

December 2009

# NomineeAlert



## this issue:

Sharon E. Burke, Director of Operational Energy Plans and Programs, U.S. Department of Defense

## Burke's Background

Vice President for Natural Security, Center for a New American Security

Director of the National Security Project, Third Way

Policy Planning Staff, U.S. State Department

Country Director, U.S. Department of Defense Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs

Speechwriter to Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Secretary of Defense William Cohen

## EDUCATION

Williams College

Columbia University School of International Public Affairs

## Who is Sharon E. Burke?

On December 11, 2009 President Obama nominated Sharon E. Burke to be the Director of Operational Energy Plans and Programs at the U.S. Department of Defense.

Burke is an environment activist who tells us that global warming is a huge national security issue.

Burke in her role as vice president for the Center for a New American Security testified on climate change before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in July of this year. Here is how she started her testimony.

Indeed, my testimony today will focus on why it is so important to characterize climate change as a pressing national security challenge. First, the choices we make today, particularly the amount of energy we choose to consume, will determine the climate consequences we will face in the future, so this is very much about our actions right now. Second, national security capabilities can take decades to build: we need to design the ideas and equipment and recruit and train the personnel to protect and defend

the nation ten to forty years in the future, and it is clear that climate change will shape our future. Fn.1.

Burke does not want us to switch to coal to generate energy.

**“The U.S. Military needs the ability to function unhindered by an energy director who appears destined to become becoming the Defense Department Carbon Czar. Burke is clearly not the type of appointee needed for this position.”**

*-Bill Wilson, President, Americans for Limited Government*

There are those who suggest we substitute coal for imported oil, and the United States does have relatively abundant supplies of coal. Absent a major breakthrough in carbon capture and sequestration technologies, however, such a switch would greatly exacerbate global climate change and the related security concerns. *Id.* at 2.

Burke believes that natural resources are the key to winning the war in

Afghanistan.

For example, President Obama has stated repeatedly that peace in Afghanistan will be contingent on economic, civic, and political development as much as military successes. A 2009 UNEP report found, however, that most of Afghanistan's natural resources are severely degraded and that any recovery would depend on

*Continued next page...*

# What you really need to know about Burke

*Continued from first page...*

restoration of these resources. **Achieving U.S. goals in the region may well depend on our ability to tie natural resources into national security.** *Id.* (Emphasis added.)

Burke believes that climate change affects the safety of every American.

The concern, more appropriately, should be about —militarizing such challenges. **Climate change, for example, may not be a threat that soldiers can attack and defeat but it is likely to affect the safety and prosperity of every American,** both through its effects on global stability and on our local environments. Fn.1 at 3-4. (Emphasis added.)

Burke, who does not appear to have any scientific background, predicts natural disasters.

Climate change may well be a predominant national security challenge of the 21st century, posing a range of threats to U.S. and international security. There will be, for example, direct threats to the lives and property of Americans from wildfires, droughts, flooding, severe storms, and other climate-related events. Fn.1 at 6.

Burke advocates dealing with climate change head on to help the military and our national security.

There is still some skepticism within the community on the definition of—climate change, and no clear picture of the defense community’s role in dealing with these issues. At the same time, many military personnel remain ambivalent regarding the relative importance of climate change. Some officers do perceive the security risks, or see synergies with combating terrorism and improving the U.S. ability to project soft power. From this perspective, American efforts to limit climate change will engender positive benefits in terms of other U.S. national security objectives. *Id.*

Burke advocates using the public’s trust in the military to convince everyone that climate change threatens us.

The U.S. military, according to annual polls, is the single most trusted institution in the country. Public recognition of the threat that climate change – and other resource challenges – presents will help Americans more properly understand the nature of the challenge. Fn.1 at 9.

Burke even states that the alarmist rhetoric could actually be understating the problem of climate change.

Recent observations support the contention that climate change estimates have been too low, with scientists underestimating several key indicators, such as loss of sea ice and precipitation changes. To the extent that scientists have underestimated climate change, security risks associated with climate change could be worse than anticipated, which will challenge global preparedness. Fn.2.

Like others on the global warming bandwagon Burke attempts to instill the urgency of the supposed threat stating that we have to act now or else.

By the time the consequences are clear, however, it will be too late to act. ... Although this warming is already unavoidable and irreversible, two or three more decades will pass before the full amount of warming is measurable at the Earth’s surface. Continued greenhouse gas emissions will lock in additional unavoidable warming. Fn.2 at 11.

## NomineeAlert

THIS ALERT IS A SERVICE OF  
AMERICANS FOR LIMITED GOVERNMENT  
9900 MAIN STREET  
SUITE 303  
FAIRFAX, VA 22031  
703.383.0880  
WWW.GETLIBERTY.ORG

## Sources for further reading:

**Fn.1.** *Statement of Sharon Burke, “Climate Change and U.S. National Security: A Changing Global Strategic Environment,”* Senate Foreign Relations Committee, July 21, 2009. Available online at: <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2009/BurkeTestimony090721p.pdf>. (Accessed December 17, 2009.)

**Fn.2.** Sharon Burke, *Natural Security, Center for a New American Security*, June 2009, at 18. Available online at: [http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS\\_Working%20Paper\\_Natural%20Security\\_SBurke\\_June2009\\_OnlineNEW\\_0.pdf](http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS_Working%20Paper_Natural%20Security_SBurke_June2009_OnlineNEW_0.pdf). (Accessed December 17, 2009.)