

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 11, 2019

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro,

We are writing today to request that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (“GAO”) conduct a review of potential threats to national security resulting from the impacts of climate change on defense contractors and the defense supply chain, and to review the extent to which the Department of Defense (DoD) addresses climate change and other environmental risks during the contracting process.

DoD has acknowledged the threats to military installations posed by climate change for years. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report summarized that:

Climate change will affect DoD in two broad ways. First, climate change will shape the operating environment, roles, and missions that we undertake. ... climate-related changes are already being observed in every region of the world, including the United States and its coastal waters. Among these physical changes are increases in heavy downpours, rising temperature and sea level, rapidly retreating glaciers, thawing permafrost, lengthening growing seasons, lengthening ice-free seasons in the oceans and on lakes and rivers, earlier snowmelt, and alterations in river flows. Second, DoD will need to adjust to the impacts of climate change on our facilities and military capabilities Although the United States has significant capacity to adapt to climate change, it will pose challenges for civil society and DoD alike, particularly in light of the nation’s extensive coastal infrastructure.¹

As required by the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the DoD earlier this year issued a “Report on Effects of a Changing Climate.”² While this report did not contain all the elements required by Congress, it revealed that about two-thirds of the military’s “mission assurance priority installations” are vulnerable to current or future threats from flooding, and about one-half are vulnerable to current or future drought or wildfires – all of which will be exacerbated by climate change.³ In the last year alone, Camp Lejeune (North

¹ Department of Defense, “Quadrennial Defense Review Report,” February 2010, <http://archive.defense.gov/qdr/QDR%20as%20of%2029JAN10%201600.pdf>.

² Department of Defense, “Report on Effects of a Changing Climate,” January 2019, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/5689153-DoD-Final-Climate-Report.html>.

³ *Id.*

Carolina) sustained approximately \$3.6 billion in damage from Hurricane Florence,⁴ Tyndall Air Force Base (Florida) sustained approximately \$4.5 billion in damage from Hurricane Michael,⁵ and Offutt Air Force Base (Nebraska) was “inundated” by Missouri River flooding amid heavy rains last month, with the base’s main runway closed and over 60 buildings under water.⁶ These incidents demonstrate that climate change-related events affect critical facilities, and if left unaddressed, pose a risk to military readiness.

While there has been analysis of the impact of climate change on military facilities, there has been no comprehensive analysis of the risks of climate change on the network of military contractors that provide billions of dollars of goods, services, and research and development to DoD, in the United States and around the world. This is a significant gap. In FY 2017, DoD spent over \$300 billion on federal contracts, “more ... than all other government agencies combined,” and “without contractor support, the United States would be currently unable to arm and field an effective fighting force.”⁷

Several of the largest defense contractors have voluntarily disclosed certain climate risks and threats. For example, Northrop Grumman has indicated that water scarcity and risk of drought in California and elsewhere may result in increased operational costs,⁸ and that the company “has significant operations located in regions that may be affected by extreme temperature changes”;⁹ Lockheed Martin has revealed that “increased severity of extreme weather events such as cyclones and floods” poses an ongoing risk to operations, noting that Hurricane Maria caused the closure of a Lockheed facility in Aguadillo, Puerto Rico, for over a month.¹⁰ But a staff review of the five largest military contractors’ annual financial disclosures revealed no comprehensive reporting on climate threats to operations, and the potential downstream impacts on military readiness.

We therefore ask that you conduct an investigation to address the following questions:

⁴ The Marine Times, “\$3.6 billion price tag to rebuild Lejeune buildings damaged by Hurricane Florence,” Dec. 12, 2018, <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2018/12/12/36-billion-price-tag-to-rebuild-lejeune-buildings-damaged-by-hurricane-florence/>.

⁵ Tampa Bay Times, “Tyndall Air Force base finds new mission with the billions to be spent repairing hurricane damage,” January 8, 2019, <https://www.tampabay.com/florida/2019/01/18/tyndall-air-force-base-finds-new-mission-with-the-billions-to-be-spent-repairing-hurricane-damage/>.

⁶ The Weather Channel, “Nebraska’s Offutt Air Force Base Inundated by Floodwaters; Runway Closed; 60 Buildings Damaged,” March 18, 2019, <https://weather.com/news/news/2019-03-17-offutt-air-force-base-inundated-by-flood-waters>.

⁷ CRS, “Defense Acquisitions: How and Where DOD Spends Its Contracting Dollars,” July 2, 2018, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44010.pdf>.

⁸ Northrop Grumman, “CDP Climate Change 2016 Information Request,” at 18-19, https://www.northropgrumman.com/CorporateResponsibility/Documents/pdfs/NOC_CDP_2016_Climate_Change_Report.pdf.

⁹ Northrop Grumman, “CDP Climate Change 2016 Information Request,” at 20, https://www.northropgrumman.com/CorporateResponsibility/Documents/pdfs/NOC_CDP_2016_Climate_Change_Report.pdf.


¹⁰ Lockheed Martin, “CDP Climate Change Questionnaire 2018,” at 13-14, <https://www.lockheedmartin.com/content/dam/lockheed-martin/eo/documents/sustainability/2018%20Climate%20Change%20CDP.pdf>

1. To what extent does climate change pose a threat to the facilities and operations of key private sector DoD contractors, and how do contractors' climate change vulnerabilities affect military operations and readiness?
2. To what extent are contractors required to disclose, either to the public, to financial regulators, or to DoD, any potential threats to their facilities or operations as a result of climate change?
3. To what extent do DoD contracting officials, during the procurement process, take into consideration (1) the actions taken by contractors to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions and their history of compliance with the nation's environmental laws; (2) the potential threats to contractors' facilities and operations as a result of climate change.


We further request the Comptroller General brief our staff not later than February 1, 2020 on the preliminary findings of this study and submit a final report on a date agreed to at the time of the briefing. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact Mr. John Quirk of the Senate Armed Services Committee staff at 202-224-8625 and Mr. Jonathan Rue of Sen. Warren's staff at 202-224-4543.

Thank you for your attention to this important national security matter.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator