PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services

Carl Levin, Chairman
James M. Inhofe, Ranking Member

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Levin, Inhofe seek Hagel's guidance on defense budget cuts

WASHINGTON – Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., the committee's ranking member, have written to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel seeking guidance on how to achieve the $52 billion in fiscal year 2014 defense savings required by the Budget Control Act.

"I believe we should replace sequestration – both the defense and domestic cuts – with a balanced deficit reduction plan," Levin said. "The plan we have asked Secretary Hagel to provide will show how devastating these cuts would be for the Department of Defense. Similar plans from other federal agencies would make clear the need to avoid sequestration in those agencies as well. I hope other committees make similar requests of the departments in their jurisdiction, so that we can demonstrate to our colleagues and the American people how urgent it is that we end sequestration and substitute a balanced approach to budgeting and deficits."

"The men and women of our military have already endured almost $600 billion in cuts and stand to lose another $52 billion next year because of a failure to address sequestration," said Inhofe. "Our military was told last year not to worry about sequestration, that it would not happen, but the failed promise has led to an enormous amount of uncertainty that has prevented our military leaders from properly planning to ensure the capabilities and readiness of our force. It is vital for DoD and Sec. Hagel to provide Congress with a detailed plan for the implementation of the FY'14 defense cuts so that my colleagues and the American public will have a clear understanding of what the future holds for our military capabilities and overall national security."

The full text of the letter follows:

May 2, 2013

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you know, the President's budget and the budgets passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives all assume that we will avoid sequestration in fiscal year 2014. To date, however, there has been virtually no sign of movement toward a bipartisan agreement that would enable us to do so. In the absence of such an agreement, the Department of Defense budget will face an across-the-board reduction of $52 billion early next year.

Virtually every DOD witness who has come before the Armed Services Committee this year has testified that an additional round of sequestration in fiscal year 2014 would be devastating for the Department. For example, Secretary of the Army John McHugh told the Committee last week: "Simply put, to continue sequestration into fiscal year '14 and beyond would not only be irresponsible [and] devastating to the force, but it would also directly hamper our ability to . . . provide sufficiently trained and ready forces to protect our national interests." As Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus explained, the impact would only be made worse by the fact that sequestration "is a fairly mindless way of cutting funds" that "does not allow money to be matched against strategy."

Despite this testimony, many members of Congress and the public still seem to have the view that sequestration is an effective way to cut government spending and can be made workable simply by providing the Department with additional flexibility or making minor adjustments. As a result, there is an increasing risk that DOD and other federal agencies may face sequestration again in 2014.

For this reason, we request that you provide us, by no later than July 1, 2013, a package of reductions to the fiscal year 2014 defense budget that you believe to be the most workable approach for meeting the $52 billion savings requirement established by the Budget Control Act. We believe that the identification of these specific reductions will serve both to help Congress and the Department prepare for the possibility that we will be unable to avoid

another round of sequestration and to show Congress and the public how unpalatable that outcome would be.

We recognize that it will not be easy to put together such a package. In our view, however, a concrete demonstration of the painful choices the Department would have to make to cut $52 billion from its budget may be our last, best hope of avoiding sequestration altogether.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Carl Levin
James M. Inhofe