

## Operation Paperback Newsletter - June 2004

March Shipments: 6,505

April Shipments: 3,844

May Shipments: 9,588

Total Books sent to Iraq : 31,469

Grand Total: 182,408

Sorry for the delay in the newsletter. We have been very busy here at Operation Paperback due to a lot of press coverage!

A warm welcome to our new volunteers who found us through Leatherneck Magazine, Terry Marotta's syndicated newspaper column or heard about us on the radio (thanks to numerous country and rock stations mentioning us).

*All I Ever Wanted to Know About the US Postal Service I Learned from Chrissy and Andrea*

Our new volunteers, and even some seasoned ones, have been learning all about the USPS and its ever changing policies and enforcement. It should be simple to mail a box of books overseas to our troops, but sometimes it can be a challenge. Here are some pointers/facts:

1. When sending boxes with only books, magazines, DVDs or music, send it media rate/book rate. If the clerk tells you that Media Rate cannot go to military addresses, ask for a manager. Do not send your boxes via Priority Mail.
2. If you send non-media items (i.e. food or personal care items), send your box via parcel post. You cannot use media rate for non-media items. USPS is opening boxes and disposing or returning those that violate their media rate policy. Don't tempt their wrath.
3. If you are using an old carton to ship your books (like a computer monitor box), make sure that every single word is removed from the outside. Use a big black marker to scratch it out. It will look ugly, but if you have any word (this includes words that are part of logos) on the outside of your box other than the address, they will not accept it for shipment.
4. At the bottom space of the customs form there is a place for you to leave shipping instructions in case the address is no longer valid. We have found that no matter what the instruction says – “leave with unit chaplain” or “leave with unit command” or “head to the place with the nearest American flag,” 90% of the time the boxes bounce back. I always put unit chaplain in the hopes that the books get to some service member. You can also request that the box be abandoned or shipped back to you.
5. Should you bother to insure or track boxes? Our stance is no. The additional cost for insurance is simply not worth it. The boxes exit out of the USPS mailing system and into the military mail system (which is a whole different mailing world). The probability of (1) finding out that the box actually got lost, (2) successfully tracking it down, and (3) getting it returned to you in a timely manner, is close to zero. Save your money to mail more books to our troops later.

With the help of some seasoned volunteers and even some volunteers who happen to be USPS employees, we are putting together a mailing tips page on our web site. The next newsletter will have a link to it!

### *Other Announcements and Information Tidbits*

How long do shipments take to get to our troops?

It varies. We have seen shipments go from New Jersey to Iraq in 10 days. We have also seen shipments from California to Korea take over four weeks! The boxes usually exit the USPS system within one week, but once they enter into the military mail system, it is anyone's guess. The boxes go on planes and trucks and there is only so much space per trip to the front lines. Rumor has it that if you keep your boxes within reasonable size (medium, no more than 16 inches on any side), they get through quicker.

When will I hear back from my service member about the shipment?

We only receive replies and shipment confirmations part of the time. One, they're busy people. Two, often times your boxes are opened and books are distributed to whole platoons and units, so the box with your original contact information is not available to someone who would like to say thank you. Before you get discouraged, the books have our labels, meaning there is contact information for OpPaper. We get thank you notes all the time and [post them online](#).

Sometimes they're very specific, "Tell Bob thank you for the books."

Okay, why are there so many rules and procedures for Operation Paperback?

We promise that we're not doing it to annoy you. In fact, it comes down to one word – safety. It is the reason behind us not posting service member addresses openly on our web site. It is the reason we keep track of outgoing packages from our volunteers. It is also the reason we collect your contact information. The safety and happiness of those who are serving our country comes first. We will do our best to guide you through our regulations, postal regulations and military regulations. Never hesitate to email us. No such thing as a stupid question!

### *A Note About Spam Blocking*

We hate spam as much as you do. However, when you tinker with your spam settings, remember to add our addresses (ahoshmand@comcast.net and oppaper2@att.net) to your 'allowed' list. We cannot contact you otherwise! We have gotten some pretty upset people who think we are ignoring them. We always respond within 72 hours to any request. If you have not heard from us, check your deleted items, check your spam filter, and then try to email us again (along with an alternate way for us to contact you in case we cannot get through).

*Feeling like you want to do more?*

If you are interested in creating care packages, please feel free to drop off goodies at the nearest veterans hospital. Give your thanks to the soldiers of past generations as they are often forgotten!

### *Usual Reminders*

Do not use old address lists! When you are on the verge of shipping, please contact us at [OpAddresses@usmilitarysupport.org](mailto:OpAddresses@usmilitarysupport.org) and get the latest address list. The list changes every single week because of unit rotations and varying demands for reading materials. If you cannot remember when you received your list, check at the top. Every mailing list now has an expiration date on it. If your list has expired, ask us for the latest update. If you do not see an expiration date on your list, then it is definitely too old to use!

Thanks for volunteering! Please never hesitate to contact us with ideas or suggestions. We are always working to make Operation Paperback bigger and better!