



THANKSGIVING OVERSEAS



NOT ALL OF US CAN BE HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS...

As families across America gather around their tables this Thanksgiving, we take a moment to remember those who celebrate far from home. From high in the Arctic to desert bases in the Middle East, service members have long found ways to bring a bit of home, gratitude, and gravy to wherever they serve. Each year, the U.S. military undertakes a remarkable effort to ensure that those in uniform can enjoy a traditional Thanksgiving meal. This mission of morale stretches across continents and oceans: frozen turkeys are airlifted into war zones, cranberries are packed into supply convoys, and pumpkin pies arrive by the pallet. From the logistics experts at the Defense Logistics Agency to the cooks in forward operating bases, it's a coordinated act of care that reflects the nation's enduring commitment to its troops.



Soldiers in the field waiting in line for Turkey, WWII, image source: [airborne museum](#)

A BOMBASTIC BANQUET

World War II, late 1944: As the Battle of Normandy's aftermath revealed that victory over Europe would take much longer than anticipated, the U.S. Army made a bold commitment: every American soldier in Europe would receive a proper Thanksgiving meal. The operation that followed became a feat of logistics. Ships sailing from New York carried thousands of tons of frozen turkeys over the Atlantic. Once they reached French ports, the challenge shifted to refrigeration, trucking and rail transport. On October 15, one refrigerated vessel departed with more than 1,600 tons of turkeys, arriving mid-November. From there, fleets of trucks delivered meals across the front. For many soldiers, this meant mashed potatoes, green beans, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie, all prepped and served in the field. Almost all of the roughly two million American troops in Europe were able to have their turkey and eat it too. The event served as a vital morale booster for the imminent Battle of the Bulge, among the most consequential conflicts of the war.



A field Turkey Cooker, WWII, image source: [airborne museum](#)

There is a certain novelty that comes with having your

THANKSGIVING IN VIETNAM

Thanksgiving dinner dropped by a helicopter. William A. 'Bill' Martin spent his Thanksgiving in an exceptionally lethal warzone. Thanksgiving Day, 1969, Martin's platoon was dug in deep on a high ridge surrounded by a dense fog. It was resupply day and the team had to physically cut out an area for the landing zone for the resupply chopper out of the jungle. The fog presented a problem though; no one in the unit expected a helicopter to fly, let alone land, in such obscured visual conditions. When a helicopter did descend from the fog, Martin rushed up to the cockpit to chew the pilot out for flying in such risky weather only to discover that the pilot was Maj. Gen. John M. Wright Jr. himself. The General had come to personally deliver their Thanksgiving dinner, packed in brown marmite bags. The contents were turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, and all the fixings. Martin recalls this meal being the only hot meal they ever received while in the field. The thanksgiving 'table', as it were, was one of the trees hacked down for the landing zone. The soldiers ate their meal together while the general entreated the soldiers to express their concerns on how the war was fairing in the front. This story is one of many involving thanksgiving on the front line, check out this [link](#) for archival footage of soldiers enjoying their Thanksgiving meal in the trenches during the Vietnam conflict.

CONTEMPORARY CELEBRATIONS

While the United States is not currently in a state of war, there are still between 170,000 and 200,000 troops stationed overseas right now. As we gather around our tables at home, let's take a moment to honor those serving abroad, the men and women of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and other supply-chain teams who make possible a holiday meal far from family and friends and homestead. According to the Defense Logistics Agency, 2023's global holiday planning kicked off as early as spring, and by November the effort had delivered an astonishing spread: approximately **28,945 whole turkeys, 82,592 pounds of roasted turkey, 145,760 pounds of beef, 70,957 pounds of ham, 40,534 pounds of shrimp, 5,007 pounds of sweet potatoes, 46,464 pies and cakes, and 7,407 cans of eggnog** were earmarked for service members stationed overseas. Behind each serving line lies months of coordination, forecasts submitted in spring, ingredients on hand by September, shipments sent across continents and seas in time for the holiday. It's more than food. It's a message: You're not forgotten. You're remembered. From mess halls on sea-going vessels to dining facilities in remote postings, those in uniform receive a slice of home, a moment of familiar ritual, and the gratitude of a nation.

SHARE YOUR GRATITUDE WITH TROOPS!

Send a care package this holiday to a soldier through the [USO Service](#), [Operation Gratitude](#), or [Troopster](#)!

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