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CLIMATE CHANGE REAL THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY:  
Fast Solution: Limit Commercial Jet Flights

On February 22, 2004, a secret Pentagon report<sup>1</sup> was leaked, warning of grave scenarios in the very near future due to climate change. The report points to the serious threat to our National Security in the event steps were not taken immediately to avert this potential disaster.

The report shows that climate change starting as soon as the next 20 years could be a global calamity, killing millions of lives in wars and natural disasters.

Now, more than ever, there is support and urgency to demand a U.S. moratorium on all airport expansion projects currently in the works, until the details of the Pentagon report have been fully vetted. Furthermore, there is a real need for environmental impact reviews to be taken seriously and results stringently enforced. Over the years, the review process has been increasingly overlooked as redundant and unnecessary. Now is the time to instead reinforce proper procedures and to move towards transportation that substantially reduces climate change forcing functions.

Jet aircraft atmospheric damage is unique in that exhaust emissions from such aircraft are deposited not only in the lower atmosphere but also in the cloud-forming troposphere and higher, where resulting contrails are formed and other chemicals remain to interact for decades.

The now well recognized critical role (including by the United Nations) that air transportation plays in climate change is raised to the highest levels of concern by the Pentagon's report.

*"Rather than decades or even centuries of gradual warming, recent evidence suggests the possibility that a more dire climate scenario may actually be unfolding."*

This climate scenario is driven by the heightened probability that the huge, Atlantic gulf stream flow of warm water (part of the thermohaline ocean circulation system) could cease within a relatively short time frame, with disastrous effects. The impact of this thermohaline collapse will shock many people who have been conditioned to believe that "global warming" means that it will be warmer in the United States, making winters more pleasant for many areas. In fact, it will get much colder, stormier, and drier!

Substantial advances toward this nightmare scenario will be experienced not in centuries, but in just years, or a few decades. Years, in which the world's air transportation industry, in consort with the U.S. and other governments, plan massive expansions of flight operations and corresponding pollutant emission deposits in the atmosphere (current projections of tripling within 15-20 years).

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ems.org/climate/pentagon\\_climate\\_change.pdf](http://www.ems.org/climate/pentagon_climate_change.pdf)

Commercial jet aviation, already a major factor in global warming, has the potential to soon become the number one cause of man-made climate change with these massive desired-by-airlines increases in numbers of flights, while also presenting a real and significant threat of destruction of the protective ozone layer surrounding our planet.

Dr. Katta G. Murty, Professor of Industrial and Operations Engineering, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, found in his study "Greenhouse Gas Pollution in the Stratosphere Due to Increasing Airplane Traffic, Effects On the Environment" that "Evidence that raising levels of Green House gases in the atmosphere are warming the surface of the earth and causing other changes in the earth's climate is mounting, and has become an issue of major concern." Furthermore, the report states, "It is an important problem to analyze at what altitudes additional releases of Green House gases will have maximum impact on global warming." Dr. Murty states further "This study also points out that the much more rapid melting of polar ice near the north pole compared to that at the south pole, may have been caused by the very large fraction of jet air flights in the world occurring over the northern polar region." Before we take another step towards airport expansion, we need to embrace reality and make changes now.

Patrick Neuman, Senior Hydrologist with the National Weather Service (NWS), recently released his paper *Earlier Seasonal Snowmelt Runoff in the Upper Midwest-Northern Great Plains* that found that rapid global warming is happening now and is warming much too quickly to allow adaptation by many species of plants and animals. "We know that the cause of this rapid global warming is the heavy accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere from massive emissions from burning fossil fuels for power generation. Very damaging is the direct discharge of greenhouse gas emissions and secondary effects such as contrail impacts, which are coming from commercial jet aviation, an industry that disregards the damage to the global environment and to human health."

Dr. David Travis, Professor and Chair, Dept. of Geography and Geology, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, research "has demonstrated that jet contrails have caused substantial increases in the high cloud coverage over the most heavily trafficked regions of the United States and Europe. These increases in high clouds have led to suppression of the temperature range causing both daytime cooling and nighttime warming in areas where contrails are most abundant. During the three days following Sept. 11th when no commercial aircraft were flying, the skies across the U.S. were remarkably clear with a much wider range in temperature between day and night, giving an indication of how the U.S. climate used to be prior to the days of aviation (i.e. pre-1950)."

It is apparent that the short term profit oriented air industry, already under financial siege, is not at all predisposed to accept that their services should be limited by government, though such is the need. This need is supported by not only the Pentagon report, but also, by the United States General Accounting Office.

A 2000 U.S. Government Accounting Office report (GAO/RCED-00-57) *Aviation's Effects on the Global Atmosphere Are Potentially Significant and Expected to Grow* found that it was not necessarily the amounts of emissions but other factors such as:

- “Jet aircraft emissions are deposited directly into the upper atmosphere and some of them have a greater warming effect than gases emitted closer to the surface, such as automobile exhaust.
- Carbon dioxide combined with other exhaust gases and particulates emitted from jet engines could have two to four times as great an impact on the atmosphere as carbon dioxide emissions alone.
- The growing demand for jet air service is likely to generate more emissions that cannot be offset by reductions achieved through technological improvements alone.”

There is already overwhelming evidence that now, more than ever, we need to re-examine our over-dependence on aviation and rapidly move towards transportation less threatening to our environment.

High-speed rail is an idea that is being successfully implemented in many countries, but has failed to find supporters with the political will to make it happen in the U.S. A high-speed rail system would be significantly more environmentally safe, since it emits nothing in the stratosphere, unlike aircraft, which emit huge amounts of toxic chemicals in both the lower and upper atmosphere.

The serious upper atmospheric environmental problems caused by aircraft and airport operations need great reduction and concomitant, comprehensive regulation in order to protect the public’s health, our environment and, as graphically presented in the Pentagon report, our national security.

U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg from New Jersey, a long time advocate for laws that protect our health and environment, observed, “The fact that the Pentagon even had this report commissioned shows that high ranking officials are aware that climate change is a growing threat. What’s even more telling is that this four-month old report had to be *leaked* to the press. I call on the Administration and Congress to demonstrate leadership on this global health and security threat, and enact controls on our unsustainable level of greenhouse gas emissions.”

We call on the Federal government to immediately stop moving in the wrong direction and start moving in the direction that is more sustainable, environmentally safe and less of a threat to our national security before it’s too late.

A nationwide airport expansion moratorium is mandatory while the serious ramifications of the Pentagon report are fully vetted by both the scientific community and the public and more environmentally safe transportation alternative programs are energized.

For more information see: [www.areco.org](http://www.areco.org)