

**Opening Remarks of General James L. Jones
Concordia Summit
September 19, 2016**

“Water as an International Security Priority”

Thank you Paula and the team for allowing me to share this time with such an outstanding group.

I will try to be brief.

Before serving as President Obama’s National Security Advisor I served for 40 years in the United States Marine Corps. During the bulk of my military service, U.S. national security was defined by the long twilight struggle against communism and the Soviet military threat. Security was expressed in the calculus of comparative troop strength, weapons count, and nuclear throw-weight.

But today’s threats are exponentially more diverse and complex than they were in the world we left behind in the 20th century.

The modern age of WMD, universal connectivity, and global economic integration demands a far richer conception of national and international security—one less reliant on reaction and far more focused on anticipation and prevention—one that centers on disarming the root causes and major multipliers of conflict and instability.

Viewed from that lens what comes into sharp relief is that the premiere strategic threat to global security is not a particular country, ideology, or weapon. It’s **HUMAN WANTS AND NEEDS** --for unsatisfied life-basics, including food, energy, water, and even dignity.

It’s said that, “Water is life!” As we speak, 1.8 billion human beings have no access to clean water. The bulk of this population clings to life in the most unstable, violence-torn regions on Earth where terrorist enterprises are working their hardest to capture operating space and followers.

Such deprivation is a human tragedy.

It is **NOT**, however, one of human development alone. The growing imbalance in global water supply and demand is metastasizing into **THE** most toxic threat to world peace, and international stability. When I say water...that of course implicates the food and energy coefficients of the “water, food, and energy nexus,” as they are indivisible.

We see manifestation of the water-security dynamic in three ways that I hope our discussion will touch on today.

First, **water insufficiency as a key driver of instability**. Water scarcity's role in weakening societies...in fomenting failed states...in catalyzing disruptive mass migration...and in ripening populations for exploitation and conflict is not some abstract, distant danger; It's happening today. We have seen burst into conflict in Syria, Yemen, and across the arc of the Arab Spring...and the trends are chilling.

Second, **water as a weapon** which we have viewed with horror in the actions of ISIS, and is likely to be only the beginning of a growing trend in the case of conflict in vulnerable regions.

Three, and more hopefully, **water abundance as a pillar of stabilization and restabilization**. By this, I mean that preventing conflict, and bringing peace and stability to today's conflict zones, will require not just by winning the marshal contest but by sustainably meeting basic human requirements.

The bottom line is that mankind confronts monumental mission of drastically increasing water, food and energy production and productivity to meet the needs of 11 billion souls by mid-century. This, in the context of already strained resources under severe threat from a changing climate. Meeting this challenge, it seems to me, calls out for a new 21st century security triad composed of:

- One, visionary governmental, scientific, and commercial leadership...
- Two, unprecedented collaboration and partnership...and
- Three, swift and disruptive innovation...each, as if our collective futures depended upon. Quite simply because it does! There is much the public and private sectors can do in catalyzing all three.

Though the challenge is severe, I am by nature an optimist. I see in the water, food, and energy challenge not just an existential threat...but a monumental opportunity for national and global common cause against a shared adversary for a better future – one fostered by abundance and rooted in peace. And that is a future worth fighting for!

Thank you.

###