

Biden's green-infrastructure bill is headline news. Republicans are up in arms. Yet every year there's already a green-infrastructure bill. Hardly anyone notices. Republicans vote for it without a fuss. Why? It's part of the annual funding bill for the military.

The Defense Department [remains](#) the biggest single consumer of energy in the country, and it has made major investments in solar power. It also plays a major role in developing new technologies. As the [NRDC](#) has explained, "DoD is the largest participant in a federal program providing seed funding for early-stage innovations that are too high risk for the private sector and has offices overseeing the transition of appropriate military technology to public use." On the research side, DoD has [major collaborations](#) with the National Renewable Energy Lab. And according to an MIT/Hoover [website](#), by 2012 Pentagon spending "on energy research, development, testing, and demonstration alone was \$1 billion—though even this was but 1 percent of its total innovation budget."

In 2018, for example, the American Association for the Advancement of Science ([AAAS](#)) noted that there was generous funding for "solar technology (including photovoltaics R&D), manufacturing programs, and vehicle technology (including battery tech, electrification, and advanced engines). Each of these programs received at least a \$31 million plus-up over FY 2017."

Making military bases climate resilient has been a persistent goal in these bills. The bill passed in 2019 was no exception. It earmarked spending for this purpose, required all the military services to use the Navy's Climate Change Installation Adaptation and Resilience planning handbook. It also called on DOD to create a Climate Vulnerability and Risk Assessment Tool. Lest the Pentagon make use of dodgy science, it had to get a federally funded research center give it "a certification in writing that the tool relies on the best publicly available science for the prediction of extreme weather risk and effective mitigation of that risk." Section 2804 required the amendment of facilities standards to ensure climate and energy resilience. Succeeding sections required consideration of future changes in weather and sea levels.

The protective umbrella of the military allows even Republicans to admit that climate change is a serious threat. For instance, the 2019 bill required the Director of National Intelligence to create a Climate Security Advisory Council. The Council's mandate is to facilitate information exchange in the intelligence community and to "ensure that the intelligence community is adequately prioritizing climate change in carrying out its activities." In 2017, a Republican Congress enacted an even more explicit provision. [Here's](#) what that funding bill said about climate change: "Climate change is a direct threat to the national security of the United States and is impacting stability in areas of the world both

where the United States Armed Forces are operating today, and where strategic implications for future conflict exist.” Trump didn’t say a peep about this provision when he signed the law, though he did complain about other sections unrelated to climate issues.

There is every reason to think the Pentagon will continue to seek major funding for clean energy and climate adaptation. In January, Biden’s Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [observed](#) that “by changing how we approach our own carbon footprint, the Department can also be a platform for positive change, spurring the development of climate-friendly technologies at scale.” Congress is more favorable today than it was in the Trump years, and of course the Biden White House is on board as well. Don’t expect any headlines, but defense funding will probably be a big add-on to green infrastructure spending.