

Sometimes, it seems like the world is upside down: the head of EPA is a climate skeptic; the head of DOD takes climate change very seriously. But the view of the Secretary of Defense isn't a fluke. There's a long list of Pentagon [documents](#) about the risks of climate change, going back over twenty years. There are some very good reasons why the Pentagon wants to move away from fossil fuels and deal with climate change.

Secretary Mattis has been [clear](#) about the impact of climate change on national security: "Climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today. . . It is appropriate for the Combatant Commands to incorporate drivers of instability that impact the security environment in their areas into their planning." He has also said, "Climate change can be a driver of instability and the Department of Defense must pay attention to potential adverse impacts generated by this phenomenon." Mattis has also explained the very practical reasons why he has promoted the use of renewable energy by the military:

I meant that units would be faced with unacceptable limitations because of their dependence on fuel, and that I wanted to be able to push those limits further. Meanwhile, our efforts to resupply the force with fuel made us vulnerable in ways that were exploited by the enemy. . . . The Department's acquisition process should explore alternate and renewable energy sources that are reliable, cost effective, and can relieve the dependence of deployed forces on vulnerable fuel supply chains to better enable our primary mission to win in conflict.

The Navy has its own reasons to worry about climate change. Simply put: Navy bases are built at sea level. As a result, they're particularly vulnerable to sea level rise. A story in the *Navy Times* [reported](#) on some of the potential risks:

Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia and 17 other U.S. military installations sitting on waterfront property are looking at hundreds of floods a year and in some cases could be mostly submerged by 2100, according to a new report from the Union of Concerned Scientists. Based on these calculations, the report says a three-foot sea level rise would threaten 128 U.S. military bases, valued at roughly \$100 billion.

Nine of those bases are major hubs for the Navy: In addition to Norfolk, flooding threatens Naval Station Mayport, Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay in Georgia

and the Naval Academy in Maryland, where 2003's Hurricane Isabel flooded classrooms, dormitories and athletic facilities.

It's not just the Navy. Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island is at risk of being completely underwater. All told, three Marine Corps installations, two joint bases, an Air Force base and a Coast Guard Station are also at risk of daily flooding, the report said.

The military isn't worried about climate change because the Joint Chiefs are a bunch of liberals. As far as I can tell, the opposite is true of their politics. But when your core business involves people shooting at you, it doesn't pay to close your eyes to the facts. Given that defense is the federal government's biggest activity outside of social insurance, the military's attitude would matter under any circumstances. But it may matter even more at present, given that Generals are the one group of experts whom the President seems to respect.