

Plan for smaller Army

- **Defense secretary** also proposes closing bases
- **Technological edge** can make up for size, he says

BY ROBERT BURNS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Looking beyond America's post-9/11 wars, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel proposed yesterday shrinking the Army to its smallest size in 74 years, closing bases and reshaping forces to confront a "more volatile, more unpredictable" world with a more nimble military.

The nation can afford a smaller military if it retains a technological edge and the agility to respond on short notice to crises anywhere on the globe, Hagel said.

He said the priorities he is outlining reflect a consensus

among America's military leaders, but Republicans in Congress were quick to criticize some proposed changes.

In a speech at the one-year mark of his tenure as Pentagon chief, Hagel revealed many details of the military spending plan that will be part of the 2015 budget President Barack Obama will submit to Congress next week.

Hagel described it as the first Pentagon budget to fully reflect the nation's transition from 13 years of war.

At the core of his plan is the notion that after wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that proved longer and more costly than foreseen, the nation's military



Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, left, and Gen. Martin Dempsey, Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, explain the budget cuts.

will no longer be sized to conduct large and protracted ground wars. It will put more emphasis on versatile, agile forces that can project power over great distances.

Hagel stressed that such changes entail risk. "We are entering an era where American

dominance on the seas, in the skies and in space can no longer be taken for granted," he said.

Hagel's call for a new round of domestic military base closings in 2017 is certain to rouse

members of Congress to protect bases in their home districts and states, much as they did after the last round, in 2005, when lawmakers argued that the process does not yield as much savings as advertised.

Early reaction from Republicans in Congress was negative.

"I am concerned that we are on a path to repeat the mistakes we've made during past attempts to cash in on expected peace dividends that never materialized," said Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, a possible presidential contender in 2016.

"What we're trying to do is solve our financial problems on the backs of our military, and that can't be done," said Rep. Howard "Buck" McKeon of California, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

SCCC seeking smoking ban at its 3 campuses

BY DAVID M. SCHWARTZ
david.schwartz@newsday.com

Suffolk County Community College wants to ban smoking and other tobacco use across its three campuses, which would make it the first public college on Long Island with a blanket ban.

The college board of trustees voted unanimously last week to ask the Suffolk County Legislature to allow it to ban tobacco use at its campuses in Brentwood, Selden and Riverhead.

The measure follows a push by the State University of New York to ban tobacco use on all SUNY campuses across the state through legislation pending in Albany.

Suffolk County already bars smoking inside and within 50 feet of county buildings, which include those at SCCC. The college decided to move ahead with its own policy after an online poll last fall showed overwhelming support for making the college smoke-free, said Ben Zwirn, intergovernmental relations

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coordinator for the college.

Of 2,875 students and employees who responded, almost 70 percent "strongly supported" or "somewhat supported" the community college becoming completely tobacco- and smoke-free.

"This would be sending a message statewide," Zwirn said. SCCC, with 26,000 students, is the largest of the state's 36 community colleges.

Legis. William Spencer (D-Centerport) said he would be willing to sponsor the resolution in the county legislature.

"It's in line with my philosophy that smoking is not good at any time for anyone," said Spencer, a physician and chairman of the legislature's health committee.

If the resolution passes, it would be up to the board of trust-

ees to vote to enact the policy. It would also set a timetable for when a ban would go into effect, which has not been determined.

In 2012, the SUNY board of trustees passed a resolution setting the goal of having all of its campuses throughout the state tobacco-free by Jan. 1, 2014, said David Doyle, spokesman for the system. A bill in Albany was introduced in 2013, but didn't come up for a vote. Another bill is pending in the State Legislature.

The push to eliminate tobacco from campuses "is part of SUNY's strategic plan to contribute to a healthy New York," Doyle said.

So far, nine schools have banned tobacco, including Buffalo State and Westchester Community College.

Nassau Community College has had no discussions about a complete tobacco ban on its campuses, said Alicia Steger, a college spokeswoman.

NCC has installed additional signage about existing county smoking policies around campus.

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