

CHECKLISTS FOR ASSESSING MILITARY EMISSIONS MITIGATION STRATEGIES AND REPORTING

MILITARY EMISSIONS GAP | FEB 2024

Introduction

It is encouraging that an increasing number of militaries are publishing emissions mitigation strategies, as well as providing annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions data. The growing list of countries includes NATO members with the largest military expenditure, such as the United States,¹ the United Kingdom,² Germany³ and France.⁴

Within the EU, the updated Strategic Compass for Security and Defence outlines a commitment to substantially increase EU military and security spending by 2030,⁵ while also embedding climate change and environmental considerations. Together with the EU's Climate Change and Defence Roadmap,⁶ this underscores the relevance and urgency of effective and transparent actions to reduce the contribution that European militaries are making to the climate crisis, as requested by the European Parliament in 2023.⁷ There is also scope for these policies to help establish global norms, should the ambition be there.

In line with established practice across government, commerce and industry, military climate strategies must include meaningful policies that reduce emissions. Because military emissions mitigation policies are at an early stage of development, we have developed two 20-point checklists to help stakeholders gauge their likely effectiveness. The checklists, which address emissions mitigation and emission reporting policies, are informed by guidelines promoted by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the International Organization for Standardization, and the Science Based Targets initiative. It is our hope that these checklists will be of use to policymakers, the media, civil society and to militaries themselves, as they reorient themselves towards a low carbon future.

1. Department of Defense (2023), Department of Defense Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions: <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Jun/16/2003243454/-1/-1/1/2023-DOD-PLAN-TO-REDUCE-GREENHOUSE-GAS-EMISSIONS.PDF>

2. UK Ministry of Defence (2021), Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/973707/20210326_Climate_Change_Sust_Strategy_v1.pdf

3. Federal Government (2023) Robust. Resilient. Sustainable. Integrated Security for Germany: <https://www.nationalesicherheitsstrategie.de/National-Security-Strategy-EN.pdf>

4. Ministère des Armées (2020), Stratégie énergétique de défense: <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/strategie-energetique-defense>

5. EEAS (2022), A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-0_en

6. EEAS (2020), Climate Change and Defence Roadmap: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12741-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

7. European Parliament (2023), P9_TA(2023)0407, UN Climate Change Conference 2023 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (COP28): https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0407_EN.pdf

Overview

Governments and institutions must reduce their GHG emissions as quickly as possible to achieve the global net zero emissions necessary to prevent the worst effects of climate change. This includes militaries.

UNFCCC guidance on credible net zero commitments highlights the importance of making timely and meaningful contributions to reduce global GHG emissions.⁸ The UNFCCC sets out four key steps based on principles developed by its Expert Peer Review Group,⁹ namely:

- 1. Pledge** to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest, with an interim target by 2030.
- 2. Plan** actions toward achieving both interim and long-term pledges.
- 3. Proceed** and take immediate action toward achieving net zero.
- 4. Publish** annual progress against interim and long-term targets.

The International Standards Organization (ISO) has also set out net zero guidelines,¹⁰ which include ten guiding principles for organisations at every level, namely:

1. Alignment.
2. Urgency.
3. Ambition.
4. Prioritisation.
5. Decision-making based on scientific evidence and indigenous knowledge.
6. Risk-based approach.
7. Credibility.
8. Equity and justice.
9. Transparency, integrity and accountability.
10. Achievement and continuation of net zero.

The ISO net zero guidelines also state that organisations should commit to at least annual reporting on progress against interim and long-term targets, using relevant public reporting platforms. The Science-Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), requires targets to be aligned with what the latest climate science deems necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, limiting global warming to well-below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursuing efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C.¹¹

In consideration of the UNFCCC and ISO guidelines, and the SBTi, the two 20-point checklists provided in this paper aim to support civil society, individuals and organisations in the appraisal of military GHG reporting data and military emissions mitigation strategies.

Referral to the UNFCCC and ISO guidelines is also recommended, as well as to the SBTi. The checklist on GHG reporting is designed to provide an overview of the overall scope and transparency of reporting, but is not intended to support a detailed review of GHG emissions data or its accuracy.

8. UNFCCC (2021), Get Net Zero Right – a how-to guide for spotting credible commitments and those that miss the mark: <https://climatezero.unfccc.int/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Get-Net-Zero-right-2.pdf>

9. UNFCCC (No date), Expert Peer Review Group: <https://climatechampions.unfccc.int/expert-peer-review-group>

10. ISO (2022), Net zero guidelines, IWA 42:2022: <https://www.iso.org/netzero>

11. SBTi (no date), How it works: <https://sciencebasedtargets.org/how-it-works>

Core requirements for any military climate mitigation strategy

DOES THE MILITARY CLIMATE MITIGATION STRATEGY?		YES	IN-PART	NO
1	Facilitate easy access and is readily found through open sources?			
2	Clearly define the terminology used?			
3	Set out a long-term plan to reduce military GHG emissions, rather than just focusing on potential conflict and security risks caused by climate change, operational energy security or the adaptation of military assets and military operations to climate change?			
4	Set out clear implementation phases, interim science-based targets and a science-based end target?			
5	Set out a commitment to prioritise emissions reduction over offsetting? Offsets must not exceed 5-10% of mitigation action.			
6	Set out a commitment to halve emissions by 2030? (Relative to base year emissions in 2020).			
7	Set out a commitment to reach net zero by 2050? (Relative to base year emissions in 2020).			
8	Set out a commitment to review military training and deployment policies, with a review to evaluate how these can contribute to reducing GHG emissions and climate impacts?			
9	Set out exactly how any carbon sinks or credits will be used to meet net zero commitments?			
10	Set out alignment with other domestic and government department climate strategies?			
11	Demonstrate buy-in from across senior military leadership?			
12	Set out a commitment to report all annual GHG emissions – direct and indirect? This includes scope 1, 2, 3 and 3+, acknowledging that reporting methodologies may not yet be available for some scope 3+. ¹⁰			
13	Allocate responsibility for the delivery of the climate strategy across the armed forces?			
14	Highlight how delivery will be independently monitored, and confirm the entity tasked with monitoring?			
15	Set out where technical expertise sits and how technical support will be provided to support delivery of the climate strategy?			
16	Set out how resourcing will be provided to support delivery of the climate strategy?			
17	Recognise and highlight the technical constraints and barriers that are anticipated?			
18	Show evidence that the military climate strategy has been developed in collaboration with the country's government department responsible for climate change action?			
19	Set out how the military climate strategy aligns – or will align in the future – with the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) submission to the UNFCCC?			
20	Set a review date for the climate strategy, that is no later than five years' time?			

10. CEOBS (2022), A framework for military greenhouse gas emissions reporting: <https://ceobs.org/report-a-framework-for-military-greenhouse-gas-emissions-reporting>

Core requirements for military emissions mitigation reporting

DOES THE MILITARY EMISSIONS MITIGATION REPORTING?		YES	IN-PART	NO
1	Facilitate easy access and is publicly available through open sources?			
2	Clearly define the terminology used?			
3	Enable a review of performance against targets and benchmarks?			
4	Set out planned initiatives and GHG reduction actions?			
5	Reflect existing GHG accounting standards and norms? Accounting should be based on established international standards such as ISO 14064-1 and the GHG Protocol.			
6	Clearly set out the operational boundaries for reporting, e.g. scopes 1, 2, 3 and 3+? ¹¹			
7	Set out any limitations of the reporting, detailing any GHG emissions excluded or not quantified?			
8	Provide clear definitions and use accessible, unambiguous language?			
9	Provide data to support any claims?			
10	Define the accuracy and uncertainties in the datasets provided?			
11	State and justify any data omissions and any gaps in GHG emission calculations?			
12	Set timeframes for providing such data, where data gaps exist?			
13	Cite methodologies and the source of emission factors used?			
14	Give separate accounts from any offsets being used to meet GHG reduction targets, which do not exceed 5-10% of mitigation action - as set out by the 'Net-Zero Standard' developed by the SBTi? ¹²			
15	Set near-term science-based emission reduction targets, e.g. for 2025 and 2030; as well as longer-term targets, e.g. for 2040 and 2050?			
16	Clearly set out any anticipated challenges to meeting any carbon reduction targets ahead, such as timeframes, reliance on emerging technologies and fuel substitutes (such as bio and synthetic fuels) and equipment with locked-in fossil fuel dependencies?			
17	Identify the report authors and responsibilities for the reporting?			
18	Set out how claims and performance have been verified through credible and independent verification?			
19	Detail the monitoring, reporting and independent verification (MRV) of any GHG removal initiatives?			
20	Identify the improvement actions needed as part of a continuous improvement process?			

11. CEOPS (2022), A framework for military greenhouse gas emissions reporting: <https://ceobs.org/report-a-framework-for-military-greenhouse-gas-emissions-reporting>

12. See: Science-based Targets Initiative: <https://sciencebasedtargets.org/net-zero>

About this paper

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