

The Harkis Stamp of France, 1989

a Relic of the North Africa Conflict – 1952-1962

Synopsis

By Tom Broadhead

The area of present day Algeria and much of North Africa was colonized by France beginning in the early 1800's. Following World War II, an independence movement in Algeria, which was then a department of metropolitan France, created increasing tension and conflict with the French. Although a majority of Algerians favored independence, many, collectively referred to as Harkis (soldiers) allied with the French. When conflict broke out, the Harkis fought with the French against pro-Independence groups. Fighting resulted in catastrophic loss of life, and after independence was realized in 1962, many Harkis were killed and others emigrated to France.

In 1989, France issued a commemorative stamp to honor the Harkis – soldiers of France. This brightly 5-colored stamp shows the profile of a Harkis soldier in traditional local dress. The stamp is known imperforate and as a deluxe proof, and as a monochromatic blue image on a commemorative philatelic document (examples in the exhibit). Subtle mis-registrations of the five colors exist, but no major varieties have been reported.



Typical for French commemorative stamps, the Harkis issue appears on both cachet first day envelopes and maximum cards. Three illustrated postal cancels exist. Two, of similar design and also representative of the stamp image, were used in Paris and Marseille. The third, of a different design, was used in Arles, the location of one of the largest Harkis internment camps. An additional, relevant, postal cancel used on Harkis stamps honors Sergeant Pierre Blandan, who died in 1842 during the conquest of Algeria.

At the time it was issued in December 1989, the Harkis stamp paid the 2.20 franc domestic postage for a letter weighing up to 20 grams or a postcard. On January 10, 1990, the domestic rate was raised to 2.30 francs, requiring 10 centimes additional postage.

International UPU postal rates were those of domestic rates at this time, but additional air mail supplements varied by country. (examples: Germany, Israel, Iraq, Rumania).

Of particular note are letters mailed to Algeria, using the Harkis stamp. These were considered unacceptable because of the nature of the stamp's content, and several examples illustrate the different ways that these were refused and returned to the sender in France.

The Harkis Stamp of France, 1989 a Relic of the North Africa Conflict – 1952-1962



Maximum card showing a map of northern Algeria, the principal location of armed conflict, with the 1997 stamp of France commemorating the war in North Africa, 1952-1962

France invaded Algeria in 1830, and in 1848 it became an integral part of France as three départements: Algiers, Constantine, and Oran. Together with the protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia, it was part of the collective Afrique Française du Nord (AFN). Following World War II, increasing interest for independence led to armed insurrection in 1952 leading to widespread hostilities in 1954. Combatants included French, also known as Pieds Noirs, pro-independence Algerians aligned with the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), and anti-independence Algerians aligned with France, known as the **Harkis**. At the end of a brutal 10-year conflict, characterized by atrocities committed on all sides, most surviving Pieds Noirs and Harkis escaped to France.

Harkis were originally relocated to settlement camps in southern France. They were not assimilated by the French Algerian population or by the French, overall. This all but forgotten, but significant group of combatants was recognized in 1989 with a commemorative stamp.



The Harkis commemorative stamp of 1989

This exhibit introduces the philately of the French occupation and conflict, but emphasizes the Harkis stamp, with its varieties and unusual postal history.

End of War and Resettlement

Negotiations between France and the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) resulted in the Évian Accords in March 1962, approved by the French electorate on 8 April. The Algerian referendum of 1 July resulted in a 99.72% approval. 900,000 Pieds Noirs fled to France to avoid reprisals from the FLN, and the AFN began to dissolve. Following brutal killings (estimated 30,000), approximately 90,000 Harkis and their families fled to France and were temporarily housed in internment camps, the largest of which was at the Camp de Rivesaltes.



Military Post, 7 May 1962
AFN to Paris
Dated between the referenda



Military Post, 12 June 1963
Camp de Rivesaltes Harkis
internment camp to Haut-Biol

Harkis Stamp

France issued a 2.20 franc commemorative stamp to honor the Harkis – Soldiers of France on 9 December 1989. It was one of the first public acknowledgements of their efforts and sacrifice in the North Africa War.

The design shows a left-facing Harki wearing a turban and a French tri-color scarf, with sun rising in the background.

Vintage photo of Harkis at a campfire. Many wore a turban, shown in stylized format on the stamp.



Harkis commemorative badge with similar theme to the stamp.



Deluxe Proof of the Harkis stamp

The Administration of Posts and Telecommunications produced a large commemorative panel, briefly describing the contributions by the Harkis and their history. The Harkis stamp bears a 9 December 1989 first day cancel from Paris.

The monochrome blue image of the stamp at lower right has appeared in online auctions as a cutout described as a trial color proof.

HOMMAGE AUX HARKIS SOLDATS DE LA FRANCE



Le terme de harki recouvre l'ensemble des formations supplétives de l'armée française engagées aux côtés de la France en Algérie, de 1954 à 1962 :

- les harkas étaient des unités recrutées par l'armée et employées dans les mêmes conditions que les forces régulières. Leur effectif était d'environ 70000 hommes.
- Les Maghzens formaient les groupes de protection des sections administratives spécialisées et des sections administratives urbaines (environ 20000 hommes).
- Les groupes mobiles de protection rurale, devenus groupes mobiles de sécurité, dépendaient du ministère de l'Intérieur mais participaient aux opérations de maintien de l'ordre aux côtés de l'armée (15000 hommes).
- Les groupes d'auto-défense, qui assuraient la sécurité des villages, étaient composés de volontaires sommairement armés et non rémunérés (60000 hommes).
- Diverses formations rattachées aux forces de police.

A ces formations, on peut ajouter les 20000 hommes servant dans l'armée active que l'on confond souvent avec les supplétifs.

Entre 1954 et 1962 l'ensemble de ces unités paya un lourd tribut.

Après l'indépendance de l'Algérie, quelques milliers d'entre eux seulement purent rejoindre la France, où ils furent hébergés de longues années dans des conditions précaires.

Cette communauté, aujourd'hui forte de plusieurs dizaines de milliers de personnes, connaît des réussites individuelles éclatantes. Mais le gouvernement, conscient des difficultés de toute nature, que rencontrent trop de nos concitoyens qui en sont issus, difficultés qui procèdent des conditions de leur installation sur le sol national, entend par ce timbre non seulement rendre hommage à nos compatriotes, mais aussi traduire son souci de mobiliser en leur faveur la solidarité de la nation.





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HEL-1

Harkis Stamp

Stamps were printed in sheets of 50, in six colors (black, light brown, blue, red, tan, light orange) that required six ink impressions. The only major variety known is imperforate, which were intentionally produced. Alignment of colors is best seen in reference to the color “traffic lights” at the lower left sheet margin. All but black tend to show small shift variations, but shifts other than those less than 1mm are not reported.



Imperforate



Block of 9 with color registration “traffic lights” at left. Red is most noticeably off-center, but does not result in a distinct offset registration on the stamp.



Color shift – blue downward and brown upward leaving white gap

Entire sheet of 50



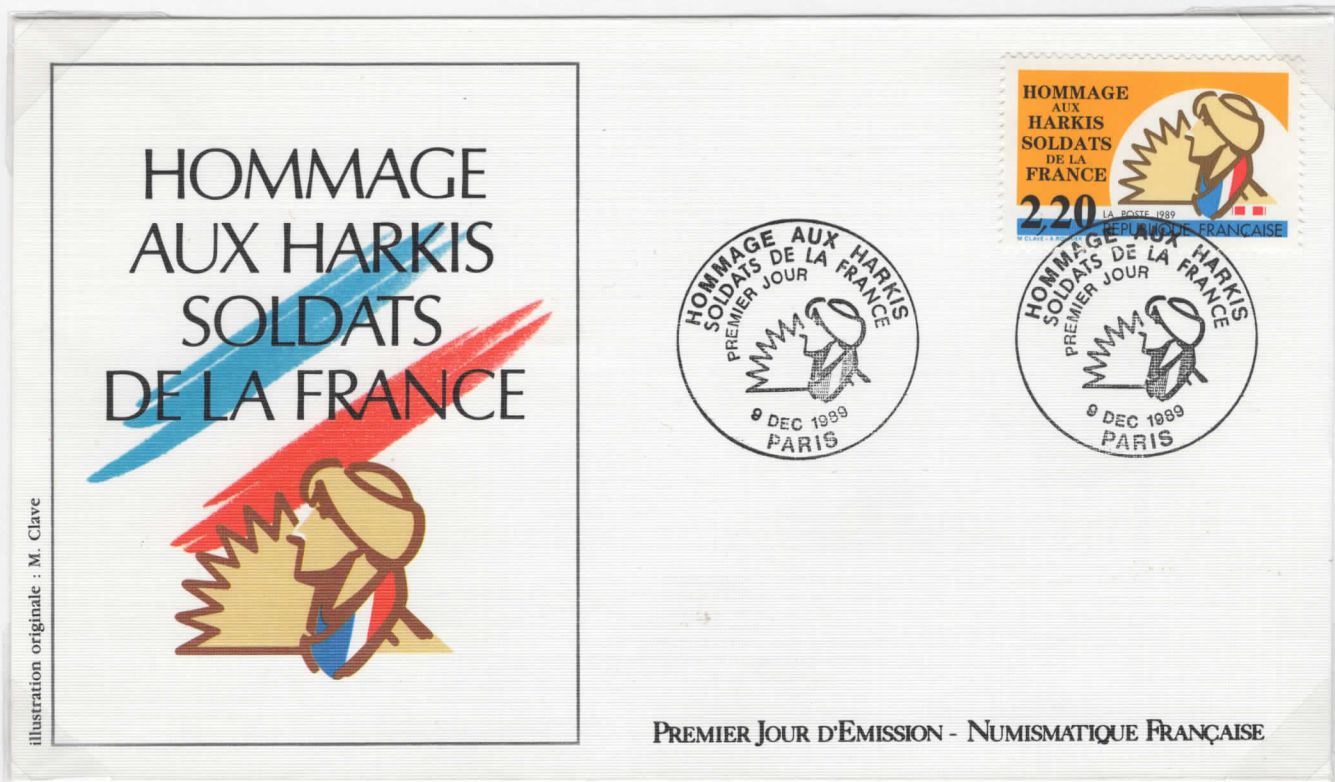
Color shift – blue upward
Tips of 2 covered
lower inscription below blue



Ink defect – “Anneau Lune”
produced by air bubble

**First Day of Issue
9 December 1989**

The Harkis stamp was issued 9 December 1989 in Paris and also, notably, in Marseille, which was a principal arrival port for Harkis fleeing from Algeria after its independence. The Paris and Marseille cancel designs include a vignette that coincides with that of the stamp and were reported in the French philatelic press prior to issue.



Official first day cancel (Premier Jour) of Paris, with coincident vignette design to that of the stamp and cachet.

Turbaned Harkis soldiers receive the salute of a French officer, one of many designs on maximum cards and envelopes showing historical photographic images from Algeria.

Marseille cancel without text "Premier Jour" and with larger vignette.



Commemorative Cancel
9-10 December 1989

Although the official first day cancel design was used in Paris, with a modified version used in Marseille, a different design was produced for use in Arles, showing profiles of two Algerian and a French fighter.



Postcard with image
resembling the
pictorial cancel



Postcard with photographic
image of French officers at
left and Harkis at right.

Commemorative Cancel Sergeant Blandan 7 April 1990

Jean Pierre Hippolyte Blandan was a French soldier who served (1837-1842) during the conquest of Algeria. Promoted to the rank of sergeant on 1 February 1842, he died (12 April 1842) of wounds suffered during an attempt to deliver mail from Boufarik to Béni Mered. A statue of Blandan was erected in 1887 in Boufarik to commemorate his heroism. Following Algerian independence, the statue was moved to France, where it was located in Nancy, and his ashes were placed in the monument's base in 1990. A commemorative cancel, showing an image of the monument, was used on 7 April.

Envelope with a cachet of the Blandan monument and posted with the Harkis stamp of 1989.



Postcard showing the Blandan monument, with the Harkis stamp and Blandan commemorative cancel

Postal History Domestic

At the time the Harkis commemorative stamp was issued, the domestic rate for a letter weighing 20 grams was 2.20 francs. This rate was in effect from 1 August 1985 through 10 January 1990, after which it increased to 2.30 francs. It was available for use on international mail as part of a make-up rate, based on destination.



*M. Mme Devrenne
impasse des Plantiers
13890 Mouries*

Post Aux Armees
(military post)
28 December 1989
to Mouries



*M. TERNOTE C.
BP 15
34660 - Cournonterral*

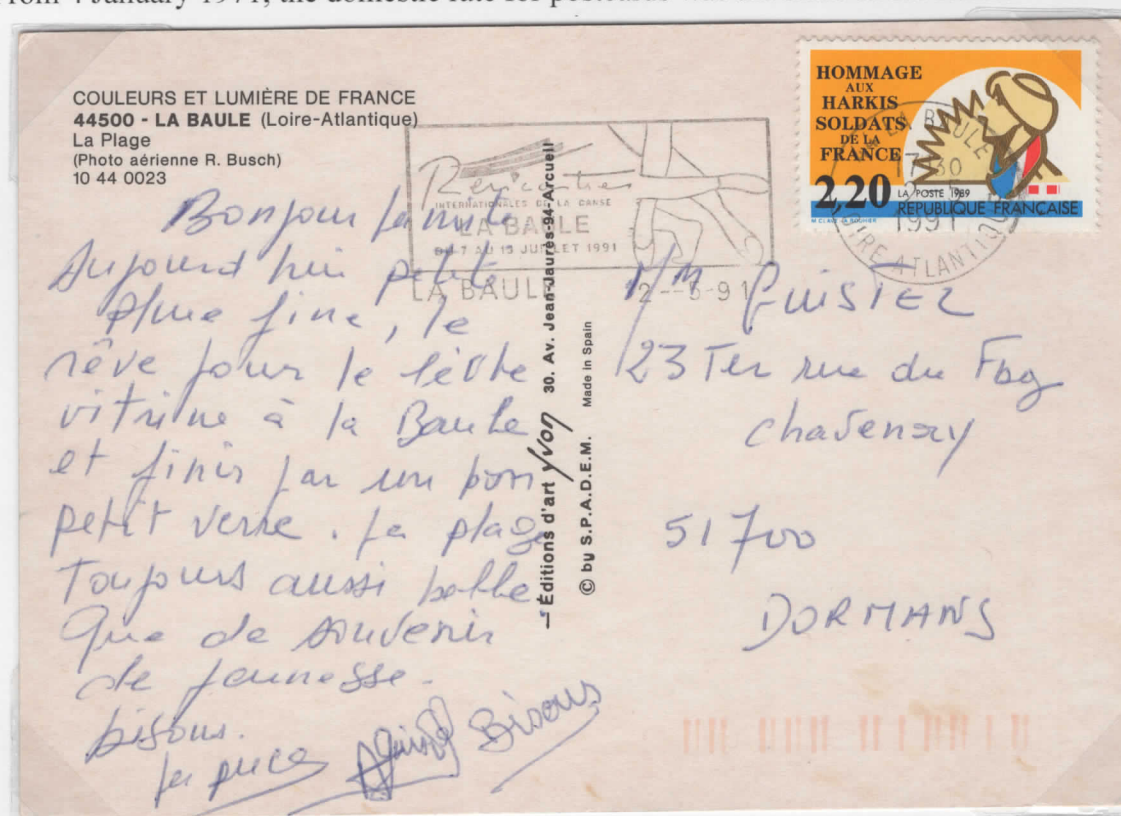
Cournonterral
local letter
10 January 1990
Last day of rate

Postal History
Domestic

Bordeaux
to Cabanac
26 December 1989
28 December
Returned – RETOUR
A L'ENVOYER
Addressee Unknown
N'HABITE PAS A
L'ADRESSE
INDIQUÉE



From 4 January 1971, the domestic rate for postcards was the same as for letters.



La Baule to Dormans
2 May 1991

Underpaid 2.30 rate
of 11 January 1990

Postal History Foreign

International rates were governed by the UPU, and countries, except Switzerland, bordering France had favorable rates identical to domestic letter rates from 1 July 1971. Airmail supplements varied by destination.

Lavelanet to
Freiburg,
Germany
17 April 1990
23 April 1990
Returned -
retour

2.30 franc rate
of 11 January
1990



Antiques to West
Mordechai
Kibbutz, Israel
14 December
1989

3.60 franc letter
rate of 16 August
1988

0.30 franc airmail
rate of 16 August
1988

Overpaid by 0.30
franc

Postal History Foreign

Lille to Baghdad, Iraq
9 November 1990

3.80 franc letter rate of
11 January 1990
0.60 franc/20 g airmail
rate of 16 August 1988

Returned 13 November
1990 due to suspension
of postal relations
following the August
1990 Iraqi invasion of
Kuwait.

CORRESPONDENCE EN
RETOUR RELATIONS
AVEC L'IRAK ET LE
KOWEIT
PROVISOIREMENT
SUSPENDUES



L'ÉCHO DE LA TIMBROLOGIE

37, RUE DES JACOBINS - 80036 AMIENS CEDEX
Exempt de Timbrage. C.C.Postaux : Lille 1671.38 S

ROUTAGE 206 AMIENS R.P.



Amiens to Arad,
Romania
26 December 1989

9.0 franc/250-500
g printed matter
rate of 1 August
1987

Underpaid by 0.60
franc

Portion of front of
large envelope
used to mail
philatelic journals

ECO-14746 -0/203/06018 00 04 1616
MR. WOHLRAPP AUREL
BLOC 129 SCB ET III AP 8
98 STR ABRUD N 98
ARAD 7 2900
ROUMANIE



Postal History Algeria

Use of the Harkis stamp on mail to Algeria is especially important – the government decree declared it INADMIS – not admissible, and mail was returned – RETOUR À L'ENVOYEUR.



Hayange to
le Fondouk, Algeria
19 January 1990

3.20 rate
for 20g letter
Overpaid by
0.80 francs

Manuscript added:
Figurine [stamp]
Inadmis Art 439
Fasc III de D'ens
generale des PTT



Beausoleil to
Setif, Algeria
25 April, 1990

3.20 rate
for 20g letter

Handstamps:
Inadmis ART 439
Fasc III I.G.
RETOUR À
L'ENVOYEUR

Manuscript:
Timbre
inadmis

Postal History Algeria

Villenandeur to
Oran, Algeria
9 August 1990
Received 11 August

3.20f rate
for 20g letter

Handstamp:
Inadmis ART 439
Fasc III I.G.

Manuscript:
Change ce timbre
S.V.P.
Retour

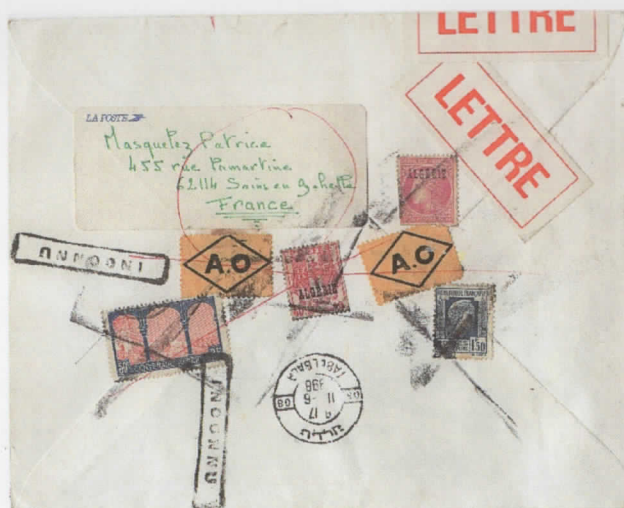


Bastia to
Constantine, Algeria
21 September 1998
Received 26
September

3.70f rate
for 20g letter
Underpaid by
0.70 francs

24.00f registration
31.80 registration
fee label – overpaid

Handstamps:
RETOUR À
L'ENVOYEUR
NON RECLAMÉ



Sains en Gohelle, 7 June 1998, to Tabel bala, Algeria, 11 June.

3.80f 20g letter rate, overpaid by 1.20f. Miscellaneous demonetized stamps of Algeria and labels on the reverse.

Handstamps: RETOUR À L'ENVOYEUR (front)
INCONNU (reverse);

Harkis stamp vigorously defaced.