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Restricted items continue to be placed in military mail

By Staff Sgt. Nate Orme
3rd PERSCOM PAO NCOIC
CAMP ARIFJAN-Military and civilian personnel continue to place restricted items capable of destroying life and property into packages mailed home from Operation Iraqi/Enduring Freedom, according to Col. Donald Kennedy, commander of the 3rd Personnel Command, the unit responsible for postal operations throughout the OIF/OEF theater.

"We have a huge problem with folks trying to send expended and unexpended ordnance, bayonets, U.S. tools, unit equipment and captured Iraqi equipment," Kennedy said.

All parcels undergo an inspection by a mail clerk at camp post office before being accepted for mailing. Postal patrons must also complete a customs form and a declaration pertaining to the contents of parcels being mailed. Additionally, parcels are subject to x-raying at several points en route to their destination, said Lt. Col. Robert Howard, director of Postal Operations for 3rd PERSCOM.

Consequences for the sender of restricted items could be severe, depending on what was sent and whether damage was caused. This may include Uniform Code of Military Justice action that could permanently damage their military careers and result in fines, reduction in grade or imprisonment, Howard said.

According to U. S. Central Command, U. S. Postal Service and Department of Defense policies, "any article, composition, or material is non-mailable if it can kill or injure another, injure the mail or other property." Harmful matter includes, but is not limited to, poisons, poisonous animals, diseases, germs, explosives, flammables, infernal machines, chemicals and other items that may ignite or explode.

Certain "war trophies"--defined as "enemy weapons, ammunition, explosives or items of equipment"--are "non-mailable." Items such as live rounds, pistols, machine guns, weapons magazines and anti-personnel mines fall into this category, said Howard.

War trophies that clearly pose no health risk, such as flags, uniforms, photos and medals that were captured or found abandoned and do not dishonor the dead or result in improper or illegal conduct can be mailed, according to CENTCOM policy.

Cigarette lighters, aerosol cans, pornographic matter, sand and/or soil from outside the United States, and pork products are common examples of non-mailable items listed by CENTCOM. Current policy also prohibits mailing all bayonets, knives, sharp objects and U.S. military equipment, including duffel/sea bags and rucksacks.

Batteries are now discouraged from being sent, Howard added. Over the summer in theater, several fires, thought to have been caused by exploding batteries, started spontaneously in pallets of packages exposed to ambient temperatures of up to 140 degrees.

In OEF/OIF, alcohol and pornography are prohibited in the mail as they are illegal to possess in many countries in the CENTCOM area of responsibility.

"If you have something and you are not sure whether it is mailable or non-mailable, it would be wise to ask the clerk inspecting the packages at the APO (Army Post Office)," Howard said.

Sending restricted items in unmarked packages could result in severe injuries to personnel and damage to property anywhere along the mail route, including injury to the receiver, said Howard.

"There could be an in-flight explosion, especially with unstable powder in munitions," Howard warned. "There are also USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) issues with sending plants and animals that could spread disease or cause damage to agriculture."

Postal patrons should let people and organizations that may mail packages into the OIF/OEF theater know about official mailing policy and guidelines, Howard said.

"It's a good idea to let folks back home know which items are prohibited. The risk of injury or worse is the same whether it's inbound or outbound mail," Howard said.



Unexploded and exploded ordnance, including landmines, rockets and sub-munitions, are all non-mailable under CENTCOM and U.S. Postal Service policies. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Nate Orme)



Spotlight

On rules for a happy homecoming

By Barry R. Fetzer (From Army Times)

(Part 1 of a 3 part series)

Many of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen are returning home after long months away. Even as hostilities continue in Iraq, another perilous encounter awaits our troops. They are about to experience one of the most exciting and dangerous things of their deployment: their homecoming.

As someone who has experienced long separations from loved ones courtesy of the Marine Corps and unexpectedly conceived two out of three children as a result of homecoming "celebrations," I am eminently qualified to offer the following eight simple rules to help make the homecoming experience less hazardous:

Rule 1: For married folks, no matter how rough you had it during your time away, not matter how tough it is being in the military, you didn't have it as rough as the loved one you left behind. Nothing will convince your loved one that taking a flight to exotic places made your job tougher than being left home, alone to be mom, dad, nursemaid and Mr. Fix-it rolled up into one.

Rule 2: Unlike the military, where immediate response and proposed solutions to problems--with alternatives--are expected, applying such a take charge attitude to events at home will not help.

Rule 3: It's you, the one off gallivanting all over the world, who can't understand how tough it has been being at home alone.

Rule 4: Remember that the excitement and partylike atmosphere of the eagerly anticipated homecoming will last indefinitely--indefinitely meaning one or two days, depending upon whether you pick up your socks and underwear off the floor.

Rule 5: Find a way to enter into a "discourse" with you loved one immediately upon arriving home. For those small children who need to be entertained for a while-- "so mommy and daddy can be alone to talk about some real important things since they haven't seen each other for a long, long time"--I recommend a bag of 100 green jelly beans. Scatter the jelly beans in the front yard--after eating one to freshen your breath--assemble the kids in the front yard and tell them that a 100 emeralds have been lost in the jungle. Their mission is to find all 100 before entering the secret headquarters (the house) to receive their reward. This strategy provides more than enough time required for an appropriate discourse between husband and wife following a long separation.

Rule 6: Remember not to violate Rule 1 by belittling your loved one's problems with the words, "You can never understand how rough I had it." If you are dumb enough to utter these words, forget Rule 5.

Rule 7: Rule 5 may result in the unanticipated addition of new members of the emerald treasure hunting team.

Rule 8: If you come home and find your loved one sobbing uncontrollably over a horrific event like a broken fingernail, apply Rules 1 through 3. You must consider proposed solutions--with alternatives--and weigh each carefully before acting. In this predicament, I recommend pursuing "discourse" with your loved one is pointless. Go pick up your underwear.

Soldier Talk

What advice would you give to your replacement?



Bring lots of sweats and tank tops.

Sgt. Erin
McKeon
800th MP



More team-work among the different shifts and be flexible.

Spc. Jessica
Pulec
450th MCB



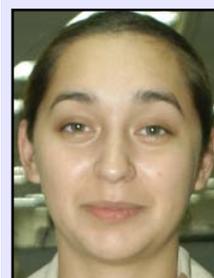
Bring chap-sticks and sunglasses.

Sgt. Heather
Romero
143rd TRANSCOM



Bring all your property books and drink a lot of beer before coming here.

Lt. Col. Calvin
Whaley
377th TSC



Get out and stay out of the Army.

Spc. Sarah
Ordenez



Stay busy ahead of your work, and not let your work get ahead of you.

Spc. Mikal
Barnes

News Briefs



Arifjan pays tribute to veterans... The gospel choir performed during a ceremony at Arifjan this week marking soldiers' remembrances of the sacrifices made by veterans, including the ultimate sacrifice of soldiers like Staff. Sgt. Nathan Bailey, 1175th Trans. Co. who died at the camp on Nov. 12 and (insert) was remembered by his unit on Friday. (Photos by Maj. Bobby Hart)

Bush extols support of employers

WASHINGTON - (From Military.com) President Bush recognized the importance of employers in making their employees' military service possible as he signed a proclamation marking National Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve Week.

The president said Reserve Component service members depend on the understanding of their employers for their service. "Across America where units have been activated, employers at offices, factories, schools, hospitals and other workplaces have been understanding and really supportive," he said. "They have given priority to the needs of our nation."

Bush said most employers have shown great consideration for their workers. "These companies have the gratitude of our nation, they have the gratitude of the commander in chief," he said.

Resistance is "despicable bunch of thugs"

WASHINGTON - (From Military.com) The terrorists trying to undermine Coalition efforts in Iraq are a "despicable bunch of thugs," but no military threat exists in Iraq that can drive the United States out, the commander of U.S. Central Command said.

"The enemy will stop at nothing to create the impression that we can't win," Army Gen. John Abizaid said. "They put ammunition and explosives

in ambulances. They store ammunition and explosives in schools and mosques. The same things that you saw from this enemy during the march to Baghdad, you see from this enemy now.

"They're a despicable bunch of thugs that will be defeated," he continued. "There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that with patience, perseverance and courage, we will see this thing through."



Help is on the way...

Family members turned out to send off 35 members of the 143rd Transportation Command who reported to Fort Stewart, Ga., this week in preparation for deploying to Kuwait later this month. The soldiers will replace current members of the 143rd who have been serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Photos courtesy of LTC Jim Horey, 143rd



(Photo by Maj. Bobby Hart)



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Nate Orme)



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Nate Orme)

Making History
 The Stryker Brigade--the Army's new interim armored vehicle that many feel embodies the Army of the future--made its historic first deployment in a combat environment when it landed at Port Shuaiba this week.



Lt. Col. Joseph Piek, public affairs officer for the 3rd Brigade/2nd Infantry Division, talks with a Kuwaiti reporter working for the Associated Press and ABC News. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Nate Orme)



<p>Bon Temps Volume 1, Issue 7 Bon Temps is an authorized publication of the Department of Defense. Contents contained herein are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. Government or Department of Defense. The editorial content is prepared, edited and produced by the 143rd Transportation Command Public Affairs Office.</p>	<p>Staff 377th TSC Commander, (Provisional) Brig. Gen. Michael J. Diamond Chief of Staff Col. Larry J. Massey Public Affairs Maj. Robert M. Hart Sgt. Maj. Larry Stevens Staff. Sgt. Nate Orme</p>	<p>Contact If you want to get your story in the Bon Temps, call DSN 825-1252 or email robert.hart2@us.army.mil</p>
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