

# NATIONAL GUARD & RESERVE



## Mission Accomplished: A Resounding Success at the 2026 Guard & Reserve Employment Summit

### Brief Overview

From May 5–7, the Hilton Orlando Buena Vista Palace became a "magical place" of a different sort, serving as the epicenter for military talent and corporate innovation during the 2026 National Guard & Reserve Employment Summit & Career Fair. Hosted by VetJobs and Military Spouse Jobs, the three-day event gathered leaders, advocates, and partners with a singular focus: bolstering employment support for the Guard and Reserve community.

### A Crossroads for the "Citizen-Soldier"

The summit opened with a powerful call to action by Maj Gen (ret) David May, Vice President of Military Partnerships, acknowledging that the "Citizen-Soldier" model is currently at a crossroads. Opening remarks emphasized that the timing of the summit was "auspicious," following recent testimony from senior Guard and Reserve leadership before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense in April. "The Guard and Reserve are a Strategic Asset," General May noted. "These men and women are not just 'part-time' service members; they are full-time leaders in businesses and our communities." The summit aimed to address the "silent subsidy" of national defense by advocating for modernized support and real incentives for the businesses that employ these service members.

### Leadership in Action

The success of the summit was driven by a distinguished roster of speakers and moderators who brought years of experience from "the field level to the halls of the Pentagon." Among our many incredible speakers were The Honorable Ron Keohane & CSM (Ret) John Sampa. This powerful duo led the opening panels.

As the former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Keohane joined Sampa—the ESGR National Chair and former Command Sgt Major of the Army National Guard—to provide deep insights into the evolving workforce. Also joining us to kick off the Summit were Dr. Ozwald Elie, NGB-J1, Col Cheri Guikema, Air Force Reserves, and LTC Kerrick Gesse, US Army Reserves. These leaders tackled the "employment gap," focusing on innovative approaches to translating military leadership into career success and supporting the home front through initiatives like universal license portability for spouses.

### Bridging the Gap in a Changing Economy

The summit didn't shy away from modern challenges. With the national jobs inventory at a five-year low and AI emerging as a "disruptive force," the event focused on the necessity of collective effort. "No single organization has the capacity to provide all the requisite employment support," as General May stated in his opening remarks, reinforcing that "only together as partners will we succeed." For the first time, the event concluded with a high-energy Career Readiness & Hiring Fair on Day 3. This session allowed job seekers to connect directly with recruiters, receive on-site resume coaching, and participate in interview preparation designed to turn "limitless dreams" into professional reality.

### Looking Forward

As attendees departed Orlando, the mission was clear: to implement solutions ranging from increased remote work for spouses to supporting the small businesses that keep our reserves ready. As the summit concluded, the message remained: when we support the careers of those who serve, we ensure the continued readiness and retention of our national defense.



Regina LeValley - MSJ/VJ



(L to R) Matt Andolina - Disney Casting Staff, Amy Rossi - MSJ/VJ, and Erissa MacKaron - Disney Casting Staff



MSJ/VJ - Stacey Cummings, Kaitlyn Smith, and Katherine DeBeer



Renetta Stratton - MSJ/VJ



Brian Wick - MSJ/VJ



Harry ("Chip") Trosclair - MSJ/VJ with TJ Robie - Blue Forge Alliance



Andrea "Drea" Hardeman - USAA



(L to R) Nick Johnston - Sen. Rick Scott's Central FL District, Harry ("Chip") Trosclair - MSJ/VJ, Maj Gen (Ret) David May - MSJ/VJ, Barry Cotton - Sen. Rick Scott's Central FL District, Brian Wick - MSJ/VJ



Panel at Guard and Reserve Summit 2026



Stacey Cummings - MSJ/VJ

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