

**DEFENSE SUPPLY CENTER PHILADELPHIA (DSCP)  
SUBSISTENCE OPERATIONAL RATIONS BUSINESS UNIT  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)  
Updated January 2003**

Below is a compilation of questions that we have received in the Operational Rations Business Unit via our web page along with the answers that were provided. If you have a question regarding Operational Rations please send it to [Joseph.Zanolle@dla.mil](mailto:Joseph.Zanolle@dla.mil) with the subject line "Rations Inquiry." Please note that some of the answers below were provided by members of the U.S. Army Soldier & Biological Chemical Command (SBCCOM) at Natick Labs in Natick, MA. We thank them for their assistance.

**Q:** What are the prices of the various Operational Rations programs?

**A:** The prices for the various rations can be found on our web page at the following link:

<http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/rations/prices.pdf>. Please be aware that some prices will change with each new fiscal year (FY).

**Q:** When menu changes are made to the Unitized Group Ration, Heat and Serve (UGR-H&S), are they implemented across the board for the entire program, or does it occur on a menu-by-menu basis?

**A:** Orders filled will occur on a menu-by-menu basis. Depending on stock of the various UGR-H&S menus, different menus will be exhausted and replaced with the newer revised menu at different times. We try to keep both sets of menus online on our web page during the transition and then only the newer menus as most of the older ones are depleted. So if you order a UGR-H&S menu in Fiscal Year (FY) 02 and we still have stock reflecting FY 02 Menu product, then that is what you will receive. If FY 02 product were exhausted, then you would receive FY 03 Menu product instead.

**Q:** What are the generic shipping times of Operational Rations for different theaters of deployment?

**A:** Average shipping time for deployment to the various theaters via surface shipments are as follows:

CENTCOM: 30-45 days  
EUCOM: 8-12 days  
PACCOM: 15-20 days  
SOUTHCOM: 6-10 days

**Q:** In your narrative on the Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE) web page, it states: "The contents of one MRE meal bag provides an average of 1250 kilocalories (13 % protein, 36 % fat, and 51 % carbohydrates)." Am I reading that correctly? One MRE contains twelve *thousand*, five *hundred* calories?

**A:** The term kilocalorie is the correct word that is used for one calorie. It does not mean one thousand calories. So the MRE has one thousand, two hundred and fifty calories (kilocalories) not 12,500 calories.

**Q:** Where can I find a National Stock Number (NSN) for Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MREs)?

**A:** The National Stock Number for a case of MREs (12 MREs per case) is 8970-00-149-1094.

Point of contact is Tom Carlin at (215) 737-7348, DSN: 444-7348, or e-mail:  
[tcarlin@dscp.dla.mil](mailto:tcarlin@dscp.dla.mil).

The webpage for the MRE is <http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/rations/meals/mres.htm>.

The NSNs for all the various Operational Rations programs can be found on each of their individual web pages at <http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/rations/rations.htm> under the "How Can I Order It" section of the description.

**Q:** How is the Subsistence Emergency Supply Operation Center (ESOC) staffed?

**A:** The Subsistence ESOC is only activated and staffed on an "as needed" basis. When not activated, all calls should be directed to the appropriate point of contact. If you have an emergency, you can call the DSCP Command and Control Center (CCC) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 215-737-4444. For a complete telephone and email directory for the Operational Rations Business Unit please visit

<http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/rations/ratdir.htm>.

**Q:** Do you still sell the HOOAH! Bar?

**A:** No, DSCP no longer sells the HOOAH! Bar. I believe that the Army had additional funds one year to spend and had DSCP buy the bar for them. After that one-time buy, it was never acquired again. It is now commercially available through Sterling Foods, Ltd. at <http://www.sterlingfoodsusa.com/capabilities.asp>.

**Q:** I was browsing the internet looking for a supplier of the Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE) for use while on camping trips and on weekend paintball activities, and happened to find your website. I have found several other sites offering MREs, but most seem to be only partial meals, consisting of an entree and some of the other items. My question then is, is it possible for an individual to purchase MREs or similar Military-Specific foods directly from your company or do you know of a distributor that sells the full MRE pack? Or, if it is not possible for an individual to purchase these items without authorization, can you refer me to whom I need to contact in an attempt to receive this authorization?

**A:** We, the Defense Supply Center Philadelphia (DSCP), are not permitted to sell the Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE) or any of our Operational Rations meal programs to the general public. We are only allowed to sell the MRE and other rations to Federally funded activities. Below is a copy of our Policy Statement which states who we are legally allowed to sell rations to and the web link on which it is found. The reason that the MREs that you have found on various web sites are only "partial MREs" is because the MRE is a military-specific item like you stated produced for military use during combat, training, and for the war reserve. The MRE is produced exclusively for this purpose as determined by the Surgeon General, the Military Services, and various other government organizations and agencies. There are some places that do sell "commercial MREs" like the ones that you have found on the Internet, so they would be your best source to fill your needs. Also, our commercial vendors that support the MRE also sell a "commercial version of the MRE", which you would be able to purchase. Below are the POCs for the three vendors. Also, retired military can purchase MREs from their local commissary. If your local commissary does not sell MREs, you can ask them to do so, as they are eligible to purchase them from us.

MRE Vendors:

Ameriqua: JKnapp@Ameriqua.com (John Knapp)  
WORNICK: MRos@Wornick.com (Martha Ros)  
SOPAKCO: DDuBose@Sopakco.com (Dave DuBose)

#### DSCP OPERATIONAL RATIONS POLICY STATEMENT:

It is DSCP policy NOT to sell rations to individuals, whether members of the Armed Services or civilians. The Department of Defense regulations and DSCP policy permit the sale of rations to the following: U.S. military organizations, federal government-funded activities, activities empowered to perform a federal-government-legislated function, a DoD sponsored non-appropriated fund instrumentality, a State Department sponsored employee commissary located outside the U. S., a foreign government when an authorized contractual relationship has been established, a federal government contractor, when the contract specifically provides for the purchase of stock fund items by the contractor and other entities when authorized by duly appointed officials.

The Policy Statement can be found at the web link below at the bottom of the page:

<http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/oprat.htm>

**Q:** I saw that there are some new Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE) food items that are going to be produced. I was wondering if you had any information?

**A:** The U.S. Army Soldier & Biological Chemical Command (SBCCOM) at Natick Labs in Natick, MA do all the research and development of new food items for the MRE. Below is a link their web page for a list of items that have been or are planned to be introduced to the MRE for years 1995-2004.

[http://www.sbccom.army.mil/products/food/MRE\\_Improvements.htm](http://www.sbccom.army.mil/products/food/MRE_Improvements.htm)

**Q:** How does one determine which Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE) components are packed based on the date of pack of the MRE case, e.g. we have menus packed in May 2001, should the components match MRE XX, or MRE XIX? And how can one determine this based on the coding placed on the MRE case?

**A:** The production year should match the MRE year (i.e. MRE XX would be 2000 year production). Also, the MRE case should have a date packed. This should match the production year also (i.e. DOP 1/1/00 would be 2000 production year).

**Q:** I am looking for information regarding the nutritional breakdown of the Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE). Our Command is participating in a one-week field exercise in which we will be eating MREs. Two pregnant women are attending the exercise and the question has been raised as to whether the MRE would meet the increased nutritional needs during pregnancy, such as for iron, folic acid and calcium. I have the calorie, carbohydrate, protein and fat information but am looking for vitamin and mineral content.

**A:** Looking at MRE XXI (2001 production of the MRE) the average of all 24 menus meets most of the micronutrient needs of pregnant women if they eat the ENTIRE ration. An important point to make is that there are some items in the MRE that are fortified. Knowing that 3600 calories is a lot to eat during the day for a women, I advise that women make smart food choices and try to consume the items that are fortified along with the entree/fruit/starch.

Here is a list of items that are fortified with various micronutrients:

Beverage Base: Vitamin C

Cocoa Beverage: Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Thiamin, Vitamin B6 and Calcium

Cheese Spread (Plain and Jalapeno) and Peanut Butter: Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and Thiamin and Vitamin B6.

Crackers: Thiamin, Riboflavin, Niacin, Vitamin B6 and Calcium.

Wheat Snack Bread: Calcium

Chocolate Covered Cookie: Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Thiamin and Vitamin B6.

I also strongly recommend that they still take their pregnancy vitamins with iron. Three MREs per day will not meet their requirement of 30mg per day. It is also a close call on Calcium and Folate (especially if they do not consume the whole ration). Is there an option to provide these women with an Ultra- High Temperature (UHT) Milk or dry milk to increase their Vitamin D and Calcium consumption? The MRE is very low in Vitamin D content. It is difficult to get dairy products into the ration due to the 3-year shelf life requirement. We are currently working on this problem and some relief has come with the inclusion of a powdered dairy shake that was approved for the 2002 production of the MRE.

**Q:** Would like to know if the U.S. Military Services (Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Army) food services consider vegetarian soldiers? I am interested in getting information about everyday meals in U.S. bases.

**A:** The meals that the US Military Services receive are shelf-stable, semi-perishable and perishable in nature. The meals that my particular office deals with are the shelf-stable and semi-perishable "Operational Rations". Different Operational Rations Programs range from shelf-stable meals (ex the MRE which last 3 years at 80 degrees F) to semi-perishable rations (such as the UGR-A which includes perishable components that require refrigeration). Within the Operational Rations programs there do exist vegetarian meals. For example there are 24 menus for the MRE. Several of these are comprised of vegetarian entrees items like pasta and vegetables. For a list of ration meal programs you can visit the website:

<http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/rations/rations.htm>

In addition to the Operational Rations CBU, there are two other CBUs here in DSCP Subsistence who procure food items for what might be termed Troop Issue - in other words the three meals a day which our active duty men and women in the Services consume in the Dining Facilities, Mess Halls, Galleys, on board ship and to some degree in the field. They are the Produce CBU and the Food Service CBU.

Having said all that, we are here to procure what our customers in the Services want. I can tell you by observation of orders and having eaten in a number of military dining facilities, etc, that the Services insure that a wide variety of fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are always available to our Service men and women. To what degree the entrees served meet definitions of vegetarian diet is not known to me.

How the Military Services take special dietary needs of the soldiers (including vegetarian needs) into account when they develop their recipes and entrees would be something that they would respond to.

**Q:** On the web page for OPRATS I have found MRE, UGR and everything else, but I have a unit inquiring about T-Rats. Are they no longer available?

**A:** The Tray Pack Rations (T-Rats) are no longer available. The T was an 18-person meal module that utilized the Tray Pack Can as its core component. The T was used mainly by the USMC. When the Unitized Group Ration, Heat and Serve (UGR-H&S) was introduced, it also used the Tray Pack Can as its core component, but it also used many commercially packaged type items and was a 50 person meal module. For a while the T and the UGR-H&S both existed together. Since the USMC was the only Service using the T, we worked with them in addressing some issues that they had with usage of the UGR-H&S (i.e. there are now several H&S menus that have alternative menus strictly for the USMC as there were several commercially packaged items that the USMC wanted packaged in the trays), and they have since converted to using the H&S. Also, we are now in the process of transitioning from use of the Tray Pack (Metal) Can to the Polymeric Tray.

**Q:** What will happen to the Tray Ration Heating System the Marine Corps is using. Will it be modified? Will it be replaced? Will UGR- H&S be the only T-Rations available?

**A:** The UGR-H&S contains the same tray packs as you were using. You will still be using your Tray Ration Heating System (Babington Burner) with the UGR-H&S. NSN's have just been established for the components of the Tray Ration Heating System, NSN 7310-01-295-7479. DSCP is starting to build inventory on the items in FSC 7310 that are managed by this office so parts availability should improve. The Unitized Tray Pack Ration (T-Rations) is no longer available.

**Q:** Is there an ingredient breakdown for the foods in the Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE) and the Unitized Group Ration (UGR) to determine what contains lactose (the fruit sugar in milk and dairy products) for those who are lactose intolerant?

**A:** Unfortunately we do not have a list of the ingredients used in operational rations, including the MRE and UGR. There are a number of manufacturers who produce the ration components and assemble the rations; therefore, there is no standard formulation for most of all of the ration items. However, there are ingredient listings on all of the MRE components. This is the same as it is for the commercial products. As far as the group rations go (the UGR-H&S and the UGR-A), there are ingredient listings on the bulk products and the tray packs. Military Service Men and Women should work with their food service personnel to provide them with the ingredient lists. Items such as gravies, mashed potatoes, entrees with cream/cheese sauces, baked items, peanut butter and cocoa beverage base are some of the items that they may contain lactose, whey or casein.

**Q:** Can you give me information on the predecessors to the Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE)?

**A:** The MRE is the current core individual combat ration for the U.S. Military Services. It is in its 22<sup>nd</sup> year of production and has evolved quite a bit during its existence. For a list of recent improvements to the MRE, please visit [http://www.sbcom.army.mil/products/food/MRE\\_Improvements.htm](http://www.sbcom.army.mil/products/food/MRE_Improvements.htm). The two most recent predecessors to the MRE were the C-Ration and the Meal, Combat, Individual (MCI). Here is a brief description of each.

#### **C-Ration:**

- Development began in 1938 and was completed between 1941 and 1945.
- Used extensively during World War II.
- Issued as one boxed ration per person per day.
- One case of C-Rations contained 6 rations.
- Each ration was composed of a B-unit and a M-unit; total weight was approximately 7 pounds.
- B-unit: (3) 12 ounce cans of bread, coffee and sugar.
- M-unit: (3) 12 ounce cans of meat and vegetable components.
- Limited menu selection [(3) M-units and (3) B-units]; many of the menus contained beans.
- Intended for limited use but sometimes it was used as the sole source of subsistence for weeks.

- Rarely were all of the components available so substitutions with duplicate components were common. This exacerbated menu fatigue.
- Menus were expanded in 1944 to include (10) M-units and (6) B-units.
- Surplus C-Rations were used in both Korea and Vietnam.

**Meal, Combat, Individual (MCI):**

- Replaced the C-Ration beginning in 1958.
- Used extensively in Vietnam.
- Evolved from the C-Ration (used same metal containers as C-Rations).
- Redesigned food packaging to provide an *individual meal rather than an entire ration*.
- Each MCI weighed approximately 2.7 pounds and contained about 1200 calories.
- Components almost identical to the C-Ration components but with more variety.
- 12 different meals per case with increased variety of canned meats.
- Less monotony and menu fatigue.

**Q:** Why was the Humanitarian Daily Ration (HDR) developed? Why weren't Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MREs) used for humanitarian feeding instead of creating a new ration?

**A:** The HDR was designed as an alternative to the MRE for humanitarian feeding to be used when conventional means are not available. The mission of the HDR is to provide basic food to people in dire need of support. An alternative to the MRE was needed, as someone near starvation would not be able to properly digest a MRE due to its accelerated nutritional profile (which is intended for someone exerting more energy in combat). A set of parameters was developed by Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) regarding total calories, some micronutrient requirements, and menu contents. Menus contain no animal products or by-products to meet the dietary and religious requirements of the intended recipients. These parameters were provided to industry to develop meals that would meet the requirements.