



A call to the people of Quebec and Canada:

## **REJECT MILITARY PARTNERSHIP WITH THE USA**

Increasingly aligned on that of the United States, Canada's foreign policy is now openly a war policy: offensive troops deployed in southern Afghanistan, accelerated purchases of military materiel without a tendering process and speeches by Prime Minister Harper patterned on President Bush's. On the home front, this war is accompanied by fear-mongering about a diffuse and exaggerated "terrorist threat", campaigns aimed at building public support for war and astronomical military budgets, and the proliferation of "security" measures that erode our rights and freedoms. The newly elected minority Conservative government has speeded up the implementation of this war policy, but it isn't solely to blame. The previous Liberal government had already announced the sending of Canadian troops to Kandahar, the beefing up of the armed forces and a huge increase of the budget for "defence."

It is extremely urgent for those who are opposed to war, with its twisted logic and devastating consequences, to speak out unequivocally to reverse a dynamic that is already well on the way to becoming a reality without the knowledge of the citizens of Québec and Canada. We therefore invite you to endorse the declaration "Reject military partnership with the USA," published by *Collectif Échec à la guerre* in the fall of 2005 and still of burning relevance today.

### **Two significant - but limited - victories**

Over the past three years, issues relating to military and international policy have loomed large in the concerns of Quebecers and Canadians. First, there was an unprecedented opposition movement which prevented the official participation of the Canadian Armed Forces in the illegal invasion of Iraq. Second, a grass roots movement forced Prime Minister Martin to announce that Canada would not be taking part in the US missile defence shield project. In both cases, the people's message to the government was very clear: reject war and militarism, reject unilateral action and violations of international law. But recent developments have shown unfortunately that instead of respecting the will of the people, Canada's military, economic and political leaders have decided to proceed even further with the military partnership that they have been working on for some time now.

Over the past few years, the role of the Canadian Armed Forces has changed dramatically, with no public debate. Closely associated in the past with UN peacekeeping missions, the Canadian Forces are now being used more and more frequently in clearly offensive operations: air strikes and the naval blockade of Iraq; bombing operations in the former Yugoslavia; bombing runs, a ground invasion and occupation in Afghanistan. Today, UN peacekeeping missions account for only a very small portion of Canadian troop deployment abroad. Along with this change, there has been further integration with US forces in terms of training, equipment and command. In 2004, without the knowledge of Canadians, Canadian Brigadier-General Walt Natynczyk, as deputy commander of the US Army's III Corps based in Texas, was made the second-highest commanding officer for the occupation forces in Iraq!

## The “war on terror” and Afghanistan <sup>1</sup>

Canada's shift toward a more militaristic role has been greatly accelerated under the guise of the “war on terror.” In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, Canada went to war with Afghanistan. And later, to compensate for Canadians’ rejection of Canada's involvement in the invasion of Iraq, the Canadian government offered to increase the number of its soldiers in Afghanistan to 2,000 and to lead the NATO force in Kabul as well. But from the outset, this war was hardly an operation of legitimate self-defence or a war in defence of freedom. For the United States, it was aimed primarily at guaranteeing the economic advantages that they were on the brink of losing (the trans-Afghan gas pipeline), bringing to power a government that was favourable to their interests and establishing a major military presence to cover all of Central Asia. More than to any other audience, it was to the countries in this area that their threats were addressed: “you are with us, or you are with the terrorists”.

### 2005: war policy and budget

However, it was in 2005, in response to the wishes so often expressed in Canada's military and economic sectors, that our political leaders put forward most clearly their vision of a closer partnership with the US empire, including a partnership at the foreign policy and military level. And it was then decided to take major steps toward making the partnership a reality, first in the 2005 budget and then in the new *International Policy Statement*.

They announced an increase in military spending of \$12.8 billion over five years, which will almost double Canada's “defence” budget! This phenomenal increase in resources is explicitly aimed at doubling the Canadian forces’ international intervention capability, and focusing particularly on Canada's shock troops. An additional 5,000 soldiers and 3,000 reservists will be recruited and costly equipment will be purchased to increase the forces’ rapid deployment capabilities.

Canada will also established a Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force that works closely with groups of the same name recently set up in the United States and in Great Britain. These groups will primarily target “failed” or “failing” states, which are one of the main dangers for international security, according to Bush, Blair and our Prime Minister. In our view, this idea of “failed” or “failing” states is nothing more than the most recent expression of their desire to dodge international law, legitimize their “right” to invade weaker countries and “reconstruct” them for the benefit of large corporations. This policy will inevitably increase resentment of countries that adopt it and result in more attacks against them.

In July 2005, we were told that Canadian troops in Afghanistan would be moved from Kabul to Kandahar and that, in February 2006, 1,400 additional troops would be sent to the area. The news was accompanied by statements by the new Chief of the Defence Staff Rick Hillier about how he thrilled to be able to finally target the terrorist “scumbags” and to see that the Canadian Forces would finally be doing their real job and “be ready to kill people”. Almost simultaneously came the announcement of an \$849 million contract with Bell Helicopter in Mirabel for the basic assembly of 368 helicopters for the US Army.

Then, on September 22, 2005, Bill Graham – then minister of Defense – announced Canada's commitment to a \$750 million project to build light armoured vehicles with the latest in combined ground and air defence technology. The primary contract for the first phase, worth \$100 million, was awarded to Oerlikon in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. The same day, at a press conference in Montreal on the mission of Canadian forces in Afghanistan, Mr Graham explained that the situation in Afghanistan was complex, demanding and dangerous, and that we should be prepared for losses of life. One week later, the Standing

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<sup>1</sup> Here we only present some broad outline of the beginning of the Canadian intervention in Afghanistan. Other documents deal more with this war.

Senate Committee on National Security and Defence released a 275-page report stating that the defence budget should be between \$25 and \$35 billion and that the Canadian Forces should be increased from 62,000 to 90,000 troops. This does not bode well for peace...

TO CANADA'S POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY LEADERS, WE SAY:

Whether in Iraq, in Afghanistan or in the "failing" states that the US empire intends to invade, WE REJECT any Canadian involvement in these wars of aggression, in any policing duties in terms of "stabilization" and in any share of the spoils from the resulting "reconstruction".

WE CALL FOR the immediate withdrawal of all foreign occupation forces in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

WE DEMAND an immediate freeze on military spending and a real public debate on the role of the Canadian Armed Forces.

WE CALL ON our fellow citizens to reject the prospect of an economy based on an even closer military partnership with the United States.

WE ASK that Canada welcome US war resisters on the grounds that the war in which they would participate is illegal.

#### **"Anti-terrorism" legislation and measures threaten our freedom**

Since September 11, 2001, the Government of Canada has spent more than \$10 billion on security-related spending of all kinds. We are convinced that this money has not made any real contribution to improving security of Canadians. The same goes for the measures announced in the wake of the London bombings and the measures yet to come: the blacklist of people who will be barred from boarding aircraft, the increased numbers of security cameras in public transit, biometric passports and identity cards, and so forth. The proof is that the city that probably has the most surveillance cameras in the world is London, the site of the most recent attacks on a western country...

In the wake of the September 11 attacks, Canada adopted anti-terrorism legislation, Bill C-36, which defines a terrorist act so broadly that it potentially covers any kind of action that may have or might be intended to have any kind of political or economic impact... Furthermore, the legislation makes it possible to charge someone for having facilitated a terrorist act, even though the person may not have had the slightest idea that a terrorist act had been or was going to be perpetrated and that his or her action contributed to it in some way! But the potential for arbitrary measures casts an even longer shadow...

How did the government, in the name of defending "our values" and "our freedoms", wind up justifying the deportation of Canadian citizens like Maher Arar to their country of origin and to certain torture? And ensuring that in the name of "national security" the public inquiry into the matter was held behind closed doors for months? And that at the end of these long months, only a summary a few pages long was released, three-quarters of which was blacked out by CSIS for reasons of "national security"?

How can it claim that the defence of "our values" and "our freedoms" requires that they be suppressed for non-citizens, as is the case with security certificates? Security certificates are used to hold non-citizens indefinitely – on the pretext that they might represent a risk for national security– without formal charges and without trial, which means that the state does not have to justify its allegations publicly. Are we any safer because Mohamed Mahjoub has been denied contact visits with his wife and children for more than five years as a detainee under such a certificate? Are we any safer because he has been refused for months a doctor-recommended biopsy to assess the advancement of his hepatitis C?

Up until now, these violations of international treaties and the very principles on which our society is supposed to be founded have essentially targeted members of the Muslim communities. They come on top of the fear-mongering by politicians and the media after every new attack, real or apprehended. They come on top of the harassment in the form of visits by the *Canadian Security and Intelligence Service* (CSIS) during which the officers regularly allude to their new powers under Bill C-36. Are we any safer because entire communities in our country are being intimidated?

TO POLITICAL AND “SECURITY” LEADERS IN CANADA, WE SAY:

For more than four years now, on the pretext of wanting to protect Canadians, your decisions and your actions have breached the rights and liberties that our society holds dear and that the Canadian Charter guarantees for all - citizens and non-citizens alike. The lessons of the past are very clear: beyond the targeted individuals and groups, when the rules of law are suspended for some, society as a whole is imperilled.

WE CATEGORICALLY REJECT the logic of totalitarian surveillance as a way of ensuring our security, and WE DEMAND an immediate freeze on “security” spending.

WE DEMAND the repeal of Bill C-36, the elimination of security certificates and the re-establishment of the fundamental rule of law for all, without exception.

WE DEMAND an end to racial profiling and intimidation, measures which are being used particularly against members of Arab and Muslim communities in Quebec and in Canada.

### **Fear-mongering**

Apart from the instability of “failed” or “failing” states, the greatest threats to international security and our own are international terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. On this issue, we reject the stance of politicians who would like to focus all our attention on the handful of bombs that non-nuclear countries - particularly Iran and North Korea – have recently developed or are attempting to develop. As long as the nuclear powers, - whose arsenal is enough to destroy the entire planet several times over - refuse to disarm, as long as NATO considers nuclear weapons to be essential to “our” security, and above all as long as the United States reserves the right to launch so-called preventive wars and even preventive nuclear strikes, it makes no sense to believe that non-nuclear countries will not try to acquire nuclear weapons.

With regard to “terrorism”, we of course condemn the attacks on New York, Madrid and London and the many others that garnered little attention in the media as long as they did not affect Western countries. But we also want to dissociate ourselves from the very selective way the term “terrorism” by Bush, Blair, Omert and our own political leaders. The “shock and awe” bombing campaigns, the missile attacks, the cluster bombs, phosphorous bombs, napalm and depleted uranium munitions used against residential areas and the collateral damage involving 10 or 100 times more civilian casualties are all just as much “terrorist acts” as the tragic attacks in New York, Madrid and London.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned about the major Quebec and Canadian media’s lack of critical distance from official pronouncements on “security” and the “war on terror”. All too often, the media simply relay the fear-mongering by the US and Canadian governments and do not conduct any serious investigation into the facts about the war.

Why do CSIS and CIA “sources” on the “terrorist threat” get prime coverage when they don’t provide

any verifiable information? Why are there no systematic investigations into the \$10 billion spent on “security” in Canada over the past five years? Which companies have profited from it? Delivering what kind of real protection against possible terrorist attacks in Canada? Why is there no close scrutiny of Canada's military presence in Afghanistan, the contracts for military infrastructure being built there by SNC-Lavalin, or the final destination of munitions which have been delivered to the Pentagon by SNC-Lavalin? Why, when there are so many in our society who are opposed to war and military action, is this opposition not reported more regular in the mainstream media?

#### TO POLITICAL LEADERS AND THE MEDIA

The identification of certain countries and their peoples as “the axis of evil”, the stigmatization of foreigners, the growing use of racial profiling and the climate of fear skilfully generated as a constant threat hanging over our lives, are all deeply disturbing. Demonization of ethnic or religious groups, stigmatization of foreigners and fear are recurring hallmarks of war-mongering.

This is why WE ARE CONCERNED and why we are not taken in by the explanations we have received. What is at stake here is nothing less than the hegemony of the US empire (and its allies who hope to profit from it) over the parts of the world that used to belong to the USSR's sphere of influence: Eastern Europe, Central Asia and some Middle Eastern countries. The opening shots in this new war were the 1991 Gulf War and George Bush Sr.'s announcement of a new world order. Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, it has gained momentum behind the new screen of the “war on terror” against “uncivilized barbarians” and the “forces of evil”...

Our response to this pursuit of hegemony and a “new American century” is our struggle for a “new century for humankind”.

WE DEMAND nothing less than peace and security for all human communities. As we see every day in the countries of the Southern hemisphere as well as increasingly in Northern countries,, the real issues of security facing humanity are access to drinking water, access to food, access to basic health care, and access to decent housing. The appalling fact is that the real danger lies in the over-exploitation of resources, environmental degradation and production of increasingly lethal weapons that characterize our economies and that can only lead to the annihilation of humankind.

For genuine peace and security in the world, WE DEMAND the total abolition of nuclear weapons and the dismantling of military-industrial complexes throughout the world.

The dream is still possible . After all, they haven't banned dreaming yet, have they?

#### SIGNED BY:

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