MONTHLY MARKET INTELLIGENCE

SoCal Aerospace & Defense Hiring Report

Southern California — LA/OC + San Diego • July 2026 Edition • Issue 2

Tracking who is hiring, what they pay, the contracts shaping demand, and where the SoCal aerospace and defense workforce is headed — compiled monthly for employers, job seekers, and the regional community.

Prepared by Intrepidus Talent Solutions — specialist aerospace & defense staffing for Southern California.

Why this report

If you hire, recruit, or work in aerospace & defense across Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego counties, this report is built for you. Each month it answers the questions that matter most in this market, using public, verifiable data: Who is hiring right now, and for what roles? What does the market actually pay here? Which federal contracts will create the next wave of jobs? Is the local market expanding or contracting?

Hiring managers and HR teams use it to benchmark pay and see who they are competing with for talent. Recruiters use it to spot where demand is moving. Job seekers - including transitioning military - use it to find who is hiring and what it takes to qualify.

This is Issue No. 2 - and the first built on a fully verified count. Fifteen of the sixteen tracked employers were pulled live from their official career systems on a single date; only one (Kratos) is held this issue. June set an early baseline, but those figures were estimates - so the July numbers below, not the month-over-month deltas, are the reliable foundation the series builds on from here.

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The Monthly Pulse

Southern California's aerospace and defense market is expanding - and this issue puts a verified number on it. Our Openings Index - a same-date count across a **fixed list of 16 named SoCal A&D employers** - recorded **2,349 open on-site roles in July**, split **1,333 across the LA/OC corridor (57%) and 1,016 in San Diego (43%)**. This is the first issue in which 15 of the 16 employers were counted from live, same-date pulls; June's 2,268 was an early estimate, so the +81 (+3.6%) headline move is directional only. The signal worth reading is the composition beneath it.

Leadership changed hands. With SpaceX's counted total down on a location-tag change, **Northrop Grumman is now the largest employer in the Index at 811 combined openings** (509 LA/OC + 302 San Diego) - the only prime with real scale in both clusters. **General Atomics / GA-ASI is second at 507**, almost entirely San Diego (Poway). **Concentration stayed extreme:** the six largest employers - Northrop, GA-ASI, SpaceX, Boeing, L3Harris, and RTX - hold about 86% of the tracked roles. SpaceX's counted total fell from 528 to 256 because it now files essentially all SoCal roles under a single "Hawthorne" tag (see index note) - a labeling change, not a hiring cut.

The layoff signal stayed quiet. No tracked A&D employer carries an active California WARN notice across Los Angeles, Orange, or San Diego counties this period - June's Raytheon (El Segundo) and Boeing (Palmdale) filings have both aged off the 60-day window with no replacements. Against 2,349 open roles and a heavy federal contract book, the market reads decisively expansion-leaning.

This month's backdrop is a heavy federal contract book - the B-21 bomber at Palmdale, the MQ-9 line at Poway, national-security launch out of Hawthorne, and a fresh July missile-tracking satellite award all sit behind the numbers (see *Contracts & the Demand Signal*).

This month at a glance

Indicator	Reading	Note
Open A&D roles in the Index (16-employer sample)	2,349	15 of 16 verified live; Kratos held at June figure
LA/OC vs San Diego split	1,333 / 1,016	57% LA/OC corridor, 43% San Diego cluster
Largest single employer	Northrop Grumman	811 combined (509 LA/OC + 302 SD); overtakes SpaceX
Second largest	General Atomics / GA-ASI	507, almost entirely San Diego (Poway)
Top-6 share of tracked roles	~86%	Northrop, GA-ASI, SpaceX, Boeing, L3Harris, RTX
SpaceX counted total	256 ▼	Down from 528 - a Hawthorne tag consolidation, not a cut
Major new award (this period)	SDA ~$1.75B (Jul 13)	L3Harris + Sierra Space; 36 missile-tracking satellites
Aerospace engineer avg wage - LA/OC	$145,190	~1.98x local all-occupation average
Active A&D WARN notices - SoCal	None this period	No tracked A&D employer on an active notice
Hiring outlook (tracked sample)	Expansion-leaning ▲	Zero A&D layoffs; heavy contract book

SoCal Openings Index

> *The Openings Index is this report's primary monthly metric - a same-date count of open aerospace & defense roles across a fixed list of 16 SoCal employers, taken from official company sources.*

Scope note: the Index is a fixed 16-employer sample built for month-to-month comparability - not a census of every A&D opening in the region. This issue verifies 15 of the 16 employers from live July pulls; only Kratos is held (its job board could not be reached this cycle) and is carried at its June figure. Because June was an estimate, the July counts - not the deltas - are the reliable baseline. All share and concentration figures describe the tracked sample.

This month's count

2,349 open A&D roles across the 16 tracked employers (counted July 20, 2026) - 1,333 in the LA/OC corridor and 1,016 in San Diego. Every count is on-site only: remote and hybrid roles are excluded, and each job is assigned to a single cluster by its primary location. RTX is counted manually (CAPTCHA barriers). The table below shows July against June, with the caveat that June was an early estimate.

By employer

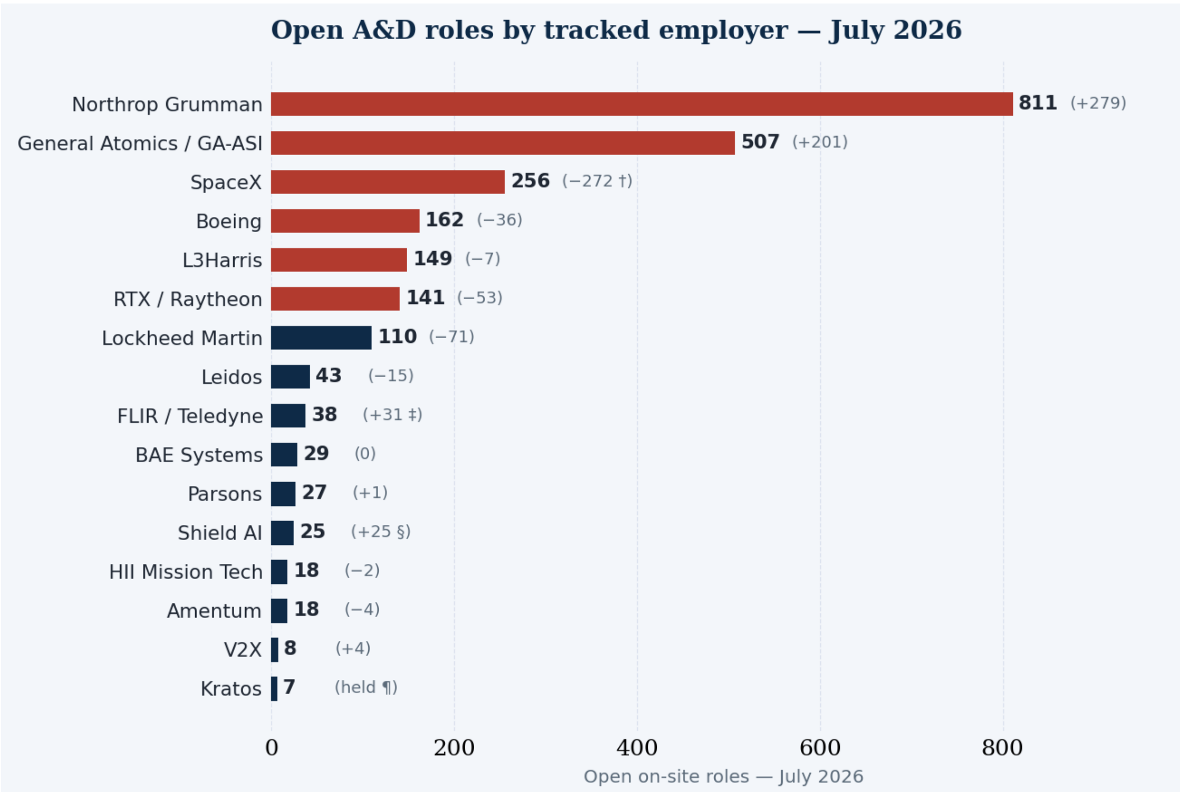

Figure 1: Openings by tracked employer, July 2026, sorted by total. Red = top six; navy = the rest. Change vs June shown in parentheses.

Employer	Jul	Jun	Chg	LA/OC	SD	Primary SoCal sites
Northrop Grumman	811	532	▲ +279	509	302	Redondo Beach, El Segundo, San Diego
General Atomics / GA-ASI	507	306	▲ +201	2	505	Poway, San Diego
SpaceX †	256	528	▼ –272	256	0	Hawthorne (SoCal roles consolidated)
Boeing	162	198	▼ –36	162	0	Long Beach, Seal Beach, El Segundo
L3Harris	149	156	▼ –7	105	44	Canoga Park, Anaheim, San Diego
RTX / Raytheon	141	194	▼ –53	120	21	El Segundo, San Diego

Lockheed Martin	110	181	▼ –71	109	1	Palmdale (Skunk Works)
Leidos	43	58	▼ –15	7	36	San Diego
FLIR / Teledyne ‡	38	7	▲ +31	27	11	El Segundo, Torrance, San Diego
BAE Systems	29	29	—	0	29	San Diego (ship repair)
Parsons	27	26	▲ +1	23	4	Pasadena, San Diego
Shield AI §	25	0	▲ +25	0	25	San Diego (HQ)
HII Mission Technologies	18	20	▼ –2	0	18	San Diego, Coronado
Amentum	18	22	▼ –4	9	9	Los Angeles, San Diego
V2X	8	4	▲ +4	4	4	San Diego, El Segundo
Kratos ¶	7	7	held	0	7	San Diego
TOTAL	**2,349**	**2,268**	**▲ +81**	**1,333**	**1,016**	**57% LA/OC · 43% San Diego**

† SpaceX consolidated essentially all SoCal postings under a single “Hawthorne” tag in July (256), down from a June estimate that spread roles across Hawthorne, El Segundo, Redondo Beach, and Palmdale (528) - a labeling change, not a ~50% hiring reduction; not a like-for-like comparison. ‡ FLIR / Teledyne is counted across Teledyne’s full SoCal careers portal (El Segundo, Torrance, San Diego facilities), on-site roles only; 17 temporary-duty (TDY) postings are excluded. June’s 7 was a narrower San-Diego-only estimate, so the +31 is largely a scope correction. § Shield AI’s June 0 was a failed pull, not a true zero; 25 is the first real count (San Diego HQ, on-site). ¶ Kratos held at its June figure - its job board could not be reached this cycle.

What the numbers say

The region’s demand is concentrated and prime-driven. Northrop Grumman (811) and General Atomics / GA-ASI (507) alone account for more than half of every tracked opening, and the two split the map cleanly: Northrop anchors the LA/OC corridor (509) while GA-ASI anchors San Diego (505). Add SpaceX, Boeing, L3Harris, and RTX and six employers cover roughly 86% of the Index.

San Diego is a bigger share of A&D demand than headcount alone suggests. The cluster carries 1,016 open on-site roles (43% of the Index), led by GA-ASI (505), L3Harris (44), Leidos (36), BAE ship repair (29), and Shield AI (25) - a distinctly unmanned-systems, C4ISR, and maritime mix versus the space-and-strike-aircraft weighting of LA/OC.

Read the movers with care. Because June was an estimate, the largest month-over-month swings mostly reflect measurement, not hiring: SpaceX (–272) is a tag consolidation, FLIR / Teledyne (+31) is a scope correction, and Shield AI (+25) is a first successful pull. Northrop (+279) and GA-ASI (+201) show genuine strength against June, but the honest takeaway is that **July is the baseline** - next month is the first clean like-for-like read.

By role family

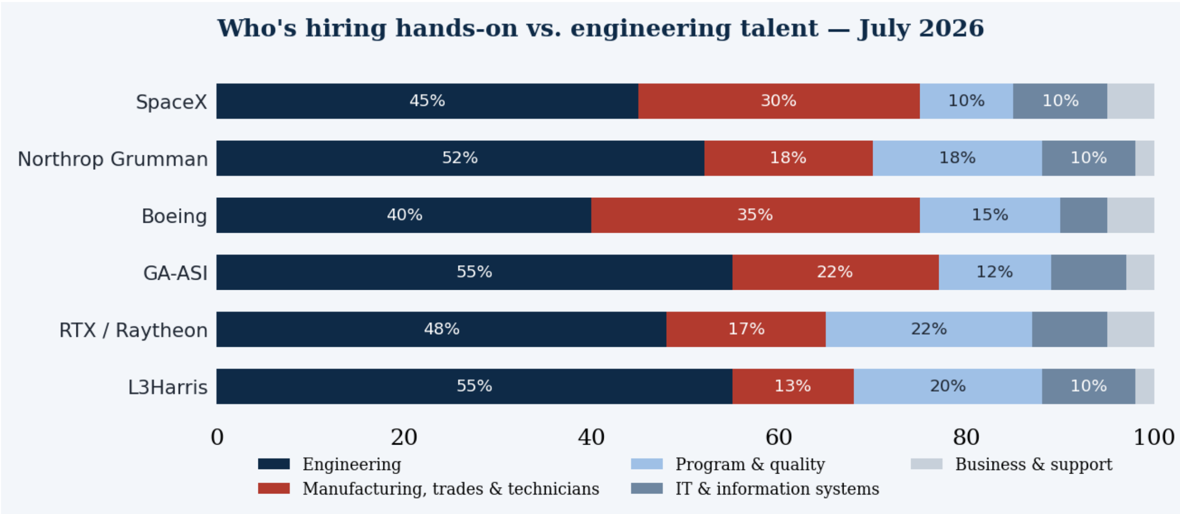

Figure 2: Approximate role-family mix for the six largest employers. Estimates from posting-title analysis; SpaceX and Boeing publish category-level data, all others are Intrepidus estimates.

Engineering is the dominant category at every tracked prime - roughly 40-55% of openings - skewing toward propulsion, structures, and space systems in LA/OC and toward RF/EW engineering for the C4ISR programs in San Diego. **Manufacturing, trades & technicians** are heaviest at SpaceX Hawthorne and Boeing Long Beach/Seal Beach, and remain the hardest-to-fill trades tier. **Program & quality** roles (program managers, schedulers, mission assurance) run 15-22% across the primes, with RTX and Lockheed carrying the highest program-management concentration as prime integrators. **IT & information systems** - embedded software, cyber, C2 - is the fastest-growing family in defense A&D.

Likely hardest to fill this month: cleared RF/EW engineers across the San Diego cluster (L3Harris, Northrop, Leidos, Shield AI carry multiple TS/SCI requirements); propulsion and manufacturing technicians pulled between SpaceX and its peers in LA/OC; and systems engineers who bridge hardware and software - a profile neither traditional aerospace nor traditional CS programs reliably produce at scale.

What the Market Pays

> *Salary benchmarks are among the data most requested by both job seekers and hiring managers.*

All figures here are the official BLS Occupational Employment & Wage Statistics for the LA-Long Beach-Anaheim and San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad metros (May 2023), shown as the average annual wage. These benchmarks are unchanged from June because the official data is unchanged - not because we did not look.

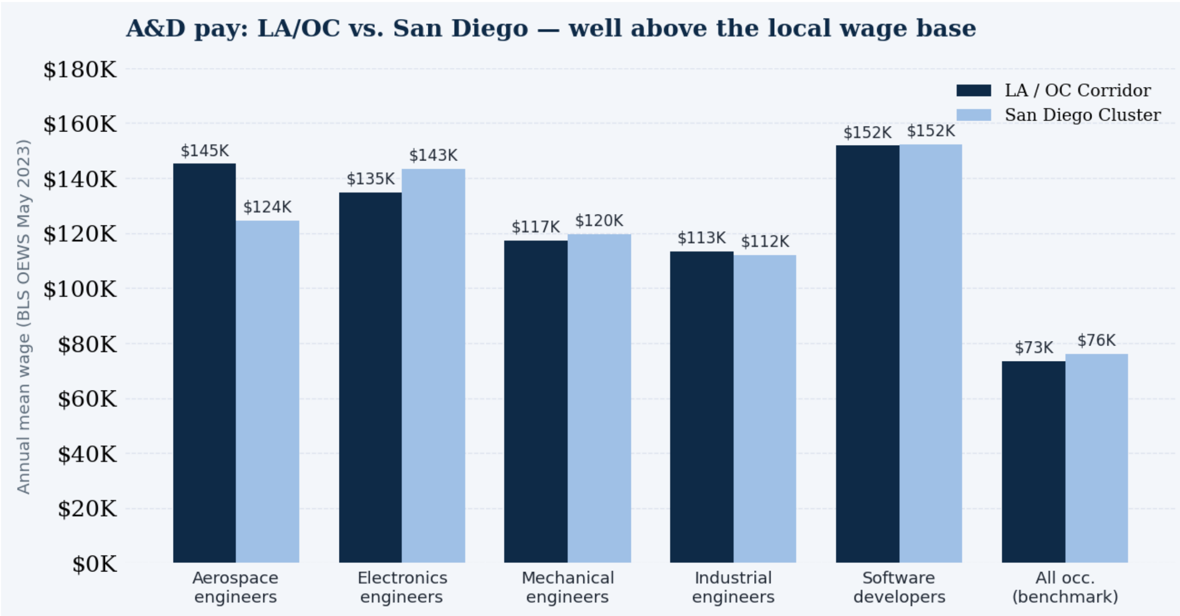

Figure 3: Average annual wage by occupation, LA/OC vs. San Diego (BLS OEWS May 2023).

Occupation	LA / OC	vs. LA avg	San Diego	vs. SD avg
Aerospace engineers	$145,190	1.98x	$124,460	1.64x
Electronics engineers	$134,870	1.84x	$143,420	1.89x
Mechanical engineers	$117,300	1.60x	$119,580	1.57x
Industrial engineers	$113,260	1.54x	$112,140	1.47x
Software developers	$151,780	2.07x	$152,270	2.00x
Aerospace eng. & ops techs	$91,890	1.25x	$80,340	1.06x
All occupations (benchmark)	$73,400	—	$76,010	—

The LA headline: aerospace engineers in the LA/OC corridor ($145,190) earn nearly twice the local all-occupation benchmark, anchored by SpaceX's commercial-space pay in Hawthorne and El Segundo. **San Diego's twist:** electronics engineers there ($143,420) out-earn aerospace engineers ($124,460) - the cleared EW/C4ISR premium, where Northrop, L3Harris, and Leidos compete for a supply constrained by clearance requirements.

Contracts & the Demand Signal

> *Federal contract awards are a directional signal of future hiring - work awarded today is staffed over the following quarters. Tracking anchor programs performed in Southern California, from public federal records, is one of this report's differentiators.*

Every figure below is filtered to a **Southern California place of performance**. Important caveat: a local place of performance establishes relevance, but does not by itself prove incremental local hiring - existing staff, subcontractors, or non-labor spending may absorb part of the work. Values are cumulative program or contract-ceiling figures unless noted.

The anchor programs (largest active contracts with SoCal work)

Awardee	Program	Award value	SoCal site
Northrop Grumman	B-21 Raider strategic bomber (USAF); 100+ aircraft planned	$4.5B recent accel.	Palmdale (final assembly)
General Atomics / GA-ASI	MQ-9 “IRIS” IDIQ - Reaper dev, production, sustainment & FMS	$14.1B (to 2031)	Poway
SpaceX	NSSL Phase 3 Lane 2 launch (USSF) - 28 missions FY25-29	~$5.9B	Hawthorne / Vandenberg SFB
L3Harris	SDA Tranche 3 Tracking Layer - 18 missile-tracking satellites	$843M	San Diego / space & sensors
Northrop Grumman	SDA Tranche 3 Tracking Layer - 18 missile-tracking satellites	$784M	Redondo Beach / Space Systems
General Atomics / GA-ASI	DHS/CBP MQ-9B UAS & equipment modification (Mar 2026)	$265.5M	Poway

Cumulative award values show where federal money is anchored, not single-year local spend.

Freshly awarded - the forward signal

- **SDA missile-tracking expansion - ~$1.75B (July 13, 2026).** The Space Development Agency awarded L3Harris and Sierra Space rapid-prototyping agreements to build 36 additional missile-tracking satellites, extending the Tranche 3 tracking-layer work that runs through L3Harris’s space and sensor programs - the region’s clearest new-award demand signal this month.
- **National-security launch keeps flowing.** SpaceX continues to draw the majority of FY2026 NSSL task orders under its ~$5.9B Phase 3 Lane 2 award, sustaining vehicle build in Hawthorne and launch-and-integration work at Vandenberg.
- **B-21 acceleration underpins Palmdale.** The Air Force’s move to raise B-21 production by ~25% keeps Northrop’s Antelope Valley final-assembly workforce on a growth footing through the 2027 first-delivery target.

Why it matters for hiring: the July award and the two acceleration stories all run through employers already in the Index’s top six. Industry experience suggests awards translate into related postings over subsequent quarters; this report does not yet measure the local award-to-posting lag.

Risk Signals - WARN Watch

As of the July 2026 pull, no tracked A&D company carries an active California WARN notice in LA, Orange, or San Diego counties. The two A&D filings recorded in Issue 1 - Raytheon (El Segundo, 55 workers) and Boeing (Palmdale Plant 42, 13 workers) - have both aged off the 60-day window, and no A&D employer has filed a replacement. The only active LA County filing is a grocery employer; Orange County's active filings are non-A&D; San Diego carries zero.

> *Net signal: zero disclosed A&D workers in active WARN notices against 2,349 open roles. The active-window A&D layoff signal this month is nil.*

The ~68 cleared or clearance-eligible workers released by Raytheon and Boeing earlier in 2026 remain the near-term cleared-talent pool - and with no fresh A&D filings, that cohort is being reabsorbed by the primes each month. For smaller suppliers, the window to reach that talent is closing.

Methodology & Sources

What we count: on-site, non-remote job postings sourced directly from official company career pages and applicant tracking systems. No aggregators (LinkedIn, Indeed, Glassdoor) are used as primary sources. **What we exclude:** remote and hybrid roles; roles outside LA, Orange, and San Diego counties (including Goleta/Santa Barbara, Edwards AFB/Kern, China Lake, Vandenberg, Ventura, Riverside, and San Bernardino).

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Data element	Source
Job openings (primary)	Company career pages & ATS, direct access; RTX/Raytheon via Intrepidus manual count
Occupation wages	BLS OEWS May 2023, LA-Long Beach-Anaheim (31080) and San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad (41740) metros
WARN Act notices	California EDD via CaliforniaWarn.com, accessed July 2026
B-21 Raider award	Air & Space Forces Magazine / Breaking Defense, Feb 2026 ($4.5B acceleration)
GA-ASI MQ-9 IRIS IDIQ	GovConWire / USAF, Sept 2025 ($14.1B, work in Poway to 2031)
NSSL Phase 3 Lane 2	Spaceflight Now / SpaceNews, Apr 2025 (SpaceX ~$5.9B, 28 missions FY25-29)

SDA Tracking Layer (T3 & Jul 2026)	Spaceflight Now / SatNews, Dec 2025 & Jul 15 2026 ($3.5B T3; $1.75B Jul expansion)