

From California to Kirkuk, AAFES Goes Where the Troops Go

DALLAS – When you have a motto like “We Go Where You Go” and a mission to support America’s troops, you’ve got to be ready to “move out” at a moment’s notice. Such is the case for the 113-year-old Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) and the 43,000 associates who regularly bring a touch of home to some of the “hottest” spots around the globe.

Most recently, AAFES associates from the BXs at Travis and Beale AFBs deployed Mobile Field Exchanges (MFEs) in support of some 400 National Guard members battling wildfires near the cities of Hayfork and Booneville, Calif. as well as Yosemite National Park.

Air conditioned and stocked full of necessities, AAFES MFEs are 54-ft. trailers (photos available on request) converted into mobile retail stores to support contingency deployments. Military operations in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo as well as domestic emergencies and training exercises drove the need for this quality of life support to deployed service members. Once the MFE arrives on site, receives merchandise and sets up, usually done within 24 hours, the unit is opened as long as needed.

“The more than 250 Army National Guards that the Travis AFB team supported in Hayfork came out of Los Angeles county,” said AAFES’ Travis AFB BX General Manager Lee Chung. “Being on- site takes on special importance when you consider that these troops just returned from a deployment to the Middle East in support of their country and have quickly remobilized to protect their state. Fortunately, in both cases AAFES did and continues to ‘go where they go’ to bring a taste of home to the front lines.”

Beyond domestic activities, AAFES continues to meet the needs of Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines assigned to Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. In fact, right now some 350 civilian associates from AAFES are voluntarily deployed in support of 90 BX/PXs, 177 name brand fast food operations, including Burger King, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell locations, as well as 74 phone centers throughout Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kyrgyzstan and Cyprus.

“We Go Where You Go’ means that this command is prepared to set up shop in some of the most hostile and austere environments troops are called to serve,” said AAFES’ Chief Operating Officer Mike Howard. “Those five words capture our team’s commitment to investing in the people and resources needed to rapidly respond to the Army, Air Force, National Guard and Reserve’s ever changing missions.”