

# CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS TO NATIONAL SECURITY

SEPTEMBER 2022

## THE BIG PICTURE

Both the Department of Defense's (DOD) global network of military installations and U.S. civilian infrastructure face climate change and extreme weather-related challenges. Climate change can also increase instability that affects U.S. security interests. GAO previously identified the significant fiscal risk that climate change poses for the U.S. government, with billions of dollars in estimated liabilities. However, climate change also poses national security risks.

**Figure 1: Selected Climate Effects on National Security**



Source: GAO (information). | GAO-22-105830



## ACTIONS TAKEN

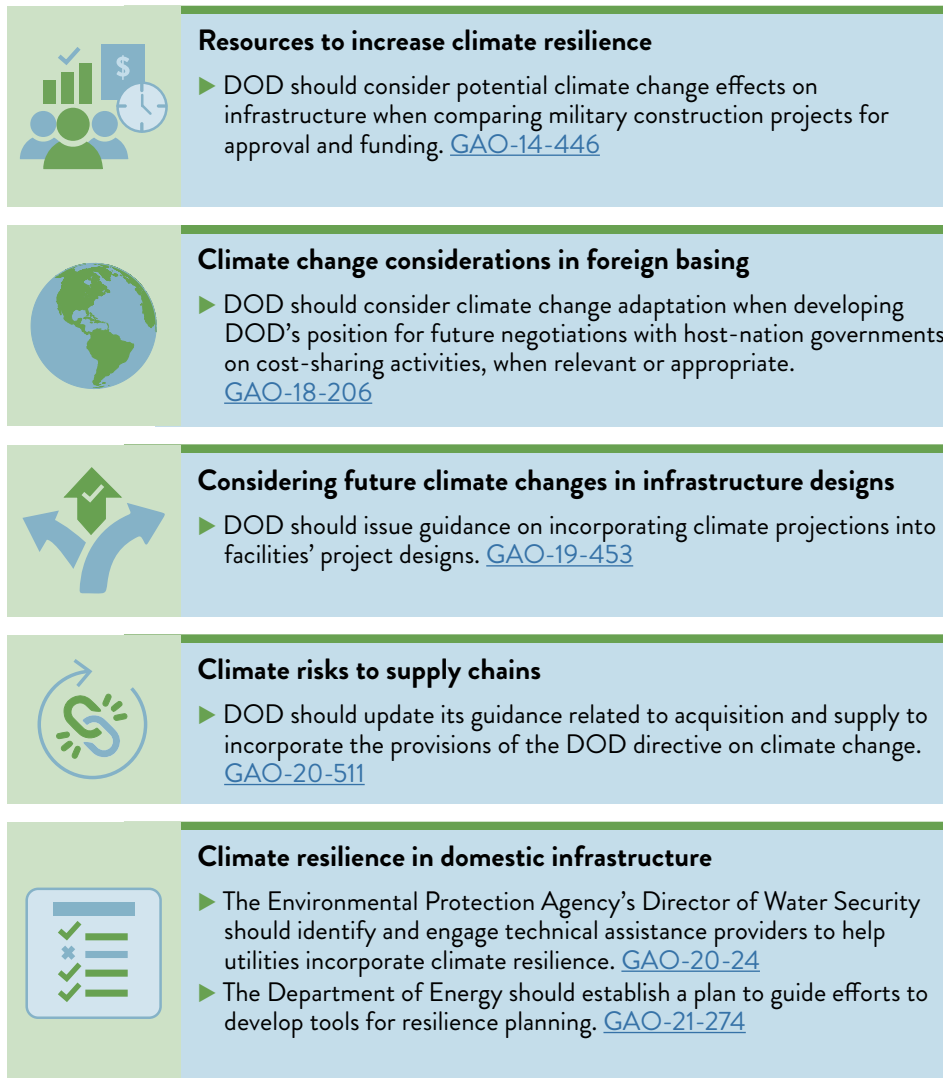
DOD and civilian agencies have taken various actions to address climate risks to national security-related infrastructure, including in response to GAO recommendations. For example:

- ▶ In 2021, DOD issued a Climate Adaptation Plan that outlines a strategic framework and lines of effort to address climate vulnerabilities, such as developing resilient infrastructure and supply chains.
- ▶ In 2020, DOD provided guidance to its installations on how to use a site-specific database of sea-level rise projections in planning and project design.
- ▶ In 2020, the Environmental Protection Agency updated a tool it developed to assist water sector utilities in assessing climate-related risks to utility assets and operations.
- ▶ In 2020, the Department of State established a Climate Security and Resilience Program, which is assessing specific risks from climate change and natural hazards to overseas U.S. embassies, consulates, and staff housing.
- ▶ In 2015, the Department of Energy partnered with 18 electric utilities to help them plan for climate change.

## GAO RECOMMENDATIONS

GAO has made numerous recommendations to help improve the nation's climate resilience and reduce national security risks, including key recommendations below.

Figure 2: Key Policy Questions and GAO Recommendations as of July 2022



Source: GAO. | GAO-22-105830

## CONCLUSIONS

Agencies have taken steps to implement our recommendations, but more work remains. GAO's recommendations that DOD and civilian agencies have not yet implemented point to ways the U.S. government can continue to improve its resilience to the effects of climate change.

These recommendations include considering potential climate change effects when comparing defense infrastructure projects for approval and funding, issuing guidance on incorporating climate projects into facilities project designs, considering climate change in acquisition and supply, and assisting civilian utilities with climate resilience efforts.

Taking steps to implement these recommendations will help both DOD and civilian agencies increase their resilience to the national security threats associated with climate change.

## ABOUT GAO

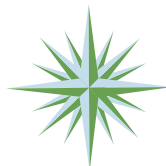
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A. Nikki Clowers, Managing Director, Congressional Relations  
[ClowersA@gao.gov](mailto:ClowersA@gao.gov), (202) 512-7114

Chuck Young, Managing Director, Public Affairs  
[YoungC1@gao.gov](mailto:YoungC1@gao.gov), (202) 512-4800



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For more information about this Snapshot, contact:  
Elizabeth A. Field, Director, Defense Capabilities and Management  
[FieldE1@gao.gov](mailto:FieldE1@gao.gov), (202) 512-2775

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