

March 5, 2019

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you as former US national security leaders to offer our support to our uniformed military, civilian national security professionals, and members of the scientific community, who across the past four Administrations have found that climate change is a threat to US national security.

Climate change is real, it is happening now, it is driven by humans, and it is accelerating. The overwhelming majority of scientists agree: less than 0.2% of peer-reviewed climate science papers dispute these facts. In this context, we are deeply concerned by reports that National Security Council officials are considering forming a committee to dispute and undermine military and intelligence judgments on the threat posed by climate change. This includes second-guessing the scientific sources used to assess the threat, such as the rigorously peer-reviewed National Climate Assessment, and applying that to national security policy. Imposing a political test on reports issued by the science agencies, and forcing a blind spot onto the national security assessments that depend on them, will erode our national security.

It is dangerous to have national security analysis conform to politics. Our officials' job is to ensure that we are prepared for current threats and future contingencies. We cannot do that if the scientific studies that inform our threat assessments are undermined. Our national security community will not remain the best in the world if it cannot make decisions based on the best available evidence.

When extreme weather hits the United States, it degrades the fighting force. Just last year, Hurricane Florence caused \$3.6 billion in damages to Camp Lejeune, home of the Marines' expeditionary units on the East Coast. You called Florence "One of the biggest to ever hit our country." Stronger storms and storm surges have long featured in predictions about a changing climate. Around the world, climate change is a "threat multiplier" – making other security threats worse. Its effects are even used by our adversaries as a weapon of war; ISIS used water shortages in Iraq, in part driven by a changing climate, to cement their hold on the population during their reign of terror from 2014 to 2017.

We support the science-driven patriots in our national security community who have rightly seen addressing climate change as a threat reduction issue, not a political one, since 1989. We support the bipartisan finding of the US Congress, which you signed into law on December 2017, stating that "*climate change is a direct threat to the national security of the United States.*" We urge you to trust and heed the analysis of your own national security agencies and the science agencies on which their assessments depend, including the 21 senior defense officials that have identified climate change as a security threat during your Administration. A committee designed to undermine the many years of work they have done will weaken our ability to respond to real threats, putting American lives at risk.

Our climate will continue to change, and the threats will continue to grow. We spent our careers pledged to protect the United States from all threats, including this one. Let's drop the politics, and allow our national security and science agencies to do their jobs.

Sincerely,

**Hon. John Kerry**

Former Secretary of State

**Hon. Ray Mabus**

Former Secretary of the Navy

**General Gordon R. Sullivan, US Army (Ret)**

Former Chief of Staff of the US Army

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Former Commander, US Pacific Command

**Admiral James Stavridis, USN (Ret)**

Former Supreme Allied Commander Europe

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**Hon. David Goldwyn**

Former Assistant Secretary of Energy and Special Envoy for International Energy Affairs

**Hon. Miranda AA Ballentine**

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Former Chief of Staff, US Central Command

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Former Deputy Commander, US Strategic Command

**Lieutenant General Norm Seip, USAF (Ret)**

Former Commander, 12th Air Force

**Hon. Sherri Goodman**

Former Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Environmental Security)

**Hon. Chuck Hagel**

Former Secretary of Defense

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Former Administrator of NASA

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Executive Director, Reserve Officers Association

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The Hoover Institution

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Former Commanding General Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island

**Brigadier General Gerald E. Galloway, USA (Ret)**

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

**Brigadier General Stephen Xenakis, USA (Ret)**

Former Commanding General, Southeast Regional Medical Command

**Colonel Lawrence B. Wilkerson, USA (Ret)**

Former Chief of Staff to the US Secretary of State