

The Pentagon's recent announcement that global warming poses a national-security risk should have set off the irony alarms.

The Pentagon has as many as 1,000 bases in other countries, and maintaining these bases (and sending troops to and from them) leaves a gigantic carbon footprint.

The U.S. armed forces consume about 14 million gallons of oil per day, half of it in jet fuel. Humvees average 4 miles per gallon, while an Apache helicopter gets half a mile per gallon.

The Iraq War, which George W. Bush launched in part to protect vital oil supplies, consumed oil at a phenomenal rate.

At the start, in 2003, the United Kingdom Green Party estimated that the United States, Britain, and the minor parties of the "coalition of the willing" were burning the same amount of fuel as the 1.1 billion people of India.

U.S. forces in Iraq during 2007 consumed 40,000 barrels of oil a day, all of which was transported into the war zone from other countries.

The U.S. Air Force uses 2.6 billion gallons of jet fuel a year, 10 percent of the U.S. domestic market.

By the end of 2007, according to a report from Oil Change International by Nikki Reisch and Steve Kretzmann, **the Iraq War had put at least 141 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent into the air, as much as adding twenty-five million cars to the roads.** The Iraq War by itself added more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere than 60 percent of the world's nations.

When we are really serious about carbon footprints, we will know the amount of greenhouse gases generated by each platoon sent to war, each bomb dropped, each tank deployed.

However, today we know the carbon footprint of a bag of British potato chips from a Tesco

grocery store in England, but war – that elephant in the greenhouse – remains unmeasured.

Consider this one fact: More than 1.4 million liters of bottled water per day are used by our troops, who need them to stay hydrated during Baghdad's 115-degree summer days. How much fuel has been burned to get the water bottles into the war zone?

When the Pentagon trumpets its efforts to save energy – as when it announced in January that it was replacing 4,200 fluorescent lights with light-emitting diode (LED) lights, saving 22 percent of the energy of the old ones – it's a bad joke. Likewise, the solar array posted on the Pentagon roof is a mirage that is aimed at passengers in cars driving on nearby highways.

The business of the Pentagon is still war, and the making of war destroys the earth.

So it has been since the dawn of the industrial age. Less than a hundred years ago, at the beginning of World War I, the main motive force in battle was the horse and shoe leather, as troops in Europe marched off to battle on foot or horseback. World War I quickly witnessed a dramatic escalation in war's carbon dioxide production with the advent of aerial bombardment, however, as well as increasing use of tanks. War is often a powerful technological motor, and carbon-consumption innovator.

World War II began with quarter-century old biplanes, and ended with jet-propelled fighters. Compared with World War II, the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan is using sixteen times more fuel per soldier, according to the Pentagon.

The mechanization of the military provided many more opportunities to increase carbon dioxide production during the world wars of the early twentieth century. World War II's Sherman tank, for example, got 0.8 miles per gallon. Seventy-five years later, tank mileage had not improved: the 68-ton Abrams Tank got 0.5 miles per gallon.

Fighter jets typical subsonic fuel consumption is 300 to 400 gallons per hour at full thrust (or 100 gallons per hour at cruising speed) during hundreds of hours' training, or combat missions. Blasting to supersonic speed on its afterburners, an F-15 Fighter can burn as much as four gallons of fuel per second.

During the 1950s and 1960s, U.S. B-52s were in the air at all times, on the theory that an airborne fleet would prevent the Soviet Union from obliterating the entire U.S. nuclear armed armada on the ground. Each of these B-52s burned hundreds of gallons of fossil fuel per hour while aloft. The B-52 Stratocruiser, with eight jet engines, consumes 500 gallons of jet fuel per minute, or 3,000 per hour. In a few minutes, a B-52 consumes what an average automobile driver uses in a year.

**What I'd like to know is, how many years of riding a bike to work would it take for me to offset one F-15 flying for an hour? Assuming that my bike replaces a car that gets 25 miles per gallon, my daily commute of five miles would use a gallon a week. That's nearly seven years to fuel a fighter jet at top thrust for one hour.**

We don't have that kind of time. Thermal inertia delivers the results of atmospheric change roughly a half century after our burning of fossil fuels provokes them. The weather today is reacting to greenhouse gas emissions from about 1960. Since then, the world's emissions have risen roughly 400 percent. The Cold War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, the Iraq War, and the Afghanistan War have all played their part. But we haven't even felt their full environmental effects yet.

Global warming has already accelerated beyond even the predictions of pessimistic scientists. The polar ice caps are dissolving and the permafrost is melting, injecting more carbon dioxide and methane into the air. And as the ice caps melt, the

sun reflects off the dark water instead of the white snow, and the atmosphere heats all the faster. This summer, large swaths of tundra have been burning, adding still more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

Before the hot wind blows in our face, we need to recognize the environmental insanity of war.

The Pentagon wants to go "green," though—and not only with its light bulbs. It is also using solar energy at some of its bases, and is even trying to manufacture a synthetic fuel for the B-1 bomber. But we don't need a "green" military with high-mileage tanks, or bombers flying on biofuel. Anyway, war, for the foreseeable future, will depend largely on fossil fuels. As the Pentagon now tells us, we have no national security without climate security. War has become the ultimate environmental oxymoron.

Instead, we need to address the reasons countries and groups go to war: nationalism, religious fanaticism, tribalism, poverty—and scarcity of resources, like oil. And we can't do that by consuming that oil in spasms of nationalism.

**Peacemakers are often assumed to be naive dreamers. Given the environmental circumstances, however, a timely end to war is not naive, but necessary. The Earth can no longer afford war.**

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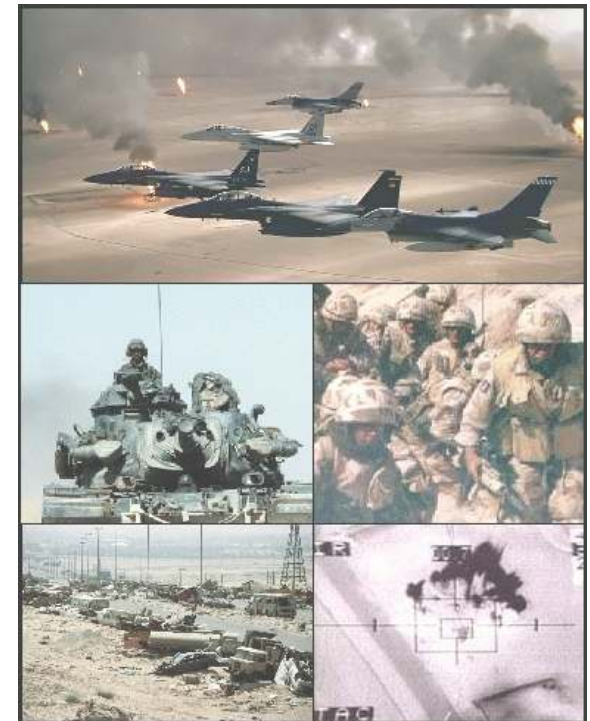
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# The Carbon Footprint of War

Bruce E. Johansen, *The Progressive*, Oct. 2009



**The Earth Can No Longer Afford War**