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Military Mail in UDI Rhodesia

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On 11 November, 1965, the government controlled by the white population of what had been the former colony of "Southern Rhodesia", albeit with responsible government since 1923, unilaterally declared the country of "Rhodesia" to be independent (Unilateral Declaration of Independence, UDI).

Not all the inhabitants, the majority of whom were black, accepted the existing government as legitimate. An armed conflict followed. During this conflict, personnel of the military forces of the "Rhodesian" government benefited from a process that permitted them to send mail home "free" of charges. Mail to these service personnel required postage.

At first military members of the government forces utilized the in-place mail system. Letters home were sent free provided an official frank containing "Official Free" was included in the wording. Police also received this benefit.

It became necessary to establish military post offices to handle mail within the "Security Forces". Members sent mail through their unit where the unit name and an endorsement "Forces mail" were franked before handover to the postal system without any "date stamp". Letters to members were addressed with green labels which had provision for the member's number, rank, name, company and unit but which still required stamps.

Envelopes sent through either of these systems are extremely popular in present day "Zimbabwe"; so much so that I was unable to obtain a specimen on a recent trip to Harare. For any readers interested, the name of an established dealer who could watch for a sample is

***Harare Stamp Company (Pvt.) Ltd.
PO Box 2371
Harare, Zimbabwe
Telephone: 759035 or fax 759036***

The source for my information was a booklet that I bought at this dealer's titled, "Rhodesia in Stamps, Second Supplement to Rhodesia, a Postal History-its Stamps, Posts and Telegraphs" by R.C. Smith, Salisbury, 1978.