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TIPPING POINT NORTH SOUTH SUBMISSION TO THE BELÉM MISSION TO 1.5

CONTEXT

Since the Industrial Revolution the military has been one of the leading drivers for the wholesale adoption of fossil fuels for both itself and the wider society (coal had been essential for the British Empire, and then later oil became key for the American Empire's takeover).¹ **Fossil fuels thus became the lifeblood of the modern military** and this will remain the case well beyond 2050. Furthermore, wars (including wars for oil) and rampant militarism are major contributors to "energy insecurity" (for example, the energy cost of Russia's invasion of Ukraine to the EU and UK from 2022 to 2025 was \$1.8 trillion);² to the rush for military-relevant critical minerals extraction; and to the undermining of international co-operation and multilateralism³.

We are in a new global arms race. The world is witnessing more wars now in 2026 than any time since WW2. Annual global military spending is pushing US\$3 trillion and high military spending is the enabler of war.

A SIGNIFICANT BARRIER TO AMBITION & IMPLEMENTATION OF NDCs + NAPs IS THE CURRENT RUNAWAY GLOBAL ARMS RACE

A significant barrier to ambition and implementation of NDCs & NAPs - as well as a critical impediment to international cooperation - is the rush to ever greater militarisation.

Despite the existential threat of the climate emergency, the world has been plunged into an arms race by a small number of nations, in full knowledge that military spending and military emissions *positively correlate*.⁴ Global (non-conflict) military emissions already account for about 5.5% of total global

¹ <https://direct.mit.edu/books/book/5413/The-Pentagon-Climate-Change-and-WarCharting-the>

² <https://transitionsecurity.org/trillion-dollar-bills/>

³ <https://transformdefence.org/publication/how-to-transform-defence-10-talking-points-for-a-difficult-conversation/>

⁴ <https://transformdefence.org/publication/natos-3-5-spending-goal/>

greenhouse gas emissions, an amount which will rise even further in the case of war.⁵ Despite this, countries are currently still not required to report military emissions in their national reporting to the UNFCCC. While some published their military emissions independently, **almost no country has disclosed their full military carbon footprint** (much less ‘bootprint’ that includes conflict-related emissions).⁶

The high spending fossil-fuel reliant militaries want us to believe they can “green” their way to net zero, but **militaries are the largest institutional greenhouse gases emitters in the world** and they will remain utterly dependent on fossil fuels for many decades to come.⁷ Since the modern military cannot exist without fossil fuels, it and its associated (arms) industries are one of the hardest to decarbonise (economic) sectors. Why? Because the more they spend on gas-guzzling big-ticket military equipment, the more military emissions are emitted.⁸ **The latest generation of gas-guzzling weaponry systems, for example the F-35 fighter jet consumes around 5,500 litres of jet fuel per flight hour.** Shockingly, are all expected to be in service beyond 2050 – in complete opposition to the 2050 Net-Zero goal. It is therefore impossible for military to “green” its way out of fossil-fuel addiction – fuel switching is not a realistic plan for current and next-generation military jets, tanks and warships nor the arms industry’s production of bombs, missiles and weapon systems.⁹

NO FREE PASS – DECARBONISATION AND DEMILITARISATION GO HAND IN HAND

Decarbonisation and demilitarisation are two sides of the same coin and logically lead to the reversal of runaway military spending.

The global top 20 military spenders alone, despite comprising a mere 10% of the number of countries in the world, account for more than 80% of the total global military spending (more than \$2.7 trillion in 2024)¹⁰. It is estimated that since 2001 the **top 20 military spenders combined dedicated US\$40 trillion** on their militaries and are therefore responsible for at least **10 billion tCO₂e of military-related emissions during the first quarter of the 21th century**;¹¹ this figure does not include conflict-related emissions.

With all of society being required to decarbonise and transition away from the fossil-fuel based economy, **the military-oil-industrial complex must not remain a destructive exception**.¹² Its intentional omission by world powers is and will remain a major obstacle to humanity’s 100% renewable future, enshrining the ‘right’ to initiate (often resource) wars in order to guarantee “energy security” – synonymous with the unchallenged assured existence of the fossil-fuel military. This is in

⁵ <https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/estimating-military-s-global-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

⁶ <https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/military-greenhouse-gas-emissions-reporting-how-reliable-it>

⁷ <https://time.com/6148778/us-military-climate-change/>

⁸ <https://transformdefence.org/publication/indefensible/>

⁹ <https://www.jcfj.ie/article/overturning-the-economics-of-war-to-deliver-a-co-operative-future-and-peaceful-green-prosperity/>

¹⁰ <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2025/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2024>

¹¹ <https://transformdefence.org/publication/climate-reparations-for-military-emissions/>

¹² <https://www.degrowthjournal.org/publications/2023-08-21-placing-the-military-in-the-degrowth-narrative/>

sharp contrast to the clean, green, often decentralised renewable energy sources that are in abundance globally and that barely need to be “secured”.

In peacetime and in war, high military-spending, fossil-fuel dependent militaries are at the heart of the climate crisis.¹³ Calls for the **reduction and reallocation of military spending have been firmly embedded within the United Nations** since its founding.¹⁴ Now more than ever is the time to act.

The genocide of Palestinian people, wars in Ukraine, Iran and Sudan are all forcing the issue of war onto the climate agenda for two indivisible reasons – the absence of mandatory military emissions reporting and wasted billions on a fossil-fuel reliant military while climate finance needs are wanting.

We hope the Belem Mission to 1.5 will not let this issue pass without attention.

Standing up for people and planet means advocating for military decarbonisation and demilitarisation.¹⁵

SOLUTIONS: HOW BELEM MISSION TO 1.5 CAN ADDRESS THIS MAJOR BARRIER AND ENABLE THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF NDCS AND NAPS

In peacetime and in war high military-spending and fossil-fuel dependent militaries are at the heart of the climate crisis. Therefore, both demilitarisation and military decarbonisation are central in the fulfilment of ambitious and 2050-Net-Zero compatible nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans (NAPs). As a start this means addressing critical gaps in UNFCCC reporting alongside ways in which nations can advance greater international co-operation by reversing runaway military spending. Combined, they are a vital element in the progressive transition away from fossil fuels in order to create sustainable societies and economies.

1. **No exemption for military emissions:** All nations to compulsorily report comprehensive and explicit GHG military- and conflict-related emissions to IPCC/UNFCCC.
2. **Military decarbonisation:** All nations to include their militaries and the associated supply chains (eg the military technology industry) in their GHG emission reduction plans and targets in NDCs and NAPs.
3. **Decarbonisation of the military-oil-industrial complex:** Emissions by the supply chain of the military (eg the arms industry) are estimated to be around 4 times as much as by the military.¹⁶ The arms industry is among the most carbon intensive economic sectors. Therefore, participants in the military supply chain must either decarbonise or transition to other clean industries.
4. **Implement Article 2.1.(c) of the Paris Agreement** which obliges states to “making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-

¹³ <https://transformdefence.org/publication/summit-of-the-future/>

¹⁴ <https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789210046459>

¹⁵ [https://www.cell.com/one-earth/abstract/S2590-3322\(25\)00284-2](https://www.cell.com/one-earth/abstract/S2590-3322(25)00284-2)

¹⁶ <https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/military-spending-rises-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions-what-does-research-say>

resilient development”. Increased and high military spending undermines the mandate of Article 2.1.(c) and should therefore be progressively reduced to less than 1% of GDP.

5. **Proposal for Demilitarisation:** since military spending accelerates the climate emergency, a Working Group should be formed led by progressive nations that wish to support research, advancement and implementation of route(s) by which nations can agree on the universal and equitable redirection of wasted military spending to climate finance and just transition.¹⁷
6. **UNSC Reform:** Military decarbonisation to be part of the UN Security Council mandate and UNSC reform, making way for people/planet centred, progressive, cooperative, climate-emergency-appropriate policies.

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Tipping Point North South is a UK based advocacy and campaigns organisation. Its primary project is *Transform Defence for Sustainable Human Safety*, which addresses the impact of global military emissions on the climate together with the impact of runaway military spending on climate finance and just transition. This work is focussed on UNFCCC processes.

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¹⁷ <https://transformdefence.org/the-five-percent-proposal/>