

POLITICS & THE NATION

Study cites cost of inaction on climate

Curbing emissions could save thousands of lives, EPA-backed report says

BY JOBY WARRICK

A global agreement to curb greenhouse-gas emissions would prevent nearly 70,000 premature American deaths annually by the end of the century while sparing the country hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of economic losses, according to a major government study about the cost of climate change.

Slowing the carbon buildup in the atmosphere also would prevent severe damage to a wide range of critical ecosystems, from Hawaiian coral reefs that support tourism to shellfish beds on the East Coast, said the report released Monday by the White House.

The report, a five-year, peer-reviewed analysis that assesses the benefits of alternative strategies for dealing with climate change, concludes that every region of the country could be

spared severe economic disruptions that would result if greenhouse-gas concentrations continue to soar.

"The results are quite startling and very clear," said Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy, whose agency was the chief sponsor of the report. "Left unchecked, climate change affects our health, infrastructure and the outdoors we love. But more importantly, the report shows that global action on climate change will save lives."

The report, "Climate Change in the United States: Benefits of Global Action," seeks to measure the potential gains for Americans under an international accord to keep global temperatures from rising by more than 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit over historical averages. The study incorporates research from earlier peer-reviewed studies as well as modeling by scientists from the Energy Department's National Laboratory Complex, MIT and other centers.

Researchers compared what would probably happen in a business-as-usual world, in which levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere

would soar from about 400 parts per million now to more than 800 parts per million by 2100, compared with expected levels of about 462 parts per million if aggressive action is taken in the coming decades to limit greenhouse-gas pollution.

The report concludes that combating climate change would yield a substantial dividend for Americans, with benefits accumulating over time.

For example, improvements in air quality from reduced fossil-fuel emissions would lead to about 57,000 fewer premature deaths per year by 2100, the study said. Fewer extreme heat waves would occur, resulting in 12,000 fewer deaths each year from heat-related illnesses, it said.

Local governments would avoid tens of billions of dollars in damage from floods and other severe-weather events, and farmers would save as much as \$11 billion a year in damage to crops from a combination of drought, flooding and destructive storms. Tens of millions of acres of forests would be preserved because of fewer wildfires, the report said.

"We not only have a moral

obligation to act, but we also have an economic opportunity if we take smart but aggressive action to reduce gas emissions," said Brian Deese, a special adviser to President Obama on environmental issues.

The report's authors acknowledged that they did not attempt to factor in all of the costs related to cutting greenhouses gases and did not consider potential effects overseas. Moreover, the study does not specify a strategy for keeping global temperatures from rising by more than 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Diplomats from 197 countries will meet in Paris in December to try to negotiate a treaty on reducing carbon emissions, but many climate experts say that the pact will probably fall short of that goal.

But McCarthy pointed to the far greater costs of inaction, saying it was important to start attacking the problem now.

"It is really not too late to avoid the worst impacts of climate change," she said.

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White House planning to streamline the NSC

Staff, which has doubled under Obama, will be 'right-sized'

BY KAREN DEYOUNG

The White House acknowledged Monday, at least indirectly, that its vast National Security Council staff, the subject of considerable criticism both within and outside the administration, has grown unwieldy and could use some streamlining.

"To ensure the NSC staff is a lean, nimble, and policy-oriented organization, we are reversing the trend of growth... to align our staffing with our strategic priorities," NSC Chief of Staff Suzy George said in a statement prepared to be posted on a White House blog Monday evening.

She noted that growth has occurred "across successive administrations" and said that "this is not about downsizing for its own sake; it's about gradually right-sizing the NSC staff."

George did not indicate the current size of the staff, but many outside estimates put it at 400, about twice the size it was at the end of the George W. Bush administration.

Officials emphasized that there is no numerical goal, and that any reductions will come primarily from attrition. The NSC staff normally has a rapid turnover rate, as personnel from Cabinet departments, including State, Defense, Justice and the intelligence agencies, rotate through White House assignments.

George's statement, along with the comments of two senior officials authorized to discuss the internal initiative on the condition of anonymity, did not reveal specific changes, but rather spoke of "reforms" that will not be readily apparent to outside observers.

"Taken together," the statement said, "they are designed to result in fewer, more focused meetings, less paper to produce and consume, and more communication that yields better policy-making."

Susan E. Rice, President Obama's national security adviser, held a town hall meeting with the NSC staff two weeks ago to explain the changes.

"People looking from the outside are not going to see a whole lot of moving of boxes" on the NSC organizational chart, one official said. "Hopefully... over time, colleagues will feel and see the difference in just how the [NSC] is running, [and] an NSC which is leaner."

The initiative follows public criticism of what former defense secretaries Robert M. Gates and Leon Panetta, who also served as CIA director, have called "micro-managing" by the White House of issues large and small. Sen. John

McCain (R-Ariz.) is a frequent critic of what he has called "the insular and indecisive White House national security team."

Internally, across departments and agencies outside the White House, senior officials have complained about slow decisions, too many meetings, and an agency that has undermined policymaking and morale.

Much of the staff growth came early in Obama's first term, when Bush's homeland security council — formed as a separate White House entity after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 — was merged with the NSC.

A technical staff that responds to a news cycle that has accelerated with digital media and the Internet also has grown significantly.

NSC directorates dealing with the Middle East and other troubled regions have expanded, as units have been added to deal with cybersecurity and other issues. No process has been in place to shrink or eliminate workforces and directorates after crises have passed.

Late last year, Rice assembled her own senior staff and ordered members to gather information about who was on the staff and to tell the directorates that "we need to reverse the trend in growth in a way that does not undercut advancing our priorities... not just an across-the-board cut for a quota," said an official who participated in the process.

Rice aides reached out to senior officials at State, Defense and other departments for suggestions on how the White House could do better.

At the time, one official said, Cabinet secretaries and their deputies were being hit by a "confluence of several things requiring a look at a high level at the same time," including expansion of the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations, as well as Ukraine and the domestic surveillance controversy.

"We have only a finite number of Cabinet secretaries and deputies, and in addition to getting together to forge strategies, [they] carry the burden of implementing," one official said. "How do you rationalize the time to enable them to do all these things at the same time, in periods of sustained activity?"

Several high-level departmental officials, contacted for their reaction, responded with the verbal equivalent of an eye roll, but said they were glad to see the effort being made. None agreed to be quoted.

"This administration's 4th quarter has only just begun," George said in her statement, "and as President Obama likes to say, he's a '4th quarter player.' Driving the President's ambitious national security agenda through January 20, 2017 requires an NSC staff that's firing on all cylinders." deyoungk@washpost.com

DIGEST

NORTH CAROLINA

Man tells FBI he had planned to kill 1,000

A 19-year-old North Carolina man is in federal custody after telling an undercover FBI employee that he wanted to support the Islamic State group by killing as many as 1,000 people in the United States, authorities said.

Justin Nojan Sullivan of Morganton faces several charges, including one count of attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State group.

Sullivan "was planning assassinations and violent attacks in the United States," Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin said Monday.

According to the criminal complaint, Sullivan planned to buy an AR-15 rifle Saturday at the Hickory Gun Show so that he could kill as many as 1,000 people and demonstrate his support of the Islamic State.

Federal authorities began investigating Sullivan after his father told dispatchers April 21 that his son was breaking items in their home. "I don't know if it is ISIS or what, but he is destroying Buddhas and figurines and stuff," the complaint quotes Sullivan's father as telling 911.

— Associated Press

NEW MEXICO

Officers charged with 2nd-degree murder

Two New Mexico police officers will be charged with second-degree murder in last year's

shooting death of a homeless man near a tent in the mountains where he had been camping, a special prosecutor said Monday.

James Boyd was killed during a standoff after video showed him appearing to surrender. It sparked angry demonstrations around Albuquerque with protesters calling for reform after several deadly police shootings.

Even before Boyd's death, the Justice Department had been investigating the Albuquerque Police Department over allegations of misuse of force. Justice harshly criticized the department this year and has reached an agreement to improve training and dismantle troubled departments.

Special Prosecutor Randi McGinn's office announced charges against officers Keith Sandy and Dominique Perez, including second-degree murder, which covers killings that aren't premeditated. It's punishable by 15 years in prison. Sandy and Perez have denied wrongdoing.

— Associated Press

Colorado teen dies of plague: A teenager in rural northern Colorado has died from a rare form of plague that he may have contracted from fleas on a dead rodent or other animal, health officials have said. Taylor Gaes, 16, from the Cherokee Park area, died June 8, but plague was only recently confirmed as the cause, the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment said. The last time someone died of the plague in the United States was in 1913 in New Mexico, a case of the less-common septicemic plague, the same form Gaes is believed to have had.



Former congressman Jesse L. Jackson Jr. leaves a Baltimore halfway house where he'd been living since his release from prison in March.

Utah family of 4 found dead; murder-suicide suspected: A Utah family of four was found fatally shot in their home in what authorities believe is a murder-suicide, police said Monday. The bodies of Russell Smith, 29; his wife, Shawna Smith, 26; and their children, 6-year-old Tylee and 2-year-old Blake, were discovered Sunday night. It appeared Russell Smith shot himself, and investigators were not looking for any suspects, police said.

Newark schools chief quits: Newark schools superintendent Cami Anderson, installed by New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie (R) to launch one of the most radical school reform efforts in the country, is leaving the job after four

tumultuous years and widespread community protests over her plan known as One Newark. David Hespe, the state commissioner of education, announced Monday that Anderson will step down July 8 from running the public schools in Newark, the state's largest city with about 277,000 residents.

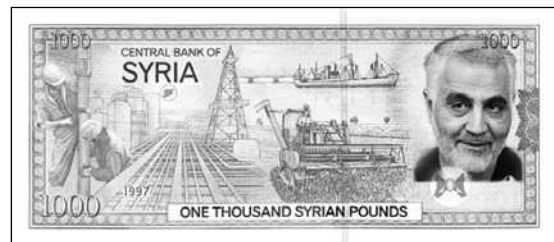
Arias ordered to pay victim's family for expenses: An Arizona judge has ordered convicted murderer Jodi Arias to pay about \$30,000 in restitution to the victim's family. Arias was ordered Monday to pay family members of her ex-boyfriend Travis Alexander for trial expenses. Arias was convicted of murdering Alexander in 2013 and sentenced to life in prison in April.

— From news services

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The policy of 'slowly bleeding Iran and Hezbollah in Syria' isn't working, Mr. President



The US administration's refusal to provide serious support to moderate Syrian rebels has allowed Iranian-controlled militias to gain the upper hand in Syria. It has also led to the strengthening of ISIS and al-Qaeda-linked groups.

The rationale behind the policy appears to be an assumption that a prolonged proxy war with the Iranian regime in Syria, coupled with crippling economic sanctions and falling oil prices, would eventually lead to weakening the Iranian regime and forcing Tehran to scrap its military nuclear program. However, the Iranian regime is now in effective control of four Arab capitals (Beirut, Baghdad, Damascus and Sanaa). This cannot be in the interest of the US.

It cannot be in the US interest that the Iranian regime is left to consolidate its dominance in the region through Shia militias that are as sectarian and extremist as ISIS and al-Qaeda.

It cannot be in the US interest that hundreds of thousands of Syrians are left to die and the moderate Syrian opposition is becoming weaker and weaker, and may eventually be defeated, because the US does not want to anger Iran in Syria and Iraq and endanger the ongoing nuclear negotiations.

It cannot be in the US interest that Syria and the wider region are left to descend into the Dark Ages, with ISIS and al-Qaeda attracting more and more extremists and exporting them to the rest of the world.

This is why, Mr. President, we ask you to:

- Fulfill your promises by arming and training enough moderate Syrian rebels, not only to fight ISIS and al-Qaeda-linked groups, but also Syrian and Iranian regime forces and militias.
- Impose no-fly zones to protect civilians and allow humanitarian access throughout Syria, in line with the international 'responsibility to protect' norm.
- Treat the war in Syria as an international armed conflict involving a foreign occupation by the Iranian regime and its militias and a liberation struggle by the Syrian people against this occupation.
- Refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court to investigate the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria, including Iran's and Hezbollah's role.

Mr. President, only the US can save Syria from disintegration. Only the US can seriously pressure the Iranian regime to withdraw its Revolutionary Guards and Shia militias from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen.

Naame Shaam, which means "Letter from Syria" in Persian, is a group of Iranian, Syrian and Lebanese activists and citizen-journalists that focuses on uncovering the role of the Iranian regime in Syria. The group is supported by the Netherlands-based Rule of Law Foundation, www.lawrules.org.

To visualize the Iranian occupation of Syria, Naame Shaam produced a photomontage of a Syrian bank note with the counterfeit of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, the de facto ruler of Syria. For more information on the issues mentioned above, see Naame Shaam's report, "Iran in Syria – From an Ally of the Regime to an Occupying Force", www.naameshaam.org

This is the third ad out of four. The first was published in this newspaper on May 5, the second on 19 May 2015. The last one will be published end of this month.



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