

On-base jobs overseas: how to know which postings are open to you

For veterans, retirees, military spouses and current federal employees living near a U.S. base abroad. What the SOFA line in an announcement means, how to read it before you spend an evening on an application, and what Best Military Resume now does to make that automatic.

1. Federal-related jobs only, and why that is the point

This guide, and the tool behind it, cover USAJOBS postings and the exchange and MWR jobs. All of them are federal employers. Contractor jobs on base, a defense company hiring for a program overseas, also sponsor SOFA and often pay more. They are not included, on purpose, and if you have school-age children that line is the one that matters.

If the sponsor works as	Base school (DoDEA) status for dependents
A full-time, locally hired federal employee, appropriated fund (GS, WG) or non-appropriated fund (exchange, MWR)	Space-required, tuition-free. Full-time means more than 32 hours a week, which is one more reason to keep the full-time filter on.
A U.S. citizen employed by a defense contractor	Space-available, tuition-paying, and only where the contract authorizes dependent education. Published OCONUS tuition for school year 2026-27 runs from about \$26,676 a year in the lower grades to about \$29,484 in high school, per child.

Sources: DoDEA Administrative Instruction 1344.01, Eligibility and Enrollment Requirements in DoDEA Schools, Change 2 (May 2, 2025), sections 3.1.b and 3.3.a; DoDEA OCONUS Tuition Rate Memorandum, SY 2026-2027.

So the trade is clear. Contractor work usually pays more. A federal or exchange job usually pays less and puts your kids in the base school without a tuition bill. Families on a SOFA tour with children tend to choose the second. Veterans without school-age kids may find a contractor role the better-paying option; if so, apply to it directly, because it will not appear here.

2. The one sentence that decides who can apply

Under the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), on-base employers overseas can hire two kinds of people: those who already hold status, and those the employer is willing to sponsor into it. Appropriated-fund jobs (GS, WG, GG) sponsor by nature. For NAF jobs, the exchanges and MWR, each announcement says which, in its own words, usually under a heading called **"Clarification from the agency."** The wording differs from posting to posting, even at the same base and the same employer.

Three real patterns, with the base and agency removed because the same words appear across installations:

"WHO MAY APPLY: Applicants with SOFA Sponsorship (including applicants with current Military Spouse Preference, Family member preference) within the local commuting area."

That job is for people who already have status through a sponsor in country. If nobody sponsors you, it is most likely out of reach.

"WHO MAY APPLY: Applicants residing within the local ... region to include Seeking SOFA Applicants (including those with current Military Spouse Preference, Family Member Preference, and current Federal employees)."

That job is open to the people it lists. A current federal employee who switches jobs gets status through the new job. A veteran living overseas on their own is not on the list.

The third pattern is silence. Many announcements say nothing about SOFA at all. For a veteran who is neither a current federal employee nor a family member of someone stationed there, that silence is the good sign: the employer is most likely willing to sponsor.

USAJOBS does not expose this sentence as a searchable field. It lives only on the announcement page, so most people find it by reading every posting to the bottom, or after they have applied.

3. The five SOFA verdicts

Best Military Resume reads that clarification line once per overseas posting, keeps the exact text, and shows one of five chips on the card. Hover the chip to see the agency's own words.

Chip	What the announcement said	Who it is for
Grants SOFA status	Every appropriated-fund position (GS, WG, GG and similar), by nature. NAF postings that say "Applicants World-wide," "Open to Public," "Offering Local SOFA," or "Seeking SOFA" with no shortlist.	The job confers status. The "Open to" line still says who may apply.
No SOFA restriction stated	The announcement says nothing restrictive about SOFA.	The good sign for a veteran on their own: the employer will most likely sponsor.
Open to current Federal employees	The line names current Federal, CNIC or DoD employees, including "Seeking SOFA Applicants (including ... current Federal employees)."	People already employed by the federal government, plus the spouses and family members it lists.
Needs existing SOFA sponsorship	"Applicants with SOFA Sponsorship," "SOFA sponsorship only," or the exchange's "MUST BE SOFA SPONSORED IN ORDER TO APPLY. NOT OFFERING SOFA SPONSORSHIP."	Dependents of a sponsor already in country.
SOFA unclear	No clarification line and no readable hiring paths.	Read the announcement.

The announcement is always the authority. The chip tells you which sentence to read first.

4. Searching by base

The Federal Jobs page searches live USAJOBS openings by base. The location picker uses the names USAJOBS itself uses, so the match is exact: "Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan", "Kadena Air Base Okinawa, Japan", "Ramstein, Germany", "Naples, Italy", "Rota, Spain", "Camp Humphreys, South Korea." Results cover 50 miles around the base by default. This part and the SOFA verdicts work without an account.

5. Filters that hold

The Overseas filter

Hides postings that need existing SOFA sponsorship. It is off by default. Turn it on if you are a veteran or retiree living overseas on your own with no sponsor. Leave it off if you are a military spouse or a sponsored family member: those postings are written for you.

The work-schedule filter

Lists every schedule bucket, so you can keep full-time and drop flex and part-time in one move. It reads the posting's title as well as its schedule code, so a job titled "NF-02/FLX" is treated as flex even when the code says otherwise.

6. The nightly alert

Save your search on a free account. Every night, new postings that match your base, radius and filters arrive by email. Each card carries its SOFA line, so you can skip the ones that were never for you before you click. From the email, one click builds a resume tailored to the exact announcement.

7. The exchange jobs that never reach USAJOBS

Navy Exchange and Navy Lodge post their openings on their own careers site, not on USAJOBS. Best Military Resume pulls those postings daily and shows the ones near your base under the USAJOBS results, with the pay line, the schedule, and a link to apply on the employer's own site. At the time of writing that is more than 360 open postings across 20 U.S. states plus Japan, Italy, Spain, Bahrain and Guantanamo Bay. AAFES is next. These employers take a normal application, so the one-click resume for them is the standard format, not the federal one.

8. Which settings are for you

If you are	Overseas filter	What to watch for
A veteran or retiree living overseas on your own	On	Postings marked Grants SOFA status or No SOFA restriction stated, and exchange jobs that hire locally.
A current federal employee overseas	Off	Postings marked Open to current Federal employees, plus everything that grants status.
A military spouse or sponsored family member	Off	Postings that need existing sponsorship are written for you; keep them visible.
Headed overseas on orders	Off	Search the base before you arrive and let the nightly alert build the list.

9. Start here

1. Open bestmilitaryresume.com/overseas and search your base. No account needed for this step.
2. Read the SOFA chip on each card, and hover to see the agency's words.
3. Create a free account, save the search, and set the Overseas and schedule filters for your situation.
4. Check the Exchange and MWR section under the results.
5. When a posting fits, build the resume for that exact announcement and apply where the employer wants you to: USAJOBS for federal jobs, the exchange's own site for exchange jobs.

Best Military Resume · bestmilitaryresume.com · Written by a Navy veteran who lived this search overseas. Facts current as of September 2026; the announcement is the authority for eligibility.