

## **Testimony: Climate Change and the Threat to National Security**

Good Afternoon. My name is Hal Bidlack and I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Protection Agency's "Clean Power Plan" proposed rule. I am not a regulatory expert, so I will not comment on the specifics of the rule, but I do support the EPA for its ambition and goals. I appear today before you as a private individual. I am speaking only for myself and not for my employer or any other organization or entity.

I was honored to spend over 25 years in uniform, retiring from the United States Air Force as a Lt Colonel in 2006. I hold a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, where my research focused on environmental security. While on temporary duty to the National Security Council, I worked on climate change issues, and in 1997 was the author of the first draft of the DOD statement on the impact of climate change on US national security. I also taught environmental security while on the faculty of the US Air Force Academy.

I began my military career as a missile launch officer, one of the "finger on the button" people at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming. My service in the Air Force taught me that we cannot

wait to address looming threats. Then it was our adversaries in the Cold War. Now we face a gauntlet of threats to national security that range from extremists in non-state actors to traditional warfare, dangerous civil wars and beyond.

I believe that climate change represents a clear and present danger to US national security.

For far too long, far too many of America's leaders have failed to address the challenges of climate change. This failure of leadership means that we are behind in addressing this problem.

The military increasingly understands the true nature of this threat. The DOD, in the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review, noted the direct threat climate change creates for future military planning, training, and operations.

I believe climate change creates three distinct challenges for the Pentagon.

First, climate change is a global "threat multiplier." That means it will make already existing problems worse and more dangerous.

The effects of climate change around the world will cause resources like food, water, and energy to become more scarce as the effects of climate change worsen; states will seek to secure resources for their own populations at the expense of

neighbors. While conflict is not inevitable, it is possible, indeed, probable.

This is not just the future we are talking about. Extreme weather events are already demanding a military response. Over 13,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines from the USS George Washington's battle group responded when Typhoon Haiyan made landfall in the Philippines – and they saved lives.

Second, climate change will affect homeland security – and that is a growing military mission – where our active duty troops provide logistical aid, humanitarian relief, and law enforcement support to civilian authorities. In 2012, Active Duty and National Guard troops responded to New York and New Jersey after Hurricane Sandy. These types of operations are growing as extreme weather grows across the country. And the associated costs will continue to rise.

Incidentally, you don't have to go to the Arctic to see climate change occurring — it is happening here in Colorado. Climate change threatens the region's agriculture, water supply, tourism, and timber – the bedrocks of our economy.

Here in Colorado, warmer winters have already given invasive pests more time to destroy our forests. Annual precipitation has declined, and become more variable, leading to droughts and wildfires followed by torrents of rain and massive mudslides. The Waldo Canyon fire came within a quarter mile

of my house while consuming 346 homes, and the next year the Black Forest fire consumed 486 more, and both fires claimed lives. While no single weather event is proof of climate change, the evidence of unusual weather event after unusual weather event adds up to strong evidence that our climate is changing.

Third, climate change is a threat to our military bases at home and around the world. The United States military manages property in all 50 states, 7 U.S. territories and 40 foreign countries, comprising almost 300,000 individual buildings around the globe, valued at over \$600 billion dollars. Rising sea levels already are causing millions of dollars worth of damage to the Navy's coastal installations. But they're not alone: wildfires have caused evacuations this year at the Marine Corps' Camp Pendleton, while the Army has seen extreme rain events wash-out areas of the National Training Center at Fort Irwin. The military is adapting to these changes, but at a cost to taxpayers.

Reducing greenhouse gases while implementing measures to adapt to the effects of climate change is basic risk management. Military planners routinely operate under uncertainty and make decisions based on incomplete information. In 2001, Vice President Dick Cheney said that if there is only a 1% chance of a terrorist acquiring weapons of

mass destruction, we have to act. Today, when we have over 99% of scientific papers telling us that human emissions are causing climate change, why is it that we dismiss them? The cartoonist Bill Watterson once joked, "It's not denial. I'm just selective about the reality I accept." In a cartoon, that's funny. In policy making, it is foolish and dangerous.

If we fail in addressing climate change we know that our military will have to respond to more disasters more often, terrorists will have more recruits to draw from, and the world will see more conflicts over increasingly scarce resources, and ordinary Americans will pay the price for generations.

I support the proposed rule, and thank the EPA for this effort.