DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
DEPUTY CHIEF MANAGEMENT OFFICER
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
ASSISTANT SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
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DIRECTOR, COST ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION
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ASSISTANTS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT
DIRECTOR, NET ASSESSMENT
DIRECTORS OF THE DEFENSE AGENCIES
DIRECTORS OF THE DOD FIELD ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: Ethics, Integrity and Accountability

As DoD personnel, we occupy special positions of trust with the American people. Ethical conduct and moral responsibility must be a high priority for each of us as we carry out our official duties. Even the slightest lapses in our ethical decision-making can erode the confidence placed in us by the public. This memorandum reiterates my expectation that all DoD personnel will adhere to the highest ethical standards at all times.

To sustain an ethical culture that inspires public confidence, we must strive to faithfully fulfill our financial, civic, and ethical duties. Fundamental values like integrity, impartiality, fairness, and respect must drive our actions, and these values must be reinforced by holding ourselves and each other accountable for mistakes or wrongdoing. Each of us must also adhere to the ethics laws, regulations, and principles that govern participation in official matters where those matters intersect with our personal and financial interests.

Accordingly, all DoD personnel must be familiar with, and observe, all applicable ethics laws and regulations, including, the Federal conflict of interest statutes, the regulatory Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch (5 C.F.R. part 2635), and the DoD supplemental rules in the Joint Ethics Regulation (DoD 5500.7-R). In addition to strict compliance with laws, rules, and regulations, we must also vigilantly avoid any action that gives rise to public concern about the integrity of DoD business processes and decisions. Honorable intentions or personal ethos cannot justify conduct that creates public doubt about the propriety and fairness of our programs and operations.

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Ethical decision-making, however, is not solely a function of determining whether a law or regulation permits you to do something. You should also consider the appearance of your actions -whether they set the right example for peers and subordinates, and how they portray the Department in the eyes of the public. This is especially true for supervisors and managers, whom I expect to lead by example and whom I charge with creating an ethical culture in the workplace. We simply cannot tolerate ethical deviations or shortcuts.

Please be mindful of your ethical obligations. If you have questions, do not hesitate to ask your supervisor, commanding officer, ethics counselor, or others in positions of authority.