

**Opening Statement**  
**Chairman James R. Langevin**  
**Intelligence, Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee**  
***Climate Change in the Era of Strategic Competition***  
**December 11, 2019**

The subcommittee will come to order.

Welcome to today's hearing on *Climate Change in the Era of Strategic Competition*. Today we will receive testimony on the impacts of climate change – from extreme weather events to changing arctic ice coverage - on U.S. national security and how the Department's strategies and plans are addressing those critical challenges.

Climate change appears to present three types of threats: direct threats to U.S. military installations, our ability to train and execute various missions, and more indirect geopolitical unrest. The IETC Subcommittee held a joint hearing with the Readiness Subcommittee exactly 8 weeks ago today, to discuss the resiliency of military installations to emerging threats, including climate change. Today's follow-on hearing is meant to highlight the threat that climate change presents geopolitically; home in on the Department's efforts to plan for the emerging operating environment; and hear about innovative approaches and technologies to address and ameliorate the threat.

The Armed Services Committee - and this subcommittee in particular - has placed considerable focus on the intersection of climate change and geopolitics, and how that intersection implicates our strategic and operational planning.

There is broad bipartisan agreement that climate change is going to have significant implications for our defense posture. I want to be clear – the purpose of this hearing is not to debate the relative criticality of climate change as compared to other emerging threats, but rather to understand how climate change shapes the threats we are already watching. How has Russia changed its posture in the High North to take advantage of an increasingly ice-free Arctic? How does drought in Iran inform the decision-making of its leaders? Are violent extremist organizations, like Boko Haram, taking advantage of water scarcity to increase their power and influence? In what parts of the world do we expect climate stresses to drive instability?

In January 2016, the Department assigned responsibilities for addressing the major risks to readiness and the vulnerabilities posed by climate change. Today, we will hear from individuals from the organizations tasked with executing those responsibilities.

- Dr. Neil Tipton is the Director of Defense Intelligence in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USDI). The USDI is tasked with overseeing the planning, organizing, coordinating, and balancing of climate change for all DoD intelligence. The organization also coordinates with the DNI on all related risks, potential impacts, considerations, and effects of altered operating environments related to climate change and environmental monitoring.

- Ms. Maria Langan-Riekhof is the Director of the Strategic Futures Group at the National Intelligence Council within the office of the DNI. Ms. Langan-Riekhof's organization is responsible for the Global Trends strategic assessment that outlines how key trends and uncertainties – including climate change – should inform the National Intelligence Community and senior leaders.
- Mr. Victorino Mercado is the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans and Capabilities in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USDP). The USDP is tasked with developing policies, plans, programs, forces and posture needed to implement the DoD strategy, including adapting actions to increase resilience to climate change.
- Finally, Dr. Milan Nikolich is the Director of Defense Research and Engineering for Research and Technology in the Office of the Under Secretary for Research and Engineering (R&E). The office of R&E is tasked with overseeing “defense-related research in climate science for the development of approaches and technologies that reduce risk and promote mission execution.

While I would have preferred to have your senior leadership testify before this subcommittee, I want to thank you all for your willingness to speak on this critical topic.

-----