

NO WARMING, NO WAR



Why Not Green the Military?



The largest industrial military in the world is also one of the biggest polluters. Maintaining a massive military requires significant investment in carbon-intensive infrastructure and gas-guzzling equipment. The carbon footprint of the military is tremendous. So why isn't "greening the military" a good solution?

What is greening the military?

The military's significant carbon footprint has garnered attention from some progressive policymakers, and responded with plans to "Green the Military." During her bid for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States, Elizabeth Warren [released a plan](#) to reduce the military's carbon emissions by requiring the Pentagon to achieve net-zero emissions for all its non-combat bases and infrastructure by 2030 and commit billions of dollars to new Pentagon energy efficiency research. This is among the most high-profile proposals from policymakers to "green" the military by making it more fuel efficient and cutting carbon emissions.

While we should be critical of the U.S. military's destructive environmental track record, advocates for peace and the environment should be cautious of calls to "green the military."

Cutting emissions sounds great! Why is greening the military a false solution?

- Such proposals tend to only address a fraction of the U.S. military's fossil fuel consumption and emissions. For example, [Elizabeth Warren's Climate Resiliency and Readiness Act](#) excludes "operational" emissions sources, which includes the high-emitting machinery used to transport troops and weaponry around the globe.
- The reality is that solar energy, electric vehicles, or aspirations of "carbon neutrality" may promise fuel-efficiency but would not make the U.S. military any less violent or oppressive. The climate justice movement calls for a restructuring of an extractive economy that is harming people and ecosystems. Such aspirations and militarism are fundamentally at odds.
- The United States has a well-known history of fighting wars for oil and, increasingly, deploys military power in response to climate threats and climate-related migration. Greening the military does nothing to change the purpose, strategies or activities of the military, which are tied to upholding the extractive economy. The fossil fuel industry also relies on militarized state violence to uphold its operations around

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the globe. Those who fight to protect their lands from extractive industries are often met with state and paramilitary violence. The domestic police and paramilitary forces that uphold the extractive economy are often supported through training or equipment by the US. military.

- Not only is militarism a key feature of the extractive economy that drives climate change, the Pentagon also monopolizes the funding we need to seriously address the climate crisis. The military budget in 2020 was *272 times larger* than the federal budget for energy efficiency and renewable energy.

I heard the military is already greening its operations. Isn't that a good thing?

The military's supposed commitment to going green can be misleading. The US incorporates climate change into military planning in three significant ways:

1. Accounting for the impact that climate change, like rising sea level and wildfires, will have on military infrastructure, like bases and ports.
2. The development of "green fuels" to power the military arsenal. Keep in mind, that alternative fuels like biofuels are often themselves not that environmentally friendly. As the world's largest institutional consumer of petroleum, keeping military machinery fueled-up can be a major vulnerability to military operations. The military's strategic interest revolves around safeguarding fuel transit routes and reducing the military's oil dependency.
3. Preparing for what the military characterizes as "new security threats." The DoD identifies resource scarcity and climate destabilization to cause more armed conflict and mass migration and often frames migrants seeking refuge in the United States as the security threat.

Each of these problems are rooted in concerns about the military's operability and invite "solutions" that justify expanded militarization and bigger military budgets, not a renegotiation of priorities to shift funds away from the war-machine and towards climate solutions.

If greening the military isn't the solution, what is?

To bring about the truly Just Transition we need, plans to confront climate change must also address militarization. With that said, "greening the military" or finding ways to wage eco-friendly war miss the boat, and the [Pentagon's destructive environmental legacy](#) calls into question the true motivations behind "greening" operations. Recognizing the relationships between war and violence, imperialism, the military industrial complex, and the fossil fuel industry demands far more transformative solutions than greenwashing militarization.

Instead, let's find ways of framing climate change and national security that challenge old conceptualizations of national security and national interest. Let's shift our priorities from a war economy and redirect significant military resources including money, infrastructure, and people toward implementing real solutions to the climate crisis.