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August 5, 2011

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I urge you to make clear that Defense Secretary Leon Panetta did not speak for the Administration when he stated yesterday that additional spending cuts, beyond those in the recent debt-ceiling agreement, should come from non-discretionary spending such as Social Security and Medicare while the military budget is spared.

This is apparently part of a Pentagon strategy to keep American troops in Iraq beyond this calendar year – a deadline set by George Bush—and to resist an orderly withdrawal from Afghanistan. It also would mean continuing to support a level of weaponry designed originally to defeat the Soviet Union in a nuclear war, and extending our indirect subsidy of wealthy allies in Western Europe and Japan, so that they can maintain defense budgets less than half of ours as percentages of gross domestic product.

Secretary Panetta's recommendations would require reducing Social Security benefits and medical care for older Americans. A sensible approach to military spending would allow America to remain the strongest nation in the world without requiring us to put additional burdens on older citizens of our own country. I urge you to make clear that the Administration shares these priorities.



BARNEY FRANK