

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 emissions (GHGs). 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 sufficient resources for civil conflict resolution, diplomacy, and a social and ecological transformation. Climate protection can only be achieved together.**

IPPNW Germany physicians warn:

War and the military...



1. **heat the climate**

Military GHG emissions contribute significantly to world-wide emissions. The US military alone emits more than many entire countries—and would be 47th on the country index.



2. **gobble up vast amounts of money**

Global military spending massively exceeds spending on climate and environmental protection. 50.3 billion euros were earmarked for the Ministry of Defense in the 2022 German budget. Now, this sum should be increased by a further 100 billion euros.



3. **destroy the environment**

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



4. **cement our dependency on fossil fuels**

The US military is one of the largest single institutional consumers of fossil fuels worldwide. Military security relies on save-guarding the supply of fossil fuels instead of reducing dependencies through the massive expansion of renewable energies.



5. **increase human insecurity**

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.



6. **shirk their responsibility**

The CO₂ “boot” print of war, the military, and armaments is not published. It is still not an obligatory component of national GHG reporting or climate protection measures.

Climate protection needs peace

How the Military and Armaments fuel the Climate Catastrophe

War and the military

1. heat the climate

The military and war make a massive CO₂ “boot” print. In 2017, the US Department of Defense alone produced more greenhouse gas (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 German Eurofighter Typhoon consumes 3,500 kilograms of fuel per flight hour—equivalent to eleven tons of CO₂. That means: one flight hour is about the same as the average CO₂ footprint of one German citizen for a whole year, already way too much. In 2018, the German Eurofighter jets spent 10,480 flight hours in the air. More than nine million trees would be needed to capture the resulting 115,280 tons of CO₂.

2. gobble up vast amounts of money

The German defense budget for 2022 is expected to exceed 50 billion euros. Thus, Germany has the largest defense budget in the EU. Now an additional 100 billion euros are to be enshrined in the Basic Law. Money that is lacking elsewhere. The climate protection package announced as groundbreaking in 2019 amounts to less than a third of this sum each year: an initial total of 54 billion euros over four years until 2023. Despite the pandemic, defense spending is increasing worldwide and reached a record high of 1,981 billion US dollars in 2020. Scientists from the journal ‘Science’ calculated that 1,400 billion US dollars’ worth of investments in climate protection needs to be made annually until 2024 to reach the goals set by the Paris Climate Agreement.

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 taken 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 during the Vietnam War. According to scientists, the use of just a fraction (about 100) 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 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. At the same time, securing access to sources of raw materials and transport routes is seen as an issue of “national security” by the German government. Raw materials and, above all, energy resources are important catalysts for war and a factor in sustaining them. At the same time, they consolidate our dependence on dictatorships and war-mongers. Replace the consumption of fossil fuels with renewable energies, and many justifications for increased armament and combat missions would no longer apply.

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. This is especially the case where basic human rights are insufficient from the start. 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 will be felt around the globe, hitting the poorest and most vulnerable people hardest. Those threatened most by the climate catastrophe and violent conflict are the same people who contribute least to the cause—women, children, those on a low income, and the disadvantaged.

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 “bootprint” to the discretion of national governments. Critical analyses from scientific and civil organizations are hampered by insufficient data. State and arms producers—particularly in Europe—refuse to be transparent, hiding behind the lack of an obligation to report, and claims of national security. Transparency through documentation and publication of the military CO₂ “bootprint” is, however, essential for an effective climate strategy.

