

## **TRANSCRIPT: Lt. General Benjamin Mixon, US Army (Ret.), recalls the Carter-era downsizing of the military**

**Event:** Defense and the Constitution: Saving the Military from Washington

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### **BENJAMIN MIXON:**

When I entered the Army in 1975, I was part of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. At that time, one of the premier units in the Army. But we were hollowed out. And there was no question about it. We had [UNCLEAR] shortages. We had all the problems that [UNCLEAR] that was not reported in Ralph Peters' [UNCLEAR] post-Vietnam era. And I lived through the Army as we rebuilt it. We got our training doctrine under control. Got additional funding. Went to the all-volunteer force and resulted in the Army that we have today. But I'm gravely concerned. Before I left my position as commander of the US Army Pacific, we were already planning for the significant budget cuts Secretary Gates had announced prior to his retirement from that Secretary of Defense. And our analysis at US Army [UNCLEAR] indicated that we were going to have to cut whole programs. And when I say programs, I mean engagement programs that were so vital to staying engaged in a critical area while specifically detained in a country, exercises, and other activities like that, we were going to be forced to cut or dramatically reduce those programs.

Additionally, we were looking at how we were going to maintain the covenant that we have with our soldiers and our family members to provide them with the best quality training, the best places to live, work, and play. Again, do all of that to maintain this all-volunteer force. And I have to tell you, that was going to be extremely difficult under the cuts that were announced under Secretary Gates. The [UNCLEAR] cuts and the potential disaster that could befall us if we have the cuts as proposed under the McGuffey [PH] committee, I think will be catastrophic. And I am deeply concerned and that's one of the reasons that [UNCLEAR] retired military officer, I'm glad to be invited to sit in on your panel and do whatever I can to at least make sure that the American people and our Congress know exactly what's going on. So let me just say something in closing. I would hope that everybody in the Defense Department [UNCLEAR] we would have to make some reductions in our process. But hopefully, there will be some analysis that will [UNCLEAR] to our national security policy. [UNCLEAR] hollow out the force, provide money for other programs that are less essential to the national defense. I will close with that and thank you very much for all your hard work, Frank.

### **FRANK GAFFNEY:**

General Mixon, thank you very much for yours. If you can stay with us, please do. If you have to catch that plane, we understand. You've done exactly what I'd hoped you would do, which is bring a personal insight into how this operates inside the military if it, in fact, gets, I think [UNCLEAR] both for the personnel and—

**BENJAMIN MIXON:**

Well, if you can still hear me, yeah, one comment to that—and it's been reported on recently in several articles. The mere size of the reequipping and the rebuilding of our major combat systems, our helicopters, our tanks, our [UNCLEAR] and our other [UNCLEAR] as we begin to draw down and bring all that [UNCLEAR] Iraq and Afghanistan, it's going to be tremendous. That, in and of itself, I mean, the current budget constraints causes me great concern that we're not going to be able to do this [UNCLEAR] I'll be quiet and I am going to have to sign off and get ready to catch this flight. Once again, thank you for letting me join in.