

TESTIMONY OF CHUCK HAGEL  
FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND U.S. SENATOR  
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Chairman Cummings, Ranking Member Jordan, members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify here today about the threats posed by climate change to our national security.

I'm proud to be sitting next to my friend and former Senate and Cabinet colleague, Secretary John Kerry. We've shared many conversations about this issue over the years. We are both founding members of the American Security Project, an organization that has led research into the national security implications of climate change.

In my public career, both in the Senate and at the Department of Defense, preparing for climate change was an important part of my work. In 1997, the Senate passed the Byrd-Hagel Resolution, which laid out the conditions for Senate support of an international agreement on carbon emissions. Later that year I led the Senate delegation to the Kyoto negotiations where John was a member of the delegation.

In 2005, I was the author of the climate title to the Energy Policy Act, creating the Department of Energy Loan Guarantee program and the international Clean Energy Ministerial meeting.

In 2007, I led the effort to require a National Intelligence Assessment of the security impacts of climate change.

As Secretary of Defense, I issued the Department's first Arctic Strategy in 2013, highlighting how the military would respond to melting ice and other challenges, as well as the Department's first Climate Adaptation Roadmap, detailing how to prepare for climate change.

I supported the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement because it met the requirements of the Byrd-Hagel resolution, ensuring that all nations take measurable, reportable, and verifiable steps to reduce their emissions.

While climate science rapidly advanced over my decades in public service, my priorities remained the same: any actions to address climate change must protect America's economy, environment, and our national security.

My views were always informed by science. As scientists reduced uncertainty about climate change over the last two decades, it became clear that the U.S. must implement policies to address the challenge – because climate change is threatening our economy, the environment, and our national security.

Dating back to the George H.W. Bush Administration in 1992, intelligence and national security professionals were telling us that climate change posed a direct threat to U.S. national security. This work has been informed by U.S. scientists telling us that a melting Arctic, more frequent droughts and floods, and extreme weather are all examples of the changing climate in the United States and the world.

Changing weather patterns threaten our national security through its impacts on military infrastructure, disaster response, and the economy.

We now don't need to wait for more sophisticated climate models to project the security consequences of climate change. The impacts of climate change are clearly evident today.

As members on this committee know, this past year's extreme weather has seriously affected our military readiness. In September, Hurricane Florence decimated Camp Lejeune and caused damage to Fort Bragg and military installations across North Carolina.

A few weeks later, Hurricane Michael leveled Tyndall Air Force Base on Florida's Panhandle, causing damage to 17 F-22 stealth fighters and major structural damage throughout the base.

Last month, floods in my home state of Nebraska severely damaged the runway and infrastructure at Offutt Air Force Base, home of U.S. Strategic Command.

As a Nebraskan, spring floods surprise no one back home. However, these floods were far more extreme than anything we've seen. We saw record setting flooding along the Missouri, Platte, and Elkhorn rivers and across the Midwest.

Estimates of the cost of these disasters to the military are significant. The Marines have requested \$3.6 billion to rebuild their North Carolina operations, while the Air Force has requested an initial \$5 billion for Tyndall and Offutt.

While the bases may rebuild over time, the loss of training and readiness cannot be recovered. In a February letter to the Secretary of the Navy, General Neller, Commandant of the Marine Corps, wrote that because of the damage from the storms, *"The combat readiness of Marine Expeditionary Force – 1/3 the combat power of the Marine Corps – is degraded and will continue to degrade."*

I will close by addressing the proposal by the White House to question the science behind the national security estimate on climate change. We still do not know the details of what the proposal before the National Security Council would do. Press reports have indicated that National Security Advisor Bolton wants to create a panel that would re-examine whether climate change is indeed a threat to security.

If this panel were created in good faith, under the legal requirements of a federal advisory committee, I am confident that the weight of scientific evidence and present day realities would confirm what I and other national security leaders have found: climate change is a real and present threat to our national security which most likely will get worse.

That is why I signed a letter, along with Secretary Kerry and 56 other senior national security officials, asking that the President not “dispute and undermine military and intelligence judgements on climate change.” I ask that a copy of that letter be included in the record.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.

