

VANA NEWSLETTER - BC BRANCH



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Box 319, 916 W. Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1K7

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Dear Fellow VANA Members in BC:

On the 11th November U.S. bombing of Afghanistan entered its 35th day. Remembrance of the fact that war is the greatest disaster is especially important now. VANA members helped deliver this message by visiting schools, speaking at their Remembrance Day ceremonies and also speaking to school classes. At the Vancouver ceremonies in Victory Square, VANA members joined the tail end of the parade, following the trucks towing field guns, and received loud cheers and very warm applause from the crowd as we marched under our banner: "Let Peace be Their Memorial." Your President's Remembrance Day message appears below.

Surrounded by a media driven war hysteria, it is comforting to learn that recent polls show world opinion in 37 countries (except in USA, Israel & India) is against the US attack on Afghanistan. Read about this below. If, like us, you are a little hazy about the steps the Bush team took before launching the Pentagon's enormous firepower on the people of Afghanistan, you will enjoy reading an article below by a US Professor of international law. His conclusion? "This is an illegal war of aggression."

VANA has often made contact with our fellow veterans of like mind in the United States. So when Vietnam Veterans Against War Anti Imperialist (VVAWAI) invited us to a meeting in Seattle, Ed Livingston made the trip down and attended their meeting. Read his very interesting report below.

Connie Fogal, an outspoken lawyer and wife of VANA member Harry Rankin, will speak at our next regular general meeting on 10 December 2001 at the Unitarian Church, Fireside Room at 1:30 p.m. Her topic, "Bills C-35 and C-36: Protest at your Peril." We will also debate this "Illegal war of aggression," and Canada's role in it. Armed with this information we will be well prepared to launch our new petition to Parliament Come to hear her and then partake in an Xmas social.

As this news letter goes to press, the bombing of Afghanistan will have continued for 52 days. Canada's support for this lawless attack on Afghanistan and our government's failure to honour the UN Charter, are issues dealt with in a new VANA Petition to Parliament, reproduced with full instructions below. We urge you to act on this.

A very cheery evening was enjoyed by all at the VANA fundraising Banquet on Wednesday November 21st at the Unitarian Church in Vancouver. After excellent Chinese food, a special fortune cookie's message was announced: "Honourable group of elders will continue to give sage advice to the young for many years." After the dinner, VANA National President, David Morgan, was awarded a life membership in VANA, after several heart-warming sweet-&-sour spare ribbing speeches. Events concluded with a short nostalgia video of a similar event in 1998 honouring Marj Nicol and Libby Davies, followed by a video of VANA's message at this year's Cenotaph parade. Congratulations to all involved in organizing this most enjoyable evening.

Keep sending in your news, information, articles, writing, questions, beefs and bouquets.

Finally: Your executive joins in wishing all members and their families a merry Christmas and a peaceful and happy new year.

Your VAN BC exec:

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Veterans Against Nuclear Arms Does Not Celebrate War

By David Morgan
11 November 2001

In 1945, at the end of the bloodiest war in history, the United Nations Organization was set up, in the words of its charter, to: "...save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...." With its Security Council to maintain peace and security, its Economic and Social Council to promote worldwide progress in economic, social, cultural, educational and health fields and its promotion of a growing body of international agreements and law, the UN was a brilliantly designed peace-promoting and war-preventing machine. December 1, 2001 But like any machine, the UN needs to be properly maintained and used for its designed purposes. So how well has this valuable machine been maintained and used? The answer is simple:

The record of neglect and abuse of the UN is a world-class disgrace. The yearly operating expenses of the UN in 1997 were \$10.6 (US) billion (roughly what Canada now spends on "defence.") The UN's 14 peace-keeping operations in 1997 cost less than \$1 billion. Compare these figure with the US "Defense" budget, currently about \$300 billion and the world's total yearly military expenses of about \$800 billion.

The war-prevention purposes of the UN have been openly flouted and defied. They were most seriously damaged in 1999 when NATO forces, including Canada, broke the UN Charter by bombing Yugoslavia nonstop for seventy-eight days. The current bombing of Afghanistan, now in its thirty-fourth day, is a further massive violation of the UN Charter. Has Afghanistan attacked the United States? The UN was not conceived to allow the world's strongest power to carry out prolonged and intensive bombing of one of the world's poorest countries, now on the verge of a catastrophic famine, and call it "Self Defence."

We veterans experienced World War II, and many of our members saw front line service and saw the bloodshed and misery of this war at first hand. To us and many others, the United Nations, for all its weaknesses and faults, is a very precious organization. The UN has literally been paid for with blood. We now urge the Canadian Government to return to a respect for the UN Charter and international law. Calling on the U.S. to end the bombing of Afghanistan will be a good way to move in this direction.

Ed Livingston Reports on VVAWAI meeting in Seattle

In late October, VANA received an invitation from Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Anti-Imperialist(VVAWAI), to send a VANA representative to a meeting on November 5 in Seattle. Since David Morgan was unable to go, I attended the meeting at which were representatives from other US veterans organizations. It was not a large meeting; there were two WWII veterans, including myself, and one from the Korean War. Most of the rest were veterans of the Vietnam war.

The discussion, which was underway when I arrived about 6:30, went on till about 11:30. It was wide ranging and rather chaotic but certainly interesting. In this group, there is distrust for the motives of their government. This often led into discussion of conspiracy theories, many of which I had never heard before. Many bad things which had occurred in the US and in the world, were seen as the products of secret actions by the US government and its agents.

They expressed impatience over the flag-waving and jingoism which is so apparent at this time in the U.S. At the same time, several veterans said that they did not know how to deal with people who questioned their patriotism. It seems that patriotism means "supporting our country right or wrong, especially in war". I suggested that a patriot keeps informed about what is going on and is obligated to protest if he/she believes the government is involved in actions which are against the interests of its citizens. I brought up the subject of United Nations and contrasted the UN approach to international disputes and problems, to NATO actions and stated that VANA urges Canada to get out of NATO. There seems to be little interest in the UN and several suggested that the UN is one more US puppet which can't really do anything significant. However, their analysis of WTO, globalization, The World Bank and IMF is the same as ours.

They are deeply concerned about the new legislation which gives the US government and its law enforcement agencies more power over the citizens, particularly people who oppose government actions. We should have the same concern about Bills C-35 and Bill C-36, which has been passed on to the Senate in Ottawa. Finally there was a motion to try to form an anti-war coalition of various groups as a united front with two aims: (1). Stop the war in Afghanistan now.(2). Prevent the hardship and deaths of Afghan children from hunger and exposure. I believe that VANA should consider joining such a coalition if it can be organized. I am not suggesting that the veterans and others who were at the Seattle meeting are typical of veterans in U.S. However, it was my first recent contact with U.S. veterans, particularly the Vietnam veterans. I like them and hope that we can work with them in future."

World opinion opposes the attack on Afghanistan. (Excerpts)

David Miller
1 November 2001

According to Tony Blair and George Bush respectively, 'world opinion' and the 'collective will of the world' supported the attack on Afghanistan. Yet analysis of international opinion polls shows that with only three exceptions majorities in all countries polled have opposed the policy of the US and UK governments.

Furthermore there have been consistent majorities against the current action in the UK and sizable numbers of the US population had reservations about the bombing. **The biggest poll of world opinion was carried out by Gallup International in 37 countries in late September** (Gallup International 2001). It found that **apart from the US, Israel and India a majority of people in every country surveyed preferred extradition and trial of suspects to a US attack**. Clear and sizable majorities were recorded in the UK (75%) and across Western Europe from 67% in France to 87% in Switzerland. Between 64% (Czech Republic) and 83% (Lithuania) of Eastern Europeans concurred as did varying majorities in Korea, Pakistan, South Africa and Zimbabwe. An even more emphatic answer obtained in Latin America where between 80% (Panama) and 94% (Mexico) favoured extradition. The poll also found that majorities in the US and Israel (both 56%) did not favour attacks on civilians.

Yet such polls have been ignored by the media and by many of the polling companies. After the bombing started opposition seems to have grown in Europe. As only the *Mirror* has reported. By early November 65 per cent in Germany and 69 per cent in Spain wanted the US attacks to end (Yates, 2001). Meanwhile in Russia polls before and after the bombing show majorities opposed to the attacks. After the bombing started Interfax reported a Gallup International poll showing a majority of Moscow residents against the US military action (BBC Worldwide Monitoring 2001)

The most fundamental problem with the polls is that they assume the public has perfect information. But, notwithstanding some dissent in the press, **the media in the UK, and even more emphatically in the US, have been distorting what is happening in Afghanistan especially on civilian casualties and alternatives to war**. To ask about approval of what is happening assumes that people actually know what is happening. But given that a large proportion of the population receives little but misinformation and propaganda (especially on TV news which is most peoples main source of information) then it is less surprising that some should approve of what they are told is happening - that the US and UK are doing their best to avoid civilian casualties, that Blair exercises a moderating influence on Bush.

When they are asked their own preferences about what should happen (rather than approval questions about what is happening) then there is much less support, even in the US. **In other words there is no world support for the attack on Afghanistan and public opinion in the US and UK is at best dubious and at worst flatly opposed to what is happening. If Bush and Blair were really democrats, they would never have started the bombing.**

US Commits Armed Aggression Against Afghanistan

excerpted from 29 November article by
Francis Boyle, Professor of International Law, Champagne, Illinois

I want to start out with my basic thesis that the Bush administration's war against Afghanistan cannot be justified on the facts or the law. It is clearly illegal. It constitutes armed aggression. It is creating a humanitarian catastrophe for the people of Afghanistan. It is creating terrible regional instability.

I. Sept 11: An Act of Terrorism or War?

Immediately after the attacks, President Bush's first statement in Florida was to call these attacks an act of terrorism. President Bush consulted with Secretary Powell and all of a sudden they changed the rhetoric. They now called it an act of war. And clearly this was not an act of war. There are enormous differences in how you treat an act of terrorism and how you treat an act of war. We have dealt with acts of terrorism before. And normally acts of terrorism are dealt with as a matter of international and domestic law enforcement. There are a good 12-13 treaties that could have been used and relied upon by the Bush administration to deal with this issue. But they rejected the entire approach and called it an act of war. They invoked the rhetoric deliberately of Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. An act of war has a formal meaning. It means an attack by one state against another state, which is what happened on December 7, 1941. But not on September 11, 2001

(continued on page 4)

Armed Aggression (continued from page 3)

II. UN Security Council Rules: This was A “Terrorist Attack” and No OK for war.

The next day, September 12, the Bush administration went into the United Nations Security Council to get a resolution authorizing the use of military force, and they failed. Indeed, the September 12 resolution, instead of calling this an armed attack by one state against another state, calls it a terrorist attack. If you take a look at the resolution of September 12, that language is not in there. There was no authority to use military force at all.

III. The “Evidence against Bin Laden & Al Qaeda:”

Secretary of State Colin Powell said publicly they were going to produce a white paper documenting their case against Osama bin Laden and their organization Al Qaeda. We never got it. All we got from Powell (October 3) was: “The case will never be able to be described as circumstantial. It's not circumstantial now.² Well, if a case isn't circumstantial, then what is it? Rumour, allegation, innuendo, insinuation, disinformation, propaganda. Certainly not enough to start a war. What we did get was a white paper from Tony Blair. Even the British government admitted the case against Bin Laden and Al Qaeda would not stand up in court. It was routinely derided in the British press. Today we are waging war against Afghanistan on evidence that Secretary of State Powell publicly stated is not even circumstantial.

IV. US Refusal to Negotiate:

The government of Afghanistan made repeated offers to negotiate a solution to this dispute. Even before the events of September 11, negotiations were going on between the United States and the government of Afghanistan over the disposition of bin Laden. They had offered to have him tried in a neutral Islamic court by Muslim judges applying the law of Shareel. This was before the latest incident. We rejected that proposal. After September 11 they renewed the offer. What did President Bush say? No negotiations. There's nothing to negotiate.

V. The US Congress: Bush Gets a “War Powers Resolution Authorization

The Bush team then went to the United States Congress using the emotions of the moment to ram through some authorization to go to war. They wanted a formal declaration of war along the lines of what President Roosevelt got on December 8, 1941, after Pearl Harbor. Congress refused to give them that. And for a very good reason. If a formal declaration of war had been given, it would have made the president a constitutional dictator. We would now all be living basically under martial law. Instead, Congress gave President Bush, Jr., what is called a War Powers Resolution Authorization. This resolution, although it is not as bad as a formal declaration of war, is even worse than the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. It basically gives President Bush a blank check to use military force against any individual organization or state that he alleges was somehow involved in the attacks on September 11 or else sheltered, harbored, or assisted individuals involved in those attacks. It was then followed up with a \$40 billion appropriation as a down payment for waging this de facto war.

VI. USA at UN: We Will attack who we choose, in “Self-Defense.”

The Bush administration tried yet a third time, September 29, before they started the war, to get authorization to use military force. But still they failed to get any authorization from the Security Council to use military force for any reason. Then the new US Ambassador to the United Nations, John Negroponte, sent a letter to the Security Council. His letter was astounding. It said that the United States reserves its right to use force in self-defense, under Article 51 of the UN Charter, against any state, in order to fight our war against international terrorism.

Clearly, what is going on now in Afghanistan is not self-defense. At best, this is reprisal, retaliation, vengeance. It is not self-defense. . Since none of these justifications and pretexts hold up as a matter of law, then what the United States government today is doing against Afghanistan constitutes armed aggression. It is illegal.

On the Heavy Side: Three –Facts;

(Source: Brookings Inst. website: <http://www.brookings.org>)

I. Cost of 1946 Operation Crossroads weapons tests ("Able" and "Baker") at Bikini Atoll:- **\$1,300,000,000 (US)**
Weisgall, *Operation Crossroads*, pp. 294, 371

II. Estimated amount spent between October 1, 1992 and October 1, 1995 on nuclear testing activities:
\$1,200,000,000 (0 tests) (US) U.S. Nuclear Weapons Cost Study Project

III. Largest U.S. explosion:**15 Megatons on March 1, 1954**, U.S. Department of Energy

On the Light Side:

Great Reasons to be a Guy

You don't have to learn to spell a new last name.
Your underwear is \$10 for a three-pack.
If you are 34 and single, nobody notices.
Car mechanics tell you the truth.
Same work, more pay.
Gray hair and wrinkles only add character.
Wedding plans take care of themselves.
Wedding dress - \$2,000. Tuxedo rental? 75 bucks.
You are not expected to know the names of more than five colours.
You get extra credit for the slightest act of thoughtfulness.
Christmas shopping for 25 relatives, on December 24th, takes 45 minutes.

Veterans Against Nuclear Arms (VANA)

240 Holyrood Road, North Vancouver, BC, V7N 2R5, Fax: 604-985-1260

PETITION

To The Honourable House of Commons of Canada in Parliament Assembled

We, the undersigned Citizens of Canada, Draw the Attention of the House to the Following:

WHEREAS the Government of Canada has uncritically offered support for the on-going bombing of Iraq since December 1998; and furthermore caused our military forces to actively participate in the bombing of Yugoslavia between 24 March and 10 June 1999, all in violation of International Law and the UN Charter; and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada has supported the US and British air attacks on Afghanistan which began on 7 October 2001 without any authorization from the UN Security Council, and has sent three Canadian warships and other Canadian forces to the Persian Gulf area, and

WHEREAS The National Defence Act of Canada forbids the use of Canadian forces outside Canada except under the terms of the NATO Charter, which subordinates itself to the UN Charter, or in accordance with a UN mandated action, as set out in the National Defence Act Section 31 (1)(b), and

WHEREAS Defence Minister Eggleton stated that *"Canada is ready to go to war again for humanitarian reasons even if the action defies International Law and the UN Charter."*(G&M 2 Oct'99); and

WHEREAS it was these kinds of breaches of and defiance for International Law that led to international anarchy and the two terrible world wars of the 20th century; and

WHEREAS it was precisely to avoid international lawlessness and anarchy and its devastating effects that the United Nations was founded in 1945 at the end of World War II, the most terrible war in history.

THEREFORE your petitioners pray and request that Parliament:

- 1. Call for the perpetrators of all crimes against humanity, including those of 11 September 2001, to be brought to justice by international police action and tried before the International Criminal Court, or its interim equivalent, all under the auspices of the United Nations Organization, and**
- 2. Return Canada's foreign and defence policies to a full respect for, and full compliance with International Law and the UN Charter.**

SIGNATURE (SIGN, do not print) (STREET, optional) CITY PROV

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____

How to use this petition:

- Make 2 copies of this petition. The first page will have room for only a few signatures on the bottom.
- From your extra copy snip off the “Therefore your petitioners pray and request...including ..”SIGNATURE etc” and stick it at the top of page two. Rule & number spaces for up to 30 signatures below.

- Obtain 30 signatures. Phone your MP and ask for a meeting. Ask your MP to read it in the House of Commons.

Day after day, Members of Parliament read into Hansard, petitions signed by as few as 35 names. Eventually, the media begins to notice this as a sign of important public opinion. Many petitions of this type coming from all over the country and being read into the Parliamentary record (Hansard) can be very effective. Mass petitions with thousands of names tend to get counted and boxed and are only read into the record once. They are therefore less effective.

(Below are notes from “Petitioning the House of Commons: A Practical Guide”

Source: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/info/guiPETe.html>

- The petition must contain a minimum of 25 valid signatures, each with the address of the petitioner. The signature of a Member of Parliament is not counted.
- Each petitioner must sign his or her own name directly on the petition and must not sign for anyone else.
- Names should be signed, not printed. Signatures cannot be attached to a sheet (taped or pasted on) or photocopied onto it.
- If a petitioner cannot sign because of illness or a disability, this must be noted on the petition and the note signed by a witness.
- The petitioner's address must be written directly on the petition and not pasted on or reproduced.
- The petitioner may give his or her full home address or simply the city and province.
- Aliens not resident in Canada cannot petition the House of Commons of Canada.
- When you have collected 35 signatures send it to your MP and ask that it be read into the record.
- The petition will go to the Petitions committee and if it is in the proper format it is cleared for the MP to read.

VANA MEMBERSHIP

Name: To renew your membership in or to join VANA, please fill out the form below and send, along with a cheque payable to VANA, to Ted Powis, Treasurer, #603-1745 Esquimalt, W. Vancouver, V7V 1R7 The dues are \$30, \$20 of which go to the national office and \$10 to the branch. (You can use the enclosed addressed envelope)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Code _____

City _____ Prov _____

Email Address _____