

# DAILY NEWS

## Pentagon's proposed cuts would shrink Army to smallest size since before WWII

*Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel's plan, to be included in in President Obama's 2015 budget proposal next week, would cut the service from 522,000 to fewer than 450,000 active-duty troops.*

By [Dan Friedman](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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WASHINGTON — With the U.S. out of Iraq and leaving Afghanistan, the Pentagon wants to shrink the Army to its smallest size since before World War II.

The plan to cut the service from 522,000 to fewer than 450,000 active-duty troops is the most dramatic of a series of cuts [Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel](#) proposed Monday.

Hagel outlined plans set to be included next week in President Obama's 2015 budget proposal as the administration works to squeeze defense funding to meet tight spending caps.

"We have to face the realities of our time," Navy Rear Adm. John Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, said Monday. "We must be pragmatic."

The reduced force reflects the Army's pullback from ground operations requiring large troop numbers.

The U.S. doesn't need a big army unless it is "expecting to be fighting large land wars," said Chris Preble, a defense analyst at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

**Planned cuts reflect decreased importance of ground operations in military conflicts.**

The cuts require congressional approval. Lawmakers voiced quick objections, suggesting a pending fight — especially over Hagel’s plan to take on ballooning compensation costs for service members.

Congress voted overwhelmingly this month to repeal a provision to slow growth in pension payments to veterans that was included in a budget bill passed just a few months ago.

The recent votes signal lawmakers’ reluctance to tackle the politically perilous task of trimming rising health care and other costs for former and active service members.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), who sits on the Armed Services Committee, “has concerns over initial reports regarding cuts to programs such as health care and housing for our military personnel,” said Glen Caplin, a Gillibrand spokesman. “She will be focused on ensuring that Congress honors the commitments we have already made to our service members, veterans, retirees and their families.”

Hagel also outlined plans to implement a new round of domestic military base closings in 2017 and to eliminate the Air Force’s famous U-2 spy planes and its expensive fleet of A-10 aircraft designed to give ground troops close air support.

Hagel’s budget protects money for special operations and cyberwarfare — reflecting a bid to move toward a smaller but quicker and more capable force.

“We are repositioning to focus on the strategic challenges and opportunities that will define our future,” Hagel said Monday.

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