

# The Military-Industrial Complex Is Fueling Climate Catastrophe — Let's Demand Accountability at COP

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*As we write, New York City is an unsettling 70 degrees in November. Meanwhile, a cohort of war profiteers, their pockets lined by the very industries destroying our climate, are flying to COP, the annual U.N. climate summit hosted by a petrostate, no less. They're gathering to "discuss climate solutions"—but one of the world's biggest contributors to the climate crisis will be entirely overlooked: the U.S. military-industrial complex.*

The world's largest institutional emitter, the U.S. military, sits beyond the reach of the metrics meant to hold countries accountable for climate pollution. Exempt from transparency requirements at the COP or within U.N. climate agreements, the military sector is, in fact, the leading institutional driver of the climate crisis. It burns through fossil fuels on a scale that surpasses entire nations while waging wars that destroy lives, communities, and the land itself. It's a deliberate omission, one meant to hide the environmental and social costs of militarism from view.

Leading the U.S. delegation to COP is **John Podesta** — a career defender of militarism, a lobbyist who has worked to fortify the very military establishment poisoning our air, water, and land. Now, he arrives in the conference halls of COP wrapped in a cloak of environmentalism. Yet, as long as he skirts around the elephant in the room, no amount of recycled paper or energy-efficient lighting at COP will address the core driver of the climate crisis. If Podesta ignores the environmental impact of U.S. militarism, he'll be dooming us.

For those of us directly feeling the crisis, there's no question that the U.S. Empire's military machine is central to our climate emergency. Appalachians living through floods and those of us in New York watching temperatures soar out of season are witnesses to the toll. And yet we watch as our leaders, claiming to care about climate, push forward with policies and budgets that only deepen our climate emergency.

In the past year alone, the war on Gaza has been a horrifying example of militarism's environmental toll. Entire communities were leveled under the firepower of U.S.-funded bombs. In just two months, emissions from these military activities equaled the yearly carbon output of 20 countries. This violence bleeds beyond borders. U.S. police forces train with the Israeli military, and they'll soon bring their war tactics to Atlanta's Cop City, where a training center is planned on sacred Indigenous land. Militarism is woven into every facet of our society — taking lives, razing homes, and desecrating land — all while stoking climate disaster.

This crisis can't be solved by those who are its architects. It can't be fixed by Podesta's well-crafted speeches or the administration's empty pledges. The Biden administration just

passed one of the largest military budgets in history, pumping more dollars — and more carbon emissions — into the climate catastrophe. Each weapon shipped, each tank deployed, is an environmental crime in the making, one funded by American tax dollars. We can't ignore this fact as COP progresses and climate talks fall short yet again.

It's easy to despair in the face of such unaccountable power. But in times of crisis, clarity can become a weapon. We must expose the truth that militarism is antithetical to climate justice. True climate solutions don't come from polite panel discussions led by those who wield the tools of destruction. They come from radical honesty and demands for accountability. They come from a commitment to ending the empire choking our planet and communities. And they come from a shared goal of mutual liberation that doesn't ignore the plight of the many to serve the few.

The cost of militarism is clear, and its environmental toll demands our fiercest opposition. This COP, let's not let the elephant in the room fade into the background. It's time for those responsible for our climate crisis—the war machines, the lobbyists, and the industries that back them—to be held accountable. For our survival and for each other, we must demand climate justice that tells the truth.

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