

## OPENING STATEMENT

**Rep. Donald S. Beyer Jr.**

Vice-Ranking Member and

Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Oversight  
House Committee on Science, Space & Technology

Co-Host of *National Security Implications of Climate Change*,  
part of the Science and Policy Perspectives Roundtable Series,  
July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Thank you Ms. Johnson, and thank you for organizing this series of Roundtables. I believe they are important, timely and address serious issues we must confront. I am pleased to co-host this Roundtable with you that will address the national security implications of climate change.

I do not believe the U.S. military can afford to ignore the potential threats from climate change. In fact, I am not alone in this belief, as many current and former military experts agree that ignoring the threat of climate change is not a risk worth taking and that dismissing this reality imperils our national security. They know the changing climate will have significant negative effects on our military infrastructure and operational readiness, and on regional tensions around the world. The economic ramifications for the U.S. military infrastructure and our economy in general will be great. Sea level rise in my home state of Virginia is already having a significant impact on military bases in Norfolk, Newport News, and Hampton Roads.

Military operations are likely to be impeded and military personnel endangered as a result of these accelerating climate related conditions. From ice melt in the Arctic to rising sea-levels in Annapolis, our national security community has been forced to confront the impacts of a warming world. Increasing natural resource shortages, including access to drinkable water; intensifying natural disasters, such as droughts and floods; and increasing waves of migration away from impacted areas are likely to lead to famine as well as exacerbate political, religious, cultural, and other tensions around the globe. In these ways and others, climate change is a threat multiplier. Many interstate wars, civil wars, and terrorist attacks in the future could all have their roots in the damage caused by climate change.

This is not an “over-the-top” assessment. It is – unfortunately - a reality that science is illuminating, and observations from around the world are confirming. It is one that the U.S. military has been preparing for and confronting for some time. Despite efforts by some to ignore these risks, the national security community must rely on facts, not ideology, to confront potential threats. We manage risks along so many fields. In business, in medicine, and on the battlefield, there is never 100% certainty. Even a low probability of the high magnitude scenarios require us to pay attention and respond. The national security implications of climate change are significant risks and we need to address them.

In May of this year, the Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats told Congress that global warming is – quote, “*projected to fuel more intense and frequent extreme weather events that will be distributed unequally in time and geography. Countries with large populations in coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to tropical weather events and storm surges, especially in Asia and Africa.*” He went on to say that potential conflicts over shared water resources between countries like Egypt and Ethiopia are likely to intensify in the coming years and, he noted that last year (2016) was the hottest year on record since modern measurements began in 1880.

The science is clear and the security threat is real. Global warming is already having a serious impact on our nation and around the world and these climate related threats will increase in the near future, heightening the risks to our economy, safety and national security.

Our panelists here today know full-well the potential security risks global warming has caused and will cause in the future and the tremendous challenges that poses for the U.S. military and our entire national security community. I look forward to discussing these issues with our panel, and I would like to thank everyone here for attending and those watching online for joining us for this Roundtable discussion where we can all address these issues and learn from the distinguished panel of experts here today.