

The Green Zone
The Environmental Costs of Militarism

Barry Sanders

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Richard Alexander

This book claims that the U.S. military constitute one of the greatest sources of pollution, environmental degradation, harm to people and animals and usage of non-renewable fossil fuels on the planet. Sanders makes a valiant attempt to put the numbers to such unquantified amounts such as how much petrol, diesel and oil the military consume in a year; how much depleted uranium it has scattered over Iraq (and how many people will die or be injured as a result.) Not to forget the human cost of the war in Iraq, on which the occupying forces have deliberately avoided collecting statistics. He even tries to come up with figures for the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases for which the U.S. military are responsible. In some respects the actual figures arrived at are not the issue. (We can all tell that whatever the actual amounts it is far too much.)

The US of A is, of course, not the only military force on the planet; others may have more people involved, be even less fuel-efficient and produce more pollution; but it is where Barry Sanders lives and correctly he deals with the issue at hand, over which he hopes the readership of his text can have some control. I would guess that in numerical terms one could apply a multiplier of 5 or 6 to the figures in here to quantify the global cost of militarism.

Sanders makes the point that the problem won't be solved by making biodegradable bullets or using renewable fuels for aircraft carriers. Militarism (the choice of enforcing decisions by military means coupled with production and political objectives in part determined by military objectives) itself is the problem, and one that can only be solved by the demilitarisation of the planet. And at the back of militarism is the nation state and international capital in whose interests the military act.

That said, this book remains an overblown pamphlet, a text that, in the heyday of radical bookshops and a clientele who frequented them, would have

been published in a 48 page pamphlet for 50p. Nowadays it can be posted on the internet where it can be accessed for free, but to get it out to the general public it has been padded out to a respectable length (184 pages) to make it into a paperback book that can be sold in general bookshops and priced accordingly.