

ALEXANDRETTA
Official Mail

Alexandrette
25 November 1938

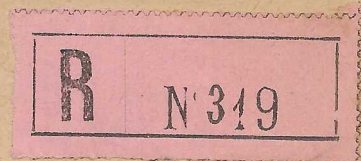
HAUT-COMMISSARIAT

DE LA
REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

S/ DÉLÉGATION D'ALEXANDRETTE



I79/A.C.



Monsieur Jacques BOYER - VIDAL
Office des Etats du Levant sous Mandat Français

I05 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré I05



P A R I S

France

Official letter from the office of the High Commission of the French Republic in Alexandrette to the office for the French Mandate in the Levant in Paris. Postage was free but 12.50 piastres had to be paid for registration.

ALEXANDRETTA
Military Mail

Vaguemestres d'Etapes/1 Levant
28 January 1939



Official cover from the Commandant of Antioch to the Chief of Engineers in Aleppo, where it was delivered the following day. Note late type of military postmark inscribed "Vaguemestres d'Etapes."

ALEXANDRETTA
Mourning Overprint

Alexandrette
15 March 1939



The President of Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, died on 10 November 1938. The final stamps for Alexandrette were mourning overprints issued in honor of Ataturk in December 1938. Examples shown on a cover to Beirut.

FREE FRENCH FORCES

Following the invasion of France by Germany in June 1940, a new French government was established under Marshal Petain at Vichy. On 28 June, the French High Commissioner and the commander of the Army of the Levant announced their allegiance to the Vichy government. On 8 June 1941, British and Free French troops invaded Syria and Lebanon from Palestine, occupying Damascus on the 21st. All resistance by the Vichy forces ceased on 14 July 1941. Later in 1941, the French terminated their mandate and granted independence to Lebanon and Syria, although the Allied troops maintained their presence until the end of the war.

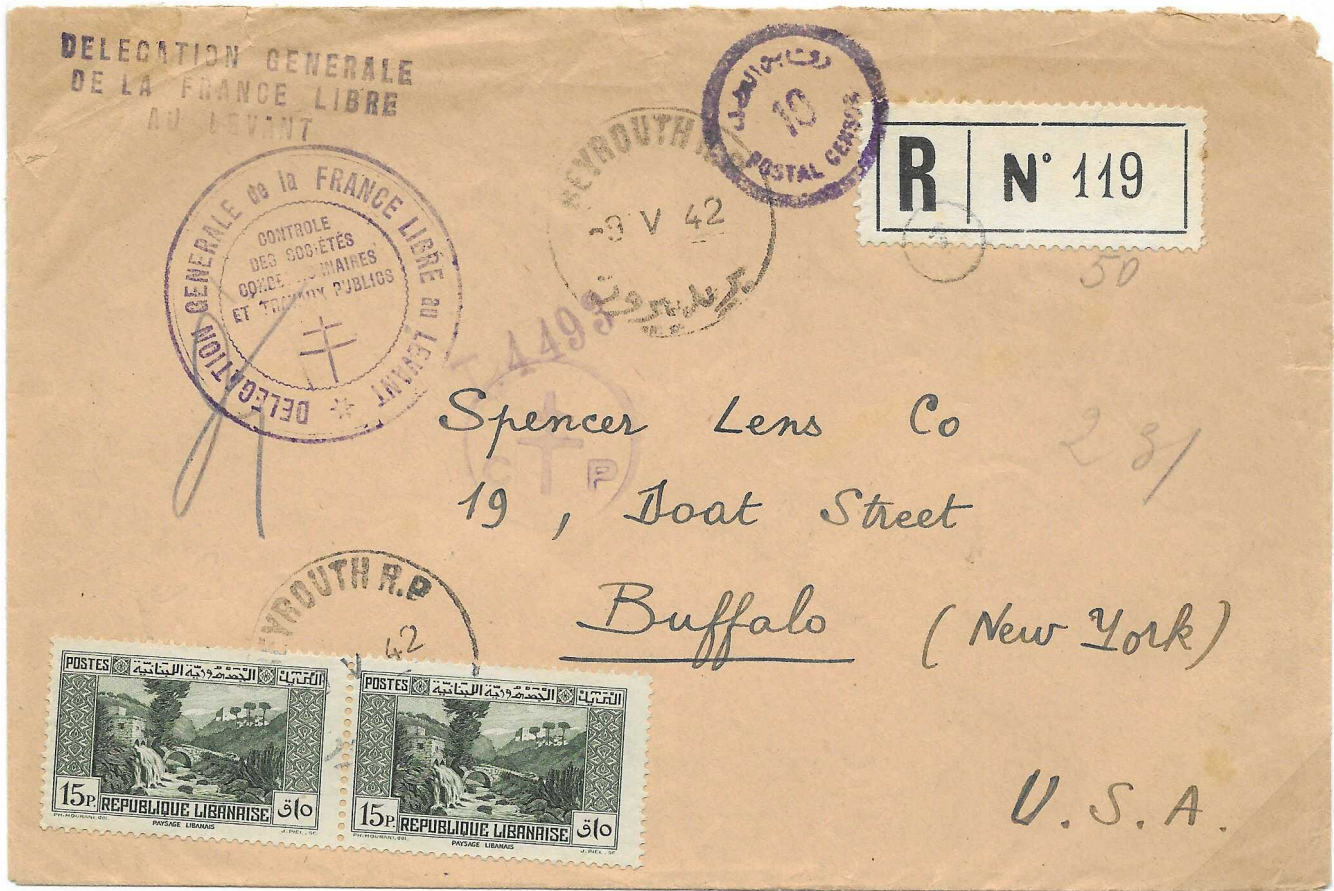
Courier Mail
3 December 1941



Civilian mail continued to use the normal postage stamps of the Syrian and Lebanese Republics, although mail was subject to Allied censorship. In 1942, the Free French established fieldpost offices to provide for the letters from the troops. The above cover is a forerunner of that service, being sent by courier from the Commandant of the Troops for North Syria based in Aleppo. Note Free French cachet depicting the Cross of Lorraine.

FREE FRENCH FORCES
Forerunner

Beyrouth
9 May 1942



The special stamps for the Free French forces were issued in mid-1942, presumably on 1 June. Thus, the above cover sent by the General Delegation of Free France in the Levant from Beirut is a forerunner of the fieldpost system by about four weeks.

**FREE FRENCH FORCES
Overprinted Stamps**

Poste aux Armees/B.C.M.1
22 October 1943



In mid-1942 the Free French overprinted three Syrian and Lebanese pictorials with "Free French Forces/Levant" for ordinary postage and four with "F.A.F.I." for airmail. These were used at the fieldpost offices as B.C.M. (Bureau Central Militaire) #1 above, located in Beirut on a cover to Gabon in French Equatorial Africa.

**FREE FRENCH FORCES
Overprinted Stamps**

Poste aux Armees/F.F.L.6
11 June 1942

Poste aux Armees/B.C.M.1
1 December 1942



The earliest postmarks used by the Free French were inscribed Poste aux Armees/F.F.L. (French Forces in the Levant) in June 1942, as shown on the upper cover sent to the Cameroons.

**FREE FRENCH FORCES
Pictorials**

Poste aux Armees/F.F.L.1
4 June 1942



MR. B. T. BAROODY
P. O. BOX NO. 153
BEYROUTH, LIBAN.

On 1 June 1942, a set of seven stamps for regular postage (inscribed "Free French Forces/Levant") and two for airmail were issued. Above philatelic cover from FPO #1 in Beirut was mailed to a local stamp dealer.

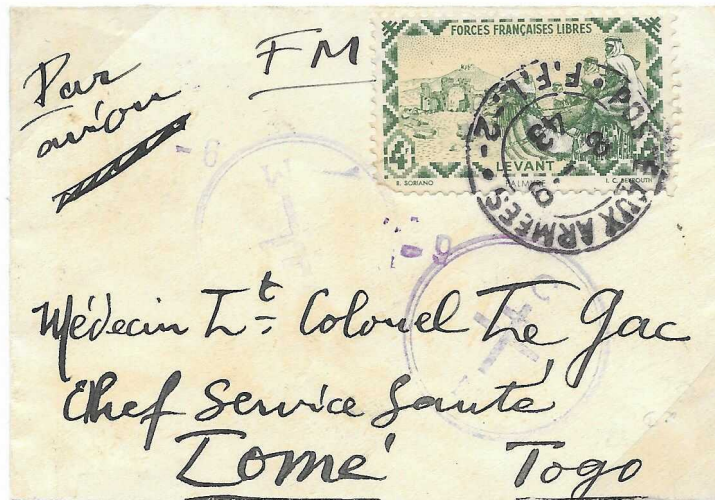


Commercial usage of Free French pictorials to pay 4 franc airmail rate to another French territory. Cover from B.C.M. (Central Military Bureau) #1 in Beirut to the Cameroons. Censored upon mailing and again on arrival. Backstamped for receipt at Kribi on 20 February 1943.

FREE FRENCH FORCES
Pictorials

Poste aux Armees/B.P.M. 6
22 June 1943

Poste aux Armees/F.F.L. 2
8 September 1943



Commercial usage of Free French pictorials. Upper cover from B.P.M. (Military Postal Bureau) #6 to Chad. Lower cover from F.F.L. #2 in Damascus to Togo.



Commercial cover franked with a 6.50 franc pictorial airmail and sent from B.P.M. #5 to Dschang, Cameroons.

FREE FRENCH FORCES
"Resistance" Overprints

Poste aux Armees/B.C.M. 4
23 December 1943



In 1943, two regular postage and two airmail stamps were overprinted "Resistance," urging steadfastness in opposition to Fascism. Note the extremely high surcharges, especially the 10 franc +100 franc denomination.

FREE FRENCH FORCES
Surcharged Pictorials

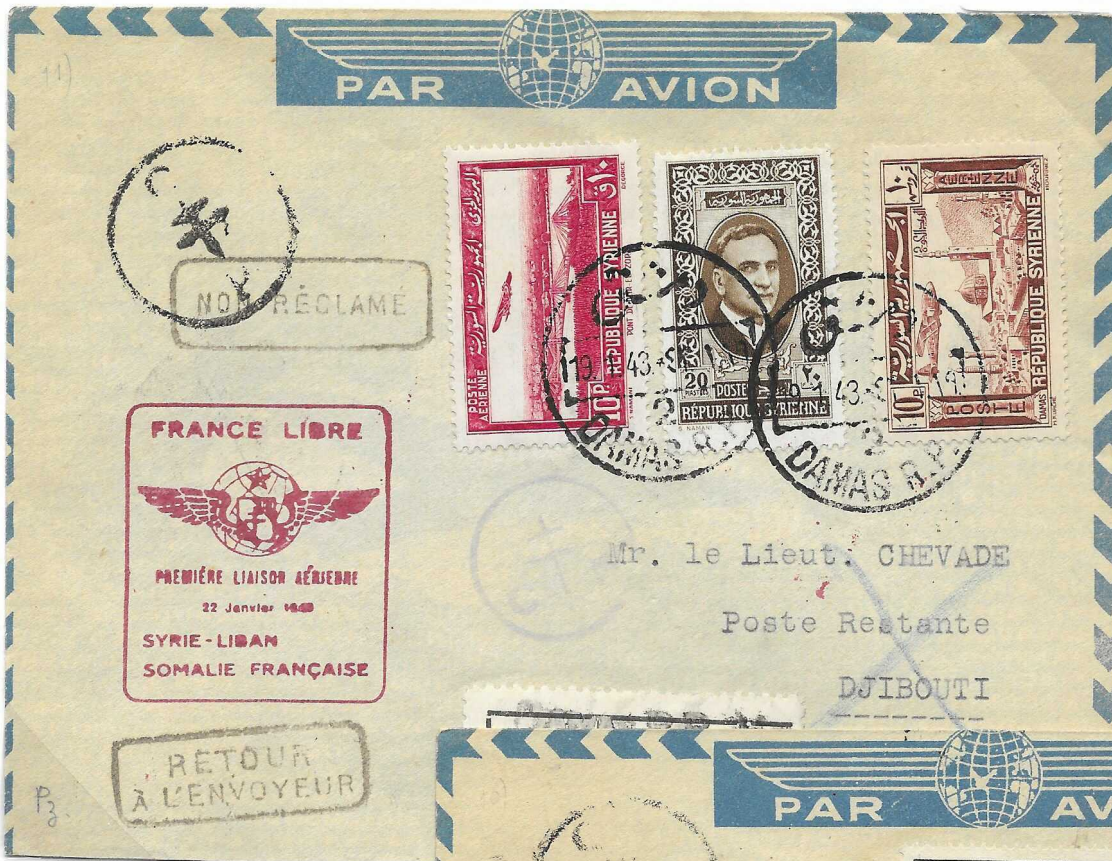
Poste aux Armees/B.C.M.1
22 October 1943



The final two Free French Levant stamps were issued in 1943 when postal rates were reduced, thus creating a requirement for 4 franc stamps. To meet this demand, the 3 franc regular issue and 6.50 franc airmail were surcharged with the new denomination.

FREE FRENCH FORCES
First Flights

Damas
 19 January 1943



The Free French were anxious to create and publicize improved communications with other territories where pro-Vichy administrations had been replaced by pro-Allied ones. One method was to organize airmail services, as indicated by these first flight covers from Damascus to French Somaliland and Madagascar.

FREE FRENCH FORCES
First Flights

Poste aux Armées/B.C.M.1
20 January 1943
8 April 1943

R. BALECHE

RÉGIE DU CADASTRE
BEYROUTH (RÉP. LIBANAISE)

PAR AVION

البريد الجوي

Poste aux Armées des F.F.L.

Lignes postales aériennes
1^{re} liaison Damas-Tananarive
22 Janvier 1943



Monsieur le Lieutenant Médecin

RENE BOISSEUIL

SAINT DENIS

(REUNION)

En cas de non livraison,
prière de retourner à l'expéditeur

Poste aux Armées des F.F.L.
Lignes postales aériennes
Réouverture liaison Levant-Alger
14 Avril 1943



Madame Raymond
Alger, rue du Levant.



RETOUR
A L'ENVOYEUR

Par Avion

Algérie

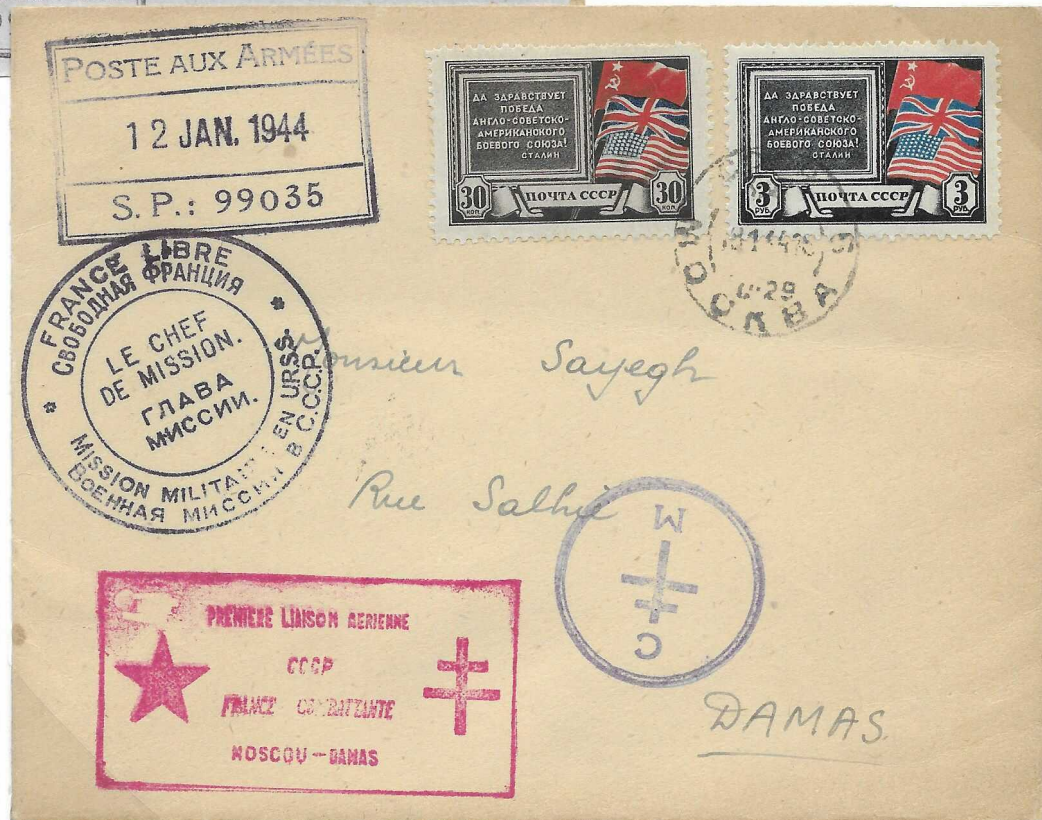


Flights were also organized from Beirut to Tananarive and Algiers, as indicated by the covers above.

**FREE FRENCH FORCES
First Flights**

Poste aux Armees/B.C.M.2
6 January 1944

Moskva
18 January 1944



The most unusual of the first flights were those to and from the Levant and the French Military Mission in the U.S.S.R. The upper cover has a Soviet receiving mark of 17 January and the lower cover was posted on the following day for service on the return flight to Damascus.