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## Base realignments lead tech firms to Ocean State

Mass High Tech: The Journal of New England Technology - by [Brendan Lynch](#) Mass High Tech

Two years after the federal Base Closure and Realignment Commission report raised the specter of mass New England military base closings, the U.S. Navy's presence in Newport, R.I. is expanding -- and attracting tech companies to the Ocean State.

The Naval Undersea Warfare Center in Newport is growing by about 100 civilian engineers, who are working on projects reassigned from other bases that include radio communications, submarine antennae and towed-array sonar, according to John Riendeau, sector lead for the defense industry at the Rhode Island Economic Development Corp.

Moreover, the Navy's Officer Candidate School moved back to Newport, from Pensacola, Fla., in August, and the Navy Supply Corps School plans to relocate to Newport from Georgia in 2011 with a new building.

That growth has, over the last two years, encouraged four companies -- Adaptive Methods Inc., Aegis Technologies Group, Alaska Native Technologies LLC, and Paramount Solutions Inc. -- to open or relocate their businesses close to NUWC, Riendeau said. Rhode Island has "fared extremely well in the BRAC process," he said.

"Companies like the energy level. They like the action," said Riendeau. "They see opportunity that meets their business growth agenda."

Centreville, Va.-based Adaptive Methods opened its Rhode Island office in January 2006, when the company hired William Matuszak to be its vice president of mission system engineering. Before that, Matuszak had worked for five years as a civilian engineer at NUWC, working on sonar systems.

"We chose NUWC because they do research in the areas we want to work in and where we want to grow," Matuszak said.

Adaptive has three engineers working at its Middletown, R.I., office, and the company plans to hire four more engineers in 2008. That might not sound like a lot, but the incoming jobs are high-wage and high-skills, according to Riendeau.

"It's not a huge number of jobs," Riendeau said. "But it's a start."

Huntsville, Ala.-based modeling and simulation engineering company Aegis Technologies started its one-man, Rhode Island operation in July. That one man, Stephen Swenson, also had worked as a civilian engineer at NUWC for 18 years, on simulations for weapons testing. In May, Swenson sent Aegis an e-mail outlining how it would benefit from a presence in Rhode Island. By July, he was Aegis's director of operations in Newport.

"It took a couple of phone calls and me visiting Huntsville, and we made the decision," he said.

AEgis is hiring two technical workers now, and plans to expand to 25 workers to 30 workers over the next three years. Swenson said he's working out of his Richmond, R.I., home now, but AEGis plans to open a Newport office within three to six months.

"I, frankly, am resisting it because then my commute gets longer," he said.

Swenson said moving northeast was a strategic move for AEGis, which is looking to diversify its customer base. Besides the proximity to NUWC, moving to Rhode Island offers access to potential biotech, transportation, academic, and homeland security industry clients, he said.

"There is no biotech sector in Huntsville," he said.

Massachusetts has also fared better than expected since the BRAC report by just about breaking even. Hanscom Air Force Base will lose only one laboratory in 2011, and the Natick Soldier Systems Center lost just a few employees, according to Massachusetts Defense Technology Initiative executive director Alan Macdonald.

The outlook for New England had been gloomy before the BRAC report's release because area bases aren't the traditional, large, high-deployment, high-training bases like those in the southern and western United States, Macdonald said.

"The preseason polling had everyone shutting the lights out on the New England military community," he said.

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