

Energy and Climate in the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review

By Rachel Posner | March 10, 2014

Last week, Secretary Hagel released his strategic vision for the Department in the [2014 Quadrennial Defense Review \(QDR\)](#). Because energy and climate change each have deep implications for the defense mission, the QDR discusses both issues.

Specifically, as described by the document, energy and climate change each will play important roles in shaping the future security environment. In addition, military energy innovation will improve our capabilities to respond to this challenging future environment.

The Future Security Environment

Globally and in specific regions, the changing climate will affect U.S. security interests. For example, the QDR notes that the effects of global climate change will “influence resource competition while placing additional burdens on economies, societies, and governance institutions around the world.” Moreover, the document states that these “effects are threat multipliers that will aggravate stressors abroad such as poverty, environmental degradation, political instability, and social tensions – conditions that can enable terrorist activity and other forms of violence.”

At the regional level, the QDR also anticipates a future Middle East where competition for energy and water resources “will worsen tensions in the coming years and could escalate regional confrontations into broader conflicts – particularly in fragile states.” For the U.S., the QDR also notes that the growth in domestic unconventional oil and gas production is a key factor in strengthening future prospects our economy.

Innovation for an Updated Defense Strategy

To address this challenging future security environment, the QDR outlines an updated defense strategy with three pillars: (1) Protect the homeland; (2) Build security globally; and (3) Project power and win decisively. Innovation, “not only in the technologies that we develop, but in the way U.S. forces operate,” is highlighted as an essential element across each of these three pillars.

A core component of the Department’s approach to innovation – and maintaining our technological superiority - is changing the way we use energy in military operations. Specifically, the QDR states that the “Department has invested in energy efficiency, new technologies, and renewable energy sources to make us a stronger and more effective fighting force.” The QDR also notes the role of energy in overcoming anti-access/area-denial threats: “Energy improvements enhance range, endurance, and agility, particularly in the future security environment where logistics may be constrained.”

Reflecting the intersection of climate change and capability at the Department’s worldwide installations, the QDR calls for an assessment of climate risks to all DoD installations. More broadly, the Department will evaluate potential effects of climate change on our missions and operational resiliency, develop and implement adaptation plans, and collaborate with our allies and partners through climate-related initiatives.

A range of organizations and groups – including retired senior military officers and national security experts – have praised the QDR for including energy and climate as influences on national security and military capability.

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