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U.S. and U.K. militaries owe poor countries \$110 billion in climate offsets for carbon emissions

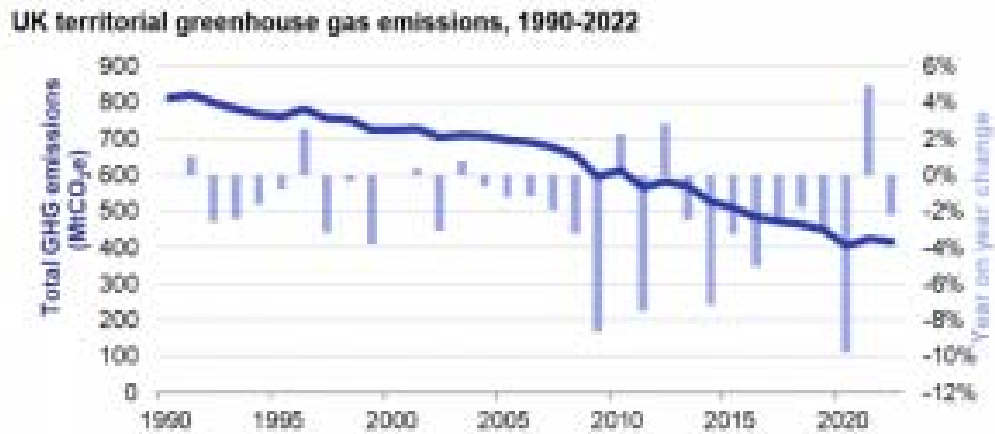
If the tragedy of the deaths and destruction of wars were not a sufficient reason to disavow armies and demand less military spending, we now observe the pollution of their industry and the mechanisms of the great powers to avoid the financial responsibilities established in global environmental agreements



According to calculations by the think tank [Common Wealth](#), a non-profit organization funded by philanthropic foundations and donations based in the United Kingdom and which also worked in the United States, the [social cost of carbon emissions from the militaries of these two countries is approximately \\$111 billion](#). Money that is taken away from the finances of the nations most threatened by the climate crisis.

International climate agreements state that countries, companies, or entities that emit greenhouse gases receive an allocation of emission allowances, which represent a certain amount of allowable emissions. These rights can be bought, sold or transferred between the parties participating in the market. If an entity has surplus allowances because it has reduced its emissions, it can sell those surpluses to other entities that need more allowances to meet their emission reduction targets.

It is clear that it is the poorest countries that, due to their lack of industrialization and consumption, have surplus emission rights to sell; and that it is the rich who, by polluting more and needing more emission rights, pay the poor to be able to pollute what the latter do not do. Well, this calculation does not include the 430 million tonnes of CO₂ emitted by the UK and US militaries since the Paris Climate Agreement came into force in 2016. That's more than the [total greenhouse gas emissions produced in the UK in 2022](#).



[Greenhouse gas emissions United Kingdom 1990-2022.](#)

Let's not forget that emissions from military sources are not addressed in international climate agreements. As a result of U.S. lobbying, overseas military emissions were exempted from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and [reporting on military emissions remained voluntary in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement](#).



[The military is a major emitter of CO2 and should no longer be considered exempt from emission reduction commitments.](#) Credit: MoD/Crown copyright 2021

The rights to emit those millions of tons of CO₂, according to the Common Wealth study, are estimated at \$110 billion, \$106 billion attributable to U.S. emissions and \$5 billion to U.K. emissions. Money that these two countries never paid.

The presence of the United States and the United Kingdom abroad shows the various ways in which military bases, their activity and their infrastructure produce environmental damage and toxic waste.

Not only that, "the U.K. and U.S. militaries have their own international military industry to supply equipment and services. In both countries, this industry is the beneficiary of public investment and many state decisions. For example, in the U.S., the Defense Department's budget approved last December in the Senate was \$886 billion. U.S. defense spending accounts for nearly 40% of countries' military spending around the world, according to figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) for 2022. In fact, Washington spends more on defense than the next 10 countries combined.

Since 2001, the U.S. Department of Defense has accounted for between 77% and 80% of the U.S. government's total energy consumption, while the U.K. Ministry of Defense accounts for at least 40% of British public sector emissions.

Common Wealth recalls that "military-centric industrial strategies in both the US and the UK have [benefited from state intervention](#), while the green sectors have suffered from a lack of support."

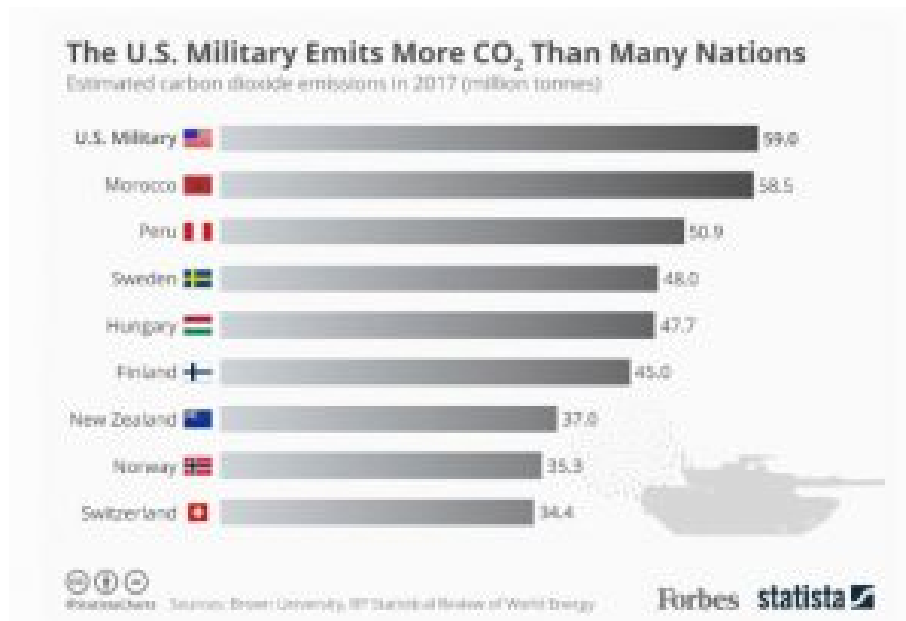


[The Asset Managers' Arsenal: Who owns the British arms industry?](#)

The costs of military pollution and environmental damage are being felt most acutely in countries in the Global South, which are facing the diffuse but increasingly intense effects of global warming. According to the recommendations of the Anglo-Saxon study, "as an initial step to correct their historical and current contribution to the ecological crisis, the US and the UK should contribute, together with other major CO₂ emitters, with the necessary funds to compensate the countries of the South facing the climate crisis and the scarcity of contributions by the polluting countries of the North".

"Reducing the U.S. and U.K. global footprint of nearly 900 military bases and introducing a military superfund, similar to the one administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to pay for the environmental rehabilitation of communities affected by hazardous materials, pollution, and waste from military bases and infrastructure are some of the measures needed to correct the full spectrum of environmental impacts," adds the Foundation.

In a 2019 study, [Brown University](#) estimated that since the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the U.S. military had emitted 1.212 billion tons of greenhouse gases, with an annual average higher than that of many industrialized countries such as Sweden, Norway or Switzerland.



[The U.S. military has emitted 1.212 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases.](#) This would equate to the emissions of about 257 million passenger vehicles per year.

Another [report by Britain's Durham and Lancaster universities](#) concluded that the U.S. military is "one of the biggest polluters in history" and said that if it were a country, it

would be the 47th largest emitter of greenhouse gases, taking into account fuel emissions alone.



[Study Reveals U.S. Armed Forces Pollute and Consume More Fuel Than Most Countries in the World](#)

If the tragedy of the deaths and destruction of wars were not a sufficient reason to disavow armies and demand less military spending, we now observe the pollution of their industry and the mechanisms of the great powers to avoid the financial responsibilities established in global environmental agreements.

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Source: [GLOBALTER](#), February 3, 2024

Edited by [Maria Piedad Ossaba](#)

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