



NEWS RELEASE

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CertifiChecks ceases operations

*By Kevin L. Robinson,
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FORT LEE, Va. – CertifiChecks, Inc., the third-party provider that has provided commissary gift certificates for use by authorized customers since 2002, has ceased operations. As a result, all sales of CertifiChecks have halted and customers possessing them cannot use them in commissaries at this time.

The company Web site, www.certifichcks.com, announced effective Feb. 26 that it will “no longer administer gift certificate programs” and further advised customers with CertifiChecks to “submit for potential reimbursement” to the following address: **CertifiChecks, Inc., Attn: Redemption Dept., 1435 Shoup Mill Road, Dayton, Ohio, 45414.**

“What has happened to CertifiChecks is similar to what is going on today with many businesses being adversely affected by the current economic downturn,” said Philip E. Sakowitz Jr., DeCA’s director and chief executive officer. “Unfortunately, in this case the situation directly affects commissary customers.

“I regret the impact this is likely to have on our customers,” he added. “However, as an appropriated fund entity, in accordance with federal law we can no longer accept these certificates at this time. We are, however, looking for an alternative solution to fulfill our customers’ requests for commissary gift certificates.”

DeCA entered into a business agreement with CertifiChecks, Inc., in September 2002 to provide gift certificates redeemable in commissaries in denominations ranging from \$5 to \$100. Anyone could purchase the certificate but only authorized customers could use them. Purchasers

could obtain them in commissaries, by phone, or online for a fee of \$4.95 that went to CertifiChecks for the cost of printing, mailing and handling of up to 20 certificates per order. DeCA received no income from its agreement with CertifiChecks, Inc.

From the start, DeCA's use of gift certificates became a popular way for the families and friends of service members to give them "the gift of groceries." Since 2002, more than \$17.5 million in gift certificates have been purchased for authorized customers. Over the past few years, popularity of the gift certificates had increased steadily from combined in-store and online sales that totaled \$3.4 million in fiscal 2006 to more than \$3.9 million in fiscal 2008.

The gift certificate program became a prominent method for military and civilian aid organizations, such as installation chaplains funds, the Air Force Aid Society, the USO, Operation Homefront, Operation Interdependence, and the Fisher House Foundation, to extend donations to military families in need. The certificates also became a major part of commissary vendor giveaways at store grand openings and other customer outreach events.

CertifiChecks, Inc., headquartered in Dayton, Ohio, was established in April 1999, according to its Web site. It processed customized gift certificates for about 450 merchants and associations across the nation.

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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 \$3,400 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.*