

TRANSCRIPT:
Is Disarming America Smart Politics?
The Security and Economic Costs of Obama's Policies

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I'm the low man on the totem pole here so to speak. We've got the general, the former assistant secretary of defense, the staffer and think tank fellow now, and General Zapanta. And here I am, just an Army captain. And I'm just a guy. And – but I did, I was willing to go to Iraq several times and served as a platoon leader in Iraq with the Army's First Cav division, served as a company commander, and then served as an operations officer of a battalion as well. And after doing all of that, I previously worked with a group called Vets for Freedom over the past few years. But now we've started up a new organization. And the name of the group is Vets for a Strong America. And what – we're a grassroots action organization working to recruit veterans and national security voters from around the country who still believe that even though jobs and the economy is the number one issue that we face right now, at the end of the day, we're still electing a commander-in-chief. You know, in 1999, when we were going through the race between Vice President Al Gore and Governor, then, Governor Bush, jobs and the economy was an issue then.

It wasn't an issue of how are we going to create more jobs in the economy. In 1999, it was how are we going to sustain this kind of economy. Little did we know that nine months into President Bush's first term, 9-11 and worldly events would thrust us into this catastrophic or cataclysmic series of events that would lead to us still or, I should say, just redeploying troops out of Iraq and still being at war in Afghanistan. But here we are, a decade later we're still at war. And I think over the last decade, veterans have earned a place at the table. They've certainly earned a spot in the political terrain as a result in the road to the White House. So our organization is going to be very active, very aggressive, very forceful, in insuring that veterans and national security issues still have a place at the table and they're still actively talked about in the run up to 2012. And us – in our efforts to do that so far, we've held events with most of the major presidential candidates with the exception of Governor Romney and Congressman Paul. But we have worked with all of the other candidates so far. They've been willing to come to our events and forums. We've done events and forums in Iowa, South Carolina, Florida, and we're looking at doing more of these events on Super – in the run up to Super Tuesday as well. And so we're introducing veterans to the presidential candidates. We're also, I think more importantly, we're introducing presidential candidates to veterans and their issues. After a decade at war, we think that's one of the most important things that we can talk about from a veteran's perspective, is allowing them to meet the next commander-in-chief. Some of those issues that we're concerned about, though, that we're going to be very aggressively talking about, though, first of all, is sequestration. 1.2 trillion dollars in potential cuts will hollow out and gut the military. There's no doubt about it. We're going to lose eighty thousand troops in the short term who are going to be handed pink slips. So if we're worried about veterans' unemployment issues, what we should worry about is just

retaining some of the most experienced war fighters that we currently have. But instead, we're going to remove them from the military. All because of budget cuts. What we have heard, though, is that president Obama has announced a six billion dollar plan where he would – he would use six billion dollars to employ twenty thousand veterans.

Why don't we use two billion dollars to continue to retain eighty thousand of the most experienced war fighters we have? Some of the other issues we're concerned about, I mean, obviously the pullout in Iraq has created an unstable mess. And what that means to the guys and gals on the ground who fight is we may have to go back there again. It was a policy that was produced as a result of politics. President Obama, before he was even elected, called Iraq the bad war. It's because his liberal base didn't want to have – his supporters didn't want to see us fighting in Iraq. They thought it was a bad war, they thought it was an ideologically-driven war, so from – before he even got into office, first of all, before the surge started in Iraq, that was successful, he thought it was a failure. And he said so. Before the war in Iraq was mostly a success, he said it was a failure. Now, the war in Iraq is becoming a failure. I don't like to say that. I don't mean that to demean the valor, the blood, the treasure that we've invested for the last decade in Iraq. But because of politically motivated means of pulling out of Iraq, we're now left with an unstable mess. Just some of the smaller issues or – you know, I don't think these issues, strategically they're smaller, but for example, the Obama administration just announced that it's cutting combat pay to troops. And what they've actually announced is that they're going to prorate combat pay for troops that are going into combat zones. It's two hundred and twenty-five dollars a month. Not a big deal, right? It's seven dollars and twenty-five cents a day. So is the Obama administration telling me, this is a regular guy who may have to go back into a combat zone again, that seven dollars and twenty-five cents a day is going to break the American budget? I don't think so. But again – and again, we're not cutting spending overall in the budget. In fact, we're going to have to vote again on lifting the spending cap again anyway.

What we're doing is we are realigning and shifting where your tax dollars are spent. Cause tax dollars – Barack Obama doesn't get anything politically out of spending on the military. He gets things politically, i.e., votes this November and support, by spending on all of his other domestic related programs, domestic related programs like wanting to spend six billion dollars to employ twenty thousand veterans. It's a handout. It's a giveaway to the troops. Or to returning veterans in, you know, wanting to hope that he'll get votes out of it. Just in closing here, our organization over the next six to nine months throughout the election, we're going to be very active, very aggressive, in recruiting and mobilizing people in key swing states with military communities. And because one of the things you're going to learn about today is not only does it affect strategically the military, it also affects the economy. And one of the last things I'll close with in terms of how the economic related consequences of budget cuts will impact the military is it's going to impact our manufacturing base. When we start to pull those dollars out of the manufacturing programs that currently are working towards developing military equipment, one of those programs, for example, is manufacturing companies that create the MRAP. We're – after these 1.2 billion dollars in budget cuts, we are going to lose the manufacturing base and those companies that previously would build equipment like the MRAP that was rapidly fielded and produced in order to save lives of troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, companies out there, those manufacturing companies are going to retool their processes and their systems. They're no longer going to be able to take an order from the Defense Department and within fifteen months have a

vehicle like the MRAP that helps save lives of troops. And so once we start pulling these dollars out of those programs, we're going to lose the manufacturing base. Consequently, and what a lot of people don't see, though, we're not – as a Defense Department, we're not going to be able to say, hey, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, can you start rapidly producing these MRAP vehicles that save lives? We're not going to have those capabilities. We're going to lose them as a result. We're going to make sure over the course of the next nine months that veterans, national security voters and veterans' families are out there talking to voters about these issues. Thank you.