



Best Southwest Cities for Defense Jobs

By Tranette Ledford and ClearanceJobs.com

America’s southwest, with its diverse geography of mountains and deserts, is one of the most photographed and visited regions in America. But tourists aren’t the only ones looking at the view. Companies doing business with the federal government are increasingly putting down stakes in Arizona, Colorado and Texas. This in turn, means a growing job market for security-cleared personnel.

Phoenix and Tucson

Before these two cities were blips on a map, the Coronado expedition was crossing Arizona in search of gold. It’s there now — in the job market.

Phoenix rises out of the desert as the sixth largest city in the U.S., with Tucson just a few hours away. Collectively they make up a growing community of defense and technology firms, drawn by the state’s military installations — Fort Huachuca, Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Davis Monthan Air Force Base and Luke Air Force Base.

Honeywell, Raytheon and Intel stand among the state’s top employers. Intel, the microprocessor giant, now provides the defense market with advanced embedded computing and communications technologies. These and related companies are increasing the job prospects for cleared candidates with backgrounds in mechanical engineering and systems and software engineering.

High Growth Defense Jobs

| Location | Common Jobs |
|--------------------|--|
| Phoenix / Tucson | Intelligence Analyst, Systems Engineer, Trainer/Instructor |
| Colorado Springs | Satellite Systems Operator, Cost Analyst, Software Developer |
| Dallas / Ft. Worth | Network Security Analyst, Linguist, Technical Trainer |

Source: ClearanceJobs.com



National defense trends are also shaping Arizona's economy. The Army's decision to field the Future Combat Systems earlier than planned is expected to step up production and development on the part of some Arizona contractors. Raytheon efforts will center on non-line-of-sight missile launch systems and will work closely with Lockheed Martin. Honeywell will focus on unmanned vehicle programs and robotics. These and other multi-billion, multi-year contracts will also affect aerospace and intelligence programs in general, keeping the doors open for security-cleared technical experts trained in state-of-the-art military technologies.

"Phoenix and Tucson are military cities, plain and simple," said Evan Lesser, founder and director of ClearanceJobs.com, which matches security-cleared job seekers with federal and defense industry employers. "The desert offers lots of room for defense contractors to test new vehicles, radar and delivery systems. With that in mind, the range of jobs in Arizona is only rivaled by metro D.C. Anything from engineering to program management, IT, finance and manufacturing are open in this region at any given time."

Tucson is now considered a 'cluster industry' region — meaning one in which firms are networking together in areas that include optics, aerospace, bioindustry and IT. To date, there are some 80 aerospace firms in Tucson alone.

The region also offers more than good job prospects. The Milken Institute ranks Phoenix fourth in the nation as a best performing city. Surveys by Janco Associates list local salaries at \$78,000 for systems programmers, \$85,000 for software engineers, and \$62,500 for data administrators.

Colorado Springs

Despite a downturn in the high tech industry, salaries and job opportunities are still strong here, with technical workers averaging \$80,000 a year. But increasingly, the Colorado Spring's economy is tied to the military and defense community. Peterson Air Force Base and Schriever Air Force Base both serve as a draw, as does the U.S. Air Force Academy with its annual allocation of \$50 million a year for defense research. Given the missile defense and aerospace focus, Northrop Grumman, Lockheed, ITT, L-3 Communications, Harris, Boeing and General Dynamics all have a presence here, and smaller sub-contractors abound. Recent funding to the state will add

Average Security-Cleared Salaries

| Location | Salary |
|--------------------|----------|
| Phoenix / Tucson | \$69,296 |
| Colorado Springs | \$72,627 |
| Dallas / Ft. Worth | \$72,572 |

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

close to \$700 million for key military construction projects and veteran programs, with a big chunk headed to Fort Carson in preparation for the return of the 4th Infantry Division and more brigades. The bottom line? Colorado Springs is a niche market for defense technology and these jobs require a clearance.

“The aerospace industry is second only to tourism here,” said Duncan Stewart, executive director of the newly created Colorado Homeland Defense Alliance, which supports the city’s development of business, defense, security and aerospace industries. “The top four employers are the military bases here, which all focus on highly technical missions, chiefly intelligence and space surveillance. We also have a large number of start-up businesses related to this industry. The nature of our market makes the value of service members with security clearances extremely high.”

Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex

It’s hard to tell where the city limits begin and end in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. Expanding all the time, it now includes Plano, McKinney, Garland and Arlington. Together, they’re part of what’s being touted as the ‘Silicon Prairie.’

The DFW region has been steadily rising in population, with predictions it will hit close to 9,000,000 people over the next decade. One of the biggest growth factors is corporate relocation. For example, in June, AT&T left San Antonio for Dallas and became part of the region’s massive telecom industry that already includes Verizon and Southwestern Bell. According to the Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce, the region now employs more than 40 percent of the state’s high tech workers.

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The area isn’t rife with military installations but it is brimming with high tech firms and those in the business of defense. Dallas is home to Raytheon, while its Network Centric Systems is in McKinney. Fort Worth has DynCorp and Lockheed Martin. Plano has Electronic Data Systems. Denton has M1 Support Services LP, a provider of aircraft and vehicle maintenance and modification, while Irving is home to EF Johnson Technologies, providing communications products to the Department of Homeland Security. So without military installations nearby, what’s the draw?

Local chambers of commerce cite simple factors like the DFW airport’s wealth of national and international flights, warm weather, wide open spaces for building and land use, and the ever important affordable housing market.

Garland is a model of what’s happening all over the Metroplex. Within its population of 234,600 people, Raytheon employs 3,500, General Dynamics Ordnance employs 550, and Northrop Grumman another 450 and growing.

“There are different kinds of jobs here for different skills,” said Dawn Summers, Garland Chamber of Commerce. “Here, Raytheon is involved in Internet and IT security technologies while L-3 Communications makes night vision goggles. General Dynamics is involved in missile and space parts. We have a very good market for security



clearance opportunities and it's also a great place to live with good highways, easy access to other locations and affordable home prices."

The entire region gets high marks for both the personal and professional considerations that go into military transition.

"Software and systems engineers, field service technicians and general IT jobs make up the bulk of defense industry positions in the DFW area," said Lesser. "We've seen a slight five percent year-over-year growth in these positions. And while salaries are less than in a number of other regions, the cost of living in Arlington, Texas, is generally about 30 percent lower than a location like Arlington, Virginia. This makes the lower salaries go a long way." So if you are into warm weather, and even hotter defense jobs, the American Southwest may be your new home.

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