



# ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

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General Gordon R. Sullivan  
United States Army (Ret.)  
President

11 July 2013

The Honorable Charles T. Hagel  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hagel:

On behalf of the members of the Association of the United States Army, I write to urge you to take action to waive reimbursement of Living Quarters Allowance (LQA) for approximately 659 Department of Defense civilians stationed overseas. It is my understanding that the Department approved LQA and related benefits for these employees because it misinterpreted the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR), which establishes the eligibility guidelines for such benefits to support federal civilian employees serving overseas.

While signing a Voluntary Repayment Agreement may result in a waiver of repayment, it also implies fault where clearly the government is in error not the employees. I urge you to eliminate this "catch 22" requirement that forces the employee to accept financial responsibility in order to receive a waiver. Requiring an admission of fault where none exists impugns their integrity. Further, I urge you to continue LQA payment until current employees depart and extend grandfather protection to those who are no longer assigned overseas or who have left federal service or retired. This action would help eliminate out-of-cycle replacement costs and give current employees and endpoint to plan future moves.

Multiple overseas commanders have said that the current course of action will create financial hardship, erode civilian personnel willingness to serve overseas and negatively affect readiness. I urge you to reconsider the DoD handling of this situation and provide clear assurances to overseas civilian personnel that they will not be penalized for the Department's mistake. Federal civilians who are willing to work overseas are a key factor in our national security and we must ensure that others will follow those serving now by addressing this error in a proper manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon R. Sullivan".

GORDON R. SULLIVAN  
General, USA Retired