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National Postal Museum Opens “Mail Call” Exhibit

The Smithsonian’s National Postal Museum today opened “Mail Call,” its new permanent exhibit, exploring the history of America’s military postal system. Visitors can discover how military mail communication has changed throughout history, learn about the armed forces postal system from the American Revolution to the present day and experience military mail through exciting artifacts and letters. The exhibit offers an appreciation of the importance of military mail and the hard work that has gone into connecting service men and women to their government, community and loved ones at home.

The exhibit features a number of interesting artifacts that bring to life the story of military mail. Highlights include a camouflaged bag used to drop letters from helicopters during the Vietnam War and a postal handstamp recovered from the *USS Oklahoma*, which was sunk in the bombings at Pearl Harbor in 1941. In addition to letters and official correspondence on display, the accompanying film *Missing You: Letters from Wartime*, provides visitors access to the dramatic firsthand records and heartfelt sentiments exchanged between writers on the frontline and the home front. The exhibit also explores how the military postal system works today and describes the new ways the men and women of the armed forces are communicating with home.

“Mail has always played a very important role in the lives of our brave troops and their families at home,” said Allen Kane, director of the museum. “This exhibit shows how mail delivery to troops was not easily accomplished during times of adversity, as significant obstacles had to be overcome along the way in many cases.”

“Writing and receiving correspondence has a significant power to shape morale,” said exhibit curator Lynn Heidelbaugh. “The relationship between mail and morale is expressed time and again in messages from deployed military personnel, and it is a compelling reason behind the extraordinary efforts to maintain timely mail service.”

The exhibit is made possible by Lockheed Martin.

A curator-led tour of the new “Mail Call” exhibit will be part of the museum’s Civil War public program, Saturday, Nov. 19. As part of the Smithsonian’s commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, this program will also include an author talk and family activities. It will run from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. Visit the museum’s website for more information.

The National Postal Museum is devoted to presenting the colorful and engaging history of the nation’s mail service and showcasing one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of stamps and philatelic material in the world. It is located at 2 Massachusetts Avenue N.E., Washington, D.C., across from Union Station. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). For more information about the Smithsonian, call (202) 633-1000 or visit the museum website at www.postalmuseum.si.edu.

Note: Press images are available here: www.npm.si.edu/press/mailcall.html

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