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## Communicating the need for better understanding of the military's contribution to climate change and action to be taken

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Armed conflict and military activity can be highly destructive for the environment. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has unexpectedly elevated global media attention on the humanitarian, environmental and societal impact of the war, with media reporting on the environmental consequences beyond the scale of other contemporary conflicts.<sup>a</sup> However, while this attention on the carbon costs of conflict and military activities is welcome, significant data and knowledge gaps remain on the overall contribution that day-to-day military activities make to climate change.<sup>b</sup> Communicating the issues around military emissions is difficult, given both their complexity and because it is politically sensitive. This is particularly the case around military decarbonisation plans, which some regard as a low priority and a risk to military operational effectiveness or preparedness. This makes geoethics important and communication of the problem especially challenging during a time when military spending is increasing due to Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

This perceived political sensitivity has contributed to the exclusion of military emissions from mainstream climate discourse, despite their potential scale. A study - led by Scientists for Global Responsibility - suggests that the world's militaries are responsible for 5.5% of global emissions.<sup>c</sup> This is considerable yet many governments do not yet publish or fully understand the contribution that their militaries make to climate change. The significant data gaps mean it is inherently difficult to estimate the emissions of the world's militaries as a whole. In turn, this makes it challenging to communicate the importance of the topic.

This presentation will set out some of the initiatives – such as <https://militaryemissions.org> - which have been developed by civil society to communicate the problem to the broad range of stakeholders, including the public, the military, civil society organisations and policy makers. Given the diverse audience, a spectrum of communication narratives has been used, including a podcast series with the military think-tank Royal United Services Institute,<sup>d</sup> policy briefs,<sup>e</sup> webinars,<sup>f</sup> blogs, papers, and media articles. Effective, ongoing communication and education is vital to increase awareness around the military's contribution to climate change and seek to ensure that any emerging climate and decarbonisation plans for the military are properly implemented and their effectiveness scrutinised.

<sup>a</sup> CEOBS, 2022a. Sustainable recovery? First sustain interest in Ukraine's environment. <https://ceobs.org/sustainable-recovery-first-sustain-interest-in-ukraines-environment/>

<sup>b</sup> Rajaeifar, M. et al, 2022. Decarbonize the military — mandate emissions reporting. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-022-03444-7>

<sup>c</sup> SGR/CEOBS, 2022b. Estimating the Military's Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions. [https://ceobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SGRCEOBS-](https://ceobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SGRCEOBS-Estimating_Global_Military_GHG_Emissions_Nov22_rev.pdf)

[Estimating\\_Global\\_Military\\_GHG\\_Emissions\\_Nov22\\_rev.pdf](https://ceobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SGRCEOBS-Estimating_Global_Military_GHG_Emissions_Nov22_rev.pdf)

<sup>d</sup> Greening Defence podcast series, available at <https://rusi.org/podcast-series/greening-defence-podcasts>

<sup>e</sup> CEOBS, 2022c. Policy brief: Military greenhouse gas emissions – transparency, reporting and action. [https://ceobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CEOBS\\_briefing\\_note\\_military\\_GHG\\_reporting.pdf](https://ceobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CEOBS_briefing_note_military_GHG_reporting.pdf)

<sup>f</sup> COP27 virtual panel: Military Emissions Gap annual update 2022, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRi5Apxht5M&t=3621s>