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German Field Post Operations

In the West: 1940-1944

[O. B. West]

By John W. Painter

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INTRODUCTION

This “monograph” was originally published in 7 issues of the *Third Reich Study Group Bulletin*, in a series of installments which appeared between 1973 (#30) and 1975 (#36). Each installment was authored by John W. Painter.

Following the seventh installment, there was a note that subsequent installments of this series would appear in the issues of the Bulletin in subsequent years. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Instead there was a note in the issue for VOL XII (12) No. 3 (Whole No. 48), published in 1978, that the remaining 38 pages were to be made available as a separate publication.

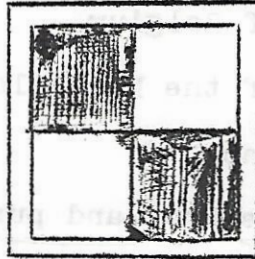
I found no mention that a complete publication of this study, including the original installments and the final separately published conclusion were ever published and sold as a complete unit, thus it is going to be difficult to present this study in its entirety. Perhaps, a reader will have access to this second half, and can offer it to me to be scanned, so that a complete study can finally be published. In the interim, the publication of the first half seemed to be a worthwhile project, and I prepared the present monograph as I was compiling the Table of Contents (Title/Author) Index for the issues. Please bring any problems or omissions to my attention.

Mike Ludeman

April 2018

mike@ludeman.net

GERMAN FIELD POST OPERATIONS
IN THE WEST
1940 - 1944



O. B. WEST

by JOHN W. PAINTER

GERMAN FIELD POST OPERATIONS IN THE WEST

INTRODUCTION

The campaigns in the west were planned with little political forethought. No attempt was made to determine how occupied areas were to be administered in the case of victory. Decisions had to be made as to whether the area was to have a military or civilian type government. Under these conditions a high degree of improvisation became necessary for the occupation of the western territories.

Belgium and France were put under direct military control while in Denmark the government was run by the Danes themselves, with only the German military forces under the control of a military commander. In Norway and the Netherlands authority passed into the hands of a Reichskommissar who answered directly to Hitler. Certain areas like Eupen and Malmedy were annexed to the Reich, while others, like Luxemburg, although not formally annexed, were administered as part of Germany.

Although Norway and Denmark are technically considered in the west, their activities are covered separately in the chapter "German Field Post Operations in the North". Field post activities in the west cover operations in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Because of the complex nature of the subject, this study is divided into the following parts:

- A. Campaign in the West (May-June 1940)
- B. Sealion and the Battle of Britain (Jul-Oct 1940)
- C. Combat Forces stationed in the West
- D. Occupation of France
- E. Occupation of Belgium
- F. Occupation of the Netherlands
- G. Southern France
- H. Invasion, breakout and pursuit

A. CAMPAIGN IN THE WEST (Fall Gelb)

On May 10, 1940 the German Forces began their attack in the west. Holland was quickly overrun and surrendered in 5 days. The Wehrmacht, concentrating their armored forces in the center, penetrated the allied front at Sedan and within 10 days had marched through the rear of the British and the French to the channel. The resulting entrapment of the allied armies in the north forced the Belgians out of the war and caused the British withdrawal at Dunkirk. By the end of May the first phase of the campaign was completed.

The second phase of the campaign, known as Fall Rot (Case Red) began on June 5, 1940 after several days of regrouping by the German armies. The objective was to break up the remaining French armies. After some initial resistance, the German Army, led by the Panzer divisions, penetrated deep into France. Paris fell on the 14th after being declared an open city. On the 17th Petain was asked to form a new government and immediately asked for an armistice, which was signed on the 22nd of June in the forest at Compiègne in the same railroad car in which the 1918 armistice was signed.

In spite of the over 2 million men involved in this campaign, field post letters, both official and personal, from this period are scarce because the rapid movement of the various armies left little time for retaining and filing letters. At the start of the campaign a postal embargo (postsperr) was employed to prevent any news of the operation from leaking out. The success of the campaign depended upon the panzer forces getting through the Ardennes unopposed.

During this campaign the Germans marshalled 3 army groups, 9 armies, 39 corps and 140 divisions of which 14 were either motorized or armored. An additional 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ divisions were provided by the Waffen SS which came under the tactical control of the army while in combat yet retained their own administrative services and supply.

The strength of the field army had risen from 2.76 million to 3.3 million in the 8 months since the start of the war. The number of divisional formations rose from 103 to 156 during this same period.

The field post offices (along with the kenn number where known) of these German forces involved in the campaign are listed below.

FIELD POST OFFICES OF THE GERMAN COMBAT FORCES
ENGAGED IN THE FRENCH CAMPAIGN
MAY-JUNE 1940

(Kenn numbers shown in parentheses represent numbers known to have been used for that unit later in the war. Experience has shown that most such numbers were used by the same field post office throughout the war).

Oberkommando des Heeres	OKH	FpA 631	FpNr. 13 728	K-144
Army Group 'A'	v Rundstedt			
	Stabsfeldpostamt	FpA 616	FpNr. 09 647	K-105
Army Group 'B'	v Bock			
	Stabsfeldpostamt	FpA 621	FpNr. 04 085	(K-448)
Army Group 'C'	Ritter v Leeb			
	Stabsfeldpostamt	FpA 605	FpNr. 36 385	(K-585)
		FpA 607	FpNr. 36 796	(K-292)

Other field post offices known to have been in the area but have not been identified with any specific Army Group or Army.

FpA 602	15 267	(K-112)
608	17 507	(K-601)
614	18 254	(K-711)
615	07 018	(K-978)

ARMIES

Armeeoberkommando 1	Armeefeldpostmeister Dr. Winter			
APM 590	11 400	FpA 590	10 219	K-549
ABSt 590	24 450	K-443	FpA 591	16 838
FpLst 597	29 271	(K-474)	FpA 592	08 754
			FpA 593	16 839
Armeeoberkommando 2	Armeefeldpostmeister Hochmueller			
APM	14 400	FpA 501	09 011	K-271
ABSt 602	33 317	K-307	FpA 506	07 109
FpLst			FpA G171	28 818
			FpA Lw154	04 444
				K-413

Armeeoberkommando 4

APM		09 980		FpA 570	28 617	
ABSt	503	38 841	(K-387)	FpA 571	26 891	(K-615)
FpLSt	577	07 475	(K-776)	FpA 573	13 518	(K-614)

Armeeoberkommando 6 Armeefeldpostmeister Zschiesche

APM		09 600		FpA 540	17 816	(K-376)
ABSt	540	26 151	K-173	FpA 541	11 735	(K-499)
FpLSt	547	03 784	K-227	FpA 542	04 475	K-611
				FpA 543	12 676	(K-347)

Armeeoberkommando 7

APM	7	24 500	K-527	FpA 551	18 947	K-696
ABSt	550	00 805	K-311	FpA 552	00 690	K-942
FpLSt	557	15 800	K-618	FpA 553	06 167	K-307
				FpA 55	16 361	K-368

Armeeoberkommando 12

APM	12	21 800		FpA 560	14 078	(K-170)
ABSt	560	20 952	K-500	FpA 561	09 366	
FpLSt	567	08 616	K-484	FpA 562	17 897	(K-439)
				FpA 563	12 388	K-235

Armeeoberkommando 16

APM	16	22 400		FpA 510	30 246	K-978
ABSt	538	11 729		FpA 512	32 726	(K-748)
FpLSt	601	21 321		FpA 516	33 795	K-661
				FpA 520	31 397	K-814)

Armeeoberkommando 18

APM	18	13 700		FpA 580	22 930	(K-935)
ABSt	580	00 805	K-311	FpA 581	23 329	(K-423)
FpLSt	587	20 495	K-320	FpA 582	10 817	K-668
				FpA 583	02 257	-

Armeeoberkommando 9

(Formed 15 May 1940 from the staff of OBER OST KOMMANDO)

APM		13 000		FpA 432	09 238	-
ABSt	530	36 392	K-589	FpA 532	26 706	K-557
FpLSt	537	19 929	K-566	FpA 533	03 320	K-554
				FpA 530	22 862	-

GERMAN ARMY CORPS INVOLVED IN THE FRENCH CAMPAIGN (MAY-JUNE 1940)

Showing Feldpost Offices assigned to each Corps along with the Feldpost number and Kenn number. Those Kenn numbers shown in parentheses represent the number used for these units later in the war; however, experience has shown that most such numbers remained unchanged for most of the war period.

Corps	FpA	FpNr	Kenn Nr	Corps	FpA	FpNr	Kenn Nr
I	421	03 956	K-789	XXII	422	02 266	K-401
II	402	29 344	(K-999)	XXIII	308	34 107	
III	403	25 239	K-101	XXIV	311	19 539	(K-773)
IV	404	26 873		XXV	307	25 149	(K-530)
V	405	26 905	K-618	XXVI	426	34 908	(K-605)
VI	406	15 462	(K-953)	XXVII	427	21 979	(K-600)
VII	407	18 052	(K-189)	XXVIII	428	06 350	
VIII	408	19 730		XXIX	429	03 429	K-794
IX	409	26 903	K-503	XXX	430	07 972	
X	410	18 458	(K-987)	XXXII	432	09 238	(K-169)
XI	411	14 907		XXXIII	433	02 156	K-247
XII	412	12 082	K-801	XXXVI	436	28 925	(K-854)
XIII	413	06 341	(K-557)	XXXVII	337	28 793	K-140
XIV m.	414	15 709	K-542	XXXVIII.	438	23 897	K-247
XV m.	415	27 659	K-365	XXXIX m.	439	26 613	K-119
XVI m.	473			XL	440	30 177	(K-396)
XVII	417	27 612	K-758	XLI m.	441	08 315	K-953
XVIII	418	32 057	K-759	XLII	442	15 682	(K-462)
XIX m.	419	12 541	(K-845)	XLIII	443	28 900	(K-586)
				XLIV	444	32 253	

FIELD POST OPERATIONS DURING THE CAMPAIGN

The rapid movement of the field forces during the French Campaign can be observed in the after action report of the Armeefeldpostmeister of the 4th Army. In the march across Belgium and France the Army Postal Station (Armeebriefstelle-ABSt) moved 9 times between May 10, and August 3, 1940. The locations of the ABSt during this period are as follows:

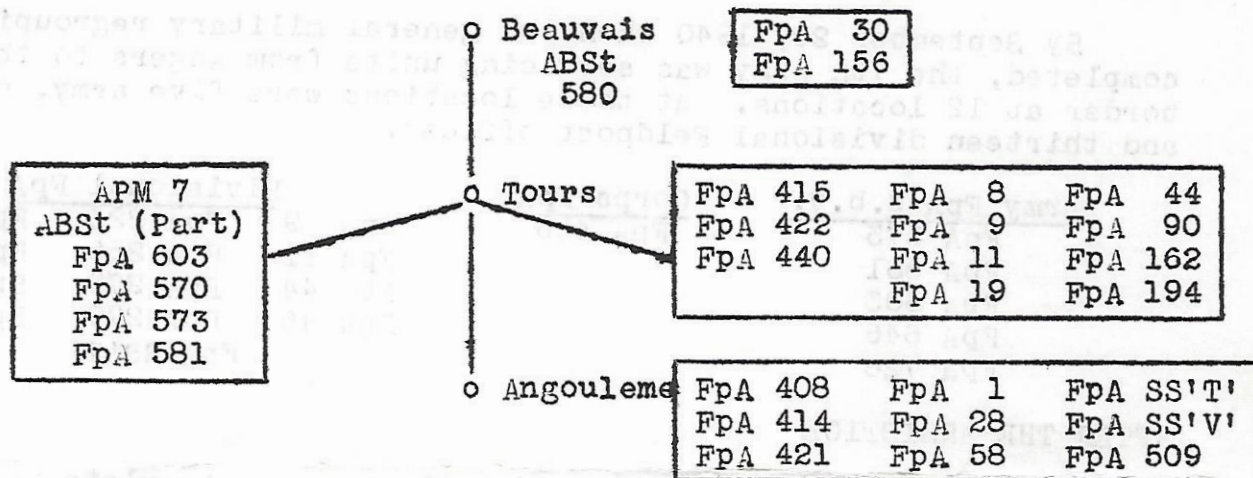
13-15 May, St. Vith, Belgium	
17-22 May, Ciney, Belgium	13-18 June, Gournay en Bray, France
23-25 May, Liory,	
26 May-6 June, Cambrai, France	19-24 June, Evreux, France
	2 June-6 July, Chateau Gantier, France
7-12 June, Avesnes le Comte, France	7 July-3 August, Angers, France

Two of the Feldpost offices attached to this army (FpA 583, 618) were used to provide mail services to army and corps troops. The remaining two Feldpost offices (FpA 580, 582) were used to set up and staff letter collection offices along the line of march.

In early May, 1940, the Army Field Postmaster (APM) of the 4th Army reported that he was receiving 1,200 to 1,400 sacks of Feldpost mail daily from front line troops attached to his army and was processing another 2,300 sacks of mail daily from the Reichspost in Germany. By the end of May the APM reported that his outgoing mail volume had jumped to 1,800 sacks per day which required 5 to 6 rail-way cars.

A report of the APM of the 7th Army illustrates how mail was routed to combat forces in the field. During the French campaign, this army, which had remained stationary in May, attacked the French troops in the Maginot Line during the middle of June and broke through into the province of Alsace. Their advance carried them deep into the Vosges mountains. After the armistice the Army staff and some of its troops moved to the Bordeaux area on the Atlantic coast to prevent the British from returning to the continent.

During May and June, mail for this army was routed through Baden-Baden. After the advance into France it went via Strasbourg from which point it was picked up by vehicles of the various Feldpost offices. After the armistice the Feldpostleitstelle 587 was moved to Duisburg where it began receiving mail from the Reichspost designated Duisburg A. This took effect on July 3, 1940. From Duisburg, the mail was routed via express train to Brussels and then to Beauvais where the Army (letter or post) Office (Armee Briefstelle) was operating. At this location all mail destined for the 7th Army was unloaded and sorted by the post office into bundles by the 5-digit Feldpost number. On July 3, this army reported that it was servicing about 1,500 Feldpost numbers, but was sending mail to only 26 Kenn numbers at 4 different locations. The following chart explains the function of the Kenn number. The Kenn (code) number hid the identity of the receiving unit, yet could be easily identified to permit the rapid sorting of mail sacks.



Each mail sack was tagged with an appropriate flag (Fahne für Briefbeutel) that indicated the Kenn number of the unit involved. Illustrated below is a flag from the PSST (Postsammelstelle) in Duisburg to K-396 for the FpA 440 of the XL Corps.



By August 4, the 7th Army was headquartered in Bordeaux and its Feldpostleitstelle (587 K-320) had moved to Colgne. Mail for the unit was now identified as KÖLN-DEUTZ B where it was loaded aboard an express train for direct shipment to Bordeaux. At that point the Army post office further sorted the mail into sacks for distribution to the five divisional Feldpost offices, the one corps and seven army Feldpost offices at ten different locations.

By September 20, 1940 when the general military regrouping was completed, the 7th Army was servicing units from Angers to the Spanish border at 12 locations. At these locations were five army, one corps and thirteen divisional Feldpost offices.

<u>Army FpA z.b.V.</u>	<u>Corps FpA</u>	<u>Divisional FpA</u>	
FpA 573	FpA 406	FpA 9	FpA 223 FpA 263
FpA 581		FpA 11	FpA 255 FpA 294
FpA 603		FpA 44	FpA 278 FpA 309
FpA 646		FpA 46	FpA 279 FpA 399
FpA 726			FpA SS'T'

AFTER THE ARMISTICE

Immediately after the armistice there was a complete rearrangement of the German Occupation Administration in France. The two northern departments, which until then were semi-autonomous, were put under the control of the Military Commander in Belgium located in Brussels. France was put under the control of the Chief of Military Administration located in Paris. From the outset the situation was complicated by the overlapping lines of authority in the German occupation machinery.

The occupation staff for Occupied France was composed of a headquarters command (Militärbefehlshaber FRANKREICH) and an administrative staff similar to that found in every Germany Army Group. This staff, which was known originally as Oberquartiermeister PARIS and later as Oberquartiermeister FRANKREICH, had sections dealing with every phase of the occupation; such as economic exploitation, police administration and troop billeting. One of these sections dealt with the administration of the stationary Feldpost network that would be needed when the combat elements moved out.

The new staff, which had originally been part of Oberquartiermeister BRÜSSEL, became operational on June 26, 1940 and was responsible for the military security and the administration of the territory under its control. Subordinate commands, which following regular German practice would normally be called Oberfeldkommando, were known as Military Administrative Districts. Initially there were five districts, but after the reorganization of 1942, this number reduced to three. They were:

- Gross Paris Later merged into the Northwest District
- "A" later renamed Northwest (13 departments)
- "B" later renamed Southwest (12 departments)
- "C" later renamed Northeast (18 departments)
- "Bord" (Bordeaux Area) Later merged into the Southwest District

* * * * *

To follow: Part B. Sealion and the Battle of Britain (Jul-Oct 1940).

GERMAN FIELD POST OPERATIONS IN THE WEST
1940-1944

by JOHN W. PAINTER

B. SEALION AND THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN (JUL.-OCT. 1940)

With the conquest of France in 1940, Hitler believed he had won the war. He had no plans ready for the next step. He could not understand why any more victories should be necessary to convince Great Britain that it was hopeless to continue the struggle. It was soon apparent, however, that England was bent on fighting to the finish. Other means of delivering the coup de grace had to be considered. The obvious and most convincing was an invasion.

Ordered by directive #16 and given the code name "Sealion", Army, Navy and Air Force planners set to work against the clock to solve the many problems created by a large scale amphibious operation. The first major obstacle was that Germany had no landing craft and little shipping available in the channel. A second was that the British Air Force would have to be neutralized before any crossing could be attempted. To land and provision the projected 90,000 men in the first six days would take a large armada and require substantial air cover.

TROOP REDEPLOYMENT

On July 20, 1940, 6 Corps and 16 Divisions were withdrawn from the west and sent to reinforce the eastern front. Shortly afterward, the 18th Army Staff was withdrawn for the same reason. The remaining forces were used to demobilize the French Army, retrain some of the new German formations and prepare for the invasion of England. A number of German divisions were actually demobilized and their personnel used in Germany to help harvest the summer crops.

In the early part of July, all Fieldpost mail for the southern group of armies (AOK 2, 4, 6, 7, 16) was being sent through Brussels. The reopening of the Saarbrücken and Freiburg rail lines permitted more direct rail links through Paris.

At this time there were only four fieldpost offices and one letter sorting office (Armeebriefstelle) under the control of the Army Postmaster of Oberquartiermeister Paris.

Armeebriefstelle	506	Paris	K-843
Feldpostamt	571	Vincennes	K-920
Feldpostamt	646	Angers	K-736
Feldpostamt	671	St. Germain	K-206
Feldpostamt	673	Dijon	K-153

More offices were not necessary at this time because of the larger number of combat formations in the area with organically attached fieldpost offices.

While preparations for the invasion were being made, it was necessary to provide logistical support for the large combat, supply and administrative forces that moved into the occupied areas. To build the necessary runways, aircraft hangers, signal facilities and petrol storage areas for the continuance of the war, required the services of a large number of Luftwaffe service and construction units. German combat staffs were freed from normal administrative burdens after a special staff "Oberquartiermeister Paris" was set up on July 2, 1940. Built in part from the staff of "Oberquartiermeister Belgium" its original compliment of 1,727 men grew rapidly, so that by August 11, 1940 it numbered 23,756, most of whom were guard and service units. The command staff numbered only 237.

As more combat formations were moved to the east their places were taken by various types of military support units which did not have their own fieldpost office. As this movement accelerated, the need for more postal services could only be met by establishing a network of stationary fieldpost offices. The movement of large Luftwaffe formations into the area made the problem more urgent. Although two air fleets and their supporting staffs were in the area, none had fieldpost offices attached to them as was the army practice for formations of similar size. To overcome this problem, the Wehrmacht established a Luftgaupostamt (LgPA) in Paris on August 20, 1940. Subsequent developments of this office are covered in the Chapter on France.

SEALION

By the end of July, most of the invasion preparations had been completed. Of the 6 armies left in the west, 3 were designated for operation "Sealion" and the remaining 3 used for the occupation and security of the rest of France and guarding the Atlantic Coast in southern France. (See Map 3). As soon as the invasion divisions reached their jumping off places along the channel, they divided their forces by corps and divisions into two groups. The Occupation Group took on the responsibilities of internal security, administration and coastal defense. The Operations Group, including units assigned to the first wave of Sealion, were left free to continue training for the forthcoming invasion.

THE BLITZ

The first large scale air attacks on England began in early August 1940 with airfields as the primary targets. In September the attacks shifted to the London area. Even though the Royal Air Force was hard pressed on many occasions, the Germans never achieved the superiority necessary to mount a land invasion of England. Since the precondition of a neutralized English Air Force was not met, the invasion was postponed. The original date of September 10 was first pushed back to the 17th and later to October 8, 1940. On October 12th the invasion was finally called off. Hitler's attention had been turned to the east. Appendices and identifies the major Army and Air Force units involved in both operations of the Blitz and Sealion. Postal data on the Luftwaffe units involved is sparse because of the non-availability of the documents.

The decision to move east cleared the way for the Army High Command to complete the general regrouping which had begun earlier in the year. Units were shifted secretly from the west in several waves. Preparations were made to make it appear that the attack on England was still contemplated. For example, when the 15th Army moved into the headquarters vacated by the departing 16th Army it was given the code designation 16T.

The drop in the number of troops in the west, is best illustrated by tabulating the number of combat formations stationed there:

July 21, 1940	80 2/3 Divisions
December 21, 1940	62 2/3 Divisions
April 11, 1941	24 Divisions

By the 22nd of June, the strength of OB West had been brought back to 38 Divisions with the addition of 14 new formations formed specially for occupation duty in the west. These 38 Divisions represented 18% of the total number of German divisions mobilized for the German attack on Russia.

By April, 1941, most of the Luftwaffe bomber formations had been withdrawn from the west. The Third Air Force assumed responsibility for all air operations in the western theater.

AFTER THE CANCELLATION OF SEALION

Prior to leaving for the Eastern Front, the 6th Army was used to secure Brittany and assist the Navy in setting up U-Boat bases. In February, 1941, the Army Quartermaster of the 6th Army reported the ration strength of his army to be 250,000 men.

135,000 Army	60,000 Luftwaffe
35,000 Navy	20,000 Organization Todt

The Army Postmaster reported that he was working mail for 1,970 Field-post numbers at the beginning of February but that it had dropped to 1,837 numbers by the end of the month.

On March 13, 1941, the 7th Army took over the responsibility for the defense of this area by extending its right boundary northward. Preparations for the Russian Campaign required that the 6th Army take up its assigned positions in the east. This assignment would lead in less than two years to its destruction at Stalingrad. When the 6th Army left France it took its regular Fieldpost Offices with it; Feldpostleitstelle 547, Armeebriefstelle 540, and Feldpost offices 540, 541, 542 and 543.

PROVISIONAL MEASURES IN NORTHERN FRANCE

On June 9, 1940, the two northern French departments were severed from French control and put under the control of a special military commander of Northern France ("Militärbefehshaber Nordfrankreich").

This act meant the two departments were not under the postal control of either the French or the Belgian administrations. To give the numerous refugees, POW's and resident civilian population a means of communicating Sonderführer von Werner, the German officer in charge of the District of Dunkerque-Hazebrouk, decided to restore postal service. Effective July 1, 1940, postcards and letters up to 20 grams could be sent within the district with regular French stamps that had been overprinted "Besetzes Gebiet Nordfrankreich" (Occupied District of Northern France).

Two handstamps were used; one had round corners and was used in Dunkirk. They were distributed to all post offices within the district except one. That office was Coudekerque which used a handstamp with square corners. The imprint covered two stamps. In a few rare cases stamps received a handwritten overprint.

Since the letter rate was 1 Franc, two 50 Centime stamps were used for overprinting. However, as stocks of the 50 Centimes stamps were soon exhausted, other values were overprinted. Fifteen different stamps were overprinted at Dunkirk and forty-one different at Coudekerque besides the original 50 Centime stamp.

Recent research published by Wolfgang Tust, in Der Deutschland Sammler, Vol. 17, #8 (Aug.'69) and #9 (Sept.'69) indicates that in all, 83 different types of stamps were overprinted. The stamps were valid for postage from July 1 through August 9, 1940.

ROUTING OF FIELD POST MAIL TO MILITARY UNITS IN THE WEST

Mail being sent to German Forces in the West was routed through either Brussels or Paris. To distinguish mail sacks and pouches destined for the different Armies and Commands being serviced through these cities special letter codes were used after the name of the city. Paris "A", for example was used for the Military Command of France. Because both cities were important communications centers, mail being sent there could easily be transferred to the proper railhead for dispatch. From late 1940 through 1942, the following codes were used:

BRUSSELS A	Those elements of AOK 15 stationed in Belgium and Northern France
BRUSSELS B	- Not known to have been used -
BRUSSELS C	Military Command of Belgium and Northern France
PARIS A	Military Command of France
PARIS B	AOK 7, Headquarters, Bordeaux; guarding the Atlantic
PARIS C	AOK 1, Headquarters, Melun; guarding the armistice line
PARIS D	AOK 15-Those elements stationed in France

The shift of the 1st Army to the Bordeaux area and the 7th Army moved North to the Normandy-Brittany area caused a change of codes in 1943.

PARIS A	Military Command of France
PARIS B	AOK 1 headquartered in Bordeaux
PARIS C	- May have been used for 19th Army in Southern France
PARIS D	AOK 7, Headquarters at Le Mans
PARIS E-F-G	- Not known to have been used, but logically could be for Army Groups "B", "D", and "G"
PARIS H	Used for those elements of AOK 15 stationed in France

To follow: Part C. German Combat Forces in the West.

Continued from TRSG Bulletins, (Whole No's. 30, 31) Jan., April 1973

GERMAN FIELD POST OPERATIONS IN THE WEST
1940-1944

by John W. Painter

C. GERMAN COMBAT FORCES STATIONED IN THE WEST.

The Command Structure

A special problem is created in studying the field post studies of the German forces in the west because of the regular German practice of separating occupation staffs from combat forces even though they may be located in the same place. In the interest of clarity, I have retained this dualism.

From May through October 1940, the top command in the west was the Army High Command (OKH, FpA 631, K-144). After the invasion of England was postponed, this staff became heavily involved in planning for the Russian campaign and left the theater on October 31, 1940. At this time, overall authority in the area was transferred to the staff of Army Group A and given the new title OB WEST (Supreme Commander West). On April 15, 1941, Army Group A left for the eastern front, and the title OB WEST, was transferred to Army Group D (FpA, K-714) which previously had been guarding the demarcation line. OB WEST reported directly to the OKW (Supreme Military High Command).

Eventually OB WEST (Army Group D) consisted of 4 subordinate commands:

Wehrmacht Commander Netherlands (LXXXVIII Corps Command)

Army Group B moved to France in December 1943 under the control of Field Marshal Rommel. Covered the coast of Belgium and Northern France with the 7th and 15th Armies

Army Group G Formed May 8, 1944, to control the forces in southern France; 1st and 19th Armies.

Panzer Group WEST Controlled all armored formations in the west. Renamed 5th Panzer Army late in 1944.

The staff of OB WEST, which was identical with Army Group D, was stationed outside Paris in the city of St. Germain. The headquarters staff lived in the historical 'Chateau de St. Germain' built in 1120 during the reign of Louis VI. (Originally a royal fortress, it was rebuilt by Louis XII in 1514 as a Chateau, retaining only the original keep and the chapel.) This occurrence was quite common during the occupation, as many of the higher headquarters personnel lived and worked in the famous Chateaux located throughout France.

Panzer Group WEST was created to provide centralized control of all armored formations in western Europe. After the invasion in 1944 this formation became operational and functioned as a regular army, controlling the many tank units on the right wing of the Normandy front.

The staffs of these higher headquarters were relatively small. In 1941, Army Group 'D'/O.B. WEST had 425 people, of which 44 were officers. Army Group 'B' had a staff of 53 men and 8 auxiliaries who were female clerks and telephone operators. As such, they had no need of a separate fieldpost office so they used the nearest stationary FpA.

The Luftwaffe command was centered in the 3rd Air Force, however it reported directly to Göring and maintained only liason with Rundstedt's command. The Western Naval Command under the direction of Admiral Krancke received their orders directly from the German Naval staff in Berlin.

SEPARATION OF FIELD POST OPERATIONS

After the establishment of an occupation staff in 1940, the theater Feldpostmeister (APM beim O.B. WEST) divided the postal authority among five subordinate commands. This arrangement lasted until 1942.

APM OB WEST		K-714
Combat Forces		
APM 15	41 800	K-105
APM 7	24 500	K-527
APM 1	11 400	K-549
Occupation Forces		
APM BRUSSELS	10 200	K-214
APM PARIS	09 800	K-843

For most of the occupation three armies (1, 7, and 15) provided the training and direction of the combat elements stationed along the Atlantic coast. Although documentary evidence varies with each Army we will consider the fieldpost activities of each separately.

The realignment of the combat forces in 1942 was accompanied by a reduction in the number of Army letter offices (Armeebriefstellen) in the area. The First and Seventh Armies no longer had their own ABSt, but were to be served by the two theater letter offices in Brussels and Paris. The Fifteenth Army never did have its own Armeebriefstelle.

Concurrent with this reorganization the postal authorities decided to establish theater Feldpostleitstellen to oversee the transfer of military mail from the Reichspost to the various theater commands. This resulted in the creation of a new type of formation, the Hauptfeldpostleitstelle. It had a larger staff than the regular FpLSt (72 instead 55). Details on its staffing and organization are found in Annex .

The unit assigned to the western theater, Hauptfeldpostleitstelle 4 (K-484) was formed from the staff of FpLSt 567. The expansion of combat commands caused further changes in the Postal arrangements. The creation of the 19th Army in southern France and the addition of Rommel's Army Group 'B' created a new superstructure for the fieldpost administrators during the period 1943-1944.

THE COMMAND STRUCTURE 1943-1944

Overall Operations		
APM O.B. WEST	20 225	K-714
Combat Units (Mobile FpÄ)		
APM beim H.Gr. "B"	--	--
APM 15	41 800	K-105
APM 7	24 500	K-527
APM beim H.Gr. "G"	20 800	K-339
APM 1	11 400	K-549
APM 19	--	--
Occupation Units (Stationary Fieldpost Network)		
APM BRUSSELS	10 200	K-214
APM PARIS	09 800	K-848

The number of personnel attached to these stationary offices continued to increase throughout the occupation period. In 1943, the Army Postmaster of OB WEST reported the following number of people working in the stationary offices.

	3 June 1943	31 Dec 1943
Feldpost Personnel	876	872
Soldiers	109	135
Female Assistants	86	144
Civilian Auxiliaries	<u>1036</u>	<u>1192</u>
	2107	2343

The Fifteenth Army (AOK 15)

This army was formed in January 1941 specifically for occupation duty in the West. We are able to trace its development throughout the entire occupation period from the excellent after-action reports filed by the Army Postmaster. The postal staff assembled for the first time on March 5, 1941 at Nürnberg to begin training in postal matters under the direction of the Reichspost Direktion in that city. (T-312, Roll 500)

The staff of the Amt Postmaster (APM) was composed of 14 men with an average age of 37 years. Fritz Schaper, the Army Postmaster, was 59 years old in 1941 and held the title Oberpostrat (Senior Civil Postal Servant). His immediate staff consisted of 6 officials

of officer rank and 7 postal aids of non-commissioned officer status. The office itself was organized into three sections (Abteilungen). Shown in parentheses is the rank of each officer and his age in 1941.

Abteilungen	I	General Administration Traffic Schedules Vehicle Maintenance	FpR Dr. Willy Hoffman (Maj.)(35) FpI Helmut Einer (1st Lt)(28)
Abteilungen	II	Army Fieldpost Numbers Directory Service	FpR Erwin Rehe (Maj.)(36) FpI Friedrich Kroner (1st Lt)(29)
Abteilungen	III	Personnel, Accounting Supplies, Equipment	FpR Gerhard Latrille (Maj.)(28) FOPI Walter Roehr (Capt.)(56)

On April 14, 1941 the army became operational by taking over control of the area formerly occupied by the 9th and 16th Armies. The new army acquired the Fieldpost Offices attached at that time to the 16th Army. To hide the movement of these formations to the east, the new army was known as 16T/9T until May 25, 1941 when the need for deception ceased to exist. The staff of APM 15 was located in Roubaix, a suburb of Tourcoing, at Blvd. de Paris 92.

By the end of May 1941, the APM reported he had 25 Fieldpost offices (FpA) and one Feldpostleitstelle (FpLst) under his control. During June the report continues, the APM processed 15,000 incoming sacks of letter mail and 40,000 sacks of Packages. The outgoing mail volume during this month was 8,000 sacks of letters and 50,000 sacks of packages. It is apparent that the occupation forces were finding time to mail home the numerous articles purchased on the local economy.

This volume of mail was generated by forces within the 15th Army area. In August 1941, the supply officer of the 15th Army reported the ration strength of 315,596 officers and men. 182,965 were in combat formations, such as divisions; 177,735 were Luftwaffe, Navy, OT and similar auxiliary formations while the remaining 141,861 were assigned to the staffs of the Military Governors of Belgium, Northern France and France.

At the end of 1941, the APM noted that the number of FpA within his area had dropped to 21 which were divided as follows:

5 FpA z.b.V. attached to the 15th Army	FpA 616, 379, 386, 750, 755
2 FpA attached to Army Corps	FpA 320, 437
14 FpA attached to Divisional Formations	FpA 171, 183, 208, 216, 225, 302, 304, 306, 318, 321, 323, 332, 336, 340.

(Source T-312 Roll 500)

Part C. German Combat Forces Stationed in the West, continued in next Bulletin.

Continued from TRSG Bulletins, (Whole No's. 30, 31, 32) 1973

GERMAN FIELD POST OPERATIONS IN THE WEST
1940-1944

by John W. Painter

C. GERMAN COMBAT FORCES STATIONED IN THE WEST, continued.

KENN NUMBERS USED IN LATE 1941 BY AOK 15

K-105	FpA 616 Army	Rouen	K-567	FpA 750 Army	Le Harve
K-108	FpA 750 Army	Le Harve	K-669	FpA 183 Div.	Valegnes
K-113	FpA 302 Div.	Dieppe	K-675	FpA 755 Army.	Laon
K-124	FpA 208 Div.	Etaples	K-701	FpA 323 Div.	Caen
K-129	FpA 336 Div.	Bolbec	K-703	FpA 321 Div.	Armentiers
K-140	FpA 437 Corps	Lille	K-760	FpA 320 Div.	Gent
K-205	FpA 216 Div.	Argentan	K-800	FpA 304 Div.	Lille
K-333	FpA 171 Div.	Mons	K-934	FpA 225 Div.	Camon/Amiens
K-482	FpA 332 Div.	Lisieux	K-937	FpA 318 Div.	Dorville
K-525	FpA 379 Army	Coutances	K-954	FpA 340 Div.	Coulogne
K-538	FpA 386 Army	Tourcoing	K-972	FpA 306 Div.	Brugge

FIELDPOST ACTIVITIES DURING 1942 (AOK 15)

The severe strain of the Russian campaign is reflected in the July 1942 report that the 15th Army was serving only 12 field post offices. By December 21, 1942 the number had increased to 14, of which 8 were divisional formations

K-102	FpA 241 Div.	Montreuil	K-525	FpA 379 Div.	Pontl'Eveque
K-105	FpA 616 Army	Tourcoing	K-536	FpA 616 zw Army	Brugge
K-140	FpA 437 Corps	Aire	K-567	FpA 750 Army	Le Harve
K-235	FpA 563 Army	Argentan	K-643	FpA 338 Div.	Antwerp
		(1 SS)			
K-278	FpA 93 Div.	Armentiers	K-659	FpA 165 Div.	Goes
K-475	FpA 139 Div.	Dixmunden	K-739	FpA 750 zw Army	Forge les Eaux
K-482	FpA 332 Div.	Bolbec	K-951	FpA 106 Div.	Calais

Source Microcopy T-312 Roll 506, Frame 8102094

The end of 1943 saw a dramatic rise in the number of forces stationed in the west caused by the increasing threat of an allied invasion. On December 1, 1943 the APM of the 15th Army reported that he was now serving 15 FpA's within his area of command. In addition there were 28 stationary fieldpost offices and branches located in his area but under the command of the APM of Brussels and Paris. (T-312 Roll 511).

AOK 1

The First Army was formed during the August 1939 mobilization in Wehrkreis XII with army troops provided by the "K" (Kassel) packet.

The organic Fieldpost units attached to this army were the 590 Armeebriefstelle, the 597 Feldpostleitstelle and four FpA z.b.V. (319, 591, 592, 593).

During the Polish and French Campaigns this army guarded the German border between the Saar and the Pfalz. In June it advanced through the Maginot Line and into the Vosges Mountains. After June 26, it secured the Armistice line until the general reorganization of 1942 when it was moved to the Atlantic Coast along the Bay of Biscay, displacing the 7th Army which had been shifted farther to the North.

At the time of the armistice the Army Postmaster reported that in addition to his regular AB St and FpLSt he was controlling 8 FpA z.b.V. (590, 591, 592, 593, 319, 561, 614, and 615). In 1939 and early 1940 the PLP (Postleitpunkt) was Frankfurt/Main. After June it was Metz 3 and Paris C until the changes of 1942 when it changed again to Muhlhausen and Paris B. The reason for the two PLP's was the need to accomodate the movement of mail from either the north and west or the east.

For the occupation period the First Army controlled only two corps commands and between four and six combat divisions. In June of 1944 the APM reported that of the ten fieldpost offices under his control two were Corps FpA, 4 were FpA z.b.V., and the remaining four belonged to divisions. One of these offices had a branch operated by it.

APM AOK 1	FpA z.b.V. 587	and branch in Libourne	Div FpA 158
	590		159
	581	Corps FpA	276
	570		708

AOK 7

The 7th Army was formed in August of 1939 from the V Army Corps Area. The fieldpost offices attached to this unit upon formation were the:

Armeebriefstelle ABSt 580 (K-311)	FpA zbv 580	582
Feldpostleitstelle FpLSt 587 (K-320)	581	583

During the French Campaign this army was stationed in the Baden area and in the middle of June was able to cross the Rhine and moved through the Maginot line into Alsace. After the armistice the army staff was moved to the Bay of Biscay with headquarters in Bordeaux. At the end of June 1940, this army had six fieldpost offices in addition to its ABSt and FpLSt.

FpA 309	FpA 581
FpA 570	FpA 602
FpA 573	FpA 603

The office of the Army Postmaster was in Bordeaux at Rue du Palais Gallien 137.

In November of 1941 the Quartermaster of this army noted that he had 281,851 troops under his supply requirements. Of these 189,351 were

Army, 48,600 were Air Force, 8,600 Navy and the remaining 35,300 non-military such as Red Cross, OT, NSKK and the like.

The reorganization of 1942 saw this army shifted to the north to cover the Normandy-Brittany area. It was while defending this front that the Allies returned to the continent in 1944. At the beginning of June 1944 the army controlled the following Fieldpost offices:

Corps	Divisions			
LXX (470)	77	275	709	
LXXIV (474)	91	319	716	
LXXXIV (484)	243	343	21 Pz Dv	
	265	352	3 F. Dv	
	266	353	5 F. Dv	

THE REPLACEMENT ARMY UNITS IN THE WEST (Ersatzheer)

In addition to the regular combat formations stationed along the coast the Germans found it expedient to station units of the replacement army (Ersatzheer), in those occupied areas that were closest to the Reich. This meant that the largest part of the rear army area of of the command in the west was garrisoned by units of the replacement army.

The three reserve corps and 10 infantry divisions stationed in the theater were used as basic training units and when necessary could double as police formations. In 1942 when Southern France was occupied, many of the units involved were from these replacement army formations. During 1943 and 1944 many replacement battalions found themselves fighting the Maquis. Basic training for many a German soldier took on a fatal outturn.

Since these replacement army units were mainly training units they lacked the regular services normally found in mobile divisions. For example in addition to no fieldpost office they lacked their own motor transport, medical services and in some cases had no artillery. Much of their equipment was captured war booty and presented all kinds of problems when it came to servicing it. Postal services were provided by the stationary fieldpost network previously set up in the various departments.

Ersatzheer Divisions and Corps stationed in the West 1943-1944:

LXVII Res. Corps	Brussel	156 Res. I.D.	Spa
		171 Res. I.D.	Nijmegen
		191 Res. I.D.	Charleroi
LXIV Res. Corps	Dijon	157 Res. I.D.	Bourg
		165 Res. I.D.	Epinal
		182 Res. I.D.	Nancy
LXVI Res. Corps	Clermont	148 Res. I.D.	Toulouse
		158 Res. I.D.	Limoges
		159 Res. I.D.	Clermont
		189 Res. I.D.	Le Puy

D. THE OCCUPATION OF FRANCE

The cancellation of "Sealion" enabled the occupying forces to continue development of a suitable occupation staff with all the necessary services. Fieldpost activities were one of the more important operations that required immediate attention so that the morale of the occupying troops would not be adversely affected.

Headquartered in Paris, the Army Fieldpost Master was part of the General Staff of the supply services (Stab-Oberquartiermeister O.Qu.) and was located in the heart of the city in the Hotel George V, at 51 Rue d'Anjou. The APM was Dr. Mueller with Oberfeldpostmeister Schaper serving as his deputy. Twelve additional persons made up the staff of the APM for occupied France. They had been charged with organizing a military postal network throughout the area.

By August, 1940, the stationary Fieldpost network had been expanded to 10 stationary offices:

Military District of Paris	FpA 571	Vincennes	K-920
Administrative District A	FpA 671	St. Germain	K-206
	FpA 271	Laval	K-266
	FpA 272	Laon	K-439
Administrative District B	FpA 646	Angers	K-736
	FpA 278	Bordeaux	K-633
	FpA 279	Niort	K-681
Administrative District C	FpA 673	Dijon	K-153
	FpA 447	Bar de Luc	K-689
	FpA 276	Auxerre	K-505

The number of stationary offices continued to grow to meet the ever increasing demands for postal services by the expanding occupation forces.

By the middle of September 1940 there were 43 stationary offices established in occupied France plus another 15 in Belgium. Often when postal services were required in towns near an established office a branch was formed from several clerks from the parent office. While they remained part of their parent unit they were given a separate Kenn number. In some few cases however, postal branches had the same Kenn number as their parent, probably because the latter handled all incoming mail and no separate kenn number was required for the branch office.

VOLUME OF MAIL

In November of 1940, the Army Fieldpost Master for occupied France reported that he was servicing 3,728 fieldpost numbers through stationary (bodenständige) kenn numbers. Broken down by service they were:

Army	2,220
Air Force	1,437
Navy	71

To be continued in Bulletin (Whole No. 34) 1974.

Continued from TRSG Whole No's. 30, 31, 32, 33, 1973.

GERMAN FIELD POST OPERATIONS IN THE WEST
1940-1944

by John W. Painter

(Correction in (OB West) numbering sequence, Bul. Whole No. 33, 1973; Please change to read; Page 41 (OB West 17), Page 42 (OB West 18), Page 43 (OB West 19), Page 44 (OB West 20).

D. THE OCCUPATION OF FRANCE, continued from Whole No. 33, 1973.

In addition the Luftgaupostamt PARIS reported it was servicing an additional 1,400 Luftwaffe fieldpost numbers of which 303 were in the city of Paris itself. As of April 1, 1941 the APM of Paris controlled 3 Armeebriefstellen and 30 stationary fieldpost offices plus 28 branches of these offices.

At the end of 1943 the same office reported the stationary fieldpost network was serving a total of 6,586 units. The average number of fieldpost numbers served during 1943 was 4,149. At this time the number of offices and branches under his jurisdiction had increased to 70; 35 offices and 35 branches. A translation of this report is found in Annex

(Source Microcopy T-311 Roll 14).

As the network of stationary fieldpost offices was expanded the Army Postmaster found it necessary to set up additional offices in Paris to serve the growing German establishment.

On August 15, 1940 a letter assembly office (Briefbundstelle) was established in the Vaugirard Railroad Station for the southern group of Armies (2, 4, 6, 7, 9). Several days earlier a special fieldpost office FpA 395 (K-654) was moved into the district to process mail from and to the almost one million French prisoners of war in German POW camps.

LUFTWAFFE MAIL

For mail to and from the Luftwaffe, a special Luftgaupostamt PARIS was formed on August 20, 1940 with a staff of 80 men from air force supply units. On September 22, 1940, Feldpostamt 280 was sent to the Luftgaupostamt to augment its staff which was found to be too small for the tasks assigned to it. What probably happened was that the Luftwaffe learned that most of the new work being given to the airforce postal unit was being generated by army service units so they insisted that the additional personnel be provided by the Army. Not even the German military was exempt from bureaucratic disputes.

Mail addressed to Luftwaffe units serviced by Lgpa PARIS, which included the area occupied by elements of the 3rd Air Fleet and the complete territory of the Luftgaukommando West Frankreich, was collected by the Reichspost and sent directly, via express trains, to Paris. There

it was sorted according to the fieldpost number by the LgpA: First by 10,000's, then by 1,000's and finally by the unit number. The number of Luftwaffe fieldpost numbers varied between 1,400 in 1940 to well over 2,500 in 1943. The routing of mail to specific units is explained in the next paragraph.

Because they were organized differently, the Luftwaffe required a Postal system different from the army. Many airforce units were of company size or smaller and could not logically support their own post office. In addition many of the units would be spread out over a large geographical area, often at remote airfields or radar sites. Whatever system they developed however, had to mesh in with the existing Army postal system. Mail addressed to airforce units was identified with the prefix 'L' and in addition to the 5-digit fieldpost number, a particular Luftgaupostamt was noted. Since these air district post offices covered not only Germany but also the occupied lands, no problem was experienced in forwarding mail to these units. Mail addressed to LgpA PARIS was sent to that office in direct sacks and worked by the clerks of the LgpA. After sorting by specific fieldpost numbers (3 sortings were necessary), the clerk would look at routing in the Luftwaffe edition of the Feldpostübersicht. Each fieldpost number was identified in one of three ways:

1. Open Address (used in the Reich and some occupied areas).
2. Kenn Number.
3. A specific Luftgaupostamt (such as Paris or Breslau).

There was no problem in delivering mail addressed to either type 1 or 2, however a separate postal system was required to effect delivery for type 3 addresses. In occupied France this was initially accomplished through the Luftwaffe transportation section which ran a courier service to most out of the way places. Since it was so irregular however, most units elected to pick up their own mail at the Luftgaupostamt. This arrangement proved too cumbersome so the following scheme was worked out. The LgpA kept an up to date listing of all Luftwaffe units stationed in its area. After sorting, the letters would be removed from the sorting case and tied together with a facing slip on top. The clerk would then write on the facing slip, one of the following; a Kenn number if the unit was served by a regular FpA, the town name if no military post offices were nearby, in which case the mail was put into a sack and sent via rail or truck to the designated unit. The third type was for units stationed nearby. Mail addressed to these units would be bundled together and held for pick up by the unit involved. Since mail was considered a priority item, this usually happened daily.

LUFTWAFFE GROUND ORGANIZATION IN THE WEST

Within western Europe, the Luftwaffe established four Luftgaukommandos. Within these commands the base elements necessary to support air operations. Directly subordinate to the Luftgau was the Regional Airdrome Command (called Flughafen Bereich). They were set up to control the various airfields and the many necessary support units required to service combat air forces. They include gasoline, truck and Luftwaffe building companies, signal units, radar installations

and the like. When required, flying units could move into an area for a specific operation and could then quickly move on to another location if needed elsewhere. Before the invasion in 1944 there were over 300,000 Luftwaffe personnel involved in staffing the ground support organizations in France and Belgium. It should be noted in passing, that the antiaircraft units (FLAK) which were part of the airforce were often located in permanent installations and were often manned by auxiliary personnel such as Flakhelfer, Flakhelferin, RAD Flak Units and even foreigners. (Flak; antiaircraft gun, antiaircraft artillery (originally abbr. of Flugabwehrkanone; now used as an independent word. Ed.). Mail from these individuals can often be identified by their titles or rank written in front of their name.

Luftgau Nederland	Flughafen Bereich	6/III	Gilze Rijen (North)
	Flughafen Bereich	2/III	Schiphol (South)

Luftgau Belgien-Nordfrankreich

Flughafen Bereich	22/XI	Brüssel
Flughafen Bereich	10/XI	Gent
Flughafen Bereich	19/XI	Beauvais

Luftgau West Frankreich

Flughafen Bereich	9/XI	Paris
Flughafen Bereich	8/VII	Caen
Flughafen Bereich	1/XII	Metz
Flughafen Bereich	4/XII	Chartres
Flughafen Bereich	2/XIII	Oreleans
Flughafen Bereich	4/VII	Melun
Flughafen Bereich	5/XII	Bordeaux

Luftgau Sudfrankreich (After November 1942)

Flughafen Bereich	1/VII	Carcassonne
Flughafen Bereich	6/XI	Salon

At this time it may be well to note that the Luftwaffe had several other types of units that although were staffed mainly with airforce personnel they had their own Field Post Offices. They were the parachute divisions and the Luftwaffe Feld Divisionen. From the initial one parachute in 1941 (7th Flieger Division) the number expanded to six by 1944 and in the closing months of the war in 1945 the Luftwaffe laid claim to a total of eleven parachute divisions. It should be noted that many of these units formed in 1945 were of regimental or brigade strength. As far as I know, covers bearing the kenn number used by these units in 1945, have yet to be seen.

The other formations are the Luftwaffe Feld Divisionen. Formed from surplus personnel in 1942 they initially numbered 22 divisions. However their lack of ground combat training and supporting arms soon caused them to suffer heavy losses. In January of 1944 the remaining units were transferred to the army where they were filled out with many experienced personnel. During the period covered by this study, 3 of these units were located in the west. They were the 16th (K-), 17th (K-389) and 18th (K-506) Luftwaffe Feld Divisionen.

Another special Luftwaffe ground combat division also existed and was used in southern France during 1943 and 1944. Called the "Herman Göring Panzer Parachute Division", it served as part of the mobile reserve of the Wehrmacht. The unit first appeared as a division in the Tunisian campaign where it lost all of its equipment and many of its personnel. Reformed in Italy in May and June, 1943 it was used as part of the mobile panzer force to counter threatened areas of Europe. Its field post office carried the number FpA 921 and used the same Kenn number from the period 1942 through 1945 (K-822).

GERMAN ADMINISTRATION OF PARIS

The capital of France was given special status during the occupation. It was called "Gross Paris" and consisted originally of the two departments surrounding the city. During 1942, its size was reduced to coincide with the city limits but it still retained its own administrative staff.

The Kommandant of Gross Paris was headquartered on the Rue de Rivoli #228. Security for the city itself was initially provided by the 36th Infantry Division (Kenn 364) from July of 1940 until the administrative measures required by the occupation became operative in March, 1941. At that time 12 Local Defense Rifle Battalions (Landeschützen Btl.) were moved into the Paris area under the administrative control of three guard (Wach) regiments, numbered one, two and three. They replaced the regiments of the 36th Division. In early 1942, the guard units were renamed Security Regiments.

On August 18, 1942 these three regiments were formed into the 325 Security Division. A fourth regiment (the 180th) was added a short time later to beef up the garrison and provide the additional guard details for the many headquarters units stationed in the city. Under the command of General Freiherr von Boineburg-Lengsfeld, this unit was not a regular combat division. It lacked the necessary motor transport and supply services needed to move independently into the field. Its personnel were mostly overage or capable of only limited duty who could not stand up to regular close combat duty. Much of its equipment was captured war booty, especially the artillery regiment which had all French guns. As a result of its special status the division had no need of a Feldpostamt, as its postal services were provided by the stationary post offices located within the city.

Feldpost Offices in Paris

Paris had all four types of fieldpost installations located within its boundaries. During the 1940-1942 period they were:

1. Army Post Masters (APM)
APM beim Mil.Bef. in Frankreich 09 800 (Stationary Units)
APM beim O.B. WEST (H.Gr. "D") (Combat Units)

GERMAN FIELD POST OPERATIONS IN THE WEST
1940-1944

by John W. Painter

Continued from TRSG Whole Numbers 30, 31, 32, 33, 1973; 34, 1974-1975.

D. THE OCCUPATION OF FRANCE, continued from Whole No. 34, 1974-1975.

Feldpost Offices in Paris (continued from Page 10 (OB West 24).

2. Army Letter Sorting Offices (ABSt)			
Armeebriefstelle 506		34 433	K-843
(Feld- u. Luftgaupostamt and Marinepostbüro)			
Armeebriefstelle 570		39 866	K-890
3. Feldpostleitstellen (FpLst)			
FpLst 500 (1940 to 1944)		21 578	K-567
FpLst 597 (1941 to 1942)		29 271	K-474
4. Feldpostämter (FpA)			
Feldpostamt 724 Weinholtz		16 125	K-155
Feldpostamt 671		33 429	K-206
Feldpostamt 395 Appel		11 642	K-654
Feldpostamt 571 Brecht		26 891	K-920

In addition to the Luftgaupostamt that was established on August 20, 1940, at the same location as the 506th Army Letter Sorting Office, the postal officials found it necessary to set up a special processing office for the many Navy units that found themselves in France. On March 26, 1941, the Marinepostbüro was set up at the same address as the Luftgaupostamt.

For occupation purposes Paris was divided into three districts; each under the control of a Feldkommandantur (military administration headquarters).

Paris "A" N.W. District (Originally 87th Inf. Reg.) FK 757

1941-1942	1943-1944	K-155
Wachregiment 1	Sicherungs Reg 1	
LSB's 455, 454, 541, 740	I, II, III Bns.	

Paris "B" Southern District (Originally 118th Inf Reg) FK 584

Wachregiment 3	Sicherungs Reg 6	K-585 (After 1943)
LSB's 378, 614, 629, 654, 817	I, II, III Bns.	

Paris "C" Eastern District (Originally 70th Inf Reg) FK 758

Wachregiment 2	Sicherungs Reg 5	K-920
LSB's 425, 453, 456, 457	I, II, III Bns.	

(LSB-Landesschützenbataillon-regional defense battalion).

Since Paris is the communications and transportation center of France it was only natural that most headquarters units would be forced to locate there. Of course we can be sure that the social and entertainment aspects of life in the capital were not overlooked when decisions had to be made as to where units needed to be stationed.

At the end of 1943 there were about 50,000 Germans stationed and working in the Greater Paris area, divided between the various services as follows: Army (22,000), Luftwaffe (15,000), Navy (8,000), SS and Police (4,000), Other (1,000).

During 1943 a new and larger Feldpostleitstelle was developed for use in providing service to the entire theater. In the West an existing FpLSt (Nr. 567) with the standard complement of 54 men was converted to the Hauptfeldpostleitstelle 4 (FpNr.08 616)(Kenn 484) and received additional personnel to bring its strength up to 79. The unit was responsible for transferring mail from the Reichspost to the military postal units, however I have been unable to determine where it was located. One would suspect that elements of this unit would be in Paris as well as Metz and Brussels, however, we do not know. It is quite possible that the unit worked entirely inside the Reich at places such as Frankfurt/Main and Duisburg.

The number of operating Feldpost installations within Paris changes as the result of some transfers and several additions in 1942 and 1943.

GERMAN FELDPOST OFFICES IN PARIS 1943

Feldpostamt 537	Loinger	42 821	K-132	Bahnhof Montparnasse
Feldpostamt 724	Weinholtz	16 125	K-155	Rue de Jena 96
Feldpostamt 605	Kalbfell	36 385	K-585	Bahnhof Montparnasse
Feldpostamt 582	Appel	10 817	K-601	Bahnhof Ost
Feldpostamt 395	Wende	11 642	K-654	Rue Vaugirard 134
Feldpostamt 571	Brecht	26 891	K-920	Vincennes
Feldpostamt			K-976	St. Germain

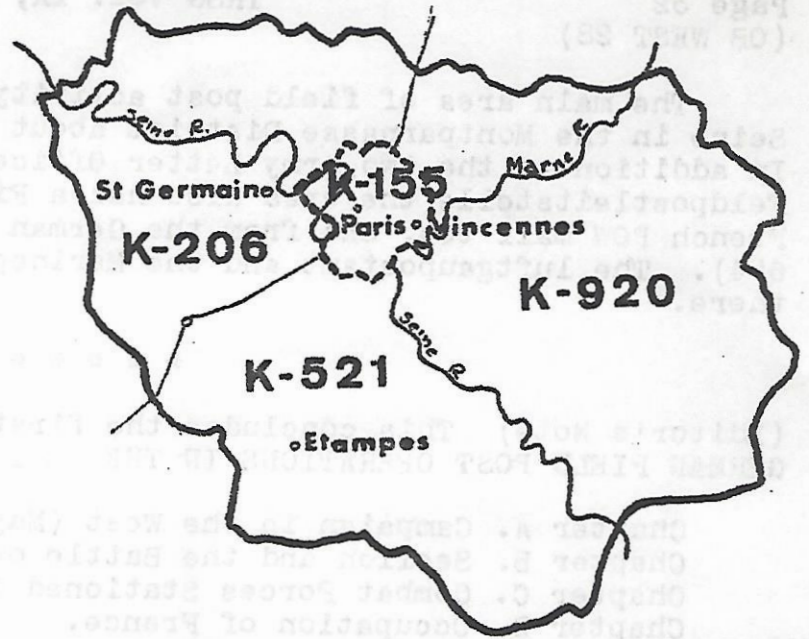
The control of all postal matters in occupied France was the responsibility of the Army Post Master of the Military Governor of France.

Initially the administrative boundaries of Greater Paris included the departments of the Seine et Oise and Seine et Marne. Map A on page 31, shows the territory covered by the field post offices stationed in the area during 1941 and 1942.

During the general reorganization of 1942, the boundaries of Gross Paris were reduced to the city proper and its incorporated suburbs. The increasing number of troops required additional offices. Map B on page 31 shows the location of the various post offices for the 1943-1944 occupation period. One of the more tragic aspects of the occupation is noted in the upper right portion of Map B. It identifies the Drancy Deportation Center which was used to transport the Jewish population of France to the extermination camps in the east.

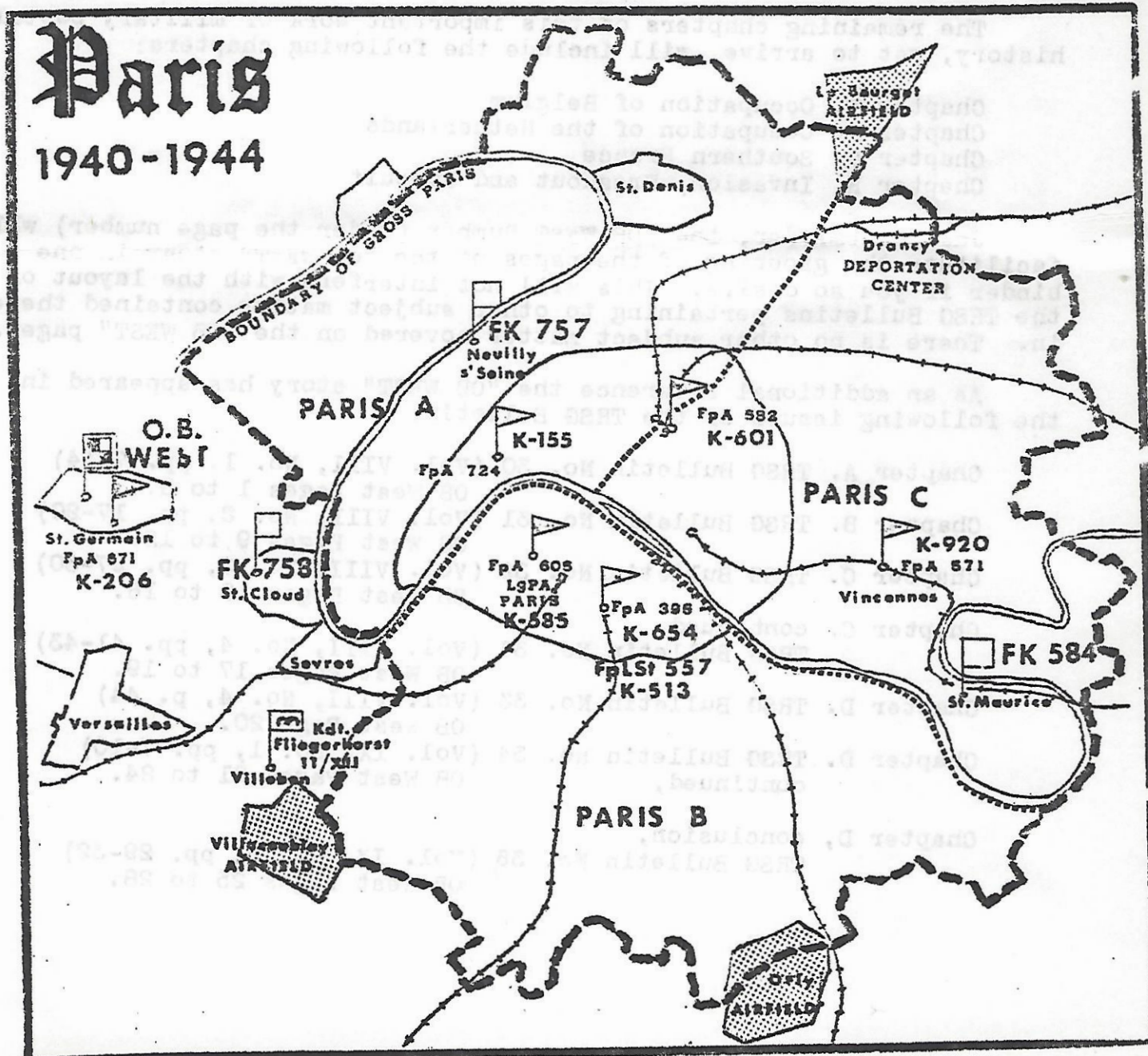
(Map A)

Territory covered
by Field post offices
1941-1942



Location of various
Field post offices
1943-1944

(Map B)



The main area of field post activity was on the left bank of the Seine in the Montparnasse District about one mile south of the Invalides. In addition to the two Army Letter Offices (Armeebriefstellen) and one Feldpostleitstelle the area also had a Field post office for handling French POW mail too, and from the German Prison Camps (FpA 395, Kenn 654). The luftgaupostamt and the Marinepostbüro were also located there.

* * * * *

(Editor's Note) This concludes the first four chapters of John Painter's GERMAN FIELD POST OPERATIONS IN THE WEST which included:

- Chapter A. Campaign in the West (May-June 1940)
- Chapter B. Sealion and the Battle of Britain (July-October 1940)
- Chapter C. Combat Forces Stationed in the West
- Chapter D. Occupation of France.

The remaining chapters of this important work of military postal history, yet to arrive, will include the following chapters:

- Chapter E. Occupation of Belgium
- Chapter F. Occupation of the Netherlands
- Chapter G. Southern France
- Chapter H. Invasion, Breakout and Pursuit

Just a reminder, the "OB WEST Number (under the page number) will facilitate the grouping of the pages of the "OB WEST" story in one binder if you so desire. This will not interfere with the layout of the TRSG Bulletins pertaining to other subject matter contained therein. There is no other subject matter covered on the "OB WEST" pages.

As an additional reference the "OB WEST" story has appeared in the following issues of the TRSG Bulletin:

- Chapter A. TRSG Bulletin No. 30 (Vol. VIII, No. 1, pp. 7-14)
OB West Pages 1 to 8.
- Chapter B. TRSG Bulletin No. 31 (Vol. VIII, No. 2, pp. 17-20)
OB West Pages 9 to 12.
- Chapter C. TRSG Bulletin No. 32 (Vol. VIII, No. 3, pp. 27-30)
OB West Pages 13 to 16.
- Chapter C. continued,
TRSG Bulletin No. 33 (Vol. VIII, No. 4, pp. 41-43)
OB West Pages 17 to 19.
- Chapter D. TRSG Bulletin No. 33 (Vol. VIII, No. 4, p. 44)
OB West Page 20.
- Chapter D. TRSG Bulletin No. 34 (Vol. IX, No. 1, pp. 7-10)
continued,
OB West Pages 21 to 24.
- Chapter D, conclusion,
TRSG Bulletin No. 36 (Vol. IX, No. 3, pp. 29-32)
OB West Pages 25 to 28.