



MARKET ENTRY

The New England Landing Zone: Where Allied Defense Suppliers Build Their US Operations

Why the Greater Boston and Southern New Hampshire corridor is the landing zone for allied manufacturers standing up US defense production near the primes.

An allied defense manufacturer should put its US operation where its customer's engineers already work, where the sub-tier suppliers it will buy from already hold the certifications its programs flow down, and where it can hire people who have already handled controlled technical data. For a sensor, electromechanical, or precision manufacturer selling into DoD sub-tier programs, the Greater Boston and Southern New Hampshire corridor answers all three. BAE Systems runs its Electronic Systems headquarters in Nashua, New Hampshire, with more than 6,500 employees across four New Hampshire cities. The regional supply base includes contract manufacturers that are already ITAR registered and already CMMC Level 2 compliant. Foreign-parented manufacturers already run real production here, including an Italian sensor multinational with a plant in North Andover, Massachusetts. Site selection answers a narrower question: which building, and which incentives package. The operating question, whether the floor inside that building can hold controlled technical data and clear a prime gate, is the one that decides whether the operation wins work. Choose the corridor on the operating answer, then negotiate the building.

The spreadsheet you are being shown

By the time an allied manufacturer decides to enter the US market, the courting has started. A site-selection consultant has a shortlist. Two or three state economic development offices have sent packages. Every one of them is built on the same spine: square footage, labor rates, utility costs, tax treatment, and an incentives number at the bottom in bold.

Those numbers are real and they are not dishonest. They answer a question, and a good site selector will answer it faster than you will. The question they answer is which building you should take.

The question none of those packages answers is whether the operation inside the building will work. Whether the floor can hold controlled technical data without an export violation. Whether an assessor will accept the evidence you can actually produce. Whether the prime that triggered this whole move will qualify you before your window closes. A site-selection firm hands over a building and an incentives package. Nobody in that tier operates inside the four walls afterward.

So the location decision gets made on the variables that are easy to put in a column, and the variables that decide the outcome get discovered in month seven. I have watched that sequence. It is expensive, and it is avoidable, and avoiding it starts with asking the corridor a different question.

A site-selection package is a real answer to a real question. It is just not the question that decides whether your US operation wins DoD work.

What a landing zone actually has to supply

Strip out the incentives and ask what a US defense operation actually consumes in its first two years. The list is short, and almost none of it is on the spreadsheet.

Qualifying-country status is not on the list either. It is a procurement preference on your end products under a reciprocal defense-procurement agreement with the Department of Defense, and it is worth having. It does not waive ITAR, it does not waive CMMC, and it has nothing to say about where your floor should go.

- Your customer's engineers, close enough to visit. Sub-tier defense work is won in design reviews and lost in the gaps between them. A prime's engineer who can drive to your floor in the morning is worth more than a tax abatement.
- A supply base that already carries your flowdown. The moment your program carries DFARS and CMMC obligations, those obligations flow down to the suppliers you buy from. A corridor where the machine shops and the board assemblers are already ITAR registered and already at Level 2 saves you a qualification cycle you did not budget.
- People you can hire who have already worked inside a boundary. A quality manager who has sat in the AS9100 audit chair. A systems administrator who has run a CUI enclave and survived the evidence request. In a region with a deep defense base, those people exist and have done it once. In a region without one, you are training them on your timeline, against a prime gate.
- A precedent. Foreign parents already running compliant US operations nearby, because a path already walked is the cheapest possible evidence that it can be walked.
- An operator who can stand the thing up. The building is inert until somebody builds the operating model, converges the IT and OT environment, draws the data border, and runs the floor to a posture an assessor will accept.

None of that appears on a location scorecard. All of it decides whether your US operation wins DoD work.

The corridor, named

Regional pitches deal in adjectives. Here are addresses.

Start with the anchor. BAE Systems sits at 65 Spit Brook Road in Nashua, New Hampshire. Its two Nashua locations hold the Electronic Systems headquarters and the Richard Reed Microelectronics Center, a 100,000 square foot facility with a wafer fabrication foundry, a module development factory, RF test laboratories, and an advanced microwave assembly factory. Across Nashua, Hudson, Manchester, and Merrimack, BAE Systems staffs more than 6,500 employees.

Merrimack holds environmental test facilities and a laser test range. Hudson holds over 550,000 square feet of manufacturing and office space. The New Hampshire sites carry C4ISR, electronic warfare, countermeasures, precision strike and sensing, and the FAST Labs research organization. Read that as an operator: this is not a regional sales presence. It is a segment headquarters with a fab in it.

Collins Aerospace, an RTX business, is at 121 Technology Drive in Durham. Then the sub-tier, which is the part of the corridor that actually decides your supplier qualification timeline:

- Cirtronics, 528 Route 13 South, Milford. A contract manufacturer of mission-critical systems, PCBA through electromechanical subassemblies through full systems, with over 40 years in low and mid volume complex builds. Its own directory entry states it is ITAR registered, CMMC Level 2 compliant, and ISO 9001 certified, and it invites re-shoring programs by name.
- RdF Corporation, 23 Elm Avenue, Hudson. High-reliability RTDs, thermocouples, heat flux gauges, and heater elements, integrated into critical systems on air and spacecraft since 1955. A sensor maker, in the corridor, already inside the programs you are chasing.
- Marmon Aerospace and Defense, 680 Hayward Street, Manchester. Interconnect solutions for the land, air, sea, and space defense markets, out of a 100,000 square foot facility.
- Haigh-Farr, 43 Harvey Road, Bedford. Mission-critical antennas and support equipment for defense and aerospace, since 1969.
- Micross Components, 1050 Perimeter Road, Manchester. Component preparation that eliminates tin whisker and gold embrittlement risk in mission and life critical systems.
- Granite State Manufacturing, 124 Joliette Street, Manchester. Contract manufacturing of specialized defense, medical, and semiconductor equipment for more than 75 years.
- Astronics AeroSat, 220 Hackett Hill Road, Manchester. Ku-band satcom and tail-mounted antenna systems, including special mission applications.

Cirtronics is ITAR registered and CMMC Level 2 compliant today, in Milford, New Hampshire. When your program flows those obligations down to your suppliers, the corridor's sub-tier has already cleared them. That is a qualification cycle you do not have to fund.

One directory, and what it tells you

Every company in the previous section is a member entry in one place: the New Hampshire Aerospace and Defense Consortium directory. It runs to roughly ninety organizations. I recommend an hour with it, because it is the corridor's actual inventory rather than a brochure about the corridor. Not every entry is a manufacturer. Some are banks, builders, and trade bodies. The manufacturers are the point, and there are enough of them, in enough adjacent towns, that the density argument stops being an adjective.

Look at the towns in that list. Nashua, Hudson, Merrimack, Manchester, Milford, Bedford. Those are neighbors inside one commuting radius, not a set of pins scattered across a state. A supplier in Milford and a prime engineer in Nashua can be in the same room before lunch and still both get a full day of work done. That is a real operating property, and it does not survive being converted

into a number on a scorecard.

My own company is in that directory. ARC Technology Solutions is at 165 Ledge Street in Nashua, building automated test equipment and build-to-print electromechanical hardware for DoD and aerospace customers, and selling into the prime tier. I am its CEO. That is not a credential I am asking you to take on faith. It is an address in the same city as BAE's Electronic Systems headquarters.

The corridor's edges run wider than its Southern New Hampshire core, and honesty requires saying where. Visible Assets in Stratham builds RuBee magnetic-wireless asset visibility for DoD and Department of Energy customers, and co-developed sensitive-item tracking with Lockheed Martin. EMC Technologies in Fall River, Massachusetts, is an ITAR-registered electromechanical contract manufacturer of functional test fixtures and interface test adapters for military aircraft and multinational missile programs. Fall River is on the SouthCoast, well outside the Boston-to-Nashua spine. It belongs in the picture as evidence of how deep the New England defense base runs, not as a claim that everything is twenty minutes away.

The parents who already landed

The strongest argument for this corridor is not that I like it. It is that allied manufacturers already chose it, at every scale, and their operations are still here.

Start with the largest, because it is the one that should change how you read your own situation. BAE Systems, Inc. is a Delaware corporation that has mitigated its foreign ownership through a Special Security Agreement between the US Government, BAE Systems, Inc., and BAE Systems plc, with a Government Security Committee of outside and US-based directors overseeing security and export compliance. Read that with your own board's fears in mind. The company whose Electronic Systems headquarters, microelectronics fab, and 6,500 New Hampshire employees anchor this corridor is a British-parented business operating under the exact class of FOCI instrument your counsel is drafting right now. The corridor did not merely tolerate a foreign-parented defense operation. It grew its anchor around one.

Galvion opened its US headquarters in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a 44,000 square foot building holding engineering teams, prototyping workshops, and its Warfighter Lab. The company's operations began in Montreal in 2002 as Revision, and the Montreal design and development center is still running. Its power and data management products and advanced coatings operations run out of Marlborough, Massachusetts. New Hampshire's own economic development agency counts Galvion among the state's foreign direct investment. Look at the shape of that: design and development at home, US engineering headquarters and US-facing operations in this corridor. That is the two-flag operating structure, already built, by a company that started where a Canadian parent starts.

Then the one I know from the inside. GEFTRAN is an Italian sensor and automation multinational headquartered in Provaglio d'Iseo, in the province of Brescia, listed on Borsa Italiana and still controlled by the founding Franceschetti family. Its US site at 400 Willow Street in North Andover, Massachusetts, roughly twenty-five miles north of Boston, is a production plant and commercial sales organization, not a sales office. Gefran markets its melt pressure sensors as made in North Andover with US-based support. I ran GEFTRAN's North America operations. So when I say a Brescia parent can run a real manufacturing plant in this corridor, I am not modeling it from a case

study. I did it.

The state keeps count of the pattern. New Hampshire's Department of Business and Economic Affairs reports foreign direct investment in the state comprising 186 companies from 24 countries across 45 industries, directly supporting 43,900 jobs, and it names Galvion, Lonza, and BAE Systems among the multinationals expanding there. You would not be the first parent to make this move. You would be joining a pattern the state already tracks.

The company anchoring this corridor's defense manufacturing base is British-parented and runs under a Special Security Agreement. The foreign-parent problem you are being told is exotic is the problem this corridor was built around.

Where the corridor is honest

You are going to fact-check this paper. Here is the fact-check, first, from me.

The most visible German defense move into the US did not concentrate in this corridor. American Rheinmetall achieved CMMC Level 2 certification across all six of its US manufacturing plants in April 2026. Four of those six are in Michigan. The US corporate parent sits in Vienna, Virginia. Somebody will hand you that as the counter-argument to this entire paper.

It is a good fact, and it argues for something narrower than it looks. A US headquarters near Washington is a decision about program offices, customer access, and the parts of the business that live in meetings. That is a real decision and Virginia usually wins it. Where the metal gets cut is a different decision, made against different constraints: the engineering customer, the supply base, and the people you can hire. Those two decisions get made in the same board meeting, and they are not the same decision. Watch for the advisor who collapses them. Rheinmetall did not collapse them. Read the release rather than the headline and you find the corporate parent in Virginia and the certified plants in Maine, Michigan, and Ohio, four of the six in Michigan, where ground vehicles at volume belong, and one of them in Biddeford, Maine. Each decision went where its own constraints pointed. That is this paper's argument, made by the company you were about to use against it. Note also what the story proves on the point that matters most to you: a German-parented US operation completed the CMMC Level 2 build across its entire manufacturing footprint, final audit closed in February. The compliant operation is not theoretical. It is done.

The corridor also does not win on cost. Southern New Hampshire and Greater Boston will not be the cheapest square footage or the cheapest labor on your shortlist, and an advisor who tells you otherwise is selling. New Hampshire's economic development agency promotes a low tax burden and ranks the state first in the country for business friendliness, which is fair enough as far as it goes, and it is the least interesting reason to choose this corridor. If the deciding variable in your model is cost per square foot, another state wins, and you should let it.

And the corridor is right for a profile, not for everyone. It is right for sensor, electromechanical, precision, and defense-electronics manufacturers whose customers are the engineering organizations already here. If your program is shipbuilding, or ground vehicles at volume, or if the prime line you are feeding sits in Texas or Alabama, then the density that makes this corridor

valuable is density around somebody else's customer. I will tell you that in the first conversation, before you have spent anything.

The corridor loses the cost argument and wins the operating argument. If cost per square foot is your deciding variable, another state should get this. I would rather say so now than bill you to find out.

New England is the export product

Here is the reframe the whole paper is for. The instinct of a parent entering the US market is to treat location as a constraint to be minimized: find the cheapest compliant place, put the building there, get on with the real work. For this profile, that instinct is backwards. The corridor is not the cost of the operation. It is the asset the operation is built on.

What you acquire when you land here is proximity to the engineering organizations that specify your parts, a supply base that already carries your compliance flowdown, a hiring pool that has held CUI before, and a two-flag precedent set at every scale from a 44,000 square foot Portsmouth headquarters to a British-parented anchor running under a Special Security Agreement. Those things are not portable. You cannot buy them in a cheaper state and ship them in with the machines. They are the product.

Standard Work 2.0 is the operating system I install: IT and OT convergence, margin engineering, human-in-the-loop, and the sovereign tier that hardwires ITAR and CMMC into the daily build. The corridor is where I install it, and my base in Brookline, New Hampshire, is inside it. The prime relationships, the supplier fluency, and the regional knowledge are not adjacent to the work. They are what a Brescia or an Ontario parent is buying: an operator already standing where you are landing.

New England is not the constraint on your US operation. For a sensor or electromechanical manufacturer selling to the primes, it is the export product.

What I own, and what stays with your advisors

Clear lines make this work, so here are mine.

- Mine: the operating model, the floor, the IT and OT build, the US-person data boundary, and the readiness evidence for the gate you are racing. I stand the operation up and I run it until the system holds on its own.
- Your corporate and export-control counsel: entity formation, ITAR and DDTC registration, FOCI mitigation, and CFIUS questions. I coordinate with them. The legal instrument stays theirs.
- Your site-selection advisor: the building, the incentives, the lease. Once you know which corridor the operation belongs in, that tier is good at what it does, and I will work alongside it.

Every engagement is held under NDA, and I run a maximum of four at a time. Four is the real limit of doing this work at depth, so four is the number.

FREQUENTLY ASKED

We have a larger incentive package on the table in another state. Does that settle it?

It settles the building. It does not settle the operation. Run the incentives against what they actually offset: rent, fit-out, and some payroll, over a defined term. Then run the operating variables against what they cost you when they go wrong: a prime gate missed because your quality manager had never sat an audit, a supplier qualification cycle you did not budget because the local shops were not ITAR registered, an export exposure because nobody drew the data border before the CAD files landed. One of those lists is a discount. The other is whether the operation wins work. Take the incentives if the corridor is right. Choosing the corridor because of them is how the discount ends up costing you the program.

American Rheinmetall put its US hub in Virginia. Doesn't that argue against New England?

It argues that a US corporate headquarters belongs near the customer's program offices, which is usually true, and usually means Virginia. It says much less than it appears to about where production goes. The same release that names the Virginia parent also lists the plants: all six certified sites are in Maine, Michigan, and Ohio, four of them in Michigan and one in Biddeford, Maine. The company put its executives near the customer and its floors near their supply bases, which is exactly the distinction this paper draws. What the story does prove is the part that matters most to you: American Rheinmetall achieved CMMC Level 2 across its entire US manufacturing footprint in April 2026, so a German-parented US operation has completed the exact compliant-operation build this paper describes. Where a large cap puts its US executives and where a sub-tier sensor maker puts its floor are two decisions with two different constraint sets. Yours is the second one.

Do we have to land in New England to work with you?

No. On-site operating work is concentrated across New England, because that is where the defense industrial base and the prime relationships I know best are dense, and it is a strong landing zone for an allied manufacturer entering the US market. Diagnostic and strategic work runs nationally. If your US site is going elsewhere, we scope the mix of on-site and remote at the start. If the corridor is genuinely wrong for your program, I will say so in the first conversation.

What does the corridor give us that a site-selection consultant cannot?

A site-selection consultant gives you the building and the incentives, and that tier is good at it. What they hand over is inert. The corridor supplies the things that turn the building into an operation: engineering customers within driving distance, a supply base that already carries your compliance flowdown, and a hiring pool that has worked inside a CUI boundary. Those are operating assets, and they do not appear on a location scorecard, because a scorecard is built to compare places on cost, not to predict whether your floor clears an assessment. I read the corridor as an operator: which suppliers can actually hold your flowdown, which people are hireable, which primes will engage a new sub-tier supplier, and what the sequence is from lease

signature to a floor that holds.

Sources

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