

# Study: Military's impact strong and growing (REPORTS)

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Who do you turn to for economic security along the Emerald Coast when the bottom drops from the real estate market?

The military.

A study released by Enterprise Florida concluded that military spending remains one of the state's leading growth industries.

DOCUMENTS:

[Read the entire Florida Defense Factbook](#)

Read the economic impact analysis: [Volume 1](#), [Volume 2](#) and [Volume 3](#)

It's particularly valuable to Northwest Florida, where defense-related spending accounts for 35 percent of gross regional product.

According to the "Florida Defense Industry Economic Impact Analysis" completed by the University of West Florida's Haas Center for Business Research and Economic Development, between Oct. 1, 2004, and Sept. 30, 2005, in Okaloosa County:

1 Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field generated \$2.2 billion in defense spending.

1 Countywide, the economic impact of the military was \$6.6 billion.

1 The average annual earnings per military job is approximately \$81,300, or 199 percent more than the area's other jobs in industries such as farming, retail and construction.

The air bases are "incredibly important for all the obvious reasons," said Jim Breitenfeld of the Okaloosa County Economic Development Council. "The high wages. The total spending."

Though the report attributes 73 percent of economic activity in Okaloosa to defense-related spending, Breitenfeld said he wasn't alarmed because the bases are stable employers.

"I don't know if we're dependent (on the military), but it would be a heck of a withdrawal if it disappears tomorrow," he said.

Breitenfeld would like to see Northwest Florida diversify economically in areas where it has competitive advantage such as aviation and high-technology information processing.

In Santa Rosa County, Naval Air Station Whiting Field contributed some \$857

million to the economy. Its average annual military wage in fiscal year 2005 was \$99,800.

Overall, the military presence in Florida promises only to grow, the Haas report continued. By 2010, military spending statewide might have an impact of \$59.5 billion, which would be \$7.5 billion more than in 2005.

“While Florida’s economy has faced challenges during the past few quarters, particularly in areas hardest hit by the real estate slowdown, high-wage, defense-related jobs are somewhat immune to downturns in the business cycle,” said Enterprise Florida president John Adams in a news release.

“They provide strength in Florida’s economy even in difficult times.”

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