THE CENTER FOR CLIMATE AND SECURITY

Climate Change and the National Defense Authorization Act

"How to get Trump to sign climate legislation? Put it in a defense bill."
Washington Post headline, August 14, 2018

An often-overlooked area of bipartisan collaboration in Washington revolves around the security threat of climate change, with Republicans and Democrats agreeing on legislation to highlight and respond to the threat, and putting forward bills that have become law. More must be done to reduce the scale and scope of the threat, but as we approach passage of the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act, it is worth looking back at the progress we've seen over the past three years.

2017 (FY18 NDAA enacted Dec 12, 2017)

Declaration of Direct Threat: *"It is the sense of Congress that… climate change is a direct threat to the national security of the United States and is impacting stability in areas of the world both where the United States Armed Forces are operating today, and where strategic implications for future conflict exist…"* – Sec 335 (b)

Report on DoD's Most Vulnerable Bases: Sec 335 (c) required the DoD to identify the ten installations per service that were most vulnerable to climate change. In January 2019, DoD responded with a report on installation vulnerability without the prioritized list, so the military services followed up with their own individual submissions (Army, Navy/Marine Corps, Air Force).

2018 (FY19 NDAA enacted August 13, 2018)

Installation Resilience Provisions: Though the top ten lists of vulnerable installations from 2017 had not yet been developed, Congress proceeded with additional provisions strengthening installation resilience to climate impacts, including:

- Floodplain requirements on new military construction: Projects must identify whether they are in the 100-year floodplain, and if so, they must not only include mitigation plans, but be designed to assume an additional 2 feet above the base flood elevation (3 feet for mission critical facilities). This was originally a bipartisan stand-alone bill introduced by Senators Schatz, Moran, and Reed. (Sec 2805)
- Incorporation of changing environmental conditions into Unified Facilities Criteria (i.e. military construction design requirements). (Sec 2805)
- Inclusion of energy and climate considerations into installation master plans (which govern how a base is laid out and where new construction will occur). (Sec 2805)
- A formal definition of military installation resilience that includes resilience to changes in environmental conditions. (Sec 2805)
- Authority to expend Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative funds to protect military installation resilience (Sec 312i)
- Authority to spend economic adjustment funds on military installation resilience. (Sec 2805)
- Expanding Defense Access Roads authority to improve critical roads outside a base that are impacted by sea-level rise and recurrent flooding. (Sec 2865)
- Added $48.4M to the Energy Resilience and Conservation Investment Program (Sec 2403)

Focus on the Melting Arctic: At the same time, Congress is paying increased attention to the security challenges posed by a warming Arctic. With Arctic ice rapidly melting, there is already more

traffic through the region and the prospect of increased resource extraction. Key Arctic provisions in the NDAA include:

- Requiring an updated Arctic Strategy by June 2019. (Sec 1071)
- Incorporation of China's Arctic activities into a new Strategy on China. (Sec 1261)
- Authority to procure six new icebreakers for the Coast Guard, expressing the intent that they be in the inventory within 10 years. (Sec 151)
- The bill provides $15.5M for a replacement F-35 munitions maintenance facility at Eielson AFB, AK, as the existing facility suffered extensive damage from settlement caused by permafrost thaw. In response, the Senate Report also requires DoD to perform an assessment of all structures in permafrost regions to anticipate future building losses and to evaluate the adequacy of construction standards in these regions given anticipated warming.

2019 (FY20 NDAA enacted Dec 20, 2019)

Military Installation Resilience Plans: The bill directs DoD to incorporate military installation resilience into its installation's Master Plans, specifically to assess vulnerabilities both to installations and surrounding communities, identify missions that would be affected by those vulnerabilities, and propose projects to address those vulnerabilities. (Sec 2801a)

Resilient Construction Requirements: The bill includes a requirement for Improved Building Codes, called Unified Facilities Criteria in DoD, to promote resilience in new construction. (Sec 2804)

Climate Handbook Required: The bill includes a requirement for use of the Navy's Climate Change Installation Adaptation and Resilience planning handbook by the entire DoD, ensuring that guidance is available for all installation officials that pursue resilience measures. (Sec 2804)

Projecting Sea Level Rise: The bill extends restrictions on construction in floodplains to cover projected sea level rise over the projected life of a building. (Sec 2806)

Climate Vulnerability Tool: The NDAA includes direction to Create a Climate Vulnerability and Risk Assessment Tool by DoD to inform mitigation planning and infrastructure development. (Sec 326)

Arctic Port Study: It also includes direction to DoD to Consider Sites for a Strategic Port in the Arctic, with a report due in 180 days. (Sec 1752)

Defense Access Roads: Made additional changes related to addressing the impacts of current or anticipated changes in environmental conditions, and expanded scope to include roads to air or sea ports necessary for deployment. (Sec 2808)

Funding for Climate Resilience Projects: The bill also provides some funding to address climate change concerns. Specifically, it includes a $49 million project at the Portsmouth (VA) Naval Shipyard to increase the height of floodwalls around its drydocks, driven by sea-level rise concerns, and authorizes $150 million for the Energy Resilience and Conservation Investment Program, which addresses projects at multiple locations. Much greater investments in climate resilience will be needed in the future, but this is an encouraging start.

Creation of a Climate and Security Council in the Intelligence Community: Finally, the bill incorporated the Intelligence Authorization Act, which included a provision that Creates a Climate and Security Council within the Intelligence Community to ensure that intelligence analysis is informed by the best possible science and projections (Sec 5321). This is highly consistent with the recommendation in the Climate Security Plan for America for a Climate Security Crisis Watch Center, led by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, to facilitate an annual interagency assessment, drawing from analysis across the intelligence community and beyond, of the risks that climate change poses to U.S. national security.