

AmeriForce can help you with your military needs!  
Visit us at [www.ameriforce.net](http://www.ameriforce.net)

# The Reserve National Guard

MAY ■ 2007

**STRYKERS  
IN THE ARNG**

**MEET GENERAL  
H. STEVEN BLUM**

**ON PATROL IN  
AFGHANISTAN**

**THIRD ARMY TRAINS  
TAJIK NCOs**

**PROJECT HANDCLASP**

**MILITARY CELEBRATES  
WOMEN'S HISTORY**

**HEARING LOSS**

**COOL GEAR**



**AmeriForce**  
publishing

[www.ameriforce.net](http://www.ameriforce.net)

# THE EXTRA MILE

By Jennifer G. Williams

Companies across the country recognize the value of having a service member as an employee—they are dedicated, hard-working and loyal, employers say. And many companies have gone the extra mile for their military employees, earning the title “best military employers.”

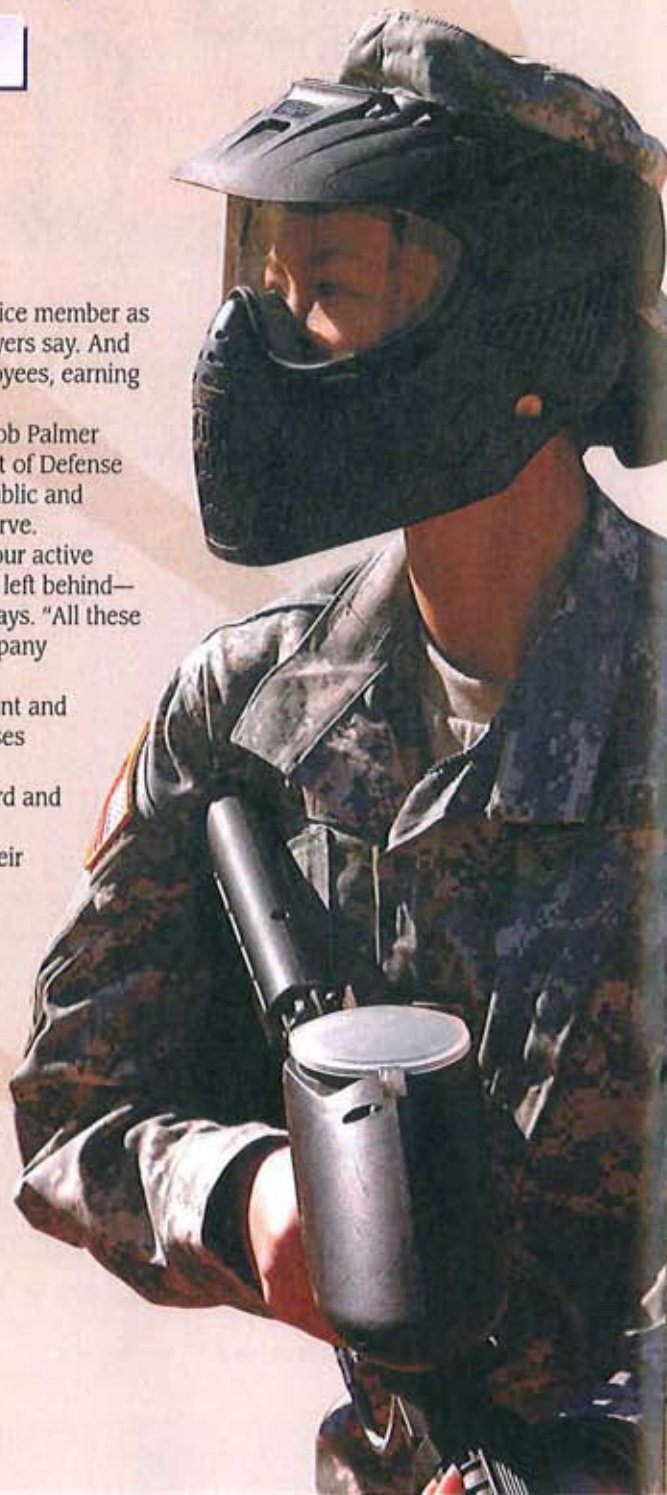
“There are a lot of employers who go above and beyond,” says Major Rob Palmer with the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense organization whose goal is to gain and maintain active support from all public and private employers for the men and women of the National Guard and Reserve.

“From making up any difference in pay between your civilian job and your active duty pay when deployed; maintaining contact with your spouse and family left behind—and with the deployed service member; even sending care packages,” he says. “All these little touches tell not only the military employee, but also all the other company employees, that military service is valued and appreciated.”

The ESGR educates employers about the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), offers mediation when a problem arises between a military employee and their civilian employer, and maintains a database of employers who have signed statements of support for the Guard and Reserve, or who have attained the coveted 5-Star Employer status. Visit [www.esgr.org](http://www.esgr.org) to search by state for military-friendly companies and see their level of stars.

Each year, the ESGR takes nominations for the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award—the highest recognition given to employers for their support of their employees who also serve in the National Guard and Reserve. Small companies and municipalities have won the award, as well as large national corporations, showing that employers at all levels can do their part for the Guard and Reserve, says Palmer.

USAA, best known for offering insurance and other financial services to members of the military, is a Five-Star Employer and won the ESGR Freedom Award in 2005. USAA was also recently named one of the “Top 50 Most Military Friendly Employers,” by military job website G.I. Jobs. USAA came in at number five on the list, which based its findings on a company’s military recruiting efforts, the percentage of new hires who are veterans, Reserve and National Guard employment policies, and military and veteran education programs for employees. The list was published in G.I. Jobs’ December 2006 magazine, and can be viewed at [www.gijobs.net/top50](http://www.gijobs.net/top50).



*Secretary of Defense Employer  
Support Freedom Awards  
from 2001-present*

**2006**

AgCountry Farm Credit Services  
Allianz Life Insurance Company of North America  
Baptist Health - Little Rock, AR  
BNSF Railway Company  
Cardi's Furniture Superstores  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Computer Sciences Corporation  
DuPont  
Fred Fletemeyer Company  
MGM MIRAGE  
Skyline Membership Corporation  
South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks  
Starbucks Corporation  
State of Vermont  
Sun Valley General Improvement District - NV

**2005**

Alticor, Inc.  
Citizens Financial Group  
Eaton Corporation  
Enterprise Rent-A-Car  
IDACORP  
Los Angeles Police Department  
The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections  
Pioneer Financial Services, Inc.  
Ryland Homes  
Sears, Roebuck and Co.  
South Dakota State University  
State of Delaware  
Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.  
USAA  
Wachovia Corporation

**2004**

Adolph Coors Co.  
American Express Co.  
Bank One Corp.  
Colt Safety Fire & Rescue  
General Electric Co.  
Harley-Davidson, Inc.  
The Home Depot  
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Dept.  
The State of Minnesota  
Northrop Grumman Corp.  
Onesource Building Technologies - a subsidiary of Fisk Corp.  
Saints Memorial Medical Center  
Strategic Solutions, Inc.  
Sprint Corp.  
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

**2003**

Central Atlantic Toyota Distribution Center  
D. H. Griffin Wrecking Co., Inc.  
Miller Brewing Company  
PG&E Corporation  
Tyson Foods, Inc.

**2002**

Autoliv, Inc.,  
General Dynamics Land Systems  
Public Service Co. of New Hampshire  
State of Wyoming  
United Parcel Service Airlines

**2001**

BAE SYSTEMS  
Electronic Data Systems (EDS)  
Southwest Airlines  
The Boeing Company  
The City of Bedford, Virginia

"Obviously we're proud to have been recognized by organizations like ESGR and G.I. Jobs," says Michael F. Kelly, a retired Air Force major who now serves as USAA's Executive Director of Military Communications. "But we are even prouder of the men and women of the National Guard and Reserve who risk their lives each day in defense of freedom. We offer all military members and their families our support and gratitude as they serve our nation."

"It's important for us to send a clear message to our employees, that while they serve our country, USAA will stand by them and support them with world-class benefits and programs designed to help them focus on their military mission without worrying about their jobs at home," he says. "When an employee is deployed, USAA pays the difference between their military pay and their civilian pay, continues their eligibility for employee bonuses, and offers continued health-care coverage and other benefits."

"At USAA, we really do know what it means to serve," says Kelly. "USAA's foundation and culture are built on the traditions of military service and leadership. That focus is reflected in the programs and initiatives in place for our employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve."

USAA is one of more than 35,000 companies across the country that have signed statements of support for the Guard and Reserve, and one of 16,000 companies who have attained Five-Star status.

Pioneer Services, in its 75th year as a member of the financial industry, is also an ESGR Five-Star Employer and a 2005 recipient of the Freedom Award. The company has also received other recognition in the past few years, including being named one of the top 25 "Best Small & Medium Companies to Work for in America" for the second time in three years by the Society for Human Resource Management.

"As a company that serves the military community exclusively, Pioneer Services strives to be a military-friendly employer in every way and is committed to being the employer of choice for service members," says Pioneer's Chief People Officer, Julie Schaller. "Military members are a valuable addition to our team and we are dedicated to going beyond the basic legal requirements to help our own service members and their families maintain their quality of life during the difficult time of deployment."

"Since we work with military families every day, it is vital that we hire associates who understand the unique financial situation faced by military service," she says. "Military personnel also have excellent leadership and management skills, as well as a strong work ethic that leads to better service and a true passion for the work we do."

In addition to offering benefits such as pay differential for deployed service members and installing video e-mail in their homes, Pioneer also stays connected with deployed employees and their families through a special team of associates called "Pioneer Partners," whose primary mission is to provide support for family members and spouses during periods of deployment. "Pioneer Partners pairs associates with other associates that have family members deployed and the Pioneer Partner communicates with the family on a regular basis to provide support and encouragement," says Schaller. "Some of the things they do during a family member's deployment include helping with benefit questions, recognizing birthdays and special events, and organizing holiday dinners for the service member's family."

"The deployed associates and their families have raved about this extra level of care and concern shown to them and their family during the difficult times of deployment," she says. And before one of Pioneer Services' military relations managers was deployed, the company treated him and his wife to an all-expense-paid weekend in New Orleans at their favorite bed and breakfast, adds Schaller.

There are roughly 150,000 employers across the country employing members of the Reserve and National Guard, says ESGR's Palmer. While the ESGR handles disputes between employees and employers, the number of disputes is relatively low, he says, especially given the number of guardsmen and reservists who have been deployed over the past few years. In fiscal year 2005, for example, there were 4,682 cases, while in fiscal year 2006, there were only 3,152 cases. "And, at any given time during these two years, at least 100,000 guardsmen and reservists were deployed," says Palmer. More than 900 ESGR ombudsmen are available across the country to assist in a dispute, he says, and they are "able to resolve roughly 97 percent of cases brought to them."

IRNS