



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

## OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAR 18 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP  
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Guidance on Hiring Freeze Exemptions for the Civilian Workforce

References: (a) Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Immediate Civilian Hiring Freeze for Alignment with National Defense Priorities," February 28, 2025 (copy attached)  
(b) Secretary of Defense Memorandum "Guidance Regarding the Department of Defense Civilian Hiring Freeze," March 14, 2025 (copy attached)

Reference (a) implemented a DoD-wide hiring freezing and specified that exemptions may be provided only for mission-critical positions that contribute to our warfighting readiness. As provided in reference (b), the Secretary delegated authority to the Secretaries of the Military Departments, in consultation with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), to exempt their respective civilian positions from the hiring freeze. He also delegated authority to the USD(P&R) to exempt positions in the other DoD Components. This authority may not be further delegated.

The Secretaries of the Military Department and other DoD Component heads must send their proposed hiring freeze exemptions to the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civilian Personnel Policy by the close of business each Tuesday. Proposed exemptions should include justifications and should prioritize civilian positions directly linked to building readiness and providing essential services. Procedures for submitting proposed hiring freeze exemptions and reporting of approved hires were provided by the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civilian Personnel Policy (DASD(CPP)) to the Civilian Personnel Policy Council on March 14, 2025, and will be broadly communicated through a forthcoming Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service message.

Additionally, the following categories of positions are exempt from the hiring freeze. The Secretaries of the Military Department and other DoD Component heads are requested to report hiring actions related to these positions along with their proposed exemptions, as provided above.

- Positions that directly support the President of the United States, e.g., White House Military Liaison Office.
- Positions requiring Presidential appointment or Senate confirmation, non-career positions in the Senior Executive Service or non-career positions in Schedule A or C of the Excepted Service.

- Positions essential to immigration enforcement, national security, public safety, recruiting, and readiness, or positions which support such functions, to be filled by:
  - Civilian employees exercising return rights from an overseas assignment.
  - Civilian employees exercising protections pursuant to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.
  - Civilian employees returning to duty after an absence pursuant to the Federal Employees' Compensation Act.
  - Civilian employees as a reasonable accommodation under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
  - Candidates selected for appointment pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 10508(b).
- Positions required to be filled by Dual Status Military Technicians.
- Positions required to be filled as directed by a court, arbitrator, or administrative tribunal.
- Positions required to be filled by law, as determined by the General Counsel of the Department of Defense or the General Counsel of a Military Department.
- Positions essential to immigration enforcement, national security, public safety, recruiting, and readiness, or positions which support such functions, to be filled by:
  - Non-competitive reassignment.
  - Detail.
  - Conversion.
  - Term or temporary employees.
  - Reemployed annuitants.
  - Intergovernmental Personnel Act employees.
- Career ladder promotions.
- Positions for employees paid from nonappropriated funds (NAF) in NAF instrumentalities under the jurisdiction of the DoD.
- Positions for foreign national employees in countries with labor cost-sharing arrangements or as necessary to comply with host nation agreements.

- In-progress permanent change of station (PCS) moves for which the DoD Component initiated PCS orders and/or shipment of household goods prior to February 28, 2025 from a less critical position to a more critical position.
- Civilian Mariner positions.
- Positions at depots, shipyards, arsenals, and maintenance facilities.
- Positions at the United States Military Entrance Processing Command.
- Positions at military medical treatment facilities that perform patient care or are essential to hospital operations.
- Child and Youth Programs staff.
- Instructors or facility support staff at DoD Schools or Child Care Centers.
- Installation positions that support and are essential for fire, life, and safety.

The Department of Defense remains committed to the President's workforce optimization initiatives and sustaining the world's most lethal fighting force. My point of contact is Mr. Zev Goldrich, Acting DASD(CPP), at [zev.n.goldrich.civ@mail.mil](mailto:zev.n.goldrich.civ@mail.mil).



Jules W. Hurst III  
Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary of  
Defense for Personnel Readiness

Attachments:  
As stated

# Reference (a)



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

FEB 28 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP  
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Immediate Civilian Hiring Freeze for Alignment with National Defense Priorities

I direct a civilian employee hiring freeze as part of efforts to streamline operations, bolster readiness, and prioritize critical missions within the Department of Defense (DoD). This aligns with President Trump's direction to streamline the Federal workforce and to make the Federal Government more efficient and responsive.

Effective immediately and for the duration of this freeze, no vacant civilian position may be filled, and no new civilian positions may be created, unless approved by me. It is my expectation that there will be no onboarding starting with the pay period beginning Sunday, March 2, 2025, unless I approve an exemption to do so. I will consider exemptions for positions essential to immigration enforcement, national security, and public safety, and positions which support such functions. The Service Secretaries and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) hold the authority to deny an exemption request at their level. DoD Component requests for exemptions should be submitted to USD(P&R) who will issue additional guidance on submitting exemption requests.

A vacant position may not be converted to performance through contracted services to circumvent the hiring freeze, and DoD Component heads will review contract actions to ensure that contracts are not being used for this purpose. I will hold DoD Component heads accountable for decisions on such actions.

I expect strict adherence to this memorandum. This action is part of a broader effort to ensure that DoD remains mission-focused and fully capable while remaining accountable to taxpayers. DoD will faithfully and rapidly implement the President's workforce optimization initiative,<sup>1</sup> and will determine civilian reductions based on a comprehensive readiness impact analysis on the size and appropriate mix of the Total Force.

*FBW*  
*SD29*

<sup>1</sup> Executive Order 14210, "Implementing the President's 'Department of Government Efficiency' Workforce Optimization Initiative," February 11, 2025



OSD001738-25/CMD002297-25

**Reference (b)**



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

MAR 14 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP  
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Guidance Regarding the Department of Defense Civilian Hiring Freeze

On February 28, 2025, in my memorandum, "Immediate Civilian Hiring Freeze for Alignment with National Defense Priorities," I imposed a moratorium on hiring Department of Defense civilians. The Department will continue to operate under this hiring freeze as we optimize our Federal workforce, reduce inefficiencies, and align our resources to the President's top national security priorities.

While the Department remains under the hiring freeze, DoD will only hire mission-essential employees into positions that directly contribute to our warfighting readiness. I have already identified exemptions for positions essential to immigration enforcement, national security, and public safety in my February 28, 2025 memorandum.

The Secretaries of the Military Departments may approve hiring freeze exemptions for the civilian workforce of their respective Military Departments after review by the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)). USD(P&R) will review and approve all exemption requests for other organizations within the Department. This authority may not be further delegated.

The above exemption authorities should use, and the DoD Component heads should request, exemptions to sustain the workforce at readiness-centric facilities including, but not limited to, shipyards, depots, and medical treatment facilities. USD(P&R) will publish additional guidance governing hiring freeze exemption requests.

The U.S. military remains the most lethal fighting force the world has ever known. Every dollar counts as we defend the homeland, deter adversaries abroad, and prepare our Service members to triumph in combat.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "RBJ", with the initials "SD29" written below it.