



VANA NEWSLETTER BC BRANCH



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c/o D. Morgan, 240 Holyrood Road, N. Vancouver, BC V7N 2R5

Web Site: www.vana.ca

Letter from Your Executive



Dear Fellow VANA Members in BC:

Remembrance Day ceremonies in Vancouver attracted a very large crowd this year, as if the public senses the threat of more warlike times. VANA members (14 of us), as usual, joined the end of the parade under our banner "Let Peace be their memorial." This message of VANA's drew very strong applause from the crowd, and pictures

of this banner appeared on CBC TV and in the Vancouver Sun.

VANA members were again invited to speak in schools, where our message is that war is a disaster that can be prevented by respect for the UN
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Charter and international law. This helps to expand young people's thinking beyond the view that war provides an opportunity for the young to prove their patriotism. This latter "theirs not to reason why" type thinking was questionable even in 1854, in Tennyson's poem about the futile "Charge of the Light Brigade." In today's nuclear armed world, peace is patriotic and concerns us all, especially the young. We need to ask why it is that in deciding questions of war and peace, we still give all the power to Presidents and Prime Ministers.

Prime Minister Jean Chretien departs the Canadian stage this week with a mixed record from his ten years in office. Generally supportive of US foreign policy, his last minute refusal to support the Bush administration's lawless aggression against Iraq, seemed to owe much to the unprecedented and gigantic public opposition to this war which swept across so many countries, including Canada. More on his legacy from a VANA perspective below.

Less cooperative with US foreign policy, is President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. The coup that ousted him from power on April 12 last year was followed three days later by the collapse of the coup, under fierce public pressure, and the return of Chavez to power.

A video "Chavez: Inside the coup" documenting these incredible events from inside the Presidential Palace, both before, during and after the coup, is certainly one of the most astonishing documentaries ever filmed. This video, which was banned by Amnesty International, will be shown at our Members Meeting on Monday 24 November at 1:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room, Unitarian Church, 49th at Oak. Don't miss it, or the lively discussions before and after.

Best wishes,
Your VANA BC exec:

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Should Vancouver host a world peace forum in 2005? Ellen Woodsworth asked this question in a 15 October 2003 letter to Vancouver peace activists. Ellen is a Vancouver City Councilor and Vice-chair of the Vancouver City Peace and Justice Committee. VANA is responding to this request with a proposal that Vancouver host a conference of world mayors in Vancouver in 2005 to consider ways of how to "alert their citizens" to the continuing nuclear weapon threat. This follows from Mayor Campbell's Nagasaki Day proclamation in which he described the needs for these alerts. Members will recall that the wording of this proclamation appeared in our September *Newsletter*

Peace activists need to be aware of a major new trend in the US Military Industrial Complex which is now privatizing military personnel and functions on a large scale and largely outside Congressional scrutiny and control. Read up on this below.

Meanwhile, good news from Minnesota, where 28 peace activists who were arrested for entering, on 2 April this year, the property of Alliant Tech Systems Corporation which makes DU weapons, were acquitted on 17 October from their trespass charges. This anti-war victory for these activists, who wanted to conduct a "citizens weapons inspection," is described below.

A new chapter in the *VANA National Update* opens in January when it moves from Ottawa to Vancouver. The reasons for this move and our plans for the new *Update* appear below. The success of this new *Update* will depend on getting the same kind of feedback and contributions from members that we have enjoyed in BC. Keep up the flow of your news, comments, poems, suggestions and opinions. They are most welcome

Chretien's legacy:

What, from VANA's anti-nuclear weapon perspective, is the legacy of Chretien's ten years in power?

The dominant factors in the Chretien's government's nuclear weapon policies have been Canada's relationship with the USA, embedded in which are our memberships in NATO and NORAD.

This relationship has meant that in the UN, Canada has consistently and with few exceptions, voted with the US dominated NATO block in opposition to effective control or abolition of nuclear weapons.. When the UN General Assembly voted in favour of asking the World Court to rule on the legality of nuclear weapons, Canada abstained. Canada did not send a representative to address the court on this issue. Canada's request to NATO to review its nuclear weapons policy was crudely rebuffed.

Canada has not officially criticized the Bush administration's policies of pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons, its rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), its plans to produce mini-nukes and bunker busters and to move towards a resumption of N-weapons tests.

The Chretien government avoided openly supporting the US plans for a ballistic missile defence and for the domination of space, but the

Canadian military has worked with their US counterparts on these initiatives and there is little chance that Martin will oppose them.

Canada's NATO membership -opposed by VANA since 1995 - has also led to Canada's support for the dangerously provocative expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe and to the aggression against Yugoslavia in 1999. The 24th of March 1999, when Chretien ordered Canadian forces to join this aggression, quite outside international law or any UN mandate, is a black page in Canadian history. It marked the first time that Canada openly broke the UN Charter on a matter of war and peace.

In the waning days of his power, Chretien resisted very great US pressure by keeping Canada out of the lawless attack on Iraq. This is certainly to his credit, but his overall ten-year record is one of support for belligerent US actions and for their very dangerous nuclear weapon policies.

Senator Doug Roche, speaking in Vancouver on 31 October said that there is a mood in Ottawa now to "restore good relations with the USA." This will probably mean that Paul Martin will support the Bush administration's aggressive foreign policies and dangerous nuclear weapon policies. VANA, a staunch member of the Canadian peace movement, will continue to oppose such policies

Privatizing war

In Iraq, private contractors do just about everything a soldier would do. They sling Spam in mess tents. They tote guns along base perimeters. They shoot. They get shot. Sometimes they get killed. And it's not just in Iraq, but around the world - in conflict zones from Liberia to Kosovo to Afghanistan - that **the United States is putting hired help behind the front lines to ease the burden of its overworked armed forces. By paying civilians to handle military tasks, the Bush administration is freeing up U.S. troops to fight. But the use of contractors also hides the true costs of war.**

Their dead aren't added to official body counts. Their duties-and profits - are hidden by close-mouthed executives who won't give details to Congress. **And as their coffers and roles swell, companies are funneling earnings into political campaigns and gaining influence over military policy - even getting paid to recommend themselves for lucrative contracts.** For the civilians handling these soldierly jobs, the risks are high.

A contractor near the Iraqi city of Fallujah died (continued on page 4)

Privatization (continued from page 3)

and an American engineer was wounded when their vehicles came under attack Monday, possibly by U.S. soldiers, said the British-based company, European Landmine Solutions. U.S. officials said their soldiers weren't responsible.

The chief military contractor in Iraq, Kellogg, Brown & Root, has had three workers killed in Iraq, two of whom died in ambushes. Kellogg, Brown & Root is a subsidiary of Halliburton, a company whose former president was Vice-President Cheney and which paid him a \$20 million (US) retirement bonus

Another top U.S. military contractor, DynCorp, saw three of its workers killed in an ambush by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip this month. In Afghanistan, two civilian contractors working for the CIA were slain in an ambush Saturday.

And in Liberia, contractors guarding the U.S. Embassy have fought like soldiers during rebel sieges, at times lifting guns from slain rebels, said Horacio "Hersh" Hernandez, a retired Marine with Intercon security in Liberia. He owes his job, he says, to post-Cold War defense cuts and a slew of new U.S. engagements. "It's a massive business boom for the private security field," Hernandez said.

As the United States slashed the size of its standing army from 2.1 million in 1990 to 1.4 million now, the Pentagon began running out of soldiers to handle postwar violence in Iraq and Afghanistan and peacekeeping in Bosnia and Kosovo while facing threats elsewhere.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld argued wars could still be fought without boosting the number of soldiers by *outsourcing* just about everything except battlefield gunning.

In Iraq, American companies made profits operating missile defense batteries, piloting unmanned aerial vehicles and snapping satellite pictures of bombing targets. The machine-gun toting guards who shadow Afghan President Hamid Karzai and L. Paul Bremer, the U.S. administrator in Iraq, are private-sector workers, as are those who built and operate the cavernous

white mess tent on the base of the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment in Baghdad.

There, a \$3 million contract with Kellogg, Brown & Root paid for the tent's construction and the Bangladeshi and Indian cooks who feed 4,000 troops daily. One soldier breakfasting inside the tent, a nine-year veteran, said she's been sent to patrol Baghdad since contractors took her job as a cook.

With Kellogg, Brown & Root handling everything from mail delivery to bug control on U.S. bases in Iraq and around the world, plenty of other soldiers are finding themselves on the front lines.

Peter W. Singer, a Brookings Institution military analyst, estimates there is one contractor for every 10 foreign soldiers in Iraq - 10 times the private involvement in the Gulf War.

Worldwide, private military companies earn about \$100 billion in yearly government contracts, Singer believes. Ninety private military companies are listed on the Web site for the Center for Public Integrity. In comparison, the U.S. defense budget is about \$380 billion this year, excluding emergency spending, and is expected to rise to more than \$400 billion.

Some of the firms working in Iraq are huge, politically connected conglomerates like Halliburton - corporate parent of Kellogg, Brown & Root and formerly headed by Vice President Dick Cheney. Others are little known, like Erinys, a security firm choked with former South African special forces that will train 6,500 Iraqis to guard oil installations.

The world of military contracts is a murky one.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, important buildings in the capitals bristle with gun-toting Americans in sunglasses. They favor khaki photographers' vests and a few military accoutrements, but lack the name tags and identifying patches of a soldier.

Ask whom they work for and one often hears "no (continued on page 5)

Privatization (continued from page 4)

comment" or "I can't tell you that."

Contractors' deaths aren't counted among the tally of more than 350 U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq. No one is sure how many private workers have been killed, or, indeed, even how many are toiling in Iraq for the U.S. government. Estimates range from under 10,000 to more than 20,000 - which could make private contractors the largest U.S. coalition partner ahead of Britain's 11,000 troops.

Global Risks Strategies, a security firm with about 1,100 workers on the ground - mainly armed former Nepalese and Fijian soldiers - is among security companies that have more personnel in Iraq than some other countries taking part in the occupation, Singer said.

To the consternation of U.S. lawmakers, Congress has little or no oversight of contractors hired by the executive branch of government - whether through the State Department, Pentagon or the CIA.

Many, like San Diego-based Science Applications International Corp., which trains Iraqi journalists, police and soldiers, are privately held firms employing ex-soldiers and spies.

"We refrain from talking about things our customers don't want us talking about," said Science Applications spokesman Jason McIntosh. "That's just good policy."

***VANA National Update* moves to Vancouver:**

As our members inevitably become less active, the role of the *VANA National Update* in holding our organization together becomes even more important than in the past.

Your executive sees the *Update* as performing these functions

1. Covering Branch news
2. Encouraging Branch members to present their views on current VANA, Canadian and world issues
3. Providing a calendar of upcoming events.
4. Presenting articles and synopses on N-threat

The connection between companies and politicians in Washington raises the specter of executives lobbying for a hawkish U.S. foreign policy since they profit from war, Avant said.

Iraq contractors DynCorp, Bechtel and Halliburton donated more than \$2.2 million - mainly to Republican causes like the 2000 Bush presidential campaign - between 1999 and 2002, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

In the case of Halliburton, the U.S. government hired the company in Iraq without a competitive bid, after the company recommended itself in a study. Halliburton's Iraq oil services contract, worth \$1.59 billion so far, will be extended until December or January. The company reported Wednesday that its government work in Iraq and elsewhere helped boost yearly third-quarter earnings by 39 percent, to \$4.14 billion.

Contractors don't appear to be pulling personnel out of Iraq despite attacks - something that has chased U.S. forces out of hotspots before.

(By Jim Krane Associated Press Writer. AP writers Austin Merrill in Monrovia, Liberia, and Tini Tran in Baghdad, Iraq, contributed to this report.)

Center for Public Integrity contractor site: <http://www.icij.org/dtaweb/icij-bow.asp>)

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related news.

5. Inviting contributions from counterpart organizations such as Veterans For Peace
6. Providing a forum where your exec can explain its actions, plans and decisions.
7. Above all
Providing all of our members with a sense of community and involvement in our policy, our plans, our actions and our common purpose.

The current arrangement with COAT including our *Update* in their magazine is cumbersome, (continued on page 6)

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with your executive communicating material to our editor Walter Josephy in Ottawa, who then sends it to Richard Sanders at COAT. The interval between COAT issues is long - 3 months and sometimes longer, and the cost is high. VANA BC is currently issuing a Newsletter once a month to all BC members. The cost of copying, envelope and postage is about \$2./issue/member.

At its last meeting, VANA National executive passed a motion to discontinue the inclusion of VANA's *Update* in the COAT paper.

We plan to produce the *Update* in Vancouver

starting in January. There will be six issues a year and the paper will be produced, edited and issued from Vancouver to the list server, the website and in hard copy to members who are not online. We hope to get a "correspondent" in each branch who will inform us of branch news by phone, fax, email or post, but we will encourage any branch members to send us material. Our BC Newsletter has printed all material sent in by members.

Finally, VANA exec offers many thanks to the former *Update* Editor, Walter Josephy for his valuable contributions, and also to Richard Sanders for hosting our *Update* in his excellent peace-promoting news magazine.

On the light side: Oz repartee

Below are the problems submitted by Qantas pilots and the solutions recorded by maintenance engineers. Qantas is the world's only accident-free major airline.

Problem: Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.

Solution: Almost replaced left inside main tire.

Problem: Number 3 engine missing.

Solution: Engine found on right wing after brief search.

Problem: Evidence of leak on right main landing gear.

Solution: Evidence removed.

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 Shayle Duffield, RR#1 Z-46, Bowen Island, BC V0N 1G0. 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 _____