

Testimony of Michael Breen, Vice-President, Truman National Security Project

June 19th, 2012

Chairman Stearns, Ranking Member DeGette, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to appear before this distinguished panel today to discuss the critical national security importance of clean energy development.

I serve as the Vice President of the Truman National Security Project, a leadership institute dedicated to forging strong, smart and principled national security policy for America. As a former Army officer and an Iraq & Afghanistan combat veteran, I am also proud to be one of the leaders of Operation Free, a non-partisan nationwide coalition of patriotic veterans who stand together in the common belief that our dependence on fossil fuel poses a clear national security threat to the United States.

When I last had the honor of testifying in March, I was invited to discuss the national security implications of our nation's dependence on oil as a single source of fuel. The dangers of that dependence are well known to the veterans of Operation Free. These men and women have walked the burning oil fields of Iraq and patrolled the mountain roads of Afghanistan – where the fully-burdened cost of fuel on the front lines is \$30 a gallonⁱ, and 1 in 24 fuel convoys ends in an American casualty.ⁱⁱ

America sends over \$1 billion per day overseas for oil.ⁱⁱⁱ A \$10 increase in the price of a barrel of oil costs the Department of Defense an estimated \$1.3 billion – almost equal to the entire procurement budget for the Marine Corps.^{iv} It should not be a surprise, then, that oil is the single largest contributor to our foreign debt, outpacing even our trade deficit with China. Worse, far too many of those dollars wind up in the hands of regimes that wish us harm.

According to the CIA, over 50% of the Iran's entire budget comes from the oil sector.^v For every \$5 rise in the price of a barrel of crude oil, Iran receives an additional \$7.9 billion annually.^{vi} That's billions of dollars to build new nuclear facilities, replace centrifuges and support terrorist groups that threaten Americans and target our Israeli allies.

For every \$5 rise in the price of a barrel of crude oil, Russia receives more than \$18 billion annually.^{vii} As ever-rising demand for oil drives the global price ever higher, Russia continues to spend windfall oil profits on weapons and ammunition for President Bashar Assad's shock troops in Syria, where over 10,000 civilians have reportedly lost their lives fighting for their freedom.

It is established consensus in the defense community that our dependence on oil is a threat to our national security. But there is another consensus emerging in the national security community that also bears heavily upon our discussion today. It is simply this: man-made climate change poses a serious threat to our national security.

I know not everyone in this room believes that climate change is real, but our country's national security professionals clearly do. The Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review, the military's most important strategic document, states that climate change is "an accelerant of instability and conflict" and that climate change and reliance on fossil fuels are "prominent military vulnerabilities" for the nation.^{viii} The CIA has established a Center on Climate Change and National Security. The Council on Foreign Relations, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Center for a New American Security, the CNA Military Advisory Board, the National Research Council and numerous other non-partisan and highly-respected organizations have all found, independently of one another, that climate change poses a serious and growing threat to our national security.

A 2007 joint study conducted by CSIS and CNAS found "strong and surprising intersections between the two great security threats of the day—climate change and international terrorism waged by Islamic extremists." The study went on to conclude that "both threats are linked to energy use in the industrialized world, and the solutions to both depend on transforming the world's energy economy—America's energy economy in particular."^{ix} The connection between our energy posture and the national security threats we face could not be more evident.

According to a recent study, over 97% of climate scientists say that man-made climate change is a reality.^x I'm not a climate scientist—I'm a former front-line combat leader in the US military. And as a combat leader, if 97% of my intelligence indicated that continuing down the road I was on would pose a lethal danger to my mission and the lives of my paratroopers, I would be committing unconscionable military malpractice if I decided not to listen, and more importantly, to act.

Yet, even in the face of overwhelming evidence and the certain consequences that inaction will bring, some say that we cannot or should not act. The challenge is too great to be overcome, they claim—the pace of progress is too slow, or the costs too high. Fortunately, leaders remember what the nay-sayers have forgotten: if government and industry stand together, there is no new market America cannot master, and no technological revolution America cannot lead.

We see that today in Kern County, California. Located in the high desert, Kern supplied the crude that made California the oil capital of the United States back in the 1920s, and fueled much of the mid-20th century oil boom. Kern County has always been proud to provide American energy. That's why in the 21st century Kern has turned to renewable sources, becoming the largest producer of wind and solar energy in the state of California and creating jobs in a place where unemployment had been 64% higher than the national average.

Two months ago, in this very building, I stood with Jeff Duff, the CEO of Air-Streams Renewables, a technical school in Kern County that trains wind turbine technicians. Air-Streams is proud that 70% of its graduates are veterans. Jeff told me about one of his students, an electrician in the Navy who after being honorably discharged, struggled to find work that used the skills he learned in the service. He left a night job at a mortuary to join Air-Streams and graduated at the top of his class. Now, he's continuing his service to his nation and his community by building the energy economy of the future.

As we debate clean technologies, we often ignore energy's impact on our national security. There will be a lot of emphasis in this room today on cost. But the price of fossil fuels includes more than

drilling and pumping. There are security costs that we must recognize. Fossil fuels fund extremists, and breed dependency on nations that don't share our values. We can let stories like Kern County's be what they are today: promising, but not commonplace. Or instead, we can lead—and invest in 21st century technologies that keep America safe and prosperous.

ⁱ Report from the Pew Project on National Security, Energy and Climate, "From Barracks to the Battlefield," pg. 16 (2011).

ⁱⁱ "Casualty Costs of Fuel and Water Resupply Convoys in Afghanistan and Iraq." Army-Technology.com, February 26th, 2010. <http://www.army-technology.com/features/feature77200/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Powers, Jonathan. "Oil Addiction: Fueling Our Enemies." Truman National Security Project, February 17th, 2010. [http://www.trumanproject.org/files/papers/Oil Addiction - Fueling Our Enemies FINAL.pdf](http://www.trumanproject.org/files/papers/Oil%20Addiction%20-%20Fueling%20Our%20Enemies%20FINAL.pdf)

^{iv} CNA Report on "Powering America's Defense: Energy and the Risks to National Security" (May 2009) <http://www.cna.org/documents/PoweringAmericasDefense.pdf>

^v CIA World Factbook. "Iran." CIA, February 21st, 2012. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>

^{vi} Powers, Jonathan. "Oil Addiction: Fueling Our Enemies." Truman National Security Project, February 17th, 2010. [http://www.trumanproject.org/files/papers/Oil Addiction - Fueling Our Enemies FINAL.pdf](http://www.trumanproject.org/files/papers/Oil%20Addiction%20-%20Fueling%20Our%20Enemies%20FINAL.pdf)

^{vii} Powers, Jonathan. "Oil Addiction: Fueling Our Enemies." Truman National Security Project, February 17th, 2010. [http://www.trumanproject.org/files/papers/Oil Addiction - Fueling Our Enemies FINAL.pdf](http://www.trumanproject.org/files/papers/Oil%20Addiction%20-%20Fueling%20Our%20Enemies%20FINAL.pdf)

^{viii} Quadrennial Defense Review. Department of Defense, February 2010.

^{ix} Report from CSIS and CNAS, "The Age of Consequences: The Foreign Policy and National Security Implications of Climate Change" (February, 2007) http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CSIS-CNAS_AgeofConsequences_November07.pdf

^x Anderegg, William R L; James W. Prall, Jacob Harold, and [Stephen H. Schneider](#) (2010). "[Expert credibility in climate change](#)". *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* **107** (27): 12107–9.