



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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## Commissaries continue excellence in managing taxpayer funds

*By Ta'Lisha Brown  
DeCA corporate communications*

**FORT LEE, Va.** – In these challenging economic times, managing your money is important. For the Defense Commissary Agency, the ability to account for taxpayer funds is vital to delivering a strong benefit.

Independent auditors validated the financial footing of the commissary benefit by issuing DeCA's fiscal 2008 financial statements a clean audit opinion. That's a mouthful considering DeCA generates more than \$5 billion in annual sales and receives about \$1 billion in federal funding. The clean audit, also known as an unqualified opinion, means that the agency's financial reporting is excellent, said Philip E. Sakowitz Jr., DeCA director and chief executive officer.

“Our excellence in financial accountability is only made possible by the commitment and dedication of the entire DeCA workforce – from our senior leaders to the commissary storeworker,” Sakowitz said. “It's important to this agency that we maintain a credible and sound benefit for the men and women in uniform who earned it.”

Only five DoD organizations achieved a clean audit opinion. The list includes: Defense Contract Audit Agency, Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Military Retirement Fund and the DoD Inspector General. DeCA is one of only four DoD activities with seven consecutive clean audit opinions. The others are Defense Contract Audit Agency, Defense Finance and Accounting Service and Military Retirement Fund.

DeCA's line of unqualified opinions began in 2002. The road to a clean opinion starts with agency accountants collecting financial data during each quarterly reporting period. The success of this effort is possible thanks to a climate of "open financial reporting," said Pam Conklin, DeCA's chief financial executive.

"With each reporting cycle, each level of the DeCA team works harder and smarter at demonstrating financial stewardship," Conklin said. "Also, continuity in the financial statement reporting division continues to be a key element to our success."

During DeCA's annual evaluation, auditors from KPMG, an international auditing firm, examine the agency's internal controls and financial statements. KPMG's auditors sift through data to check efficiency and accuracy in reports that deal with areas such as time and attendance, annual inventories of resale stocks, equipment inventories, property accountability, and information technology controls over financial systems at various locations including commissaries, regional offices and DeCA headquarters. The auditors also review DeCA's financial links to outside organizations such as Defense Finance and Accounting Service-Columbus. Evaluations range from "no opinion" to an "adverse opinion" to an "unqualified opinion" – the best possible ruling.

As DeCA makes its way toward its next audit opinion for fiscal 2009, the agency wants to continue "raising the bar on how we can become the best possible guardian of the taxpayer's dollar," said Larry Bands, DeCA's director of accounting.

"I encourage all levels of DeCA to continue to seek ways to improve our processes," he added. "It is important that we all know how our individual jobs are woven together and ultimately reflect how much we care about the benefit that we deliver each day."

**- DeCA -**

**About DeCA:** *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*