

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

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**MACKENZIE EAGLEN:**

So I'm going through the agenda and I'm looking through it at our panel and some of the other breakouts and I thought, hmm, that's interesting. If there was a liberal political action committee, let's pretend, we'll call it LPAC, I just don't know that they would have two breakout panels, one on Medicare Cuts for Seniors: Good or Bad and then, you know, Keep Medicare Strong, but that's what we have at CPAC. We have the – basically the panel that's going to talk about why providing for the common defense is the first job of government, government's spending all kinds of money on things that they shouldn't and not enough on the things that they should. And then there are all these other panels about how to keep cutting defense. I just think it's really interesting. We're at war with ourselves about this issue. And liberals don't have this problem.

They are pushing on an open door when it comes to defense cuts. We've seen this at CPAC over the last several years. The agenda topics and other items of discussion and other speakers in the past. You know, this isn't a question of whether we're going to cut the military, whether we're going to cut defense spending, etceteras. We're already doing it. It's been underway for three years under president Obama with the acquiescence of Republicans in Washington all the same. So let me put it into a little perspective. So I know that's the elephant in the room and I've just got it out of the way and now we can talk like honest friends. We – you know, I don't want to portray this image of a circling firing squad, but it's one thing, I think, as a family, conservatives have to be aware of and we should talk about. So I'd like to use a quote that the – Obama's previous secretary of defense and George W. Bush's last one, Robert Gates, often liked to say. He said, five times in the last century, the United States has disarmed after conflict. And it's true. It's something we always do. We fund our military like this, booms and busts. That's just – the nation feels like they're owed a peace dividend after wars because, as Frank said, they're very expensive. And I get that. But you never really save money in those bust periods because you have to ramp so dramatically back up to remedy the things that you overkilled or cut or canceled or something to that effect, including service members in those periods before. One thing we've not done as a nation in modern history, meaning the last century, is disarmed or begun the defense build down with not quite a hundred thousand US forces actually in harm's way in Afghanistan. And that's just, of course, the tip of the iceberg. It may bother you that our military is in many, many other places around the world. But that doesn't change that they are. And so we've never actually undertaken this grand experiment of disarming while people are literally where bullets are flying. And I think that's something that's missing from the conversation in Washington about our debt ceiling debate and what led to the Budget Control Act and sequestration which is coming. The premise of this, you know, I live and work in Washington, so I have to think in terms of budgets and dollars and the debate here among policymakers, which tend to be politicians, and we've been talking a lot about this debt ceiling deal, about the

president's new budget proposal and what it means for the military. You might have heard that president Obama made a trip to the Pentagon recently. It was a big deal. No president had done that before and all the chiefs were behind him. It's been all over the news lately that there's this new strategy that's out of the Pentagon in this shift in emphasis on Asia, winding down war, as the president said, several times, I believe, at the Pentagon, that the tide of war is receding, as if it is up to us unilaterally.

But what is the premise behind this larger budget effort this year? Not – I'm not even going to take you back in time in the last three years of all the previous military budget cuts that we've had. But what it basically means is that the president has formerly abandoned something we've had in America for decades. It's basically what's given our military post-World War Two and post-Cold War in particular a superpower status. You're a superpower for a lot of reasons, one of them is your economic strength. Right? That's pretty indisputable. And your military strength and your economic strength [UNCLEAR] are inextricably linked. And in fact, they're mutually reinforcing in many ways about which some of these panelists will discuss. If you have the iPhone 4, if you're lucky enough to have that, you know, it's – all the rage is that series in the phone, right? Those artificial intelligence. Well, that's thanks to the US military. You have your internet at home and you have the microwave and you have the GPS in your car thanks to the US military. My son's video monitor, he's a young baby in his room, it has infrared technology so I can watch him while he's sleeping and not wake him up. Everything that you use everyday in your life, you have no idea. But it probably had some R&D development through the federal government, primarily from the military, at least in the last forty years. So what the president is proposing right now is that we abandon something we've held for over a half century, which is as part of our military superpower status, we've long said and built a military capable of doing or being in two places at once. Particularly in conflict. It's called a two-war construct. Now we saw the last decade, we were pretty busy in Iraq and Afghanistan, so we've already shown that we're a country that, at times, will have to do and fight and win in two places at once. But the president is suggesting that we should abandon that. And that's a justification for things like laying off one hundred thousand active duty soldiers and Marines, for example. And not a single DOD civilian. A bureaucrat.

This dismantling, this changing of the rules of the game that we've had for so, so long is basically like giving the enemy a hall pass. It's where the United States becomes a substitute teacher. As opposed to what we've been. And it makes us just like everybody else. And that's – it's not parity on – that's meant to be a good thing. It's parity where every other nation in the world has to worry about their neighborhood. Right? Their region. Their – those who surround their borders, those on the periphery possibly. But nobody else in the world has to worry about everywhere like we do because our economic interests are everywhere. It's not because we like to just use our military unilaterally. It's because we actually have national interests that span the globe. Therefore, we've built this military that also can reach across the globe. So to change this rule and say this longstanding prospect for the United States military is to weaken it. And it's weakening it and it's advertising that weakness to everybody. If you want to be a paper tiger and, you know, have no clothes, at least as the emperor, don't tell everybody. And that's – I would think. So the president's proposing as part of this shift, a pivot to Asia, as an emphasis as if this were new, but it's not. This has been around DC for a long time. It was in fact Bill Clinton's secretary of defense and George W. Bush's national security adviser who led a commission in

2010 that I participated in and they recommended that the US needs to shift its emphasis to the Asia/Pacific. Not at the expense of everywhere else, though. See, that's the thing. You can't – it's not a zero sum proposition of what this budget and this strategy under this administration is. So I call this the paper pivot to Asia. So it's the right thing to do in theory if it weren't zero sum and if it actually had resources behind it. The president and the secretary have spoken a lot about that this is a renewed emphasis on naval and airpower. I'm sure much to the chagrin of Joel and others. But when you look at what's happening, the president's budget shrinks the navy and the air force. But we're supposed to be emphasizing this region. We're supposed to be sending more assets and more people and more equipment over there.

So we're seeing this – the typical Washington sort of thing. Which is, you talk a big game but you lack really resources behind it. We're cutting back, scaling – scaling back or delaying everything that's required for sort of this emphasis on the future. An irony is, all of these things are happening and I already referenced the last three years of budget cuts. There's a readiness challenge facing US forces, not just in terms of people and in terms of the end strength cuts to the number of people who are actually going to serve, but also on the hardware side. And all of this is sort of lost into the larger debate. I will close with the impact of sequestration. So we have this debt ceiling deal. It started the second round of defense cuts. And basically when I say defense cuts, I mean the military's pure budget. Obviously, other security cuts are happening as well. Now Congress establishes a super committee to find a solution to further reduce the debt. And they agree that if they can't do that, then there are automatic cuts that happen and most of those fall under military. That was supposed to scare everybody into action. Of course, it didn't. And where we are now is facing this impact of sequestration, so these automatic spending cuts. The secretary of defense sent a letter to Congress saying this would be a doomsday scenario. I mean, he's using really dire language. He's actually correct in saying that. But outlining the truly devastating impacts it would have on a very small number of people, roughly one percent of our population. And what is most sad and most ironic about the secretary's dire outcomes is that almost everything that he outlined in that prospect, if Congress crosses that red line, is happening today. Very quickly, he said, we'll have the smallest navy since 1916, we already have the smallest navy since World War One. He said we'll have the smallest and oldest Air Force in history. That's exactly what we have now. Can you imagine where we will be after budget cuts?