

# **AIR FORCE COMMISSARY SERVICE**

## **MISSION**

The Air Force Commissary Service provides subsistence support to authorized military and civilian personnel through appropriated and nonappropriated funds food activities worldwide. The commander of the Commissary Service exercises command jurisdiction under the direction and control of a board of directors, Headquarters USAF, whose chairperson is the director of engineering and services. The Air Force Commissary Service manages commissary stores through stateside and oversea regions.

## **LINEAGE**

Air Force Commissary Service established and activated as a separate operating agency, 1 Jan 1976

Reassigned as a subordinate unit of the Air Force Engineering and Services Agency, 8 Apr 1977

Returned to separate operating agency status, 1 Dec 1978

## **STATIONS**

Kelly AFB, TX, 1 Jan 1976

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Air Force Engineering and Services Agency (later, Center), 8 Apr 1977

USAF, 1 Dec 1978

## **COMMANDERS**

Maj Gen Charles E. Woods, #1981

Maj Gen George C. Lynch, #1983

## **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

**EMBLEM**

## **MOTTO**

### **OPERATIONS**

At the end of World War II, each of the military services made its own regulations for commissaries - stores that sold grocery items to its personnel and family members. With the establishment of the Department of Defense in 1947, some form of centralization was inevitable within the Air Force. The major commands set their own commissary operating policies and procedures, with each base managing its own store. This was usually not cost effective and often became counterproductive with substandard facilities, remote site delivery problems, poor service, and the inability of small stores to receive price reductions based upon sales volume. A 1975 Defense Department study attributed these shortcomings largely to the lack of professional training, standardized procedures, and a centralized organization.

As a result, the Defense Department established the Air Force Commissary Service (AFCOMS) in January 1976 to overcome these problems within the Air Force. The headquarters, located on East Kelly, began operating with a small cadre of key personnel in April before officially assuming control of all Air Force commissaries on October 1, 1976.

Following its establishment, AFCOMS began building new facilities and modernizing its existing stores. By 1989, of 145 Air Force commissaries in operation, seventy-five were new. State-of-the-art methods of grocery management, scanners and computerized inventory methods, were used to cut costs and streamline operations. The headquarters staff managed the wartime subsistence mission and peacetime operation of commissaries as well as interfacing with local and national vendors to obtain discounts, promotions, and the best prices possible. But the tide of centralization did not stop with just consolidated operations within one service. Congressional budget cutbacks forced the Defense Department to look at centralizing all commissary operations. On October 1, 1991, AFCOMS officially consolidated with the commissary functions of the other services to form the new Defense Commissary Agency, headquartered at Fort Lee, Virginia.

The Air Force had pushed to locate the new agency's headquarters at Kelly. While that did not happen, the San Antonio location remained important. The former AFCOMS building on East Kelly became a regional headquarters for the new agency and included a service center that paid bills and salaries for all commissary operations located from the Mississippi River to Japan. While the organization changed, the mission remained the same - providing the best rations available to American service members and their families in war and peace

Midwest Region Headquarters of the Defense Commissary Agency At the end of World War II, each of the military services made its own regulations for commissaries—stores that sold grocery items to its personnel and family members. After the establishment of a separate Air Force in 1948, the major commands set their own commissary operating policies and procedures, with each base managing its own store. This usually proved inefficient and counterproductive with substandard facilities, remote site delivery problems, poor service, and

the inability of smaller stores to receive price reductions based upon sales volume. A 1975 Department of Defense study attributed these shortcomings largely to the lack of professional training, standardized procedures, and a centralized organization.

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The new organization began building new facilities and modernizing its existing stores. By 1989 over half of the Air Force commissaries were operating from new buildings. State-of-the-art methods of grocery management, scanners, and computerized inventory methods were used to cut costs and streamline operations. The headquarters staff managed the wartime subsistence mission and peacetime operation of commissaries as well as interfaced with local and national vendors to obtain discounts, promotions, and the best prices possible. But the tide of centralization did not stop with just consolidated operations of one service. Congressional budget cutbacks forced the Defense Department to look at centralizing all commissary operations. On October 1, 1991, the Air Force Commissary Service officially consolidated with the commissary functions of the other services to form the new Defense Commissary Agency, headquartered at Fort Lee, Virginia.

While the Air Force failed to locate the new agency's headquarters on Kelly, the San Antonio location remained important. The former Air Force Commissary Service headquarters building on East Kelly became the Midwest Regional headquarters and included a service center that paid bills and salaries for all commissary operations located from the Mississippi River to Japan. The Midwest Region headquarters also opted to stay in its facility on East Kelly once the BRAC Commission decided to close SA-ALC and realign the base to neighboring Lackland AFB. On October 1, 1997, it became a tenant of the GKDC, but the mission remained the same—providing the best rations available to American service members and their families in war and peace.

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USAF Unit Histories  
Created: 20 Oct 2022  
Updated:

Sources  
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

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