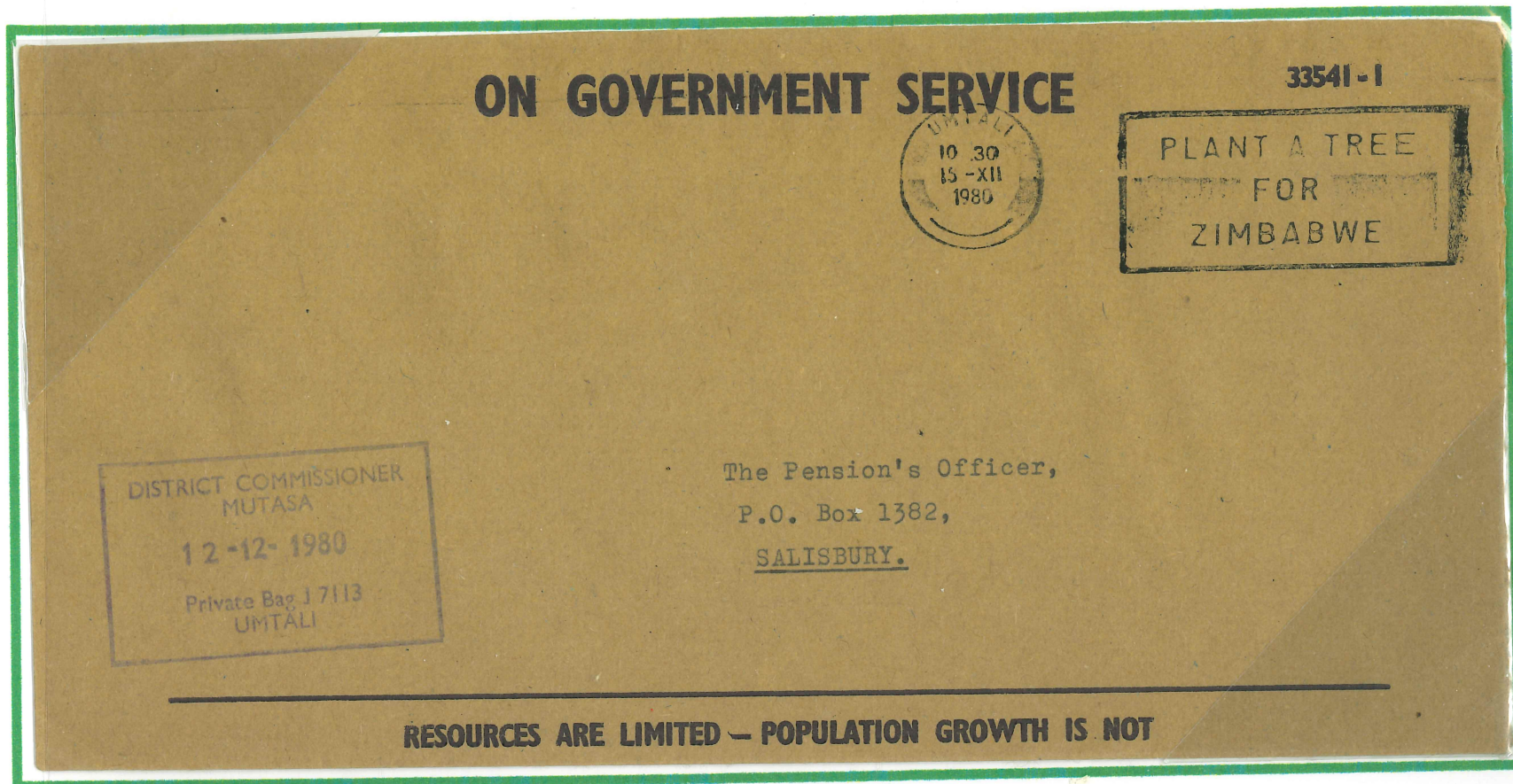




**After the War  
Rhodesian Army**

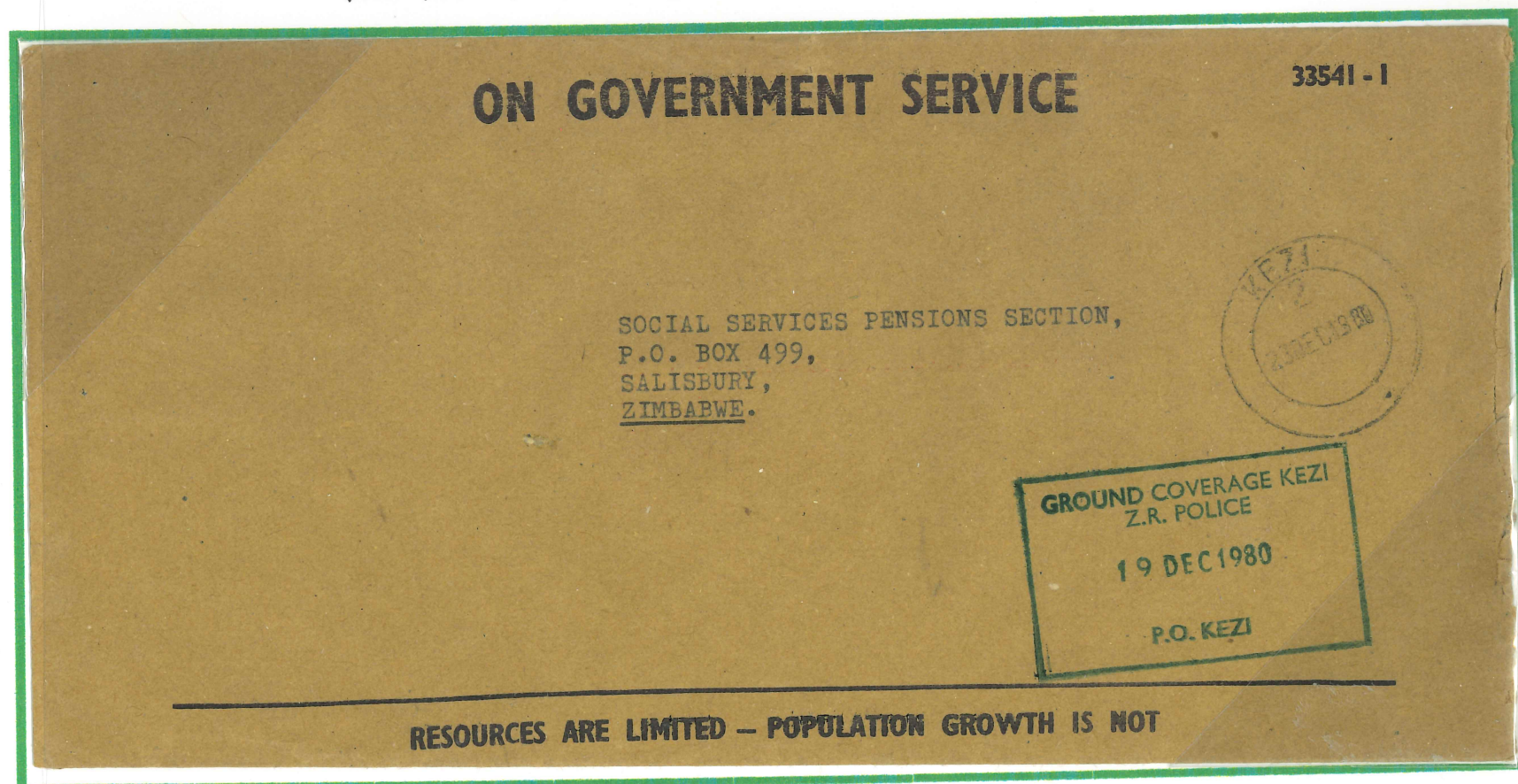
**Dismantling Active Forces  
Pension Letters**

These two letters sent in December, 1980 are pension letters which each reflect the country name of Zimbabwe.



District Commissioner Government Services letter, sent from Umtali on December 12, 1980, slogan cancel, "Plant a Tree for Zimbabwe".

↓ B.S.A. (now Z.R.) Ground Coverage Police Zimbabwe addressed letter, sent from Kezi on December 23, 1980.





Following a transition to internationally recognized majority rule in 1980; the United Kingdom ceremonially granted Zimbabwe independence on April 18, 1980. Zimbabwe's first issues followed shortly after.



May 1, 1980, letter re-addressed, franked with Rhodesian and new Zimbabwe stamps paying the letter rate.

Countries who had joined together in suspending mail service to and from Rhodesia lifted their sanctions and recognized Zimbabwe as a free and independent nation. Normal mail service was resumed.



## After of the War Independence

## Conclusion

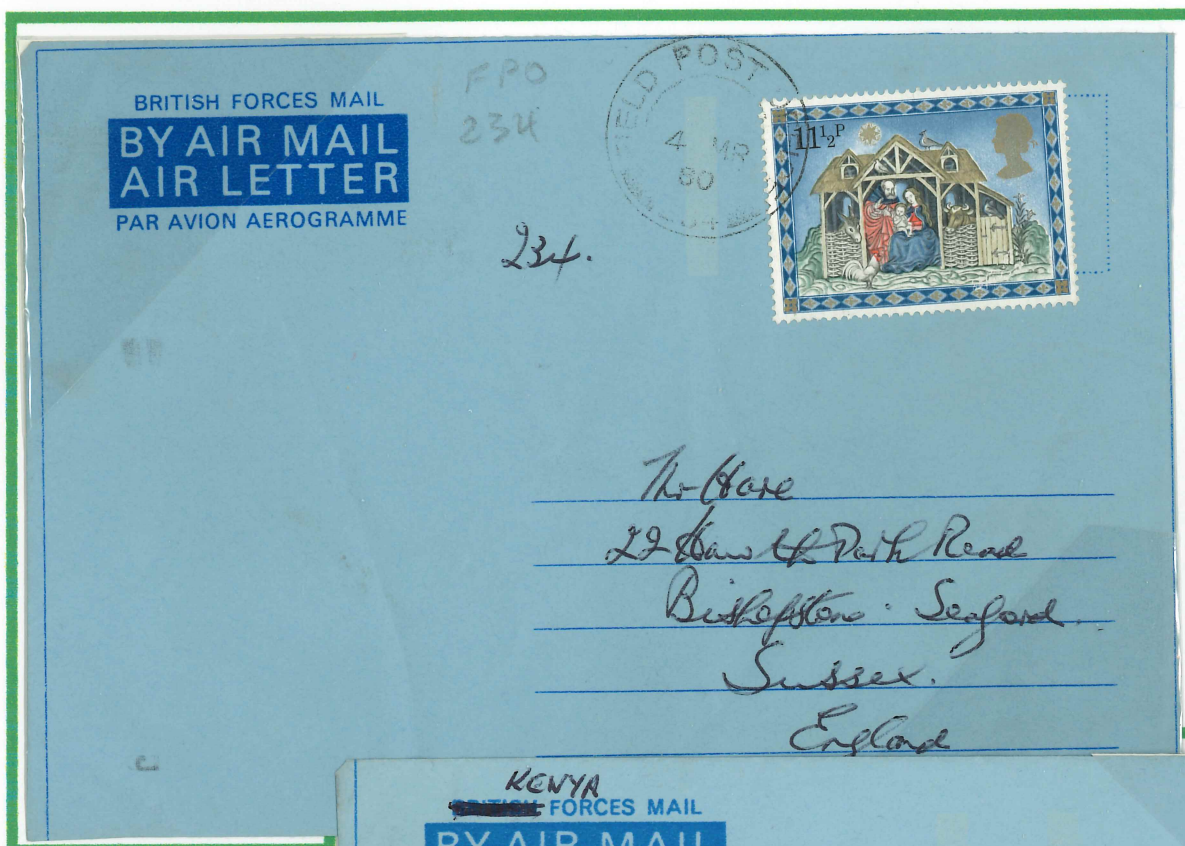
## Keeping the Peace Foreign Monitoring Forces

Conclusion: The Rhodesian military post office operations had ended and security was maintained by peace keeping forces, police and designated guard forces, bringing a close to the military post office content of this exhibit.

Philatelic covers provide evidence of Foreign Monitoring Forces, engaged to keep peace in newly independent Zimbabwe.

British Forces Air Letter form indicates: Royal Marines Monitoring Force and Police Detachment box

British Forces Air Letter form adapted by the Kenya Government Representative Monitoring Force in Rhodesia. The adaptation made by substitution of the word "Kenya" and the addition of the East African Coat of Arms.



British Forces Mail  
Air Letter cancelled  
Field Post Office 234,  
March 4, 1980.  
F.P.O. 234 - Police  
Detachment.

### Kenya Forces Mail

Note the addition of  
the East African  
Coat of Arms →

Kenya Force  
Representative -  
Monitoring Forces

Kenya Forces Mail Air Letter  
dual franked and receipt  
cancelled - philatelic  
December 2, 1980.

