

Testimony by Senator John Warner (Retired)
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
July 30, 2009

Chairman Boxer, Ranking Member Senator Inhofe, Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to a former long-serving member of this committee to provide my thoughts on the interrelationship between America's energy future, the challenge of global climate change, and the potential consequences on America's national security, and the sovereign security of many nations worldwide.

As I appear today by invitation to the Committee. I am complying with the provisions of law in Title 18 U.S.C. § 207 and the Senate Rules on Ethics giving testimony before a formal Congressional public hearing, under oath, and expressing my own personal opinions, and not those of my law firm or clients.

My work in this field today is with the Federal Executive Branch, state and local governments, veteran and military-oriented organizations, non-profit organizations, and experts on climate. The goal is to listen to the public concerns in their hometowns across America.

How did I come to join in the efforts of so many who have concerns on the impacts of climate change on our nation's energy security, economic security, and overall national security?

During my fifth and last Senate term, I was privileged to Chair the Armed Services Committee and serve on this Committee. Many retired military officers, and concerned citizens visited with me to discuss the concepts of how America's military policy, energy policy, and climate policy were interrelated.

Unquestionably, they are!

Today, I confine my views and opinions to this subject and make a specific recommendation.

Let's start with a statement from the Secretary of Defense

Robert Gates:

“We also know that over the next 20 years and more certain pressures – population, resource, energy, climate, economic, and environmental – could combine with rapid cultural, social, and technological change to produce new sources of deprivation, rage, and instability.”

Remarks to the U.S. Global Leadership Campaign (July 15, 2008).

Secretary Gate's warning was observed by the Chairman and Ranking Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in their opening statements at the Committee's hearing last Thursday, July 21, 2009.

Senator John F. Kerry said:

“Climate change injects a major new source of chaos, tension, and human insecurity into an already volatile world. It threatens to bring more famine and drought, worse pandemics, more natural disasters, more resource scarcity, and human displacement on a staggering scale. Places only too familiar with the instability, conflict, and resource competition that often create refugees and IDPs, will now confront these same challenges with an ever growing population of EDPs—environmentally displaced people. We risk fanning the flames of failed-statism, and offering glaring opportunities to the worst actors in our international system. In an interconnected world, that endangers all of us.”

Senator Dick Lugar said:

“The American military is at the forefront of those working to develop energy resources that do not depend on the good will of unpredictable and sometimes hostile regimes. America is rich in coal, as are large developing nations like China, India, and Ukraine. Coal remains a big part of the energy plans of many countries. The United States and the world are unlikely to be able to deal with climate change without progress on clean coal technologies. The Pentagon is experimenting with coal-to-gas and coal-to-liquid technologies to fuel America’s military. As the Pentagon moves to expand the use

of coal fuels, it should simultaneously work to develop cost-effective carbon sequestration methods and cooperate with other agencies and entities engaged in this endeavor.”

There are many non-profit organizations who have made significant contributions towards creating greater understanding of the need for the national climate debate to embrace our national defense considerations.

Organizations I have been privileged to work with are the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Center for Naval Analysis, World Resources Institute, and Council on Foreign Relations.

The Center for a New American Security recently conducted a forum with a very distinguished panel of government and non-government defense officials. The discussion was lead by Sharon Burke, Vice President for Natural Security. She stated:

“As disaster rates rise, the U.S. military and civilian assistance agencies are likely to be called upon increasingly to conduct and support humanitarian and disaster relief operations, similar to Operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE, which responded to the Indian Ocean Tsunami. These disasters will vary in scale and location and the United States and other developed nations will be unable to bring relief in all cases. Social unrest and state instability may result, which will likely increase and contribute to supply disruptions and influence U.S. strategic priorities.”

Another organization, “The American Security Project,” represented by its President Vice Admiral Lee F. Gunn was a panel member with Admiral McGinn and me before the Foreign Relations Committee. He said:

“Climate change will force change in how we operate our forces around the world; changes will effect ground operations and logistics as well as operations at sea and in the air. Sea level rise threatens large investments in U.S. facilities around the world. Desertification and shifts in the availability of water can change logistic patterns drastically for all our forces.

“The British Indian Ocean Territory, the island of Diego Garcia is a critical staging facility for U.S. and British naval and air forces operating in the Middle East and Central Asia. It sits just a few feet above

sea-level at its highest point. Rising sea levels may swamp Diego Garcia and deny the United States this critical operating hub for its armed forces. There are myriad other examples of contingencies for which our national security team must prepare.

“The Arctic is a prime example of how alliances will be forced to adapt to the realities of climate change. Just a few years ago, the scientific community was predicting that the Arctic wouldn’t be ice-free until the middle of this century. Now the predictions put that date at 2013; just four years from now.

“In the Arctic, the loss of sea-ice has caused concern in the U.S. Navy for nearly a decade. What naval planners know is that loss of sea-ice at the North Pole has the potential to increase commercial and military activity by other powers. As if we needed any evidence of this, look no further than the 2007 expedition by Russia to plant its flag in the sea-bed at the North Pole. Not surprisingly, Canada, Norway, Denmark, and the United States—all nations bordering on the arctic—responded critically to Russia’s actions.”

In preparing for this hearing I consulted with the Department of the Navy and asked to include as a part of my testimony today a statement by the Oceanographer of the Navy, Read Admiral Titley:

“The Navy recognizes the challenges poised by the ongoing changes in the global climate system. One area of immediate interest is the decrease in Arctic sea ice extent together with scientific predictions that ice coverage will continue to decrease. As noted in the 2007 Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower, “climate change is gradually opening up the waters of the Arctic, not only to new resource development, but also to new shipping routes that may reshape the global transportation system. While these opportunities offer potential for growth, they are potential sources of competition for access and natural resources.” Outside of the Arctic, global climate change may, as noted in a recent Center for Naval Analysis study, act as a threat multiplier for instability in some of the most volatile regions of the world and add to tensions even in stable regions with good governance.

“In May 2009, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) convened an Executive Board specifically to examine the state the state of Navy’s current knowledge and capabilities to respond to these climate change challenges. This led to the formation of the Navy’s Task Force Climate Change (TFCC) as a cross-OPNAV team to examine the issues and use a science-based approach to assess timelines for action and potential risks. TFCC is also looking for partnership opportunities as multiples agencies and allies begin to consider climate change effects. TFCC working groups are currently developing the initial Navy Roadmap for the Arctic that will be delivered to the CNO later this summer. The various working groups are examining a number of focus areas

including strategy, policy, infrastructure, military systems, and arctic environmental assessment and prediction capabilities in order to guide future Navy strategy, policy, and investment decisions. The Roadmap will lay out a series of milestones for Navy actions, studies, investments, and partnerships. This will provide a means to make future decisions of not only “what” should be done but also “when” based on the best available scientific assessments.”

I made a further request of the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Forces, to provide me with a statement describing on-going work in the Department of Defense. Secretary Kathleen Hicks forwarded this very interesting report:

“Energy and climate change are two of the key strategic trends affecting national security. The impacts of climate change will disproportionately affect regions with limited adaptive capacity. It will contribute to food and water shortages, increase the spread of disease, and may lead to mass migration. It is going to accelerate state failure in some cases, and may also lead to the spread of insurgency as weak governments fail to cope with its effects. The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act requires DoD to consider the impacts of climate change on roles, missions and installations in the QDR. This effort is ongoing, but clearly will not end with the

delivery of the QDR report to Congress. We expect our support to civil authorities for disaster relief missions to grow due to projected increases in extreme weather events such as severe storms, floods and droughts. We must also be prepared to respond to conflicts over natural resources, including food, water or land. As climate science advances, and new observations give us fresh insights, we will periodically re-evaluate DoD climate change risks and vulnerabilities in order to develop policies and plans to manage the effects of climate change on DoD operations and missions.”

Chairman Boxer, Members of the Committee, I have now had the opportunity to testify before the House of Representatives Committee, chaired by Messrs. Waxman and Markey, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and now this Committee whose work will be vital to the Senate’s legislative responsibilities on the relationship between energy, climate change and national security.

I have had many years of experience working “in” the Defense Department and, here in the Senate, working “with” the Defense Department.

The Defense Department is the largest user of energy of any single entity in the United State, or, likely the world.

As the testimony of this panel today will confirm, it is the men and women in uniform who will likely be called upon by the President to address adverse situations brought on by erratic climate changes.

America’s citizens can take great pride in the work being done now, and the planning for the future, by the Department of Defense under the leadership of Secretary Gates and the officers and men of all the Services.

Their story must be told in greater detail to the American public.

All polls and studies confirm the great respect the American public has for those – in uniform and civilians – working for our nation’s security.

They have great credibility.

The DoD has vast experience and resources for research.

By this hearing, this Committee, like the Foreign Relations Committee, is giving them a voice.

Six Committees of the Senate, so far as I know, are going to make specific recommendations to Senate Leadership on pending legislation.

I most respectfully suggest the Armed Services Committee, which can compile a more detailed record, also make a submission to the Senate Leadership.

The Armed Services Committee has a reputation for achieving consensus on vital issues with a high degree of bipartisanship. History records this record over a half century, for that level of bipartisanship is a duty owed on matters relating to our nation's security, and, especially to the uniformed personnel and their families.

Bipartisanship is key to today's public acceptance and endurance and implementation in the future of proposed legislation.

The challenges and problems must be addressed by all nations – it's a global problem with consequences and burdens to be shared by all people

At this time strong leadership internationally is needed.

The United States must lead, and now. Our nation is among the major emitters of pollution. Only if we lead, stepping forward with a long stride, can we expect the other significant emitters to follow.

Thank you.