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Title of Defense: A Content Analysis of Environmental Security Studies within the U.S. Military Community

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## **ABSTRACT**

A historical assessment of the environmental security content of U.S. military journals and academic papers was conducted. Adapting the American Council /United Nations University Millennium Project's Conceptual Framework for Environmental Security and the Environmental Security Database coding system, this content-analysis study examined 50 documents written between 1989 and 2009. A code book and coding form were created to analyze: (1) types of threats to environmental security, (2) kinds, media, and/or targets of environmental security threats, (3) sources of environmental security or insecurity, and (4) environmental security policy and decision responsibilities.

The results indicate that actions resulting in environmental security threats are due primarily to ignorance and/or mismanagement, as well as a mix of natural/human action at the regional/transborder level. The findings also suggest that physical (e.g., water) and biological (e.g., forests) media and processes are targets of environmental security threats, with the sources of environmental security and insecurity occurring as a result of social, legal, and political factors, as well as military actions. Furthermore, this study determined that national governments, primarily that of the United States and the military in particular, are responsible for environmental security policy- and decision-making. The top three environmental security issues – resource scarcity, the effects of climate change, and military impact on the environment – have considerable implications for the U.S. military. Research identified in this content analysis recommended that the military should focus its environmental security efforts on recognizing and assessing specific environmental issues threatening stability and peace – notably the relationship between environmental scarcity and conflict, and the effects of climate change – relevant to military activities or having military solutions. Furthermore, this research suggested that the United States create a national or Department of Defense environmental security policy, plan and/or strategy.

Understanding these environmental security issues allows the military to pursue several missions. These include fostering effective military planning for war and for operations other than war (including emergency responses and humanitarian aid), identifying underlying causes of regional instability and seeking ways to promote peace, identifying gaps in environmental security readiness (especially in relation to disaster incidents induced by climate change, and adequacy of resources/infrastructure), training and allocating forces, and increasing environmental stewardship and protection.