

# SHUT IT DOWN: How the U.S. war machine poisons the world

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
September 28, 2019



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

For years, Pentagon officials have been discussing, assessing and reporting on

climate change.

They consider its implications for imperialist military tactics and strategy. They cite the possibilities of mass migration due to water and food shortages. They stress the need to prepare to deal with possible mass uprisings. They've written reports that assess the vulnerability of their military installations to extreme weather events – drought, flooding, wildfires, etc.

But like the proverbial elephant in the room that everyone pretends not to notice, one pertinent fact gets omitted from every discussion, report or study by the top military brass: that the U.S. military itself is by far the single worst polluter in the world.

Many studies over the last decade rate countries based on how much their economy contributes to the rising amount of carbon dioxide (CO2) in the atmosphere. In 2016, the U.S. was the third largest polluter behind Saudi Arabia and Australia, emitting 15 metric tons per capita.

But greenhouse gases take decades or even centuries to dissipate. [Historical records kept by the World Resources Institute](#) show that since 1850, the U.S. and Europe are responsible for nearly two-thirds of the heat-trapping contaminants currently in our atmosphere.

But many contemporary studies exclude some or all of the emissions caused by armed forces.

How bad is the pollution from the U.S. military? The information is not easy to get. The authors of a study called “[U.S. Military Pollution](#)”, published on TheEcologist.org, point to the efforts of the U.S. Department of Defense to conceal information and resist any restrictions:

“It’s no coincidence that U.S. military emissions tend to be overlooked in climate

change studies. It's very difficult to get consistent data from the Pentagon and across U.S. government departments.

"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."

It isn't only CO2 emissions. [Mint Press News reported](#) that the Defense Department is responsible for more toxic waste than the five largest U.S.-based chemical companies combined.

### **Pentagon's environmental racism**

The military is guilty of leaving toxic waste behind in various forms: contaminating drinking water with perchlorates and other components of jet fuel; the horrors of depleted uranium, used in Iraq and other countries attacked by the imperialist military, that has radiated the ground and air, causing cancer rates to spike; nuclear tests that displaced entire populations and destroyed islands in the Bikini Atoll and destroyed First Nations lands in Nevada; mining for uranium that poisoned Navajo lands in the Black Hills; the mass destruction of the island of Vieques in Puerto Rico – the list goes on and on.

Of the 1,300 Superfund sites-areas so contaminated that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists their cleanup as urgent and directs funds toward their cleanup-more than 900 are the consequence of U.S. military activity. Many are abandoned military bases.

Since its initiation in the 1980s, the Superfund program has only claimed success in

cleaning up about 15 to 20 percent of contaminated sites.

But the Pentagon is also the single largest consumer of oil. If it were compared to countries showing the volume of CO2 they send into the atmosphere, it would be listed somewhere around the 50th worst — more than 140 countries.

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 airforce alone: “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 remained 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 illegal bases in occupied Palestine.

It may seem ironic that the oil-guzzling U.S. military has killed, by some estimates, over 500,000 people since the first Gulf War, and destroyed the infrastructure and poisoned the land in several countries in order to maintain control of oil markets. In this era of capitalism in the stage of imperialism, the drive for profit isn't guided by logic and knows no bounds.

The horror wrought by U.S. imperialism and its military domination will only end with the abolition of both.



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# Climate strikers demand system change

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
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**Millions** took part in the historic, youth-led, global climate strike on Sept. 20. At least 5,000 actions were held in 163 countries, kicking off a week of civil disobedience, news conferences, organizing events and more to combat the growing

capitalist climate crisis.

From the **Philippines** to **Afghanistan**, from **South Africa** to **Puerto Rico**, oppressed people living on the front lines of climate change and imperialist wars led the way and set the tone.

In the U.S., the largest protest took place in **New York**, where 250,000 marched from Foley Square to Battery Park — the majority of them multinational, high school students. The pressure for mass walkouts from public schools was so great that city officials gave the youth permission to skip classes that day, trying to blunt the impact of a mass strike.

The mood in Manhattan's streets was militant and passionately anti-capitalist. "System change, not climate change" was a slogan seen on many of the thousands of handcrafted protest signs calling out the profit system and big business for their culpability in the growing environmental catastrophe. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Amazon.com were also slammed hard: "The wrong ICE is melting, the wrong Amazon is burning."

A banner from Struggle-La Lucha, "The Pentagon: world's biggest polluter. Shut it down!" was very popular, as was a second banner from the Socialist Unity Party declaring, "No more blood for Big Oil profits — U.S. hands off Iran and Venezuela." Many young people as well as older marchers stopped to have their photos taken with the banners, snapped up newspapers and fliers, and expressed their support for the anti-war, anti-imperialist demands.

Unions also joined the massive demonstration, including 1199SEIU, the New York State Nurses Association, the United Federation of Teachers and the Communication Workers.

Speakers at Battery Park conveyed a strongly anti-colonial, pro-Indigenous message,



with young people from many nationalities speaking. Many climate strikers stayed through the hot afternoon to hear Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old activist whose one-person climate strike outside the Swedish Parliament helped inspire the global movement.

Thunberg has both inspired millions of young people to take to the streets, and become a reviled figure for climate change deniers like Donald Trump and big capitalists, who fear the revolutionary potential that message could unleash. Her intensity and uncompromising demands that governments and politicians acknowledge the scientific reality of climate change and the urgent need for action to save lives was on full display at the [U.N. Climate Action Summit](#), where she hurled the charge of “How dare you!” at the assembled politicians.

But [Thunberg isn't alone](#) in giving a voice to the movement. The climate strike has introduced many to young leaders like Autumn Peltier, a 13-year-old water protector from the Indigenous Wikwemikong First Nation; 17-year-old Mexican-born, New York activist Xiye Bastida; and African American Mari Copeny, a 12-year-old from Flint, Mich., who is helping lead the fight for clean water in her hometown.

### **Youth, workers fight for climate justice**

Struggle-La Lucha's Gloria Verdieu reports: “There were walkouts at high schools and universities throughout **San Diego**. I went to the one close to where I live at San Diego State University. Hundreds of students walked out of class. There were also faculty, community and some city council members.

“The message was that now is the time for action against climate change. After marching through the campus, a rally began with a message from Greta Thunberg, who said, ‘No company on earth has a climate change strategy that is good enough.’”

In **Seattle**, more than 1,700 Amazon.com workers walked out of the company's headquarters to join the Climate Strike. Organized by the group [Amazon Employees for Climate Justice](#), they struck the behemoth company to demand that billionaire CEO Jeff Bezos pledge for the company to reach zero emissions by 2030 and stop providing cloud computing services to oil and gas companies. They were joined by workers from Google and other tech giants who merged with the student-led march to City Hall.

"Over five hundred **Baltimore** youth and students came together on Sept. 20 to participate in the Global Climate Strike," reports Emma Rose. "Middle and high school students from city schools, including Baltimore Polytechnic, City College High School and the Baltimore School for the Arts, as well as students from local colleges, gathered to declare to government officials and the world that they will not stand for climate change denial and disregard.

"Students demanded a better future for themselves and their peers. One youth held a sign calling attention to the recent climate disasters ignored by the U.S.: 'I strike for the 4,000+ Boricuas that died after Hurricane María and our friends in the Bahamas.'

"Youth and supporters marched from Baltimore Inner Harbor to City Hall. Organizers of the rally set up an open mic where dozens of youth got a chance to speak. One Bryn Mawr high school student organizer declared: 'By striking, we support a global movement which demands a Green New Deal, respect for Indigenous land and sovereignty, environmental justice, protection and restoration of biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture.'"

### **'Earth before profits'**

According to M. Tiahui, "Huge crowds in **Boston** for the Climate Strike. We were proud that there were four Indigenous speakers on the program. Thousands of



people heard messages about climate justice and the need to center Indigenous knowledge and sovereignty.”

One of those speakers was Mahtowin Munro, co-leader of United American Indians of New England, who said: “Profound climate change happened in this hemisphere following the invasion of Columbus and the other European colonizers that would follow. The changes were due to the decimation and genocide of tens of millions of Indigenous humans within a short period of time. Every place the Europeans landed, Indigenous populations were massively reduced, including right here where we stand.

“I’m gonna be real and not lie to you today. The years of delays in understanding and addressing modern climate collapse have meant that we’re not going to be able to reverse a lot of the changes that are already underway. But that doesn’t mean we should give up. It means that we have to fight even harder and be in the streets disrupting just like we are today!

“We can’t trust the people, systems and corporations that have raced toward destruction for years to suddenly turn around and do the right thing. We need to insist on putting Earth before profits and not settle on half-measures and promises. We need immediate changes, not gradual. We need much more than a Green New Deal.”

In **Los Angeles**, thousands of high school students defied city officials and walked out to join Climate Strike actions at Pershing Square, City Hall and other locations. An action is planned at the Brazilian Consulate on Sept. 27 to protest the ultra right-wing Brazilian government’s inaction on the massive fire burning the Amazon forest.

Leon Koufax reports: “Thousands of people gathered on Capitol Hill in **Washington, D.C.**, to demand that political and economic leaders take progressive action regarding climate change. The image was rather stirring — activists demanding

action to preserve our planet while juxtaposed to a symbol of an institution that has refused to hold polluting corporations accountable.

“The demonstration was high in spirit and mainly composed of youth. The message was clear: we refuse to inherit a planet that is dying due to capitalist greed and recklessness. One of the most powerful speakers of the afternoon was a young Indigenous woman who proclaimed that not only was the land we were all standing on stolen from her people, but those who stole that land have done nothing but disrespect its beauty and resources for hundreds of years.”

As world leaders gathered in New York for the United Nations General Assembly in the days immediately after the Climate Strike, 16 youths filed a [petition](#) to the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child attempting to hold Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany and Turkey accountable for their inaction on the climate crisis. The [young people](#) are from Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Marshall Islands, Nigeria, Palau, South Africa, Sweden, Tunisia and the U.S.

The world’s biggest enemy of human rights and climate justice, U.S. imperialism, has never ratified the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, while President Trump has announced the U.S. will pull out of the (woefully inadequate) Paris climate accords.

“Let’s say it very clearly,” as Bolivian President Evo Morales said at the U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 24. “The root of the problem is capitalism.”



# The meek won't inherit the earth: Mass action will save the planet

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
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**The PENTAGON:  
world's biggest polluter  
SHUT IT DOWN!**

**STRUGGLE ★ LA LUCHA**  
*for Socialism | por el Socialismo*



*In conjunction with the worldwide #ClimateStrike actions on Sept. 20, Struggle-La Lucha presents this article by the Marxist thinker and fighter Sam Marcy, written for the 20th anniversary of Earth Day in April 1990.*

Back in the Middle Ages, when a natural catastrophe like a crop failure or storm devastated large areas of a country, reducing the mass of the peasants to starvation while the lord's manor was well stocked with provisions, it was considered wise policy for the lord to call the peasants into the courtyard. There a priest would intone the old biblical adage that the meek, the humble, the submissive will inherit the earth.

Today's giant predatory corporations know the efficacy of such a tactic. They also resort to an even earlier practice, from the era of ancient Rome, when rebellious slaves were pacified with bread and circuses.

The monopolies which have vandalized the environment respond to the fear of an ecological catastrophe by encouraging a festive, carnival atmosphere on Earth Day, diverting what should be a serious anti-government, anti-capitalist demonstration away from the real polluters.

The largest corporations in this country, and the worst polluters, including Exxon, Mobil, Weyerhaeuser and Dow Chemical, to name only a few, have assembled a sophisticated media and political campaign aiming to show that they have done their utmost to use their immense technology for environmentally sound purposes, all for the good of the people.

### **The first Earth Day**

Twenty years ago, on the first Earth Day, the environmental movement was officially born in the United States. In that year, 1970, millions of workers, young and old, men and women, able and disabled people, gay and straight, and nationalities from

all over the world demonstrated their keen desire to avoid the terrible ill effects of pollution and the destruction of the physical elements of the environment.

It was a day of great promise, an outpouring of mass enthusiasm for ending the environmental damage that was rampant throughout the world but affected the industrialized countries, especially the U.S., most of all.

Today, 20 years later, there is more pollution, more damage to the air, the forests, the oceans, the rivers, indeed to all life. Acid rain, the ozone layer, global warming, toxic and radioactive wastes, and endangered species have become household words.

Earth Day 1970 came in the midst of the bloody carnage in Vietnam. That year, the U.S. invaded Cambodia. The Nixon government was under acute pressure from the anti-war and civil rights movements. It was a year in which huge masses of people were awakening to the real problems facing this country: war, hunger, racism, sexism, pollution.

For another five years, the U.S. government got around the movement, continuing the war while making promises of an alluring peace, at which time all these problems would be solved and, above all, there would be an effort to clean up the environment.

Finally, the mass protests against the Vietnam war in the U.S. and all over the world put an end to it. Glowing promises then began to flow freely like water in a stream. Now, it was said, the air would be cleaned up, nuclear waste would be eliminated, and environmentally clean plants would be built. Polluting sources of energy like coal, petroleum and nuclear energy would be put under strict governmental control. The damage would first be reduced and eventually, certainly by 1990, would be eliminated.

## **Promises of peacetime conversion**

Such were the promises 20 years ago. You can look them up in the yellowed pages of the old newspapers. “Conversion planning” was the buzzword. Military-related companies especially were anxious to show they had already drawn up the blueprints for converting to cleaner, more peaceful methods of production.

What happened to them? Was it all fraud? Was it make believe? Or was it both?

The fact of the matter is that no sooner was the war in Vietnam ended than the Pentagon and the military-industrial complex began not to scale down the armaments, not to beat their swords into plowshares, but to expand and modernize on an unprecedented scale.

This is of critical importance to all questions relating to the security of the physical environment, for there is no greater polluter of the air, the water and the land than the military. Even when it is not actually using them, the Pentagon is constantly testing all kinds of weapons — conventional, nuclear, chemical and biological.

## **Trillions for the Pentagon**

Scientists may argue over how old the planet is, how fragile is its ecology, or its degree of warming, but there can be no disagreement that since Earth Day 1970, literally trillions of dollars have been spent by the Pentagon.

Since Earth Day 1970, countless acts of war have been carried out or supervised by U.S. forces in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Grenada, Panama, Libya, Lebanon and Afghanistan, lately in Peru and Bolivia, and innumerable covert operations in Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia and dozens of other countries. Large-scale military exercises take place each year in Korea, Germany and the Caribbean, as well as in the U.S. itself.



Today, just like 15 years ago at the end of the Vietnam war, there is a flood of peace promises. Congress is agog with them. The White House has given its blessings. Even the Pentagon speaks of the peace dividend. But is there any substance to it?

The kind of Pentagon operation just referred to is expanding more rapidly than ever. Of course, redundant nuclear weapons are being discarded on both sides of the East-West confrontation line. But mark well. Not one nuclear test related to the modernization of the nuclear fleet, submarines, aircraft carriers or the new “super-supersonic” planes has been canceled, except for reasons of bad weather or malfunction. The brave men and women of Greenpeace and other groups that have tried to stop these tests can tell you what is really going on with the alleged reduction of the nuclear threat.

The greatest of all polluters, the biggest offender and the most significant element in the vandalism of the environment remains the Pentagon.

As this is being written, Secretary of Defense Cheney is opposing even the smallest cuts in sea-based missiles. On the contrary, they are continuing to MIRV the sea-based missiles (add multiple warheads), which means multiplying their capacity for devastation.

### **War-related industries and banks**

Lest some think we are taking a narrow, pacifist view by focusing in on the war-making establishment, let it be said that the Pentagon is, of course, not an island unto itself. Every single one of the 100 largest banks in the U.S. lends to, holds deposits of or floats securities for corporations in league with the so-called defense industry. That's a lot of banks.

Of all the 15,000 banks in the U.S., small, medium and large, not one would relinquish the profits it gets in connection with defense orders. There is not one

bank, not one huge corporation that will put people ahead of profits. Such is the reality of the situation on Earth Day 1990.

It is now estimated that the bailout of failing banks will cost the government \$500 billion. The amount appropriated for the environment is a mere pittance, a tiny fraction of this gigantic sum.

Of the giant industries which play a key role in the U.S. economy, petroleum and coal pollute and vandalize the environment the most, even though hundreds of thousands of workers have been displaced from these industries. All manufacturers, especially in the petrochemical industry and pharmaceuticals, and including those using the most sophisticated technologies, contribute their share to pollution. For the most part they are completely unregulated; any government supervision is strictly superficial.

### **Good will vs. profits**

To get to the core of the problem, one must take into account that it is profits which motivate the operations of the capitalist economic system in the U.S. Ever fewer and more powerful groupings of industrial and financial magnates control the means of production and run the country, from the local county offices all the way up to the White House.

If we overlook this fact, if we believe that just protesting, just appealing to the good will and humanitarian instincts of these giant, avaricious and predatory elite financiers and industrialists will change the situation for the better, we will be building upon illusions.

The mass of the people have been told over and over again to be patient, to have good will toward their oppressors, that in time good behavior on the part of the masses would reach the consciences of the evildoers. The meek shall inherit the

earth.

But the meek in history have never made it. There's not a single example over hundreds of years where the rich and powerful have given way to the poor, to the ordinary workers and peasants, just because they have been good and subservient and passive.

To appeal to the good will, common sense and even self-interest of the big financiers and industrialists is to expect them to be able to abandon the lucrative profits, exploitation and oppression which are linked to pollution. This is a bankrupt theory, unsuitable in this or any other age.

The history of the environmental struggle shows that relying on the multinational corporations, on the banks, on the insurance companies and on capitalist politicians brings no results.

At this critical phase in world history, it is only the deliberate activity of the masses themselves, when they intervene and threaten the system of capitalist exploitation and oppression, that can sweep away the polluters like the hazardous waste they have created on this planet.



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# **‘An important biological species is endangered’**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
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*On June 12, 1992, then Cuban President Fidel Castro addressed the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development's Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Find this speech and more at [FidelCastro.cu](http://FidelCastro.cu).*

Mr. Fernando Collor de Mello, President of Brazil;  
Mr. Boutros Ghali, Secretary General of the United Nations;

An important biological species is endangered due to the accelerated and progressive destruction of its natural living conditions: humanity.

We are becoming aware of this problem only now when it is almost too late to tackle it.

It is worthwhile indicating that the main responsibility for the brutal destruction of the environment lies with the consumer societies. They are the offspring of the old colonial metropolises and of imperialist policies that also begot the poverty and backwardness which are today the scourge of the overwhelming majority of humanity.

These societies, with only 20 percent of the world population, consume two-thirds of the metals and three-fourths of the energy produced in the world. They have poisoned oceans and rivers and contaminated the air; they have weakened and opened holes in the ozone layer and saturated the atmosphere with gases that impair climate conditions with catastrophic effects that we are starting to feel.

Forests are disappearing and deserts growing while billions of tons of fertile soil end up in the oceans every year. Numerous species face extinction. Overpopulation and poverty lead to desperate efforts for survival, even at the expense of Nature. The Third World nations cannot be held accountable for this, for only yesterday they were colonies and today they are still exploited and plundered by an unjust world economic order.

The solution cannot be to put off the development of those who need it most. The truth is that everything that today contributes to underdevelopment and poverty is tantamount to a flagrant attack on the ecology. As a result, tens of millions of men, women and children perish every year in the Third World, far more than in each of the two world wars.



The unequal terms of trade, protectionism and the foreign debt are also an assault on the ecology and facilitate the destruction of the environment.

A better distribution of wealth and of the technologies available in the world could spare humanity such devastation. Less luxury and waste in a few countries could bring about a reduction of poverty and hunger in a large part of the planet.

Let's put an end to the transfer of lifestyles and consumer habits to the Third World that ruin the environment. Let human life be more rational. Let a just international economic order be implemented. Let science work toward a sustainable development without contamination. Let the ecologic debt be paid and not the foreign debt. Let hunger disappear and not man.

Now that the alleged threat of communism no longer exists, neither the pretexts for cold wars, the arms race nor military expenditures, what prevents the immediate use of those resources to foster development in the Third World and to thwart the planet's ecologic destruction?

Let selfishness and hegemonism cease, as well as callousness, recklessness and deceit. Tomorrow it will be too late to do what should have been done a long time ago.

Thanks.

(Ovation)



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# Bolivia's Amazon fire hotspots reduced by 85%

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
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"I call on young environmentalists, farmers and social organizations to implement a recovery plan for locals in the affected areas. #UnityinAdversity"

Bolivia's defense minister Javier Zavaleta announced on Wednesday afternoon, that the hotspots for the Amazon fires in Bolivia have been reduced by 85% in the past eight days. Bolivia's government has mobilized a huge air operation, involving helicopters, planes and the 'Supertanker' to combat the fires that have raged in the country.

"More than 85 percent of the hotspots have been extinguished in almost eight days of operations, therefore, the fire is definitely receding, and we are already attacking specific places from air and land. So we hope the fire will continue receding" [said](#) Zavaleta, speaking at a press conference on Wednesday.

He continued, “The large expenses [of operations] are being covered by the Bolivian state with our budget and our own resources, but we still welcome any help (...), now that the fire is in retreat, we have no reason to return to the height of what the fire was. We used to have more than 8,000 fire hotspots we are now at less than 1,000 hotspots”

Nevertheless, challenges remain. Zavaleta also said that fire had been detected near San Ignacio in the Chiquitania area and that the President will be visiting the area shortly to help coordinate operations.

In response to the news. President Evo Morales called for a new phase of operations to begin, asking for others to work with the government to help recover what has been lost. He said “I call on young environmentalists, farmers and social organizations to implement a recovery plan for locals in the affected areas. #UnityinAdversity”

One part of the recovery plan is the [announcement](#) on Tuesday evening that buying and selling land in the affected areas will be banned, so as to stop agro-capitalists profiteering from burnt areas, to allow for regeneration of the forest.

The [UN has](#) praised Bolivia’s leftist government for the scale of the operations they have mobilized to combat the fires. This includes contracting the world’s largest air tanker, the Boeing 747 ‘Supertanker’ too led efforts to extinguish the fires. Along with sending troops, firefighters and veterinarians to reinforce operations.

Meanwhile, far-right Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has been slammed for inaction in the face of the devastating fires.

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# **PG&E bankruptcy: A case of profits over safety**

written by Struggle - La Lucha  
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Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), the largest investor-owned utility in the U.S., has acknowledged the high likelihood that its poorly maintained electrical transmission equipment caused the deadly Camp Fire in 2018, the worst wildfire in California history.

The Camp Fire killed 85 people and burned down the entire northern California town of Paradise. PG&E declared bankruptcy on Jan. 29, claiming that it won't have the money for the lawsuits and damages that it will be facing.

PG&E's safety record is abysmal. The utility was convicted of breaking pipeline safety laws that would have prevented the 2010 San Bruno gas explosion that killed eight and burned down an entire block. It was found culpable for damages in 2017 wildfires that killed 22. Evidence now points to lack of powerline maintenance having sparked the deadliest California wildfire ever.

According to the Sept. 16, 2014, San Francisco Chronicle, investigations of the San Bruno explosion revealed that a pipe replacement project [was called off prematurely](#) and should have included San Bruno; that PG&E workers voiced concerns about inspection of pipelines being impeded but were ignored; and that California's Public Utilities Commission, the state's utility watchdog, discussed with PG&E representatives ways of getting lawsuits against the utility moved so that they could be heard in front of friendly judges.

When PG&E again faced a barrage of lawsuit settlements after the 2017 wildfires, California's state Legislature passed a law that allowed the utility to pass the costs of liability for those fires on to their customers.

But the bill that was passed regarding the 2017 wildfires doesn't protect PG&E from what happened in 2018. Letting the utility off the hook again amidst rising anger seems out of the question.

Yet, with all the talk of stiffer regulation, the possibility of a breakup of the corporation, and even after being excoriated by federal Judge William Alsup, PG&E executives have still been arrogantly throwing their weight around. That's because, so far, all the threats of action are just talk. The reality is that, at every turn, they've been treated with velvet gloves. The superrich investors that call the shots are used to ignoring courts, watchdog groups and regulators, and getting away with it.

Associated Press coverage of the [Jan. 29 hearing in front of Judge Alsup](#) focused on how tough and angry the judge was. He did sound angry and in fact denounced PG&E for putting profits before safety — something you might hear from progressive activists.

But Alsup could have issued orders that PG&E would've had to appeal or obey. Instead, he merely outlined proposals that included cleaning brush and clearcutting trees impinging on PG&E electrical transmission equipment, temporarily turning off

power in areas hit by high winds and coming up with a safety plan for the future.

After the hearing, PG&E attorney Kevin Orsini responded by saying that the proposal for trimming trees and brush would cost \$150 billion, that they would not be able to find enough tree trimmers in the entire country, and that turning off the power grid would risk lives of first responders.

Judge Alsup demanded answers again at a subsequent hearing. But there are still no real teeth in anything he's done.

### **Bankruptcy to protect profits**

The Los Angeles Times reported on Jan. 24 that lawyers for claimants, watchdog groups and even some PG&E investors say that the [bankruptcy is nothing more than a business strategy](#) to protect the utility from liability and possibly set the stage for another bailout from the state.

They debunked the company's claim of being in financial straits, pointing to \$1.5 billion currently in PG&E's coffers, and that it would be years before PG&E would be forced to begin paying any damage claims from the Camp Fire.

As of this writing, PG&E is already using the bankruptcy to fight off claims against it by some of the survivors of previous disasters.

Climate change, caused by the recklessness of capitalist corporations in their pursuit of maximum profit, has created a tinderbox in the mountains and forests of the Southwestern states. Droughts and other extreme weather events happen more frequently now.

Safely managing the new challenges of delivering energy that millions of people and the machinery of production and services depend on is not a job that can be done by those same capitalist corporations, nor by a government-run power grid that's



underfunded because military spending and prison-building are given priority.

Whatever amount of money needs to be spent for safe, clean energy must be spent. But that will take a revolutionary transformation of society that finally ends the destructive drive for profits.



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# Mass struggle needed for a Green New Deal

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Capitalism is cooking the earth. Rising sea levels are threatening 167 million people in Bangladesh while [Africa is suffering from both increased flooding and drought](#).

Capitalist climate change dragged the polar vortex to Chicago, where at least 20 people died of the cold. Meanwhile, Australia had record temperatures of well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other congresspeople have proposed a Green New

Deal (GND) to tackle this grave threat to humankind. Vile racist and sexist attacks have been hurled against Ocasio-Cortez, also known as AOC, who represents parts of the Bronx and Queens in New York.

Using Twitter effectively and humorously, AOC threw these assaults right back at her reactionary opponents, like Serena Williams returning a serve on a tennis court. As revolutionary socialists, we say, “Right on!”

### **Deadly capitalist decay**

U.S. capitalism is so decayed that it can’t even maintain its own infrastructure. That’s because there’s no individual profit in doing so.

Electrical power outages in the U.S. Northeast turned the lights out for 30 million people in 1965 and 55 million in 2003. Nine million people lost their power in the New York City area in 1977.

Even though the electric grid is absolutely essential for capitalist production, the private utility monopolies have refused to upgrade it. That was left to President Obama’s “stimulus” program, which spent \$11 billion to start fixing it.

Eight people were killed in 2014 when a 127-year-old gas main exploded in New York City’s El Barrio (East Harlem). Despite having a net income of \$1.5 billion in 2017, Con Ed, the big New York utility company, continues to operate hundreds of miles of ancient gas, steam and water mains.

Right-wingers have attacked the GND for its plans to greatly expand high speed rail. But there’s nothing utopian about that.

The fastest trains on earth go between Beijing and Shanghai — an 819 mile distance — in four-and-a-half hours. At the same speed, a 21st Century Limited would take just five-and-a-quarter hours to go from New York City to Chicago.

Yet the capitalist government can't even replace Amtrak's 109-year-old Portal movable bridge in New Jersey, which carries 200,000 passengers a day.

When this writer worked as an Amtrak dispatcher, we would cross our fingers whenever this bridge opened for a boat, hoping it would then lock back up.

### **Pentagon is biggest polluter**

Former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, who may run for president, attacked the GND for guaranteeing good-paying jobs and higher education. Schultz enjoys billions in his bank accounts exactly because [the average income of baristas](#) in the U.S. is less than \$24,000 a year.

Listen up billionaires: everybody had a job in the socialist Soviet Union and there was no college tuition, either.

The same war hawks who were for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which killed hundreds of thousands of people, have attacked the GND as "too expensive." Yet [over \\$3 trillion has been spent](#) on those bloody occupations according to economist Joseph Stiglitz's estimate.

There are many good proposals in the GND, including calling for the "informed consent of Indigenous people for all decisions that affect Indigenous people." That would have stopped the Dakota Access Pipeline that's violating Native land.

But the GND doesn't mention that the U.S. war machine is the world's biggest producer of greenhouse gases, guzzling 300,000 barrels of oil per day. The \$700 billion Pentagon budget spent on war and war preparation could instead pay for millions of jobs and massive public works.

Another addition should be freeing the hundreds of thousands of poor people in prisons mostly because they are poor and employing them in union jobs. The U.S. is

the world's biggest jailer with over 2.2 million people incarcerated.

## **We need a revolution**

Many people think President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal gave us Social Security, unemployment compensation and even unions. But everything that was won in the 1930s and 1960s — which the capitalists have, ever since, been trying to take away — was won through the mass struggle of millions of people.

Millions were hired by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s against the political backdrop of the socialist five-year plans in the Soviet Union.

The greatest examples of the reforestation that's necessary globally for carbon capture are in socialist countries. Despite the cruel U.S. economic blockade of Cuba, the Caribbean country has [more than doubled its forested land](#) since 1959.

The People's Republic China has [spent \\$100 billion on reforestation](#) since 2009. An area of 123,000 square miles — twice the size of New England — has been replanted with trees.

Revolutionaries are the best fighters for reforms. In his time, Karl Marx hailed the struggle for a shorter workday.

It will take massive struggles to get any parts of the Green New Deal through a Congress that's bought and paid for by Big Oil.

To really stop capitalist climate change, we need a revolution to get rid of capitalism. Working and poor people need to take over the industries and the war machine to stop the destruction of the global environment.

