

**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF  
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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT  
AND PUBLIC WORKS  
ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

**JULY 30, 2009**

Chairman Boxer, Ranking Member Inhofe, Members of the Committee, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am honored to appear here today with this distinguished panel to discuss the incredibly important issue of climate change and national security. I am the Chief Operating Officer of the Truman National Security Project whose mission is to recruit, train, and position a new generation of progressives to lead on national security. The Truman Project is currently working to raise awareness of the connections between climate change and national security. As a former US Army Captain and Iraq veteran, I understand first hand the challenges our national security apparatus will face when dealing with this growing threat. It is important that the American public understands the threat and ensures our leaders both address the challenge and use our international leadership to set the standards for others to follow.

Over the course of my time in the military I learned incredibly valuable lessons in situations that ranged from running training exercises in garrison to patrolling the streets of Baghdad. I believe the most important piece of advice I received was when I first met my soldiers as I arrived to my unit fresh out of Officer Basic. My well seasoned and experienced platoon sergeant grabbed me by my lapels and dragged me around to the side of the motor pool to provide me words of wisdom I will never forget.

He said, "Sir, there are two types of leaders in the military, those who lead by rank and those who lead by example. The soldiers will follow those who outrank them, but a true leader sets the example and sets the standards for all to follow."

When it comes to climate change, we as a nation have been trying to lead by rank for too long. It is time we begin to lead by example. America is at a critical point, and our security relies heavily on how we address this growing threat.

A recent report from the Center for New American Security<sup>i</sup> rightly points out that "Climate change... may not be a threat that soldiers can attack and defeat, but it is likely to affect the safety and prosperity of every American, both through its effects on global stability and on our local environments."

The threat to global stability is both serious and urgent. Changes to our air and sea temperatures are expected to result in increases in frequency and intensity of both storms and droughts, and decrease the availability of drinking water around the globe.

So how does this changing physical environment affect our national security?

I believe it is important to note that the threats to national security created by climate change are not abstracts – we have actually seen them firsthand. For example, when Indonesia was hit by a massive tsunami in December 2004, the U.S. military responded with logistics aid, ships, planes, and helicopters to establish a rapid supply chain to stricken regions. At a price tag of \$5 million per day<sup>ii</sup>, only the U.S. military had the capacity to respond so quickly to a disaster of such magnitude. If the intensity and occurrence of such storms increase, the demand for the United States to respond to such events will increase in turn. With America's military overstretched in Iraq and Afghanistan, this will seriously tax U.S. resources.

Many Americans might ask how these actions affect our national security. Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim country, and U.S. efforts after the tsunami dramatically improved the image of the U.S. in the eyes of Indonesians. This is a major accomplishment in America's fight against Islamic extremism.

Then there are the dangers of increased drought and decreased drinking water. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Lake Chad, formerly one of Africa's largest freshwater sources, is shrinking to 5% of its original volume.<sup>iii</sup> The fight over the scarcity of resources such as water is happening in already destabilized or fragile states, such as the Sudan or Somalia. As a result, these nations become targeted by extremist groups looking to take advantage of failing governments.

It should be no surprise then that a recent National Intelligence Assessment judged that "sub-Saharan Africa will continue to be the most vulnerable region to climate change because of multiple environmental, economic, political, and social stresses."<sup>iv</sup>

Climate change will also hit us here at home. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that Latin America will see 50% of agricultural lands undergo desertification and salinization in less than 50 years.<sup>v</sup> You can imagine what this will do to immigration challenges here in North America.

Whatever damage is done, is already done. But if we wish to fight climate change, and prevent any further damage to our security then we must attack the problem at its source - fossil fuels. There is little doubt that America's reliance on oil is an Achilles heel that our enemies deliberately use against us. It is imperative that we develop energy alternatives that will protect us against this threat.

Al Qaeda has called on its supporters to attack oil facilities and infrastructure throughout the Middle East. As a result, the number of attacks increased from less than 50 a year, before September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, to 344 by 2006.<sup>vi</sup>

The economic and security costs of our oil addiction are overwhelming and we must reduce our dependence.

First, we are propping up the economies of some rather unsavory regimes. A Truman Project Security Fellow conducted an analysis on the impact that increases to crude oil prices have on the gross revenue streams of certain nations based on BP's 2008 production estimates. The Truman Fellow found that for every \$5 rise in the price of a barrel of crude oil Putin's Russia receives more than \$18 billion annually, Ahmadinejad's Iran an additional \$7.9 billion annually, and Chavez's Venezuela an additional \$4.7 billion annually.

Are these countries where we want to be sending our nation's treasure?

Second, we are depleting our own financial resources. Our Department of Defense (DoD) is the largest energy consumer in the nation, and our nation is the largest energy consumer in the world. According to the CNA's most recent report,<sup>vii</sup> a \$10 per barrel rise in the price of oil will cost DoD over \$1.3 Billion dollars annually. That is more than the entire procurement budget for our Marines.

With the price of oil doubling from nearly \$30 in December to approximately \$65 today, you can see this has a tremendous impact. It impacts both our military's bottom line and our nation's economic security.

Goldman Sachs' predicts that by 2010 crude oil will hit \$100 per barrel, and McKinsey is estimating that we will have a sharp increase between 2010 and 2013.<sup>viii</sup> Those prices will be troubling to our economy as we struggle to recover from what many have referred to as some of the most challenging economic times since the Great Depression.

Many economic experts and political leaders worldwide are beginning to suggest that the continued rise in oil prices may cause a "double dip" recession. JP Morgan recently warned in a memo that "we can argue whether it is \$75 or \$100 a barrel that will start to impact economic growth, but it will happen,"<sup>ix</sup>

Some of our closest allies are concerned about this "double dipping." For example, British Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair Darling warned in June that oil prices have "the potential to be a huge problem as far as the recovery is concerned."<sup>x</sup>

OPEC's leadership has the ability to help relieve this economic stress, but do we want to leave our national security in their hands?

I believe the American people want Washington to take our security in our own hands and reestablish policies that will seriously and urgently reduce the threat of climate change.

The economic challenges that we currently face as a nation provide the incentive to halt the funneling of billions of dollars overseas. We have the opportunity to reduce our dependence on oil by providing clean energy incentives. This will allow our recovering economy to focus its investments in clean, domestic, cheap, and safe energy.

This committee will play a critical role in once again establishing America as a nation that leads by example. It is vitally important that you develop domestic legislation that will protect our environment and ensure our national security. We can only accomplish this by reducing greenhouse gases, providing clean energy incentives, freeing us from foreign dependence, and growing our economy.

We obviously have a major task ahead of us. But then again, so did the generation that lived up to President John F. Kennedy's call to put a man on the moon and answer the security threat of its era. And as we celebrate the recent anniversary of the lunar landing, I believe President Kennedy's word still ring true for today's security challenge.

We choose to address these challenges "not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win."

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<sup>i</sup> CNAS working paper on "Natural Security" (June 2009) <http://www.cnas.org/naturalsecurity>

<sup>ii</sup> US State Department report on "Going the Distance: The U.S. Tsunami Relief Effort 2005" <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/dod147/dod147.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Nature Reports Climate Change "Is this what the world's coming to?" (October 2007) <http://www.nature.com/climate/2007/0710/full/climate.2007.56.html>

<sup>iv</sup> House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming Testimony by Dr Thomas Fingar on "National Intelligence Assessment on the National Security Implications of Global Climate Change to 2030" (June 2008)

<sup>v</sup> IPCC report on Climate Change 2007: Climate Change Impacts, Adaption and Vulnerability, IPCC 2007 [http://www.ipcc.ch/publications\\_and\\_data/publications\\_ipcc\\_fourth\\_assessment\\_report\\_wg2\\_report\\_impacts\\_adaptation\\_and\\_vulnerability.htm](http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/publications_ipcc_fourth_assessment_report_wg2_report_impacts_adaptation_and_vulnerability.htm)

<sup>vi</sup> Oil and Gas Terrorism Monitor report [http://www.ogi-tm.com/ogi\\_threats\\_st.php](http://www.ogi-tm.com/ogi_threats_st.php)

<sup>vii</sup> CNA Report on "Powering America's Defense: Energy and the Risks to National Security" (May 2009) <http://www.cna.org/documents/PoweringAmericasDefense.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> Plumer, Bradford "Peril at the Pump," *Foreign Policy* (June 2009) <http://www.cnas.org/naturalsecurity>

<sup>ix</sup> Swartz, Spencer, "Rising Oil Prices Risks Snuffing Out Recovery," *The Wall Street Journal* (June 2009) <http://blogs.wsj.com/environmentalcapital/2009/06/12/rising-oil-price-risks-snuffing-out-recovery/>

<sup>x</sup> Swartz, Spencer, "Rising Oil Prices Risks Snuffing Out Recovery," *The Wall Street Journal* (June 2009) <http://blogs.wsj.com/environmentalcapital/2009/06/12/rising-oil-price-risks-snuffing-out-recovery/>