

- **STATEMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, THE HONORABLE LEON E PANETTA, 11.21.2011**



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Statement by Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta on Supercommittee Negotiations

The failure of the Congressional Supercommittee to reach an agreement on deficit reduction is a setback for the country's efforts to achieve fiscal responsibility while protecting our national security. If Congress fails to act over the next year, the Department of Defense will face devastating, automatic, across-the-board cuts that will tear a seam in the nation's defense.

Despite the danger posed by sequestration, I join the President in his call for Congress to avoid an easy way out of this crisis. Congress cannot simply turn off the sequester mechanism, but instead must pass deficit reduction at least equal to the \$1.2 trillion it was charged to pass under the Budget Control Act.

In my four decades involved with public service, I have never been more concerned about the ability of Congress to forge common-sense solutions to the nation's pressing problems. Since becoming Secretary of Defense, I have made it clear that the Department has a responsibility to help the country get its fiscal house in order -- and we are doing that. I have been leading a strategy-driven effort to achieve the more than \$450 billion in cuts over 10 years required by the Budget Control Act. We will move ahead with that plan.

But as Secretary of Defense, my primary responsibility is to protect the security of the nation. The half-trillion in additional cuts demanded by sequester would lead to a hollow force incapable of sustaining the missions it is assigned. If implemented, sequester would also jeopardize our ability to provide our troops and their families with the benefits and the support they have been promised. Our troops deserve better, and our nation demands better.