

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 20, 2014

The Honorable John McCain
241 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Newt Gingrich
Gingrich Productions
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Dear Senator McCain and Mr. Gingrich:

Over the weekend, Secretary of State John Kerry gave a powerful and important speech in Indonesia about the dangers of climate change. Secretary Kerry accurately said, “When I think about the array of global threats ... terrorism, epidemics, poverty, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction ... the reality is that climate change ranks right up there with every single one of them.”

Your reaction was disappointing. Senator McCain asked, “On what planet does he reside?”¹ Mr. Gingrich called the Secretary “delusional” and “dangerous to our safety.”²

You should know that Secretary Kerry’s assessment of the risks we face is consistent with those of national security experts of unimpeachable credentials. For example:

- Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, Chief of U.S. military forces in the Pacific region, said that the biggest long-term security threat in the region is climate change because it “is probably the most likely thing that is going to happen . . . that will cripple the security environment, probably more likely than the other scenarios we all often talk about.”³

¹ National Journal, McCain Doesn't Think Kerry Should Be Focusing on Climate Change (Feb. 19, 2014) (online at http://www.nationaljournal.com/energy/mccain-doesn-t-think-kerry-should-be-focusing-on-climate-change-20140219?utm_source=&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=9093).

² Newt Gingrich, Twitter (Feb. 17, 2014, 4:43 PM) (online at twitter.com/newtingrich/status/435575383002714112).

³ *Chief of US Pacific forces calls climate biggest worry*, The Boston Globe (Mar. 9, 2013) (online at www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2013/03/09/admiral-samuel-locklear-commander-pacific-forces-warns-that-climate-change-top-threat/BHdPVCLrWEMxRe9IXJZcHL/story.html).

- General Anthony Zinni, the former Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Central Command, warned, “You may also have a population that is traumatized by an event or a change in conditions triggered by climate change. ... [T]hen you can be faced with a collapsing state. And these end up as breeding grounds for instability, for insurgencies, for warlords. You start to see extremism. These places act like Petri dishes for extremism and for terrorist networks.”⁴
- Robert Gates, the former Defense Secretary, said, “over the next 20 years and more certain pressures – population, resource, energy, climate, economic, and environmental – could combine with rapid cultural, social, and technological change to produce new sources of deprivation, rage, and instability. ... I believe the most persistent and dangerous threats will come less from ambitious states than failing ones that cannot meet the basic needs – much less aspirations – of their people.”⁵
- Admiral Michael Mullen, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated, “The scarcity of an potential competition for resources like water, food and space, compounded by the influx of refugees if coastal lands are lost, does not only create a humanitarian crisis but it creates conditions of hopelessness that could lead to failed states and make populations vulnerable to radicalization.”⁶
- Admiral John Nathan, former Commander of the U.S. Fleet Forces, predicted, “There are serious risks to doing nothing about climate change. We can pay now or we’re going to pay more later.”⁷
- James Clapper, the Director of the National Intelligence, testified, “there will almost assuredly be security concerns with respect to ... energy and climate change.

⁴ The CNA Corporation on Behalf of the Military Advisory Board, National Security and the Threat of Climate Change at 31 (Apr. 2007) (online at <https://www.cna.org/reports/climate>).

⁵ Robert M. Gates, Remarks at U.S. Global Leadership Campaign Tribute Dinner, Washington, DC (July 15, 2008).

⁶ Remarks of Admiral Michael Mullen, Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at Department of Defense conference titled *Empowering Defense Through Energy Security* (Oct. 2010).

⁷ Pew Charitable Trusts, Senator John Warner, Pew Project on National Security, Energy and Climate and the Hampton Roads Partnership Discuss Climate and Security in Norfolk, Virginia (Oct. 6. 2009) (press release) (online at http://www.pewenvironment.org/uploadedFiles/PEG/Newsroom/Press_Release/John%20Warner%20and%20the%20Pew%20Project%20visit%20Hampton%20Roads,%20VA.pdf).

Environmental stresses are not just humanitarian issues. They legitimately threaten regional stability.”⁸

- Thomas Fingar, the former Chairman of the National Intelligence Council, concluded, “We judge global climate change will have wide-ranging implications for US national security interests.”⁹
- Hans Blix, the former chief UN weapons inspector, said he thought climate change posed a greater threat to the planet than nuclear proliferation.¹⁰

You may also want to review the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, which called climate change “an accelerant of instability or conflict” that “could have significant geopolitical impacts around the world, contributing to poverty, environmental degradation, and the further weakening of fragile governments.”¹¹

These concerns about the profound risks of climate change are shared by distinguished world leaders. Last month, Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, wrote in the *Washington Post*, “Climate change is the biggest challenge of our time. It threatens the well-being of hundreds of millions of people today and man billions more in the future.”¹² Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, said last year that climate change has the “potential for major social and economic disruption.”¹³ And Dr. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group, stated that if we fail to confront climate change

⁸ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Testimony of James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, 113th Cong. (Mar. 12, 2013).

⁹ House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, Testimony of Dr. Thomas Fingar, National Intelligence Assessment on the National Security Implications of Global Climate Change to 2030, 110th Cong. (June 25, 2008).

¹⁰ *Blix says 'spin' was used to justify the war in Iraq*, New York Times (Sept. 5, 2003) (online at http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/05/news/05iht-blix_ed3_.html).

¹¹ Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report (Feb. 2010).

¹² *A united call for action on climate change*, Washington Post (Jan. 22, 2014) (online at http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/kofi-annan-a-united-call-for-action-on-climate-change/2014/01/22/3694fa0c-82c1-11e3-9dd4-e7278db80d86_story.html).

¹³ *A New Global Economy for a New Generation*, Speech, Christine Lagarde, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (Jan. 23, 2013) (online at <https://www.imf.org/external/np/speeches/2013/012313.htm>).

“we could witness the rolling back of decades of development gains and force tens of millions more to live in poverty.”¹⁴

You may also want to reflect on what Robert Rubin, the widely respected former Treasury Secretary, said just last month about climate change: “There are a lot of really significant, monumental issues facing the global economy, but this supersedes them all.”¹⁵

Senator McCain made a particular point of criticizing Secretary Kerry for talking about climate change “when we have got 130,000 people in Syria killed.”¹⁶ This is an inaccurate criticism because Secretary Kerry has been devoting extensive attention to Syria. It is also uninformed. There are experts who believe that climate change and the extended drought is one of the underlying causes of the conflicts in Syria. As the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman wrote, tensions in the Middle East have been “driven not only by political and economic stresses, but, less visibly, by environmental, population and climate stresses as well. If we focus only on the former and not the latter, we will never be able to help stabilize these societies.”¹⁷

Secretary Kerry needs allies in this fight for the future of our planet. History will not look back and fault him for leading the charge to prevent the worst impacts of climate change while we still have time. But history may question why Republican leaders who were once their party's champions on climate change fled the field at a crucial moment.

¹⁴ Jim Yong Kim, World Bank Group President, Op-Ed: Ending Poverty Includes Tackling Climate Change (July 10, 2013) (online at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2013/07/10/op-ed-ending-poverty-includes-tackling-climate-change>).

¹⁵ Industry Awakens to Threat of Climate Change, *New York Times* (Jan. 23, 2014) (online at http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/24/science/earth/threat-to-bottom-line-spurs-action-on-climate.html?hpw&rref=us&_r=1).

¹⁶ *McCain Doesn't Think Kerry Should Be Focusing on Climate Change*, *National Journal*, (Feb. 19, 2014) (online at http://www.nationaljournal.com/energy/mccain-doesn-t-think-kerry-should-be-focusing-on-climate-change-20140219?utm_source=&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=9093).

¹⁷ *The Other Arab Spring*, *New York Times* (Apr. 7, 2012) (online at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/08/opinion/sunday/friedman-the-other-arab-spring.html?pagewanted=1&_r=3&hp).

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Sincerely,



Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Co-Chair
Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change



Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse
Co-Chair
Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change