

Weapons for a Warming World: U.S. Contributions to the Green Climate Fund vs. Foreign Military Financing

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Key Takeaways:

- **The U.S. has the resources and the responsibility to finance equitable global climate action.** It is both the largest historical driver of global warming and the world's wealthiest country, with the largest military budget.
- Over the last decade, U.S. funding to the Green Climate Fund, the primary fund for international climate resilience, totaled **\$2 billion**. In the same period, Congress approved at least **\$79 billion** - **40 times** more funding - in aid to foreign countries to finance the purchase of U.S.-made weapons.
- To avoid the most destabilizing effects of a warming planet at home and abroad, **the U.S. must rebalance foreign aid priorities** and commit to providing a **fair share** of global climate adaptation and mitigation efforts— and end the arms aid that fuels conflict and enriches corporations that profit from endless war and climate collapse.

The Need to Scale-Up International Climate Finance

The world is rapidly [approaching](#) global warming goals set by the international community. With emissions on the rise, we are at risk of increasing instability, conflict, and human suffering at a massive scale. Current U.S. investment policies represent business as usual, creating a perfect storm for instability and conflict by funding international weapons sales even as we let climate needs go unmet. To meet the [real needs](#) of Global South countries, climate aid must be sufficient in amount, but it also must not exacerbate debt loads for those countries - especially given the fact that they account for just [8% of historical excess emissions](#). Security demands that we flip the script, investing more in global climate resilience and less in conflict.

The Fight for the Green Climate Fund

The [Green Climate Fund](#) (GCF) offers the best existing avenue for channeling public and private funding from the global north to climate action in the Global South¹. Established by the UN's climate secretariat, the GCF became operational in 2014 and is the [leading mechanism](#) for leveraging public investment in international climate finance to the most climate-vulnerable countries. While a number of multilateral funds exist, the GCF is uniquely effective at administering and mobilizing funds where they are needed most.

Pursuant to U.S. national [obligations](#) under the Paris Agreement, President Obama and Biden both included funding for the GCF in their annual overall international climate finance budget requests. However, Congress has repeatedly zero-ed out the GCF budget line in final appropriations bills. Due to this roadblock, the Obama and Biden administrations each redirected [\\$1 billion](#) from the State Department to the GCF, totalling [\\$2 billion](#) in collective U.S. disbursements between 2016-2023. Despite being the world's largest economy, the U.S. ranks [fifth](#) overall in global contributions to the GCF.

¹ Between FY2022-FY2024 Congress also enacted roughly \$3 billion in bilateral and multilateral international climate finance, but the GCF remains the best dedicated and most equitable vehicle for international climate finance. Sources: Congressional Research Service 'U.S. International Climate Finance in Focus' (factsheets) [FY 2023](#), [FY 2024](#), [FY 2025](#).

U.S. Green Climate Fund Pledges vs Dispersed Funding

Since 2014, the U.S. has pledged a total of \$6 billion to the [GCF](#) but has only delivered \$2 billion. Congress has never authorized a budget that includes funding for the GCF.

- **Obama Admin:** The U.S. made its first national GCF pledge of [\\$3 billion](#) under Obama, but only [\\$1 billion](#) was ultimately delivered during his tenure via the State Department’s [Economic Support Fund](#).
- **Trump Admin:** Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Paris Agreement and [withheld](#) requests for the GCF in his federal budgets, fulfilling his campaign [promise](#).
- **Biden Admin:** In 2021, Biden resigned the Paris Agreement and included a [\\$1.6 billion](#) budget for the GCF in his FY2022 presidential budget request. After funding was blocked by Congress, Biden directed [\\$1 billion](#) in funding from the [Economic Support Fund](#) to the GCF. In 2023, Biden pledged the U.S. will deliver an additional [\\$3 billion](#) to the GCF between 2025-2028, though it is unlikely the Trump Administration and Republican-dominated Congress will fulfill this promise.

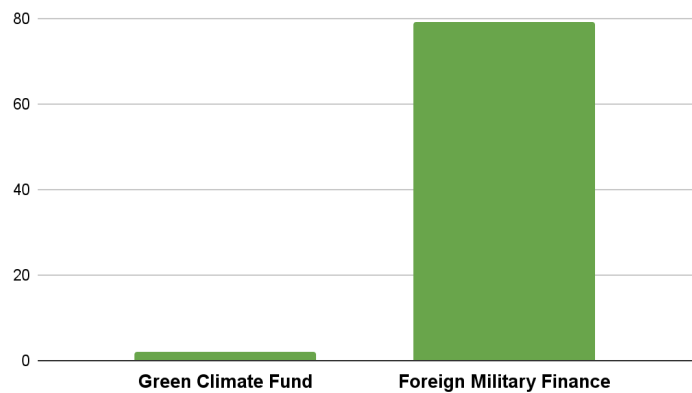
International Climate Finance vs Finance for Weapons

Congress has consistently cut budget requests for international climate finance— approving minuscule amounts of funding². In contrast, significant amounts of taxpayer dollars have been funneled into [Foreign Military Financing](#) (FMF), or grants the U.S. provides to foreign countries [exclusively](#) to purchase U.S.-made [weapons](#).

While funding has lagged behind national pledges on international climate finance (and far short of the [real need](#)), members of Congress on both sides of the aisle continue to increase public spending on the Pentagon and police to unprecedented levels:

- The U.S. has the largest military budget in the world, spending more than the [next nine countries combined](#).
- In FY 2023 alone, nearly [two-thirds](#) of the federal discretionary budget funded the military-industrial complex and militarized spending, dwarfing public investment in climate action.
- For years 2014-2024, U.S. funding to the GCF totaled [\\$2 billion](#). In the same period, Congress approved at least [\\$79 billion](#) - **40 times more funding** - in FMF to foreign countries to finance the purchase of U.S.-made weapons.³

Funding for the Green Climate Fund vs. Foreign Military Finance FY2014-FY2024 (billions)



² Public U.S. int’l climate assistance is grouped with other forms of international development aid meaning, contributions often have “climate-related” components but tend to support multiple developmental/environmental goals. Most of the entities do not streamline funding to initiatives in climate-vulnerable countries like [GCF](#)— which is exclusively dedicated to climate change and has specific safeguards. There is [no standard method](#) for defining or measuring climate finance, consequently reports by donor countries can have [discrepancies](#) and result in [unclear climate impacts](#).

³ FMF data sources: White House Supplemental Budget Materials; Public Budget Database subfunction 152, account codes 1085,1082. The enacted FY2024 FMF total includes \$7.1 billion in additional FMF authorized through H.R.815