

AAFES Considers Expanding Online Store Access to All Veterans

• DALLAS

The Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) confirmed with *E and C News* that it has participated in discussions concerning the expansion of shopping privileges at the online exchange store to all honorably discharged veterans.

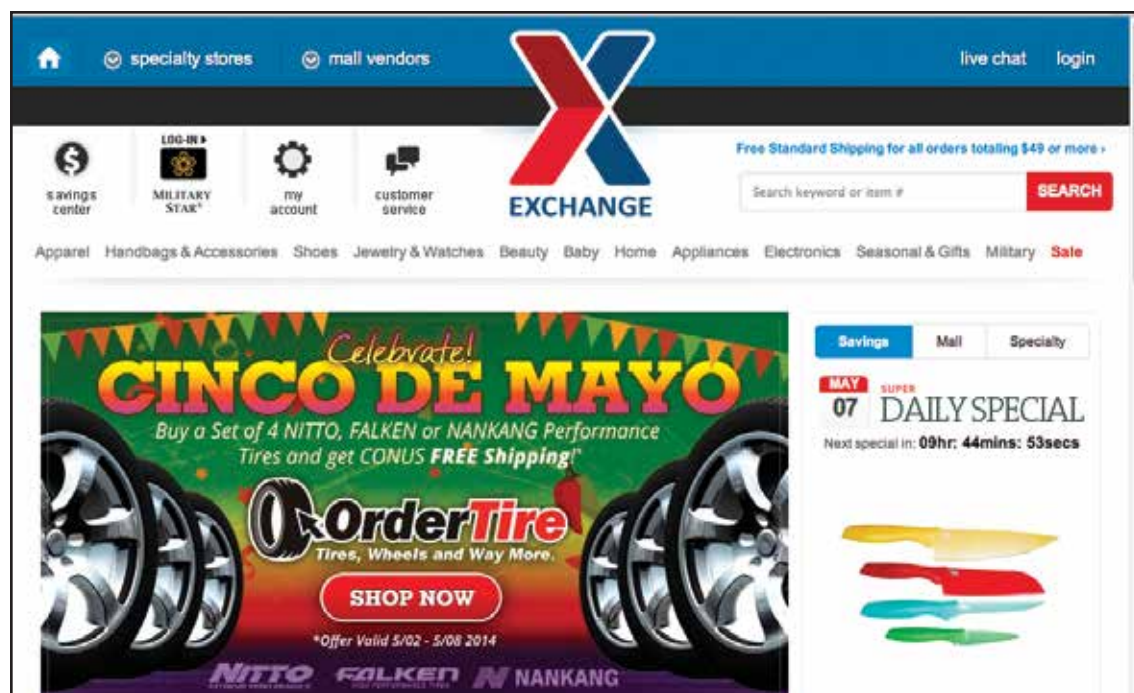
Although an AAFES spokesman said the organization has not submitted a formal proposal to extend this access, if such a proposal were enacted, it would open the online store at shopmyexchange.com to about 22 million veterans. This site is already open to authorized customers from all service branches.

Such a change would require an update to the existing subject Department of Defense Instruction (DODI), and would have to be declared “legally sufficient” by the office of the DoD General Counsel.

“Should the Department of Defense (DoD) wish to extend online benefits to veterans, the Exchange would need to make internal adjustments to address an expected increase in shoppers,” the spokesman noted. “If DoD were to establish parameters for such an initiative, the Exchange would have a better understanding of the timeline needed to implement internal adjustments.”

Under current policy, the only veterans who are authorized to shop the exchange, besides retirees, are those with honorable discharges who are rated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as 100-percent disabled, or hospitalized where exchange stores are available.

“Authenticating honorably discharged veterans as authorized online shoppers could be accomplished using the current data feed armed services exchanges have established with the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reports System (DEERS) to authenticate active-duty military and their dependents,” the spokesman said, adding that AAFES would have to defer



AAFES has participated in discussions concerning the expansion of shopping privileges at the online exchange store to all honorably discharged veterans, although the organization has not submitted a formal proposal to extend this access.

to the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) for specific information concerning DEERS.

“Initial research has validated that DEERS encompasses all living veterans,” the spokesman said. “As such, the protection and transfer of data could follow the same authorization processes currently used to validate active duty, retirees and their dependents.”

AAFES plans to launch a new version of its

website during the summer, featuring an improved product mix, where parity between online offerings and those found in the exchange service’s brick-and-mortar stores will be much more aligned with each other than ever before. The spokesman said a preliminary analysis of a variety of military social media polls indicated a ninety-five percent approval level for the idea among those addressing the topic.