

Your Vietnam Regional Exchange



... Service To The Fighting Man



MACV Office of Information

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COMMAND INFORMATION NOTE

The Vietnam Regional Exchange (VRE) is a valuable part of the overall U. S. military effort. In three years it has grown into a \$35 million-a-month business whose customers are the Free World Forces in Vietnam.

In addition to accomplishing its assigned mission of providing health and comfort items to the servicemen, the VRE plays an important part in the United States goal of helping Vietnam to attain a stable economy.

The Exchange helps keep the money spent by servicemen abroad in American hands. It siphons off excess dollars servicemen otherwise might convert to piasters, the spending of which would further overload an already inflated economy.

This pamphlet is offered to acquaint you more thoroughly with the Vietnam Regional Exchange and its many services.

WHERE IS VRE?

The Exchange in Vietnam is wherever the troops are—from the Mekong Delta to the DMZ. Servicemen can walk into a PX or BX (in some cases the Exchange can come to them) and buy from a stock of up to 5,000 items.

This is the first time the Exchange Service has operated in an active combat zone. In previous conflicts, PX supplies were issued to units.

In Vietnam, with its problems of transport and supply, the Vietnam Regional Exchange keeps pace with growing troop strengths, steadily expanding its services to military personnel and authorized civilian

patrons. The Exchange now serves Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) troops country-wide with more than 300 retail outlets and 130 snack bars.

In addition to large modern facilities in major troop areas, the VRE operates stores in tents, trucks and other vehicles and—for small remote units—delivers Exchange merchandise by helicopter. Throughout the country there also are more than 500 Exchange-controlled concessions such as barber shops, beauty shops, tailor shops, watch repair shops and gift shops.

PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT GO

Top and middle level management positions in the VRE are filled mostly by Army and Air Force officers, US civilian executives, enlisted men and third country nationals. The Exchange employs over 800 third country nationals (Filipinos, Koreans, and Australians) and almost 10,000 Vietnamese. Most of the store personnel are Vietnamese.

Many servicemen work part-time for the VRE, operating small stores for units in remote locations under special supply and accounting arrangements. Unit commanders control operation of these stores, which keep basic items available to the troops in the field under combat conditions.

WHAT'S FOR SALE?

The Vietnam Regional Exchange sells more than 5,000 items, ranging from shoelaces to potato chips to tape recorders. Included are necessities such as toilet articles, tobacco and writing materials and such comfort items as beverages, electronic equipment and photographic equipment.



About 20 Exchange items are rationed or controlled. These include radios, cameras, watches, tape recorders, cigarettes and liquor, which are sold only to authorized bearers of MACV ration cards. The MACV Exchange and Commissary Ration Control Board determines which items will be placed under ration limitations. This is designed to give everyone a fair chance at short-supply merchandise.

Exchange stores also control the sale of such large-demand items as soap by limiting the amount that may be bought. Thus more customers can be supplied.

When a customer cannot find an item he wants in the Exchange and wonders why, the reason probably is one of these four: 1) the item is authorized for sale but temporarily out of stock; 2) the manufacturer has discontinued the item; 3) the item may be out of stock because of insufficient demand and is in phase out status; or 4) the item may not be authorized for sale at that particular facility.

The customer can make his desires known in these cases by checking with the customer service desk or the manager. Sometimes the item can be obtained from another store. If it is not stocked, the customer can fill out a "want slip." This is one of the ways the Exchange learns what its customers want.

Exchange patrons are prohibited from giving rationed items or any item costing \$10 or more to anyone in Vietnam not authorized Exchange privileges. Violation of this rule can result in severe disciplinary action.

PRICES—WHO DECIDES?

Prices in the Vietnam Regional Exchange are set by boards at headquarters of the Army & Air Force Exchange Service in Dallas and Pacific Exchange System in Honolulu. Broad guidelines are set by the board of directors of the Army & Air Force Exchange and Motion Picture Services in Washington, D. C.

Prices are based on the cost of each item and a standard markup to accommodate operating costs. A modest "surplus" is included in pricing to insure the sound capital structure of the Exchange Service and to

generate funds for support of welfare and recreation programs.

Prices are the same at all VRE outlets. If a variance is noted from store to store an administrative error has been made and should be reported to the manager.

PROFITS

The major share of Exchange profits—an average of 6 to 7 per cent of gross sales—is returned to the Departments of the Army and the Air Force to finance nonappropriated fund activities (athletic facilities, libraries, hobby shops, dayrooms, etc.) In Vietnam, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard personnel are included in welfare fund distribution from the Departments.



Exchange profits have put more than \$500 million into these programs in 20 years. The remainder of the profit, about 2½ per cent of Exchange revenue, is set aside to improve and activate facilities.

EXTRAS OFFERED

In addition to its regular store service, the Exchange provides a number of extras. Among them are a check-cashing service, special order service for items not stocked by the stores and a number of mail order catalogues that enable the ordering of U. S. or foreign-made merchandise for delivery in Vietnam or the United States. The mail order catalogues, a year-round service, are especially useful for Christmas shopping.

Another service allows for the purchase of American cars to be delivered in the

United States. Only representatives of American automobile manufacturers are permitted to do business here, thus eliminating the chance of misrepresentation.

FACTS AND FANCIES

Questions are often asked from time to time about the Exchange. Here are a few:

Question: "The Exchange often run short of good watches for sale, why don't they order enough?"

Fact: Many of the watches stocked by the Vietnam Regional Exchange have been off-shore (non-U. S.) purchases. Such purchases must be limited in keeping with our Government program to restrict the flow of U. S. gold to foreign countries.

As a result, the supply simply has not been enough to meet the demand. However, the Exchange is increasing its orders for U. S.-made watches, so the supply will increase.

Question: "Do Mobile Exchange snack bars frequently carry incomplete stocks."

Fact: The Exchange's mobile snack bars must buy food items from Class I issue points, and are dependent on available stocks there. If the issue point has used its available fresh bread to fill troop mess or open mess orders—no sandwiches for the mobile snack bar.

Question: "Why don't Mobile Exchanges make rounds at regular hours?"

Fact: Mobile units, like other vehicles, go in for maintenance or repair. Lack of parts may temporarily keep them off the road.

Question: "Can anyone go into a PX and shop around?"

Fact: Positively not! All persons entering an Exchange, except U. S. and Free World Forces Servicemen in uniform, are checked. This impression may have arisen because limited exchange privileges are extended to U. S. government and government-connected civilians here. This is standard procedure in other overseas areas.

Question: "Do they put all the big items up for sale at the big store in Saigon?"

Fact: Definitely not. The short supply merchandise—cameras, watches, electronic equipment, etc.—is distributed to all stores.

Allocations are based on troop strengths, not on dollar sales.

The Exchange tries to give all customers a fair chance to purchase these items by placing them on sale a few at a time and at staggered, unannounced times.

Another Exchange effort to insure fair purchase opportunities is the ration control system. This is designed to give everyone a fair chance at short-supply merchandise. Ration cards are checked and controlled very closely to prevent illegal use.

If a man loses his ration card, he should report it immediately to his commander or supervisor.

The original card is a precious thing. When a lost ration card is replaced, all ration items except liquor and cigarettes are deleted. Lists of non-valid ration cards are kept in Exchanges.



Female barber "trims the locks" of a soldier in one of the over 500 exchange controlled concession activities.

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The Vietnam Regional Exchange wants satisfied customers and does a great deal to get and keep them.

Service is their mission, and "Questions of doubt will be resolved in favor of the customer."