

TRANSCRIPT: Rep. Trent Franks speaks at launch of For the Common Defense on Capitol Hill

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

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In a fundamental sense, it's very difficult for people like me right now in the Congress because as many of you know, I'm one of the more fiscally conservative members of the entire Congress and people say, well, why does that all change when it comes to military spending? Why do all of a sudden, do you advocate the strongest military possible and say that defense cuts are out of the—they're off base? And I want to say simply that if a person cares about the economy, and I know Randy made this very erudite point already, if we care about this economy, if we want to see America be productive, it has to be in a secure environment. And I think all of us underestimate the reach of the American military across the world, how they're able to keep shipping lanes, to keep markets secure, how they're able to point to this nation being the most secure nation on earth where investment can be dragged from the four corners of the planet, I would just have to say to you that I think if we could only do one thing for our economy, if we could only do one thing as a government, it would be to keep this nation secure and make sure our military was second to none in the world. So I start out with that and I can't thank you again—enough for your steadfast dedication to the US Constitution and to making sure that common defense continues to be a focal point of everything that we do. And I'm grateful for your work, you know, on and off the Hill here, Frank, that's amazing. Despite the clearly written responsibility in Article I, Section 8, of our Constitution, all of you know that we're now facing a moment where we're in danger of gutting our military to the point of transforming the unipolar superpower of the world into a regional power. Depending on which tables are used, military cuts are ranging now—budget cuts, from three hundred and fifty to four hundred and sixty-five billion dollars over ten years. And to require armed forces to operate on a shoestring is not only unwise, it is a threat to both, again, our national security and our financial security.

Two airplanes hitting two buildings cost this nation's economy two trillion dollars. I don't know if there's a better example of saying that we could be pennywise and very pound foolish here if we're not cautious. The reality is that if maybe we had spent just a little bit more money on intelligence, maybe if our people could have had a little bit more resources, maybe 9-11 would have just been another day. Now, I know as young as I look, none of you think that I was around in 1980. But I was and if you'll remember back with me, some of you that might be able to do that, you remember the disastrous military event dubbed Desert One during which Jimmy Carter greenlighted a rescue mission to rescue hostages held in Tehran. Now what doomed that mission from the beginning was not the skill or courage of our men in arms. Nor was it the mentality of doing more with less. It—they were just asked to do things with a hollow force. And we saw a similar situation following the Clinton procurement holiday that left us unable to adequately respond even to the 9-11 attacks. Going to war in Afghanistan and Iraq with Reagan era platform weapons is what we had to do. As all of us know too well, those who do not learn from history, again, are doomed to repeat it. And I'm told in this place that the only

thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history. And it seems to be the case. Yet here we are with the probability of funding our military at levels not seen since before World War Two if you count it as a percentage of our total authorized budget. Now, I wonder, even in the times of 1939 when we were having, I know most of you don't remember that one, if we—when we were having difficulty financially, I suppose our entire focus was on that. And maybe that's we spent less. Maybe we just didn't have a GDP. But I wonder if, at the time we were ignoring our military if we realized that World War Two was at our door, I wonder if perhaps if we had had a stronger budget, maybe Pearl Harbor would never have occurred. I don't know, but I know that at least the question exists. Let me be very clear. The proposed budgets to the defense that are out there now will cripple our military and leave us with an impotent force.

With the passing of the Budget Control Act, Congress has taken the future of our military and national defense from the collective minds of five hundred and thirty five members and placed it in the hands of twelve, which is one of the reasons that I voted against the bill. Now, this I'm convinced that if this so-called super committee fails and sequestration is triggered, it will mean undoing the greatest military force in the history of humanity. And potentially the beginning of our financial ruin as well, because it's—of all the things that Randy said earlier about how military monies ripple throughout the economy, all of us know that if there's any government stimulus that does work, if there is, and I think the question's still a worthy question, but if there is, it's the military because we create our—I say military, I shouldn't say we, the military creates all kinds of ripples in our economy and the high paying jobs that result, the ancillary sciences that are effected, all of the things the military do, if there is any true stimulus that the government can make, it is to keep this country strong and to invest in the men and women who give everything they have for all of us. Not only do these cuts jeopardize our national security, of course they endanger our economy. Today, some would demand that those who selflessly do battle on behalf of all of us must find a way to do with even less. Not only is such a mindset shameful, it compromises our national security. It has been proven to be unwise in the past. And it is sure to be unwise in the future. History reminds us again and again that a robust national security is critical to any economic security. You know, I just returned from Israel. And let me suggest to you that that nation feels under siege. And I think they have every right to. This administration has reserved more over rebuke for our most important ally for building homes in their capital city of Jerusalem than it has reserved rebuke for a madman like Mahmoud Ahmadenijad for building nuclear weapons to threaten the peace of the entire human family. Let me suggest to you that we are going to have to all pull together and make sure that not only do we fight in the next five weeks to make sure that we don't let these critical moments pass and see our military hollowed out, but we need to fight in the next year and a half to make sure that the next Congress and the next president understand some of the challenges that are facing us in the world. I have three year old twins and, of course, I waited a long time for them. They mean more to me than anything I can possibly express to you. And I know more than anything else that what you all do gives them a chance to walk in the sunlight of freedom and for that I thank you and I appreciate your time.