

The Military's Contribution to Climate Collapse



Although it's been difficult to get hard numbers on the Department of Defense's total carbon footprint, it's largely accepted that the U.S. military is the single biggest energy consumer in the world. The DOD itself said that it sent out more than 70 million metric tons of carbon dioxide in 2014 — roughly the amount of CO₂ put out by Sweden and Norway combined — but that number is an under-estimate because it excludes hundreds of overseas bases, vehicles, and anything labeled secret.

Vehicles, the military has a lot of vehicles. One is the F-35 fighter. It's made by Lockheed Martin and they call it the Lightning 2. Despite its cool name it's not electric powered. It uses jet fuel and its tank holds about 19,000 pounds of it. Combat loaded it gets about 0.4 miles to the gallon, less than half a mile to a gallon. You can imagine the CO₂ it puts out. The military plans to spend a trillion dollars to build and maintain 2,600 of these F-35 fighters

In wartime of course more fuel is burned up by war vehicles and transport. It's been estimated that the first four years of the Iraq war put 141 million tons of carbon dioxide into the air. That's the equivalent of putting 25 million cars on U.S. roads for a year.

Besides the amount of greenhouse gases produced by the military we need to talk about the trillion dollars spent each year for the upkeep of the present military and for our debts to veterans. A trillion dollars That's money we desperately need to remake the world at what U.N. scientists say is a scale and speed for which there is "no historic precedent".

It should be obvious that part of the effort turn us away from our present path to climate doom must be a struggle to end war. The problem is we have a system where the war-goods corporations are private and are free to lobby in a million different ways for bigger and every more gargantuan militaries. One idea is to nationalize these companies, to make them government run or worker run. The bigger answer is to break our addiction to war.

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