

Pentagon push to tap tech talent in 'weird' Texas city

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Pentagon chief Ashton Carter on Wednesday announced the creation of a new defense innovation center in Austin, Texas—the latest expansion in an ongoing effort to connect with some of America's hippest tech communities.

Carter's project, called Defense Innovation Unit Experimental, or DIUx, already has offices in Silicon Valley and in the Boston area, home to Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The Pentagon has a long history of collaboration with the tech community that has yielded or advanced new technologies including GPS and the internet.

Austin, the state capital of Texas, has long been known for being "weird," as it is fiercely liberal and attracts hipsters from around the country in an otherwise largely conservative southern state.

It also has become a tech hub, and is home to dozens of established tech firms and startups.

"I not only want to keep Austin weird; I'm counting on it," Carter said in prepared remarks delivered in the city.

"Because the creative thinking that happens in places like Austin is part of what makes our country so innovative and our economy so vibrant and strong."

Carter, a physicist and former Harvard University professor who delights in the US military's innovation in high-tech areas, has made repeated trips to tech firms—mainly on the West Coast—in recent months.

The Pentagon chief also praised Austin's "commitment to innovation, access to talent and academia, as well as the department's longstanding ties to Texas."

The Lone Star State also hosts an array of established defense firms that manufacture equipment, such as Marine Corps attack helicopters and the military's most advanced stealth fighter jet, the F-35 Lightning II.

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