SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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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.

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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.