

# Climate Change



## Climate Change – Talking Points & Takeaways

**National security leaders have identified climate change as a security threat.** The Department of Defense, the CIA, the National Intelligence Council, and the State Department all agree: climate change poses a threat to US national security.

**Climate Change is a threat multiplier.** Climate change causes droughts, floods, and famines, destabilizing weak nations. The US military may have to help prop up countries hit by greater tornados and other disasters, or step in to help with refugee crises. Meanwhile, unrest and refugee flight creates safe havens and breeding grounds for terrorist groups.

**“Climate change will provide the conditions that will extend the war on terror,”** Admiral Joseph T. Lopez, US Navy (Ret.)

**The military is leading the charge to combat climate change.** The military gets the seriousness of the threat, and has developed plans to move away from dirty fossil fuels and create alternative fuels for ships, vehicles, planes, and buildings. The Navy intends to launch the “Great Green Fleet,” a strike group fueled completely by alternative fuels, by 2016.

**Operation Free – Veterans Make the Security Case to Tackle Climate Change.** Operation Free is a coalition of national security and veterans groups working to tell the American public that climate change and dependence on oil threaten America's security. It's time to fight those threats with clean energy and put America in control of its energy future ([www.operationfree.net](http://www.operationfree.net)).

## US Security Agencies Agree: Climate Change is a Security Threat



**Department of Defense:** "Climate change and energy are two key issues that will play a significant role in shaping the future security environment...Climate change will contribute to food and water scarcity, will increase the spread of disease, and may spur or exacerbate mass migration. While climate change alone does not cause conflict, it may act as an accelerant of instability or conflict, placing a burden to respond on...militaries around the world," 2010.



**Central Intelligence Agency:** "The Central Intelligence Agency is launching The Center on Climate Change and National Security...Its charter is not the science of climate change, but the national security impact of phenomena such as desertification, rising sea levels, population shifts, and heightened competition for natural resources," 2009.



**National Intelligence Council:** "Climate change will have wide-ranging implications for US national security interests over the next 20 years...We judge that the most significant impact for the United States will be indirect and result from climate-driven effects on many other countries and their potential to seriously affect US national security interests," 2008.

## So do Military and Foreign Policy Leaders



**State Department:** "American leadership is essential to meeting the challenges of the 21st century. And chief among those is the complex, urgent, and global threat of climate change. From rapidly rising temperatures to melting arctic icecaps, from lower crop yields to dying forests, from unforgiving hurricanes to unrelenting droughts, we have no shortage of evidence that our world is facing a climate crisis," 2009.



**American Security Project:** "Addressing the consequences of changes in the Earth's climate is not simply about saving polar bears or preserving the beauty of mountain glaciers, important as those are. Climate change is a threat to our national security. Taking it head on is about preserving our way of life," 2009.

- **Vice Admiral Lee Gunn (US Navy, Retired)**



**The CNA Corporation:** "Climate change will provide the conditions that will extend the war on terror," 2007; "The more instability increases, the more pressure there will be to use our military. That's the issue with climate change," 2009. - **Military Advisory Board of 11 retired Generals and Admirals**

## Veterans are Speaking Across America to Educate the Public on the Security Threat of Climate Change



**Operation Free** is a coalition of veterans and national security groups who recognize that climate change is a major national security threat, and that America's dependence on oil is making the United States less safe.

As part of Operation Free, hundreds of veterans around the United States have appeared in the media, met with their elected leaders in Washington, and spread the word about the need for America to take control of its energy future by passing comprehensive legislation that will break our dependence on oil and develop clean energy.

To learn more about Operation Free or contact Operation Free veterans, please visit [www.operationfree.net](http://www.operationfree.net) or contact Matt Oberhoffner at [matto@trumanproject.org](mailto:matto@trumanproject.org).

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## Q: How Does Climate Change Affect Security?

**ANSWER: Rising Sea Levels.** Climate change has already led to rising sea levels around the world. Millions who live along coastlines will have to flee their homes, creating unstable populations in nations such as Bangladesh where extremists can hide and recruit. The rising waters are also taking a toll on critical US military installations.



- India recently constructed a 2,500-mile wall on its border with Bangladesh, partly in order to stem the tide of expected "climate refugees" – individuals who flee rising sea levels or tropical storms. Jihadists found safe haven there after the US invasion of Afghanistan, and intelligence analysts have identified it as a potential new base of operations for terrorist organizations. Restive, vulnerable populations would make that threat worse.
- By 2050 as many as 200 million people may become permanent climate refugees, moving within and across borders in search of sustenance.
- Diego Garcia, a small island in the Indian Ocean, is a major logistics hub for the US military. Its highest point is only a few feet above sea level. As sea levels rise, the base will either be lost or have to be relocated.

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## Q: How Does Climate Change Affect Security?

**ANSWER: Natural Disasters.** Climate change increases the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina. This causes humanitarian catastrophes that the US military must often respond to, which costs time and money. Just as rising sea levels can cause migrations and unstable populations where extremists can hide and recruit, so too can natural disasters.



- When Indonesia was hit by a massive tsunami in 2004, the US military responded with ships, planes, logistical aid, and medical supplies. It cost \$5 million per day.
- Hurricane Katrina cost nearly 2,000 lives and more than \$80 billion. It also did millions of dollars of damage to Pascagoula Naval Base in Mississippi.



- By 2005, more than 300 million people around the world were affected by climate-related disasters such as the tsunami in Indonesia – up from 70 million in 1980.
- Cyclone Aila made 750,000 Bangladeshis homeless in May 2009.

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## Q: How Does Climate Change Affect Security?

**ANSWER: Climate change is a threat multiplier that increases the likelihood of conflict in unstable parts of the world.** Climate change causes heat that prompts droughts, hurts crops, and melts glaciers that act as critical water supplies; those are things that can cause people to fight. The ensuing conflicts could come back to haunt the US in the form of weak or failed states.



- Drought in Darfur reduced grazing and farm land, leading to conflicts between nomads and farmers. Compounded by ethnic and religious differences, the conflict has erupted into a genocide that has claimed at least 300,000 lives. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda – which killed 800,000 – was also exacerbated by conflicts over agricultural resources.



- Al Qaeda and other extremist groups are already looking to exploit food shortages and instability in the Horn of Africa, while 36 countries with a combined population of 1.4 billion people could face shortages of water and cropland by 2025.
- Millions rely on glaciers for freshwater supplies, but many of them are likely to disappear within the next few decades. Anywhere between 7 million and 77 million people in Latin America could soon be faced with water shortages. That would likely increase migratory pressure on US borders.

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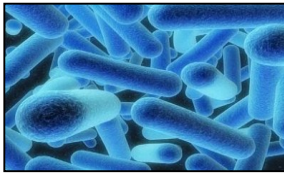
## Q: How Does Climate Change Affect Security?

**ANSWER: Increased Disease.** Changing weather patterns are spreading the conditions in which deadly tropical diseases thrive, while hotter temperatures pose a threat to more vulnerable parts of the population, such as the elderly. Deadly diseases do not stop at our borders and, once here, are very hard to eradicate.



- Diseases that are expected to proliferate as temperatures increase include malaria, dengue fever, cholera, and West Nile Virus.

- Climate change means that events such as Europe's 2003 heat wave, which killed 35,000, will become more prevalent.



- The World Health Organization estimates that modest climate changes between the mid-1970s and 2000 caused an annual loss of over 150,000 lives throughout the world.

## The United States & Climate Change



**Clinton Administration.** During the 1990s, the Clinton administration signed the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement designed to curb greenhouse gas emissions. However, in 1997 the Senate passed the "Byrd-Hagel" resolution by a margin of 95-0. The resolution expressed the "sense of the Senate" that the US should not sign any international agreement that did not bind developing countries to specific reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The Kyoto Protocol was never introduced to the Senate for ratification.



**Bush Administration.** President George W. Bush entered office as a skeptic of climate change science. During his second term, he recognized the reality of climate change, but did little to address it as a serious issue. In fact, his EPA prevented states from taking action on their own, blocking California and sixteen other states that wished to reduce their emissions requirements. His administration also neglected to play a serious role in organizing a follow-up treaty to the Kyoto Protocol, which is set to expire in 2012.

## The United States & Climate Change



**Obama administration** has identified climate change as a threat to national and international security. To meet the threat, the administration has worked with Congress to develop domestic legislation, and is also spearheading international negotiations to create a global treaty to combat climate change.

**The House of Representatives** passed the American Clean Energy and Security Act (ACES) in summer 2009. ACES would institute a “cap and trade” system that would put limits on greenhouse gas emissions and create incentives for the production of clean energy technologies.

**The Senate** is currently working on its own version of comprehensive energy and climate change legislation. Leaders of the effort cross parties: John Kerry (D-MA), Joseph Lieberman (I-CT), and Lindsay Graham (R-SC).

**Copenhagen Climate Accord.** During the Copenhagen Climate Summit in December 2009, President Obama made a major push to help create the “Copenhagen Climate Accord.” The accord creates a framework for a final international agreement. The accord calls on developed and developing nations to set limits on greenhouse gas emissions and pledges “adaptation” funding to poorer nations that will be the hardest hit by climate change. Over 100 countries signed the agreement, including China and India.

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## Domestic Energy & Climate Legislation

**The Objectives.** Advocates of comprehensive energy and climate legislation have several goals. They seek to create a market-based system that will: create jobs, revive America’s manufacturing base, improve air quality, reduce America’s dependence on oil, help consumers adjust to a low-carbon economy, and make the United States the world leader in clean energy technologies such as wind and solar power.



**The Sticking Points.** Opponents of comprehensive energy and climate legislation have two major critiques. First, many doubt that climate change exists, or is exacerbated by humans, in the first place, and so they see no reason to pass legislation to affect it. Second, critics insist that current legislative proposals will harm the economy by increasing the size of government, increasing the cost of electricity, and essentially levying a tax on the American people. They discount the national security impact of our oil addiction.

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## International Climate Change Negotiations

**The Objectives.** More than 100 nations have signed onto the “Copenhagen Climate Accord.” The accord sets a goal of capping global temperature rise at 2 degrees Celsius, and states that developing and developed nations alike must do their part to combat climate change by setting specific, binding goals. The accord is meant to set the state for a final international agreement, which many hope will be negotiated at the Mexico Climate Summit in late 2010.

**The Sticking Points.** The biggest divide exists between developed and developing nations. Developed nations (such as the US and European nations) are responsible for most past greenhouse gas emissions, while developing nations (such as China) are today’s biggest carbon polluters. Both sides fear that if only one side commits to cutting carbon, the other side will have an unfair economic advantage by being able to pollute.

**Developing nations** believe they should have the right to improve their economies and should not have to pay for the pollution that developed nations have already caused. Since many developing nations will suffer the effects of climate change, they also believe that developed countries should provide “adaptation” funding to deal with those effects.

**Developed countries** are reluctant to provide large sums of funding to developing nations such as China. Since nations such as China and India are becoming the world’s top polluters, developed nations also believe that developing nations must commit to binding reductions.



## Climate Change – Sources

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