POSTE AUX ARMEES
136

Post Office 136 opened at Pnompenh, Cambodia on 1 February 1946 where it remained until closing in 1954. During the early years of operation, registration labels were not available. Here a facsimile of a label was hand drawn on the cover.

The address includes both the postal sector number as well as the BPM number – a practice that was later prohibited.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES * 136 * 2-11 46
handwritten registration number and label
The letters "SM," meaning “Service Militaire,” indicated official mail. Posted from Phnom Penh, the envelope was stamped "NÉCESSITÉ DE FERMER" (must be closed) and sent as registered mail. The numbered registration label was over stamped with the indication of the originating post office. Markings on the reverse show that the letter was handled by several military post offices.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES * 136 * 23-3 1950
registration label and "CF" in blue crayon

REVERSE
POSTE AUX ARMEES 405 24-3 1950
POSTE AUX ARMEES * 402 * 25-3 1950
Post Office number 402 opened at Cholon, near Saigon, on 2 February 1946. It became the post office at Tansonhut in 1953 and closed in 1955.

Since it was marked for official service ("SM"), this envelope was sent as registered mail without the need of postage stamps. The cachet is unusual because it belonged to the treasurer.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES 402  17-3 1953
registration label
sorter's marking in blue crayon
Army Post Office number 402 was the only one that employed both the "POSTE AUX ARMEES" and "B.P.M." formats in its military canceller for military mail. Here the postmark was applied on a registered mail receipt form, which had originated in Paris.
Effective 28 March 1951, Army Post Office Annex 402-A was relocated to Cantho, Cochinchina. The post office remained at Cantho until it closed in 1955.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES 402-A  30-11 1954
registration label
REVERSE
POSTE AUX ARMEES TOE 1-12 1954
BESANCON R.P. DOUBS  2-12 1954
POSTE AUX ARMEES
N° 402B

Post Office 402-B opened at Vinhlong in mid 1946. The early version of its postmark bears "N° 402B at its base, an unusual method for identifying the number of the post office.
After opening at Cholon, Post Office 402-B never moved during the remainder of the conflict. A postmark from 1949 displays the typical way of presenting the post office number. As evidenced by the stamp and the absence of military markings, a civilian sent this letter from the military post office.
Opened on 1 July 1946, Post Office 403 operated at Hanoi until 1954. The cachet at the lower left certifies that this mailing to Algeria was for official business. The "SM" at the upper right is the appropriate indication for free mail of an official nature. No postage of any type was needed for official mail.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES * 403 * 21-2 1949
manuscript registration number
REVERSE
MAISON CARREE ALGER 8-3 1949
In the case of this registered letter sent by a soldier in 1946, a registry label was drawn by hand on the cover because no paste-on labels were available. During the early post-war period, French stamps were accepted for postage.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES * 403 * 4-11 46
framed manuscript registration number
REVERSE
POSTE AUX ARMEES * 416 * 21-11 46
The second type of postmark used the designation "B.P.M. 403 XY" for civilian mail. The straightline handstamp was used on registered mail along with an "R" to identify the point of registry.

B.P.M 403 ANNEXE DE HANOI

POSTAL MARKINGS
B.P.M 403-X.Y  7-8 46
straight tine “B.P.M 403 ANNEXE DE HANOI
"R" with manuscript registration number
The lettering is slightly larger in a second variety of the auxiliary post office’s straight line marking.

POSTAL MARKINGS
B.P.M 403-X.Y 30-11 46
straight tine “B.P.M 403 ANNEXE DE HANOI
"R" with manuscript registration number
registration numbers in pencil and crayon
From July 1946 through February 1948, Army Post Office 403-A was located at Langson on the frontier with China. The "BPM 403A" straight-line handstamp served as the registry marking for this Post Office, Telegraph and Telephone Administration envelope.
After 1948, Post Office 403-A was located at Nam Dinh. Here the military postmark was applied as a receipt mark on a mailing wrapper. The addressee had left Indochina and the wrapper was readdressed for forwarding to France.
Established early on 21 October 1945, Army Post Office 405 remained situated at Saigon throughout the conflict.

Here a soldier chose to frank a letter to Malaysia with 175 francs worth of French stamps (5 francs on the reverse).
Located in Saigon, Post Office 405 was certainly one of the largest Army post offices in Indochina. Among its postmarks was a singularly different circular date stamp with the word "DEPART" located at the base.

**POSTAL MARKINGS**
B.P.M. 405 DEPART. 30-9 1952
REVERSE
SAIGON R.P. VIETNAM 1-10 1952
POSTE AUX ARMEES
405-A

Post Office 405-A was transferred to Pleiku in July 1946. Here a civilian letter was accepted from the missionary at Pleiku. Because the postage had been overpaid, a post office worker wrote "affranchi par exp" to indicate that it was the sender who had affixed the postage stamps of a higher than necessary value.
After much moving around, Post Office Annex 405-A settled at Saigon in August 1946. For all practical purposes, the annex merged with the main Post Office 405, perhaps the major Army post office in Indochina.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES 405-A   4-2 1950
POSTE AUX ARMEES
405-B

Post Office 405-B replaced post Office 405-A at Nhatrang in July 1946. It remained there until June 1949.

Official envelopes did not need to bear any indication for free service. Here the envelope went from the military post office at Nhatrang to the central military post office in Saigon (BPM 405).
POSTE AUX ARMEES 406

Opening at Haiphong in March 1946, Post Office 406 at first supported the large military build-up in that area. Simply addressed to “BPM 405,” this mailing was sent on to the main military post office in Saigon.

The postmark is different in that instead of the usual asterisk, a cross of Lorraine occupies the upper middle area.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES 406

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES 406 17-12 46
straight-line POSTE AUX ARMÉES 406 handstamp
POSTE AUX ARMEES
406

When civilian mail was accepted by a military post office, all postal fees had to be paid by the sender. Here a registered handstamp specially made for Post Office 406 was struck on a registered letter to Canada.

In this case, an asterisk instead of the cross of Lorraine appears inside the postmark.
POSTE AUX ARMEES
B.P.M. 406

Army Post Office 406 used a completely different style of postmark on this registered letter posted in March 1947. This format was previously unreported.
Army Post Office 406, located at Haiphong, established an annex for the temporary processing of the civilian mails. Operating from September 1946 until February 1947, this government envelope was posted during the final month of service.
POSTE AUX ARMEES
406-A

Army Post Office 406-A operated at Hongay from 1947 to early 1948. Instead of the usual asterisk, the 406-A postmark bears the Cross of Lorrraine at the top center.
First established at Tienyen in 1947, this post office moved to Hongay but returned to Tienyen where it closed in April 1955. A postal clerk applied Army Post Office 406-B postmark to a money order receipt in 1953.

**POSTAL MARKINGS**

POSTE AUX ARMEES 406-B 13-6 1953
Established in 1946, Army Post Office 409 served troops stationed at Nhatrang. No doubt in the interest of a quicker delivery time, the soldier who sent this airmail letter to Canada chose to affix his own postage.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES * 409 * 16-7 1949
Post Office 409 was a large post office created at Nhatrang after Post Office 405-B left in June 1949. It remained open until 1955. Here the circular date stamp was applied to a registry receipt form in 1955.
Identified as official mail by the framed “S.M.” marking, this envelope was handstamped with the naval cachet of the patrol transport “Le Mekong.” Army Post Office Annex 409-A was located at the coastal town of Phantiet, Annam.
The handwritten “SM” at the upper right of this cover identifies the letter as official mail. The postmark shows that the letter originated at Dalat where Army Post Office Annex 409-B was sited from when it first opened June 1949 until October 1951.
Post Office 411 was the first to open in the North. It was established at Hanoi on 1 November 1945. After troops arrived in large numbers, it was moved to Laos.

Here a registered civilian letter was accepted for transmission. It was handstamped in red with a registry marking for recording the registration number. The postmark was applied with blue ink.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES * 411 * 21-3 46 (blue)
registration handstamp (red) with manuscript number
In June 1946, Army Post Office 411 moved to Vientiane Laos. The circular date stamp and registry handstamp that had been employed at Hanoi were the same after the transfer to the new location.

**POSTAL MARKINGS**

POSTE AUX ARMEES * 411 * 7-12 46
registration handstamp with manuscript number

REVERSE

POSTE AUX ARMEES * 405 * 13-12 46
In mid 1946, Post Office 411 reopened at Luang Prabang, Laos. The sender of this letter violated military security rules by indicating his geographical location on the envelope.
With 25 francs worth of postage, this mailing demonstrates the effect of postwar inflation on postal rates. Replacing Army Post Office 414-A when it closed, Army Post Office 413 opened at Pleiku, Annam on 1 May 1951.
Post Office 414 was transferred to Tourane in January 1947. It remained there until 1955.

Here the sender prepaid the postage for a letter to foreign destination. The Army post office canceled the stamps.
POSTE AUX ARMEES
414-A

Army Post Office Annex 414-A operated at Pleiku, Annam until 1 May 1951 when Post Office 413 replaced it. Here a mailing from the Post, Telegraph and Telephone Administration was delivered with only the Postal Sector (SP) of the addressee identified on the cover.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES 414-A 6-11 46
REVERSE
POSTE AUX ARMEES ＊ 405 ＊ 12-11 46
Post Office 418 opened on 1 May 1946 at Hue, Annam. It remained there throughout the conflict until closed in 1955. The sender put stamps on his letter to Canada and the military post office canceled them. By 1949, post offices had replaced registry handstamps with paste-on registry labels.

**POSTAL MARKINGS**

POSTE AUX ARMEES * 418 * 9-4 1949  
registration label

REVERSE

MONTREAL CANADA AP 20 49  
MONTREAL A.M.F. AP 20 49  
MONTREAL CANADA STATION W 20 AP 49  
B.P. Montreal, G.P.O. CANADA REGISTERED APR 21 1949
Post Office 418 used a variation of its regular postmark. Unlike similar postmarks, “POSTE AUX ARMEES” was not centered but rotated counterclockwise giving the postmark an asymmetrical appearance.
Since the civilian postal system was in collapse when French soldiers arrived at Hue, an annex was established specifically for accepting civilian mail. The annex for Army Post Office 418 was in operation for less than a year from August 1946 until May 1947.
This example of a registered airmail letter was posted through the annex of the military post office. In addition to the postmark, the originating post office is identified by the straight-line “B.P.M. 418 ANNEXE DE HUE” handstamp that was applied after the registration label had been affixed to the mailing.
Similar to the situation in Hue, postal facilities for civilians were fumbling when French troops arrived at Tourane. Another annex of Army Post Office 418 was set up at Tourane for civilian mail. It operated for six months from September 1946 until February 1947.
Army Post Office Annex 421-A was transferred to Donghoi around May 1947. Here its postmark was applied to the receipt for a registered letter sent to an addressee at Sector Postale 55.101.
Army Post Office Annex 418-B accepted registered letters from soldiers for onward transmission. Located at Quang-Tri, Annam, Army Post Office Annex 418-B served the military in the Quang-Tri area for 7 years from 1947 through 1954.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES 418-B  27-10 1952
registration label
REVERSE
POSTE AUX ARMEES * 418 * 29-10 1952
POSTE AUX ARMEES
419

Army Post Office 419 opened at Vientiane, Laos on 16 April 1954. It remained in service at Vientiane until closing on 28 November 1975.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES 419 12-2 1957
registration and airmail labels
REVERSE
BESANCON R.P. DOUBS 17-2 1957
On 16 February 1948, Army Post Office 421 began operations at Langson replacing Post Office 403A. This post office served Tonkin's frontier with China.
Sent in the preceding envelope by a soldier on campaign, this letter verifies that Langson was the location of Army Post Office 421.
After the evacuation of Langson on 18 October 1950, Army Post Office 421 set up operations at the airport at Gialam.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES * 421 * 1-8 1951
registration label
REVERSE
CHAILLEVETTE CHARENTE MARITIME 6-5 1951
Established at Caobang on 16 February 1948, post office annex 421-A remained open there until October 1950 when Caobang was evacuated by French troops.
Army Post Office 422 was established at Haiphong on 1 April 1954. Here the sender registered his response to Reader's Digest in Paris very likely because a cash payment was enclosed.
Transferred to Bien Hoa in October 1954, Post Office 422 closed the next year.

Here the post office's circular date stamp was applied to a registry receipt that originated in Paris in October 1955.
POSTE AUX ARMEES
422-A

Post Office 422-A opened on 27 May 1946 at Dalat, Annam.

Here a civilian used Army Post Office 422-A to send a letter to Captain Malzion, head of BPM 405, the main military post office at Saigon.
POSTE AUX ARMEES
422-A

Post Office 422-A was transferred to Cantho in June 1949. It remained there until March 1951.

Here a postage-free registered letter was accepted for transmission by the military post office indicating that it was treated as official business even though it was marked "FM."

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE AUX ARMEES 422-A 21-3 1950
registration label with "CF" in blue crayon

REVERSE
POSTE AUX ARMEES 402 23-3 1950
In Dalat Annam, which had formerly been served by Army Post Office 409-B, the military created Army Post Office 423 on 16 October 1951. It remained at Dalat through 1954.

The cachet on this cover indicated that the sender was a sailor or a marine.
Naval units had their own post offices. This letter is an early usage from Saigon. The post office was established at Saigon in October 1945. For his mailing, the sender used an American postal stationery envelope franked with Indochinese stamps. The Naval Post Office Only the latter and ignored the stationery’s indicium.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE NAVALE 2-2-46
POSTE NAVALE
Opposing Format

For this style of postmark, the words "POSTE" and "NAVALE" are opposite one another.

Here an envelope was returned to France in 1950 through the Naval Post Office at Saigon.
The naval post office also employed a postmark with the wording in a continuous format. The lettering goes from the 8 o'clock position to the 4 o'clock position. At the bottom of the postmark is a small anchor. In this case, the sender was stationed at Nhatrang.
Presumably, the “URGENT” handstamp indicates mail of some time value. An envelope fabricated from paper, which had originally been a printed form of some sort—a so-called “turned cover,” supports this assumption.
The sender indicated that this letter was official business by writing "SM" (Service Militaire) in the upper right hand corner of the envelope. Cachets that were added validated the franchise.
This official 1952 letter to Paris bears several cachets including that of the Naval Air Group (GROUPEMENT AERONAVAL INDOCHINE). The manuscript number under the "OFFICIEL" marking is a serial number for tracking correspondence.
Official mail ("Service Militaire") was always post-free. Here an official letter posted in 1953 bears several markings attesting to its navy origin. The marking at the upper right indicates that the sender was with the French riverine unit in Southern Indochina (FLOTTILLE AMPHIBIE INDOCHINE SUD).
A French Navy letter from 1954 bears a variety of official handstamps.
Naval Base
Haiphong

Haiphong was a major port for commercial shipping. Quite naturally, it became the principal navy base in northern Indochina. The cachet for the base consisted of “BASE NAVALE HAIPHONG” in two lines within a rectangular frame.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE NAVALE  8 11 1951
Another unit cachet that employed the rectangular format came from Cat-Lai. Cat-Lai was a small town located very close to Saigon. “B.A.N” stood for “Base Aéro-Navale.”
The cachet on this cover identifies the sender with the Construction and Naval Arms Administration located at the Saigon Arsenal.
The postal clerk (vaguemestre) for postal sector 4531 applied his cachet to this letter handled by the naval post office. While postal sector numbers were definitely assigned to Army units, it is uncertain whether Navy units also got them.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE NAVALE 11-7 1953
Civilian Use of Naval Post Office

Because of the postwar disruptions, public post offices could not be reopened immediately. Consequently, military post offices would accept mail from civilians for onward transmission.

Through July 1946, the Navy Post Office at Haiphong handled civilian as well as military mails. French stamps were valid for postage.

With this style of postmark, the lettering goes from the 9 o'clock position to the 3 o'clock position.
In the postwar period, there were two numbered French Naval Post Offices in Indochina. Naval Post Office Number 91 was established at Saigon in October 1945 when the French military returned there. Postmarks indicating the number of the naval post office were generally used only during the early part of the Franco-Viet conflict.
The “CENTER D’INSTRUCTION DU TRAIN” was a training center for train operations and must have been a specialized school. Ironically, a letter from the center was posted through a naval post office.
POSTE NAVALE BUREAU № 91

Another format variety crammed “POSTE NAVALE BUREAU № 91” around the top of the naval postmark.
In this case, a commercial mailing from Saigon to Marseilles was posted through Naval Post Office Number 19 in 1946.
Starting in 1950, the year in the postmark for Navy Post Office Number 91 was specified with four digits instead two digits.
A late version of the Naval Post Office Number 91 postmark placed the “No 91” at its base. In this case, the registration label was also handstamped “BUREAU NAVAL No 91.”

**POSTAL MARKINGS**
BUREAU NAVAL № 91  31-8 1955
REVERSE
FREJUS VAR  3-9 1955
In addition to the naval post office at Saigon, Naval Post Office Number 14 operated at Haiphong from March 1946 through 1955 when French troops withdrew in conformance with the Geneva Accords. Afterwards, the naval post office operated for short periods at Tourane and Camranh Bay.
A civilian posted his letter at Naval Post Office Number 14 when registration labels were unavailable. To indicate registration, a clerk applied the post office’s handstamp with a handwritten registration number.

POSTAL MARKINGS
POSTE NAVALE BUREAU N° 14 24-6 46
BUREAU NAVAL N° 14 handstamp with manuscript registration label
Originally built as a passenger-cargo ship, she was converted to an aircraft escort vessel and delivered to the U.S. Navy. Under the Lend Lease Act, she was transferred to the United Kingdom and commissioned as *HMS Biter*. In April 1954, she was transferred to the French Navy. Departing Toulon in January 1947, she reached Saigon in March and participated in two landing operations. *Dixmude* continued operations in the Far East into the 1950s.

A special cachet commemorated her sixth year in service while stationed off Indochina in 1951.
Arromanches was an aircraft carrier of the French Navy, which served from 1946 to 1974. Arromanches participated in the First Indochina War in three campaigns from 1948 to 1954. She was stationed off the coast of Indochina during the second half of 1952 when this letter was posted.
An official naval letter sent to France was handstamped “OFFICIEL” and ‘Frégate TONKINOIS’. The POSTE AUX ARMEES postmark locates the ship in Indochina in September 1948.

Frigate Tonkinois

OFFICIEL Frégate “TONKINOIS”
Indochinese stamps were accepted for postage at Hanoi’s special Army post office established to service civilian mail. This represents a late usage of the B.P.M. 403 postmark at Hanoi. It was replaced with another distinctive postmark.

POSTAL MARKINGS
B.P.M. 403 25-2 47
Frigate *Tonkinois*

A period postcard depicts the *Tonkinois* with hull number F11. Built in 1943 by Smith’s Dock Company in England, the ship was originally named *H.M.S. Moyola*. She was transferred to France in 1944 and renamed *Tonkinois*.