

# What AAFES Has In Store For You

*Interview with Maj. Gen. Bill Essex, Commander of AAFES*



*Maj. Gen. Essex shops for desert camouflage sporting goods at a Tactical Field Exchange in Operation Iraqi Freedom.*

**Q** Now that members of the Reserve & National Guard have unlimited exchange shopping privileges, how would you explain the value of this benefit to them?

**A** AAFES is a major non-pay benefit to military service members, retirees and their families. According to a national independent market basket survey, AAFES' shelf prices provide Guard and National Reserve members an average of 22.09 percent overall savings compared to the competition, and that's before tax!

**Q** Stores off base or post make money from purchases. Who makes money from customers buying in the exchanges?

**A** AAFES reinvests each dollar customers spend in their communities as part of AAFES' dual mission to provide competitively priced goods and services and return earnings to support Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs. Roughly 68 percent of AAFES earnings are traditionally returned to MWR programs. The AAFES dividend funds quality of life improvements such as libraries, sports programs, swimming pools, youth activities, tickets and tour services, bowling centers, hobby shops and unit functions.

**Q** What percentage of your customers are members of the Reserve & National Guard?

**A** Approximately 23 percent of authorized AAFES customers are members of the Reserve & National Guard.

**Q** In light of the favorable tax advantages to exchange shopping, do you agree that buying higher-end value-priced products is the most meaningful exercise of one's benefit?

**A** In addition to contributing to MWR programs through purchases, saving sales tax on higher-end value-priced products is an excellent AAFES benefit.

**Q** Even though not all members of the Reserve & National Guard live near a major military shopping facility, do you agree that a shopper who is looking for a higher-end product (like a new television) should nevertheless consider visiting an exchange?

**A** Taking advantage of the AAFES benefit is always recommended, whether making small or large purchases. For those customers entitled to Exchange privileges, but not within close proximity to a PX or BX, the AAFES internet, [www.aafes.com](http://www.aafes.com), and catalogs extend the Exchange benefit to every corner of the globe.

**Q** Price and tax advantages are just two aspects of the total shopping experience. What about selection — how do the exchanges measure up?

**A** AAFES offers a wide selection of merchandise from name brand items to private label brands. When compared to equivalent national brands, "Exchange Select" prices are approximately 48 percent lower. The "Exchange Select" line currently offers more than 450 quality products including health and beauty care, baby products, vitamins and household products.



*"We all have a hand in securing our freedom" banner on the Bagram flight line (Steel Beach), Afghanistan on the 24th of July 2005. (left to right) Chris Schrafft, General Manager; Kurt A. Curtis, Senior Loss Prevention Manager; Bill Essex, Major General USAF, Commander AAFES; Woody W. Younginer, Vice President OEF; Jack A. Morris, Senior Vice President Europe and Esperanza (Pini) E. Gonzalez, Services Business Manager*

**Q** *AAFES also offers other services including a credit card. What is the benefit of having an AAFES credit card?*

**A** The Military STAR™ Card offers many benefits to Reserve and National Guard members including 10 percent off entire first day's purchases, competitive interest rates, no annual fee, 24/7 online account access and exclusive promotions throughout the year. The card can be used worldwide at participating Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard Exchanges (includes Online Store, Exchange Catalog and Centric Mall).

**Q** *What exchange benefits are available to families of Deployed Reserve & National Guard?*

**A** While AAFES lives its motto, "We Go Where You Go" with 55 exchanges and more than 450 associates deployed to those locations throughout Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom in support of deployed troops, activities at the homefront remain relatively unchanged for family members. With more than 47,000 associates worldwide, AAFES is able to continually provide quality service to those at home.

**Q** *What is the benefit of the exchange to the Reserve & National Guard who may live in more remote locations?*

**A** AAFES saves customers money everyday by offering low prices on quality goods and services. In addition to brick and mortar stores, AAFES features a wide variety of products available through internet and catalogs, with the same great savings found in the traditional BX/PX.

**Q** *What else would you like to tell members of the Reserve & National Guard about the AAFES Internet site?*

**A** AAFES' main website, [www.aafes.com](http://www.aafes.com), offers more than 25,000 items in all major categories with 24/7 shopping availability. Weekly specials and clearance items are definitely worth checking out. <http://CentricMall.com> expands AAFES' stock assortment by providing an assortment of products from more than 50 vendors not necessarily available at the local PX or BX. Military service members and their families receive free shipping when using

their Military STAR card or when making a purchase of \$49 or more.

**Q** *Have new services been added to the exchanges in the past year? If so, what are they?*

**A** Several new services have been added to the exchanges in the past year, including:

- Day spas
- DVD vending machines
- Digital photo processing kiosks
- Voice Over the Internet Protocol (VOIP)
- CZee Gaming Centers

**Q** *Tell us about employment opportunities for spouses or other military family members, both in CONUS and OCONUS.*

**A** AAFES has more than 47,000 associates worldwide. With 25% of those being military spouses and family members, AAFES employs more military spouses and family members than any other organization. Military family members can view available job postings by visiting [www.aafes.com](http://www.aafes.com).

**Q** *What else would you like members of the Reserve & National Guard to know about the exchange shopping experience that makes it so special compared to shopping at a civilian retail store?*

**A** You have earned the benefit of shopping at the BX/PX and we want to earn your respect by providing what you want and need at the best price anywhere. Our people are proud of the service they provide and are motivated to work hard for you. AAFES is always looking for new and better products, so please give your BX/PX a chance to serve you.



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*Maj. Gen. Bill Essex is Commander of the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) headquartered in Dallas, TX. His operational experience includes command of a squadron, an operations group and two wings. General Essex led unit deployments for operations Restore Hope and Southern Watch, served as installation commander in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and participated in Operation Deny Flight.*