

## **TRANSCRIPT: Rep. Randy Forbes outlines real-world consequences of defense budget cuts**

**Event:** Providing for the Common Defense: The First Duty of the ‘Super Committee’

**Date:** 10/5/11

**Location:** Capitol Visitors’ Center, CVC 268

And if I could begin by just telling you a couple of observations that I think you'll find to be true, the first one is wherever I travel in the country today, I find people either asking me one core question or I find that they have thought about this question and asked and answered it themselves. And it's simply this. Is the future of American optimistic or is it pessimistic? Most of you, truth be known, you've asked that same question yourself. You just don't know totally what the answer is. And I sit back and I wonder how in the world did the greatest nation on the face of the earth get to a point where our citizens had to ask the question whether our future was optimistic or pessimistic? I think, in large measure, that answer may be asked and answered for us literally in the next several weeks in what we determine what we're going to do with the national defense of this country. The other observation that I would offer you is I was at a dinner with eleven other members of Congress about a month ago and all of them actually were somewhat supportive of cuts that they were going to make to the Department of Defense and to the military. And it came to me and they looked and they said what do you think? And I started reeling off to them what it was going to mean to defense. And literally to say like they were a deer caught in the headlights would be an understatement, but one of them, a dear friend of mine, looked at me and he said, Randy, we thought somebody was looking after all of this. And making sure it didn't happen. Now that would be comical, but I will tell you every single day I will have a member of Congress or some American somewhere or an admiral or a general who sits down beside me and says, we thought somebody was looking over all of this. They think somehow magically there's a room with all these computers in it and all these great thinkers and somebody's sitting around and saying, you can play all you want out there, but once it gets to destroying the defense of the country, somebody's going to push a button and say, no, you can't go past that. And when they finally realize that's not true, it horrifies them as it horrifies me every single night. Because if we head down the road we're heading down now, I would suggest to you that we're going to wake up and say, I thought somebody would have the sense to look at all of this and not allow this to happen.

If you look at the cuts that we see that are on the horizon, the Armed Services Committee staff has done a tremendous job over the last six weeks in trying to compile data that we just can't get. I mean, it's very difficult to get it. And I'm going to just give you—in the two or three minutes that I've got, just kind of a couple of those pictures and then I want to tell you something that I think we can do in the next several weeks to help turn this around. If these cuts go through that we're looking at—now, let me back up before I do that and tell you one other thing. If I were going in a department store to buy a gift for somebody, it would make sense that before I walked in I would say, how much money do I want to spend on this gift? And then I'd walk in and I'd try to look at gifts that would match that budget that I had set for myself. That's if I was buying a gift for somebody. But if I was trying to defend a nation, it's kind of foolish for me to use the same approach

that I would use to buy a gift. If I'm trying to defend a nation, I better start with a strategy and say what's the strategy I need to defend this country? What do I have to have to defend the country? And then I better go find the resources to do that or at least ask this question. What's the risk that I assume if I don't do it? Just yesterday, I had an ambassador sitting in my office. And he was talking about decisions that they had made in their country based on platforms and forestructure and other kinds of things and at the end of it, I looked at him and I said, there's one big difference between your country and my country. Between your decision making process and my decision making process and I said, it's this. If you get it wrong, guess who your backstop is? And he looked at me and he said, you. And I said, that's right. I said, if we get it wrong, there is no backstop behind us. There's nobody we can look to and say, can you cover this?

And if we get it wrong, if these cuts come into place that we're looking at, one of the things that our projections suggest is that we are going to be moving not to three hundred and thirteen ships, which is the minimum floor the Navy has told us that we need, which we think is too many. Quite honestly, the Navy will admit is too few. Because you and I are living in the first time in our lifetime when the Chinese have more ships in their navy than we have in our navy. But we're going to be moving to two hundred and forty ships. The Chinese moving up and we're moving down. And just so you know, that would be the fewest number of ships that we have had in a hundred years. In addition to that, the Marine Corps would shrink to about a hundred and forty-five thousand people. That's the smallest Marine Corps number in fifty years. Our Army would be reduced by a hundred and fifty thousand people. That is less than we've had in a decade. And the Air Force would have only thirty-five percent of the fighters that we had in 1990. And they'd have one third of the fighters that we had—I mean, the bombers, that we had in 1990. Chinese today have sixty attack subs. We're going to drop below the forty-eight minimum that we thought that we had to have just to maintain what we needed. And already our combatant commanders will tell you we don't have enough subs to meet the requirements that they need. In terms of missiles, the Chinese are continuing to produce a new class of ballistic missile subs in developing the sub-launched JL-2 missile to establish a sea-based nuclear weapons platform. And what's the United States doing? We're considering delaying procurement or reducing the number of higher-replacement submarines meant to replace our current aging fleet of ballistic missile boats. And General Breedlove said something incredibly important, Vice-Chief of the Air Force, the other day in a hearing before our subcommittee. He said, if the Chinese say they'll have three hundred J-20s in five years, they will have three hundred J-20s in five years. If we say we're going to have a hundred and fifty F-22s, we might get thirty and then we'll shut down the production line. For surface ships, China acquired two next generation guided missile destroyers last year alone. And they've got more under construction. And what are we doing? We're considering retiring some of our highly capable Ticonderoga class cruisers. China launched its first carrier and what are we doing? We are delaying one of ours and perhaps with these cuts we'll have to eliminate two entire carrier groups. Not just carriers.

But lets look just from a selfish economic point of view if we didn't do any more. Secretary Panetta said that these cuts will be 1.5 million jobs that are lost. Now, put a face on that. That's seventy-six percent of all the job losses in manufacturing during the entire

recession. It equals—triples, the losses in the leisure and hospitality industry during the recession. It quadruples the losses in transportation and warehousing industry during the recession. And let's say Secretary Panetta is way off and let's take a third of what he said. And let's just say that he's off by two thirds. If that's the case and he's off by two thirds and we take the absolute lowest amount possible of job losses this is going to be, it will still equal all of the unemployed people in West Virginia, New Mexico, Maine, Nebraska, Montana, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Delaware, Alaska, South Dakota, Vermont, Wyoming, and North Dakota combined. But how are we going to cure that? We're going to give a forty-five hundred dollar credit for any employer who will hire all of these guys that are coming back. And you look at the employers and they just laugh at you and say, do you really think we're going to spend forty thousand or fifty thousand dollars to hire somebody because you give us forty-five hundred dollars? We will be eliminating more jobs than all those lost during the six worst months of 2010. And for our military, in wrapping up let me just tell you what it means for them. Thirteen percent of our war fighters will be pink slipped. One in four defense civilians will be pink slipped. We will have a spike in the unemployment for veterans. National average right now, a little over nine percent. But for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, it's twenty-two percent already. For our wounded veterans, it's forty-one percent and we're breaking faith with the greatest military the United States has ever seen. Because we're going to have less time at home as services get smaller. The Navy has fewer ships to meet the requirements. Less funding for schools around military based families. They're going to have increased grocery bills as we see savings at commissaries slashed to fifteen percent. Cuts to morale, welfare, and recreation funding. And then, of course, you've heard of the fees for tri-care for life and retail pharmacy copay hikes. And they're even talking about a bracket-styled civilianization of military retirement.

Now, I give you all of that and I'm going to wrap up, but I just want to tell you this. When you ask that core question, is the future of America optimistic or pessimistic? I never like to quote these guys, but sometimes they're right. And the Chinese defense minister said, last year, something that we better pay attention to. He said for China to be great, they've got to have a strong economy and a strong military. And they can't have one without the other. I would suggest to you for American to be great, we've got to have a strong economy and a strong military. We begin to unravel one and we begin to unravel the other. Now, is there anything that we can do? Do we just sit back and wring our hands? Well, let me just suggest to you there is something we can do. We will have a resolution. It's called Strong Defense, Strong America. All of the subcommittee chairmen for the Armed Services Committee has endorsed this resolution today. We will be moving it on the floor to try to get signatures on it and try to get it brought up before the Armed Services Committee, which the chairman has said he's going to do as quickly as possible. And then bring it to the floor. And it basically says this. It recounts how important defense is for the United States of America and if I could just paraphrase, it says, enough is enough. No more cuts to the military. We cannot balance this crisis on their backs. If you want to do something over the next few weeks, and we only have about a month, you can get as many people as you can to call as many people as they can and say sign on to this resolution so we can send a message to the super committee that we are going to make sure that America continues to have the strongest military in the world. And I wrap

up by telling you this—I see my good friend Trent is here and such a good expert on this. Every night when I go to bed, every morning that I wake up and look in the mirror, the one thing that haunts me is that one of our Marines, one of our soldiers, one of our airmen, one of our sailors, will be somewhere someplace in the world and they will not have all the resources they need to keep freedom alive. I don't want them ever to be in a fair fight. I want them to be in a fight that we know that they are going to win. To a large degree, it's in our hands over the next several weeks. Thank you guys for what you're doing.