



DOD ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS CEREMONY KEYNOTE ADDRESS

SHERRI GOODMAN

CNA SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL COUNSEL AND CORPORATE SECRETARY

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Thank you Deputy Secretary Lynn and thank you Dr. Carter. Thank you both for your extraordinary leadership of the Department of Defense. Both Deputy Secretary Lynn and Undersecretary Carter are great national security leaders of this generation. I am privileged to have worked with them for many years now. It's good to see you again and to be back here at the Pentagon. And to all the winners of the 2010 Secretary of Defense Environmental Awards – thank you for your service and for your dedication and commitment to the work you do for our nation and for our environment.

It is truly wonderful to be back home again with all of you.

My very first speech as Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Environmental Security in 1993 was for this Awards ceremony which was held on Earth Day of that year. As I recall I didn't have much notice that I was to preside at this ceremony, and at the time, hadn't given many public speeches or presided at many ceremonies of this type. The staff diligently helped me prepare some remarks which I woodenly delivered, trying to act like I knew what I was doing, which I didn't! But I muddled through, and after the ceremony, a Congressman came up to me, and said, "Well, you did a fine job – but there's just one thing – you forgot to mention – "Earth Day!" Needless to say, I never made that mistake again!

Each year since 1962, the Secretary of Defense has honored individuals, teams, and installations for their outstanding achievements to conserve and sustain the natural and cultural resources entrusted to the Department of Defense – and while I wasn't here quite that long ago, I am proud to say that during my tenure as Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Environmental Security I, and the many fine people I had the privilege to work with, were able to undertake and implement initiatives that still stand as the foundation of your Environmental and Energy Security policies and programs.

A core element of our efforts then, and yours now, has been to work with and within communities, establishing partnerships, enlisting public involvement, doing the kind of outreach – from local to international – that fosters effective cooperation and advances responsible environmental stewardship in service of the military mission and the men and women who serve our country so well.

It's interesting to look back a decade and see the threads that tie our work then, with yours now. For example in 1999, we talked about how DoD's environmental security efforts were active in each of the three elements of then-Secretary of Defense Cohen's defense strategy of: Shape, Respond and Prepare.

- We were working to SHAPE the international security environment in ways favorable to U.S. interests, promoting regional stability through military-to-military cooperation
- We were RESPONDING by supporting critical environment and health requirements of military operations
- And we were PREPARING by sustaining access to land, air, and sea for training through responsible management of our installations and training lands.

In the 1990s, DOD also issued new directives, which included fully incorporating environmental, health and safety values into the culture of the Department of Defense; to have those core values recognized by the uniformed and civilian customers throughout the Department and by its external stakeholders; and to make them vital parts of all operational and business decisions whereby the safety and health of our people, protection of weapons systems, facilities, and the environment were integrated into all worldwide national defense activities.

Today, that vision has evolved to remain current in adapting to today's issues and in responding to today's challenges. As stated in the most recent DOD Quadrennial Defense Review: We must: Prevail in today's wars; Prevent and deter conflict; Prepare to defeat adversaries; and Preserve the All Volunteer Force.

As difficult as today's wars are, we know that our ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are not the only security challenges we face. The United States faces a geopolitical and geographic landscape that is increasingly dynamic and significantly more complex than that of the Cold War.

Traditional state and non-state actors, such as Al-Qaeda are highly adaptable. Information and advanced technologies are more readily available. The proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, cyber and other asymmetric threats are mounting concerns.

In work that I have done in the last few years with CNA's Military Advisory Board – a board comprised of some of our generations' leading retired military leaders – we have identified the concept of climate change and energy acting as a “threat multiplier” for instability in fragile regions of the world.

Climate change could seriously exacerbate already marginal living standards in many Asian, African, and Middle Eastern nations, where widespread political instability and failed states are already national security concerns.

Indeed, as DOD's Quadrennial Defense Review observes, “Climate change and energy are two key factors that will play a significant role in shaping the future security environment... Climate change may act as an accelerant of instability or conflict.”

This is why, as President Obama said in accepting the Nobel Prize for peace, the world must come together to confront the twin challenges of energy security and climate change.

“There is little scientific dispute,” the President told the world, “that if we do nothing, we will face more drought, more famine, more mass displacement –all of which will fuel more conflict for decades. For this reason, it is not merely scientists and environmental activists who call for swift and forceful action – its military leaders in my own country and others who understand our common security hangs in the balance.”

Of course the primary driver of these challenges has been, and remains, our dependence on fossil fuels, which poses its own threat to our nation's security. Our continued heavy reliance on these fuels poses a clear, present and growing security risk. Indeed, our military's critical dependence on fossil fuels to power our weapons systems and deploy our troops makes possible asymmetric attacks such as Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and sabotage of our fuel convoys. Our dependence on fossil fuels leaves us vulnerable to hostile regimes, terrorists and our own technological overreach, whose consequences in the Gulf of Mexico we will be coping with for decades to come.

Moving toward low carbon energy alternatives lessens that danger and helps us confront the serious challenges of energy security and climate change. Solutions that improve energy efficiency also reduce carbon intensity and carbon emissions. Those solutions must be pursued. I am pleased that DOD is already leading the way.

The Department of Defense, as the nation's number one consumer of energy, has an important role to play in redefining America's relationship to energy and providing the kind of strategic decision-making that can ripple across the rest of the economy – acting, if you will, as a solution-multiplier.

Securing America's energy future will require visionary and committed leadership by our elected leaders, by our business leaders and by our military leaders, and innovative approaches in science and technology in order to steer a new course.

Innovation is key – for DoD and the nation. As President Obama said at West Point in May, “our strength and influence abroad begins with the steps we take at home.

He also said, “We must develop clean energy that can power new industry, unbound us from foreign oil, and preserve our planet. We must pursue science and research that unlocks wonders as unforeseen to us today as the microchip and the surface of the moon were a century ago. Simply put, American innovation must be a foundation of American power. Because at no time in human history has a nation of diminished economic vitality maintained its military and political primacy.”

There is no doubt that global trends and national challenges are making ever greater demands on our military and DoD civilian employees. But that is because DoD's expertise in critical areas of logistics, support, planning and equipment exceed those of any other department or agency. An earthquake in Haiti, assistance in border security efforts in America's southwest, support to contain and recover from the massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico – DoD, and you here today, respond when called upon.

In the wake of the worst oil spill in American history, the still unfolding events in the Gulf could usher in a new era of environmental protection and energy innovation. An era when protecting our land, water, and air are essential components of protecting our people – who depend on our natural resources. An era when environmental stewardship and national security are recognized as mutually supportive goals. And an era when American ingenuity and innovation enable us to meet those goals, and reclaim our global leadership and economic strength.

You here today are among the leaders of this new era – the age of clean energy.

Winston Churchill once said “You can always count on Americans to do the right thing – after they've tried everything else.”

But as Sir Winston, I believe, would agree, Americans are also practical, sensible people with an acute sense of right and wrong, a keen ability to assess and solve problems, a dogged determination to surmount any obstacle, and the courage to fight and succeed no matter the odds.

At this time of both peril and promise, we cannot wait. The clean energy age must begin now and you here today can begin to lead our nation into this new era so that our national heritage and treasures are preserved for our children and grandchildren.

My thanks to each of you, and especially to all of today's award winners. Congratulations.