

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Tom Rooney (FL-16) issued the following statement in response to a letter from Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on the impact defense cuts would have on national security under sequestration:

“If the joint deficit committee cannot reach an agreement and automatic defense cuts are triggered, our national security will be severely weakened. As Secretary Panetta stated, the impact of these cuts – which would bring the total cut to the Department of Defense to \$1 trillion – would be ‘devastating.’

“While our military would be much smaller, our weapons systems more outdated, and our overall readiness greatly weakened, the threats we face would be unabated. Our enemies would only grow stronger and more confident in the face of an American military that could no longer meet our defense needs.

“We must reach an agreement to tackle our deficits without crippling our defense. Failing to heed the warnings of Secretary Panetta and our military leaders would be irresponsible and unacceptable.”

If the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction does not reach an agreement, the Department of Defense would face approximately \$500 billion in automatic cuts, bringing the ten-year total in defense cuts to \$1 trillion. In a letter to Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Secretary Panetta stated that the automatic cuts under sequestration would require an across-the-board, 23 percent reduction, leaving the United States with its smallest ground force since 1940, fewest ships since 1915, and the smallest Air Force in its history.

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