

Military Spending and the Climate Crisis



A pocket
guide for
change
makers

—| |—
September 2026

Militarism drives climate breakdown

As the climate crisis rages around the world - governments continue to prioritise military spending over reducing carbon emissions and mitigating climate breakdown

The effects of the climate crisis are all around us - from the wildfires burning around the world to the extreme heat in the UK.

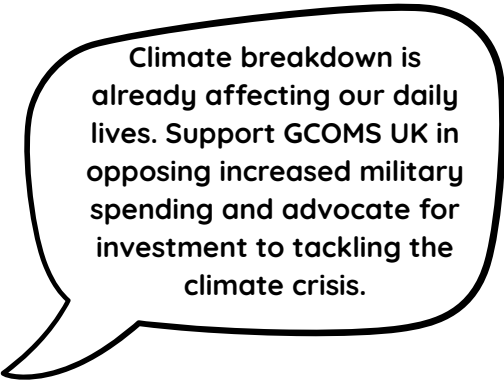
Yet rather than tackling the carbon emissions driving climate breakdown - politicians continue to call for more military spending.

Military conflicts across the globe, from the war in Ukraine to the genocide in Gaza and America's war on Iran, are not just humanitarian disasters; they are also climate disasters and their impacts will be felt for years to come.

Independent estimates say the military accounts for 5.5% of carbon emissions - more than the whole of Russia.¹

Yet the lack of transparency from governments on actual figures means even this could be a significant under-estimation.

There is also a clear link between increasing military spending and increasing carbon emissions - with **every \$10bn extra spent on the military leading to an increase in carbon emissions equivalent to 2.3 million cars driven in the UK for a year.**²



Climate breakdown is already affecting our daily lives. Support GCOMS UK in opposing increased military spending and advocate for investment to tackling the climate crisis.

What you can do

Our work depends on people like you getting involved and taking action. Help us call for change:



Share this guide with your friends, family and organisations in which you are active



Follow us on social media and spread the word and sign up to receive our emails



Get involved in actions locally and nationally to call for change



Ask organisations you are involved in to become a GCOMS UK Supporting Organisation



Support GCOMS UK financially to help us continue



Take motions opposing increased military spending to your political party and Trade Union

UK Government spending plans (2026-29)³

Military (core spending)

£210 billion

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

£35.3 billion

The UK position

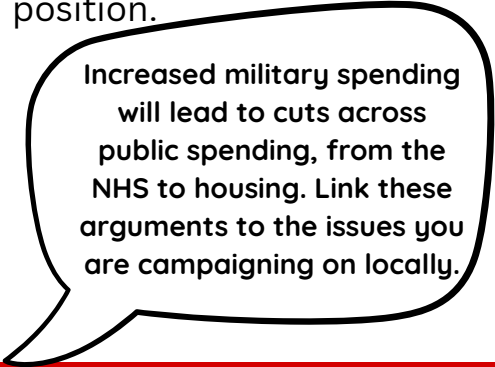
The UK is one of the most militarised countries in the world, with **core military spending planned to be £61.7bn in 2025-26**. Further planned increases would take the figure to 2.7% of GDP by 2027 - part of an increase of more than £13bn, or 22%, over five years to 2028-29.⁴

Prime Minister Andy Burnham has pledged to meet the new NATO target of 3.5% of GDP to be spent on the military by 2035, requiring an estimated £25bn in additional spending.

Defence Secretary Wes Streeting acknowledged that increasing military spending has “an opportunity cost across government”.⁵

This is an acknowledgement of the enormous cuts to public spending in other areas which will be needed to fuel this increase.

Spending by the Ministry of Defence already dwarfs that of government departments with **more than 5.5 times as much spent on the military as the budget for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**, which has responsibility for overseas aid and diplomacy work, and 4.6 times the Department for Energy and Net Zero.⁶ When the Chancellor announces the new Budget on October 28 we will be going through the figures and producing a fresh analysis setting out the current position.



Increased military spending will lead to cuts across public spending, from the NHS to housing. Link these arguments to the issues you are campaigning on locally.

Read our latest impact report

demilitarize.org.uk/2025-impact-report

Around the world

According to figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute **global military spending rose by 2.9% in real terms in 2025 to \$2.887 trillion.** The increase was slower than the previous year, but this is the 11th consecutive year of growth. **Over the last decade military spending has increased by 41%.** The USA is again the highest spender, with China and India increasing at a faster rate.⁷

While the increases are in part driven by ongoing conflicts - the general arms race in Europe and more spending in Asia and Oceania are also responsible. These figures stand in stark contrast to the **\$136.7bn provided in climate finance for developing countries.**⁸ We must urgently reverse these trends to prioritise tackling the climate crisis, or face devastating consequences.

References

1 - <https://www.sgr.org.uk/resources/military-spending-and-military-emissions-hidden-links>

2 - Calculated on data from: <https://www.sgr.org.uk/publications/military-spending-rises-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions-what-does-research-say>

3 - Figures taken from the Budget Red Book 2025 -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6929b353345e31ab14ecf735/E03444720_Budget_2025_Web_Accessible.pdf

4 - <https://demilitarize.org.uk/budget2025/>

5 - <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2026/jul/22/increased-defence-spending-uk-economic-growth-wes-streeting-military-andy-burnham>

6 - See GCOMS UK analysis of the 2025 Budget -

<https://demilitarize.org.uk/budget2025/>

7 - <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2026/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2025>

8 - https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2026/05/climate-finance-provided-and-mobilised-by-developed-countries-in-2013-2024_532c847f/full-report/component-2.html

GCOMS-UK is the British branch of the Global Campaign on Military Spending. We bring together a coalition of non-governmental organisations to campaign against militarism and for a world based on genuine security. Every year we coordinate work around the Global Days of Action on Military Spending, bringing together activists at a local and national level to call for change.

Join us as we
campaign for a
better, more secure
future



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**Global Campaign on
Military Spending UK**