

# The Cover Story

Oh, The Things You Can Learn Stamp Collecting!  
“Iceland Military Covers” Part 1 by Mike Schumacher

“Iceland Military Covers” an interesting title for a country that has had no military. But none-the-less an interesting collecting area. These covers come about due to the British, Canadian, Norwegian, and U.S. Troops operations in Iceland during World War II “**to defend Iceland**”. (Editor’s note: Due to article size and depth of information – this will be a multiple part article for 3-4 months)

## The Invasion of Iceland

On **May 10, 1940**, the British invasion of Iceland\* began at 3:45 am, when an aircraft circled Reykjavik and by 4:00 am the two British cruisers (HMS Berwick & HMS Glasgow) & two destroyers entered the harbor with a force of about 500 Royal Marines with a few guns. The British Consul-General and a few trusted friends met the troops at the harbor to guide them on their mission. Four main tasks were to be performed:

1. seize the German Consulate General and its inmates;
2. arrest the German nationals (about 60 German sailors were in Iceland from a recently wrecked freighter);
3. the occupation of the telephone office; and
4. the broadcasting station.

The most significant casualty of accomplishing the mission was a broken lock at the Post Office when the door was kicked in because the door was locked.

*The Icelandic government was assured that the intent of the British was to defend Iceland; that the troops would not stay a moment longer than necessary and they would not interfere with Iceland’s internal affairs.* The Icelandic Government had not been informed in advance of the invasion and declared the invasion a violation of their acknowledged neutrality and would protest to the British Government, but in the meantime would cooperate with the British troops.

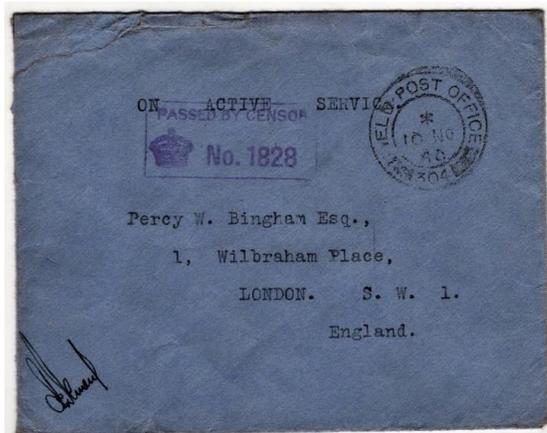
In their efforts to defend Iceland, the British set up a number of military outposts, with Post Offices and various “Field Post Office” numbers (cancellers) used during their stay.

The British utilized the following (Field Post Offices) **F.P.O.’s** in Iceland.

F.P.O. #	Location	From	To
2	Reykjavik (type 1)	10-10-1940	15-2-1943
3	Seydisfjordur <b>Fig. on front cover</b>	10-10-1940	1-9-1942
89	Reykjavik HQ	14-5-1941	21-11-1941
304	Akureyri	21-5-1940	22-8-1942
305	Reydarfjordur	3-8-1940	27-6-1942
306	Reykjavik <b>Fig. on front cover</b>	11-6-1940	3-12-1942
307	Reykjavik (type 2)	7-10-1940	7-4-1942
308	Borgarnes	2-10-1940	12-4-1942
526	Reykjavik	27-11-1941	5-4-1943

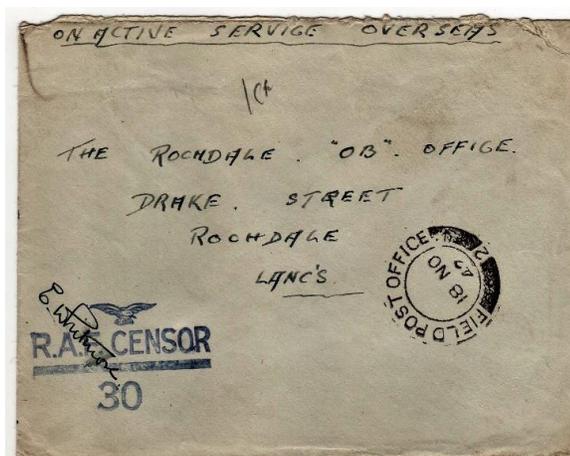
Hand stamp cancel – a double ring with: “Field Post Office” at the top and the **number** at the bottom – along with the date of cancel in the middle. # 304 in Akureyri was the first to be utilized.

**F.P.O. # 304 Akureyri** (largest city in north central Iceland – 1940 population - 13,711)



Examples of mail from other British F.P.O.'s:

**F.P.O. # 2 Camp Alabaster at Artun near Reykjavik** (used 10 Oct. 1940 to 9 Feb. 1943)



The 147<sup>th</sup> British Infantry Brigade arrived on May 15, 1940. On May 23, 1940 the SS Ulster Prince arrived with reinforcements. The Royal Army Ordnance workshop, as well as the 12<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Brigade arrived at Lagafell later in May. By June 15<sup>th</sup>, British Naval personnel had begun construction of a Navy base at Hvalfjordur.

\* The invasion of Iceland by the British was a preemptive move, due to their concern that Germany would invade Iceland and thus control the sea lanes for supplies from the United States. (*The Germans had invaded Denmark on April 9, 1940 / Iceland was still under the sovereignty of Denmark at the time.*)

Reader's Note: These articles will concentrate on the British and American Operations during World War II, however it is important to note that even though Iceland has never had a military, they did have a sizeable merchant fleet manned by Icelandic seaman, which was instrumental in transporting men and supplies to Europe and the United States.

More information and covers to follow in additional articles.