

## Thousands of Pounds of Words

# Mail Call Is Weighty Matter in Viet

SAIGON (OI)—From the DMZ to the southern tip of the Republic of Vietnam, Allied forces receive and send letters and packages through one of the world's largest "post offices"—the Saigon Aerial Mail Terminal.

The facility at Tan Son Nhut AB delivers thousands of pounds of mail daily to military men in Vietnam and forwards their gifts and letters to the United States.

Whether in an office or on the battlefield, a "break" to the men in Vietnam usually means checking mail and reading letters.

"We handle an average of 150,000 pounds of airmail daily," said CM. Sgt. Elliott C. Phelps, non-commissioned officer in

charge of the mail terminal. "During May, we processed 16,586,000 pounds of surface (boat mail) and air mail."

Until recently the terminal received air and surface mail. Now, the Army handles surface mail picked up at Saigon docks, but the terminal still services III and IV Corps areas with surface mail.

Postal personnel in Vietnam are part of the U.S. Air Force Postal and Courier Service, with the Vietnam district offices located near Saigon.

"There are four basic steps taken to deliver mail—from the terminal to the Air Post Office (APO), then to the Consolidated

Mail Room (CMR), and on to the individual," Phelps said.

When air mail arrives at Tan Son Nhut it is sorted for nine in-country points. Some APOs have personnel at the airport to pick up mail for their organization. Other mail is delivered to the 8th Aerial Port where it is flown up or down country by 834th Air Div. aircraft.

The remaining mail is taken to the Saigon Aerial Mail Terminal for further breakdown to APOs. Personnel from local APOs pick up their mail on regularly scheduled runs. Phelps said that about 15 to 18 per cent of all mail coming into the Republic is addressed to APO 96307, which is Tan Son Nhut. "This is probably

the largest APO in country," he said.

"Some mail comes to us as 'mixed mail'. This is mail that hasn't been separated. But, most of the mail coming from the States has already been separated and tied in bundles," Phelps said.

The terminal is manned by 180 people. Most are Air Force, but Army, Navy and Republic of Korea military personnel also work there.

Besides the APO sorting section, there is a stateside mail room where postal personnel separate letters going to different states and even cities. Sometimes, letters mailed by individuals are on their way to the States by aircraft within hours after being placed in a mail box.

The registered mail section is one of the busiest and exacting of all sections in the terminal. Here, all registered mail is logged and receipts signed before the mail is forwarded to the addressee. Because of the section's smooth operation, mail is never held up because one or both of the above has not been accomplished.

During peak periods, packages are piled to the ceiling in the APO pick-up section. "December is our busiest month for handling packages," Phelps commented. "Last December we handled about 31,000,000 pounds of mail. One day that month, 380,000 pounds went through here. That's a lot of mail in any postal facility."

"I remember Christmas eve last year very well. We were so anxious to get the mail to the troops before Christmas day, all of us in the terminal, including the commander, went down to the docks in Saigon and helped unload boat mail. We worked all night long, and we had the mail out by morning," he said.

## 6 Make Dean's List

TOKYO (S&S) — Five U.S. servicemen in Vietnam and one civilian in Thailand have been named to the Dean's List of the University of Maryland Far East Division for the fifth term of the 1966-67 academic year.

Airman 1.C. George A. Paxton, Saigon, earned a scholastic medallion for maintaining an

## BOONDOCK BARDS

Stars and Stripes welcomes poetry from its readers. Contributions should be typed or block printed and double-spaced. Send them to Boondock Bards, Pacific Stars and Stripes, APO 96503. Editors reserve the right to reject or make minor changes. All contributions whether used or not become the property of Pacific Stars and Stripes. No poems will be returned and editors will not engage in correspondence about them. Only poems written by personnel stationed in Southeast Asia can be accepted for publication.

### Is This the Day?

The planes come in, the planes go out,  
No news from home is causing doubt.  
Does she still love me? Does she care?  
That I am here, but my heart is there.  
Sitting here on watch, my heart is sad,  
Sixty days without mail, my morale is bad.  
Every day I anticipate the arriving plane,  
Hoping to hear from my darling again.  
Day after day, night after night,  
Anxiety builds, my emotions I fight.  
Have my wife and daughters met harm,  
Or are they safe and healthy back on the farm?  
Fighting each day to keep back the tears.

