

DOD Officials Highlight Climate and Energy Security Issues at International Conference

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Senior Pentagon officials underscored the Defense Department's role as a global leader in managing the impacts of climate change on resilience, peace and stability during the 28th Conference of the Parties, or COP28, being held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The DOD delegation to the annual United Nations climate change conference includes the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Environment and Installations and DOD Chief Sustainability Officer Brendan Owens; Assistant Secretary of the Navy for EE&I and Navy CSO Meredith Berger; Assistant Secretary of the Army for IE&E and Army CSO Rachel Jacobson; Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for EE&I and Air Force Dr. Ravi Chaudhary; Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Arctic and Global Resilience Iris A. Ferguson; and Daniel Parnes, performing the duties of DOD deputy CSO.

More than 70,000 people from more than 190 countries are attending COP28, according to the U.N. In addition to government officials, the conference hosts a variety of stakeholders, including leaders from the private sector, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations.

It was the second year in a row that leaders from the Defense Department are among the U.S. delegation, highlighting DOD's key role in the U.S. whole-of-government approach to addressing the climate crisis.



Spotlight: Tackling the Climate Crisis

"Climate change is altering the global landscape and, with it, the department's mission," said Owens. "It impacts our military readiness—including warfighter training, mission execution, tactical planning, acquisition and sustainment of platforms and installations, and national and global security."

In 2021, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III signed the Department of Defense Climate Risk Analysis, which outlined ways in which climate change is shaping the strategic, operational and tactical environments for the Defense Department. The DCRA noted that "there are many ways for the department to integrate climate considerations into international partner engagements, including supporting interagency diplomacy...and sharing best practices." COP28 provides an opportunity for the department to showcase its leadership on climate and energy resilience to the international community and to discuss opportunities for collaboration with allies and partners.

"Climate change is a threat to global peace and security. This has been recognized for decades, but never before has the need to act been more urgent," said Jacobson.

"The Army is focused on solutions," she said. "We use 'Engineering with Nature' to bolster infrastructure resilience, and we are working with partners to develop alternative and resilient energy systems. We do this to maintain readiness and to ensure we can train and deploy under all conditions. The Army remains committed to working across DOD and the entire U.S. government to combat the climate crisis by driving adaptation and strengthening resilience at home and abroad."

Berger said that climate change is impacting mission assurance and readiness in the Department of the Navy. "Climate change creates a more volatile world, and a more volatile world calls on the United States Navy and Marine Corps. For our naval forces, climate change is increasing our mission set and reducing our ability to respond to that increased demand," said Assistant Secretary Berger. "For us, climate readiness is mission readiness. We are increasing our resilience and reducing our contribution to the threat so that we create every advantage for our sailors and Marines, contribute to the U.S. whole-of-government approach and remain a reliable partner of choice."

The Navy and Marine Corps are targeting investments to enhance installation resilience, mitigating the vulnerabilities of energy, water and facility control systems, while investing in energy storage and microgrids that can enable rapid recovery from severe weather or cyber threats. The Defense Department is making ships and tactical vehicles more efficient building better warfighters and investing in nature-based solutions to protect infrastructure and people.

By participating in COP28, officials said the U.S. serves as an example to other nations.

"If we are committed to supporting a more secure world, we must commit to making it a world worth securing," said Chaudhary.



The Defense Department's participation in the conference adds to a long list of actions it has taken to effectively respond to the changing climate and mitigate further risk to the environment. These steps include improving the energy efficiency of operational platforms, adapting military facilities to improve mission resilience and investing in applied research to ensure the military maintains its edge.

"We can no longer afford to move at the speed of government, we must move at the speed of the climate threat, and that means now," Chaudhary said.

Chaudhary highlighted multiple Air Force initiatives aligned with both mission and mitigating climate impact, including the new blended wing-body aircraft and a clean energy microreactor slated to become operational in Alaska by 2027.

Officials said the conference was an opportunity for the Defense Department to continue to lead as the international community gathered to address climate change.



"The DOD was excited to lend its voice to the conversations at COP28," Ferguson said.

"We came to listen, learn and tell a compelling story about one of the world's largest organizations navigating climate risk and the energy transition," she said. "In our dozens of conversations in Dubai across the public and private sectors and civil society, it was clear that people were excited to see DOD at COP28 and to explore opportunities to partner with us on shared climate and energy priorities."

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