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J. Randy Forbes
United States Congress
4th District, Virginia

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General Norton A. Schwartz (Norty)
HQ USAF/CC
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Dear General Schwartz:

As you may be aware, on September 12, 2011 the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos, wrote a two-page memo to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta regarding the role of the United States Marine Corps. I welcomed the General's thoughtful comments on the role the Corps plays in our national defense policy and found it a valuable public contribution to the ongoing debate regarding our nation's defense budget.

Although the focus of the General's letter was the Marine Corps, I also appreciated his larger message that it is "imperative that our Nation retain a credible means of mitigating risk" to our national security interests. I could not agree more. I believe the series of cuts we have made to our defense budget over the past two years, and those that may occur in the coming months, will inevitably be judged as shortsighted and have a detrimental effect on our national security.

However, while these pivotal debates have waged on Capitol Hill these past months I am alarmed at how silent our nation's military leadership has remained. Now, more than ever, I would expect our military leaders to be willing to speak candidly about the state of our national defense and the ongoing role it will play in our national security policy.

I would therefore be eager to hear you articulate what you believe to be the role of the United States Air Force in our national defense policy in the decade ahead.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your service to our nation and reiterate that my door is always open to your thoughts and concerns. Now, more than ever, building a strong relationship between the Congress and the Department of Defense is vital if we expect to maintain a strong national defense and sustain the type of leadership role we as Americans have always known.

With kind personal regards, I am

Yours Truly,

J. Randy Forbes
Member of Congress