

Hagel Announces Recall of Most Defense Department Civilians

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By Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 5, 2013 – Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced today he is recalling most of the Defense Department civilians who were placed on furlough as a result of the government shutdown which began Oct. 1.

“Today, I am announcing that most DOD civilians placed on emergency furlough during the government shutdown will be asked to return to work beginning next week,” he said.

“Immediately after President [Barack] Obama signed the Pay Our Military Act into law, I directed DOD’s acting general counsel to determine whether we could reduce the number of civilian personnel furloughed due to the shutdown,” Hagel said.

The Defense Department, he said, consulted closely with the Department of Justice, which expressed its view that the law does not permit a blanket recall of all civilians.

“However, DOD and DOJ attorneys concluded that the law does allow the Department of Defense to eliminate furloughs for employees whose responsibilities contribute to the morale, well-being, capabilities and readiness of service members,” Hagel said.

“Consequently, I am now directing the military departments and other DOD components to move expeditiously to identify all employees whose activities fall under these categories,” he said.

Hagel noted he expects the military departments to be able to “significantly reduce – but not eliminate – civilian furloughs under this process.”

“Employees can expect to hear more information from their managers starting this weekend,” he added.

The defense secretary said the department has tried to “exempt as many DOD civilian personnel as possible” from furloughs, and will continue to try to bring all civilian employees back to work as soon as possible.

“Ultimately, the surest way to end these damaging and irresponsible furloughs, and to enable us to fulfill our mission as a department, is for Congress to pass a budget and restore funds for the entire federal government,” Hagel said.

“This has been a very disruptive year for our people – including active duty, National Guard and reserve personnel, and DOD civilians and contractors,” he said. “Many important activities remain curtailed while the shutdown goes on.”

Civilians under furlough, Hagel said, face the uncertainty of not knowing when they will receive their next paycheck.

“I strongly support efforts in Congress to enact legislation to retroactively compensate all furloughed employees,” he said.

“And I will continue to urge Congress to fulfill its basic responsibilities to pass a budget and restore full funding for the Department of Defense and the rest of the government,” Hagel said.