

## Environmental Impacts of War

The collateral damage done by wars is indescribable as millions of square feet of nature are destroyed and transformed into vast and deserted lands. In 2008 the United States military used at least as much oil as 1,210,000 million cars on the road (Skelton, Miller 1), and that is only on that war and the United States military alone. The damage done by the war may impact not only the area, but also the water, air, and soil, which can lead to detrimental disasters as the loss of the wildlife. The long lasting impacts of war are a detrimental aspect to a nation, especially to its environment.

Countries use millions of gallons of oil and other polluting products during a war to ensure their personal benefit, but they do not think about the long term environmental impacts. The oil used during wars is a pollutant that contaminates not only the atmosphere, but also the soil and the water, which can lead to the contamination of other things. The United States is one of the biggest examples of this as the U.S. military sprayed 79 million liters of herbicides and defoliants over about one-seventh of the land area of Southern Vietnam, the primary target of the program were the country's inland hardwood forests and the Mangroves, to deprive communist Vietnam Guerilla of the cover that enabled them to move freely and the prevention of the U.S. military to not be ambushed in the forests by the opposing forces ("War and the Environment", 2). The actions taken by forces such as the U.S. military show the impact of polluting products on a region as it only took a few days to kill all of the vegetation for the benefit of one nation in one war, but the same vegetation will take decades to grow back, if it has the ability to. The destruction of war also causes for accidental leaks of polluting products as happened in Pearl Harbor. The 1941 attack on the American base in Pearl Harbor caused for the attack to sink hundreds of ships, planes, and submarines, and by doing so much of the oil stored in those hulk

of the ships or the fuel tank of planes leaked the unused oil into the ocean. The USS Arizona's wrecks remain in the bottom of the ocean with the hulk leaking oil with many other wreckages (S.M. Enzler, 2). The attack shows the collateral damage caused by one single attack as it did not show the total damage also caused by the wanted destruction, concluding that the use of polluting substances for the benefit of a nation in a war is ineffective as it causes too much unneeded damage to the environment.

War is a major cause of migration and camp settlement which are two drastic movements that can damage and impact the environment in an unwanted way. The act of war leads to a drastic change in the environment that can destabilize it for decades. Studies done by the UNHCR, a United Nation agency mandated to protect and support refugees at the request of a government or the UN itself, show that there were approximately 23 million refugees in 2002 as it rapidly increased, and its major cause were national conflicts which resulted in the misplacement of millions of people (A.M. Mannion, 10). The results show drastic movement of people, and with further analyzation of the topic it can be declared that the massive movement of people causes the need for settlement, and with that trees and vegetation has to be destroyed for the new settlement of refugees and the old settlement are left vacant most times as there is not enough individuals to take the shelter. War involves the use of many devastating weapons that can completely change the landscape of the area, and by doing so deserting many places impacted by these ferocious weapons. Many examples of drastic destructions in war can be found in major world cities such as London which resulted in the death of thousands of people, and even though rural areas may not have as much death it certainly has a legacy nevertheless. In Vietnam and Laos, for example, agricultural areas are characterized by numerous duck and fish ponds that originated as bomb craters during the Vietnam War of 1964 to 1975. It has been

estimated that 25 million such craters between 6 and 30m in diameter were created, that more than one million hectares of forests were destroyed and that two million hectares of agricultural land were rendered unproductive (A.M. Mannion, 9). The event shows the massive long term impacts of war in the environment as the land became unproductive and it will never be able to support the country or even the world with food anymore.

Even though the environment may seem unimpacted by the destruction of war as it is so vast and able to recreate itself, yet it has a clear damage on it that cannot be fixed in the time limit before another destructing event. The massive killing of wildlife leads to the environment not being able to replenish and fix itself, but the wildlife loss does not come as a wanted consequence. The accidental death of millions of animals such as dogs, horses, pigeons, elephants, ... are deaths caused by the forced labor pushed into these animals, so that a nation can succeed in their mission ("Animals in War", 1). Animals in the wild can also be killed during the migration of refugees, since war increases the refugee migration. The looting of livestock and crops by refugees and combatants may leave local inhabitants with no practical alternatives to the subsistence and commercial harvesting of bushmeat and wild food plants during times of civil disruption. The refugees are left with only the option of killing much of the wildlife to support the massive number of people (Dudley, Ginsberg, Plumptre, Hart, and Campos, 236). The evidences show the massive impact of war in the wildlife and its impact on the environment as it is dependent on the animals and the vegetation for its success,

The long term impact of war in the environment can be classified by the drastic changes in the environment, polluting substances used, and the destruction of wildlife. The environment is a necessity to humanity, but humans do not appreciate it as they destroy it through the use of

weapons in the war. One day will be the end of the environment and with it the end of humankind.

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