War and armed conflicts causing global destruction of nature

Environment, Nature

Everyday there is another aspect of nature that is under attack from the global destruction that has become normalized in today's modern society. Everyday we are surrounded by toxic household chemicals that are a great health risk to humans and the environment. These chemicals effortlessly enter into things like streams and stormwater drains, poisoning the water sources. Oil spills from boats crashing, oil rig failures or explosions, and faulty/cracked piping further contaminating water sources. Even things like armed conflict leave contaminated and large uninhabitable lands due to left over munitions. By looking at the way the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of American (PNAS), The New York Times (NYT), and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are talking about the global destruction of nature, we are able to see it is important to carefully examine the contents of the texts they produce.

The dystopian film Mad Max: Fury Road paints a gruesome picture of a war-torn world in which humanity has poisoned the Earth, reflecting of the potential outcomes of the continued destruction of nature.

Mad Max: Fury Road's commentary on the global destruction of nature gives insight into the amount of destruction that our society does on a daily basis. Many human practices are destroying the natural world around us. One of the things destroying nature is war and conflict.

Modern day weaponry and conflicts have many negative environmental impacts. The extent and span of the conflict and even the type and number of weapons directly correlate to the amount of damage and lasting effects on the environment. In recent decades researchers have begun to measure the

damage caused by armed conflict. Modern day conflicts have grave environmental impacts, some of which are due to scorched-earth tactics. These scorched-earth tactics is a military strategy used to destroy, especially by fire, any and all useful resources of the enemy while advancing or retreating. In the U. S.-Iraq war when the Iraqi army was retreating they set 736 oil wells on fire. The oil fire continued to burn for eight months and burned 6 million gallons of oil every day. The Persian Gulf filled with black clouds and the fires released sulfur into the atmosphere which increased the acid rain and declined the regional air quality.

The Gulf War was the first war to use a considerable amount of depleted uranium (DU) munitions. The DU munitions were used because it is able to penetrate further than other kinds of munitions but is a low-level toxic nuclear waste which contaminate is immediate surroundings. It is the by-product of residual nuclear fuel and increases cancer rates and birth defects. After the World War I battles in France and Belgium left thousands of tons of munitions scattered and undischarged making certain areas uninhabitable. In modern war aftermaths, the battlefields contain contamination from the DU, and full of cluster bombs and landmines. The sheer number of landmines left behind has caused there to be “ approximately one landmine for every person; in Afghanistan, Iraq, Croatia, Eritrea, and Sudan, the ratio is one mine for every two persons”.

During the Eritrean and Ethiopian wars, forest cover was diminished from its original cover to only 1% remaining. This extreme deforestation caused massive crop failures, sedimentation of rivers, reduction in wildlife

populations and soil erosion. Hiroshima and Nagasaki are two of the most notable environmentally disastrous conflicts. The dropping of atomic bombs on these two Japanese cities caused radioactive air pollution, and fires that burned for six weeks that polluted the water with radioactive particles and caused radioactive precipitation. The precipitation covered a larger area than the blast of the bombs themselves and contaminated crops and humans. Cancer and birth defects increased in the following generations for decades after the original explosions.

Another human practice that is destroying nature is water pollution caused by chemical, fuel, and garbage spills into our water supplies. From a small pond to the world’s deepest oceans, we are poisoning the water and damaging the home of and the marine and aquatic life itself. Groundwater pollution from crops and landfills send pesticides and a mixture of suspended and dissolved garbage into our water supplies. Along with things like road salts, fertilizers, herbicides, oil and gasoline all cause surface water pollution from the runoff. Some water pollution is willfully dumped into water supplies. Before the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) of 1972 was passed the US in 1968-1970 alone contributed “ 100 million tons of petroleum products, two to four million tons of acid chemical wastes from pulp mills, more than one million tons of heavy metals in industrial wastes; and more than 100, 000 tons of organic chemical wastes . . . 38 million tons of dredged material (34 percent of which was polluted), 4. 5 million tons of industrial wastes, 4. 5 million tons of sewage sludge (significantly contaminated with heavy metals), and 0. 5 million tons of construction and

demolition debris. EPA records indicate that more than 55, 000 containers of radioactive wastes were dumped at three ocean sites in the Pacific Ocean between 1946 and 1970. Almost 34, 000 containers of radioactive wastes were dumped at three ocean sites off the East Coast of the United States from 1951 to 1962.”

The famous 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, which was around 11. 4 million gallons of oil that spilled into the Pacific Ocean, and the 1979 Ixtoc 1 spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which spilled 140 million gallons of oil, created the largest environmental disaster in U. S. history that caught the attention of and motivated the American people to make changes. Then in 1989 Exxon Valdez supertanker spilled 35, 000 tons of oil into the Prince William Sound near Alaska when it crashed into a reef. The oil covered over 900 square miles.

In the late 1940s, Hooker Chemical dumped pollutions into a container similar to a bathtub which contained the most dangerous organic pollutions that included pesticides, trichlorethylene (TCE), poly-chlorinated biphenyl (PCB), dioxin, and many others. This container was buried for many years before the property above it was developed and container cap was broken in the installation of sewer and water lines. Precipitation was able to leak into the container and toxic waste began to rise and emerge through the ground into homeowners’ yards. Many children received severe chemicals burns. This was another environmental disaster the motived the American people to make changes.

The concerns over the global destruction of nature is that war and armed conflicts are causing too much damage to nature and there is a decrease in the amount of usable natural resources which may lead to conflicts over the scarce remaining raw materials. The sheer amount of water pollution from runoff and chemical spills is poisoning our water supplies and making it harder to get the necessary clean and disease-free water to people all over the globe. Too much damage is being caused daily to the environment and at this rate, the natural soil around us will unusable and the water sources will be undrinkable from being slowly poisoned.