

## Seattle Unexpected Defense Industry Stronghold



USS Bonhomme Richard pulls into Elliott Bay during Seattle Seafair Navy Week  
U.S. Navy photo

When many people think of military cities, places in the south or northeast often most quickly come to mind. But with renewed focus on Central Asia, the Pacific Coast region, and Seattle, in particular, has been growing as a hub in the defense industry.

Seattle is a part of the Puget Sound Region, made up of King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties. Seattle is the largest city in the state of Washington and lies in the center of the Puget Sound region. Many major companies, such as Starbucks, Microsoft and Boeing Commercial Airlines, are headquartered in the Seattle area. With more than 53 percent of resident's holding a bachelor's degree, Seattle ranks as one of the highest educated cities in the nation. An entrepreneurial culture and major aerospace and IT industries are helping to stabilize defense industry job opportunities for security cleared professionals.

In addition to defense industry and defense contracting opportunities, Seattle has a large and growing active-duty military population. Washington state ranks seventh in the nation in military population, and saw an increase in military and civilian jobs as a result of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC). The area also has a high population of veterans.

### Security-Cleared Earnings in Washington

Average Base Salary	\$57,517
Average Total Compensation	\$72,573

Source: 2011 ClearanceJobs Compensation Survey

Industries, including software, virtualization, technology and advanced manufacturing, have continued to do well despite the economic downturn. A growing need for logistics experts to move goods from Seattle into cities across the nation is also providing opportunity.

“We are one of the top places for retirement for the military,” said Olivia Robinson, regional affairs coordinator for the Puget Sound Regional Council. “So we’re trying to make sure companies know we have fantastic people who have training, security clearances, and the experience for high-level positions.”

The military presence in the Puget Sound region includes Fort Lewis–McChord, a joint Army/Air Force base merged by the 2005 BRAC commission and the third largest military installation in the nation. Naval Base Kitsap and Naval Station Everett, as well as National Guard and Coast Guard facilities are also based in the region. The military facilities directly support more than 93,000 jobs in the region and provide an estimated \$3.1 billion in total payroll annually. In 2006, defense contracting in the Puget Sound region totaled \$3.7 billion. In 2009, the defense industry provided \$10.5 billion in labor income alone.

## An emerging market in cybersecurity and cloud computing

When it comes to software development, gaming and cybersecurity, Seattle’s skilled workforce and a high number of tech companies give it an advantage.

“We have a dark horse edge in the cybersecurity business,” said Brice Barrett, executive director of the Pacific Northwest Defense Coalition. “I’d be keeping an eye on that if I were a cybersecurity professional.” Barrett noted that with Seattle’s talent in software development and engineering and cloud services, companies have an edge in designing and implementing secure computing solutions for both the government and military. Barrett expects Seattle companies to be very competitive in future IT contract announcements.

“It’s not surprising that a place like Seattle is going to tap into expanding opportunities in cybersecurity,” said Evan Lesser, managing director of ClearanceJobs.com. “We’ve been seeing contracts, and also demand for cleared cyber professionals, continue to rise over the past several years, and I think we’ll also see the number of regions that tap into those opportunities and contracts grow.”

The growing strength of the defense industry in the region isn’t an accident. A permanent statewide Military Working Group was established in 2009. They created a military cluster game plan which included helping military spouses and veterans find employment; increasing educational opportunities for veterans, military spouses and children; and expanding the region’s defense contracting industry.

“We’re not seen as a military community; we’re not ever going to be that,” said Robinson. “But how do we make sure that we recognize our bases are there, that we’re working with them, and also get them used to working beyond the fence line.” She went on to add that given the challenges of today’s military, and also the increasing number of service members with families, focusing resources and attention on the entire military family was a priority.

Aerospace dominates Seattle’s King County, with Boeing Commercial Airlines making its home there. Aircraft manufacturing is the largest source of



A soldier descends in front of Mt. Rainier onto Fort Lewis, Washington  
U.S. Army photo

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—Brice Barrett

*Executive Director of the Pacific Northwest Defense Coalition*



USS Port Royal arrives in Seattle  
U.S. Navy photo

contracting in the region, bringing in \$1.3 billion in contracts annually. Washington state overall is a leader in aerospace, with more than 82,000 skilled aerospace workers and 650 companies. This year Boeing was awarded a \$35 billion contract to replace the Air Force's fleet of mid-air refueling tankers. Some of that work is taking place in their King County facility.

It's more than aerospace powering the defense industry in the region, however. Engineering services, advanced materials, biofuels, and design are all strong and growing sectors of the defense industry. Defense industry earnings include the approximately \$7.9 billion Washington military installations spent in 2009, as well as contracts awarded for work. In recent years, the region has also taken a renewed focus in attracting and retaining defense industry business.

"Aerospace is a big thing we're known for, and it will hopefully be one of the things we're still known for," said Robinson. "But we have a lot of other things. Our economy is surprisingly diverse, and we want to grow that diversity." Robinson noted that they're working with both local companies, and the acquisition arm at the Pentagon to increase awareness of the diversity of Seattle's industrial base. From electronics and winter wear to global health and software development, Seattle has a variety of industries that can be used to support the military.

### 'Wow, this is an incredible place to live'

When it comes to the quality of life in Seattle, folks usually don't need too much convincing. For outdoor lovers or culture buffs, there are few better places than Seattle. Located on the sound, with breathtaking views of the Olympic Mountains across the bay, many people fall in love. The cost of living is well below major west coast cities such as San Diego, and salaries are competitive.

"They come here and they're like 'Wow, this is an incredible place to live,' and they stay," said Christina Donegan, vice president of communications at the Seattle Chamber of Commerce.

When it comes to the economic downturn, Donegan noted that no one is immune, but the diversity of the economy in Seattle is a major help.

"There are great job opportunities," said Donegan. "Industries, including technology, have continued to do well, and that has helped us." She noted that the strength of exports to Asia and the growing demand for logistics experts to get goods from Seattle and into cities across the nation is a bright spot in the economy.

Seattle, long known as the home of Starbucks and Amazon, could be considered the understated defense giant. With major defense contractors making it their home, as well as IT giants and major military installations, it's an ideal fit for cleared professionals looking to head west. ★ ★ ★

### High-Growth Areas in Seattle

- Software Engineering
- Cybersecurity
- Aerospace
- Aviation Repair/Maintenance
- Logistics

### Highest Cleared Earnings Nationwide

Job Category	'11 Earnings
Program, Project Manager — Engineering	\$122,660
Program, Project Manager — Info Tech	\$115,702
Sales — Account Manager, Federal or Business Development	\$120,529
Info Tech — Software — Programming or Web Development	\$106,766
Policy or Public Affairs	\$107,499
Engineering — Aerospace or Aviation	\$103,733
Program, Project Manager — Other	\$102,910
Engineering — Electrical	\$95,182
Info Tech — Databases — Admin, Architect or Data	\$94,883
Info Tech — Testing — Test or QA	\$92,534

Source: 2011 ClearanceJobs Compensation Survey