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**MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY HAGEL ON FURLOUGHS
TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2013**

To all Department of Defense personnel:

As you are fully aware, the Department of Defense is facing a historic shortfall in our budget for the current fiscal year. This is the result of current law that went into effect March 1. It imposes deep across-the-board cuts on DoD and other federal agencies. Combined with higher than expected wartime operating costs, we are now short more than \$30 billion in our operation and maintenance (O&M) accounts – which are the funds that we use to pay most civilian employees, maintain our military readiness, and respond to global contingencies.

The Department has been doing everything possible to reduce this shortfall while ensuring we can defend the nation, sustain wartime operations, and preserve DoD's most critical asset – our world-class civilian and military personnel. To that end, we have cut back sharply on facilities maintenance, worked to shift funds from investment to O&M accounts, and reduced many other important but non-essential programs.

Still, these steps have not been enough to close the shortfall. Each of the military services has begun to significantly reduce training and maintenance of non-deployed operating forces – steps that will adversely impact military readiness. And even these reductions are not enough. Since deeper cuts to training and maintenance could leave our nation and our military exposed in the event of an unforeseen crisis, we have been forced to consider placing the majority of our civilian employees on administrative furlough.

After extensive review of all options with the DoD's senior military and civilian leadership on how we address this budget crisis, today I am announcing that I have decided to direct furloughs of up to 11 days for most of the Department's civilian personnel. I have made this decision very reluctantly, because I know that the furloughs will disrupt lives and impact DoD operations. I recognize the significant hardship this places on you and your families.

After required notifications, we will begin the furlough period on July 8 at the rate of one furlough day per week for most personnel. We plan to continue these furloughs through the end of the current fiscal year. If our budgetary situation permits us to end furloughs early, I would strongly prefer to do so. That is a decision I will make later in the year.

Furloughs for 11 days represent about half of the number we had originally planned, reflecting the Department's vigorous efforts to meet our budgetary shortfalls through actions other than furlough. There will be exceptions driven by law and by the need to minimize harm to the execution of our core missions. For example, all employees deployed or temporarily assigned to a combat zone will be excepted from furloughs.

Your managers have been given authority to develop specific furlough procedures to minimize adverse mission effects and also limit the harm to morale and productivity. They will be in touch with you to provide guidance and answers.

The President and I are deeply appreciative of your patience, your hard work, and your dedication and contributions to the critical mission of helping protect America's national security. I am counting on all of you to stay focused on this vital mission in the days ahead. As I said the day I assumed the responsibilities of Secretary of Defense, I'm proud to be part of your team and I'm proud to serve with you.

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