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DOD Leaders Worry About Shutdown's Effect on Civilian Morale

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Oct. 11, 2013 - The partial government shutdown
is hurting DOD civilian morale, the department's comptroller told
Congress yesterday.

Under Secretary of Defense Robert F. Hale told the House Armed
Services Readiness Subcommittee DOD civilians have been
through a lot over the past year and it is hurting productivity.

The furloughs triggered by the shutdown that began Oct. 1 are
only the most recent instance of this damage, Hale said. Civilian
employees have not had annual raises for more than three years.
Hiring freezes, cuts in training, cuts in bonuses and step increases
all work to erode morale.

Earlier this year, almost all DOD civilians were furloughed under
sequestration for six days.

The lapse in appropriations that began Oct. 1 continues to affect morale. Around 400,000 DOD civilian employees were furloughed after the fiscal 2013 appropriations lapsed. About 95 percent of them were recalled under the Pay Our Military Act. Still, there are around 7,000 DOD civilians remaining on furlough.

"In the first days of the lapse, commanders repeatedly told me that civilian workers were frustrated and angry," Hale said. "And I can't imagine they'd be any other way."

The comptroller said many DOD employees say they will retire or resign and seek other jobs.

"And low morale means low productivity at most DOD support activities," Hale said.

Later in the hearing, Hale corrected a representative who called furloughed employees "non-essential."

"Please don't use the word non-essential as regards our civilians," he said. "The folks that are still on furlough are essential. We can't operate without them in the longer term. It is very ... harmful to morale. Call them nonexempt or non-excepted, but please don't use that phrase."

Biographies:

[Robert F. Hale](#)

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