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How the Pentagon poisons the world

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New York: People's Mobilization to Stop the U.S. War Machine, Sept. 22, 2019. SLL photo: Greg Butterfield

Despite climate change deniers like Donald Trump, there is a high level of awareness about the growing threat to our planet.

If you're in the age bracket that is now raising children or will soon, you know there is a chance that the world they'll inherit will be unlike what previous generations have lived in.

Unprecedented heat in places that were temperate and unimaginable cold in other

areas; routine level 5 hurricanes; coastal populations forced to move inland because of rising sea levels; some island nations completely disappearing; thousands of animal species going extinct: all of that could become the new normal. Every instance of unchecked CO2 pollution bears more consequences.

But climate change isn't a slow-motion train wreck. We don't have to just watch in horror as it happens. It might surprise most people to learn that ending the military operations of U.S. imperialism — abolishing the Pentagon — would be the biggest step forward in making sure that the earth stays habitable for future generations.

The period of global warming coincides with the rise of industrial capitalism, and fossil fuels have been central to industry throughout its history. Historical records kept by the [World Resources Institute](#) show that since 1850, the U.S. and Europe — where capitalism is most advanced — have been responsible for nearly two-thirds of the heat-trapping contaminants currently in our atmosphere.

There is one entity that rarely gets discussed when it comes to pointing the finger of blame for wrecking the planet we live on. The U.S. military spews more CO2 and other contaminants into the air than any single corporation. Each of the economies of 45 countries pollute less than the U.S. military. As a single entity, it is the worst polluter in the world.

Much of what we read excludes CO2 emissions by the U.S. military. The authors of a study called "[U.S. Military Pollution](#)," published on TheEcologist.org, point to the Department of Defense concealing information about its role in global warming.

"It's no coincidence that U.S. military emissions tend to be overlooked in climate change studies. ... In fact, the United States insisted on an exemption for reporting [military emissions in the 1997 Kyoto Protocol](#). This loophole was [closed by the Paris Accord](#), but with the Trump administration [due to withdraw from the accord in 2020](#), this gap will return. Our study is based on data retrieved from multiple Freedom Of

Information Act requests."

A June 2019 [Brown University study](#) calculates that between 2001 and 2017, all branches of the U.S. military emitted 1.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases. That amount included 400 million metric tons from the U.S. wars against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria, as well as attacks in Pakistan.

In an article on Pentagon pollution posted on [ClimateAndCapitalism.com](#), H. Patricia Hynes describes consumption of fuel by the air force: "The U.S. 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 U.S. planes did during the Second World War (1941-1945) — an astounding 2.6 billion gallons," Hynes reported.

Since the first U.S. attack on Iraq in 1990, the majority of U.S. military activity has been in the Arab world to maintain control over oil markets. [According to PressTV](#), U.S. troops are stationed in 14 countries in the Middle East and North Africa; there is a huge U.S. base in Qatar; the Fifth Fleet is stationed in Bahrain; and there is a U.S. military airport in Oman. We can now add Al-Tanf in Syria, illegally occupied by the U.S. There may also be secret and illegal bases in occupied Palestine.

During all that military activity, the U.S. has killed over 500,000 people by some estimates, destroyed access to clean water, bombed hospitals and infrastructure, and left behind huge areas so contaminated with depleted uranium as to be

uninhabitable. This has all been done to maintain control of oil markets, by the biggest single largest consumer of oil.

There is nothing wrong with being conscious of our personal “carbon footprint.” But workers don’t bear the blame for this horror show. It was energy capitalists who destroyed energy efficient mass transit in most cities in the U.S. It is the corporate class that is out to smash regulations that to a small extent limit the pollution of the planet.

The frantic pace of industry and the frenzy for profit under capitalism is toxic. The imperialist death machine is even worse. The fight to end capitalist exploitation, stop climate change and end the endless imperialist wars is all one struggle. It is a race against time.

