‘Transform Defence’ on 5th anniversary of Paris Climate Agreement

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New reports call to ‘Transform Defence’ on 5th anniversary of Paris Climate Agreement

Tipping Point North South’s Transform Defence for Sustainable Human Safety initiative launches today with the publication of two reports detailing the staggering cost of military spending to people and the planet.

The first report, ***Indefensible: The true cost of the global military to our climate and human security*** assesses the impact of the global military on climate change, human security and development. The second report, ***Global military spending, sustainable human safety and value for money*** makes the case for modernising defence and security thinking *and spending* in order to effectively deal with the biggest threats to our collective safety: climate change and pandemic.[1]

Together, the reports argue that the US$1.9 trillion[2] spent globally each year on the world’s military delivers nothing to defend citizens facing these twin threats. “Five years after the Paris Climate Conference, it is time to add the global military’s carbon footprint to the ‘net zero’ debate,” says TPNS Co-Founder Deborah Burton. “And our call for an assessment of the accountability, efficacy, relevance and value for money of our global military to the threats we face could not be more timely as lives and livelihoods worldwide are destroyed by a foreseen yet completely unaddressed ‘Tier 1’ security threat – pandemic.”

According to ***Indefensible: The true cost of the global military to our climate and human security***, if the world’s militaries were combined together as a single country, they would be the 29th biggest oil consumer in the world, just ahead of Belgium or South Africa. To put it another way, this is half the oil consumption of the world’s 5th biggest economy, the UK. Runaway global military spending enables the world’s militaries to remain the biggest institutional users of fossil fuels in the world and to be major driver for climate change. A carbon-neutral world demands we fully decarbonise our militaries.

“[This report] is an important addition to the growing evidence on the significant role of military emissions in causing climate change. Using a novel methodology, it widens the analysis to all the world’s militaries… it connects the dots between military fuel use, military spending, war, and the burden of climate change on development,” says Neta C. Crawford, Professor and Chair of Political Science Boston University and Co-Director of the Costs of War Project. “… it [also] offers important solutions. It is essential reading for all those concerned with climate change and the path to a sustainable and secure future.”

And as nations update their 2020 Nationally Determined Contributions,[3] the Transform Defence reports call for NGOs and policy-makers alike to undertake a practical, imaginative, brave discussion about redefining and re-making defence policy so it is truly fit-for-purpose and accords the same level of attention, urgency and resources to pandemic and climate change as is granted to conventional security threats.

“[TPNS’s] ***Global military spending, sustainable human safety and value for money*** report … demonstrates how deeply inadequate the concept of ‘national security’ is in light of the ongoing pandemic and the rapidly unfolding threats of climate change,” says Jen Maman, Senior Peace Adviser, Greenpeace International. “It asks what we can learn by looking at the policy and spending priorities of governments, and argues that, unquestioned and at our peril, governments are massively outspending on weaponry compared to the climate emergency or global health protection.’’

Notes to editors:

In 2016, total public expenditures on climate change (international and domestic) amounted to US$141 billion while global military expenditures was US$1.7 trillion.[4] On average, the expenditure of national governments on climate change amounted to 8.5% of what they spent on defence, a ratio of 12:1.[5] Since 2016, global military spending has gone up significantly.

Indefensible: The true cost of the global military to our climate and human security also estimates that the global military and defence industry combined accounts for at least 1% of total global greenhouse gas emissions. This is larger than the annual greenhouse gas emissions of the entire country of Italy and not much smaller than the total GHG emissions of the UK and France respectively.

For comparison, international civil aviation is responsible for around 1.3% of global GHG emissions and is a climate change focus of public and political attention. Meanwhile, the global military-industrial complex accounts for a similar amount of greenhouse gas emissions as civil aviation but it receives no such scrutiny.

Global military spending, sustainable human safety and value for money
report uses the F35 fighter jet as a case study to illustrate this imbalance. Had the US$2 trillion estimated global total lifetime cost of F-35 programme been applied to the activities/areas/agencies below this is what the global community would be receiving instead:

Climate finance for 20 years

UN disaster response for the next 400 years

UN disaster risk reduction for the next 4,000 years

Global biodiversity conservation at US$100bn per annum for the next 20 years

WHO at US$2bn per annum for the next 1,000 years

WHO's COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund for 2,963 years

Global pandemic surveillance and control at US$8bn per annum for the next 250 years

UN peacekeeping operations at current US$5bn per annum for the next 444 years

UN peacekeeping at US$15bn per annum for the next 133 years

Transform Defence is a project comprising a number of elements including the Five Percent Proposal and the case that military spending is an urgent international development issue; the global military's impact on climate change and human insecurity; the absence in UN processes of the global military's emissions accounting; and Green New Deal Plus.

*Transform Defence for Sustainable Human Safety ?*describes the paradigm shift we need for all defence, security?, foreign and international development? policies? in a climate changed, post-pandemic world.

Transform Defence challenges NGOs and policy-makers alike to undertake a practical, imaginative, brave discussion about redefining and re-making foreign and defence policy such that it is truly fit-for-purpose, understanding its role in climate change, pandemic, economic, racial and gender injustice and why all these issues must be part of any system change process.

Tipping Point North South is a London based co-operative. Its projects include cinema documentaries (*We Are Many*, *Open Bethlehem*,) and events (*Bethlehem Unwrapped*, *Make Apartheid History*). *Transform Defence* is its latest advocacy initiative.

TPNS was founded by former senior Christian Aid trade, tax and climate justice campaigners.

https://transformdefence.org/about/team/

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[1]
Both reports build on major work published earlier: the USA Pentagon emissions report "*Pentagon Fuel Use, Climate Change, and the Costs of War*," by Professor Neta Crawford of the Costs of War Project;

UK military emissions "*The Environmental Impacts of the UK Military Sector*," by Dr. Stuart Parkinson, Scientists for Global Responsibility; and "*Hidden Carbon Costs of the 'everywhere war': Logistics, Geopolitical Ecology, and the Carbon Boot-print of the US Military*," by Oliver Belcher, Patrick Bigger, Ben Neimark, and Cara Kennelly.

[2]
Trends In World Military Expenditure, 2019, SIPRI.
https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/fs_2020_04_milex_0.pdf

[3] See https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs

[4]

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