

Climate protection needs peace!

How the military and armaments fuel the climate catastrophe

War causes death and destruction, also of the environment and the climate. The production of weapons, vehicles, fighter jets and ships generates huge amounts of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Military vehicles guzzle vast amounts of fuel both during exercises and when deployed. War and the military industry contribute significantly to the global climate catastrophe. The German Affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) advocates disarmament and demilitarization and demands a human security policy rather than military defense. We need civil conflict resolution, climate mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage and a just social ecological transition. Climate protection can only be achieved together.

IPPNW Germany physicians warn:

War and the military...



Military GHG emissions contribute significantly to world-wide emissions. If the world's military were a country, it would have the 4th highest carbon footprint.



Exceeding \$ 2 trillion in 2021, global military spending massively exceeds spending on climate and environmental protection. One year's military spending by the top ten military spenders would pay for promised international climate finance for 15 years.



Soil, air, and groundwater are polluted by military activities worldwide. For instance, 1.6 million tons of waste left over from war still exist in German waters alone.



War and the military cannot be green. Military security still relies on safeguarding the supply of fossil fuels instead of reducing dependencies through the massive expansion of renewable energies.



The climate catastrophe exacerbates existing dangerous social and political situations and can thus become a driver for conflict. Violent conflicts in turn hinder the mitigation of the effects of global warming. This is how the climate catastrophe and war reinforce each other – causing suffering to all those affected.



The CO₂ "footprint" of war, the military, and armaments is not sufficiently published. It is still not an obligatory component of national GHG emission reporting or climate protection measures.

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War and the military...

1. heat the climate

The military and war make a massive CO₂ "footprint", contributing 5.5% to global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). In 2017, the US Department of Defense alone produced more GHG emissions than countries like Denmark or Sweden. A Russian SU34 jet fighter emits between 30 and 32 tons of CO₂ per flight hour. One Eurofighter Typhoon consumes 3,500 kilograms of fuel per flight hour – equivalent to eleven tons of CO₂. That means: One flight hour is more than the average CO₂ footprint of one German citizen – or of 35 Kenyan citizens – for a whole year. A Ukrainian environmental organization estimated that the first nine months of the war and its consequences amount to 100 million tons of CO₂ due to fighting, resultant forest fires, the destruction of energy infrastructure (including the Nord Stream pipeline) and from reconstruction in the aftermath.

2. gobble up vast amounts of money

In 2021, global military spending rose to \$2.1 trillion. The five largest military spenders are the United States, China, India, United Kingdom and Russia. Four of these countries are also the largest GHG emitters. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has been used to approve major increases in military spending in the US and EU since then. At COP15 in 2009, rich countries in the Global North made a commitment to approve an (insufficient) sum of \$100 billion annually to fund adaptation to the climate crisis in developing countries. This promise has not been met. A reduction and re-allocation of military spending to provide finances for climate mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage could remedy that. One year's military spending by the top ten military spenders would cover international commitments to finance climate action for the next 15 years.

3. destroy the environment

Wars kill people and devastate their habitats. Military exercises and waging wars pollute the water, soil, and air. Huge swathes of land are appropriated for their use, and they have considerable long-term consequences. For instance, more than 8,500 ships lie at the bottom of the oceans – mostly sunk during World War II. As they break apart, they release millions of tons of fuel, crude oil, and marine diesel. Approximately one million people still suffer today from the long-term effects of 'Agent Orange', the carcinogenic herbicide and defoliant chemical weapon used by the US army during the Vietnam War. According to scientists, the use of just a fraction of the current nuclear arsenal would be enough to trigger a climate catastrophe and a subsequent global

famine. The use of the actively deployed US and Russian nuclear weapons (about 3,000) would mean that our planet would no longer be habitable for people and most animals.

4. cement our dependency on fossil fuels

Military logistics and the operation of bases, exercises and combat operations are all run on fossil fuels. The US military is thus one of the largest institutional consumers of fossil fuels in the world, needing 350,000 barrels of oil per day in 2016. Recently, the militaries of the richest countries are claiming to be tackling their carbon "footprint". However, most national military climate strategies remain unconvincing. Securing access to sources of raw materials and transport routes is still seen as an issue of "national security". Raw materials and fossil fuels are thus important catalysts for war and a factor in sustaining them. Prioritising renewable energies over armament and fossil industry could change that.

5. increase human insecurity

The arms industry, military, and war destroy the environment – the very foundation of human security – and contribute significantly to the climate catastrophe. This is known to be an amplifier of conflict factors. Extreme weather events such as drought, floods, storms and fires exacerbate existing conflicts, especially in regions where basic human rights are already undermined. For example, from 2006 to 2011, the worst drought in 500 years in Syria led to extreme crop failures, which neither the Syrian government nor the international community were able to effectively counter. The result was political unrest in the cities, which later contributed to the 2011 uprising. The impact of the Ukraine war on the global food system has been felt around the globe, hitting the poorest and most vulnerable people hardest. Violent conflict, hunger and poverty again hamper the capacity for climate adaptation, leading to a vicious circle.

6. shirk their responsibility

The role of climate killers – the military and the arms industry – is being systematically ignored by governments, as well as by the International Panel on Climate Change. The Kyoto Protocol (1997) excluded military GHG reporting explicitly, the Paris Climate Agreement (2015) left analysis and reporting of the military CO₂ "footprint" to the discretion of national governments. Critical analyses from scientific and civil organizations are hampered by insufficient data. Reporting of military GHG emissions and concise, committed plans to reduce and eventually eliminate them must be part of effective climate strategies.



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