

City says NSA set to double new hires

Agency likely to add some 3,000 workers to those already here.

By L.A. LOREK
EXPRESS-NEWS BUSINESS WRITER

The number of new employees at the National Security Agency's San Antonio campus could reach 3,000, and the organization is investing tens of millions of dollars in new construction.

The NSA, the nation's largest intelligence agency, last April confirmed plans to establish a campus on the Far West Side with an estimated 1,500 new employees.

It now appears the agency has expanded the scope of its operations, with plans to lease additional space.

The campus in San Antonio eventually could accommodate 5,200 employees, expanding from its current 2,200.

The NSA is one of the big projects San Antonio has landed recently along with Toyota's new pickup plant and Washington Mutual, said Mario Hernandez, president of the San Antonio Economic Development Foundation.

Because 60 percent of the NSA's workers have advanced degrees and the agency is the nation's largest employer of mathematicians, the project is one of the city's economic development gems.

With the NSA increasing its presence here, San Antonio's reputation in the security and intelligence area has generated even more interest among information technology companies looking to come to San Antonio, Hernandez said.

The city already has a strong intelligence community, with

City says NSA planning to boost S.A. operations

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more than 60 computer security companies employing over 6,000 workers, he said. It is also home to the Air Intelligence Agency and Cryptologic Systems Group at Lackland AFB.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has leased an old Albertsons grocery store near Interstate 10 and Wurzbach for a Defense Department client that economic development leaders report is the NSA. The site will be used for training.

A construction company is working at the site. A Corps of Engineers spokeswoman said the building should be ready by fall for training classes.

The NSA is spending \$100 million to improve the old Sony plant at West Military Drive and Loop 410, Hernandez said. Corporate Office Properties Trust bought the site last year and leased it to the Corps of Engineers. Construction work is under way, with four large work trailers on site and lots of laborers.

Ramiro Cavazos, the city's economic development director, said the NSA will be hiring or relocating up to 3,000 new employees on top of the ones it has here.

The NSA also is generating a lot of interest among contractors looking to supply goods or services.

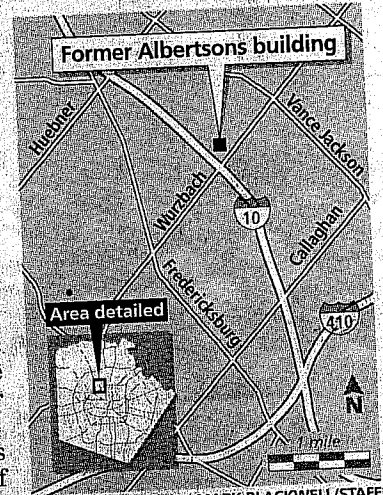
"It's a quiet giant," Cavazos said.

One of the government's most secretive branches, the NSA performs foreign intelligence gathering, analysis and reporting missions supporting combat commanders and national decision makers in the U.S. and abroad. Its agents are known as the nation's code breakers and code makers.

The NSA will not confirm how many employees it is hiring or relocating to San Antonio, said Don Weber, an organization spokesman.

The NSA now has 2,200 Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and civilian Defense Department employees here, he said. Renovations of the Sony site are under way, and the NSA expects to occupy it in 2008, Weber said.

Last year, the NSA began an aggressive national recruiting campaign, with the goal of hiring about 1,500 new employees a year through 2008, and a portion of



MARK BLACKWELL/STAFF

tonio, Weber said. The NSA held a big job fair in San Antonio last year, and more than 5,000 people showed up.

It is too early to tell how many of those people landed a job with the NSA, because security clearance can take up to 18 months.

Employees at San Antonio's NSA site work on projects involving some of the nation's highest security threats.

As terrorism worries have increased in recent years, the NSA has been beefing up its staff aggressively. It is hiring linguists, mathematicians, computer scientists, analysts who focus on intercepting communications, and electrical and other types of engineers.

One reason the NSA chose to expand in San Antonio is because it already has a big presence here, economic development experts said.

It also likes to have access to reliable power and the latest fiber-optic technology. The nearby headquarters of the nation's largest telecommunications company, AT&T, makes San Antonio an attractive place for intelligence work.

The NSA also is looking to diversify its operations outside the Washington area. Today, only 7 percent of the NSA's staff is outside that area. By 2011, the agency wants that increased to 20 percent.

Most of NSA's operations are housed at its headquarters at Fort Meade, Md., about 10 miles from Washington.

Because the agency keeps a low profile, it's not certain how many people work at the NSA, but estimates range from 20,000 to 40,000.