

**Chair McCollum – Opening Statement
Subcommittee on Defense
Climate Change, National Security, and the Arctic
March 17, 2021**

Last month the subcommittee held a hearing on budget trends and potential trajectories of defense spending in the next 10-20 years.

As I mentioned then, I want the subcommittee to use our time before we receive the FY 2022 budget request to think about larger themes and what priorities we want to direct funds toward in the upcoming budget cycle to address future challenges.

This is another hearing in that series.

This morning the subcommittee will receive testimony from two of the foremost experts on the subject of climate change and national security:

- Sherri Goodman, a senior fellow with the Polar Institute and Environmental Change and Security Program at the Wilson Center; and
- Retired Vice Admiral Dennis McGinn, an advisory board member of the Center for Climate and Security.

We look forward to their testimony.

There can be no doubt that our climate is changing, and the Department of Defense and the entire federal government must be prepared or suffer the consequences.

In the last few years we have seen historic hurricanes cause catastrophic damage to Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida, and Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

These hurricanes seriously impacted Air Force and Marine Corps operations and cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

In 2019, historic Mississippi River floodwater overflowed into Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, posing a threat to US Strategic Command operations.

These are not isolated climate incidents – climate change is a national security threat to our nation now and the threat is growing.

As the largest federal consumer of energy, the Department of Defense

has a responsibility to play a leading role in making its systems more efficient and curb emissions in order to reduce catastrophic events.

That is why I am pleased that in his first week in office, President Biden signed executive order 14008, which requires:

- the Director of National Intelligence to issue a report on the national and economic security impacts of climate change;
- the Secretary of Defense to develop a Climate Risk Analysis that can be incorporated into modeling, simulation, war-gaming, and other analyses; and
- the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to consider the security implications of climate change in developing the National Defense Strategy, the Defense Planning Guidance, the Chairman's Risk Assessment, and other relevant strategy, planning, and programming documents.

These actions are long overdue, and I thank President Biden for leading on this critical issue.

The changing climate will impact every corner of the earth, and nowhere is it more pronounced than the Arctic.

As a former social studies teacher, I can say that thanks to the widespread use of Mercator projection maps, many Americans don't realize that the United States is an Arctic nation.

We must ensure that the Arctic region plays an appropriate role in our national security planning.

Our adversaries are active in the region.

We must be ready to respond – from issues related to thawing permafrost affecting installations or our ability to train and use equipment that can survive extreme environments.

And we must ensure the freedom of navigation through the Bering Strait.

These are just some of the important topics to discuss.

With that, I thank everyone for participating in today's hearing, and I would like to recognize our distinguished ranking member, Mr. Calvert for his comments.