



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

Corporate Communications

1300 E Avenue, Fort Lee, VA 23801-1800

Tel: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 8-6105 DSN: 687-8000, Ext. 8-6105

FAX: (804) 734-8248 DSN: 687-8248

www.commissaries.com

Release Number: 79-19
Date: October 10, 2019
Media Contact: Kevin L. Robinson, public affairs specialist
Tel.: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8773
E-mail: kevin.robinson@deca.mil

Happy anniversary

Commissaries honor Navy's 244 years of service

*By Tamara Eastman,
DeCA public affairs specialist*

Note: For a video honoring the Navy's birthday, go to DeCA's [YouTube](#) site. For photos, go to the agency's [Flickr](#) page. Go to the DeCA [website](#) to read this release online.

FORT LEE, Va. – Oct. 13 is the 244th anniversary of the establishment of the [U.S. Navy](#) by the Continental Congress in 1775. Since that day, the Navy has grown from 12 ships to become the world's pre-eminent naval force.



“The Defense Commissary Agency [DeCA] salutes the Navy on this important anniversary and acknowledges their legacy of distinguished service, valor and sacrifice during conflicts that date back to the American Revolution,” said Army Command Sgt. Maj. Tomeka N. O’Neal, senior enlisted advisor to the DeCA director. “As we celebrate their 244th birthday, we are proud to serve active duty, reserve and retired sailors and their families by delivering the commissary benefit they’ve earned.”

Before the Navy established its own commissary operations, sailors had to find ways to procure food while at sea.

In the days of sail, shipboard fare during long voyages was monotonous and nutritionally deficient, often becoming spoiled or infested with weevils or maggots. Sailors therefore eagerly anticipated visiting a port of call – either foreign or American – where they could obtain fresh, tasty, healthful foods.

The earliest regulations for the new Navy of the “United Colonies” included directions to the ship captains to employ some sort of fishing and the fish was to be distributed to sailors onboard who were sick. The regulations also contained instructions on feeding the sailors: They were to receive weekly rations of 3 pounds of beef or pork, a sack of flour or suet – the hard fatty tissue about the loins and kidneys of cattle and sheep – some cheese and ships biscuits known as hardtack.

Meat was kept in brine in order to “pickle” it and the ships biscuits were stored in barrels for several months at a time. The enlisted crew also were to receive a half pint of distilled spirits or a quart of beer daily.

Keeping the provisions onboard fresh was a real dilemma for the early Navy, as much of the provisions would spoil and the hardtack was often infested with maggots, leading to the onboard joke that they provided more protein in the diet. The ration was reduced in 1801 as a result of the establishment of the peace time Navy.

When in port, even if the men didn’t leave their ships they could buy goods from civilian vendors who rowed, paddled or sailed out to visiting ships in small craft known collectively as “bumboats.” From those boats, these merchants conducted business with the sailors on deck. They sold all manner of local goods, from fish and lobsters to pineapples and coconuts. Although the vendors provided a valuable service, many charged exorbitant prices.

During the round-the-world voyage of the “Great White Fleet” from 1907 to 1909, the Navy realized that bumboats could not adequately serve the needs of larger ships that carried bigger crews. Even before the fleet’s return, Congress took steps to establish “ships’ stores” aboard every vessel to take the place of the overseas bumboats, and sales commissaries – called “ships’ stores ashore” – at ports in the United States. The stores ashore were similar to sales commissaries the Army had established in 1867.

The first Navy commissary opened in 1910, and commissaries have grown with the Navy for the last 108 years. At first, these stores operated more like warehouses, where clerks pulled items from the shelves for the customers.

Self-service began to gain popularity in the late 1920s and became widespread in the 1940s. Modernized commissaries comparable to civilian grocery stores, along with professionalized permanent store staffs, began to appear after the stores came under the authority

of the Navy Ships' Store Office in 1946, the Navy Retail System Office in 1969, and the Navy Resale and Services Support Office in 1979. NAVRESSO managed Navy commissaries until the creation of DeCA, which centralized control of all the services' commissaries in 1991.

"Today, DeCA provides the Navy and other armed forces branches the opportunity to save thousands of dollars annually compared to civilian supermarkets," O'Neal said.

Members of the Navy community, along with their peers in the other armed services, may shop at any of DeCA's 236 commissaries at U.S. military installations around the world. There are 60 such stores at Navy bases, plus one at the Joint Reserve Base at Naval Air Station Fort Worth, Texas.

-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. Commissaries provide a military benefit, saving authorized patrons thousands of dollars annually on their purchases compared to similar products at commercial retailers. The discounted prices include a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. 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.*

Stay Connected to Your Commissary Benefit

COMMISSARIES.COM: Visit www.commissaries.com to learn more about the Defense Commissary Agency: check out the latest news, find a store near you, see what's on sale, create a shopping list, learn of food and product recalls, scan employment opportunities, read frequently asked questions, submit a customer comment form online through DeCA's Your Action Line and more.

COMMISSARY CONNECTION E-NEWSLETTER: Stay connected with the latest news about your most valued benefit, Hot Links to additional savings, shopping sprees, contests, commissary promotions, events and more, go to www.commissaries.com/subscribe.cfm and subscribe to the Commissary Connection newsletter.

COMMISSARY CONNECTION BLOG: To see regular posts about topics of interest to commissary customers, including commissary news, human interest stories, shopping tips, videos and notifications about programs or events, go to <http://commissaryconnection.dodlive.mil/>. You can also subscribe to this forum by going to www.commissaries.com/subscribe.cfm.

FACEBOOK: Visit www.facebook.com/YourCommissary, DeCA's Facebook page, where you can post comments and share news, photos and videos.

YOUTUBE: To see DeCA's latest videos, visit www.youtube.com/DefenseCommissary.

TWITTER: To see DeCA's latest "tweets," visit www.twitter.com/YourCommissary.

PINTEREST: To see DeCA's theme-based image collections, visit <http://www.pinterest.com/YourCommissary>.

FLICKR: To see DeCA's latest photographs, visit <http://www.flickr.com/photos/commissary/>.

INSTAGRAM: To see DeCA's latest photographs, visit <https://www.instagram.com/YourCommissary/>.