



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

FEB 20 2013

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the Senate
United States Senate
S-212 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President:

In accordance with statute, I am providing a report on potential civilian furloughs within the Department of Defense. Specifically, title 10, U.S.C., section 1597(e), provides that the Secretary of Defense "may not implement any involuntary reduction or furlough of civilian positions ... until the expiration of the 45-day period beginning on the date on which the Secretary submits to Congress a report setting forth the reasons why such reduction or furloughs are required and a description of any change in workload or positions requirements that will result from such reductions or furloughs." This letter provides the report and information required by this section.

We remain hopeful that the Administration and Congress will reach an agreement to avoid the across-the-board reductions in Federal spending required by the Budget Control Act of 2011, commonly known as "sequestration." The Department must, however, continue to plan for such reductions should Congress not take action prior to sequestration taking effect on March 1, 2013. If sequestration is not avoided, the magnitude of the potential reductions will damage force readiness, slow major acquisition programs, and necessitate civilian furlough actions that will negatively affect our Federal civilian workforce. Overall, sequestration will put us on a path toward a hollow force and inflict serious damage on our national security.

If faced with sequestration, the Defense Department will be forced to forego critical objectives. As we make the difficult decisions about how to maintain our national security to the greatest extent we can in light of these destructive cuts, the Department will have to consider furloughs across the entire defense civilian workforce in order to meet the fiscal target mandated by sequestration. Because there will be no change in the requirements for work to be performed by the Department's workforce to maintain our national security, the workload on each employee and the requirements for each position that will result from such furloughs will be increased beyond what can reasonably be achieved. The furloughs contemplated by this notice will do real harm to our national security. Moreover, we understand that furloughs would have serious adverse effects on the livelihood, morale, and productivity of our workforce, and where possible we will take steps to minimize those effects.



Nevertheless, if required, it is my goal to apply furlough actions in a consistent and equitable manner across the Department, though variations may occur because of the mission and budgetary requirements of each military department and agency. Each military department and agency within the Department will prepare detailed sequestration plans, and the Department will submit an updated plan for operations under a sequestration to Congress, as required by section 116(b) of the Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2013, Public Law 112-175.

Finally, if furlough actions prove to be necessary, every affected employee would be subject to furlough for up to 22 discontinuous work days (176 total hours), the maximum number of furlough days allowed without triggering additional notification requirements that follow reduction-in-force procedures (though such an extended furlough action would still constitute a temporary placement on non-pay/non-duty status, rather than a permanent separation from service). We will provide affected employees the requisite advance notice before a furlough occurs. The Department is also engaged in the necessary and appropriate discussions with employee unions, and will discharge any applicable collective bargaining obligations that may arise. In the event an agreement is reached that averts sequestration and restores needed funding, we will immediately cancel any furloughs that have resulted and cease furlough planning.

While furloughs would be disruptive and damaging to our ability to carry out the defense mission, there are no viable alternatives for the Department if sequestration actually occurs. We will continue to work with Congress in an effort to avoid sequestration and furloughs. A similar letter is being sent to the Speaker of the House and the defense oversight committees.

Sincerely,





SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

FEB 20 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: Preparations for Potential Sequestration on March 1 and Furlough Notifications

For more than a year and a half, the President, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I have repeatedly voiced our deep concerns over the half a trillion dollars in automatic across-the-board cuts that would be imposed under sequestration and the severe damage that it would do to both this Department and our national defense.

The Administration continues to work with Congress to reach agreement on a balanced deficit reduction plan to avoid these cuts. Meanwhile, because another trigger for sequestration is approaching on March 1st, the Department's leadership has begun extensive planning on how to implement the required spending reductions. These cuts will be magnified because the Department has been forced to operate under a six-month continuing resolution that has already compelled us to take steps to reduce spending.

In the event of sequestration, we will do everything we can to continue to perform our core mission of providing for the security of the United States, but there is no mistaking that the rigid nature and scale of the cuts forced upon this Department will result in a serious erosion of readiness across the force.

I have also been deeply concerned about the potential direct impact of sequestration on you and your families. We are doing everything possible to limit the worst effects on DoD personnel – but I regret that our flexibility within the law is extremely limited. The President has used his legal authority to exempt military personnel funding from sequestration, but we have no legal authority to exempt civilian personnel funding from reductions. As a result, should sequestration occur and continue for a substantial period, DoD will be forced to place the vast majority of its civilian workforce on administrative furlough.

Today, I notified Congress that furloughs could occur under sequestration. I can assure you that, if we have to implement furloughs, all affected employees will be provided at least 30 days' notice prior to executing a furlough and your benefits will be protected to the maximum extent possible. We will work to ensure that furloughs are executed in a consistent and appropriate manner, and we will also continue to engage in discussions with employee unions as appropriate. More information and answers to frequently asked questions regarding furloughs can be found at www.opm.gov/furlough, under the "administrative furlough" section.



Working with your component heads and supervisors, the Department's leaders will continue to keep you informed. As we deal with these difficult issues, I want to thank you for your patience, hard work, and continued dedication to our mission of protecting the country.

Our most important asset in the Department is our world-class personnel. You are fighting every day to keep our country strong and secure, and rest assured that the leaders of this Department will continue to fight with you and for you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "James M. ...", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.