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## Task force meeting to protect SC military bases from spending cuts

By JEFF WILKINSON

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The South Carolina Military Base Task Force is set to meet today to discuss ways to protect the state's installations from deep cuts proposed by the Obama administration and the Defense Department, particularly to the Army and Marines.

It will be the first time the task force has met since Haley took office more than a year ago.

Critics claimed that Haley, who didn't make appointments to the board until about three weeks ago, was tardy in building a plan to preserve the \$13 billion that is pumped into South Carolina's economy each year by its four major bases in Columbia, Charleston, Sumter and Beaufort.

But the appointments — which include heavy hitters such as Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt and SC Adjutant Gen. Bob Livingston, as well as mayors, chamber of commerce heads and county council chairs from the four military communities — now pave the way for a state-wide strategy, said Maj. Gen. William "Dutch" Holland, a former commander of the Ninth Air Force, the planning and logistical arm of Air Force air power in the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

"I think we're OK," said Holland, now executive director of the Shaw-Sumter Partnership for Progress and a member of the task force. "This is good impetus to get us all together, lock the door ... and decide where we want to go on a united basis."

SC Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom is chairman of the committee.

Haley spokesman Rob Godfrey said Haley will work with the state's federal delegation and the task force to protect SC military bases from cuts.

"It's time to speak with one voice as we move to protect all of our military bases and defense programs," he said in a release.

A spokeswoman for Commerce said both Hitt and deputy commerce secretary George Patrick — a retired major general and former executive coordinator of the task force — will attend today's meeting.

"Secretary Hitt is keenly aware of the impact that the military presence has on South Carolina's overall economy," spokeswoman Amy Love said in a release.

In January, Obama and the Defense Department mandated \$487 billion in cuts to the U.S. military over the next 10 years — cuts that are expected to impact South Carolina's major military installations. And they and the Pentagon have asked for two more rounds of base closings and realignments, called BRAC, in 2013 and 2015.

A mutual effort between the state and the military communities paid off in the last round of BRAC, in 2005, when Fort Jackson and Shaw Air Force Base gained missions, most notably the national Drill Sergeant School at Fort Jackson and Third Army at Shaw.

Ike McLeese, president and CEO of the Greater Columbia Chamber of Commerce, said that in addition to fending off losses and positioning the installations to gain missions, the task force also needs to develop strategies for caring for service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and finding employment for those forced to leave the service.

Among the priorities are:

- Finding jobs with the state for those forced to leave the service because of draw downs
- Ensuring that returning SC National Guard members and Reservists retain their jobs or find new ones after deployment
- Establishing a state-wide network for attaining those goals

"In the past we've targeted issues that were mental or physical in nature," said McLeese, a task force member. "Now the thing that has moved to the No. 1 priority is helping them find jobs."

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# Legislators prepare to challenge any Ohio base cuts

**Rickenbacker, Mansfield in line to lose planes; Obama expected to seek closings in 2013, 2015**

By **Jessica Wehrman**

*The Columbus Dispatch* • Friday February 10, 2012 5:42 AM

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WASHINGTON — Days before President Barack Obama releases a budget expected to call for two rounds of military base closures within the next five years, the Ohio congressional delegation already has begun coordinating how to spare Ohio bases.

Obama, as part of his fiscal 2013 budget, is expected to call for base closure rounds to begin in 2013 and 2015.

If Congress agrees, the process, aimed at helping to reduce a massive federal deficit, would require an independent commission to make recommendations on which bases to close and which to realign. Congress would then have to approve or disapprove the list agreed to by the independent commission.

During the last round, in 2005, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base — the state's only active-duty military base — gained missions.

But with federal law calling for at least \$487 billion in cuts during the next decade, lawmakers worry that the state could bear the brunt of some of those cuts.

"The expectation is, if we're prepared, we'll end up with better outcomes for the community and the military," said Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, who organized a meeting yesterday of the state's congressional delegation. "Today we started the process."

The state's delegation is already worried about Obama's budget, which will include the elimination of some aircraft at the Air National Guard bases at Rickenbacker and in Mansfield.

Last week, the Air Force announced plans to retire six of the 18 KC-135 tankers at Rickenbacker and four C-27J cargo planes in Mansfield.

Early indications, however, show Wright-Patterson might actually gain intelligence and surveillance work under the president's fiscal 2013 budget.

In all, the state's military installations support 43,950 jobs, according to material compiled by Ohio's congressional delegation, including 27,000 at Wright-Patterson. Rickenbacker and the Defense Supply Center Columbus combined support about 9,200 jobs.

Rep. Steve Austria, R-Beavercreek, said the group, which also included Reps. Mike Turner, R-Centerville; Jim Jordan, R-Urbana; Dennis Kucinich, D-Cleveland; and Steve Stivers, R-Upper Arlington, hopes to apply lessons learned during the 2005 base closure process to future rounds of base closures.

"We need to put a plan together as a delegation," he said.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, wasn't at the meeting, but he said he wants to work with the delegation "to make sure the process is done fairly."

"I'll continue working with the delegation to do the right thing," he said. "We will work across party lines."

To protect the state's bases, Portman said, the delegation will have to rally community support, take a thorough inventory of the value of the state's military bases and make plans for how to proceed when legislation proposing base closures comes to Congress.

"We aren't competing with one another," Portman said. "We're working as a team."

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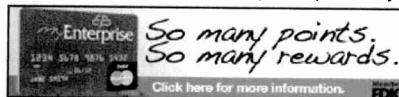
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## Hanscom base cuts draw concern

By Chris Camire, [ccamire@sentinelandenterprise.com](mailto:ccamire@sentinelandenterprise.com)

Posted: 02/24/2012 06:35:47 AM EST

BEDFORD -- Military officials are downplaying reports of dramatic job cuts at Hanscom Air Force Base, but local business officials remain on edge over the future of the facility's role in the local economy.

Hanscom could lose three-quarters of its funding for contract workers over the next four years and an additional 380 government jobs due to a reduction in military spending.

Cuts to the base's Electronic Systems Center, which employs 1,250 contractors, are set to begin in April. The center will see a 10 percent to 15 percent budget reduction in the first year, according to base spokeswoman Sarah Olaciregui.

Olaciregui cautioned, however, that the total number of jobs to be cut in the long term has not been decided.

"It may take some time before all the effects of these changes are fully known and understood," she said.

Hanscom generates \$5 billion in annual economic activity, according to Maureen Rogers of the Woburn-based North Suburban Chamber of Commerce. The base has led to the creation of 16,000 jobs that generate a combined annual income of \$423 million, she said.

Rogers added that local businesses, such as restaurants and caterers, worry about what the future holds for the local economy should the base suffer steep cuts.

"The base personnel might go to the local restaurants. They have children in the school system. It just increases unemployment with every single cut," said Rogers, who represents 30 companies that do business

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with Hanscom. "Military may leave this area and go elsewhere."

Hanscom has no planes and few uniformed personnel. The facility largely focuses on developing high-tech weapons and communications systems with the assistance of private contractors that employ hundreds of people who live throughout the region.



(An E-3 Sentry AWACS aircraft takes off. The Electronic Systems Center at Hanscom was awarded a contract in 2010 to upgrade the French AWACS fleet with more modern capabilities. Photo courtesy Hanscom AFB)

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Contractors that could be affected by the proposed cuts include Oasis Systems in Lexington, Odyssey Systems Consulting Group in Wakefield and Burlington, Gemini Industries in Billerica, QuanTech Services in Lexington, and Sumeria Systems Inc. in Danvers.

"They're trying to reduce the cost of doing business -- overhead, discretionary spending, contract support -- which is what we do," said David Clapp, division manager of PESystems Inc., of Littleton, which reviews Hanscom's contracts with such companies as Raytheon Co. and Boeing. "Unfortunately, the easiest thing for them to cut is the contractors. We think we play an important role in Hanscom's success."

Clapp, who has worked for PESystems since 2001, said the company has about 300 people employed at Hanscom. It would be a huge blow if cuts to the Electronic Systems Center are enacted, he said.

"Our main line is federal support contracts," Clapp said. "What we try to do is diversify, but overall, defense is in a decline right now, so it's difficult. We've chosen our course of action. Now we have to make the best of it."

Members of Congress and local officials are urging the military to rethink the changes.

"We've already started the discussion, asking for justifications for these cuts and getting all the information we need," said U.S. Rep. John Tierney, a Salem Democrat. "We will deal with the Washington element and the local element."

Tierney said domestic bases are often targeted when the Pentagon needs to make spending cuts, but he suggested the military would be better served examining spending on international bases and weapons systems he described as "seriously over budget and behind schedule."

U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas, a Lowell Democrat, said she plans to highlight the strategic importance of Hanscom to Pentagon officials. She said the base has met critical communications, technology and other security needs for the military for decades.

"The Air Force's mission at Hanscom is supported by the universities and innovative high-tech companies that are unique to Massachusetts, and the presence of these institutions has helped the Air Force to confront current threats and prepare for future ones," Tsongas said in a statement.

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has said the military is looking to close domestic bases as early as next year. Hanscom is on that list.

Hanscom narrowly avoided being shut down in 2005, thanks to state officials convincing the Pentagon that the Bedford installation plays a unique role in advancing military innovation and technology.

Former U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy and former Gov. Mitt Romney co-chaired a public-private effort to protect the local base.

Now state leaders are once again being asked to tout the important role Hanscom plays in protecting the U.S.

"If there isn't a significant demonstration of support, that could be misinterpreted as a laissez-faire attitude -- like, OK, so maybe the base will close or downsize, but we'll move on," Bedford Selectman Michael Rosenberg said. "That's not the way we should feel. Sometimes you really have to have a brass band and a major, visible, public demonstration of support."

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**Federal budget cuts will likely hit Texas military bases****Some expect building spree will soon come to an end**

By Gary Martin

Updated 10:55 p.m., Sunday, February 19, 2012

WASHINGTON — Nearly a decade of military expansion that helped buoy the Texas economy during the recession is coming to an end as Pentagon officials ponder budget cuts and a shrinking force structure.

"It looks to me like the big building boom from the military is screeching to a halt," said Nelson Wolff, the Bexar County administrative judge who has overseen a decade of defense-related growth in San Antonio.

President Barack Obama's budget blueprint for fiscal year 2013 contains \$450 million in military construction projects in Texas — far less than the \$640 million set aside last year and nearly a third of the \$1.1 billion the state received in 2010.

Obama also has proposed two rounds of base closures as the Pentagon withdraws from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"In some cases, that left us unsure where we need to make the 'milcon' investments," said Lt. Gen. Larry Spencer, the Pentagon director for force structure and resources.

Military construction proposals shrunk for Air Force, Army, Navy and the Marines as the Pentagon grapples with other cuts in spending dictated by last year's debt-limit deal between the administration and Congress.

The Defense Department also is finishing the last round of base closures from 2005, which prompted building booms in San Antonio and Bethesda, Md., where the military's medical operations were consolidated.

***'One-year pause'***

Last year, Obama sought \$331 million for military medical consolidation in San Antonio alone.

The 2013 budget out last week includes \$80 million for the ongoing construction of a hospital at Lackland to replace Wilford Hall Medical Center.

Overall, the Air Force military construction budget shrank by \$900 million, said Maj. Gen. Edward Bolton Jr., Air Force deputy assistant secretary for budget.

"This one-year pause will give us time to ensure proper investment of limited resources in light of the ongoing budget reduction pressures and potential force structure changes," Bolton said during a Pentagon budget briefing.

The Army saw a similar building spree at Fort Bliss, in El Paso, when the U.S. Army's 1st Armored Division was moved from Germany.

Last year, Fort Bliss saw \$286 million in construction; this year's total is \$214.6 million.

As the Pentagon turns off the spigot for military construction, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told the Senate Armed Services Committee that further reductions are being eyed at overseas bases.

The Defense Department announced the removal of two of four combat brigades in Europe. That would still leave 70,000 U.S. military personnel stationed abroad, where facilities could be pared.

"Finding further reductions and consolidations in our overseas force posture should be our first priority," Panetta said.

Nonetheless, the Obama administration's budget blueprint for military expansion at domestic bases for fiscal 2013, which begins Oct. 1, will impact the economies of states with multiple military installations.

Texas will still receive \$450 million in construction projects, if approved by Congress.

***State panel reviewing***

The Texas Military Preparedness Commission, a panel appointed by Gov. Rick Perry, reviewed the president's budget last week in Austin.

"It's about being prepared, because the DoD budget plays a big role in our state's economy," said state Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, D-San Antonio, chairwoman of the Texas Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs and Military Installations.

Texas has more than 131,500 active-duty military and 48,000 civilian employees, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

State officials estimate that the economic impact of the U.S. military payroll for active-duty, reserves and civilians to be more than \$77 billion.

The economic impact for San Antonio is estimated at \$15 billion. For the state as a whole, military contracts totaled more than \$60 billion.

Federal military spending is one sector of the state's economy that helped Texas replace all 433,400 jobs that were shed during the recession as the state economy rebounded more quickly than the United States as a whole, according to Texas Comptroller Susan Combs.

Nationally, through January, only 36 percent of recession-hit jobs have been recovered, Combs said.

Two of the largest projects for Texas are the ongoing construction of hospitals at Fort Bliss and Lackland.

Building at Fort Bliss alone accounts for \$4.6 million in annual economic impact for the El Paso region, according to Rep. Silvestre Reyes, D-El Paso.

### ***San Antonio 'lucky'***

Wolff said the San Antonio area has been "very lucky" in terms of military expansion, mainly due to the 2005 base closure round and consolidation of military medicine at Fort Sam Houston, which created thousands of construction jobs.

Texas lawmakers are hopeful that state installations will be key to future expansion.

They point to expanding high-technology missions at Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base in Houston, where MQ-1 Predator drones are remotely manned, and at Lackland, where Air Force cybersecurity operations are conducted.

And Texas lawmakers say they will oppose additional rounds of base realignment and closure, commonly referred to by the acronym BRAC.

"Strategic needs have changed, and we certainly can't afford to maintain non-essential overseas bases," said Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas.

### ***Ready for the ax***

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, noted that the 2005 closures were completed just last year. "Congress is not ready for another BRAC, and neither is the military," Cornyn said.

Wolff, meanwhile, is bracing for the possibility. "You can't expect Congress to meet spending guidelines without cutbacks," the administrative judge noted.

Just the reduction in military construction will be felt by Texas cities.

"It does have an economic impact when you do cut back, but there is a clear consensus we need to cut back on spending" Wolff said.

"It doesn't surprise me. I think it needs to be done. We are going to get prepared," he said.

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## TheBostonChannel.com

### State Leaders Push To Save Military Bases

#### Task Force Will Focus On Hanscom Air Force Base

POSTED: 7:03 am EST March 5, 2012

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**BEDFORD, Mass.** -- Some of the Massachusetts' top state leaders are launching a new push to save hundreds of military jobs on Monday, gathering at Hanscom Air Force Base in Bedford to convene a task force to explore what might be lost and what can be done.

Sen. John Kerry, U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas and Lt. Gov. Tim Murray are concerned about the loss of jobs, both on and off base, because base cuts also affect off-base civilian contractors. None of the cuts would come without a fight, officials said.

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"What is clear is that the federal government and the U.S. military across the board will be engaging in belt-tightening with the winding down of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan,"

Murray said last month, adding that no final decisions have been made about Hanscom or any of the state's other bases.

Murray is leading the Military Asset and Security Strategy Task Force, which is trying to minimize funding and job cuts at the state's six military bases. The Pentagon is looking to close bases in order to meet \$500 billion in defense cuts agreed to by President Barack Obama and Congress as part of the deficit-reduction pact.

"It trickles all down," said Maureen Rogers of the North Suburban Chamber of Commerce. She said the economic impact of losing 40 to 45 civilian base jobs this year and 100 to 175 off-base contractor positions next year, could have wide-ranging consequences.

"There are caterers, there are restaurants, everything else. There could be, potentially, a \$5 billion economic impact, that we've found, for Hanscom Air Base," said Rogers.

Lt. Gen. Charles Davis is the commander at the Electronic Systems Center, where the cost cutting proposals are focused. The center is facing a total cut of 245 positions, 62 of which are currently filled.

"It's not pleasant right now, especially if you're the one losing a job, but I'm trying to tell everybody there's no reason to panic right now," said Davis.

There's also the possibility of more cuts over the next four years, slashing contractor budgets by 75 percent.

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Hanscom was the second of at least six visits to the state's military bases. In addition to Hanscom, Murray has toured Barnes Air National Guard Base in Westfield and plans to tour Westover Air Reserve Base in Chicopee later this month.

In April, Murray plans to tour the Massachusetts Military Reservation / Otis Air National Guard Base in Falmouth, Natick Soldier Systems Center in Natick and Fort Devens.

"The reality is, tough budget choices will be made and we've got to be all hands on deck to ensure that the mission and workers at Hanscom aren't hurt in the process," said Kerry. "We've got a good story to tell and we're going to tell it, because technologies and equipment conceptualized, researched, developed and manufactured at facilities across Massachusetts help the military execute its mission at the highest levels."

"Massachusetts has the immediate ability to meet our country's national security needs in cyber-technology, advanced manufacturing, bio-science and many other critical areas," said U.S. Sen. Scott Brown. "I will continue working at the federal level to spotlight the military value in Massachusetts and greater New England."

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## With cuts looming, NY pols trying to protect military installations worry about air bases

MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

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ALBANY, N.Y. — With broad defense cuts looming, some New York officials working to protect the state's military installations are focusing on Air National Guard and Reserve bases.

President Barack Obama this month proposed a leaner defense budget for 2013 amid troop drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta is soon expected to formally request two new rounds of domestic base closures and realignments as a way to cut long-term costs.

The expected cuts could have major effects in New York, which is home to dozens of military installations, including Fort Drum in northern New York, the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station and the Army National Guard's Camp Smith near Peekskill in the Hudson Valley. Combined, the active duty, National Guard and Reserve installations employ tens of thousands of troops and civilians from Long Island to western New York, and they are critical to the economies in many upstate areas.

Though it does not appear likely New York will be hit as severely as it was in the mid-'90s base closure round — which shut down active duty Air Force bases in Plattsburgh and Rome — there are still worries.

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"There's no doubt there will be cuts. We are trying to limit the cuts and trying to grow the missions and present New York as the future for the military," said U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Gillibrand, U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer and other members of New York's congressional delegation have been trying to secure and extend missions at New York's military installations as a way to protect them from being shuttered or shrunk in the coming years.

Gillibrand said she is particularly concerned about the five bases maintained by the Air National Guard and Air Reserves in New York, as well as the Air Force research lab in Rome. The Air Force announced planned nationwide force reductions this month that would lean heavily on the Guard and would trim Reserve forces as well.

One focus for politicians is on Niagara Falls, where the 914th Airlift Wing of the Air Force Reserve and the 107th Airlift Wing of the New York Air National Guard share a tactical airlift mission. There are plans to reduce the number of C-130 transport planes, which has raised fears that fewer planes could leave the 107th without a mission, said Niagara Military Affairs Council chairman Merrell Lane.

Lane, whose group advocates for the base, said it is the largest employer in Niagara County and the loss of the Guard mission could cost about 800 civilian jobs.

"Western New York has always struggled," Lane said. "And the loss of that many jobs to western New York would be — it just wouldn't be good."

Members of New York's congressional delegation advocating for the Guard and Reserve at Niagara Falls have touted the base's proximity to the Canadian border. Gillibrand and others have asked Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano for a new Border Patrol station at a Niagara Falls military base.

In a similar vein, members of Congress are lobbying against a proposed \$30 million cut to the Air Force Research Lab in Rome, touting the central New York facility's role in cyber-security. And they have lobbied Panetta not to retire transport planes at Stratton Air National Guard Base near Schenectady.

Officials say they are concerned about every military installation across the state, though some seem immune from major cuts because they have recently gained missions or are being upgraded.

In the Hudson Valley, the 105th Airlift Wing at Stewart Air National Guard Base is receiving C-17 Globemaster cargo planes to replace an older type of transport.

The Air National Guard's 174th Fighter Wing at Syracuse has operated unmanned Reaper drones over Afghanistan since December 2009 and also has a Reaper maintenance training facility. Last fall, the wing began flying the drones out of Fort Drum's Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield for takeoff and landing practice.

Fort Drum is home to the oft-deployed 10th Mountain Division and funding has already been approved for a new training complex to replace World War II-era buildings. Obama's budget proposal includes still more for Fort Drum, including \$95 million for an aircraft hangar and \$25.9 million for a data terminal complex for the Missile Defense Agency.

"I actually think Fort Drum will be fine," Gillibrand said, "and largely because Drum is one of the premier training bases in the whole

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