

## BRIEF ANALYSIS

No. 277

*For immediate release:**Thursday, August 6, 1998*

## Is the Global Warming Treaty a Threat to National Security?

Most environmentalists, some scientists, President Clinton and Vice President Gore have blamed global warming and all manner of natural catastrophes — hurricanes, floods and even El Niño — on rising levels of greenhouse gases, due primarily to fossil fuel use. In December 1997, the Clinton administration agreed to a treaty in Kyoto, Japan, to reduce the levels of human-caused greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere. On this theory, since most of the increased emissions come from energy use, we must use less energy to reduce the likelihood of environmental apocalypse.

However, many scientists are skeptical of the theory that humans are causing global warming. Economic analyses have shown that the treaty would raise prices and destroy jobs. And almost everyone agrees the treaty will do nothing to halt the rise in greenhouse gases.

In addition, U.S. national security could be threatened by actions taken to meet U.S. commitments under the treaty. How? There are only a limited number of ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by energy use. The administration ruled out energy taxes as a way of shifting consumer demand away from fossil fuels, and most analysts do not expect new technologies that could substantially reduce reliance on fossil fuels to emerge in the near term. As a result, forcing energy use reductions or rationing are the primary policy tools for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. And that's where the threat to U.S. security comes in.

**Energy Use and the U.S. Military.** Currently, the federal government is the nation's largest user of energy. Seventy-three percent of federal government use is by the Department of Defense (DOD), and 58 percent of that goes for military operations and training. Since President Clinton promised that the government will lead by example in the effort to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, cuts in the military's energy use seem a likely option.

However, experts including former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleberger, former Secretary of Defense and Energy James Schlesinger and former Undersecretary of Defense Frank Gaffney have argued that energy cuts will dramatically reduce military effectiveness. Moreover, they contend that according to the treaty the U.S. military will be able to defend U.S. interests only on missions approved by the United Nations. That is tantamount to placing the U.S. military under U.N. command.

Because energy use is critical to an effective military, Sherri Goodman, deputy undersecretary of defense for environmental security, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff requested a national security exemption for the DOD from emission reductions. Before the negotiations in Kyoto, administration officials agreed to demand an exemption in any greenhouse gas treaty.

What they promised and what they delivered are two different things. The Kyoto treaty exempts only "multi-lateral operations pursuant to the United Nations Charter." Neither U.S. military engagements in Grenada, Panama and Libya nor humanitarian relief operations like that in Bangladesh shortly after the Persian Gulf war were U.N.-sanctioned. And with the makeup of the U.N. Security Council it is unlikely that future military operations against Iraq or the former Yugoslavia, for example, would gain Security Council acceptance. In addition, day-to-day operations, training and war games are not exempted from the treaty's energy rationing scheme.

**Cutting Energy Use: Reducing Military Preparedness.** Leaving aside the question of whether the U.S. military should be under foreign command, a memo from Undersecretary Goodman shows the DOD estimates of how military operations would be affected by a 10 percent cut in fuel use:

- It would reduce tank training by 328,000 miles per year.
- It would cut flight training and flying exercises by 210,000 flying hours per year.
- It would cut the number of steaming days (days on board ship in port and at sea for training and military exercises) by 2,000 days per year.

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The DOD estimates these reductions would substantially hamper the military readiness of flight crews and tank crews, since computer simulations are a poor substitute for in-vehicle training. Flight crews would need an additional four to six weeks to deploy in response to a military crisis and tank crews would need an additional six weeks of training to coordinate a motorized deployment. What will our enemies be doing while our troops get up to speed?

**Cutting Energy Use: Fuel Efficient but Less Safe Vehicles?** Another way to significantly reduce military energy use would be to increase vehicle fuel efficiency. This too is problematic. Electrically powered vehicles are not realistic options for the military, since refueling during combat is usually impossible and operations often take place far from electric power supplies. Solar-powered vehicles are underpowered, too dependent on weather for long-term operation and very expensive.

For these reasons, the only realistic way of increasing vehicle fuel efficiency is to reduce vehicle weight by providing fewer armaments and/or less protective armor. Either would jeopardize the safety of U.S. forces. The auto industry's experience with government-mandated fuel efficiency standards is instructive. Research has shown that for every 100 pounds shaved off new cars to meet fuel efficiency standards, between 440 and 780 additional people are killed in auto accidents — a total of 2,200 to 3,900 lives lost per model year.

Similar weight reductions would increase the wartime danger faced by U.S. military personnel relative to their prospective opponents like Iraq or North Korea, who will not be parties to the greenhouse gas treaty. Even if U.S. tanks, planes and ships were still better armed and armored than our opponents, the gap between the effectiveness of military equipment would be narrower than before the Kyoto treaty. Even if they eventually agree to similar emission reductions, the leaders of such countries have shown themselves to be untrustworthy and would be unlikely to use more fuel-efficient vehicles.

The Clinton administration has estimated that the U.S. will have to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by more than 30

percent to reach our Kyoto commitments, since cuts of 10 percent are less than one-third of what will be required under the terms of the treaty.

**The Clinton Administration's Response to Congress' Worries.** Congress has challenged the administration for its irresponsible treatment of the U.S. military in the Kyoto negotiations. In response to congressional pressure, Undersecretary Goodman testified before the Senate that the administration has assured her it will oppose efforts to impose emissions-reducing energy cuts on domestic military operations and training. Going further, she stated that "to undertake . . . a completely unilateral operation, we do not need an international treaty to tell the United States how to operate unilaterally. That is a matter of United States sovereignty."

Well said! But that strong language did not make it into the treaty, so in effect we are telling the world that when the treaty does not suit us we will break it. This puts the U.S. in the unenviable position of being a rogue nation.

And if other nations follow our example, which seems likely, the treaty becomes largely moot — good for public relations but not much else. So why sign it in the first place?

**Conclusion.** The administration's assurances were not enough to satisfy the House of Representatives, which passed an amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill by a vote of 420 to 0 specifying "that no provision of the Kyoto Protocol will restrict the procurement, training, operation or maintenance of the U.S. Armed Forces." The exemption does not reduce the U.S. emission limits as specified in the treaty. Rather, it further limits the administration's options for meeting our Kyoto commitments. A unilateral DOD exemption would simply force the private sector to make deeper emissions cuts. Harming the U.S. economy is no more in our interest than hamstringing the U.S. military.

None of the options — weakening national security, flouting treaties or harming the U.S. economy — are in the national interest. And neither is the Kyoto Treaty.

*This Brief Analysis was prepared by NCPA policy analyst Sterling Burnett.*