

# WebMemo



Published by The Heritage Foundation

No. 1683  
October 30, 2007

## Emissions Mandates Would Undermine National Security

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As the military fights a two-front war in Iraq and Afghanistan, Congress is attempting to open up a third front: emissions mandates. The proposed Carbon-Neutral Government Act of 2007 (H.R. 3221) would restrict all federal agencies to fiscal year 2010 emissions levels beginning in 2011. That presents a big problem for the Department of Defense (DOD), which accounts for well over half the federal government's energy consumption.

Imposing CO<sub>2</sub> constraints on the armed forces would hamstring the Pentagon's ability to train, sustain, and fight; the cost of operating and maintaining an already overstretched force would skyrocket. In addition to being disastrous for national security, the emissions mandate is unnecessary: DOD is already committed to alternative energy research and the development and fuel conservation measures. Rather than hamstringing the Pentagon with unrealistic legislative mandates, Congress should encourage its research and conservation efforts and promote modernization initiatives that add new, needed combat capabilities while reducing energy demands.

**Worse Than Pearl Harbor.** H.R. 3221 could shift the Pentagon's primary mission from defending the nation to curbing emissions. To meet the environmental mandates, the services would have to divert funds away from maintenance, repair, research, and procurement. Beyond the initial freeze, the Pentagon would face the unrealistically stringent goal of reducing emissions annually—to the level of zero by 2050. The overly broad judicial review provi-

sions could allow anyone to challenge DOD policies in court on the grounds that the resultant emissions may put it out of compliance. The DOD would spend time and money fighting endless CO<sub>2</sub>-related lawsuits.

Furthermore, the Pentagon is already at the forefront of developing alternate energy sources, investing roughly \$250 million in such programs in fiscal year 2006. These programs include the development of synthetic fuel, fuel cells, and lightweight materials. As one of the world's largest consumers of fossil fuels, the U.S. military already has every incentive to find ways to conserve energy and reduce the vast logistical "energy tail" that limits the agility of forces on the battlefield. In expending resources, however, the Pentagon must balance the real-world needs of current operations with efforts to refit and modernize the force—all within the limits of what current technologies can deliver.

**Room for Improvement.** Without question, DOD can and should do more to reduce energy consumption. The armed forces would probably be better off if they burned fewer fossil fuels and were less dependent on foreign energy. In fiscal year 2005, the Pentagon spent \$10.9 billion on energy sup-

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This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/wm1683.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/HomelandDefense/wm1683.cfm)

Produced by the Douglas and Sarah Allison  
Center for Foreign Policy Studies

Published by The Heritage Foundation  
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002-4999  
(202) 546-4400 • [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

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plies. Today, every \$10 increase in the price of a barrel of oil costs the military an additional \$1 billion in operating costs. In terms of operations, fuel represents more than half of the DOD's logistics tonnage and more than 70 percent of the tonnage required to deploy the Army. Consequently, reducing fuel consumption would alleviate both a significant expense and a strategic weakness.

The following initiatives would help address the DOD's energy issues:

- Building nuclear cruisers and expanding the submarine force;
- Expanding research into synthetic fuels;
- Continuing research and development into next-generation batteries, fuel cells, and composite materials;
- Ending congressional earmarks in the Pentagon's R&D budgets, allowing the services to focus research dollars on real needs;

- Accelerating development and production of a new bomber that uses less fuel to put more bombs on targets; and
- Accelerating the fielding of next-generation ground vehicles.

**Conclusion.** Emissions mandates are an unnecessary and unrealistic way to reduce the military's energy demands. H.R. 3221 is an unfunded mandate that would hamstring the Pentagon and undermine national security. What the Pentagon needs is a robust and adequate budget. Funding defense at about 4 percent of GDP every year would provide sufficient resources for a trained and ready force, current operations, and preparing for the future.

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