

Code Red for Humanity: The Climate Impacts of Military Emissions

US military spending is nearly half the world total, even without war, making it the world's largest institutional emitter of Green House Gases. Therefore, UUs are urged to demand better monitoring and reporting of these emissions and to join coalitions to reduce, not just warfare, but US military activities, bases, and production, both in the US and abroad.

Proposed by: Dick Burkhardt, partnering with Cindy Piester; UUs for a Just Economic Community (lead group); Veterans for Peace Climate Crisis and Militarism Project; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 'US Earth Democracy Committee', also its 'International Environmental Working Group'.

Many UU groups have supported prior work on this project, including UUs for Social Justice, UU Service Committee, UU Ministry for Earth, UU Young Adults for Climate Justice, UU BIPOC Caucus on Climate Justice, the UU Peace Ministry, and the UUA Create Climate Justice Net.

WHEREAS:

- United Nations (UN) Secretary General António Guterres has warned that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 6th Assessment Report is CODE RED FOR HUMANITY - “an atlas of human suffering”. Action is required NOW or NEVER. Youth, elders, people of color, the poor, and the Global South, are disproportionately impacted.
- The US Department of Defense (DOD) uses fossil fuels intensely for its vast logistical facilities and supply lines around the world, in addition to modern weapons of war on land, sea, or air. In fact, it is the world's largest institutional emitter of Green House Gases (GHG). This leaps out, since US military spending is nearly half of world military expenditures, and world military emissions are 5% of the global total.
- Scientists warn that current US efforts to reduce GHG are far short of what's urgently needed to meet the 1.5°C (2.7°F) limit on global temperature rise already at 1.1°C (2.0°F), to avoid or dampen key climate tipping points, which are advancing much more rapidly than predicted.
- Continued production of energy intensive weapons systems locks us into decades of fossil fuel reliance, despite efforts to minimize such reliance and advances in alternative energy sources.

- Yet as a result of US government pressure in 1997, military emissions were granted confidentiality and reporting mechanisms remain optional and obscure resulting in vast underreporting.
- The supply of affordable oil, already fragile, is expected to continue into serious decline. Thus the US government must develop and implement alternative technologies and strategies to help anchor global security, in addition to reducing GHG.
- Both our 6th and 7th UU principles call us to action: *“The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all”* and, *“Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”*
- This statement will focus on a glaring gap in US emission reduction strategies, while building off a long history of related UU statements: 2006 Statement of Conscience (SOC) on “Global Warming and Climate Change”, 2010 SOC on “Creating Peace”, 2015 AIW “Act for a Livable Climate”, and 2019 AIW on “Building the Movement for a Green New Deal”.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2023 UUA General Assembly, its member congregations, and Unitarian Universalist individuals and groups take immediate action to:

- Organize moments, stories, or activities in worship and religious education to support Climate Justice, including advocacy to reduce militarism and its environmental impact.
- To bring attention to military bases and weapons production in our regions and attempt to assess their emissions and other impacts, joining coalitions to curtail or alter damaging practices.
- To support state, national, and global groups which are focused on the institutions and practices of peaceful conflict resolution, enabling the reduction of warfare and military forces, replacing them with social and physical structures that reduce GHG in equitable ways.
- To ask the US Administration and Congress to require annual tabulation and **full and transparent** reporting of all GHG emissions related to US military activities by DOD and associated agencies to the UN.
- To re-establish a UU presence at the UN to include support for Climate Justice linked to reductions in militarism through the UN and its associated agencies.
- To network with the many UU groups who work on issues of militarism or climate justice, such as UUs for a Just Economic Community, UUs for Social Justice, UU Service Committee, UU Ministry for Earth, UU Young Adults for Climate Justice, UU BIPOC Caucus on Climate Justice, and the UU Peace Ministry.

Reference Materials

- IPCC: Updated IPCC Sixth Assessment Reports:
<https://www.ipcc.ch/2023/03/20/press-release-ar6-synthesis-report/>

<https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>

(“In the last decade, deaths from floods, droughts and storms were 15 times higher in highly vulnerable regions. Emissions should be decreasing by now and will need to be cut by almost half by 2030, if warming is to be limited to 1.5°C.”)

- NASA: World of Change: Global Temperatures
(“a one- to two-degree drop was all it took to plunge the Earth into the Little Ice Age”)
- NOAA: <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/department/news-research-highlights>
- BROWN UNIVERSITY: Pentagon Fuel Use, Climate Change and the Costs of War
- INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES: “The Warfare State: How Funding for Militarism Compromises our Welfare”. <https://ips-dc.org/ips-post-type/reports/>
- CONFLICT AND ENVIRONMENT OBSERVATORY:
The military’s contribution to climate change:
<https://ceobs.org/the-militarys-contribution-to-climate-change/>
Environmental CSR reporting by the arms industry: Report: Environmental CSR reporting by the arms industry - CEOBS
- ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY: Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks | US EPA
- MILITARYEMISSIONS.ORG:
The Military Emissions Gap – Tracking the long war that militaries are waging on the climate
- NATIONAL PRIORITIES PROJECT: Climate, Militarism, and Migration
- SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN: Climate Change News and Research
- SCIENTISTS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY “Carbon boot-print of the military”
<https://www.sgr.org.uk/resources/carbon-boot-print-military-0>
- THE TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTE: Climate Security Primer
<https://www.tni.org/en/publication/primer-on-climate-security>
- THE GLOBAL CARBON PROJECT: Carbon Budget (globalcarbonproject.org)
- WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE
Advancing the Systems Change Needed to Fight Climate Change

- SCIENCE: Intergenerational inequities in exposure to climate extremes.
https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abi7339?_ga=2.140428851.1086394533.16327494621575527405.1631121912&
- STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE:
www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2022/world-military-expenditure-passes-2-trillion-first-time
- MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE of TECHNOLOGY:
[Climate Justice | MIT Climate Portal](#)