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Armed forces have a massive carbon footprint that is absent from global accounting.

The world's militaries are heavy emitters of greenhouse gases. No one knows exactly how much; estimates range between 1% and 5% of global emissions, comparable with the aviation and shipping industries (2% each). Yet militaries are largely spared from emissions reporting. This must change, or mitigation measures risk becoming mere guesswork ¹.

For instance, the US military is the world's largest in terms of expenditure. If they were a nation, US forces would have the highest per-capita emissions in the world, at 42 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂eq) per staff member (see 'Military emissions'). For each 100 nautical miles flown, the US Air Force's signature F-35 fighter jet emits as much CO

²
(2.3 metric tonnes of CO

²
eq)
²

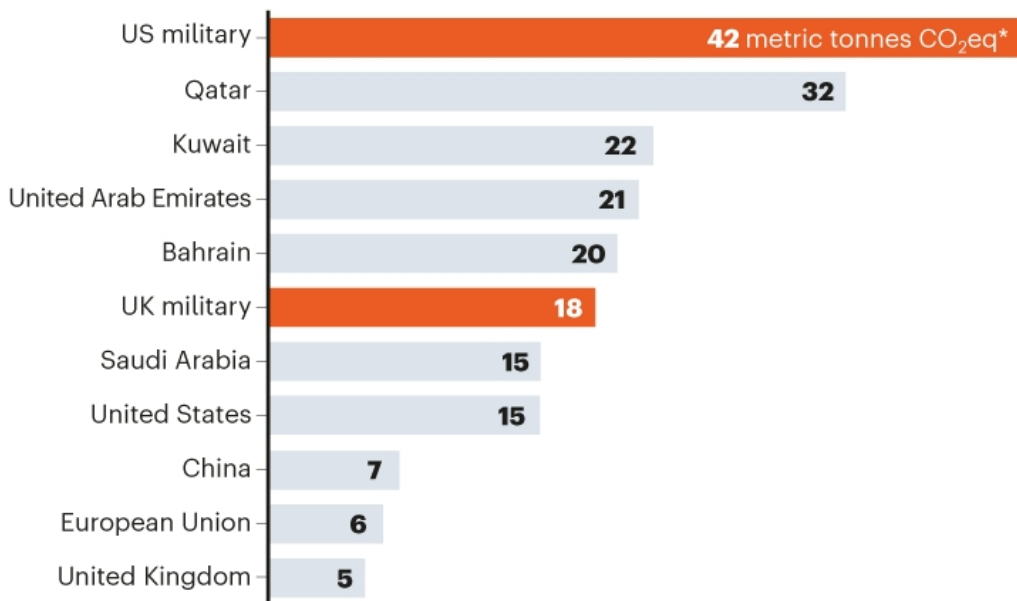
as an average UK petrol car driven for one year. Each year, jet-fuel use by the US military alone generates emissions equivalent to six million US passenger cars

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MILITARY EMISSIONS

Fuel-use data show that US and UK armed forces emit as much CO₂ per capita as many carbon-intensive countries.



*Per capita or per military personnel.

Country-level data are from the World Bank and are from 2018.

See the Supplementary spreadsheet for further calculations.

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The US government is a heavy user of fossil fuels, especially jet fuel. Using more renewables can lower emissions.



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