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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC**

December 1, 2011

Secretary Leon Panetta  
Defense Department  
Office of the Secretary  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I write on two points.

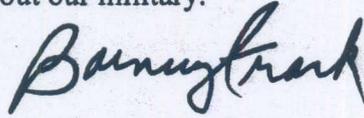
First, I was pleased but not at all surprised that you handled the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" so firmly and efficiently. When the legislation left some discretion to the DOD, many of my friends and allies in the fight for LGBT legal equality expressed some concern and began to strategize about how to follow-up. Once you were appointed Secretary, my advice to them was to save their time and energy for other matters, because I knew, based on your strong commitment to ending discrimination of various sorts, that there was no need for any of us to do anything. Thank you both for getting rid of that policy as promptly as you did, for making sure that an atmosphere was created in which it will be implemented appropriately, and for vindicating me.

Second, I write about a matter of disagreement between us. Specifically, I want to express my deep skepticism at the notion that we somehow endangered America's national security during the years immediately after the Cold War – when you were playing a prominent role in the Clinton administration – by "hollowing out" our military. The reduction in military spending that began under President George H.W. Bush in which your administration continued, was one of the three legs of the stool on which we were able to balance the budget – the others being some constraints on domestic spending, with which I did not always agree, and with the increase in taxes on people at the high end of the income scale.

You are now apparently reconsidering the military spending reductions that you helped implement on the grounds that they resulted in a hollowed-out military. My question to you is, to what can you point that show that we paid a price for this? That is, in that post-Cold War period, when we made the military spending reductions that you now decry, on what occasions was there a need or desire to use American military force that we were unable to carry out because of the military's being hollow? My own view is that there were several instances of military force being used during that period, which repudiate the notion that we had somehow reduced our military capacity below what was needed. President Clinton very effectively used the military, primarily airpower, in the former Yugoslavia. President Bush was then able to use

military force – unwisely in my view – to completely dominate Iraq, and to launch a second war in Afghanistan at the same time.

As I look back over the last thirty years, I do not see cases where we were unable to achieve important and legitimate American national objectives because we lacked the military force to do so. The problem of course is that sheer force is not always sufficient to achieve our objectives, but I would be interested in knowing, as I have said, what instances you can point to at any time in the last several decades when a legitimate American national interest could not be vindicated because we had unwisely hollowed-out our military.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barney Frank". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

BARNEY FRANK

BF/la