WIN WITHOUT WAR

Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief
Intel for Advocacy

DATE: May 19, 2022
SL: The planet's hot, so's the F-35's engine

The Takeaway:
- While there's consensus that climate change is an existential threat to humanity, one of its major drivers is often overlooked: militarism.
- Emitting more greenhouse gasses than many countries, the U.S. military significantly contributes to climate change as well as exacerbates global violence, poverty, and insecurity.
- "Greening" the military is not the solution. To truly address the climate crisis, we must cut the Pentagon budget, invest in international institutions and treaties to reduce conflict, and support the Global South in building resilience against climate change.

The Military-Industrial Carbon Footprint

The Planet's Problem
Almost forty years after the world's governments and scientists came to a consensus that humans are causing climate change, we still have not taken the bold action needed to address it.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nations are increasingly sounding the alarm that we are on a trajectory for the planet to warm between 2°C and 3°C, almost double the temperature limits of the Paris agreement. Without drastic action to shift course, we are poised to suffer through an environmental calamity of our own making very soon.

The Polluting Warmachine
The U.S. military generates more greenhouse gasses than 140 whole countries. That puts the U.S. military as one of the biggest polluters on the planet. Our efforts to make ourselves safer through military might are a huge contributor to the biggest threat to everyone's safety – climate change. Any conversation that involves cutting emissions must include reducing the size and scope of the U.S. military.

The U.S. military envelops the entire planet — our capability to wage war by land, air, sea, and increasingly space is made possible by the scattered military bases planted across the planet. Supported by a budget that could be as much as $813 billion for FY2023, with wasteful

spending on unnecessary weapons like the [nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N)](#), the U.S. military is poised to grow even larger.

The Plan Misdirected

The U.S. national security community is acutely aware of the effects of climate change — they've been planning and gaming out scenarios since the late 2000s. For example, there's a [National Intelligence Estimate](#) and [Global Trends 2030](#), both products of the National Intelligence Council; the Department of Defense's [Risk Analysis](#) and [Adaptation Plan](#); and the [Army even has its own climate plan](#).

But the U.S. national security community is [primarily focused on adapting to fighting wars](#) in a climate changed world. Efforts to reduce greenhouse emissions extend only towards electrifying non-tactical vehicles and transitioning to net zero carbon electricity generation for military bases. In other words, the SUVs and the Sedans the military procure will be electric vehicles, but the [F-35 will still burn 22 gallons of jet fuel per minute — a whopping 1,340 gallons of jet fuel per hour](#).

The Politics of Bread

We're already starting to live with the effects of climate change. Extreme weather patterns are now the norm and not the exception. Beginning in late March, a fifth of the total human population living in [South Asia has been suffering](#) through an extended drought that has sustained temperatures upwards of 120°F or 48.8°C. [Birds](#) have dropped dead from the sky.

The compromised environment that climate change creates exacerbates existing competition and conflict for resources. [According to the World Food Programme](#), climate change is the second leading cause of hunger. Conflict is the first, which climate change also intensifies and inflames.

Food insecurity and the economic stress people feel, particularly in countries with poor governance structures, quickly snowball into [political instability, violence,](#) and [increasingly forced migration leading to refugee crises.](#)

The Progressive Climate Fight

In addition to emphasizing the urgency of the climate crisis and championing a Global Green New Deal, progressives' climate advocacy should include reducing the U.S. military footprint. It all comes down to fighting in the swamp on the federal government's resource allocations. Budget blueprints signal policy priorities. We must be fighting to shift our limited tax dollars away from the already bloated Pentagon towards diplomacy and sustainable, equitable development.

That also means negotiating arms control treaties to limit the spread of carbon-intensive arms races, strengthening international institutions to manage resource competitions and resolve

conflicts, and supporting change-makers in the Global South to build stronger governance structures and creating resiliency against the effects of climate change. This 21st century fight the progressive movement must undertake won't be easy, but it will be worth it.

BURIED LEDES

Recently, *The New York Times* [revealed](#) that the Pentagon tried to hide a 2019 U.S. airstrike in Syria that killed dozens of civilians. **This revelation forced the Pentagon to open a new inquiry into the strike – but lo and behold – the [inquiry has found](#) no wrongdoing**. Remind us again why the Pentagon is allowed to investigate itself??

One in six people worldwide are killed by the same threat — and it's not malaria, wars, or car crashes. [It's pollution](#). If you're somehow not yet convinced the biggest security challenges we face don't have military solutions, let this be a wake up call.

The United States was just ranked the [most secretive financial jurisdiction](#) in the world. What an honor: to be recognized as an enabler of global corruption and an **easy place for oligarchs and criminals to hide their financial assets**. We're number one! USA! USA!

UN human rights experts have said that the Israeli government's forcible eviction of around 1,200 Palestinians from their homes in Masafer Yatta in the West Bank, may be a [war crime](#). The State Department should forcefully denouce the evictions, now.

While some have "moved on" from the pandemic, we can't forget its devastating impact on so many of our friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors. On Monday, **the official U.S. death toll from COVID-19 reached [1 million people](#)**, and is likely much higher.

A positive step for Cuba policy: the **Biden administration is [reinstating](#) the Cuban family reunification program, increasing travel options, and allowing people to send more money to family members in Cuba**. Still, Biden should just end the blockade already.

The U.S. is sending hundreds of [soldiers to Somalia](#) to train its forces to fight the insurgent group al-Shabab, even though "training and equipping" foreign militaries has [failed](#) in the past. It's also a stark reminder that our forever wars are very much not over.

And finally, a **beautiful, beautiful [freudian slip.](#)**