

MARKINGS OF THE FRENCH MARITIME POSTAL SERVICES  
DURING THE SUEZ EXPEDITION – 1956

A. Winter

The last British soldiers left the Area of the Suez Canal in June 1956. On 20 July, the United States definitely gave UP its plan to fin-once the Aswan Dam. Then, on July 26, while in Alexandria, Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal. At the some time, the offices of the Company were militarily occupied. This event produced a profound emotion in London - where it was felt that the British prestige was at stoke - and in Paris where this Suez Canal was considered a French Firm.

A joint French-English military operation was decided. General Stockwell, Air-Marshal Barnet and Admiral Dunford Slater for the English, and Admiral Barjot and General Beaufre, among others, for the French, took the command. The expedition was prepared in Cyprus where the forces were concentrated beginning in August 1956. The operations lasted only a week, from 31 October until 6 November. When the French and English had the best of it, a very strong American and Russian pressure, followed by a resolution from the United Nations enjoined to stop the fighting. The French Naval Forces consisted of requisitioned merchant ships, auxiliary and "servitude" ships of the French Marine and chiefly of 40 warships. There were among them - four large ships: the "JEAN BART", a ship of the line, the "GEORGES LEYGUES", (admiral ship) cruiser and the "LAFAYETTE" and "ARROMANCHES", aircraft carriers.

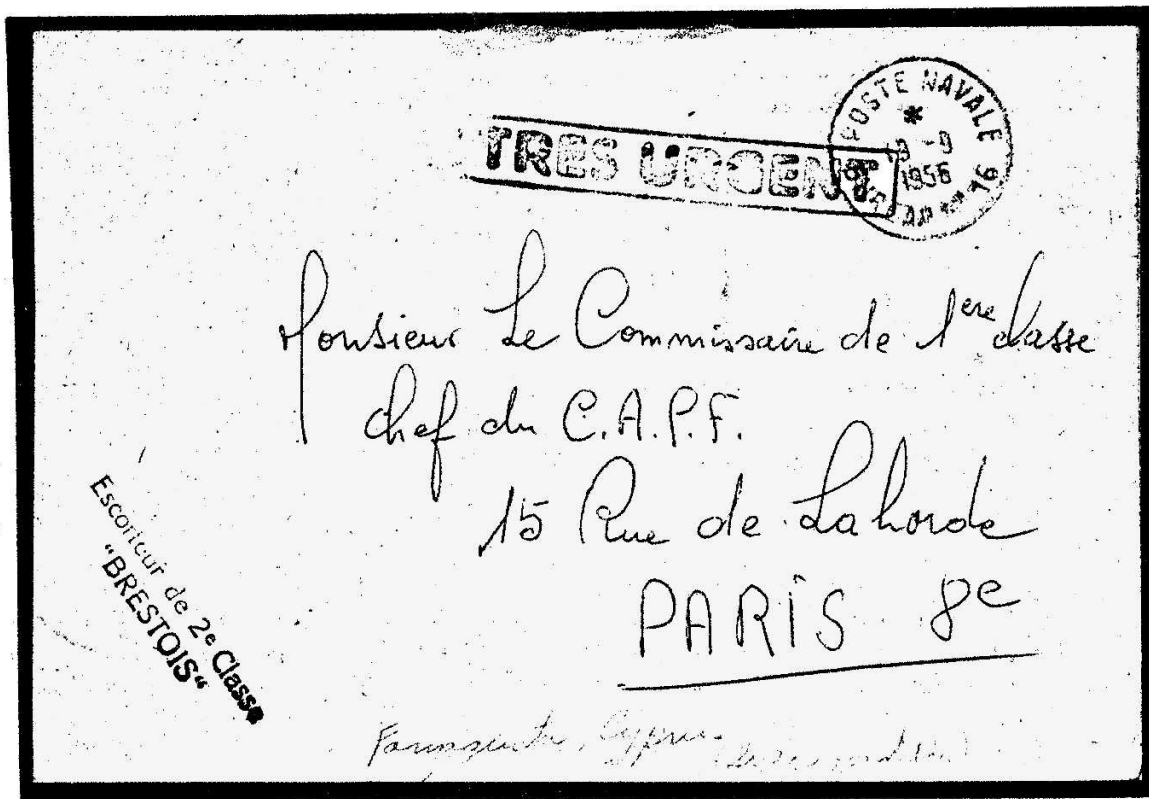


Fig.1 An Example on cover of the first type (A) of Agences Postes Navles (APN) illustrating the hexagonal marking of the aircraft carrier "Arromanches" dated 17 September 1956.

During the official period of hostilities (31 October - 22 December 1956, date of the expeditionary forces' departure), six post offices of the French Marine were operating, namely:-

A) The four "Agences Postales Navales" (APN) of, the "Jean Bart", the "Georges Leygues", the "Lafayette" and the "Arromanches". Those APN are the normal post offices found aboard all important ships beside wartime. They used hexagonal handstamps with dotted periphery, the name of the ship appearing in the crown and the date (day - month - year in two lines in its centre. The date is framed with a star above, and an anchor below, (see illustration No.1 on the preceding page, of the hand- stamp of the "Arromanches", aircraft carrier, dated 17 September, 1956.

B) The offices of tire "Poste Navale". The "Paste Navale" is the French Postal organization which, in wartime, is entrusted with the private and official mail to and from ships and administrative buildings of the "Marine Nationale". The Bureau Navel No. 16 was operating in Cyprus. Opened on 12 September 1956 in



English Barracks in Famagouste, it was, on 5 November transferred to Limassol and closed on 17 February 1957.

Fig. 2. Entire with CDS of POSTE NAVALE/BUREAU 16

It was in charge of the postal service of the whole French Naval Forces, It used the following markings: A circular date stamp: "Paste Navale/ Bureau No. 16 (See illustrations 2 & 3). -Two linear handstamps: "Bureau Naval No. 16 (length 27 mm, height of letters, 3 mm) in two lines, and "Bureau Naval No. 16 (length 53 mm, height of letters, 4 mm.) in one line (See illustration Fig. 4.



The "BUREAU NAVAL No. 24" had only a short existence In, Egypt. If opened on 22 November 1956 in a building of the Suez Canal Company in Port Fouad, and closed on 22 December, It was intended for the mail of the ships which had cal led at a port in Egypt. This Mail was transferred by helicopters or "servitude" ships on the large warships. It was then sent on to Cyprus, Algeria, or directly to France. Algeria, or directly to France. The markings used included- -

BUREAU NAVAL  
N°16

A circular date stamp " POSTE NAVALE BUREAU No. 24. -

Two linear handstamps "BUREAU NAVAL No. 24", of the some sizes as the handstamps described for the Bureau No. 16, illustrated on this page at the left.

BUREAU NAVAL N°16

To complete this study, let us mention the anonymous cancellation used by the post Office aboard the "GEORGES LEYGUES" cruiser, besides its own date-stamp (APN type). It is hexagonal in shape, a date-stamp with dotted periphery. It bears only the text "POSTE NAVALE", with the date in two lines, framed with a star and an anchor. This was the only opportunity when the "GEORGES LEYGUES" used this date-

stamp. An example of this marking appears on the cover illustrated below, from the collection of Kenneth Pierce, of Los Angeles.

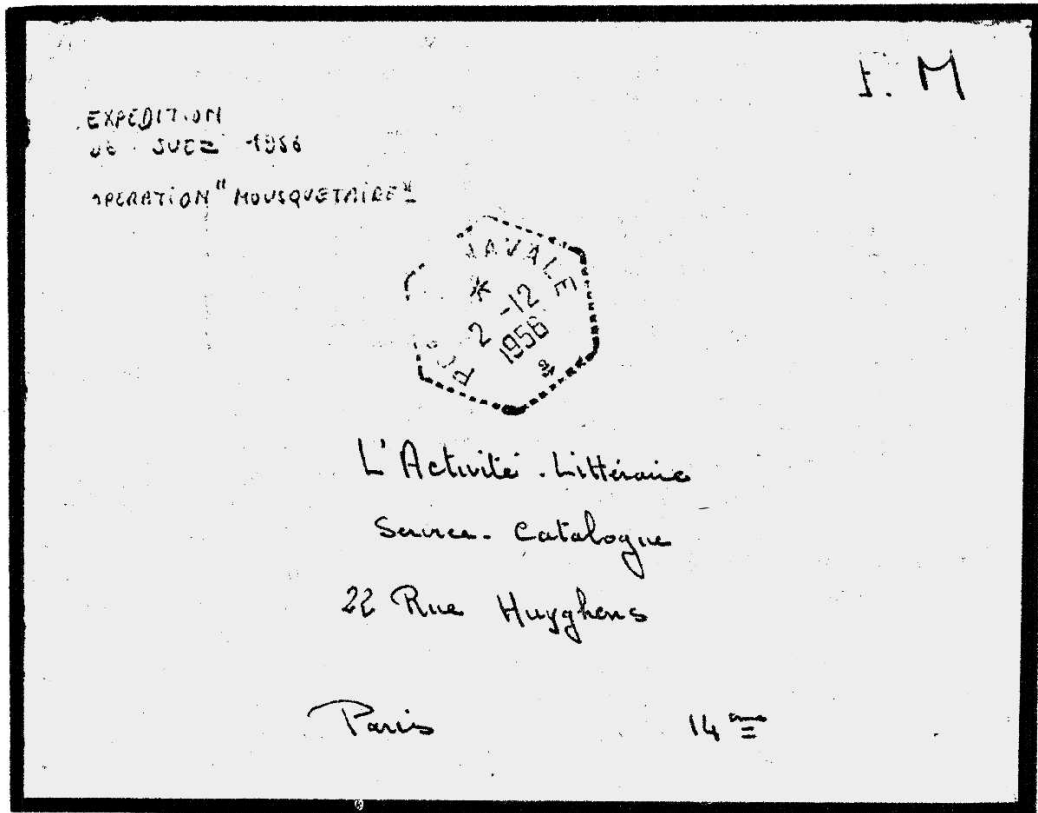


Fig. 5 "Blind" CDS used on the "Georges Leygues"