

TRANSCRIPT: Tom Donnelly of AEI speaks at the 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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This is, at this point, really a political question, even a moral question. It's—the problems that the Defense Department faces are beyond what any wonk or expert can possibly solve. The gap between what we're asking our men and women to do and what we will continue to ask them to do and the number of them who do it and the resources that they have to carry out their missions is a gap that no efficiencies, no savings, no reforms, can close adequately. So I really do encourage you to take these comments and take the flag forward to try to get the results that both the congressman and Frank encourage you to do. Really, this is a question not only for the current moment, but for the coming presidential campaign. We'll have a chance to have a new commander-in-chief, but the question is whether the forces that he or she commands will be adequate to the task. This is a problem that is not beginning now. It's been a steady pattern since the end of the Cold War. After the success of the Cold War, the H.W. Bush Administration and then after that, the Clinton Administration, cut that Cold War force, which was already a small force by a third to forty percent. So in the 1990s, when all of us were enjoying a boom economy, the military gave back a trillion dollars to the federal government. Al Gore reinvented government by throwing people out of uniform and terminating weapons programs. When Barack Obama came into office in 2009, he asked Secretary Gates to terminate three hundred and thirty billion dollars worth of procurement programs. A year after that, Secretary Gates was asked to take another hundred billion dollars out of their program. The Budget Control Act as already passed is not cutting three hundred and fifty billion dollars out of the defense program, but four hundred and eighty-nine billion dollars. That's the target that people in the Pentagon are scrambling to meet today. It's going to cut a hundred thousand soldiers and Marines off the rolls before the wars they're fighting are completed or done. And that's the launching pad for the super committee or sequestration. Or whatever it is that comes next. And the congressmen were quite right to point out what the consequences will be for the forces and for the services. But what are the consequences going to be in the world? We say it's a dangerous world. It's more than a dangerous world. It's not just a question of Iran's nuclear ambitions. It's a question of Pakistan's current nuclear capabilities and terrorist capabilities. Admiral Mullen finally awoke to the danger posed by the Pakistani security services as he was leaving office. Both the congressmen mentioned China's rise. What are they spending that money on? They're spending that money on anti-ship ballistic missiles and attack submarines. These are not systems that will secure international commerce. They can only be used to threaten it or to threaten American capital ships. It's a very dangerous world. And absent what America does, not only for ourselves, but for the entire world, it's going to be a much more unstable, uncertain place, not just for commerce and trade, but for people to move and for us here at home. And for the interests that Americans of both parties, presidents of both parties, since 1945 have always striven and gone to war to protect. So we really are at one of those infamous crossroads moments. I went to pundit school. I get the license to use the term crossroads. We are at a crossroads. We're beyond the

crossroads in my judgment. And unfortunately, we're in the dark. And the things that we're groping for are going to hit us before we understand what's happened. I encourage you all to take this message away. All of us have lots of further data. I'm not going to inundate you with more stats and figures. But really, this is the time to make your voices heard. Not just to stop what could be happening or could be about to happen, but actually to reverse the course that we have been on for too long. Thanks, Frank.