

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Michael Lawrence Brown, of Georgia, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, the Trump administration has come up with a name for its energy policy. The energy policy amounts to, basically, a big, fat cascade of gifts and special favors for oil, gas, and coal companies, which, in turn, make big political contributions. Trump officials call the policy “energy dominance.” More accurately, its name would probably be “fossil fuel industry political dominance” or one might actually call it “ignorance dominance” since the administration willfully ignores scientific understanding, basic economics, market theory, and even the warnings of our national security community.

The situation is not pretty from an environmental point of view. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt is busily trying to roll back rules that limit, for instance, emissions of methane, which is a more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. He is considering walking back fuel efficiency standards that save drivers money at the pump. President Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris climate accord and was promptly ignored by every other nation on Earth.

Last month, on the Interior Secretary’s recommendation, Trump took big areas of the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments, in Utah, away from the public and opened them, instead, to big mining and oil and gas interests. Zinke has even proposed to open almost all U.S. coastlines to drilling by oil and gas companies. That includes drilling in protected areas in the Arctic, drilling up and down the Atlantic coast, expanded drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, and drilling along the Pacific coastline. The plan even includes Georges Bank and other crucial fishing grounds for New England.

This drilling scheme is likely dead on arrival. Republican Governors in New Jersey, Maryland, and Florida have all denounced the plan, as have Florida’s Democratic and Republican Senators. It even runs into objections from the Pentagon. When President Obama considered opening the southern Atlantic coast to drilling 2 years ago, the Defense Department told the Obama administration that offshore energy development could interfere with military readiness and missile testing.

Given the dominance of fossil fuel political interests in this administration, the whole Trump energy dominance scheme, of course, neglects the warnings of our national security experts about climate change—climate change as an accelerant of global instability

and conflict and climate change as a direct hazard to military installations and infrastructure, from the Naval Station Norfolk to faraway facilities like Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

In 2008, the National Intelligence Council reported more than 30 U.S. military installations facing risk from rising sea levels. A vulnerability assessment directed by the “2010 Quadrennial Defense Review” found that at around 3 feet of sea level rise, 128 military installations are at risk. Naturally, many of those belong to the Navy—indeed, 56 out of those 128. It is a significant share of the Navy’s global footprint, totaling around \$100 billion in value.

In 2011, the National Academy of Sciences report, “National Security Implications of Climate Change for U.S. Naval Forces,” recommended the continued review of how sea level rise and changes in storm frequency and intensity would affect coastal installations.

The National Defense Authorization Act, which we just passed, directs the Department of Defense to study how climate change will affect our most vulnerable military bases over the next 20 years, including “the effects of rising sea tides, increased flooding, drought, desertification, wildfires, thawing permafrost,” as well as how climate change may drive new requirements for combatant commanders.

The law includes a sense of Congress statement that “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.”

That is a sense-of-Congress statement that has passed this Republican-controlled Senate and the Republican-controlled House and was signed into law by this administration. Thank you to the author of this language, my friend and fellow Rhode Islander, Congressman JIM LANGEVIN.

Even the U.S. Government Accountability Office has engaged. The independent oversight agency issued a report titled, “Climate Change Adaptation: DoD Needs to Better Incorporate Adaptation into Planning and Collaboration at Overseas Installations.”

I think that title gives away the punch line. Surveying our bases and installations across the world, GAO found that weather and climate change pose operational and budgetary risks to infrastructure. GAO recommended that DOD’s climate planning efforts be expanded and increased; specifically, that the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force require defense installations to “systematically track the costs associated with extreme weather events and climate change” and that DOD better coordinate addressing climate change risks across different DOD installations.

This picture in the GAO report shows an unnamed military facility in the

Pacific that has at times been cut off by flooding from access points to its munitions storage complex. If you have a military facility that can’t get access to its munitions storage, you have a problem.

This is the picture of the flooded entryway, and this is the picture of the similar entryway under normal circumstances, able to be traveled.

A 2014 typhoon caused flash flooding here that trapped and imperiled American personnel. The point is, when climate change effects inhibit military base operations, defense preparedness requires climate preparedness.

Naval Station Norfolk, the largest Navy base in the world, is a poster child for the devastation that awaits our coastal military bases if we continue to pump out the greenhouse gas emissions that are driving sea level rise. A tide gauge operated at the base since 1927 has shown nearly 15 inches of vertical sea level rise so far. In the broader Hampton Roads metro area, home not only to the Navy but also to facilities of the Air Force, the Marine Corps, the Coast Guard, NASA, and NOAA, high tides are already regularly forcing seawater back through storm drains and flooding roadways.

DOD’s own environmental research program, the Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program, used Norfolk as its case study for sea level rise and extreme storm risks to coastal DOD installations. The study found a “tipping point” of about a half meter, 1.6 feet, of sea level rise, at which point “the probabilities of damage to infrastructure and losses in mission performance increased dramatically.” This is mapping of the flood hazard around Naval Station Norfolk.

This tipping point at which the mission performance losses increase dramatically is only a few decades away. Retired RADM David Titley, a former oceanographer and navigator of the Navy and leader of its Climate Change Task Force, said Norfolk has about 10 to 15 years to get serious about sea level rise in the region before “we’re really cutting it close.”

In 2017, CAPT Dean Vanderley, who leads infrastructure engineering at the Norfolk Naval base, admitted that sea level rise is “something where I don’t know that we’ve fully defined the problem. And we have definitely not fully defined the solution.”

Retired CAPT Joe Bouchard, a former base commander, told InsideClimate News that Naval Station Norfolk would need significant improvements to nearly every piece of infrastructure, from electrical and drainage systems to pier improvements, not to mention a seawall. He estimated this work could cost more than \$1 billion and take as long as a decade to complete. That is just one base with \$1 billion and a decade’s worth of work. The DOD has identified over 128 bases that would be at significant risk with 3 feet of sea level rise. I think NOAA’s current estimate is for 6 feet of global sea rise by the end of the century.

Even though our President is clueless about the basics of climate change, his Secretary of Defense understands and acknowledges the risks. In response to congressional questioning last year, Secretary Mattis said, "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."

Well, for political reasons, the White House can't acknowledge the problem so the recently published "National Security Strategy" totally disregards all of these recommendations. It will not even mention the forbidden words. We know these words are forbidden in the Trump administration because over and over again the memos leak out about people being told don't say the words "climate change."

Instead, with all these warnings from GAO, from senior military officials, from the National Intelligence Council, from a decade of Quadrennial Defense Reviews, and the testimony of Secretary Mattis—instead of listening to that, Trump parrots climate change denial talking points that come from the phony fossil fuel front groups. It is pathetic. Calling this deliberate ignorance "energy dominance" may be a fine fossil fuel flourish, but it is completely disconnected from actual safety, security, and military readiness—and don't get me started on what the fossil fuel industry's systematic corruption of our democracy means for America's fabled status as that "city on a hill."

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IRAN

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss my thoughts on recent protests in Iran and the important upcoming decisions by the President with respect to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or the JCPOA.

While I am mindful that we have limited visibility into Iran and continue to learn more about the circumstances and motivations of the recent protests, one thing is clear: A significant portion of the Iranian people are not satisfied with their government and are increasingly willing to make their dissatisfaction heard. It is important that we support their right to peacefully express their views and demand that the Iranian Government respond with constructive dialogue, rather than force.

It was notable that Iranian President Ruhani implicitly recognized the validity of the protests earlier this week when he reportedly said:

It would be a misrepresentation and also an insult to Iranian people to say they only had economic demands. . . . People had economic, political and social demands

That is according to President Ruhani.

Acknowledging the need for reform, Ruhani continued:

We cannot pick a lifestyle and tell two generations after us to live like that. It is impossible. The views of the young generation about life and the world is different than ours.

Now is the time to support the Iranian people in their quest for a government that is more representative and supportive of their interests. Unfortunately, some have suggested that our response should be to withdraw from the JCPOA, an action that I believe would only serve to embolden the hardliners in Iran and leave the United States more isolated from our allies. Withdrawing from the JCPOA and re-imposing nuclear-related sanctions on Iran would immediately change the narrative inside of Iran, uniting reformists and hardliners alike in their opposition to what they view as a hostile United States.

While some would argue that the recent protests in Iran are symptomatic of what they view as a flawed JCPOA, I would suggest otherwise. In reality, the nuclear deal exposed one of the Iranian regime's central vulnerabilities—namely, that the regime can no longer simply blame sanctions imposed by the United States and the international community for its economic woes at home. It is becoming clearer to the Iranian people that it is actually the regime's corruption, financial mismanagement, funding of malign activities, and hegemonic ambitions that are at the root of their government's inability to enable job creation and to ensure that necessities like food and gasoline remain affordable.

In the coming days, the President has several important decisions to make with respect to the JCPOA. In October, President Trump acknowledged that Iran is meeting its commitments under the JCPOA, but he chose not to certify that continued sanctions relief is "appropriate and proportionate" to the actions taken by Iran with respect to terminating its illicit nuclear program. By the end of this week, President Trump is again required to decide whether to issue such a certification. I expect he will again choose not to do so.

The more consequential decision for the President this week will be whether to continue waivers of nuclear-related sanctions, as he is required to do under the JCPOA. Choosing not to continue such waivers would immediately snap back U.S. nuclear-related sanctions, thereby putting the United States in violation of the JCPOA. Let me be clear. This would be a unilateral action on behalf of the United States that would put us in violation of an international agreement, not just with Iran but with the United Kingdom,

France, Germany, Russia, and China, as well.

By all accounts, the JCPOA is working as intended, and Iran is verifiably meeting its commitments under the deal. It is important to remember what the JCPOA was designed to do and what it is now achieving. The JCPOA commits Iran to never seeking to develop or acquire a nuclear weapon; effectively cuts off all pathways for Iran to achieve a nuclear weapon during the period covered by the agreement; and increases the time it would take for Iran to acquire enough material for one nuclear bomb from 2 to 3 months to at least 1 year. When this agreement was signed, they were within months of having that capability. It dramatically reduces Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium and the number of installed centrifuges. It has prevented Iran from producing weapons-grade plutonium and has subjected Iran to robust monitoring by the IAEA to verify its compliance.

Withdrawing from the JCPOA at this point would provide no benefit and would actually leave us more isolated and less able to deal with the various challenges posed by Iran. The crippling sanctions regime that brought Iran to the negotiating table in the first place only worked because the international community was united in its determination to keep Iran from achieving a nuclear weapon. If we withdraw from the JCPOA unilaterally—and in the absence of a clear violation of the deal by Iran—there is no reason to believe that our partners in the P5+1 would join us. In fact, French President Macron has said that there is "no alternative" to the JCPOA and told the U.N. General Assembly that "renouncing it would be a grave error."

General Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Armed Services Committee last year:

I believe that the U.S. would incur damage vis-a-vis our allies if we unilaterally withdraw from the JCPOA. Our allies will be less likely to cooperate with us on future military action to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and less likely to cooperate with us on countering other destabilizing aspects of Iranian behavior that threaten our collective interests.

Our sanctions may snap back but not those imposed by the rest of the world, many of whom have begun building economic ties to Iran since the JCPOA was signed. Our international partners would then blame us, not Iran, for the failure of the deal.

Some, including President Trump, have argued that we can and should dissolve the JCPOA and renegotiate a better deal. This is a highly unrealistic proposal. We were only able to achieve the JCPOA after years of sustained multilateral diplomatic efforts and the imposition of aggressive international sanctions in concert with our partners. It will likely be impossible to replicate those conditions if the United States unilaterally withdraws from the JCPOA.

Contrary to President Trump's belief, threatening to walk away from the