

Testimony by Senator John Warner (Retired)

Senate Foreign Relations Committee

July 21, 2009

Senator Kerry, Senator Lugar, members of this Committee, many of my longtime friends and colleagues, thank you for the invitation to provide this important committee with my thoughts on the pressing issues of a new energy future, global climate change, and the potential consequences to national security, of not only the United States, but the security of nations worldwide.

Since retiring from the Congress on January 3rd, I have been fortunate to join, as a partner, the firm Hogan and Hartson, where I started my legal career many years ago. I

am honored to be working with the Pew Charitable Trusts on The Pew Project on National Security, Energy and Climate. However, today, the views that I offer are mine alone.

The Pew Project brings together science and military experts to examine new strategies for combating climate change, protecting our national security, increasing our energy independence and preserving our nation's natural resources. Pew provides this information and outreach to the general public.

I spent thirty years in the U.S. Senate working on behalf of our men and women in uniform serving our country; in my last years, on issues related to the potential impact of

climate changes on their future military roles and missions. Leading military, intelligence, and security experts have publically spoken out that if left unchecked, global warming could increase instability and lead to conflict in already fragile regions of the world.

If we ignore these facts, we do so at the peril of our national security and increase the risk to those in uniform who serve our nation. It is for this reason that I firmly believe the U.S. must take a leadership role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Other nations are moving ahead and the U.S. must join and step to the forefront.

With the Pew Project, I am working with state and municipal governments, the Administration, local

organizations, and military, security and climate experts in the U.S. to address the climate-energy- national security nexus. And I hope this work will educate the American public on these potential risks to our national security posed by global climate change.

Just last week, the Pew Project went to Missouri where we held two fora, one in St. Louis and one in Kansas City, examining the link between national security, energy and climate change. Tomorrow, I travel with the Pew Project to Charleston, South Carolina for similar events, and later in the summer and early in the fall, we are slated to visit the states of Michigan, Virginia, and Indiana. Your witness today, retired Vice Admiral Dennis McGinn travels with me and is a most articulate, credible spokesman on the

threats climate change and our energy policies pose to national security.

In my 30 years in the U.S. Senate, I have not seen an issue as complicated as the challenges posed by national security, energy and climate change.

As the Committee well knows, in the last Congress, I was privileged to work with an extraordinarily capable legislator, Senator Joe Lieberman -- and with the Chairman and members of the Senate Environment Committee -- to produce the only climate change bill to reach the Senate floor.

Even before I teamed up with Senator Lieberman, this

issue had my attention. I was privileged to serve for many years as the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. In 2007, I was pleased, as a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, to co-sponsor with then-Senator, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, a provision in the Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Reauthorization bill that would require the Department of Defense to consider the effects of climate change on department facilities, capabilities, and missions. This provision, signed into law, requires future periodic revisions of long-range national strategic plans to take account of the impact on U.S. interests of global climate change.ⁱ

Secretary Clinton and I included this language in the

annual defense bill because we recognized at that time the strategic, social, political and economic consequences climate change could have on political instability in parts of the world.

Accordingly, I firmly believe that the challenge before us is to build a foundation resting on three legs: energy, climate change and national security. Eventual success requires all three legs to remain equally strong.

I want to credit the many national security experts who have expressed their concerns, which I share. Many senior retired officers, from all branches of our services, including my friend and thought partner, Vice Admiral Dennis McGinn, have come forward and joined in the public

debate, expressing clearly their views in support of action on climate change.

One extraordinary soldier, the former Chief of Staff of the United States Army, General Gordon Sullivan, who chaired the Military Advisory Board of the Center for Naval Analysis, succinctly framed what we face: “The Cold War was a specter, but climate change is inevitable. If we keep on with business as usual, we will reach a point where some of the worst effects are inevitable... back then, the challenge was to stop a particular action. Now the challenge is to inspire a particular action. We have to act if we are to avoid the worst effects.”

Today our nation and much of the world is in the grips of an economic crisis without precedent. The brave men and women of our armed forces and that of other nations are engaged in two wars. Understandably there is a measure of legitimate fear in our hearts as to whether we should undertake at this time such an enormous and uncertain challenge as posed by the issues before us in this hearing. But I say, in the spirit of the generations, which showed the courage to find solutions to move our country forward, that it is our duty to replace fear with confidence.

We as a nation can do it again, provided we come up with sound solutions, solutions that can be understood and made acceptable to the American people. This is for the benefit of their children and grandchildren.

Our President has shown courage and committed to work with the Congress on this matter, and I hope the resulting legislation will rest on the tripod that I have described.

Such action will lay the groundwork for the U.S. to go to Copenhagen in December as a leader.

When I testified before the House Energy and Commerce Committee earlier this year, I suggested that climate legislation should incorporate a specific role -- equal to other departments and agencies -- to the Department of Defense and the Intelligence Agencies. They bring to this issue a very different and critical perspective, but also vast knowledge and resources to get this job done.

Looking back, we should have included such language in the Lieberman-Warner bill. We could have garnered more support. A reasonable objective analysis of polling data today shows that the American public is motivated toward action on climate change by the likelihood that more jobs will be created and our national security strengthened.

To be specific, in the arena of national security, one of the most critical components is maintaining stability in the world.

Many factors can lead to instability. To name a few associated with global climate change: severe droughts, excessive sea level rise, erratic storm behavior,

deteriorating glaciers, pestilence, shift in agriculture ranges.

These factors can result in water wars, crop failures, famine, disease, mass migration of people across borders, and destruction of vital infrastructure, all of which can further lead to failed nations, rise in extremist behavior, and increased threat of terrorism. Much of this is likely to happen in areas of the world that are already on the brink of instability. In other words, climate change is a “threat multiplier” making worse the problems that already exist.

Global climate change has the potential, if left unchecked, of adding missions to the already heavy burdens of our

military and other elements of our nation's overall national security.

To the extent we can plan today how best to minimize these contingent disasters means, the less we may have to call upon our armed forces tomorrow.

Whose military is best equipped, most capable to help with the evacuation of distressed areas? Who is going to be called upon to intervene in such humanitarian disasters? The United States military will be called to action. Such action will not only bear financial costs to our military, and thus our taxpayers, it will divert resources and troops from other areas of the world.

For those volatile nations that are not capable of dealing with the pressures of climate change, governments can fail and extremism and terrorism can fill the void.

In 2007, the Military Advisory Board (MAB) of the Center for Naval Analysis, a non-profit think tank, issued a report titled “National Security and the Threat of Climate Change.” The MAB is comprised of many of the most distinguished and highest ranking retired military leaders in the United States. They made several of the conclusions I have shared with you in today’s remarks. To quote from that report, in the words of Admiral T. Joseph Lopez, USN (Ret.), “You have very real changes in natural systems that are most likely to happen in regions of the world that are already fertile ground for extremism.”

Delaying action on global climate change will exacerbate these threat multiplying effects and will cost the U.S. more in the long run. The difference is that these later costs will not only be economic; there will be a human cost.

On the battlefield, we never wait until we have 100 percent certainty or wait for the conditions to be 100 percent ideal. We have to act when we have enough information to act. And I think the information we have is clear.

Again, I emphasize, the U.S. cannot and should not wait for other countries to take the lead. Certainly it is our desire to have all nations commit to economy-wide emissions

targets; however, that policy may not be practical at this time. This reality must NOT be a basis for delaying the U.S. from stepping forward to take a greater leadership role.

Our international position must be to encourage developing nations to adopt a framework of policy commitments for a national program. These commitments could include sustainable forestry, renewable energy, and other programs that achieve emission reductions.

There is a critical role for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in the development of our domestic legislative program and our international leadership role toward crafting an international treaty.

To foster early international participation, our domestic climate change program must provide for robust international offsets. Until advanced technologies become commercially available, we must take advantage of low-cost, readily available emission reduction opportunities wherever they are, which today often means in other countries.

International offsets provide the best chance to slow tropical deforestation and are a critical component of our domestic challenge to reduce compliance costs. Analysis from EPA and in non-governmental analysis shows domestic compliance costs are dramatically reduced with the availability of international offsets. By purchasing emission reductions made abroad, U.S. companies save

money, save jobs, and foster critical relationships in developing nations.

Climate change is a global problem that demands a global solution. But the U.S. is uniquely positioned to be a strong leader in the effort to reduce greenhouse gases, while also putting safeguards in place to protect our economy, jobs, and national security.

Thank you.

ⁱ Public Law 110-181, SEC. 951. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CONSIDERATION OF EFFECT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON DEPARTMENT FACILITIES, CAPABILITIES, AND MISSIONS.

(a) Consideration of Climate Change Effect- Section 118 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

(g) Consideration of Effect of Climate Change on Department Facilities, Capabilities, and Missions- (1) The first national security strategy and national defense strategy prepared after the date of the enactment of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 shall include guidance for military planners--

`(A) to assess the risks of projected climate change to current and future missions of the armed forces;

`(B) to update defense plans based on these assessments, including working with allies and partners to incorporate climate mitigation strategies, capacity building, and relevant research and development; and

`(C) to develop the capabilities needed to reduce future impacts.

`(2) The first quadrennial defense review prepared after the date of the enactment of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 shall also examine the capabilities of the armed forces to respond to the consequences of climate change, in particular, preparedness for natural disasters from extreme weather events and other missions the armed forces may be asked to support inside the United States and overseas.

`(3) For planning purposes to comply with the requirements of this subsection, the Secretary of Defense shall use--

`(A) the mid-range projections of the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change;

`(B) subsequent mid-range consensus climate projections if more recent information is available when the next national security strategy, national defense strategy, or quadrennial defense review, as the case may be, is conducted; and

`(C) findings of appropriate and available estimations or studies of the anticipated strategic, social, political, and economic effects of global climate change and the implications of such effects on the national security of the United States.

`(4) In this subsection, the term `national security strategy' means the annual national security strategy report of the President under section 108 of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 404a).'

(b) Implementation- The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that subsection (g) of section 118 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), is implemented in a manner that does not have a negative impact on the national security of the **United States**.