



## Top Security Experts Identify Ecological Disruption as a Major Security Threat in a Landmark Report by the Converging Risks Lab of the Council on Strategic Risks

**Washington D.C., February 9, 2021** - Converging Risks Lab of the Council on Strategic Risks (CSR) released a landmark report today, "The Security Threat That Binds Us: The Unraveling of Ecological and Natural Security and What the United States Can Do About It." The report, which was made possible by the Natural Security Campaign, identifies the global loss of nature and degradation of natural systems as a major and underappreciated security threat and calls on the United States to reboot its national security architecture to better respond to this evolving threat landscape.

Strains on critical Earth systems -- water, food, forests, fisheries and wildlife populations -- are increasingly contributing to conflict, political instability and economic harm while also heightening the risks of future pandemics. In short, a failure to ensure natural security is undermining our national security.

The report offers recommendations based on three key measures: elevated and enhanced action from the U.S. government to combat ecological and natural security disruptions; a greater infusion of science into national security communities; and a reboot of U.S. national security doctrine and architecture to tackle the modern threats presented by a changing planet and recognize humanity's reliance on nature and the severe consequences we face from alteration not just of the climate, but of many of the earth's natural systems.

"The past decade has seen a lot of deserved attention on the security implications of climate change, but the fraying of the ecological networks on which humanity depends, which is both interconnected with and distinct from climate change, poses a commensurate security threat," said [Dr. Rod Schoonover](#), lead author of the report, Advisor at the Council on Strategic Risks, and former Director of Environment and Natural Resources at the National Intelligence Council. "The U.S. and international security communities need to treat ecological disruption and climate change as conduits of serious security threats, rather than mere environmental concerns."

"Ecological disruption clearly is underway worldwide and is a threat to both national and natural security," said Brigadier General Gerald Galloway, US Army (Ret). "The report effectively describes the linkages that exist among natural systems and identifies actions that must be taken to ensure that these natural systems, including water, will be equitably available for future generations. In the face of stark and growing realization of the threats of climate change, it is clear that the time for action is now. The report creates an effective roadmap to guide national and international action and needs to be immediately addressed by US government and national leaders."

"Security in the 21st century is being fundamentally reshaped by global ecological disruption, from zoonotic disease, to climate change, to declining ocean health," said Sherri Goodman, Senior Strategist and Member of the Center for Climate and Security Advisory Board, Chair of the Board at the Council on Strategic Risks. "This report offers a new national narrative in which planetary health is a core element. This report will enable decision makers in both Congress and the Executive branch to take practical steps to address ecological disruption, including pandemic risks, environmental crime, biosphere degradation, forests and fisheries, as key components of national security strategy, plans and programs."

The report highlights eight pillars of recommended actions by the United States:

1. **Promote International Mechanisms that Aim to Reverse and Reduce the Drivers of Ecological Disruption**, which include: Ratify the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Law of the Sea; infuse ecological and natural security into climate change efforts; integrate sustainable agriculture and food supply into policy and science; and promote actions that combat overexploitation of natural resources.

2. **Promote Methods that Protect and Expand Critical Systems and Services**, such as: Counter harmful state actions towards critical resources; expand protected areas; better manage and protect protected areas; protect critical ecosystem services that span geographies.
3. **Build and Strengthen International Alliances**, which include: Assert global leadership on climate and ecological security; bring together ecological security communities; increase international communication on ecological risks; and develop, share, and collaborate on ecological defense frameworks.
4. **Treat Environmental Crimes as Serious Crimes**, which include: Prioritize anti-corruption efforts; target criminal markets as well as criminal groups; and move beyond seizures and promote effective prosecutions and deterrent penalties.
5. **Reduce Pandemic Risk at Point of Origin**, which include: Enhance monitoring, understanding of pathogen space, and pathogen early warning; increase assistance for One Health efforts, particularly at frontiers of tropical deforestation and forest fragmentation/degradation; and address pandemic risk in the wildlife trade.
6. **Amplify Ecological and Natural Security Issues in the U.S Government**, which include: Create a Deputy Assistant to the President and an Office of Environmental Security within the National Security Council; infuse ecological and natural security into White House strategic planning; increase capacity for analyzing ecological and natural security issues within the intelligence community; elevate international water security issues (including their climate dimensions) within the foreign policy and national security enterprise, including at the State Department, Department of Defense and National Security Council; add more ecological and natural security issues to military-military and intelligence-intelligence engagements; and augment ecological and natural security in U.S. defense and intelligence academic curricula.
7. **Initiate an Ecological and Natural Security Research Agenda**, which include: Deepen understanding of linkages between ecological disruption and security; develop early warning indicators for dangerous ecological regime shifts; bring ecological forecasting to maturity; and foster more research on insect declines.
8. **Engage the Public on Ecological and Natural Security Issues**, which include: Deploy effective security advocates; convene high-level ecological and natural security conferences, with the participation of security, foreign policy and intelligence leaders; and expand the aperture of natural security to include the broader ecological security framework described in this report.

For more information, [click here](#) to download the full report.

#### **About the Natural Security Campaign:**

The [Natural Security Campaign](#) is a collaboration among four leading conservation organizations-Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society and World Wildlife Fund-as they work to educate Americans about the importance and benefits of international conservation efforts. Since 2002, these partners have worked together to raise awareness of and advocate for sustained U.S. leadership in international conservation, including supporting the creation of the International Conservation Caucus. The Natural Security campaign is funded in part by the [Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation](#).

#### **About the Converging Risks Lab:**

[The Converging Risks Lab](#) (CRL) is a research and policy development-oriented program designed to study converging, cross-sectoral risks in a rapidly-changing world. The CRL will bring together experts from within the Council on Strategic Risk's distinct institutes, and from multiple sectors of the security community, to ask forward-thinking questions about these converging risks, and to develop anticipatory solutions.