

Ray Wilson – Statement to Avon Pension Fund Committee - 27<sup>th</sup> June 2025

I hope this submission will help guide the Avon Pension Fund's decision making process during its consultation on divestment from the arms trade. I want to draw attention to a constantly ignored danger of modern warfare. It's a hazard that is pernicious and it exists beyond the targeted deaths of the weapons of war that your pension fund monies finance. I hope that the insight I offer, into the secondary human devastations that APF is complicit in facilitating, will persuade you to support our objective – which, to be clear, is the disinvestment of APF's pension fund monies from companies involved in the production of armaments.

Weapons of war kill, and they kill people directly, by blowing them to bits, or by vaporising their flesh in the white hot heat of eruptive technology. Those very same weapons destroy societal infrastructure and whole environments, and again, directly, producing desolate swathes of crater strewn landscapes.

Gaza is now a wasteland of 50 million tons of rubble and debris. Rats and dogs are presently scavenging amid the ruins and fetid pools of raw sewage. The putrid stench and contamination of decaying corpses rises from beneath the mountains of shattered concrete. **1**

The guns, and grenades and bombs, and missiles and drones and warplanes, and aircraft carriers and land mines, that reach the frontline to provide APF's dividend income, they bestow a legacy of death that stretches beyond their first victims.

Those very same weapons go on to kill again.

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At the North Pole on 5<sup>th</sup> February this year it was 20 degrees Celsius above normal, ice was melting there in midwinter. Just a few days earlier, the first month of year ended as the hottest January ever recorded. Although we know that war is bad for the environment, a much less obvious, and constantly ignored danger, is the long-term impact of its carbon emissions.

Benjamin Neimark and his colleagues at Queen Mary University, London, have estimated that the US military alone emits more greenhouse gas than 150 countries combined, and that the emissions from the first 120 days of the Israel-Gaza conflict exceeded the annual emissions from over 20 individual countries.

While humanitarian crises dominate global attention, the environmental impact of the conflict is significant and warrants responsiveness. Military operations account for about 5.5% of global carbon emissions, yet these emissions are often underreported and understudied. Neimark's co-Author, Patrick Bigger, says the carbon emissions associated with Israel's invasion of Gaza bring us closer to the precipice of catastrophic warming. **2**

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The UK government has refused to reveal the carbon emissions of its two brand new aircraft carriers, each with three runways and space for dozens of fighter jets. These floating airports have largely escaped criticism from climate campaigners who have focused on blocking a third runway at Heathrow. One of the ships, HMS Queen Elizabeth, has the most powerful marine gas turbine in the world. It was built by Rolls-Royce and can power a town the size of Swindon.

Seven million litres of fuel fit in the carrier's tanks, four million for the ship and three million for its aircraft – you could fill your car up 127,000 times with that! That four million litres for the carrier is around 2% of the total maritime fuel the British military used during 2023. Burning it together with the jet fuel would emit nearly 18,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide. That's similar to charging two billion smartphones. **3**

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Is the Avon Pension Fund oblivious to all this?

Is the Avon Pension Fund oblivious to the worsening of the climate emergency as a result of its investments?

Do the Avon Pension Fund's 135,000 members know they are, by proxy, taking part in oblivicide – murder by remaining oblivious to the facts?

**1** *Chris Hedges, Substack*

**2** *These findings were first published in the Conversation, and the researchers hope their work will prompt further studies and policy changes to address the significant, yet often overlooked, climate costs of war. View the full research article here:*

[https://www.qmul.ac.uk/busman/media/sbm/documents/Gaza\\_Carbon\\_Emissions.pdf](https://www.qmul.ac.uk/busman/media/sbm/documents/Gaza_Carbon_Emissions.pdf)

**3** *The full article is available at*

<https://www.declassifieduk.org>