

A MESSAGE FROM ADRIAN HUO ON THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND MILITARISM

Adrian Huo is a climate organizer, cofounder of the New Haven Climate Movement Youth Action Team and a Youth Coordinator at the Climate Health Education Project. The following are excerpts from her talk on June 3, 2023, at an event welcoming the Golden Rule antinuclear sailboat to New Haven.

In 2020, I was introduced to the US federal budget pie chart breakdown through volunteering with the City of New Haven Peace Commission. It became clear to me that the United States values destruction over all else with a bloated military budget of over \$770 billion. Coming from the background of a climate activist, I was drawn to explore the connections between militarism and climate change. What I learned would strengthen my commitment to both peace and climate action.

From learning about the major contribution of greenhouse gas emissions by military operations to the legacy of toxic military waste, I came to the realization that we cannot achieve true climate and environmental justice without significantly demilitarizing our approach to defense... Militarism degrades the environment and contributes directly to climate change. Our Department of Defense is the world's largest institutional user of petroleum, and correspondingly, the single largest producer of greenhouse gases in the world. The US military produces 59 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually, which is more than entire industrialized countries like Sweden... Maintaining our carbon-intensive infrastructure and gas-guzzling equipment across the 750 US military bases around the world has a tremendous carbon footprint. And of course, warfare itself is extremely carbon intensive. The US military has emitted over 1.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere since 2001.

Huge environmental injustices and health hazards exist where we wage war. Most military bases store large quantities of dangerous tools containing hazardous waste, resulting in tens of thousands of polluted sites in the US and abroad which have caused widespread poisoning in humans and animals.

The fossil fuel industry is intertwined with militarism since the US serves as a key customer to the industry in order to power its machinery. Finally, when we over-invest in the military, we under-invest in areas like human needs and environmental sustainability. Compared to the \$6.4 trillion spent on war in the past 20 years, the cost of shifting the US power grid to 100% renewable energy is estimated to cost \$4.5 trillion. Instead of funding endless wars, we could have shifted off our country's fossil-fuel reliance with money to spare.

In 2020, the federal military budget was 272 times larger than [the budget] for energy efficiency and renewable energy. Plus, they spent 16x more on military than on diplomacy and humanitarian aid... Locally, this year, New Haveners are paying \$206 million in taxes towards the federal military. From a climate standpoint, this could have powered all the households in the city with solar electricity for 14 Years.

Even more damaging than traditional warfare, we must discuss the impact of nuclear war on climate and humanity. A 2022 study found that a full-scale nuclear war between the US and Russia with their current number of warheads could lead to as much as 150 million tons of soot being injected into the atmosphere. All that soot would quickly spread around the globe and block incoming sunlight leading to drastic global cooling. In the cold and dark, crops would wither and die, as would livestock. It is estimated that 5 billion people would die from famine in this "nuclear winter."

We may have forgotten about the possibility of nuclear war, but the looming threat remains. More countries possess nuclear weapons now than during the Cold War. International arms control treaties have begun to crumble. Global military spending is reaching a record high and international tensions have [heightened.]

A militarized economy has many other downsides. The more a country spends on military, the slower its economic and productivity growth, the higher the unemployment, the less innovation, and the greater its contribution to global warming... Militarized industries and extractive industries such as the fossil fuel industry create economic dependence and essentially trap their vulnerable workers. Luckily, funding a green economy would be a net job creator. For the same level of spending, clean energy and infrastructure create over 40% more jobs. Plus, green jobs can provide safer work environments.

One day, I want to live in a nation that values sustaining life rather than destroying livelihoods and environments.

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