

# Stop Wapenhandel

## Fossil wars, arms trade and climate justice

November 2019

### Introduction

It is evident that climate change has an impact on safety. Wars usually have multiple causes and climate change reinforces existing tensions.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere, military planners are investigating what this means for military tasks and deployability. In their language, climate change is a 'threat multiplier'. Not only the military, many civilians as well put climate on the top of the security agenda. In an international study of security perception in 26 countries, the majority of respondents in 13 countries mentioned climate change as the biggest threat, before ISIS, cyber war or Russia.<sup>2</sup>

However, defining climate change as a security problem has consequences for the kind of solutions that are being sought. And for budget choices. Just as 'strengthening security infrastructure' has become a separate goal for development cooperation at the expense of more traditional development goals such as education,<sup>3</sup> 'climate security' could become a separate goal for climate policy, at the expense of investments in sustainable solutions. The arms industry, which is constantly looking for new markets, already sees opportunities here.

The involvement of armed forces themselves in the creation and maintenance of climate change must also be included in the debate. In her latest book Naomi Klein points out that the armed forces are considerable climate polluter.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the armed forces of NATO defend an economy that is based on mass consumption and the extensive use of fossil fuel. Military forces are deployed worldwide in the competitive struggle for raw materials.<sup>5</sup>

If we demand climate justice and an end to the fossil fuel economy, we cannot avoid the question what role the armed forces should or should not play in this transformation.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cisl.cam.ac.uk/resources/publication-pdfs/ipcc-ar5-defence-briefing-web-en.pdf/at\\_download/file](https://www.cisl.cam.ac.uk/resources/publication-pdfs/ipcc-ar5-defence-briefing-web-en.pdf/at_download/file)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.statista.com/chart/10533/global-threats/>

<sup>3</sup> Wapens ondermijnen het ontwikkelingsbeleid.  
<http://www.stopwapenhandel.org/sites/stopwapenhandel.org/files/militarisering%26ontwikkeling.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Naomi Klein. On Fire: The (Burning) Case for a Green New Deal. Simon & Schuster, 2019

<sup>5</sup> Michael Klare. The Race for What's Left. Picador 2013

## Raw materials and 'strategic commons'

One of the major tasks of Western armed forces is to secure the supply of raw materials for our economies, in particular fossil fuel. For this reason the Netherlands and other NATO countries have armed forces that can operate globally, with heavy weapon systems for deployment far beyond national borders. In almost all recent major wars, access to raw materials, especially fossil fuels, played a major role. As Von Clausewitz said in a famous quote: war is politics by other means. Under the dominating free market consumption economy, military deployment often is free market policy by other means.

### *Strategic commons*

"The protection of the lines of communication that guarantee our safety and generate prosperity and flow security is an important part of the strategy." writes the Dutch government in its Integrated Foreign and Security Strategy 2018-2022.<sup>6</sup> To defend Dutch economic interests, according to the Constitution: "For the defence and protection of the interests of the Kingdom", the armed forces must be able to act worldwide, be "expeditionary". With weapon systems that can be deployed over great distances in full spectrum conflict, such as submarines and F-35 combat aircraft. It is precisely these weapons systems that are particularly lucrative for the arms industry; for example, the F-35 is the most expensive weapon system ever, and € 4 billion has already been reserved for new submarine capacity in the Netherlands.<sup>7</sup>

Dominating the 'strategic commons', the free passage routes at sea, does not only guarantee own access to raw materials but also gives the possibility to deny this to competitors. The United States may have lost its world hegemony in economic terms to China, in military terms it is still superior. China has to import 90% of all its oil which makes it vulnerable. In its Strategic Concept 2010, NATO calls on member states to "develop capacity to contribute to energy security, including the protection of critical energy infrastructure and transit areas and lines (...)"<sup>8</sup>

### **Fossil wars**

The Middle East in particular is paying a high price for the struggle for control over fossil fuel. The official reason for the military invasion of Iraq by the US and allies in 2003 was the - later proven false - claim by US intelligence services that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. Dutch politics and public opinion also largely followed this story.<sup>9</sup> While the arms industry and private military companies profited considerably from this war, the Iraqis paid a high price. At least 183,030 civilians were killed in the violence since the

<sup>6</sup> Wereldwijd voor een veilig Nederland – <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/rapporten/2018/03/19/notitie-geintegreerde-buitenland--en-veiligheidsstrategie-gbvs/Notitie+GBVS.PDF>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.stopwapenhandel.org/node/2130>

<sup>8</sup> NATO's role in energy security 14 Sep. 2018 [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49208.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49208.htm)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.vn.nl/leugens-over-leugens/>

overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime, which was in the 1980s considered a Western ally and received Western weapons.<sup>10</sup> In 2004, then US Vice President Dick Cheney said: "Oil is unique because it is so strategic. We are not talking about soap powder or fashion here. Energy is really fundamental to the global economy. The Gulf War was a reflection of that reality. "Iraq has one of the largest oil reserves in the world."<sup>11</sup>

### *Yemen*

Control over raw materials also plays a major role in other conflicts in the region. Yemen, for example, is strategically located at the Red Sea, where important global shipping routes run. The Yemen war is a domestic conflict between different populations and a regional conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia, but it is also about the control of Western countries over the supply routes of raw materials. The West would like to see a friendly government here, and not a government that might be sympathetic to Iran. That is why the warring coalition, led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, can continue to buy Western weapons on a large scale. The Saudi Air Force received help from the US Army in their bombing flights.<sup>12</sup> The conflict with Iran is also about controlling oil.

### *Competitive shale oil*

In the meantime, the US is stepping into the energy market itself. Immediately after taking office, President Trump denounced all environmental protection laws that restricted the extraction of fossil fuels.<sup>13</sup> Not surprising, as the US energy sector is a major sponsor of the Republican party.<sup>14</sup> The US government has been putting pressure on the EU, including during NATO meetings, to import more American LNG gas extracted from shale, and to stop the import of Russian gas.<sup>15</sup> That is causing discord in Europe. Eastern member states in particular fear the Russian power to cut off energy supplies. Russia showed itself capable to do so during the war in the Ukraine. But not everyone in the EU is happy with the environmentally unfriendly and expensive American LNG.<sup>16</sup> In the meantime, Germany is investing with the Russian Gazprom and among others Shell in the North Stream 2 pipeline for gas import from Russia. The most important factor, namely that fossil fuel must be phased out anyway and that the investments must go to sustainable sources, does not even play a marginal role in the discussion. Strategic and economic interests are mixed up dangerously here: the US has no interest in improving the relationship between the EU and Russia if it wants to sell its LNG.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-much-oil-does-iraq-have/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/yemen-war-us-stop-inflight-refuelling-saudi-coalition-jets-conflict-a8627701.html>

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/176384/tomgram%3A\\_michael\\_klare\\_%2C\\_militarizing\\_america%27s\\_energy\\_policy](http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/176384/tomgram%3A_michael_klare_%2C_militarizing_america%27s_energy_policy)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/indus.php?cycle=2018&ind=E>

<sup>15</sup> <https://euranetplus-inside.eu/us-lng-imports-in-eu-markets-will-decide/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.foeeurope.org/search/foee/LNG>

A switch to renewable energy sources will have major consequences for the balance of power in the world. Countries such as Russia or Saudi Arabia, whose economies are largely based on fuel sales, will have to adjust very quickly or seriously destabilize. By bringing oil company ARAMCO to the stock market Saudi prince Salman is said to raise funds for this economy shift. The UAE wants to invest in arms industry capacity as a new economic sector.<sup>17</sup> Russia however is not very active in investing in other than fuel extraction sectors.

Conflict areas might shift to countries with raw materials needed for sustainable energy production such as lithium.

## Weapons for petrodollars

The large sums of money that western countries spend on fossil fuel imports are partly returning by the export of weapons. The Middle East is the largest customer of the European arms industry, despite European arms export rules<sup>18</sup> that are intended to prevent weapons from ending up in conflict regions, with dictators or with human rights abusers. The Gulf states Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait together spent \$ 4.05 billion on defence in 2018.<sup>19</sup> So far they barely have their own arms industry so almost everything has to be imported. In particular, exports to Saudi Arabia and the UAE are denounced by peace and human rights groups because of the war in Yemen.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, only a few countries (including the Netherlands and Germany)<sup>21</sup> are restricting their exports to the Gulf. Arms deliveries give European countries influence in the region. With the purchase of weapons, countries are bound to the supplier for a long time, because an arms deal requires a long-term contract for maintenance and spare parts. Arms exports make Gulf States dependent on the supplying country for 15 to 25 years. In addition to political advantage and proceeds from sales, there is another financial advantage with this large-scale arms export. More export leads to more sales, and therefore lower production costs for the European arms industry. In this way, European countries can purchase their own weapons cheaper - arms exports save directly on the national defence budget. There are major interests in maintaining the cycle between weapons and oil

## Climate migrants and military deployment

Almost all military planners agree that an increase of migration is the biggest security risk caused by climate change. Entire areas will become unliveable and millions of people, especially from poorer parts of the world, will have to look for a new place to live.<sup>22</sup> Many of these climate refugees migrate within their own country, others will look for opportunities abroad. Europe does

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/united-arab-emirates-ramps-up-weapons-abilities-1.8200202>

<sup>18</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:335:0099:0103:nl:PDF>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/gulf-cooperation-council-arms-race-sells-180412125953374.html>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/28/world/middleeast/un-yemen-war-crimes.html>

<sup>21</sup> <https://yemen.armstradewatch.eu/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/08/south-asia-heat-waves-temperature-rise-global-warming-climate-change/>

not want to admit 'economic migrants' although already many of them are at least partly climate refugees. The European Parliament, among others, has been trying to establish a definition of 'climate refugee'. But that is not easy, because climate is just one of the several factors causing migration which can hardly be isolated from other factors.<sup>23</sup> Research models however do show a relationship between climate change, conflicts and migration.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Anti-migration measures*

The rich countries, which have contributed the most to climate change, are trying to stop migrants crossing their borders, with a policy of walls and surveillance technology. The wall that Trump wants to build on the southern border of the US is an extreme example of this; the arrival of migrants from Latin America is partly driven by food insecurity due to climate change.<sup>25</sup> Europe is also investing heavily in closing borders. The European market for border surveillance technology, which is mainly served by arms companies such as Airbus, Leonardo, Safran and Thales, is currently growing at around 8% per year.<sup>26</sup> The budget of European border surveillance agency Frontex increased from € 143 million in 2015 to € 322 million in 2020. There are also European military operations for border control, sometimes in cooperation with NATO. The Netherlands supplies Frontex with naval vessels, coast guard aircraft and military police and, among other things, trains the Libyan coast guard to intercept and return migrants who are detained in Libya under inhumane conditions.<sup>27</sup>

Stopping migrants does not only take place at the EU's external borders. Migrants are stopped even before they reach a European border. Niger, for example, an important transit country for African migrants and the second poorest country in the world, receives € 10 million from the Netherlands and Germany for setting up special border guard units.<sup>28</sup> Not only are border posts set up on through roads, oases are also guarded. There are no ways around these border controls. People who try nevertheless are caught or do not survive; at present there are more migrants dying in the desert than drowning in the Mediterranean, these victims remain invisible.<sup>29</sup> As a reward for stopping migrants, Niger will receive 100 million euros from the Dutch development budget for poverty reduction, education and drinking water.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621893/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)6\\_21893\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621893/EPRS_BRI(2018)6_21893_EN.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2019-01/iifa-nsc012219.php](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-01/iifa-nsc012219.php)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/30/migrant-caravan-causes-climate-change-central-america>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.stopwapenhandel.org/borderwars2>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.amnesty.nl/actueel/weer-meer-mensen-door-libische-kustwacht-teruggestuurd-naar-onmenselijke-detentiecentra>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.thelocal.de/20181101/germany-netherlands-back-niger-border-force-to-counter-migration>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.stopwapenhandel.org/sites/stopwapenhandel.org/files/Expanding-the-fortress-webMay14.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2019/02/13/minister-kaag-meer-investeren-in-ontwikkeling-van-niger>

## Climate conflicts between rich and poor

Extreme weather, flooding, and a shortage of fresh water and fertile soil will lead to more scarcity and more competition over livelihood. The conflicts that arise must not by definition escalate into violence, but the risk is high, certainly in poor countries where margins are narrow. Conflicts occur within countries but also between countries, such as conflicts over the water of cross-border rivers. Development organizations and armed forces are trying to get the concept of "Responsibility to Prepare" into effect in EU and UN conflict prevention and peacekeeping. For example, by introducing climate indicators into 'early warning' systems for fragile states.<sup>31</sup> But in fact, these conflicts are not caused by climate change itself but by insufficient means to cope.

In the competition for water and fertile soil, poor and vulnerable groups are losing out to rich and powerful parties. There is a lot of demand for land for the production of food crops, animal food or biofuel, usually for export. Countries such as Saudi Arabia and China secure their food supply by purchasing land in poorer parts of the world, often at the expense of local food supplies.<sup>32</sup> Large companies also buy land or take it for themselves, supported by governments that do not adequately protect its own people, because of corruption, unwillingness or powerlessness. In many situations, military forces or private militias defend the interests of rich countries and large companies against civilian resistance. People protesting against environmental damage and loss of land and livelihood are often confronted with repressive military and / or paramilitary force.<sup>33</sup> Nomadic and indigenous populations are particularly vulnerable, their legal position is often not strong or simply ignored. It happens too often that citizens protesting against large companies are 'eliminated': in 2017, Global Witness described 201 cases of people who were killed for standing up for their livelihood and their environment. In at least 30 of these murders armed forces were responsible.<sup>34</sup>

### *Armed forces against civilians*

Soldiers also play a role in protests against pollution from fossil fuel extraction, or unsolicited land use for transport pipelines. In the Netherlands, several lawsuits are filed (and some won) against Shell's role in Nigeria. A current case is filed by the widows of nine murdered Nigerians ('Ogoni nine') claiming that Shell actually encouraged the Nigerian government to send troops to suppress civil protests.<sup>35</sup> The Dutch arms industry offered patrol vessels to

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/Report\\_Europe\\_Responsibility\\_to\\_prepare.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/Report_Europe_Responsibility_to_prepare.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Michael T. Klare, *The race for what's left*, uitgever, jaar, Pp 15-87

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2014/jan/07/honduras-dirty-war-clean-energy-palm-oil-biofuels>

<sup>34</sup> [https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/19595/Defenders\\_report\\_layout\\_AW4\\_up\\_date\\_disclaimer.pdf](https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/19595/Defenders_report_layout_AW4_up_date_disclaimer.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.trouw.nl/home/shell-en-nigeria-hebben-mijn-man-gedood-zegt-nigeriaanse-weduwe-tegen-de-rechter~add27bd1/>

the Nigerian army, which can be used for the transport of troops into the areas of unrest.<sup>36</sup> The Dutch government approved these exports with an explicit reference to Shell's interests in Nigeria. At present, there is an order of a Damen Shipyard Landing Transport Ship also suitable to use in the Ogoni delta.<sup>37</sup>

In the United States, protesters meet an increasingly heavily armed and militarily trained police.<sup>38</sup> The Trump government has declared unlimited extraction of fossil fuel a matter of National Security.<sup>39</sup> Demonstrations against the construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline through native territory were confronted with private security firms that previously worked for the US army in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup>

## Military strategies adapt

That US President Trump removed climate change as a risk factor from the US National Security Strategy<sup>41</sup> indicates friction between the White House and the Pentagon. Because the US armed forces do suffer from extreme weather due to climate change. For example, during Hurricane Florence in 2018, thirty American navy ships had to flee their harbour on the east coast to prevent them from being smashed. California forest fires, caused by extreme drought and heat, caused emergency evacuations of army training camps.

In response the US Congress asked for a report on the effects of climate change for the US armed forces.<sup>42</sup> Military climate adaptation varies from reinforcing naval ports to floating plates under army camps on the melting permafrost in Alaska. The most vulnerable are the strategically crucial bases on Pacific islands ("closer to Pyongyang than to Washington"), threatened by increasing hurricanes and a shortage of fresh water.<sup>43</sup>

### *European strategies*

In European countries climate change is part of military strategic planning. The EU Common Global Security Strategy<sup>44</sup> already mentioned climate change as a threat to the Union's security and stability in 2003, however without drawing any conclusions. French Defense and National Security Strategic Review 2017 describes climate change as a growing security risk for the French semi-colonies in the Sahel (Niger, Mali, Mauretania, Chad), for Southeast

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.stopwapenhandel.org/publicaties/2010/springstoffeb>

<sup>37</sup> Damen to help Nigerian military to transport troops and weapons in Delta  
<http://www.stopwapenhandel.org/node/2350>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/sep/14/police-military-weapons-urban-shield-expo>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/sep/14/police-military-weapons-urban-shield-expo>

<sup>40</sup> <https://theintercept.com/2017/05/27/leaked-documents-reveal-security-firms-counterterrorism-tactics-at-standing-rock-to-defeat-pipeline-insurgencies/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/dec/18/trump-drop-climate-change-national-security-strategy>

<sup>42</sup> Report on Effects of a Changing Climate to the Department of Defense  
<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/5689153-DoD-Final-Climate-Report.html>

<sup>43</sup> <https://joop.bnnvara.nl/opinies/wie-beschermt-het-drinkwater-van-het-eiland-guam>

<sup>44</sup> [https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/pages/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_13.pdf](https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/pages/files/eugs_review_web_13.pdf)

Asia (Bangladesh and Pakistan) and for the Pacific Islands, including French Polynesia, former test site of French atomic bombs.<sup>45</sup>

At a 2019 informal meeting of European defense ministers, climate security was on the agenda alongside cyber security, new defense technologies and European defense cooperation.<sup>46</sup> Ministers try to find solutions to climate threats in technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, solutions undoubtedly promoted by the arms industry who would not object to profit from 'green' research funding. They also propose strengthening 'climate diplomacy' through the European Defense Agency (EDA) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). In particular with regard to the EDA this is inconceivable as the agency is meant to support European armaments and the arms industry.<sup>47</sup> 'Climate security' seems here to be primarily an opportunity to argue for more military technology and European military cooperation.

In the Dutch Defense Memorandum 2018 the word climate change does not occur, but there are concerns about 'natural disasters in the Caribbean' and the 'unstable security situation and conflict in the ring around Europe: the Middle East, North Africa and parts of sub-Saharan Africa and West Africa.'<sup>48</sup> The focus seems to be not primarily on the areas that are most threatened, but on the areas that can pose a problem for Europe.

## Military forces and disaster relief

While climate disasters will occur more frequently, armed forces come into view as rescue and disaster relief organisation. They are flexible, mobile and can quickly provide people and materials. The reflex to send soldiers to a disaster might partly stems from the time of conscript armies, when the armed forces had a huge resource of immediately deployable young men at their disposal. Some US military warn for shortfalls for international military operations if US soldiers have to fight national disasters such as fires and floods.

The Dutch navy is already standby in the Caribbean from June 1 to December 1 for "providing humanitarian aid or maintaining public order after disasters or accidents, such as hurricane passages."<sup>49</sup> When Hurricane Irma hit Sint Maarten in 2017, the island's government approached the Dutch navy for help with law enforcement. Dutch media suggestively reported about possible looting prevented by the marines<sup>50</sup> while some islanders wondered why their own emergency services and police were not adequately equipped. It is not

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/539178/9257163/file/Plaquette-DefClim-2018.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> EU defence ministers to discuss the future of defence cooperation in Helsinki. EU2019 press release. [https://eu2019.fi/artikkeli/-/asset\\_publisher/eu-n-puolustusministerit-keskusteleivat-helsingissa-puolustusyhteistyon-tulevaisuudesta?](https://eu2019.fi/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/eu-n-puolustusministerit-keskusteleivat-helsingissa-puolustusyhteistyon-tulevaisuudesta?_101_INSTANCE_YCurs8qvI1NM_languageId=en_US)

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.euractiv.com/section/climate-environment/opinion/an-eu-agenda-for-climate-security/>

<sup>48</sup> Defensienota 2018 <https://www.defensie.nl/binaries/defensie/documenten/beleidsnotas/2018/03/26/defensienota-2018/210318+Defensienota+definitief.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/taken-in-nederland/caribisch-gebied>

<sup>50</sup> <https://joop.bnnvara.nl/nieuws/meer-dan-helpt-nos-berichtgeving-sint-maarten-gaat-over-plunderingen>

without risk to task military with relief. Civilian aid workers and law enforcement officers are specially equipped and trained to work with civilians, while soldiers are primarily equipped and trained for war situations. In 2019 Dutch soldiers provided assistance at the Bahamas. Amphibious transport ship Johan de Witt and two support ships could be on the spot quickly because they were already in the area for a disaster training exercise held every four years. One may wonder how efficient - and climate-efficient - it is when people and equipment should have to be transported all the way from Europe to the Caribbean.

### *Suitable logistics*

Caribbean storms intensify due to climate change.<sup>51</sup> Jamie Shea, former NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary-General for Emerging Security Challenges, urges European armed forces (French, British and Dutch) to purchase more resources for disaster relief in their former Caribbean colonies, to prevent that military deployment at disasters goes at the expense of military deployment for war.<sup>52</sup> Investing in civilian resources and local emergency shelters is probably more efficient. Dutch logistical support ship Karel Doorman brought bulldozers, excavators and school furniture to Sint Maarten in 2017 and earlier played a role in providing assistance to the African west coast affected by Ebola. However, the ship is equipped with, among other things, cannons and a landing deck for combat helicopters. It is intended and developed for support during military operations. With a civilian ship, other priorities would have been set, with a different price tag. Europe however is planning to develop more military relief capacity. The European Intervention Initiative (EI2) of the French president Macron, in which the Netherlands also participates, aims at more cooperation between armed forces notably, among other things, relief operations in the Caribbean.<sup>53</sup>

## **Armed forces go green**

“The Dutch armed forces want to be less dependent on fossil fuels in the future through the use of hybrid systems, biofuels, electrical systems and through their own energy generation. A test base has been built specifically for this purpose, which tests the latest technologies in a military environment” said the Dutch minister of Defense Bijleveld.<sup>54</sup> ‘Greening’ military bases is international military policy which has nothing to do with climate policy. Long supply lines are vulnerable and cost a lot of money and human lives. For military bases in Afghanistan fuel trucks had to drive thousands of kilometers from Pakistan via very dangerous and hard to secure roads. Energy

<sup>51</sup> Stormclouds and solutions: Climate change in the Caribbean  
[https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/PB\\_PSI\\_Stormclouds\\_and\\_Solutions.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/PB_PSI_Stormclouds_and_Solutions.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> <https://climateandsecurity.org/2019/06/03/the-climate-and-security-podcast-episode-15-with-jamie-shea/#more-17489>

<sup>53</sup> [https://www.europa-nu.nl/id/vl2268zm7kyd/nieuws/ministers\\_van\\_defensie\\_bespreken\\_het?ctx=vh6ukzb3nnt0](https://www.europa-nu.nl/id/vl2268zm7kyd/nieuws/ministers_van_defensie_bespreken_het?ctx=vh6ukzb3nnt0)

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2019/08/29/eu-defensie-ministers-praten-in-helsinki-over-klimaat>

independence is a strategic interest.<sup>55</sup> Large innovation subsidies are used to develop renewable technologies for military applications, for which there is no budget in the unsubsidized civilian market.<sup>56</sup> These technologies are not necessarily the most sustainable. Optimal energy independence is another objective than minimizing climate impact.

#### *Military emissions*

Armed forces are large consumers of fossil fuel and therefore large emitters of CO<sub>2</sub>. Especially the expeditionary military force of NATO countries, which is equipped to be deployed worldwide and has all kinds of heavy systems to drive, sail or fly to a theatre of war anywhere on the globe. The United States armed force is the largest institutional energy consumer in the world; the US Navy uses around 5 billion liters of fuel per year, the Air Force 9 billion. The Paris climate agreement does not include targets for the military sector. It is up to governments if they want to assign a reduction target to their armed forces. The Dutch armed forces have recently pushed their initial reduction target for 2030 forward to 2050. Which makes sense, because there is no known clean fuel technology for the military's heavy equipment. Experiments with F-16's flying 5% on biofuel based on frying fat<sup>57</sup> were successful but short-lived because there is not enough biofuel available and it is too expensive.

---

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.forces.net/technology/frontline-tech-how-militaries-are-going-green-and-cutting-costs>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/christian-stirling-haig/budget-deal-could-fuel-pentagon-green-energy-blitz>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2019/01/16/f-16%E2%80%99s-op-biobrandstof>

## Conclusion

The armed forces and the arms industry play a central role in the system that is precisely causing climate change; our fossil fuel-based economy. An important part of the armed forces is designed to protect the supply of raw materials, in particular fossil fuel. While phasing out fossil fuel is the only way to prevent irreversible climate disasters. If the supply of fossil fuel threatens to be disrupted, it is the task of military and paramilitary troops to intervene. Armed forces are defending the consumption-based economy of the rich against the interests and rights of the poor. Who the winners and who are the losers in the battle for scarce resources is partly determined by military violence. At the same time, the armed forces are huge carbon emitters themselves.

Europe must invest heavily in climate policy in the coming years. Defining climate conflicts and climate migration as a security problem focuses on consequences, not causes. A sustainable policy does include less not more more military activity.

Wendela de Vries 2019

**Stop**  
**Wapenhandel**

Stop Wapenhandel  
Anna Spenglerstraat 71  
1013 NL Amsterdam  
Phone +31 (0)20 616 4684  
info@stopwapenhandel.org  
www.stopwapenhandel.org  
IBAN NL68 TRIO 0198 4563 52