

**U.S. ANTARCTIC
EXPEDITION 1955 - 1956**

**OPERATION DEEP
FREEZE I (ODF1)**

TASK FORCE 43

COVERS SENT TO

**REAR ADMIRAL
RICHARD EVELYN BYRD II**

**BY HIS SON
Lieutenant Commander
R. E. Byrd III**

DURING EXPEDITION



Photograph taken
C 1 Dec 1955 (per back)

This is Lieutenant
Commander Richard Evelyn
Byrd III, Jr Nicknamed 'Dicky'
by the family
(19/2/1920 - 3/10/1988)

He was a Lieutenant
Commander in the United
States Naval Reserve, at the
time his father, Rear Admiral
Byrd II was appointed Officer
in Charge of Operation Deep
Freeze I.

GENERAL INFORMATION: In March 1955 Rear Admiral Richard Evelyn Byrd II (25/10/1888 - 11/03/1957) was appointed OIC of United States Antarctic Expedition, ODF1. An historical, geographical exploration and scientific research operation, conducted during International Geophysical Years (IGY) 1956-57 to establish bases in McMurdo Sound, Bay of Whales, Ross Sea and at the South Pole, Antarctica.

President Eisenhower authorised the establishment of specific ongoing Antarctic research programs. The official Operation Task 43 Emblem (turned into a Cache for the expedition envelopes) was designed by Walt Disney. He was made an expedition honorary member.

Rear Admiral Byrd II appointed his son, Lieutenant Commander Richard E. Byrd III, as his personal aide, to record the Expedition on envelopes. Covers were prepared; inscribed with activity details, postmarked and rubber stamp addressed to his father's home as such: Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, USN 9 Brimmer Street, BOSTON, MASS. LC Byrd first inscribed envelopes on Operation Highjump 1946 - 1947, when Little America Base Camp IV was established during the Highjump Operation, Task Force 68.

PURPOSE OF EXHIBIT: Focus is on showcasing envelope inscriptions on this Expedition. Includes notated discovery of a suitable base site for Little America V. Envelopes carried at sea by USS Glacier and USS Arneb and bear ship post office postmarks, on dates notated.

SCOPE: Commences September 10, 1955, an Official United States Antarctic Expedition letter signed by Rear Admiral Byrd. Expedition return to Port Lyttleton, New Zealand, 10 February 1956. Lastly, an envelope retrieved from UC1 Otter plane crash, PMK May 1 1956.

PLAN: Firstly shown is a variety of Skymaster airmail stamps used on envelopes. Thereon, structured chronologically, from date leaving America, to N.Z. return. Not every day was recorded. Photographs support story. Concludes with envelope postmarked three months after arrival in N.Z., carried by Otter plane pilot, which crashed on first flight to Mt. Bird, Hut Point. McMurdo Sound, Antarctica,

RARITY Confirmation from M. Jurisich, N,Z Polar Philatelist and Hal Vogel, American Polar Society, affirming this is the only known 1955 - 1956 ODF1 cover collection specifically addressed to Rear Admiral Byrd II, by his son, Lieutenant Commander Byrd III, during this operation.

RESEARCH: Bibliography: 'Operation Deep Freeze' by Rear Admiral George J. Dufek (10/2/1902 - 10/2/1977) published by Harcourt, Brace & Co 1957. 'Exploring With Byrd - Episodes of an Adventurous Life' author Richard E Byrd Jr. Published by Rowman & Littlefield 2015. Antarctic Journal Jan-Feb 1974 'U.S. Aircraft losses in Antarctica', Ref: P6 - Sourced:: Research Group 313 Centre for Polar Archives, Washington, D.C
Websites: National Library of N.Z. Archives.(paperspast.natlib.govt.nz - Admiral Byrd in 1955), asn.flightsafety.org (UC1 Otter crash), US Navy Operations in Antarctica 1955 ODF1 (history). navsource.org (USS Arneb),.

5c and 6c SKYMASTER AIRMAIL STAMPS on expedition covers

Designer Washington DC, Bureau of Engraving & Printing, Rotary Press, Colour: Carmine, Perf: variations

The 5c and 6c stamps feature on the inscribed envelopes during ODF1, Task Force 43, 1955-1956, except for two. PMK Nov 4 1955 Statue of Liberty coil stamp addressed to Byrd's Boston address, date left U.S.A. Registered letter bearing N.Z. Queen Elizabeth II stamps. Sent from Wellington, 2 December 1955..to a N.Z address, one day after Byrd's arrival in N.Z.

Strip of 3 gummed 5c DC-4 Skymaster stamps were the first Airmail coil stamps to be printed, 15 January 1948. in Washington DC Perforated 10 on two sides. Skymaster aircraft made maiden flight Feb 14, 1942. Played a critical role in the Allied war effort 1948-49. From then on, used commercially and delivered airmail. Retired 1975,



First Skymaster sheet stamps issued 1946, for reduced rate of domestic airmail from 8c to 5c per ounce. A new smaller designed Skymaster airmail stamp issued 26 March 1947, for use in booklets and vending machines remaining 5c until 31 December 1948.



18 January 1949, new Skymaster 6c stamps issued in sheetlets. The new 6c coil stamp issued 25 August 1949.. Available only in rolls of 500. 6c SkyMaster booklets issued 18 November, 1949, sold at 1c above face value. Used mainly by businesses.





UNITED STATES ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION

9 Brimmer Street
Boston, Mass.
September 10, 1955.

Colonel Jennings C. Wise,
Robert E. Lee Hotel,
Lexington, Virginia.

Dear Tim:-

I have just returned here from a short leave in Maine with my family, the first holiday I have had for over two years, and find your letter of August 27th and also the copy of your book "PHILOSOPHIC HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION."

I am very glad to hear from you and to be brought up to date on your doings. I can see that you are working harder than ever, all in the interest of your fellow men.

Thank you very much for sending me your book and for the fine inscription you wrote in it. I haven't as yet had a chance to read it; but in glancing through it, I can see that it is a book that will hold one's interest from beginning to end.

As you may know, last March I was appointed by President Eisenhower as Officer in-Charge of the United States Antarctic Expedition, which is scheduled to leave for the Antarctic early in November. I am, therefore, busier than I have ever been, and my personal correspondence has to be cut to the minimum, and my letters are necessarily short.

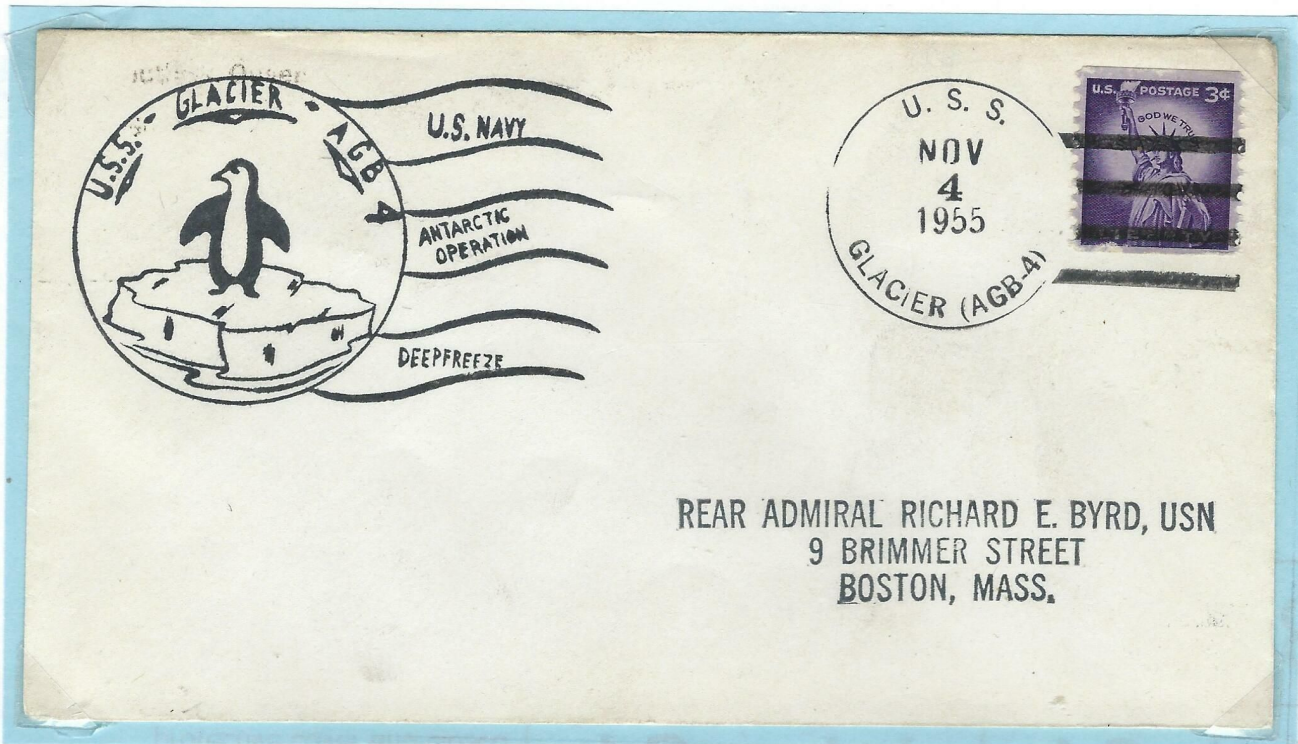
My very best to you.

Sincerely,

Diick

Tim - We must get together. Dick

**U.S.S. GLACIER (AGB-4) DEPARTS BOSTON U.S.A.
SHIP INK CACHE ON COVER POSTMARKED NOV 4 1955 U.S.S. GLACIER (AGB4)**



REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD E. BYRD, USN
9 BRIMMER STREET
BOSTON, MASS.

3c coil violet stamp. Statue of Liberty issued 20/7/1954.

Designer: Charles R Chickering, Engraver: Richard M. Bower, Lettering: George L. Huber, Perf 10 vertical.
Domestic letter rate from 6/7/32, 3c per oz. Changed to 4c 1/8/1958



USS GLACIER AGB4

USS Glacier - icebreaker. Served in 15 Operation Deep Freeze Expeditions. Builder: Ingalls Shipbuilding, Pascagoula, Mississippi Length 94.34m, capable of breaking ice up to 6.1m thick. Launched 27 August 1954. Decommissioned 1966.

In Charge Of Polar Programme



REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD E. BYRD, who arrived in New Zealand last night to join the U.S. Navy's "Operation Deepfreeze" for his fifth exploratory venture to South Polar regions.

Article in newspaper - quote
"REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD E. BYRD, who arrived in New Zealand last night, to join the U.S. Navy's 'Operation Deepfreeze' for his fifth exploratory venture to the South Pole

Rear Admiral Byrd had his son, appointed as his personal aide. One of his duties was to document the episodes of Operation Deep Freeze. "Dicky" had done this for his father before, on Operation High Jump (1946-47). He would address mail to his father, at their Boston home address and have it posted from various location during the expedition." - Unquote

"Dicky" became responsible for the family's philatelic archives at their Boston homestead.

2 DECEMBER 1955 - REGISTERED MAIL FROM WELLINGTON TO MASTERTON

(in the Greater Wellington Region of N.Z.) Signed 'good luck R E Byrd' - PHOTOGRAPH OF USS ARNEB AKA56

Registered at Wellington
N.Z. - 2 DE55 2.30pm with
New Zealand Government
House PAID cachet.

3d Queen Elizabeth II,
set of 6 issued 20/10/1954,
WMK 8 inverted
(paper fed incorrectly),
Designer: Leonard C
Mitchell, Engraver:
N. A. Dow, Perf: 13¹/₂.

N.Z. domestic letter rate
from 6 Jul 1932, 3c per oz.
Changed to 4c 1 Aug 1958



USS ARNEB PHOTOGRAPH
ENVELOPE PMK U.S.S. Arneb December 15 1955 - Antarctic Circle

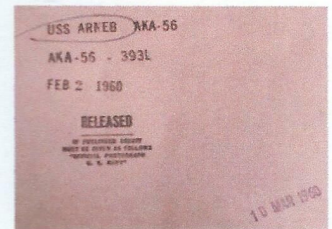
Rear Admiral Byrd and his son transferred from USS Glacier to USS Arneb at Port Lyttleton, for the journey to Antarctica



Photograph reproduced from exhibitor's original photo

Below - reduced inscription on back of original photo:

"Released - Official Photograph
U.S. Navy" Feb 2 1960 and
10 Mar 1960



USS ARNEB - an Andromeda class attack cargo ship (designed to carry military cargo and landing craft onshore). Builder: Moore Dry Dock Co, Oakland, California. Length 139.95m. Launched 6 July 1943. Joined Operation Deep Freeze I on 14 November 1955. Decommissioned 12 August 1971, struck from the Navy List. Sold 1 March 1973 to a Texas company and scrapped.

Inscription: Antarctic Circle, Scott Island, Ice Pack (1st entry) - 15 Dec 1955

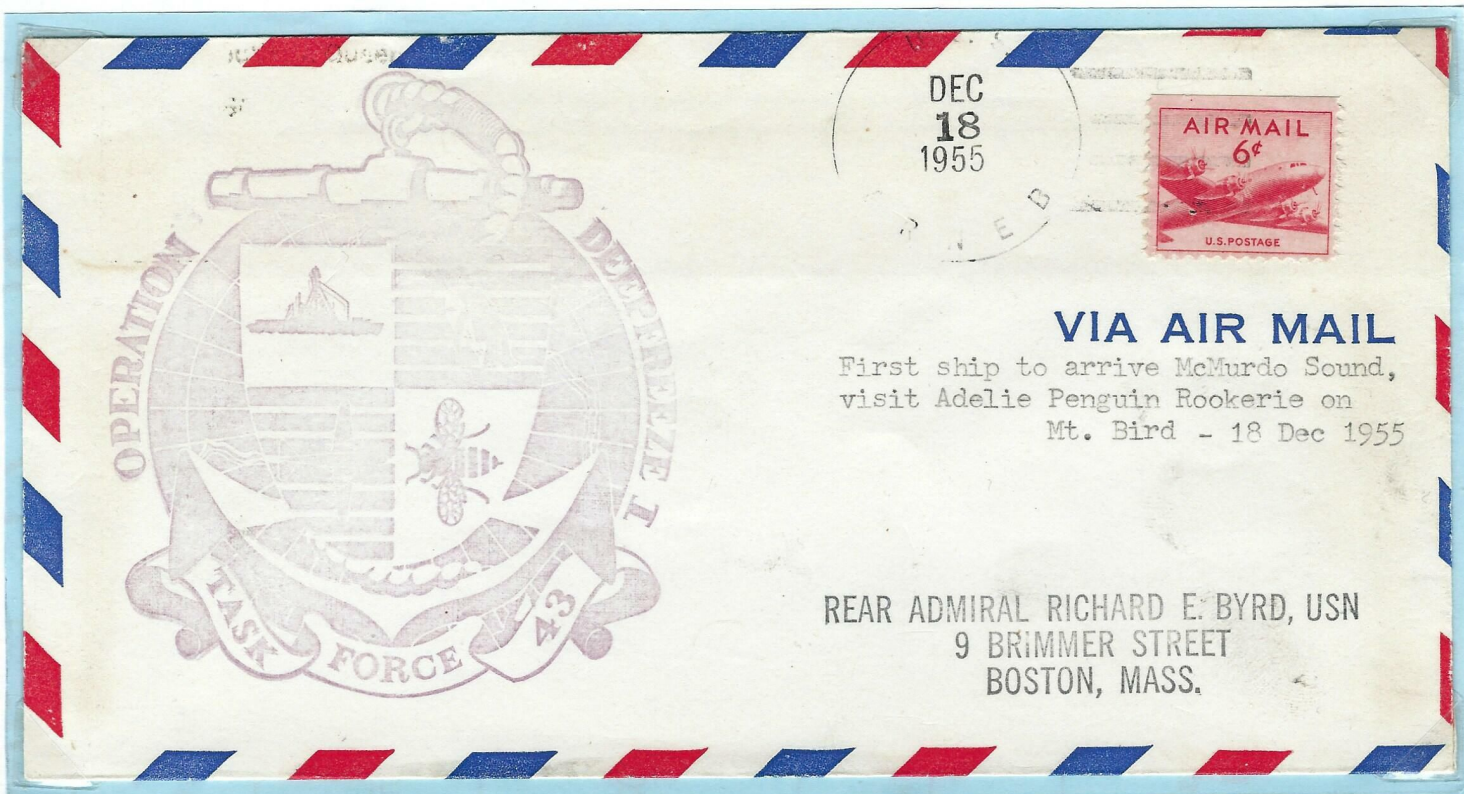


FIRST SHIP TO ARRIVE MCMURDO SOUND, VISIT ADELIE PENGUIN ISLAND DEC 18 1955

Adelie Penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*) discovered 1840 by Jules Dumont d'Urville named after his wife, Adele.

The smallest of all penguins found around the entire continent of Antarctica, their main habitat.

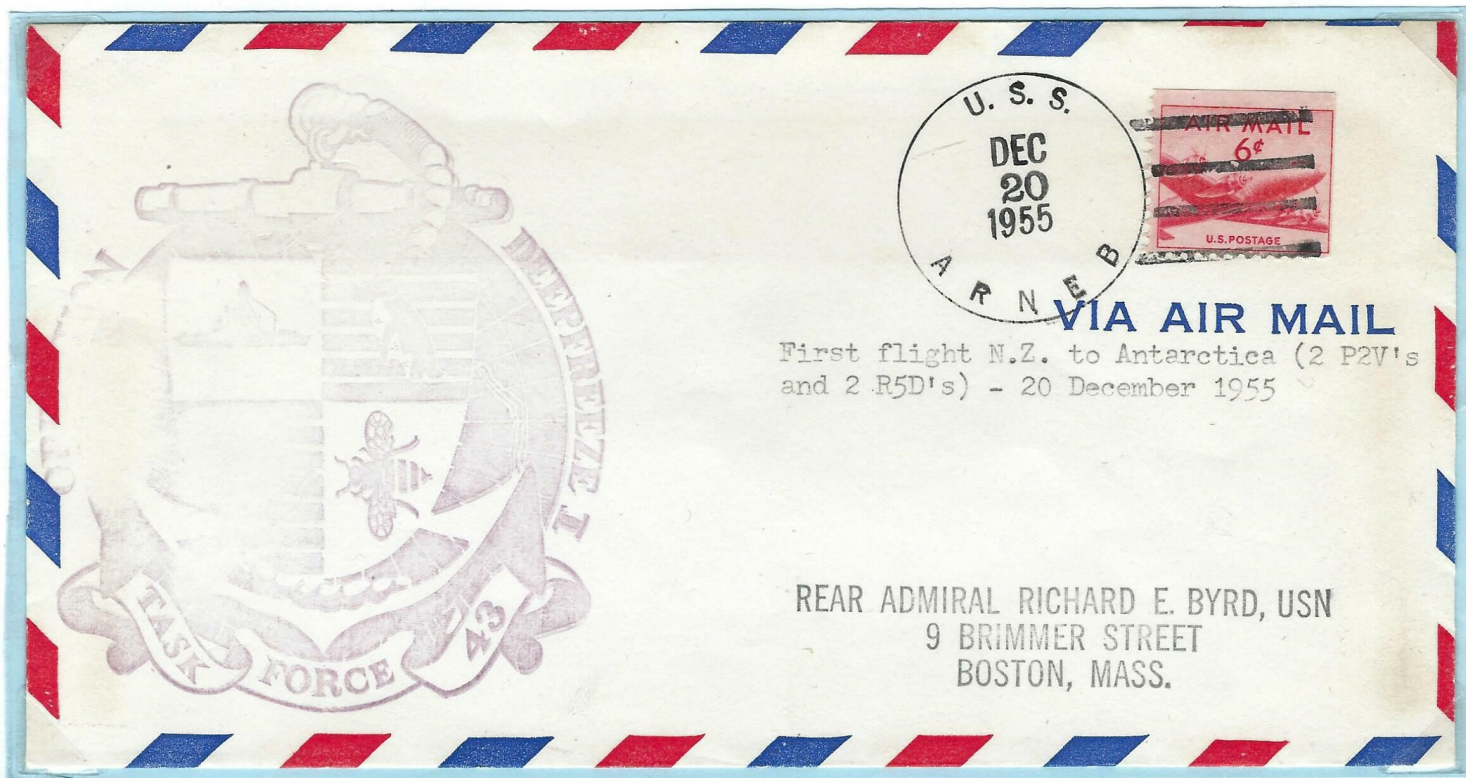
FIRST FLIGHT NEW ZEALAND TO ANTARCTICA 20 DECEMBER 1955



Inscription: First Ship to arrive McMurdo Sound, visit Adelie Penguin Island Rookerie on Mt. Bird - 18 Dec 1955

Walt Disney designed the Task Force 43 Emblem and made an honorary member of the Expedition

Inscription: 'First flight N.Z. to Antarctica (2 P2V's and 2 R5D's) - 20 December 1955

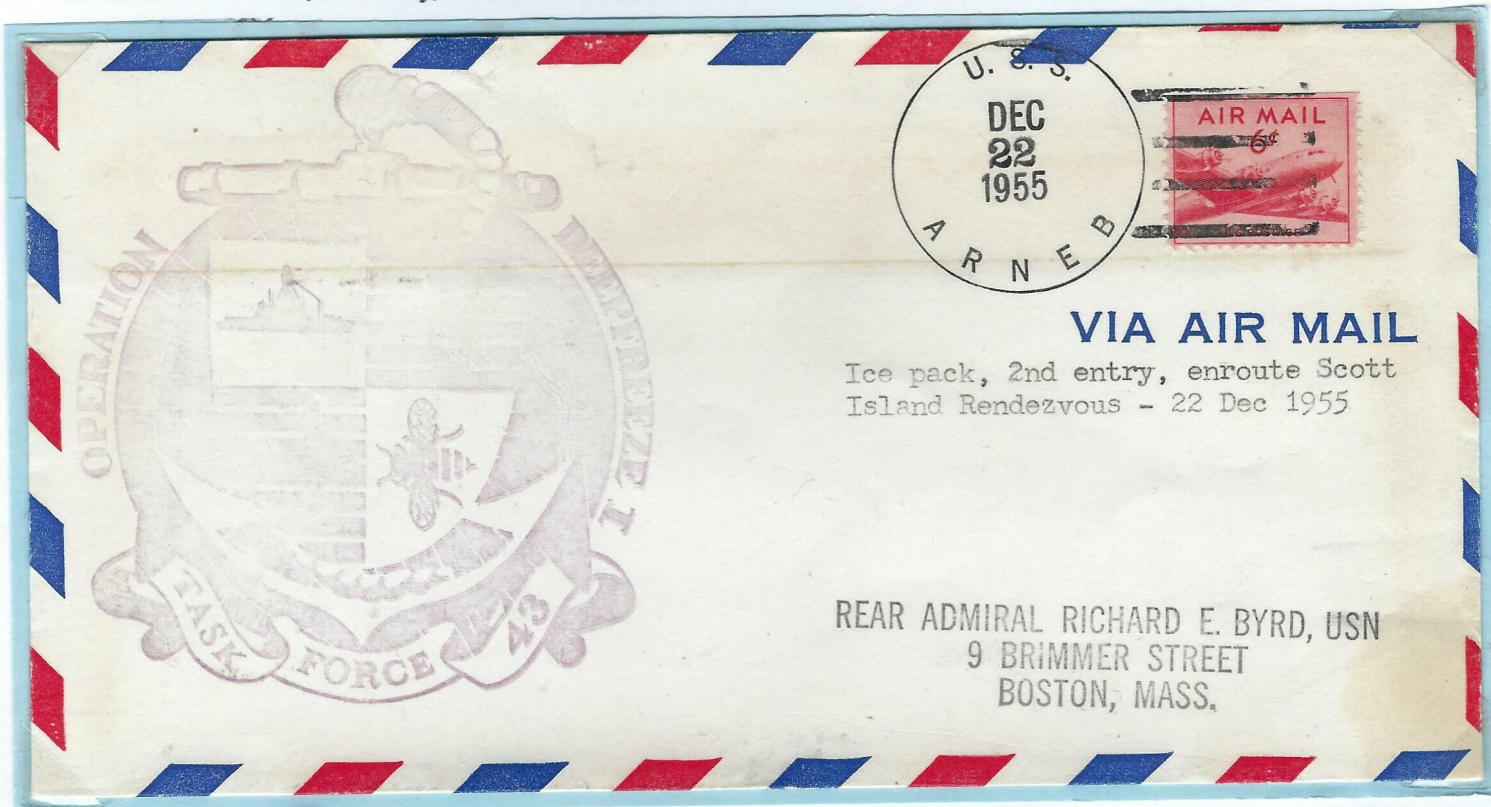


ENROUTE TO SCOTT ISLAND RENDEZVOUS DEC 22 1955
Otter plane crash happened this date however, not mentioned on this envelope
U.S.S GLACIER and WYANDOTTE BREAKING THROUGH PACK ICE



Photograph U.S.S Glacier (AGB4) and Wyandotte (AKA 921) breaking through pack ice
Walt Disney Studios compiled documentaries and the U.S. Navy posted historical documentaries on u-tube about this expedition. Photographs taken by U.S. Navy ship photographers.

Inscribed: 'Ice Pack, 2nd entry, enroute Scott Island Rendezvous - 22 Dec 1955.' PMK U.S.S. Arneb DEC 22 1955





**SCOTT ISLAND RENDEZVOUS 23 DECEMBER 1955
ROSS SEA ENROUTE TO LITTLE AMERICA
CHRISTMAS DAY 25 DECEMBER 1955**

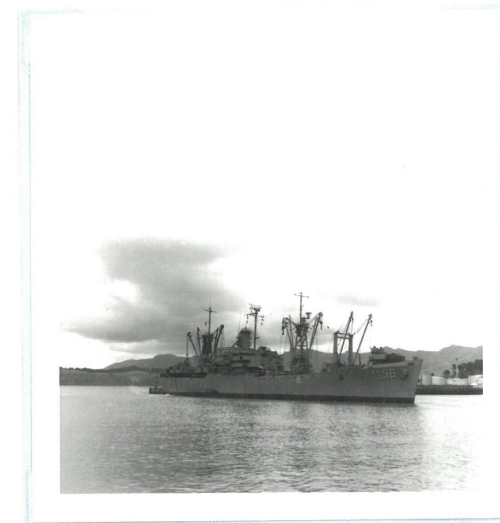


Inscribed: Scott Island Rendezvous (Arneb, Wyandotte, Nespelen, Greenville Victory, Glacier); Ice pack, third entry, enroute Little America 23 December 1955 (Cover above)

U.S.S. Glacier AGB-4

ADMIRAL BYRD VISITS LITTLE AMERICA'S 1 & 11 - 28 DECEMBER 1955

The first U.S. post office, Little America II was founded Oct. 6, 1933, by Admiral R. E. Byrd, on his second expedition
5TH VISIT TO LITTLE AMERICA SINCE FOUNDED IN 1928



Photograph of Wyandotte launched 28/6/1944 (scrapped 5/11/87) - a WWII cargo ship designed to carry military cargo.

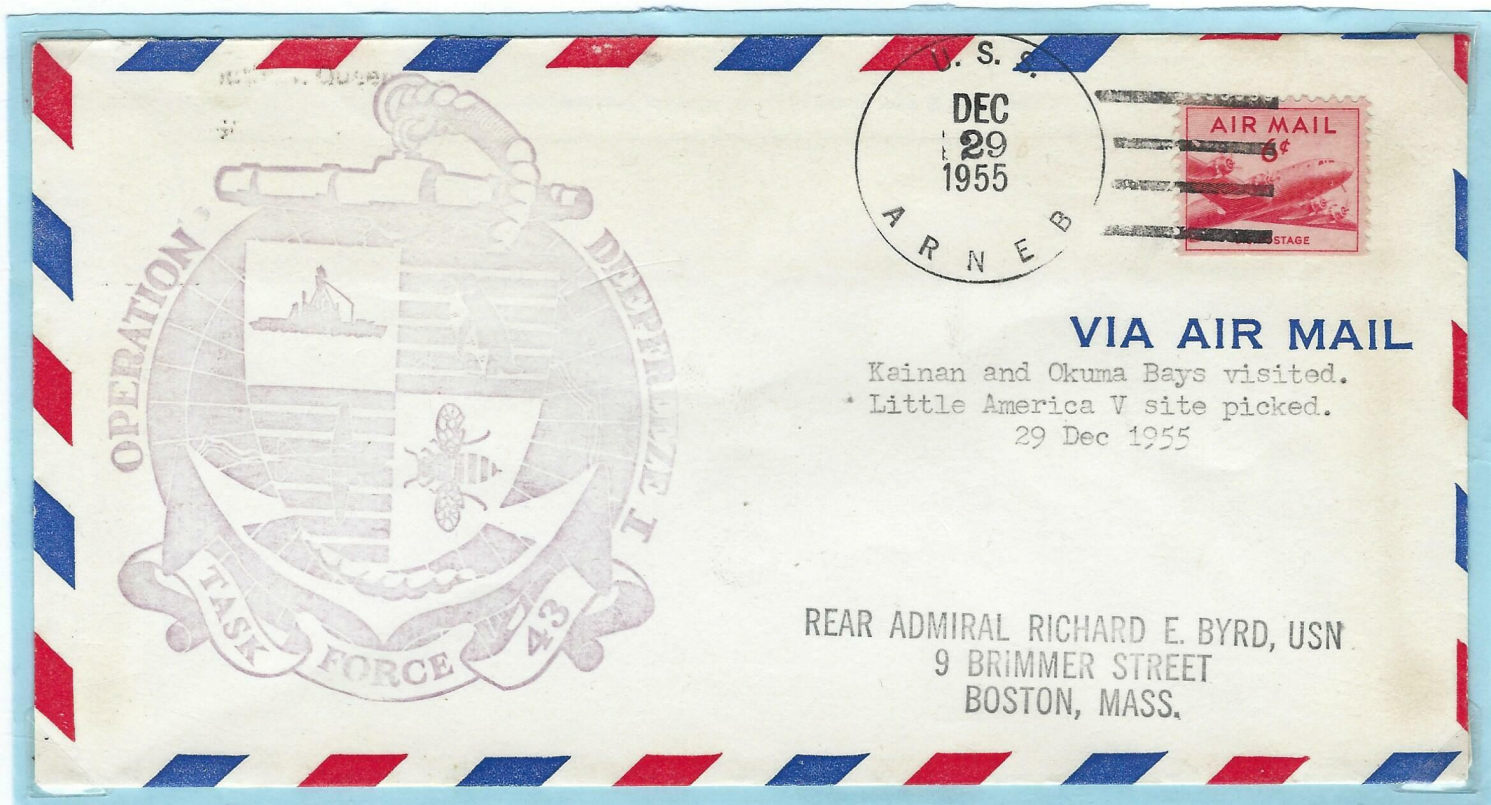
Inscribed: 'Admiral Byrd and his veterans visit Little America's 1 & 11, on the occasion of his 7th Polar expedition and 5th visit to here since he founded it in 1928. Flag was raised. 60 foot radio tower was buried and 12 feet of other two was showing. LA's 111 & 1V located, summer tent city of latter located partly intact - 28 Dec 55'



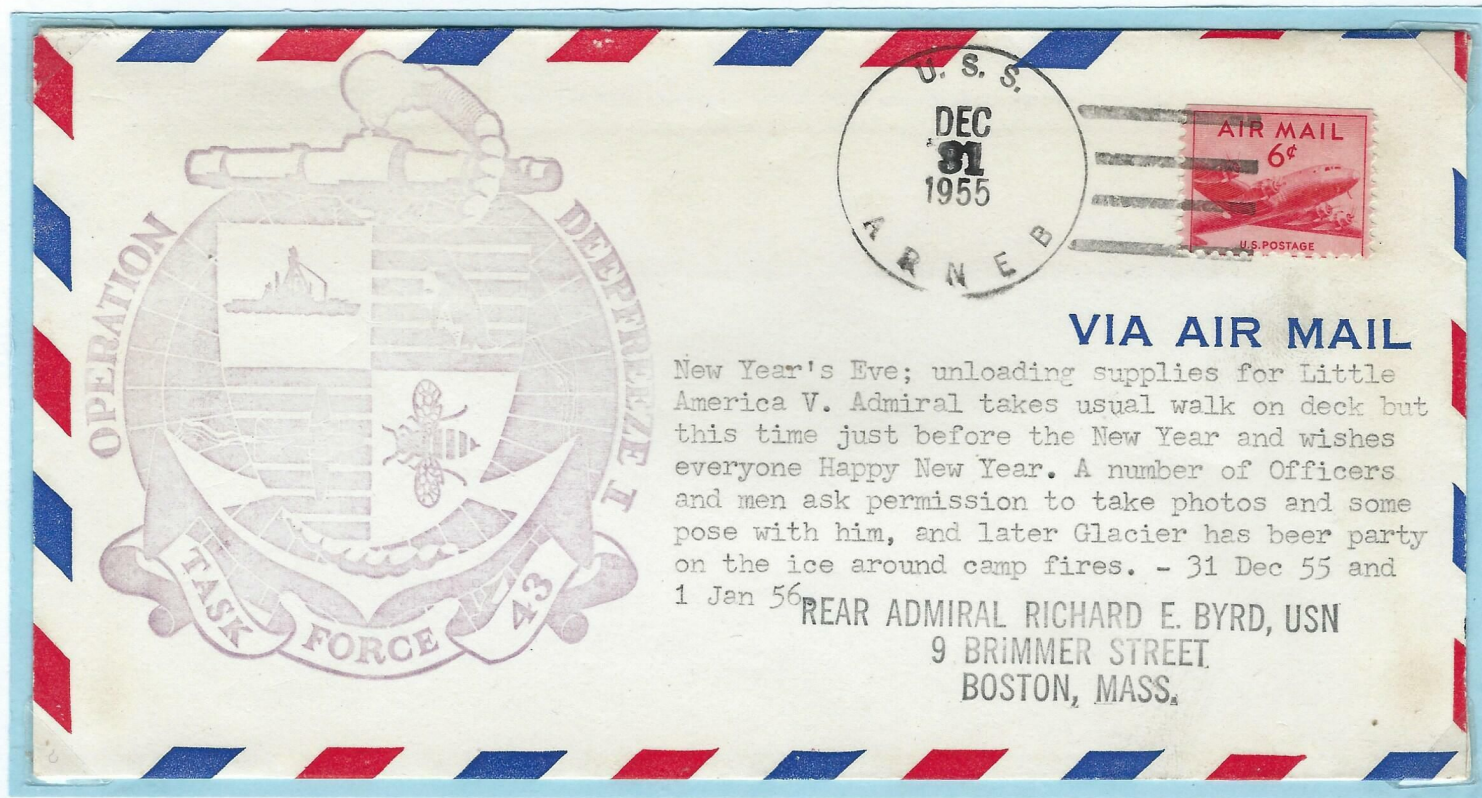
Inscribed: 'Christmas - Ross Sea - enroute Little America - 25 Dec 1955'



LITTLE AMERICA V SITE PICKED - DECEMBER 29 1955
NEW YEAR'S EVE - UNLOADING SUPPLIES FOR LITTLE AMERICA V 31 DEC 1955



Inscribed: 'Kainan and Okuma Bays visited. Little America V site picked. 29 Dec 1955.'
PMK U.S.S. Arneb Dec 29 1955 on 6c coil Airmail DC-4 SkyMaster stamp. Issued 25 August 1949.



Inscribed: 'New Year's Eve; unloading supplies for Little America V. Admiral takes usual walk on deck but this time just before the New Year and wishes everyone Happy New Year. A number of Officers and men ask permission to take photos and some pose with him, and later Glacier has beer party on the ice around camp fires. - 31 Dec 55 and 1 Jan 56.'

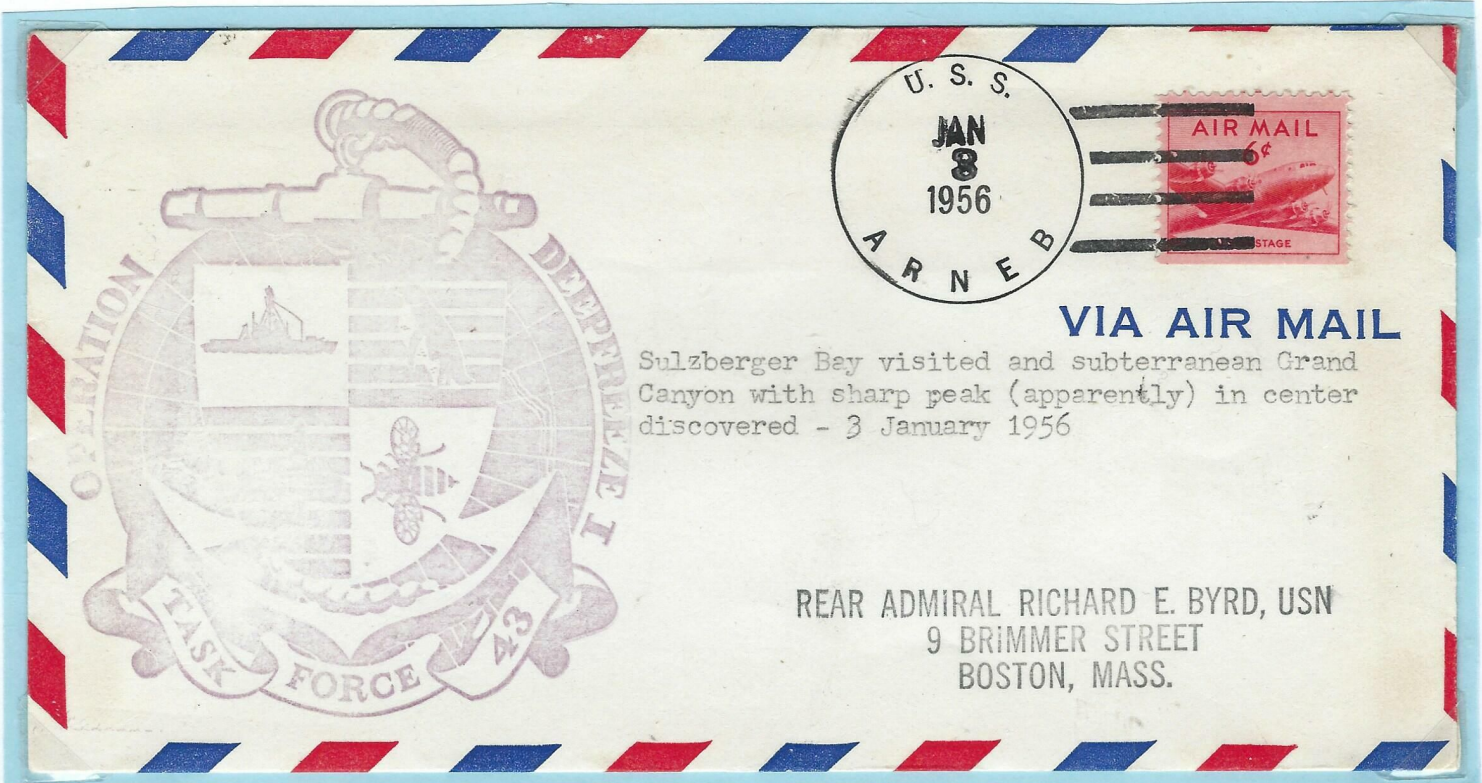
SULZBERGER BAY VISITED - SHARP PEAKED GRAND CANYON DISCOVERED - JAN 3 1956

Roughly mapped by Byrd Antarctic Expedition 1928-1930, named after Arthur H Sulzberger, publisher N.Y. Times.
Supporter of Byrd's 1928-30 and 1933-35 Expeditions.

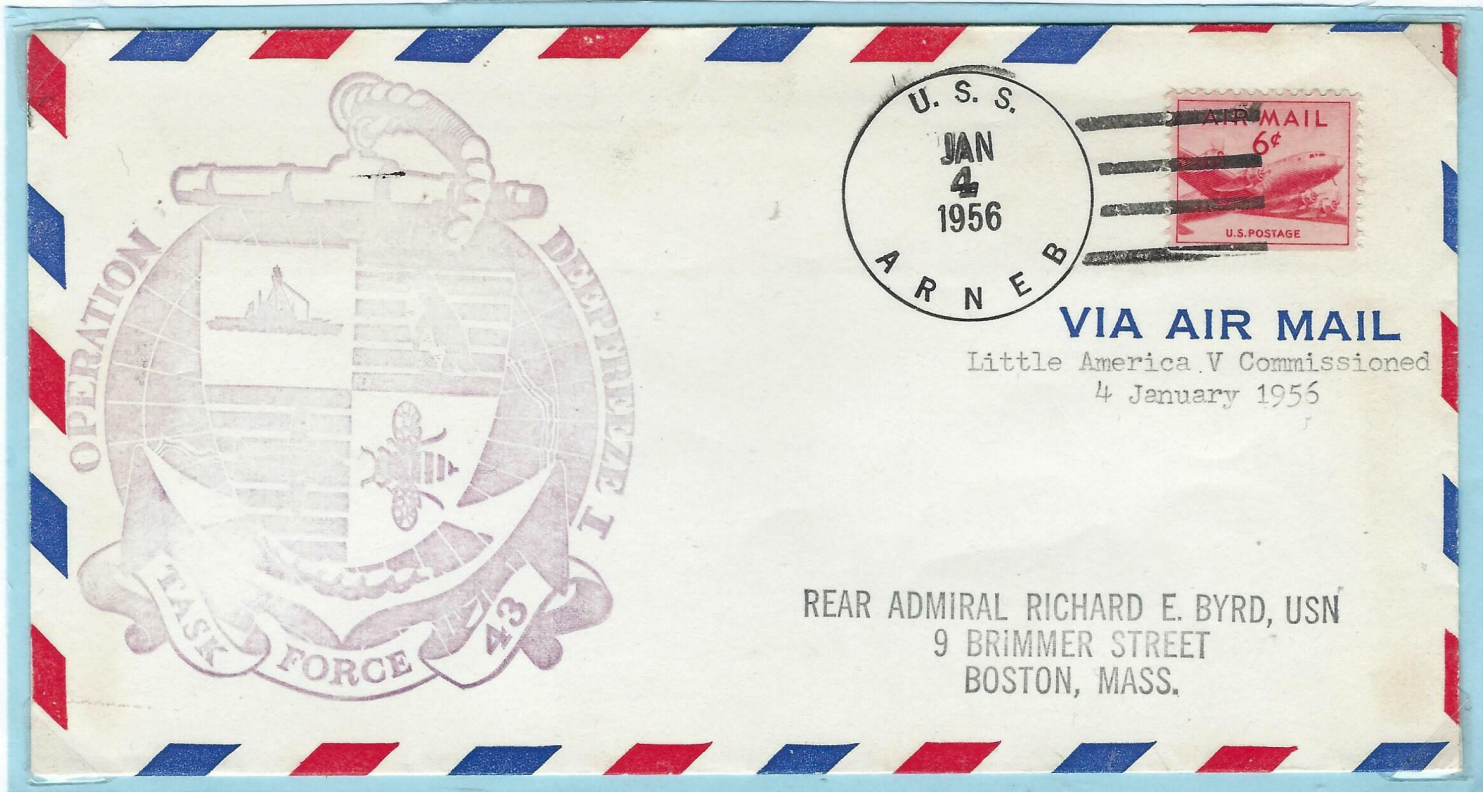
LITTLE AMERICA V COMMISSIONED - 4 JANUARY 1956

Served as base during IGY Jul 1 1957 to Dec 31 1958, closed Dec 1959. Iceberg B-9 carved away in 1987 taking the site.

Richard E. Byrd



Inscribed: 'Sulzberger Bay visited and subterranean Grand Canyon with sharp peak (apparently) in center discovered - 3 January 1956'



Inscription: Little America V Commissioned 4 January 1955

MCMURDO SOUND - SECOND VISIT - 7 JANUARY 1956

McMurdo Station established with a post office January 1956 - took 3 months to build.

Station currently supports up to 1200 personnel, approx 250 winter over

SOUTH POLE FLIGHT - ADMIRAL BYRD'S THIRD IN 26 YEARS - 8 JANUARY 1956

Official U.S. Post Office is located at Amundsen-Scott, South Pole Station. Completed February 1956. Supports researchers. First postal clerk Bob Chaudoin, until December 1956. Earl Johnson took over postal operations.

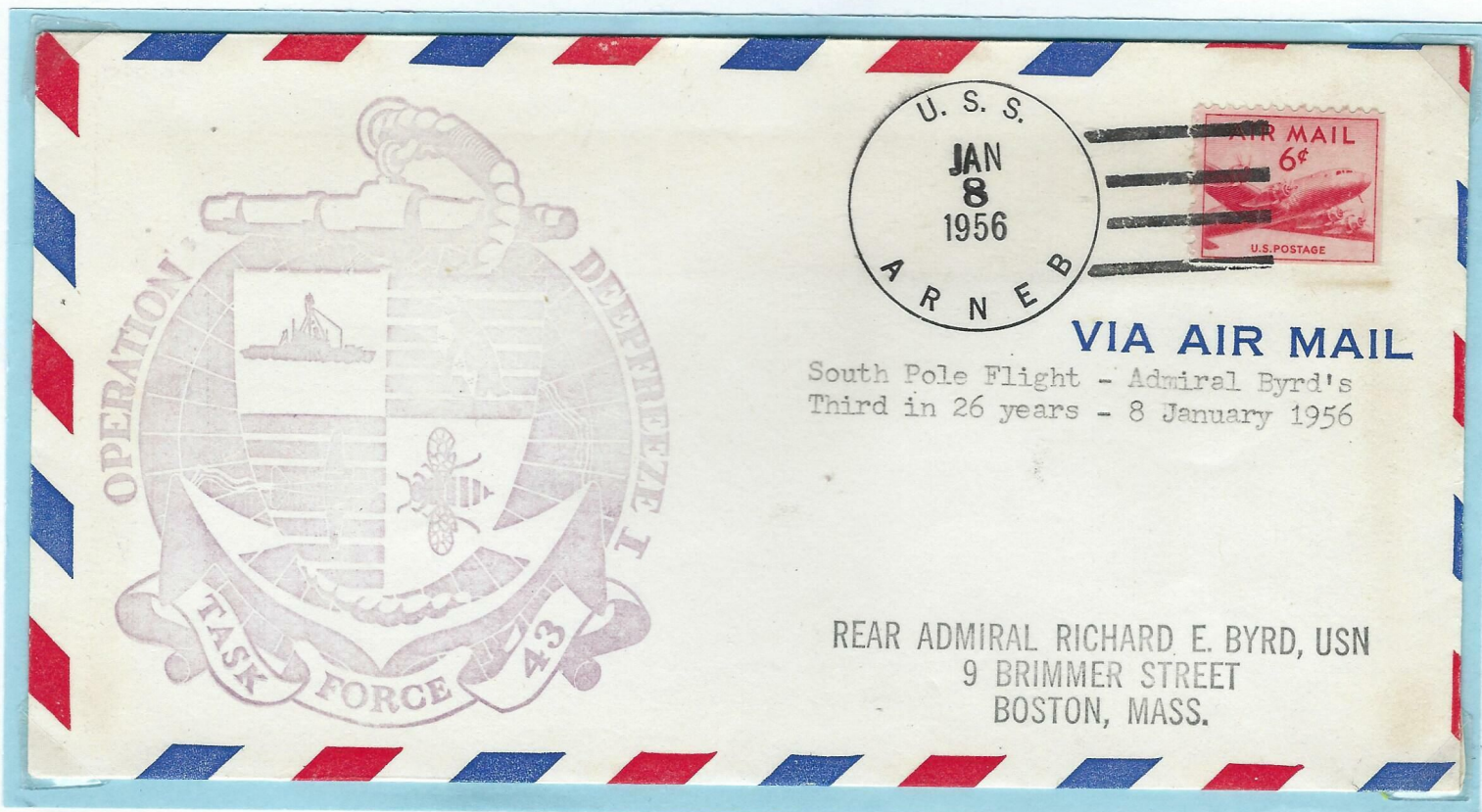


Inscribed: McMurdo Sound - Second Visit 7 January 1956

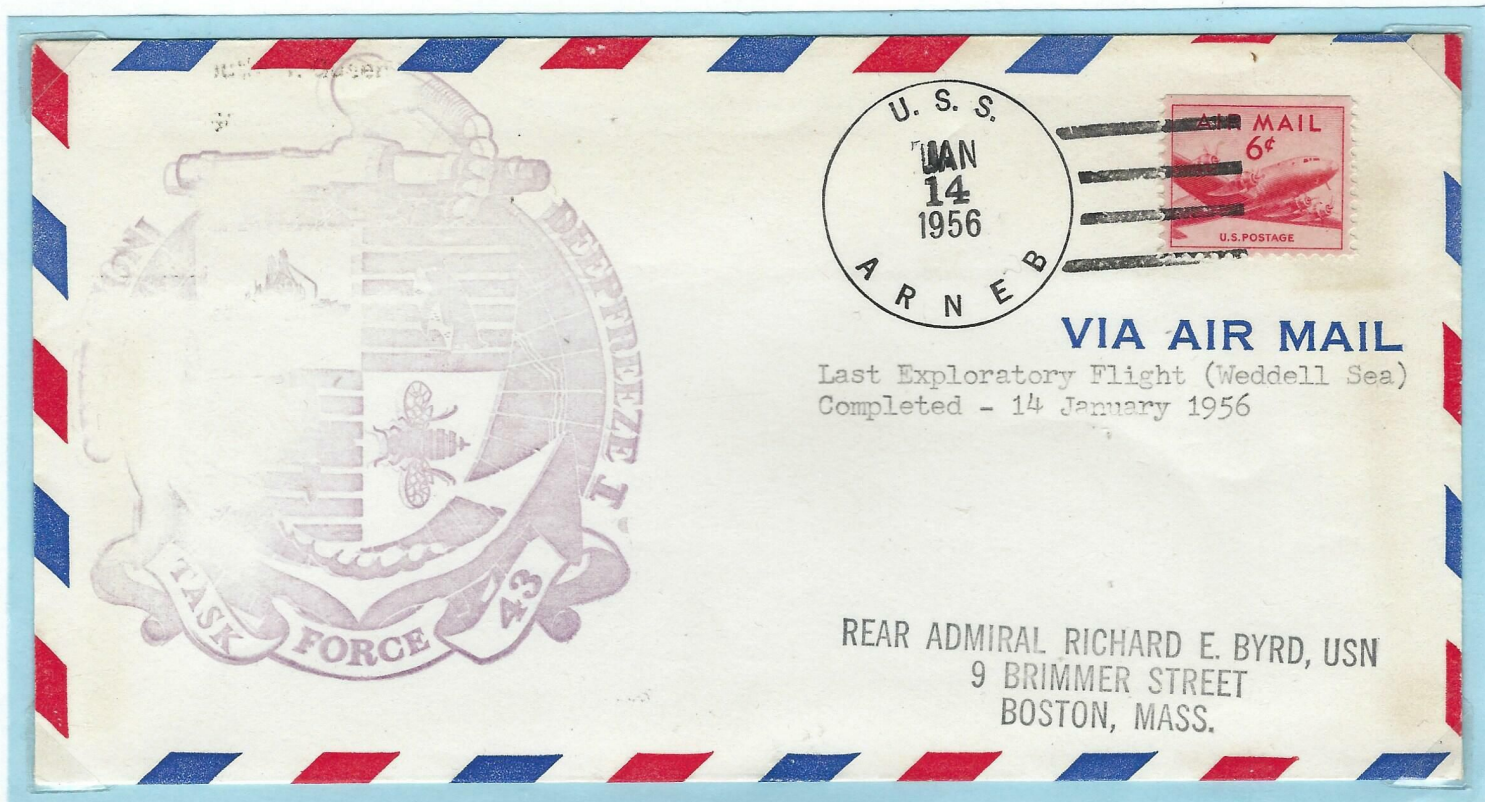
According to Johnson there was no money, no stamps and no real mailing system. Johnson resorted to using Sailor's Mail, in lieu of postage. The OIC would sign and send it on its way. Navy planes airdropped mailbags at the Pole station.

<https://antarcticsun.usap.gov/features/2280/> (reference accessed 19/08/2024)

Inscribed: South Pole Flight - Admirals Byrd's Third in 26 years - 8 January 1956



**EXPLORATORY WEDDELL SEA FLIGHT 14 JANUARY 1956
PLANES FLY BACK TO NEW ZEALAND FROM MCMURDO TO WIGRAM FIELD - 18 JANUARY 1956**



U. S. S.
JAN
14
1956
ARNEB

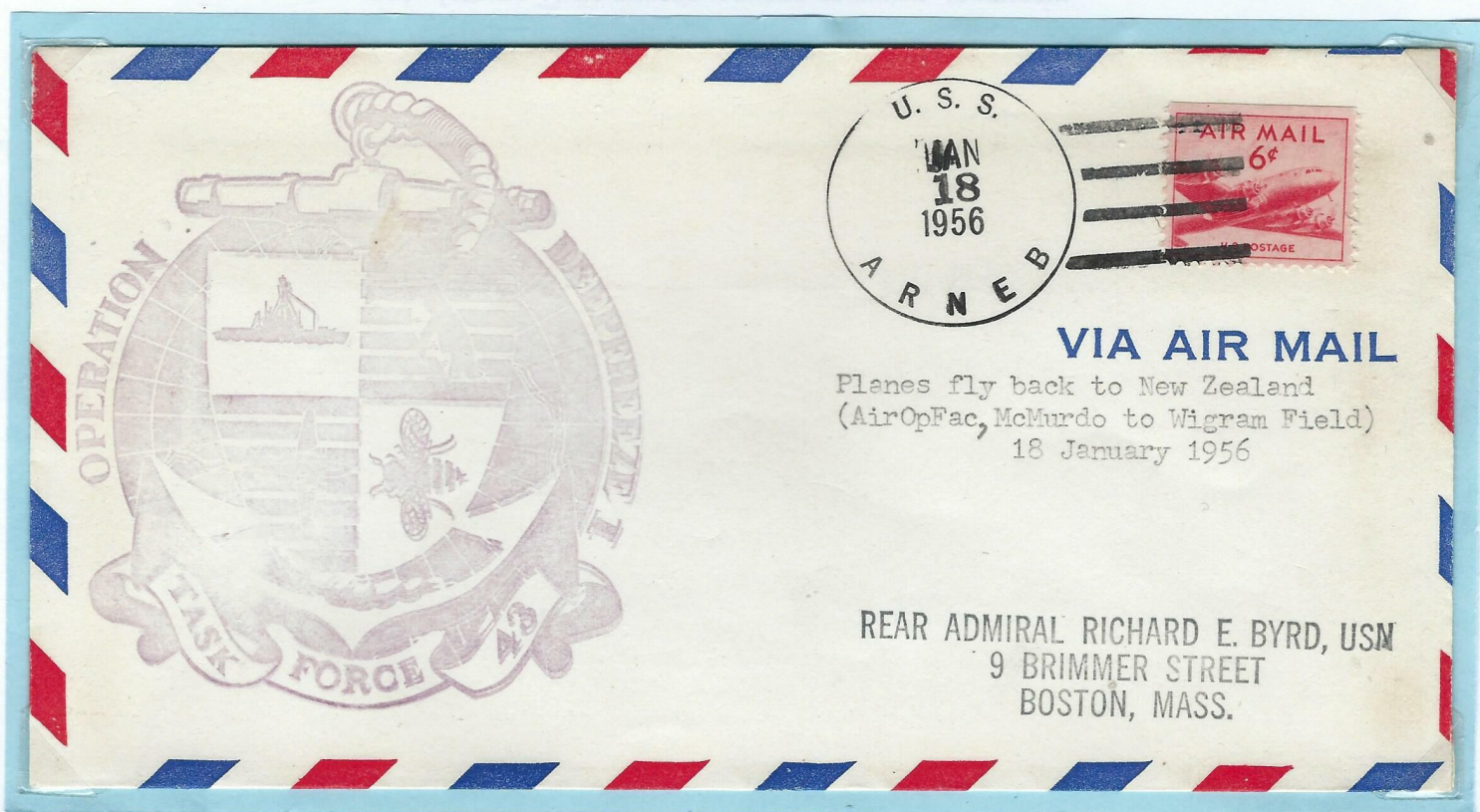
AIR MAIL
6¢
U.S. POSTAGE

VIA AIR MAIL

Last Exploratory Flight (Weddell Sea)
Completed - 14 January 1956

REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD E. BYRD, USN
9 BRIMMER STREET
BOSTON, MASS.

Inscribed: Last exploratory Flight (Weddell Sea). Completed - 14 January 1956



U. S. S.
JAN
18
1956
ARNEB

AIR MAIL
6¢
U.S. POSTAGE

VIA AIR MAIL

Planes fly back to New Zealand
(AirOpFac, McMurdo to Wigram Field)
18 January 1956

REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD E. BYRD, USN
9 BRIMMER STREET
BOSTON, MASS.

Inscribed: Planes fly back to New Zealand (AirOpFac, McMurdo to Wigram Field) 18 January 1955

ADMIRAL BYRD LEAVES MCMURDO SOUND - 3 February 1956

Inscribed: Admiral Byrd moves his flag to the Arneb and leaves McMurdo Sound. Otter plane flying Marie Byrd Land party members back to Little America V. Overdue - 3 February 1956



**USS ARNEB ARRIVAL PORT LYTTLETON NEW ZEALAND - 10 FEBRUARY 1956
ENVELOPE CARRIED BY PILOT ON FIRST FLIGHT IN MCMURDO SOUND PMK 1 MAY 1956**

Inscribed: 'Arrive Port Lyttleton New Zealand 10 February 1956'



Inscribed: This cover was carried by the pilot of the Otter plane that crashed on the attempted 1st flight Mt. Bird to Hut Pt in McMurdo Sound PMK Little America U.S.N. MAY 1 1956. Department of the Navy envelope.

**Photo of Canadian UC-1 De Havilland Otter Aircraft (no. 142424) in Antarctica
A Sikorsky (S-55 HO4S-3) Canadian Royal Navy helicopter in background**



CRASH OCCURRED 22 DECEMBER 1955 - COVER PMK 1 MAY 1956 THREE MONTHS AFTER ARRIVAL IN N.Z.
None of the five aboard were killed, however Commander George Oliver sustained a broken knee. A member of the Seabees (US Naval Construction Battalion - known as the Navy Seabees) was critically injured, flown back to Christchurch hospital then to a U.S. hospital. He became permanently disabled. (Ref: "Deep Freeze" US Navy Operations in Antarctic 1955-1999, P58)