

despatched the mail to the men overseas. The volumes of letters, tobacco gifts and parcels that passed through the Base Post Office for members of the Armed Forces abroad during the years 1940, 1943, 1944 and 1945 were as follows:—

	1940	1943	1944	1945
Letters.....No.	5,618,640	31,500,000	60,051,000	53,116,775
Tobacco gifts.....lb.		6,250,167	5,379,000	599,022
Tobacco labels.....No.			2,424,000	7,762,400
Parcels.....No.	954,275	3,921,866	5,549,000	3,228,127

In addition, nearly one million pounds of news passed through the Post Office each year.

To shorten the time of delivery of letters to the Armed Forces, the Postmaster General in conjunction with the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of National Defence for Air, shared in arrangements that resulted in the creation of an R.C.A.F. Air Transport Squadron to operate a supplementary mail service from Canada to the United Kingdom, the Mediterranean area and return. Later, air-mail service operated regularly between the United Kingdom and the Canadian Forces in northwestern Europe. Thousands of pounds of ordinary mail were carried by air which would otherwise have been despatched by surface—though, naturally, not all ordinary surface mail could be carried by this means.

Special Tobacco-Handling System.—Realizing that “smokes” played an important role in sustaining the morale of the Armed Forces overseas the greatest care was given to ensure the safe delivery of gift parcels of cigarettes and tobacco. Early in the War a system that was virtually hand-to-hand registration was instituted for gift-parcels of tobacco ordered from tobacco companies in Canada for the men on service overseas. At the Base Post Office the tobacco parcels were checked and listed as they came in, and the parcels then sorted into the bags of their respective units. Before each bag was despatched the contents were taken out and checked against a list that was placed in the bag before being sealed. Each bag was signed for on entering and leaving the custody of the postal service and the unit Post Orderly obtained the signature of the addressee on delivery of every parcel. Despite all hazards, including loss, theft, fire and sinking of ships by enemy action, only a very small percentage of the parcels sent overseas were undelivered.

Tobacco Label System.—To further safeguard gifts of cigarettes, a new system was inaugurated in the early summer of 1944, first to the Forces in Italy, and later to the United Kingdom and northwestern Europe. Huge reserves of cigarettes were established at tobacco depots set up overseas by bulk shipments from Canada. Instead of mailing individual parcels on receipt of each order, the tobacco companies prepared address labels, which were flown to the overseas tobacco depot where the order was promptly filled. If the original label were lost a duplicate was forwarded.

Canadian Army Priority Casualty Postcard.—To expedite mail to casualties in hospital overseas, a Canadian Army Priority Casualty Postcard was designed to be filled in on the man's entry to hospital asking correspondents to add “in hospital” to the usual unit address. It was carried free by air to Canada. Letters from Canada marked “in hospital” received priority treatment at the Base Post Office and were routed direct to Records overseas, and forwarded as quickly as possible.