



# Best West Coast Cities for Defense Jobs

By Tranette Ledford and ClearanceJobs.com

**California remains the most populous state in the nation, also the one with the highest farm producing income. But the Golden State's sun and soil are good for more than agriculture. Industry is fast catching up in terms of economic impact — and the defense contractor industry is one of the chief reasons.**

## San Diego

No question, San Diego's business community has taken its share of rides on the economic roller coaster over the last few years. Despite those ups and downs, the military and defense sector remain one of the region's most stable assets. For security-cleared personnel looking to transition to southern California, San Diego is hot in every sense of the word.

In August, San Diego's Military Advisory Council rolled out its most recent study of the military impact on the city, announcing that the defense business is now a \$24.6 billion dollar industry in that location. The report reveals a telling employment picture: The economic contribution of the defense business growing at a rate of about 7 percent a year.

California's southern coastline in and around the San Diego area has the largest military concentration in the world. The Air Force has long been drawn to the southwest skies, which make up 67 percent of the nation's military training airspace.

### High Growth Defense Jobs

#### Location

San Diego

Los Angeles

#### Common Jobs

Help Desk Technician,  
Systems Security Analyst

Structural Engineer, Flight  
Test Coordinator, Network  
Engineer

Source: ClearanceJobs.com



San Diego sits beneath those skies housing a deep water harbor that brings the Navy and Marine Corps in droves. Then there's the geography — plenty of operational, manufacturing and ground space for the Army. For these reasons, San Diego was made part of the military map long ago and today, about 150,000 civilians are employed in businesses directly impacted by the defense industry. That's about 27 percent of the region's employees.

As counties go, San Diego County receives the lion's share of military appropriated funding — more than any county in 2005, with more to come by 2010. Much of the budget is earmarked for military construction projects. These will provide new opportunities for security-cleared veterans looking to enter building, repair and construction careers. For example, new housing projects are slated for Marine Corps Camp Pendleton and the Navy's new administration building which will serve as the logistics center for the War on Terror. According to Larry Blumberg, executive director, San Diego Military Advisory Council, the planned construction will cost \$2.65 billion, and result in an output of \$5.3 billion and 43,000 jobs.

"The Navy's major space and warfare systems commands are here," said Blumberg. "So they hold job opportunities in communications, electronics, networks, all the high tech positions. There's also a major port with jobs related to that."

With San Diego logistically and geographically suited for the defense business, major contractors continue to partner with the military, including some of the area's larger employers like General Dynamics, Computer Sciences Corporation, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Epsilon Systems Solutions. This means an ongoing need for security-cleared personnel.

Life in San Diego is good, according to Blumberg. But it can be financially challenging. "This is a great place to live but the drawback has always been the cost of living," he said. "But there are good salaries in the defense sector that can offset that."

Evan Lesser, Director of ClearanceJobs.com concurs. "Without a doubt, San Diego is the top location that cleared job seekers want to relocate to on the West coast. Although the cost of living is high, the wide array of job opportunities and close-knit military community is very attractive to candidates."

### Average Security-Cleared Salaries

Location	Salary
San Diego	\$63,984
Los Angeles	\$81,980

Source: ClearanceJobs.com

### Top 20 Highest Salaries by Job Category

Job Category	Salary
IT Management-Executive	\$116,935
Database Admin-Oracle	\$101,905
IT Management-Project Manager	\$100,089
Project/Program Management	\$94,231
Systems Engineer	\$93,202
IT Software-Java/J2EE	\$93,036
Engineering-Aerospace and Aviation	\$92,923
Software Development	\$91,273
Network/LAN/WAN Design	\$84,545
Security-Network Management	\$83,309
Security-Intrusion Detection	\$83,158
IT Software-Prog	\$83,125
Engineering-Military Software	\$82,821
IT Hardware-Unix	\$82,708
Engineering-Military Hardware	\$80,625
Engineering-RF	\$80,500
Engineering-Electrical	\$80,392
Contract Admin	\$78,600
Engineering-Telecommunications	\$76,293
Linguist, Translator or Interpreter	\$70,952

Source: ClearanceJobs.com



Nationwide, security clearances boost average salaries dramatically. In San Diego, for example, security-cleared desktop support specialists in defense contractor firms earn above \$50,000 a year, and cleared senior program managers are earning six figure incomes.

While the California housing market has seen tough times, it's a benefit to those relocating. Home prices have plummeted 35 percent since May, 2007. At that time, average home sales hovered around \$600,000. But today's buyers can get in to these houses for around \$380,000, and there are less expensive homes throughout the county.

## Los Angeles

There's a mix of good and not-so-good job prospects for those interested in hitting the Pacific Coast Highway. Los Angeles has struggled in several sectors, including the high tech industry and the financial industry, the latter of which holds the least predicted job growth. However, there continue to be good opportunities for security-cleared personnel throughout the city's surrounding counties — Los Angeles, Ventura, Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange County.

"The economy is strong here, but we've seen some changes in employment data," said Ann Marshall, senior labor market research analyst, California Employment Development Department. "Some companies have moved elsewhere and there have been layoffs. But there are niche areas of opportunities for security-cleared personnel in the defense sector."

While there is only one active duty installation, Los Angeles Air Force Base, it's a major one. LAFB houses the Space and Missile Systems Center which is responsible for

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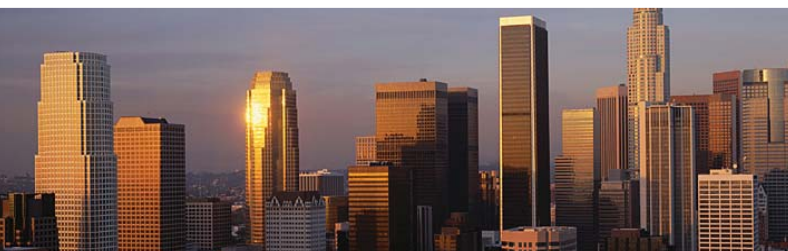
military satellite communications and space systems. In all, the center manages more than \$60 billion in contracts and continues to provide opportunities to security-cleared personnel.

In Los Angeles County, Raytheon, Enscro and AT&T Government services are the major employers of security-cleared personnel, while San Bernardino County is home to Fort Irwin's National Training Center and the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, two of the largest employers. Orange County holds opportunities at Boeing, the University of California and Newport Communications.

Network systems and data communications analysts are two of the fastest growing occupations in both Orange County and Los Angeles County, while the highest salaries continue to be in engineering management and computer and information systems management, all of which command six figure salaries. Other major employers in the area — SBC Pacific Bell, ABM Industries, Inc., and Cisco Systems.

It's tough to predict what the average home sale will be in the Los Angeles region in the coming year — only that it will be lower than last year. Foreclosures are still occurring at record levels and those relocating have great bargaining power and more options than ever. Back that up with the latest salary statistics and the view is a good one. Project and IT managers can earn more than \$100,000 in Los Angeles, while telecommunications engineers earn just under that.

So what does the future hold for the Los Angeles region? In July, the Los Angeles County Economic Development



Corporation released its mid-year update, revealing that the top three most productive sectors are federal jobs, health services and science and technology. Job growth throughout southern California was up in 2008 and is predicted to grow in 2009. That story is also true for household incomes, which are up 4.5 percent. Security-cleared personnel in aerospace have a particularly bright future, with DoD stepping up programs related to unmanned aerial vehicles and satellites.

Lesser notes, "Los Angeles still remains one of the leading aerospace hot-spots in the United States. In particular, systems engineers and flight test professionals earn excellent salaries commensurate with the southern California cost of living."

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