

World on Fire - Earth Day 2021 Statement by the Upstate Drone Action

Our action, World on Fire, is designed to bring attention that the U.S. military is destroying our climate 24/7 and if we want our children to have a livable future this simply must be stopped. We are gathering at Hancock Field as the 174th Attack Wing pilots drones that are murdering people in the Middle East and Africa. This is one component of the vast military mega machine which consumes fossil fuels relentlessly. The U.S. military is the single biggest institutional emitter of carbon dioxide in the world, more than most nation-states.

One cannot address climate change without addressing militarism. According to Neta Crawford of Boston University, since 2001, the US military has emitted 1.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases. In 2017, DOD emitted 59 million metric tons of greenhouse gases, greater than either Finland (46.8 million) or Sweden (50.8) (pp. 14-15) Jet fuel constitutes, by far, the major type of fuel for vehicles purchased by DOD (p. 10).

These figures does not include greenhouse gases emitted by the US weapons industry. Crawford estimates an additional 250 to 350 million tons of greenhouse gases emitted per year by the defense industry (p. 21).

The above figures also do not include many other greenhouse gas emissions resulting from wars in which the US military has been engaged. Neta Crawford gives examples from recent wars, noting that both the US and its opponents deliberately targeted oil facilities: "it was not possible to estimate the emission due to the burning of oil by sabotage and destruction of oil infrastructure by belligerents, the energy consumed by reconstruction, in particular in making cement . . . NATO tankers were often attacked by militants and burned during their transit through Pakistan into Afghanistan. In the 2003 invasion of Iraq, oil wells were set alight by the Iraqi military and burned for several months. Oil infrastructure was targeted again in 2015, when the US bombed oil infrastructure in Iraq and Syria as a means of reducing ISIS revenue. And when ISIS retreated, it set oil wells and pipelines on fire in Iraq and Syria. In many cases, these fires burned for several months. Starting in September 2014, the US targeted tanker trucks and oil refinery and storage sites controlled by ISIS as a means of cutting off their revenue stream. In October 2015, the US attacked more oil producing ISIS controlled oil infrastructure." (pp. 21-22)

Ironically, perhaps, as documented by Michael Klare, the Department of Defense continued to treat global warming as a serious threat, even in its public reports, throughout the Trump Administration, when most federal agencies publicly succumbed to the Trumpist climate change denying agenda. This is because climate change is already impacting military operations in multiple ways and these impacts will increase over time. The operation, and even the existence, of many US bases is under threat. Climate related disasters - hurricanes, typhoons, drought - are increasing in scale and frequency, and the US military will be called upon to provide emergency relief. The number of refugees fleeing

climate disasters will continue to increase. These same disasters will lead to increasing numbers of "failed states," which will lead to more US military intervention. The risk of wars between great powers will increase. US drone policy increases the instability and chaos in multiple regions and, thereby, increases the flow of refugees.

Although the Pentagon has treated climate change seriously in recent years, three things should be noted. First, as Neta Crawford concludes, despite its planning for climate change, "the Pentagon does not acknowledge that its own fuel use is a major contributor to climate change." Second, the Pentagon is not concerned with preventing climate change, but with ensuring that climate change does not interfere with its capacity to wage war and to project US power across the globe. Thus, the Pentagon's move towards alternatives to fossil fuels is not to save the planet, but to make its own forces less vulnerable (for example, to the regular attacks on its convoys through Pakistan bringing fuel to its troops in Afghanistan). Third, while the Pentagon has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions, it remains the largest institutional polluter. Neta Crawford notes: "So far, switching to renewable sources has yielded savings in emissions offsets of less than 1 percent of US DOD Greenhouse Gas emissions." (p. 31)

And so, we gather here on this Earth Day to call for an end to militarism, a serious effort to halt the climate disaster, and an end to killer drones.

References

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