

DEFENCE EMISSIONS: BRIEFING PAPER

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If Australia is to reach its emissions reduction target, Australian Defence Force emissions must be addressed.

- In the years for which data has been made public, Defence was responsible for 66% of the Australian Government's emissions¹
- Defence has not published complete energy use or emissions data since 2012
- Military operations drive increased emissions and abet the threat of climate change

The Australian Defence Force says it has initiated a range of investments to drive a 43% reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2040 - a decade ahead of the government's overall national target.²

However, the ADF has not published its plan for decarbonisation, and there is no information about the level of current Defence emissions, how the ADF measures them, or how it deals with operational emissions. Reporting of Defence emissions through the National Inventory scheme has been poor.

If Defence is to play a role in minimising the threat of climate change, decarbonisation alone will not be enough. It must also address how reducing military expenditure, activities and deployments, and increasing efforts towards peace and stability, can reduce emissions and minimise the threat of climate change.

At the international level, military emissions are voluntarily reported by states parties to climate conventions, excluded from the overall calculation of each state's emissions, and exempted from clear emissions reduction targets.

Without concerted, collective action on military emissions, it is less likely that global temperature rise can be limited to 1.5°C as specified in the Paris Agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Australia can:

- Commit to improved measurement, reporting, and scrutiny of Defence emissions
- Include Defence emissions from all sources and supply chains in overall calculations of Australia's emissions, and mandate a reduction target, and ensure reporting is transparent, accessible, independently verifiable and fully disaggregated from other non-military emissions
- Address how reducing military expenditure, activities and deployments, and increasing efforts towards peace and stability can reduce emissions and minimise the climate threat

MILITARY EMISSIONS

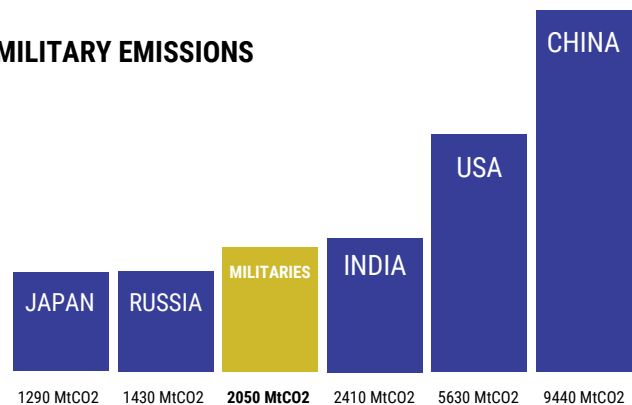


FIG.1: MILITARIES' GLOBAL CARBON FOOTPRINT

SOURCE: CEOSBS/SCIENTISTS FOR GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

Militaries are highly polluting, contributing an estimated 5.5% of global emissions. If the world's militaries were a country, it would have the fourth highest carbon footprint (Fig 1.)³

The UK armed forces account for 50% of the UK government's emissions.⁴ The US military is responsible for 56% of US government emissions, and is the world's single largest institutional petroleum user and carbon emitter.⁵

In Australia, no Defence emissions data has been made public since 2012, and reporting on energy use has been incomplete. In the period 2001-2012 Defence was responsible for 66% of total Australian Government emissions.

This does not take into account military supply chains, a source of considerable embedded carbon emissions. Therefore, Defence's contribution to national emissions is likely to be much higher, and to have increased proportionately since 2012.

NATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

The Australian government has committed to 43% reduction of emissions by 2030, and a 2050 target of net zero. Allowing Defence to continue with business as usual makes it much less likely that Australia will meet its reduction targets, and much more likely that other sectors will have to make deeper emissions cuts.

INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

The 2015 Paris Agreement made military emissions reporting voluntary. Military emissions are excluded from the overall calculation of each state's emissions, and exempted from clear emissions reduction targets, creating a significant 'emissions gap'.

Australia did not fully report military emissions in its 2019 report to the UNFCCC. Operational emissions - for example, from overseas or conflict operations - are not reported to the UNFCCC by Australia. Military operations are sources of high levels of emissions as well as being drivers of environmental degradation.

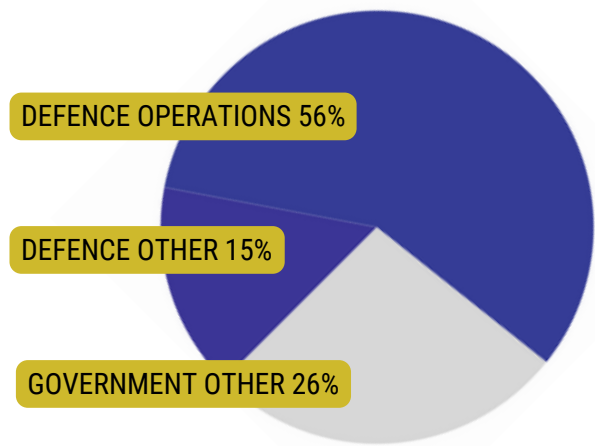
Developed nations like Australia have an obligation under the UNFCCC to provide climate finance for the world's most vulnerable countries. Yet the world's developed nations have spent 30 times more on their armed forces than on climate finance.⁶

CLIMATE AND HUMAN SECURITY

Climate change is an immediate threat to human security, precipitating multiple and simultaneous crises. Defence must address its own contribution to a threat that Defence itself is increasingly called on to respond to.

**Briefing prepared by the Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW) | mapw.org.au
Contact: 03 9023 1958 | eo@mapw.org.au
MAPW is a national organisation of health professionals working to prevent the harms of war.**

FIG.2: MILITARY OPERATIONS AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ENERGY USE 2011-12



Defence has committed to conducting a risk assessment of the implications of climate change for national security, but it is not known if the assessment will include the ADF's own contributions to global temperature rise. The 2020 Defence Strategic Update does not deal with the threat of climate crises. The Terms of Reference for the 2022 Defence Strategic Review do not mention climate.

Expanding military operations to respond to the consequences of climate change abets the threat. Over half of total Australian Government energy use was attributable to ADF operations in 2011-12 (Fig. 2).⁷ Since 2012, the ADF has reported that increases in energy use are attributable to operational fuel consumption, new bases, and base expansions.⁸

Defence must urgently address how reductions in expenditure and operations, and reorientation towards peace and stability, are essential for threat minimisation and human security.

SOURCES

1. Energy Use in Australian Government Operations 2001-2012
2. 2022 Incoming Government Brief
3. Conflict and Environment Observatory/Scientists for Global Responsibility 2022
4. UK Ministry of Defence Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy
5. Brown University Costs of War Project
6. Transnational Institute 2022
7. Energy Use in Australian Government Operations 2011-2012
8. ADF Annual Reports 2013-2021