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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER CENTER OF EXCELLENCE



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## **MEDIA RELEASE: Fort Benning calls many furloughed civilians back to work**

**DATE:** Oct. 7, 2013

**FORT BENNING, Ga.** – Nearly 1,000 of Fort Benning’s civilian employees have been recalled to work today based on provisions in the Pay Our Military Act, passed by Congress and signed by the President hours before the shutdown occurred Sept. 30.

While the law does not permit a blanket recall of all civilians, under the current reading of the law, the standard of “support to members of the Armed Forces” focuses on those employees whose responsibilities contribute to the morale, well-being, capabilities, and readiness of Soldiers and their families.

A memorandum from Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, published Friday, provided Fort Benning leadership with additional, refined guidance. The new guidance expanded the sets of circumstances under which DoD civilian personnel can be granted an “exception,” and return to work during the ongoing government shutdown.

“I want to make it clear that every DoD employee makes an essential contribution to the Department's ability to carry out its mission of defending the Nation,” Hagel said in the memo. “However, under this Act, we must determine who provides support to the members of the Armed Forces in active service, in a way that respects Congress's specific appropriation.”

Additionally, the Act allows for civilians to use annual or sick leave, which was not allowed under the furlough conditions.

The refined guidance identifies two categories of civilian employees who now also fall within the scope of this statutory provision, in addition to those who were previously granted exceptions. “Excepted” personnel are those who were not furloughed. The first category includes employees who provide support to service members and their families on an ongoing basis. This would include those civilian employees who support health care activities; transition assistance programs for military members in active service; family support programs and activities; repair and maintenance of weapons systems and platforms; training activities associated with military readiness; supply activities; human resource activities associated with organizing, payroll, equipping, manning and training functions; installation support and facilities maintenance; Commissary operations, and other services such as legal, to name a few.

The second category consists of those employees who contribute to sustaining capabilities and Force Readiness, which if interrupted by the lapse in appropriations, will impact the Army’s mission in the future. Examples of these activities include: acquisition program oversight and management; financial management; contract, logistics, and engineering activities; activities related to the repair and maintenance of weapons systems and platforms; intelligence functions; information technology functions, to name a few.

“Those falling outside the scope of the Act include men and women who have devoted their lives to service of this country, and whose work on our behalf and on behalf of the Nation is enormously valuable and critical to the maintenance of our military superiority over the long term,” Hagel said in the memo.

The Pay Our Military Act provides appropriations for personnel; it does not provide appropriations for equipment, supplies, materiel, and all the other things the Department needs to keep operating efficiently. The Secretary warned if the lapse of appropriations continues, many recalled workers will not be able to do their jobs as critical parts, or supplies may run out.

“If there comes a time that workers are unable to do their work, I will be forced once again to send them home,” Hagel’s memo stated.

The Maneuver Center of Excellence has a web link to shutdown and furlough information available here: <http://www.benning.army.mil/common/emergencyinfo2013.html>. In addition, the MCoE Public Affairs Office will continue to work with local television and radio stations to communicate any changes.

Fort Benning remains open. Our mission is to prepare Soldiers and leaders in support of our nation's defense and we will continue to do so through this time of uncertainty. Our Fort Benning command team is committed to taking care of our Soldiers, Families and civilians. Programs and services on post, such as Army Emergency Relief and Army Community Service, stand ready to provide assistance when and where it is needed.

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