Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 21, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

We have grave concerns over recent reports that as part of ongoing debt ceiling negotiations, substantial defense cuts have been proposed.

We are a nation at war with men and women fighting in harm's way on multiple fronts. We need to ensure that the soldiers of this nation are well equipped with every resource they need to protect the liberties we all enjoy. We need to send a clear message to the men and women fighting for our nation that this Congress will not sit by while your Administration makes unjustified decisions about defense funding.

We can all agree that the Pentagon must scrutinize closely how it spends taxpayer dollars, but we must also invest proactively in the requirements needed to keep our country safe today and tomorrow. We remain committed to prioritizing fiscal responsibility and accountability in the Department of Defense, but we also believe that any cuts to force structure, programs, and equipment cannot occur without an open and objective review of America's role in the world and the risks we face to our national security. This is clearly not occurring as part of your current direction to cut defense spending. Just last week, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General James Cartwright, indicated that a number of key modernization programs are being considered for cuts as part of ongoing budget deliberations in the Pentagon despite a complete lack of analysis of the strategic impact. We live in an era when threats arise simultaneously and unexpectedly. This reality necessitates a well-equipped and funded military prepared for multiple contingencies.

Sadly, a pattern of ignoring obvious areas of wasteful government spending in favor of gutting defense has become evident in budget negotiations. First, the Pentagon already has proposed and begun to implement $100 billion in targeted efficiencies. However, before these efficiencies can even be realized, the Pentagon was ordered to cut an additional $78 billion from defense funding over the next five years and an additional $400 billion over the next decade. These sizeable sums are being offered up without the necessary analysis of what our nation's national defense obligations and priorities are, and more importantly, without any consideration for the risks they pose to our national defense. Given the shortfalls we already face today it is clear that further cuts to national defense will result in deep reductions in force structure that will leave our military less capable and less ready to fight in the long-term. This is a dramatic shift for a nation at war and a dangerous signal to our foes about our willingness to defend our national interest.

To make matters worse, you recently indicated in your Twitter town hall that any cuts in defense spending would not be applied to deficit reduction but instead would go to expand discretionary

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domestic programs: "But it's [the defense budget] so big that you can make relatively modest changes to defense that end up giving you a lot of headroom to fund things like basic research or student loans or things like that." Your statement illustrates that proposed cuts to defense spending are not intended to address our historically high levels of deficit spending. To the contrary, these cuts to defense spending appear to be designed to weaken our national security in favor of more domestic spending.

Consequently, we are left with more questions than answers. What is the national security strategy of the United States going forward? What missions will our Armed Forces no longer conduct? How will we modernize our aging ships, planes, and war-worn field equipment? These cuts would decrease America's ability to deter enemies at home and abroad. They will burden strained military families. They also constitute a marked departure from Congress' constitutional responsibility to provide for the common defense. This duty rests solely with Congress and thus deserves our utmost dedication. We urge you to protect a strong national defense while also seeking fiscal constraint in the vast array of programs run by the federal government.

Sincerely,

Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress

Howard "Buck" McKeon
Member of Congress

J. Randy Forbes
Member of Congress

Michael Turner
Member of Congress

K. Michael Conaway
Member of Congress

W. Todd Akin
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Thomas Rooney
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