

San Diego Free Press

Grassroots News & Progressive Views

The US Military is a Major Contributor to Global Warming

NOVEMBER 14, 2014 BY JOHN LAWRENCE

Share this:



The US Military: Protecting Our Freedom While Destroying Our Planet

*Editor's Note:
This week SD Free Press is re-posting past articles relevant to our War and Peace theme. This article was originally published back in June, 2014*

By John Lawrence



Search this website ...

San Diego Free Press Has Suspended Publication as of Dec. 14



Let it be known that Frank Gormlie, Patty Jones, Doug Porter, Annie Lane, Brent Beltrán, Anna Daniels, and Rich Kacmar did something necessary and beautiful together for 6 1/2 years. Together, we advanced the cause of journalism by advancing the cause of justice. It has been a helluva ride. "Sometimes a great notion..." (Click here for more details)

The [impact](#) of the US military on climate change is enormous due to its excessive consumption of fuel oil. The US must spread its influence across the oil producing parts of the world in order to protect its supply of oil.

The US military consumes huge amounts of oil so that it may preserve strategic access to oil in order to get the oil it needs to preserve strategic access to oil and so on in a never ending loop. Insatiable militarism is the single greatest institutional contributor to the growing natural disasters intensified by global climate change.

The US military is the largest single consumer of energy in the world. If it were a country, the Department of Defense (DoD) would rank 34th in the world in average daily oil use, coming in just behind Iraq and just ahead of Sweden.

Within the DoD, the US Air Force is the largest oil consumer. Not only does the military consume a lot of oil, they pay outrageous prices for it. The Pentagon pays an average of [\\$400](#) to put a gallon of fuel into a combat vehicle or aircraft in Afghanistan. The DoD uses [4.6 billion US gallons of fuel](#) annually, an average of 12.6 million gallons of fuel per day.

Electricity usage by the military, which accounts for even more greenhouse gas emissions, is also gargantuan. In FY 2006, the DoD used almost 30,000 gigawatt hours of electricity at a cost of almost \$2.2 billion. The DoD's electricity use would supply enough electricity to power more than 2.6 million average American homes.

In fiscal year 2012, the DoD consumed [about a billion gigawatt hours of site delivered energy](#) at a cost of 20.4 billion dollars. While consuming that amount of energy, DoD emitted 70 million metric tons of CO₂. And yet, total DoD energy use and costs are even higher simply because the energy use and costs arising from the contractors to support military operations both domestically and abroad are not included in DoD's data.



[Click for the #ResistanceSD archives](#)

**Make a Non-Tax-Deductible
Donation**





Military fuel is more polluting because of the fuel type used for aviation.

CO₂ emissions from jet fuel per gallon are triple those from diesel and oil. Also,

aircraft exhaust has unique polluting effects that contribute in an even greater way to global warming. Among other things jet exhaust includes nitrous oxide, sulfur dioxide, soot and water vapor all of which exacerbate the warming effect of the CO₂ exhaust emissions. And the noise pollution of continuous stop and go landings at Miramar Marine Corps Air Station in San Diego is horrific. Residents of nearby Tierra Santa can hardly step outside their door without being bombarded by it. The same holds true for other military air fields across the country.

Even though the DoD is the largest institutional user of petroleum products and energy, the Pentagon has a [blanket exemption](#) in all international climate agreements. We are hiding our heads in the sand not to include the military when we talk about climate change. Yet the Kyoto treaty had a [loophole](#) big enough to drive a tank through, according to the report [A Climate of War – the War in Iraq and Global Warming](#). After the United States demanded and won exemptions and concessions on the effects of the military on climate change, George W. Bush pulled the United States out of the Kyoto Protocol as one of the first acts of his presidency, alleging it would straitjacket the US economy with too costly greenhouse gas emissions controls.

According to [The Military Assault on Global Climate](#):

... [M]ilitarism is the most oil-exhaustive activity on the planet, growing more so with faster, bigger, more fuel-guzzling planes, tanks and naval vessels employed in more intensive air and ground wars. At the outset of the Iraq war in March 2003, the Army estimated it would need more than 40 million gallons of gasoline for three weeks of combat, exceeding the total quantity used by all Allied forces in the four years of World War 1. Among the Army's armamentarium were 2,000 staunch M-1 Abrams tanks

KNSJ 89.1 FM
Community independent
radio of the people, by
the people, for the people



[Click here to listen to KNSJ live online](#)

fired up for the war and burning 250 gallons of fuel per hour.

The US Air Force (USAF) is the single largest consumer of jet fuel in the world. Fathom, if you can, the astronomical fuel usage of USAF fighter planes: the F-4 Phantom Fighter burns more than 1,600 gallons of jet fuel per hour and peaks at 14,400 gallons per hour at supersonic speeds. The B-52 Stratocruiser, with eight jet engines, guzzles 500 gallons per minute; ten minutes of flight uses as much fuel as the average driver does in one year of driving! A quarter of the world's jet fuel feeds the USAF fleet of flying killing machines; in 2006, they consumed as much fuel as US planes did during the Second World War (1941-1945) – an astounding 2.6 billion gallons.

Coincident with these environmental tragedies which intensify global warming is the ongoing tradeoff in the US federal budget between militarized defense and genuine human and environmental security. The United States contributes more than 30 percent of global warming gases to the atmosphere, generated by five percent of the world's population. At the same time funding for education, energy, environment, social services, housing and new job creation, taken together, is less than the military budget. Former Secretary of Labor [Robert Reich](#) has called the military budget a taxpayer-supported jobs program and argues for reprioritizing federal spending on jobs in green energy, education and infrastructure – the real national security.

There is a dangerous feedback loop between war and global warming. Not only is



climate change likely to increase conflict, particularly over access to natural resources, but war, in turn, is already accelerating global warming while simultaneously draining our economy of money needed for clean energy.

At the OB Rag: OB Rag

OB Planners Approve Liquor License for Dirty Birds – But with a Condition

Thoughts on the Dilemma Ocean Beach Planning Board Faced on Approving Another Liquor License

San Diego African American Museum of Fine Art to Honor the 2019 Keepers of the Culture

Good Samaritan Who Died in Jumping Off Bridge Had Ocean Beach Connection

Warfare Between Pot Dispensaries: Urbn Leaf vs. Golden State Greens

The increased propensity for war and conflict brought about by global warming is being exploited by the military-industrial complex which is planning on how to profit from it. Defense contractors are looking at climate change as a growth and profit opportunity due to the potential conflicts produced by food and water shortages. They are salivating over the potential profits to be made leading to increased stock market performance and, therefore, higher CEO compensation.

Defense contractors are setting their sights on a narrow minded militarist approach. Indeed, the very companies most responsible for climate change are set to [make a killing](#) from its intensification. Just the opposite of the militaristic response to climate change is what is needed, one leading to a meaningful transformation in social relations, cooperation and diplomacy. What the planet needs is increased cooperation among all peoples since we all share the same planet, and we will all suffer the same fate from the effects of global warming. The interests of all earth-citizens coincide for once, but that's not the way military planners see it, and there is little precedent for cooperation on a world scale.

“I think climate change is a real opportunity for the aerospace and defense industry,” said [Lord Drayson](#), then British Minister of State for Strategic Defence Acquisition Reform, in 2009.

One of the world's largest defense contractors, [Raytheon](#), agrees. In a briefing to the Carbon Disclosure Project last year, the corporation said that “expanded business opportunities will arise” as a result of “security concerns and their possible consequences,” due to the “effects of climate change” both at home and abroad in the form of “storms, droughts, and floods.”



Global warming
is

creating “[business opportunities](#)” for defense contractors. What kind of business opportunities? Raytheon expects to see “demand for its military products and services as security concerns may arise as results of droughts, floods, and storm events ...” Extreme weather conditions could have “destabilizing effects” and that on an international level, “climate change may cause humanitarian disasters, contribute to political violence, and undermine weak governments”.

And this, indeed, is the [problem](#): the military-industrial complex views the problems and conflicts created by climate change as opportunities to profit instead of as opportunities to work together with other nations to mitigate and adapt to its effects; instead they are determined to justify innovative new ways to [save the profits of the few who run the planet](#) by using conventional military techniques.

Of course if the money used for war were used to build renewable energy generating plants, none of the disaster scenarios might ever happen. But that would not increase military-industrial complex profits. Total US spending on the military could cover all of the global investments in renewable power generation needed between now and 2030 in order to decrease current global warming trends and obviate the necessity for new defense products.

On Memorial Day we celebrated all the old WW II veterans that served their country so proudly and saved the world from

fascism. There were Medal of Honor winners and others in snappy colorful uniforms with chestsful of medals strutting around. But where were the Peace Corps veterans? Where were the Peace Corps Medal of Honor winners. Where were their snappy uniforms with chestsful of medals? **Sad to say we celebrate war, but we don't celebrate peace.** If we cut the military budget by 50% and increased the Peace Corps budget concomitantly, we might just be able to avert global warming and create a world invested in peace rather than war.

The FY 2014 budget for the Peace Corps is \$379 million. The military budget for FY 2014 is \$820 billion, over 2000 times the Peace Corps budget. Why not increase the Peace Corps budget by a couple of orders of magnitude and decrease the military budget commensurably? We should be celebrating the people that are helping to build water and sewage systems in underdeveloped countries, the people that are helping villagers to build solar and wind power plants, the people that are building hospitals and schools. Nobody is thanking them for their service.

VISTA is the domestic Peace Corps equivalent created by President Lyndon Johnson. Its purpose is to fight poverty in low-income communities by engaging Americans from all walks of life in a year of full-time service. During the Clinton Administration, VISTA was brought under the newly created AmeriCorps program, a division of the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#), and was renamed "AmeriCorps*VISTA." These programs put people to work helping other people in underserved communities focusing on enriching educational programs and vocational training for the nation's underprivileged classes.

For their service participants in these programs receive a number of benefits including a stipend, settling in and transportation costs, child care benefits, and a basic health care plan. Upon completion of their one-year term, VISTA members have the option of receiving a cash award or the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. It gives otherwise unemployed people a chance to do something positive and constructive as well as helping others to better their lives. Isn't it better to put people to work doing something constructive rather than letting them languish in unemployment where they are likely to become gang

members, engage in criminal activities and end up in jail after which they never will be able to get a job for the rest of their life?

Here again the FY 2014 budget for the domestic equivalent of the Peace Corps is a paltry sum – \$335.4 million for AmeriCorps State and National Grants, \$30.0 million for AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) and \$92.4 million for AmeriCorps VISTA. America puts its money where its heart is – not in programs that provide and create employment for poor people but on war programs for rich defense contractors and other denizens of the military-industrial complex – those with the riches to hire lobbyists and make campaign donations. And the national jobs program for the poor is to join the Army and become cannon fodder.

As President Obama said recently, “When the only tool you have is a hammer, the solution to every problem looks like a nail.” That’s precisely the problem with the US militaristic approach to the world’s problems: the US acts like every problem has a military solution and that’s where we put our money. As Iraq falls apart, the folly of the war there that George W Bush and Dick Cheney lied us into becomes apparent. Those two managed to spend 4 trillion dollars of taxpayers’ money, get hundreds of thousands of people killed and maimed, both Americans and Iraqis, and the outcome is a complete destabilization of Iraq and arguably the whole middle east. At the same time their oil fetish and military activities dumped millions of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. That’s quite a legacy: destroying the planet’s ecosystem while killing, maiming and wasting taxpayer money!

This insatiable militarism is the single greatest institutional contributor to the growing natural disasters intensified by global climate change.

 **Bio**

 **Latest Posts**



John Lawrence

John Lawrence graduated from Georgia Tech, Stanford and University of California at San

Diego. While at UCSD, he was one of the original writer/workers on the San Diego Free Press in the late 1960s. He founded the San Diego Jazz Society in 1984 which had grants from the San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture and presented both local and nationally known jazz artists. John received a Society of Professional Journalists, San Diego chapter, 2014 award. His website is [Social Choice and Beyond](#) which exemplifies his interest in Economic Democracy. His book is [East West Synthesis](#). He also blogs at [Will Blog For Food](#). He can be reached at j.c.lawrence@cox.net.

Like this:



One blogger likes this.

Related



[Conversion to Renewable Energy is Going Too Slow to Avoid Catastrophe](#)
December 2, 2014
In "Environment"



[Trump's Dim-witted, Ill-founded Immigration Ban](#)
February 15, 2017
In "Military"



[Green Capitalism: A Contradiction in Terms?](#)
April 21, 2015
In "Activism"

FILED UNDER: ENVIRONMENT, GOVERNMENT, MILITARY, POLITICS, WAR AND PEACE

« [Women's Perspectives and Changing Roles In the US and Iraq War](#)

[SDFP Street Beat: North Park Jack in the Box, South Park Target,](#)

Comments

michael-leonard says

June 17, 2014 at 7:50 am

Magnificent article, John. Wow.

Will Falk says

June 17, 2014 at 8:56 am

I think this is a wonderfully clear-sighted article, John. You show why, in my analysis, civilization is fundamentally unsustainable (civilization connotes/denotes bad things is my view). When humans live in numbers great enough that their land base cannot support them and they create societies dependent on certain “natural resources” like oil, corn, grains etc., they must import the resources they must have. When the people in the watershed over or where the oil is won’t give you their resources, you will take them by force or your society will collapse.

Just as the first civilizations needed soldiers to guard their crops, so do current governments need soldiers and police to find new oil, protect infrastructure, and enforce property rights. The current system would collapse very quickly without the use of widespread and persistent violence.

That’s why, in my opinion, environmentalism is the most important social justice movement and why anti-colonialism is more than anything an environmental movement.

bob dorn says

June 17, 2014 at 9:25 am

“The business of America is...” war. Maybe it’s time to tweak that quote from the electrifying Calvin Coolidge, again.

Goatskull says

June 17, 2014 at 10:52 am

Here is the [more humorous side](#) to it all:

Anna Daniels says

June 17, 2014 at 11:53 am

Good article. “If you want to tell people the truth, make ‘em laugh. Otherwise, they’ll kill you.” –Oscar Wilde

Paul Keleher says

June 17, 2014 at 3:07 pm

Great article John. Thank you for your insights and

clear writing. You explain in no uncertain terms why the US's answer to every problem is WAR! Which also explains why we have no answers!

I like the picture! What is Lockheed-Martin selling? Bombs or boobs?

John Lawrence says
June 17, 2014 at 4:54 pm

Lockheed is selling anything and everything, but they only have one customer – the US government.

John Lawrence says
June 17, 2014 at 5:09 pm

Via email:

Dear John

Great article and fully agree. Pls check ww.thetreesolution.com and take a look at my book. You can freely download it. Maybe it can inspire you to write an article. People get sometimes tired of all the bad news. In the book I offer a clear and payable solution for global warming.

Kind regards and get on going!

Pieter

Nancy says

June 17, 2014 at 10:47 pm

Interesting article in light of an event that was held at the downtown library 6/4. Congressman Scott Peters and U.S. Navy Capt. James Boudreau were 2 of 5 participants that spoke of this very issue. A consensus of national security and military leaders recognize climate change as a threat to our national security, and they are promoting clean energy technologies by the military. Operation Free is a nationwide coalition of veterans and national security experts that advocate for securing America with clean energy. The organization recognizes that climate change and our dependence on oil are national security threats, and so fight on a local, state, and federal level for strong clean energy policies. Very interesting evening. Check out <http://www.operationfree.net> for more information.

Paul Keleher says

June 18, 2014 at 4:34 am

How about we not engage in war instead! I believe it was the founders intent that this country not engage in any war without lengthy public debate first and not unless any proposed military engagement has the support of the vast majority of the population.

But instead this country has over the past 30 years devolved to a point where the country is constantly at war, and no one even cares! Read Rachel Madow's book, "Drift", if you want to learn the details of how this situation has come to be.

It will be interesting to see how Obama handles the current situation in Iraq. I believe the Founders would insist that Congress declare war

before he does anything. Does anyone think that will happen?

Nancy says

June 17, 2014 at 11:11 pm

I forgot to mention the movie that was shown on 6/4; google "the burden by Roger Sorkin." This is a documentary explaining how fossil fuels dependency is the greatest threat to our democracy and how the military is leading the transition away from oil. But we have to get Congress to listen.

John Lawrence says

June 18, 2014 at 7:50 am

After watching the trailer to "The Burden" I think it's fair to say that there are some programs within the military with regard to green energy. I don't think they're working on anything to replace jet fuel though. Theoretically, they could make HumVees electric vehicles. However, I believe that most of the research on green energy should be funded through the civilian sector, not the military. The military has its fingers in every pie thanks to the fact that they can get hold of the money easier than can the Department of Energy or other applicable departments since Republicans in Congress strip civilian Departments of funds while lavishing them on the military. I'm not really impressed by the fact that the military has some pilot programs in green energy.

Goatskull says
June 18, 2014 at 9:35 am

Clean energy programs in the Navy (not sure about the other branches) are pretty much geared towards clean burning vessels as far as I know. Aircraft not so much.

Frank Gormlie says
June 18, 2014 at 10:25 am

Goatskull, I couldn't resist: "clean burning vessels" – as after they've been hit by submarines or aircraft?

Goatskull says
June 18, 2014 at 11:06
am

;)

Oxymoron. Naval Efficiency.
Military Intelligence.

michael-leonard
says
June 18, 2014 at
11:52 am

I have one navel; it's efficient.
Military intelligence is probably THE oldest oxymoron example. Even older than jumbo shrimp.
;-)

Goatskull

says

June 18,

2014 at

12:28 pm

But is it as old as

“Civil War”?

My naval efficiently

collects lint.

;:-)

michael-

leonard says

June 18, 2014

at 4:33 pm

navel = belly-

button; naval =

pertaining to

the Navy.

I don't think

your “naval”

collects lint.

Civil war — you

win that round,

Mr. Skull

::-))

Goatskull

says

June 18,

2014 at 8:27 pm
You got me on that.

michael-
leonard says
June 19, 2014
at 8:17 am
that makes us
even. been a
pleasure foiling
with ya.

Nancy says
June 18, 2014 at 9:10 pm

I don't have a problem with the military doing research on green energy, esp. as you say, they "can get hold of the money easier than can...." At least they're looking at the issue, and we should make sure our politicians push for more and more green energy in the biggest money-receiving dept. in the govt.

michael-leonard says
June 18, 2014 at 8:29 am

Nancy and John Lawrence:
Yes, any reduction in the military's elephantine carbon footprint is a good thing. But, as the article shows, it's just a spit in the ocean. Let's face it: our modern military = destruction on so many fronts. Period.

bob dorn says
June 19, 2014 at 9:14 am

I'd guess that there's a science navy and a guts and glory navy.
The science navy is thinking that if it could get an edge on supply of power it could be telling, like say, atomic power was (is?) to subs.
When everyone else catches up to you with atomic power, you go to...?

michael-leonard says
June 19, 2014 at 11:05 am

trained dolphins?

John Lawrence says
June 19, 2014 at 8:05 am

Via email:

Thank you for your excellent article covering the US military's massive contribution to planetary meltdown. I am posting your article on "geoengineeringwatch.org" (20,000 visits a day) and my FB pages. We will also like to affiliate sites.

Most Sincerely

Dane Wigington

Geoengineeringwatch.org

Paul Keleher says
July 11, 2014 at 7:19 pm

Nancy, I don't have a problem with the military researching "greener" ways to power its enormous consumption of energy. But I don't think we as a society should be relying on them to lead the way either.

I think entrepreneurial efforts like those of Elon Musk (Tesla), who has just given away Tesla's patents, permitting anyone (including the major auto-makers) to use them freely, will have a much greater impact on future development than anything the military will do. [His stated intent is to spur electric car sales over fossil-fuel car sales by anyone selling them, to break the catch-22 around a lack of charging stations.

[Sitemap](#)

[Contact](#)

[About Us](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

©2010-2017
SanDiegoFreePress.org

Code is Poetry