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# Powering America’s Defense: Energy and the Risks to National Security

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**Abstract**

Powering America’s Defense: Energy and the Risks to National Security

Admiral John Nathman, USN (ret)
Military Advisory Board Member

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Background

April 2007: National Security and the Threat of Climate Change
www.SecurityandClimate.cna.org

www.PoweringAmericasDefense.org
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Fundamental Questions:

• What are the **national security threats** associated with energy?

• What is an **appropriate role for DoD** in addressing these threats?

• The MAB’s debate led to: **findings and priorities**
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"We never have 100% certainty. If you wait until you have 100% certainty, something bad is going to happen on the battlefield. That’s something we know."

Gen. Gordon Sullivan (Ret)
Former U.S. Army Chief of Staff
Finding 1: U.S. Energy Posture is a Threat

America’s energy posture constitutes a **serious and urgent threat** to national security—*militarily, diplomatically and economically*

- Oil dependence
- Weakness of U.S. electrical grid
U.S. Oil Dependence Undermines National Security

- **Weakens** international leverage
- **Jeopardizes** foreign policy
- **Exacts** huge price tag in dollars and lives
- **Entangles** US with hostile regimes
- **Undermines** economic stability
Dependence on Oil: Mission Impacts
Dependence on Oil: Drives Instability

- Interdependence issues with climate change
- Competition for resources
Grid a Dangerously Weak Link

Domestic electrical grid is outdated, fragile, and overtaxed—and a threat to military capability

- U.S. military bases vulnerable to deliberate or accidental incidents
  - Cyber weakness
  - Reach back
  - Training and readiness
Finding 2: Converging Risks

Continuing energy business as usual creates an unacceptably high threat level from a series of converging risks.
Finding 3: Commitment to Energy Security

Achieving energy security in a carbon-constrained world is possible, and requires **concerted leadership** and **continuous commitment**.
The national security planning processes have not been sufficiently responsive to the security impacts of our current energy posture

- Strategic planning
- Operational planning
Finding 5: DoD Must Lead the Way

DoD can contribute to national solutions as a technological innovator and early adopter
Recommendations: #1

Energy security and climate change goals should be clearly and fully integrated into our national security and military planning processes.
Recommendations

2. Design & deploy systems to the field to reduce the burden of inefficient energy usage

3. Know DoD’s Carbon **Bootprint**

4. **Transform installations** through aggressive pursuit of energy efficiency, smart grid technologies and electrification of non-tactical vehicle fleet

5. Expand distributed & **renewable energy** generation

6. Invest in long-term **shift to low-carbon** liquid fuels
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"This is America. We're pretty good at getting stuff done. We need to get this one done."
Suggested Websites

PoweringAmericasDefense.org

SecurityandClimate.cna.org
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