



May 8, 2017

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The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

As you affirmed during your confirmation hearings, climate change poses risks which must be addressed multilaterally, and it is important that the US remain engaged in conversations on how to minimize those risks.

As retired military and national security leaders, we know that climate change poses strategically significant risks to US national security, directly impacting our critical infrastructure and increasing the likelihood of humanitarian disasters, state failure, and conflict. The Department of Defense and the intelligence community have been aware of this “threat multiplier,” and taking actions to address it, since the early years of the George W. Bush Administration. However, addressing these security issues is going to primarily be a civilian-led exercise. As Secretary Mattis himself recently stated, “...climate change is a challenge that requires a broader, whole-of government response.” The State Department’s role in that whole of government response will be crucial in the days, months and years ahead.

That role involves acting as a leader on the issue among the international community – not least as that leadership can aid us in advancing our other vital security interests. This includes leadership in all important international forums where climate risks are being discussed and addressed.

Among these, the G7 is an important entity for driving practical climate risk management. The G7’s Climate Fragility Working Group’s analysis of instability risks and description of commensurate policy responses, as well as its coordination work to implement these policies within G7 governments, are particularly important given that they directly relate to our national security interests.

A strong signal in the communiqué that G7 governments are committed to maintaining agreements to address climate security risks would lay the foundation for a structured and deliberate response to the phenomenon, and its attendant impacts on the global security environment.

We are also supporting Secretary of Defense James Mattis’ leadership on addressing climate change risks, and encouraging him to work closely with you, and our partners and allies, to proactively get ahead of this challenge before it becomes unmanageable. We hope that you consider such a partnership as an important step in preparing the United States for this new geostrategic reality.

Respectfully,

THE CENTER FOR
CLIMATE AND
SECURITY

Admiral Frank L. “Skip” Bowman, US Navy (Ret)

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Admiral Sam J. Locklear III, US Navy (Ret)

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Former Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations and Environment

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Former Assistant Judge Advocate General, US Army

Brigadier General Stephen A. Cheney, US Marine Corps (Ret)

Former Inspector General, US Marine Corps

Brigadier General Gerald E Galloway, US Army (Ret)

Former Dean of Academic Board, US Military Academy at West Point

Rear Admiral Leendert “Len” Hering Sr., US Navy (Ret)

Former Commander, Navy Region Southwest

Rear Admiral Ann C. Phillips, US Navy (Ret)

Former Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group TWO

Rear Admiral David W Titley, PhD, US Navy (Ret)

Former Oceanographer of the Navy

Rear Admiral Jonathan White, US Navy (Ret)

Former Oceanographer of the Navy

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Former Deputy Director, Ranges, Sea, and Airspace (Readiness)

Captain James Goudreau, SC, US Navy (Ret)

Former Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Energy)

Colonel Thomas F. Watson, US Air Force (Ret)

Former Director, Infrastructure Coordination and Analysis Office, Department of Homeland Security

Colonel Lawrence B. Wilkerson, US Army (Ret)

Former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell

Cc: General James Mattis, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret), Secretary of Defense