



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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Director of sales heads list of key leadership changes

*By Kevin L. Robinson,
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FORT LEE, Va. – Chris Burns, the deputy director of DeCA West, has been selected as the Defense Commissary Agency’s new director of sales. Burns’ selection heads a list of key personnel moves announced by the agency. The effective date of these actions is Jan. 17.

“These actions will help energize DeCA and encourage a more complete blending of leadership efforts across functional areas,” said DeCA Director and CEO Philip E. Sakowitz Jr. “We are committed to cultivating 21st century, enterprise-wide leaders whose impact on this agency transcends one functional area.

“Chris returns to headquarters with a broad resume in commissary operations at all levels, and we are confident he will bring his experience to bear as the new director of sales.”

Burns’ commissary career dates back to his tenure as an intern in 1984 while attending college. Along the way, he has served as a commissary officer at several stores in Germany and in Colorado. After a two-year stint with the private sector, he returned to government service and rose from store director to zone manager to senior fellow at the Defense Department’s Resale Activities and Nonappropriated Fund Policy Office in the Pentagon. He was selected director of operations at DeCA East in 2006 and later went on to become deputy director for CONUS at DeCA West in May 2007.

Burns replaces Randall “Randy” Chandler who was selected deputy director at DeCA East. Chandler will replace Robert Vitikacs as one of two deputy directors at DeCA East. During Vitikacs tenure as deputy director he had been selected to serve as the acting region director.

Vitikacs has announced his plans to retire from government service in December. The selection of region director has not been announced yet.

“Randy brings his extensive knowledge of product support and commissary and industry experience to DeCA East,” Sakowitz said. “He is a sterling example of the wealth of talented leaders we have in this agency. His leadership in the sales directorate is one of the reasons we almost eclipsed the \$6 billion mark in fiscal 2009.”

Chandler had served as director of sales since his appointment in September 2007. He is noted as being one of the early founders of the agency’s marketing business unit. His commissary career began in 1979 with the Marine Corps Commissary System as a deputy commissary officer at Camp Lejeune, N.C. He was a Marine Corps representative to the DeCA Transition Team that helped merged four military commissaries into one agency in 1991.

Chandler had left government service to work for industry, returning in 2005 after seven years to become the store administrator at Charleston Air Force Base, S.C. Later, he was selected chief of the sales directorate’s semiperishable division in 2006.

Terry Batenhorst, the director of operations at DeCA Europe since August 2004, has been named deputy director of DeCA West. Early in his commissary career, Batenhorst had served as a member of the DeCA Transition Team in 1990. He has served in a variety of positions including deputy commissary officer in Cairo, Egypt; store director at the Mallone Village Commissary at Fort Bragg, N.C., and zone manager in Wiesbaden, Germany. He replaces Burns. Batenhorst’s replacement in DeCA Europe has not been selected.

“Terry has served with unparalleled professionalism during a period of tremendous change for DeCA Europe; he has been a pivotal part of the region and we will miss him,” said DeCA Europe Director Mike Dowling. “DeCA West is fortunate to get a person with his skills and experience.”

Diana P. Graff, chief of the internal audit since April 2005, has been selected to become the deputy chief of staff. This is a new position that reports directly to the headquarters chief of staff. Her replacement as chief of internal audit has not been announced yet.

“Diana has done a superior job managing the agency’s audit program,” Sakowitz said. “She had a unique perspective related to examining everything we did as far as our systems, operations, programs and procedures. That knowledge will serve her well as deputy chief of staff.”

Graff joined DeCA after a tour with the U.S. Army Audit Agency, Alexandria, Va., where she was the program director for its policy and audit support division. She entered federal

service in 1986 with the U.S. Army Audit Agency in Fort Huachuca, Ariz. She has since served in a variety of position's in the audit agency's field and headquarters offices.

Eric Swayzee, the deputy director, performance and policy, will become the director of business enhancement office. This is a new position overseeing four divisions that interact with DeCA business functions to develop and align information technology solutions with the agency's strategic business goals.

Swayzee had served as deputy director at performance and policy since November 2008. Before that he had been the chief of the business operations group division. "Eric has a reputation as a 'go-getter' in our directorate," said James "Jay" Hudson, director of performance and policy. "Few people have such a working knowledge of commissary operations combined with the energy to get the job done."

Herbert Winchester Jr., the chief of workforce development, has been named deputy director, performance and policy. He replaces Swayzee. Winchester had served as workforce development chief since March 2008 after coming to headquarters from DeCA Europe as deputy director. "Herb can do it all and quite well," said Jerry Oestreich, director of human resources. "Zone manager, region deputy director, workforce chief – he has shown a commitment to excellence at every stop. Performance and policy will be no different."

Norm Brown, former executive assistant to the DeCA director, will replace Winchester as chief of workforce development. Brown had been first an executive assistant and later an executive officer to the DeCA director after coming to headquarters from DeCA East in 2004. Since then he has served under three agency directors: Patrick B. Nixon, Richard S. "Rick" Page (acting director), and Sakowitz. A replacement for Brown has not been selected. "Norm has been the traffic cop behind the scenes that made the agency director's workload easier to manage," Sakowitz said. "Our employees will see that same sense of professionalism as he moves to workforce development."

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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 \$3,300 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.