

Hagel to Make Furlough Decision Soon, Press Secretary Says

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, May 1, 2013 – Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel will make a decision soon on the scope of civilian furloughs in response to sequestration spending cuts, Pentagon Press Secretary George Little said today.

Hagel is reviewing analysis on the budget “and he’ll reach a decision in the near future,” Little told reporters.

Little acknowledged news reports that some services contend they do not need to use furloughs to make their sequestration goals.

“There are different pockets of money in different places for each of the services,” he said. “To be totally straightforward, the math does work for some services to avoid some furloughs, at a minimum. For other services, it is harder.”

The general principle so far has been “one team, one fight” inside the department to be consistent, the press secretary said. “That’s an understandable position,” he added.

Still, he said, Hagel is reviewing the DOD budget and the constraints the department is operating under. “We’re in the middle of a \$37 billion to \$40 billion cut over a six-month period, and we need to look closely at that, but I expect him to make a decision soon,” the spokesman said.

The situation “points out the absurdity of sequestration,” Little said.

“You don’t have a lot of choice, in some cases, over where to save money and where to cut,” he added. “The across-the-board cut is forcing some tough decisions. The goal of the furlough so far ... is to ensure, at least on this issue, there is some consistency.”

When originally proposed, all DOD civilian personnel were going to be furloughed for 22 days during the remainder of fiscal year 2013, which ends Sept. 30. Officials since have reduced that estimate to 14 days. DOD officials are examining requests for exemptions, Little said.

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