

# VANA NEWSLETTER - BC BRANCH



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## Letter from Your Executive

Dear Fellow VANA Members:

I remember an old, Jewish, holocaust survivor who visited Vancouver years ago saying: "The winds of madness are blowing through history today." The current belligerence in Washington and in the Israel - Palestine and India - Pakistan crises- all nuclear weapons ready - sadly confirms his view. What can VANA do in the face of these great threats? We can do what we have always done: Use our considerable prestige as veterans to inform the public about the terrible risks from nuclear weapons, and call for their speedy abolition.

VANA's "Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Since" exhibition ran from 20-22 March at Langara College at the invitation of Mary Goldie who runs their Peace and Conflict Studies program. Two of her classes came to the exhibition, held in the Student Union Building, where David Morgan made presentations on the "Reality, the Risks and the Riddance of Nuclear Weapons." Students were surprised mainly by two aspects of the nuclear threat:

First, the terrible risks that have been taken in the past and second, the seriousness of current risks. Many of our one-page summaries of these risks were taken by students. The planned exhibition at Simon Fraser U. was pre-empted by a student election, but we will return in the fall. We are also making fall bookings, when students are clear of exams and papers, at UBC and Capilano and Douglas colleges.

The U.N. has called on Israel to halt its destruction of Palestine. Within Israel itself there are very strong divisions of opinion on this use of force, even in the Israeli army itself. VANA supports any member of any armed forces who resist the lawless use of force. We reprint below an article from The Independent(UK), "Rebellion grows among Israeli reserve officers," which describes this. The army statement that **"there is no place for soldiers to choose what jobs they do and do not want,"** raises basic issues of citizenship dealt with by the Nuremberg Tribunal:

As mentioned in the last update, VANA's Convention 2002 will take place in the second week of October and will be an "at home" convention. The convention will operate by a conference phone call involving VANA branches across Canada. The National Exec members all agreed, at our meeting of 8 April 2002, to run again for office. Nominations for exec posts will be welcomed in the next national update. Mail-in ballots will be sent to all VANA paid-up members in September. Branches will be sent convention packages in September, containing resolutions, the president's address, a financial statement, the treasurer's report, a membership report and a conference call agenda.

We VANA members are especially aware of the shocking return of the threat of use of nuclear weapons. An article "Taming the Nuclear Monster" by Richard Flak and David Krieger appears below, which gives a good survey of these perils and how they should be avoided. An example of the increasing risk of use of nuclear weapons has been given by recent statements from Geoff Hoon, British Defence Secretary. A BBC report on this, "UK 'prepared to use nuclear weapons,'" appears below.

Finally, a reply by Ed Shaffer to a pro-war article in a local journal. Do keep sending in your news, information, articles, writing, questions, beefs and bouquets. They are always welcome in this update.

**At our next members meeting on Monday 22 April 2002, 1:30 p.m., at the Fireside Room, Unitarian Church, 49th Avenue at Oak, we will welcome Riadh Muslih who came to Canada from Iraq long before the Bush family entered the White House. Riadh who edits a local Iraqi newspaper "Al Shoruq," will speak about "Iraq's current situation - Why Bush is eager to attack and what will happen if he does." Stay 'au courant' on Iraq, by coming to hear this well informed and eloquent speaker.**

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## Rebellion Grows Among Israeli Reserve Officers

*The Independent*, 1 February 2002

By Phil Reeves in Jerusalem

Israel's armed forces are struggling to contain the most serious internal challenge of the 16-month Palestinian intifada after more than **100 combat reservist soldiers signed a petition saying they would not serve in the occupied territories**. At least four of the signatories have been stripped of their command positions, and the army's chief of staff, Lt-Gen Shaul Mofaz, declared that "there is no place in Israel's military forces for such occurrences." The petition, which by last night had attracted 104 signatures, has prompted a national debate, and a backlash within the army. Another group of several hundred reservists has signed a counter-petition accusing the petitioners of "lies, distortions and unbridled defamation of the army." The issue erupted when a group of reservists, led by two young lieutenants, published an indictment of Israel's 35-year occupation in the newspaper, *Yedioth Ahronoth*,

**"We will no longer fight beyond the Green Line for the purpose of occupying, deporting, destroying, blockading, killing, starving and humiliating an entire people," declared a petition signed by the reservists and published in Israel's best-selling daily newspaper, Yedioth Ahronoth, saying that it was "corrupting the entire Israeli society."** Some of the signatories are officers and others are from frontline units - the paratroops, infantry and armoured and artillery corps. The petition said **soldiers had been issued commands while serving in the occupied territories that "had nothing to do with the security of our country," and had "the sole purpose of perpetuating our control" over the Palestinians.**

**"We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people," it stated.** The reservists' protest is the most compelling example of the simmering dissent within Israel over the conflict. In September, more than 65 Israeli teenagers signed a letter to the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, saying that they would refuse to do compulsory military service because of the **"aggressive and racist policies of the Israeli government and army."** A fortnight ago, an article appeared in the *Ha'aretz* newspaper by Dr Yigal Shochat, a physician who used to be an Israeli fighter pilot, who **called on F-16 pilots to refuse to bomb Palestinian cities.**

At the same time, the army faced intense domestic criticism for demolishing 60 Palestinian homes in a Gaza refugee camp, while the Israeli left has begun to accuse the army of war crimes. The divided opinion in the military ranks was further exposed **by revelations that a group of senior reserve officers, led by a brigadier-general, were planning to present the government with proposals for the reoccupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and the destruction of the Palestinian Authority.** Refusals to serve are not a new problem for the Israeli army. There were conscientious objectors in the 1982 Lebanon war and the first intifada, from 1987 to 1992. According to a group that represents Israel's refusenik soldiers, *Yesh Gvul* (translated as "There is a limit"), 49 have been jailed this time round for refusing to go to the occupied territories, 14 of them regular soldiers. Most Israeli men and women are conscripted into military service at age 18 -- men for three years, women for 21 months. Israeli men also usually serve up to one month of reserve duty every year until the age of 45. Organisers of the reservists' petition say they want to attract the support of at least 500 reservists. They have declined to speak to the foreign press, for fear of fuelling international anti-Israel sentiment. But the Israeli media has pounced on the issue. Itay Sviresky, a lieutenant in a reserve paratroop unit, told Channel Two TV that, **"as a human, a citizen and as a Zionist, I feel that there are certain things that I can't take part in. You have to be an occupier -- you can't be an enlightened occupier, you have to be a cruel occupier."** The Israeli army has countered with a statement saying that the petitioners were unrepresentative, and pointing out that **there is no place for soldiers to choose what jobs they do and do not want.** A press officer cited the example of a 56-year-old Tel Aviv lawyer, Avraham Dviri, who finished reserve service eight years ago, but volunteered again last year. After several Palestinian suicide attacks, Israelis feel even more embattled than ever. Mr Dviri represented the mood of many when he said he "despised" the refusing reservists. **"An officer who says that he cannot serve somewhere should not command other soldiers. He should be dismissed with dishonour," he said.**

### Taming the Nuclear Monster

By Richard Falk and David Krieger

Not since the dawn of the nuclear age at the end of World War II has the danger of nuclear war been greater. And what is as troubling, this danger is not widely understood. Several developments account for this most disturbing situation. The US Government has apparently adopted contingency plans that look for the use of nuclear weapons against specific countries and in a wide range of circumstances. Terrorist networks with genocidal agendas have been making strenuous efforts to acquire nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The spread of biological and chemical weapons increase political incentives to threaten nuclear retaliation. The American push for missile defense is likely to lead other nuclear weapons states to increase their arsenals. India and Pakistan, hostile neighbors, continue their conflict over Kashmir with their nuclear arsenals lurking in the background. And, in addition, the atmosphere created by the September 11 attacks has given rise to a good and evil world view that seems less inhibited with respect to nuclear weaponry. (Continued on page 3)

## Taming the Nuclear Monster (continued from page 2)

It is against such a background that the parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) will meet from April 8-19 to review progress on the treaty and, most important, on its Article VI commitment to nuclear disarmament. The recent revelations of the classified US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which was first released in partially unclassified form in January 2002, indicated contingency plans for the potential use of nuclear weapons against at least seven named states. These revelations are sure to have alarmed these governments, and hopefully awakened the international community generally to an atmosphere of mounting risk.

Any US plans to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons would be contrary to international law as well as to long-standing US assurances not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states. It also constitutes a provocative threat to the named states and others as well as to international peace and security overall. This US approach to planning nuclear weapons use, as well as other developments that increase the risk of nuclear war, will undoubtedly adversely affect the approach taken to non-proliferation by all countries. It is likely to induce further nuclear proliferation and to weaken seriously the non-proliferation regime. US policy toward nuclear weapons use, combined with its plans to develop and deploy missile defenses, is almost certain to encourage the expansion of nuclear weapons programs by Russia and China as well as the development of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction by other countries. It is also likely to give rise to destructive new arms races. The fact that the US is developing contingency plans to use nuclear weapons is viewed by most of the world as a dangerous expression of bad faith. In the past, nuclear weapons have been reluctantly tolerated, but only as a deterrent against the use of nuclear weapons by other states.

The US Nuclear Posture Review reveals that nuclear weapons are apparently being integrated into a full spectrum of potential war fighting situations. US policy seems to make nuclear weapons no longer weapons of last resort, but rather instruments that may be used in fighting wars, even against non-nuclear weapons states. Detrimental steps have already been taken following the US lead. The UK announced that it is also prepared to use nuclear weapons against any state that may attack it with any weapon of mass destruction. Such an expanded role for nuclear weapons is bound to have other destabilizing effects. In the post-September 11 world it is vital that the US and other nuclear weapon's states assume full responsibility for assuring that nuclear weapons and weapons grade materials, particularly in the former Soviet Union, do not fall into the hands of terrorists. It is also crucial that leading nations do their utmost diplomatically and by way of the United Nations to defuse war-prone tensions in South Asia and the Middle East.

The most urgent challenge at this time involves steps that should be taken to restore the restraints on this most menacing of all weaponry. Just as it is accepted that it is essential to establish reliable regimes of prohibition for biological and chemical weapons, it is long overdue to give the highest priority to establishing a comparable regime for nuclear weapons. Non-nuclear states should insist that nuclear weapons states at least adhere to the declared Chinese position of no-first use, thereby retaining nuclear weapons only for nuclear deterrence purposes until they can be eliminated altogether. In this vein, the US and the UK should retract their dangerous and destabilizing plans for nuclear war fighting and, in their own interests as well as those of the rest of the world, provide leadership toward eliminating nuclear weapons and ending the nuclear weapons threat to humanity and all life. The states that are parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty cannot afford to remain passive, but should use their leverage to remind the world that we are all facing an unprecedented and growing danger that nuclear weapons will be somehow used for the first time since 1945.

*Richard Falk is professor emeritus of international law and practice at Princeton University, and visiting distinguished professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara. David Krieger is president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation*

### **UK 'prepared to use nuclear weapons'**

BBC News Online:

Wednesday, 20 March, 2002, 14:49 GMT

The UK is prepared to use nuclear weapons against rogue states such as Iraq if they ever used "weapons of mass destruction" against British troops in the field, defence secretary Geoff Hoon has told MPs. Mr Hoon said he was not certain Britain's nuclear arsenal would deter a first strike from a state willing to sacrifice its own people to make a "gesture." " They can be absolutely confident that in the right conditions we would willing to use our nuclear weapons," said **Geoff Hoon, defence secretary**

He also told MPs the possibility of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction was a cause for "real anxiety" and something "we would have to guard against very seriously." However, he stressed, there was no evidence that any terrorist group had so far acquired such weapons. And the prospect of terrorists acquiring ballistic missiles was not considered a major threat. Mr Hoon was briefing MPs on the threat posed by four countries identified by the UK as "states of concern" - Iraq, Iran, Libya and North Korea. (continued on page 4)

**Chemical weapons** "There are clearly some states who would be deterred by the fact that the UK possesses nuclear weapons and has the willingness and ability to use them in appropriate circumstances, " he told the Commons defence select committee."States of concern, I would be much less confident about."Saddam Hussein has demonstrated in the past his willingness to use chemical weapons against his own people."In those kinds of states, the wishes and needs and interests of citizens are clearly much less regarded, and we cannot rule out the possibility that such states would be willing to sacrifice their own people to make such a gesture."No evidence." He added: "They can be absolutely confident that in the right conditions we would be willing to use our nuclear weapons."What I cannot be absolutely confident about is whether or not that would be sufficient to deter them from using a weapon of mass destruction in the first place."Of the four "states of concern" identified by the UK, Mr Hoon said North Korea appeared closest to developing intercontinental ballistic missiles. There was no evidence of a direct threat to the UK from North Korea, he said. But, he added: "Their threat is a threat to the stability of the world because they are clearly very determined to sell their equipment to anyone who has the cash to buy it."Mr Hoon also singled out Libya as a cause for concern."I am sure Libya has an aspiration to develop a weapon of mass destruction and, equally, would like to purchase the necessary technology to allow it to deliver it."That conjunction is something we keep a close eye on."**Missile defence:** Mr Hoon said he still considered Iraq the greatest threat the UK currently faced. But, he stressed there were no states - to the government's knowledge - that had both the intention and the ability to launch an attack against the UK. Mr Hoon refused to be drawn on the extent of UK involvement in the development of the US missile defence - or son of Star Wars - system.

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**Get a Grip Yourself, Dr. Slater**

Edward H. Shaffer

February 13, 2002

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*Note: The article below appeared. In an abridged form in the Spring edition of BC Book World in a reply to a pro-war article that appeared in its Winter edition.*

After reading Dr. Ian Slater's article, "Getting a Grip," in the Winter 2001 edition of *Lookout*, I feel like a dichotomy. Dr. Slater places people in pigeonholes, based on by their attitudes to the so-called "war on terrorism." On one hand he describes glowingly the generation who fought and died for our freedom" and, on the other, he castigates the "intellectually lazy crowd" who "blame everything on the U. S.," with the clear implication that no one individual could possibly fit in both pigeonholes. To the disappointment of Dr. Slater, I happen to have squirmed into both holes and I am not alone in performing such a remarkable feat. I might add that those of us whom he regards as "intellectually lazy" do not blame everything on America. What we are saying is that the U.S., as the world's sole superpower, must bear most – but not all – of the responsibility for the world's problems.

I am a decorated U.S. war veteran, who, after volunteering for the army in 1942, fought in Europe as a member of the 12 63rd. U. S. Engineer Combat Battalion. We crossed the Elbe River in the dying days of the war and met the Soviet army about 65 miles west of Berlin. I know war first-hand and I can assure Dr. Slater that U.S. General Sherman's comment that " war is Hell" is an understatement. War is worse than Hell. I am thus very reluctant to support any war. War, furthermore, is a very dangerous game in this nuclear age. Wars provide an incentive for powers that do not have the bomb to obtain it and for the powers that do, to use it. The deployment of the bomb could spell the end of civilization.

I note that Dr. Slater was a member of the Australian military intelligence. To me and to many of my fellow veterans the term "military intelligence" is an oxymoron. Our favorite description of military life was snafu (situation normal, all f...ed up). This is not surprising because the military, by its very nature, stifles intellectual creativity. Soldiers are expected to obey orders without question. As Tennyson put it, "theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die." This blind obedience, an integral part of military culture, creates intellectual stagnation. Dr. Slater should remember this when he accuses people like me of being "intellectually lazy."

The present war in Afghanistan is a direct result of the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington on September 11th. The U.S. government believes, and I agree, that Osama bin Laden is the one who is ultimately responsible for these attacks. The real question is whether these attacks are sufficient reason to justify the U.S. bombing and killing of thousands of innocent Afghan civilians. Could not the United States have found ways to capture bin Laden, without going to war? How is it that the CIA. , despite its vast resources, has been unable to do what Israel did in apprehending Eichman in Argentina and France did in arresting Carlos the Jackal in the Sudan? Both these countries got their man without dropping a single bomb and killing any innocent civilians. Dr. Slater attributes the failure of the CIA to neglect of "human intelligence" under the stewardship of Stansfield Turner. This explanation is far too simplistic. Does not Dr. Slater know that the CIA had a close relationship for many years with Mr. bin Laden, whom he describes as "vermin." Certainly any intellectually alert person would ask why would the CIA deal with such "vermin" in the first place? (continued on page 5)

Did the military culture of blind obedience prevent Dr. Slater from asking such an obvious question? In addition he should know that the CIA had contact with bin Laden as late as July 2001

In an article in *The Guardian* (London, November 1, 2001) Anthony Sampson, a respected author of several books on the oil and arms trade, reports that “[t]wo months before September 11 Osama bin Laden flew to Dubai for 10 days for treatment at the American hospital, where he was visited by the local CIA agent.” Sampson’s source of information was the conservative French newspaper, *Le Figaro*, which has close contact with French intelligence. According to Sampson:

**Bin Laden is reported to have arrived in Dubai on July 4 from Quetta in Pakistan with his own personal doctor, nurse and four bodyguards, to be treated in the urology department. While there, he was visited by several members of his family and Saudi personalities, and the CIA. The CIA chief [in Dubai] was seen in the lift, on his way to see Bin Laden, and later, it is alleged, boasted to friends about his contact.**

Sampson’s story, if true, raises questions about the willingness of the United States to capture Bin Laden. So does a recent book, *Ben Laden: La Vérité Interdite (Bin Laden: The Forbidden Truth: November 2001)*, coauthored by Jean-Charles Brisard, a French security expert and Guillaume Dasquié, a journalist. The book claims that John P. O’Neill, former director of antiterrorism for the F.B.I.’s New York office, “complained bitterly last summer that the United States was unwilling to confront Saudi Arabia over Osama bin Laden and that oil ruled American foreign policy” It states that he had been leading the F.B.I.’s investigation into the bombing of the destroyer Cole in Yemen in October 2000, but he had been barred in July from returning to Yemen by the United States ambassador there, who accused him of harming relations between the United States and Yemen. Frustrated by this lack of cooperation, he left the F. B. I. in August last year to become the chief of security of the World Trade Center. He was killed in the Sept. 11 attack.

Another indication of the unwillingness to go after Bin Laden was the decision by the United States to agree to the request of Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Saudi Arabia’s ambassador to Washington, to evacuate 24 members of Osama bin Laden’s family, who were living in the United States They were driven or flown under F.B.I. supervision to a secret assembly point in Texas and then to Washington from where they left the country on a private charter plane when airports reopened three days after the attacks. Why were not these people, some of whom may have had direct connections with Osama, detained and questioned, while at the same time the government was rounding up and detaining without any charge several thousand people from the Middle East, whose connections to bin Laden are unproven. This question remains unanswered.

Furthermore, James Woosley, former director of the C.I.A., told the BBC late last year that the United States is not interested in finding bin Laden. He said it would leave that task to the new Afghan government. He added that all the U.S. is interested in is “changing governments” in Afghanistan and other countries. And on Feb. 4, this year, the *New York Times* reported that in “a recent televised interview the president [Bush] said: ‘Osama bin Laden is not my focus. My focus is terror at large.’ And in his State of the Union speech he did not even mention Mr. bin Laden by name.”

There are a number of reasons why the U.S. may not want to find bin Laden. First, if they capture him alive, they will have to put him on trial. Such a trial could arouse passions in the Muslim world. In addition, bin Laden may bring to light some interesting revelations about relationships between his family and that of former president Bush. The elder Bush is one of the chief representatives of the Carlyle Group, a \$12 billion (US) equity fund, which invests heavily in military industries. Other illuminaries are former Secretary of State James Baker, former British PM John Major and, until very recently, the bin Laden family. In addition, the Carlyle group has reaped large profits from the military procurement orders given by the U. S. government to companies in which it has investments. Because of his connections with Carlyle, the President’s father received personal benefits from these orders. As an heir to his father’s fortune, the president himself may have also benefited and may be subject to conflict-of-interest charges. It certainly would not be in his interest to air this dirty linen in public.

The alternative to putting bin Laden on trial is, using the mobster language of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Dr. Slater, to “kill him.” But that would make him a martyr, something the U. S. would not want to happen. Finally, bin Laden’s capture would put strong international pressure on the U.S. to end the war. But the U.S. wants a permanent state of war in order to impose a *Pax Americana* on an unwilling world. Such a policy may ultimately bring about a nuclear disaster. This is what concerns “lazy intellectuals” like me. I therefore urge Dr. Slater to get rid of his military blinkers and take a look at the world as it really is before making baseless accusations. It is he who should get a grip.

## **On the Heavy Side: The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's Top Five List of Events Related to Nuclear Terrorism in 2001**

1. After security tests in which US Army and Navy Teams penetrate nuclear facilities and obtain nuclear materials, measures to increase security are taken.
2. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf orders an emergency redeployment of the country's nuclear arsenal to at least six secret new locations.
3. The UK Ministry of Defense gives details on its website about the transport of nuclear weapons and plutonium throughout the country, thus offering a useful guide to potential terrorists.
4. As a precaution against suicide attacks, France increases the number of surface-to-air missiles near La Hague, Europe's largest nuclear waste reprocessing plant.
5. Weapons experts testify to attendees of the International Atomic Energy Agency conference in Vienna, Austria that terrorists could use a nuclear device.

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### **On the Light Side: Picking Apples**

To save money in my small orchard I decided to pick the apples myself. I climbed to the top of a tree on a ladder and fastened a pulley wheel there, ran a rope through the pulley, climbed down, fastened one end of the rope to a barrel, pulled the barrel to the top of the tree and fastened the other end of the rope to the tree trunk. Then I climbed the tree, filled the barrel with apples, climbed down and untied the rope to lower the barrel.

Unfortunately, the barrel weighed more than I did, so I was rapidly pulled up, had my head banged by the descending barrel and jammed my fingers in the pulley wheel. Hitting the ground, the barrel burst, scattering apples, and now that it was lighter than me, I descended rapidly and had my shins banged by the broken barrel on its way up. Landing hard at the foot of the tree, I then foolishly let go of the rope, and, yes, the pieces of the barrel came crashing down on my head. Next year I will hire someone to pick my apples.

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### **VANA MEMBERSHIP**

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:** \_\_\_\_\_

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