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CIA Opens Center on Climate Change and National Security

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September 25, 2009

The Central Intelligence Agency is launching The Center on Climate Change and National Security as the focal point for its work on the subject. The Center is a small unit led by senior specialists from the Directorate of Intelligence and the Directorate of Science and Technology.

Its charter is not the science of climate change, but the national security impact of phenomena such as desertification, rising sea levels, population shifts, and heightened competition for natural resources. The Center will provide support to American policymakers as they negotiate, implement, and verify international agreements on environmental issues. That is something the CIA has done for years. "Decision makers need information and analysis on the effects climate change can have on security. The CIA is well positioned to deliver that intelligence," said Director Leon Panetta.

The Center will assume responsibility for coordinating with Intelligence Community partners on the review and declassification of imagery and other data that could be of use to scientists in their own climate-related research. This effort draws on imagery and other information that is collected in any event, assisting the US scientific community without a large commitment of resources.

The new Center does more than bring together in a single place expertise on an important national security topic—the effect environmental factors can have on political, economic, and social stability overseas. It will also be aggressive in outreach to academics and think tanks working the issue. The goal is a powerful asset recognized throughout our government, and beyond, for its knowledge and insight.

Historical Document
 Posted: Sep 25, 2009 11:19 AM
 Last Updated: Apr 29, 2013 01:11 PM

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