

# Scientists call on world's military forces to come clean on carbon emissions

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Scientists are calling for government transparency around the huge hidden carbon emissions of their armed forces.

The United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) obliges some nation states to report on their greenhouse gas emissions every year. But, because reporting military emissions is voluntary, many governments have chosen not to. Researchers call this lack of transparency the 'military emissions gap'.

As we head into the 2021 UN Climate Change Summit COP26 in Glasgow, researchers from Lancaster and Durham Universities working on the 'Concrete Impacts' project, in partnership with the Conflict and Environment Observatory, are demanding governments to:

- End secrecy around the greenhouse gasses produced by militaries and report them in line with other highly polluting industries;
- Openly report military greenhouse gas emissions by COP27 so that the true scale of global emissions is known and can be factored into climate discussions;
- Commit their militaries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to keep global warming below the 1.5C target agreed in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

And in a new step to highlight the scale of the military emissions gap, the Conflict and Environment Observatory and Concrete Impacts have launched a new website bringing together the data that governments report on the emissions of their militaries into one place, allowing people around the world to explore what their governments do and do not report.

The website was officially launched on November 9<sup>th</sup> during a day of COP26 events at the Arctic Basecamp tent in the conference's Federated Hermes fringe area.

"It's vital that governments take urgent action to reduce the huge contribution that militaries are making to the climate crisis," said the

Conflict and Environment Observatory's Doug Weir. "With this new website, we can help everyone from the public, policy-makers and the military themselves to understand the true scale of the problem, which is a critical first step in tackling it."

Militaries are, for many countries, the government agency with the greatest emissions. They rely heavily on fossil fuels to power their tanks, planes, aircraft carriers and other vehicles.

However, the emissions generated from powering all of that battle hardware is only the tip of the iceberg. There are also all the background operations such as transport logistics, and the operation of buildings and bases, contributing towards military emissions.

In addition, research has shown that most military greenhouse gas emissions are derived from the embedded emissions in the supply chains of all the weapons and equipment purchased by militaries. In 2019, sales by the largest 25 arms producing companies reached an estimated US \$361 billion. Each sale has its individual carbon cost, from the extraction of raw materials, through to production by arms companies, the use by militaries, decommissioning and end-of-life disposal.

Previous studies by Durham and Lancaster University researchers have shown that the largest militaries emit more greenhouse gasses than many countries combined. If the United States military were a country, its emissions would rank between Peru and Portugal.

However, despite their huge combined environmental impact, the true extent of military greenhouse gas emissions is hidden from view. Some countries bundle their military emissions together with civilian emissions, or provide incomplete data. Other countries justify non-declaration by citing national security concerns.

Dr. Ben Neimark, Senior Lecturer at Lancaster University, said that "allowing militaries to continue with business as usual makes it much less likely that the world will meet its Paris target of keeping warming below 1.5°C."

Linsey Cottrell of the Conflict and Environment Observatory said that "forty industrialized countries spent around \$1,270 billion on their armed forces in 2020, yet just five of them reported their military emissions in line with UN guidelines."

"We also found that a further 15 countries, including China, India, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Brazil, Iran, Singapore and Pakistan, which together spent around \$510 billion on their militaries in 2020, do not report any disaggregated data on military emissions."

The project partners say they do not want military-grade greenwash, they are calling for credible and meaningful action to improve the reporting of military emissions to help identify how they can be reduced. This includes:

- Developed industrialized countries to undertake mandatory and independently verified reporting of the [greenhouse gas emissions](#) of their militaries, making the information transparent, accessible and distinct from emissions from other parts of the economy;
- Developing countries should begin annual voluntary reporting of their military's emissions;
- All governments to set clear targets for militaries to conserve energy, reduce reliance on [fossil fuels](#) and switch to environmentally responsible renewable energy, making genuine cuts to emissions and not relying on offsets.

**More information:** Website: [militaryemissions.org/](http://militaryemissions.org/)

Previous studies: [www.lancaster.ac.uk/news/us-military-carbon-emissions-impact-on-the-climate](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/news/us-military-carbon-emissions-impact-on-the-climate)

Provided by Lancaster University

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