

# *Pentagon to Cut 15 Bases in Europe*

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Washington, January 14 (RHC)-- The Pentagon has announced a plan to close down 15 military bases in Europe due to shrinking budgets. Pentagon officials said they were ending operations at an air base in Britain along with 14 other sites in Europe and handing them back to their home governments in a move to save \$500 million annually.

The closures and infrastructure consolidations will affect 15 facilities in the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Portugal. Some 2,000 U.S. troops would be removed from Britain over the next several years -- the biggest consolidation move in Europe in terms of personnel, the Pentagon said.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel acknowledged the move would lead to job losses in the countries affected, but said the changes were necessary to "help maximize our military capabilities in Europe so that we can best support our NATO allies and partners."

The Pentagon has to reduce spending by nearly \$1 trillion over a decade, officials say. The Defense Department has repeatedly asked Congress to close some facilities inside the U.S., where excess capacity is around 20 percent. But Congress has resisted any closures. Lawmakers believe defense officials should start cutting excess facilities in Europe first.

The United States has more than 64,000 troops stationed in Europe, mostly in Germany, Italy and Britain.



**Radio Habana Cuba**