



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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## Sakowitz announces plans to retire in July

*By Office of Communication*

**FORT LEE, Va.** – Philip E. Sakowitz Jr., director and CEO of the Defense Commissary Agency, today announced plans to retire from federal service in July. There is no information available concerning his replacement.

Sakowitz, a member of the Senior Executive Service, was selected to lead the commissary agency in the spring of 2008, succeeding its previous director, Patrick Nixon, who retired in October 2007. Rick Page, the agency’s chief operating officer at the time, had served as its acting director in the interim.

The decision to leave the government was a difficult one, Sakowitz said. But he and his wife, Marion, had talked it over and decided it was time to end his civil service career, completing a journey that has lasted 35 years with 11 jobs and 14 different residences.

“The time has come for a little more balance in our lives in the years ahead,” Sakowitz said. “Marion and I have been blessed with two loving children, who have married two wonderful spouses, and in the past 18 months they have brought into our lives two of the cutest little girls you can imagine – and there is a grandson now due in August! It is time to spend more time with all of them.”

Sakowitz arrived at DeCA after completing an assignment as executive director of the Army’s Installation Management Command. He said meeting and working with DeCA’s dedicated employees and industry partners has been “a more positive adventure” than he ever could have imagined.

“Leading this benchmark organization has been so fulfilling, so educational, such fun and absolutely rewarding,” he said. “How could it not be? We’re serving our nation’s finest – our service members and their families around the world.”

During Sakowitz’ tenure, DeCA has enjoyed tremendous success in delivering the commissary benefit for an estimated 12 million potential customers. More military members and their families are using their benefit, evidenced by customer transactions increasing more than 3.3 million and sales growing more than 7 percent since 2008.

Before he even arrived at the headquarters, Sakowitz put his stamp on the agency with his popular calling card, “The Commissary ... It’s Worth the Trip!”, announcing this slogan as his mission statement during the DeCA 2008 Conference and Training Event May 20 in Richmond, Va.

He also took great pride in the military recognizing the agency’s ability as a Department of Defense leader in doing the right thing as a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars. During his time with DeCA, the agency continued to raise the bar in being rated among the best in government for its financial management and internal controls.

Sakowitz’ directorship was also marked by DoD formally recognizing the commissary benefit’s relationship to the military’s global and strategic mission. This acknowledgment marked commissaries as a key component to supporting service members, allowing them to deploy with confidence and peace of mind knowing that their families can obtain affordable groceries in a safe and secure environment.

As a result of the elevated importance of the commissary benefit, DoD authorized the elevation of the DeCA director’s position to a Tier 3 Senior Executive Service position. In military leadership structure, a Tier 3 SES equates to the rank of a three-star flag officer.

Operating at a high level was nothing new to Sakowitz. Over the course of his 35 years of government service, he had served in several SES assignments, to include executive director of IMCOM from 2002 to 2008; deputy chief of staff for base operations support, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command from 1998 to 2002; and as assistant deputy chief of staff for personnel and installation management, U.S. Army Forces Command from 1996 to 1998.

His career has been highlighted by White House accolades several times by Presidents Clinton and Bush as a Meritorious Presidential Rank recipient, recognizing him as a leader in the top 5 percent of the federal government’s Senior Executive Service. Most recently, in October 2008, he was chosen by President George W. Bush to receive the nation’s highest career civil

service award, the Presidential Rank Award of Distinguished Executive. This award is presented to no more than 1 percent of the federal government's Senior Executive Service annually.

“Leading this \$6 billion business in 13 countries around the world has had its challenges, but true to all of our government values, the DeCA team did it with exceptional style,” Sakowitz said. “And, working each and every day with the DeCA family, internal staff and industry, has been an honor and a pleasure.”

After he leaves federal service, Sakowitz said he hopes to continue serving this country in association with government programs or through private sector affiliations.

**-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 \$3,300 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.*