**CAC Message Guidance: Climate Change and National Security**

**March 13, 2019**

**Military and national security experts have identified climate change as a pressing national security threat that is already impacting our military readiness, increasing troop threats and jeopardizing military installations. Despite the need for urgent climate action, the Trump administration continues to refuse to move forward with solutions to protect our troops and our national security from the threat of climate change.**

**The Trump administration’s proposed National Security Council panel to undermine climate science is opposed by national security experts of all political stripes.**

* The Trump administration has announced plans to use the National Security Council to create an “adversarial” group to [undermine](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-climatechange/white-house-readies-panel-to-question-security-risks-of-climate-idUSKCN1Q92AR) the science that informs national defense planning and intelligence threat assessments on climate change. Military and national security leaders from across the political spectrum oppose this plan.
* In an extraordinary rebuke, a group of 58 senior retired military and national security experts [signed a letter](https://climateandsecurity.org/letter-to-the-president-of-the-united-states-nsc-climate-panel/) denouncing the Trump NSC plan to form “a committee to dispute and undermine military and intelligence judgments on the threat posed by climate change.”
  + The signers include former secretaries of state and defense (John Kerry and Chuck Hagel) former combatant commanders (such as Admiral Locklear and General McChrystal), former intelligence leaders (such as Greg Treverton, past Chair of the National Intelligence Council) and other senior military and national security officials that served in Republican and Democratic administrations stretching back to President Eisenhower.
* The experts warn against inserting politics into national security, including “second-guessing the scientific sources used to assess the threat, such as the rigorously peer-reviewed National Climate Assessment, and applying that to national security policy. Imposing a political test on reports issued by the science agencies, and forcing a blind spot onto the national security assessments that depend on them, will erode our national security.”
* The Trump administration’s deep denial of climate science is a threat to our national security. Their refusal to act puts imperils our troops, our military installations and our security.

**Climate Change as a national security threat isn’t a new idea. The four previous administrations have acknowledged the threat to our national security from climate change.**

* Since 2010, the Department of Defense (DoD) has released multiple [reports](http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2014_quadrennial_defense_review.pdf) – including the last two Quadrennial Defense Reviews – confirming the urgent threat of climate change to our national security. Even Former DoD Secretary James Mattis [confirmed](https://taskandpurpose.com/mattis-climate-change-trump) during his tenure that climate change is a pressing national security issue. Director of National Intelligence Dan Coates has also [reported](https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/2019-ATA-SFR---SSCI.pdf) that climate change would increase the risk of interstate tension in several countries throughout the Middle East and parts of Africa.
* The National Security Community has long understood climate change to be a threat multiplier. In 1991, President George H.W. Bush’s administration assessed in its National Security Strategy that threats such as climate change were “already contributing to political conflict.
* The DoD’s 2014 Climate Change Adaptation Roadmap also found that climate change “has the potential to exacerbate many of the challenges we are dealing with today – from infectious disease to terrorism.” This point is mirrored by experts in the intelligence community, including the military advisory board at CNA.

**Climate Change is having a tangible impact on US national security and military readiness.**

* Two-thirds of U.S. military installations analyzed by the Pentagon are currently at risk of flooding, drought or wildfires linked directly to climate change, according to [a 2019 report](https://climateandsecurity.files.wordpress.com/2019/01/sec_335_ndaa-report_effects_of_a_changing_climate_to_dod.pdf) from the Defense Department. That number jumps even higher when future vulnerabilities are taken into consideration.
* Climate change is already costing the DoD significant amounts of [taxpayer resources](https://www.reed.senate.gov/news/releases/reed-statement-on-trump-administrations-inadequate-and-incomplete-climate-change-risk-assessment-report) and impacting military readiness:
* Hurricane Michael and the destruction of Tyndall Air Force Base will cost the Air Force over $5 billion to rebuild.
* The damage from Hurricane Florence will cost the Marine Corps roughly $3.7 billion to rebuild Camp Lejeune.
* Three named storms in 2017 cost the Department over $1.7 billion in infrastructure repairs alone.
* Virginia’s Norfolk Naval Base already floods 10 times a year, and [rising sea levels](https://insideclimatenews.org/news/10252017/military-norfolk-naval-base-flooding-climate-change-sea-level-global-warming-virginia) fueled by climate change will dramatically worsen this chronic flooding.
* Soldiers at Fort Carson [can’t train with live ammunition](https://www.denverpost.com/2018/03/26/fort-carson-fire-army-live-ammo/) due to the increased wildfire risk further exacerbated by climate change.
* Melting permafrost and coastal erosion are [causing the ground to crumble](https://www.npr.org/2019/02/25/697615977/how-climate-change-is-affecting-alaskas-military-radar-stations) beneath the DoD’s long-range radar stations in Alaska – threatening to take the facilities out of operation altogether.

**Climate Change will fuel conflicts and increase threats to US national Security.**

* The Pentagon says that climate change could also fuel conflict around the world with droughts, floods, and other natural disasters undermining already-fragile governments and creating avenues for extremist ideologies and conditions that foster terrorism.
  + For example, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism [found](https://www.ict.org.il/Article/2023/climate-change-contribute-to-boko-haram-uprising#gsc.tab=0) that Nigeria’s inability to address the country’s severe drought helped create the volatility that Boko Haram exploited to kidnap hundreds of innocent girls.
  + Anticipated droughts throughout the Middle East and parts of Asia – including the [Nile Basin](https://qz.com/africa/1181318/ethiopia-egypt-sudan-and-eritrea-tensions-over-grand-ethiopian-renaissance-dam-on-nile-river/), [Indus River](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/22/india-again-threatens-to-restrict-flow-of-river-water-to-pakistan-as-tension-builds) and [Mekong River](https://thcasean.org/read/articles/257/Tensions-and-Prospects-Over-the-River-Mekong) – have already led to heightened tensions.
* Foreign competitors – including China and Russia – are already [planning](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/world/arctic-climate-change-military-russia-china/?utm_term=.ba835aa0caa1) on establishing military and commercial infrastructure in the Arctic that could pose a threat to our assets in the region. This wouldn’t be a viable option for them if it weren’t for climate change.