



# UPDATE

The National Newsletter of  
**Veterans Against Nuclear Arms (VANA)**

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## The Case for Ending Launch on Warning

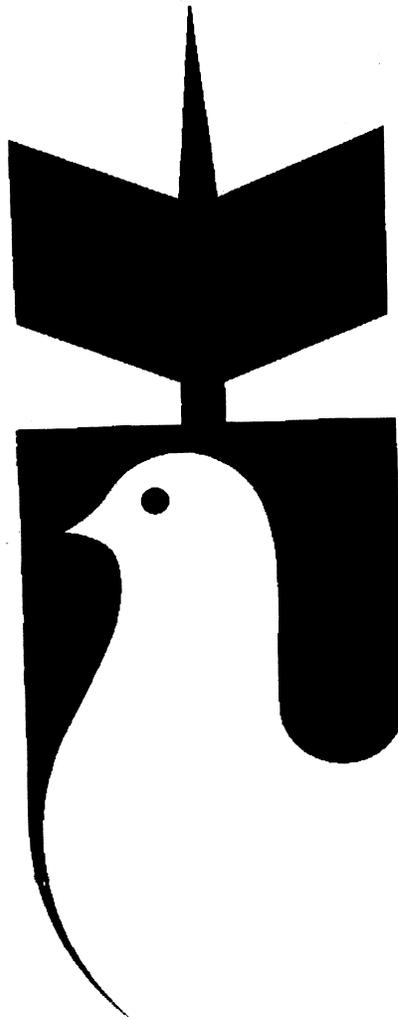
By Alan Phillips, long time member of VANA from Hamilton

A Threat Conference is what happens at NATO headquarters every time there is an irregularity in the signals from radar and satellites that could possibly be the first sign of a nuclear attack by Russian rockets. The task of the conference is to determine whether the apparent warning of attack is true or false, before the rockets arrive.

There have been thousands of threat conferences over the years since the start of the Cold War, and they still go on. So far, they have achieved the astonishing record of 100 per cent accuracy, and that within the twenty minutes or so of flight time left after the conference is called. Every false warning has been correctly diagnosed as false. There has never been a true warning.

If a conference wrongly diagnosed a true warning as false, it would make little difference: the war to end civilization would have already started. But if they wrongly diagnosed a false warning as true, it would make all the difference in the world. The war to end civilization would start immediately, because retaliation would be launched before the incoming rockets were predicted to arrive. This is called launch on warning (LoW), and it is, as far as we can find out, the policy of both Russia and U.S.A. It was started in the 1960s, when the change from liquid to solid fuel for rockets made it possible to launch at short notice.

The policy of LoW is far too dangerous, simply because of this risk of a purely accidental nuclear war. Considering that the risk of accidentally ending both U.S. and Russian civilization (for preserving ) sic (in order to preserve) one political system against the other, and considering that several times that accident nearly happened, the policy was unjustifiable even



during the Cold War, when many people thought a surprise first strike by one superpower against the other was a serious possibility.

The last time accidental war nearly happened (that was known to the public) was January 25, 1995, the Norwegians had notified Russia through the usual channels that a re-

search rocket would be launched, but the message had not reached their early warning people.

As far as we can tell, the same LoW policy is still in effect in 2002, on both sides. This is absurd. It is by far the likeliest cause of a nuclear war between U.S.A. and Russia, and is an entirely unnecessary risk. (The other nuclear weapons states are not believed to have developed the LoW option..)

To end the danger, there have been peace movement initiatives calling for 'de-alerting nuclear weapons'. And perhaps more importantly, the Canberra Commission and prestigious 'think tanks' (Brookings Institute, Stimson Centre) have recommended it. The Canadian Parliament's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs recommended that our government endorse the concept.

There is an important distinction that has not been pointed out in these recommendations. The term 'de-alerting' is used to mean introducing an unavoidable delay between a decision to launch and the crucial, irrevocable step of a launch sequence that actually sends rockets on their way. De-alerting would eliminate LoW but would be very difficult to achieve. A simpler alternative is just to abandon the LoW. Abandoning LoW without de-alerting is sufficient to eliminate the risk of a nuclear war starting purely as a result of a false warning, as nearly happened in 1995 and on several other occasions.

It must be assumed that as long as the U.S.A. and Russia retain nuclear arsenals, they will keep the doctrine of

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A tax receiptable way of contributing to peace. Please send to: DREC, Box 3B8 R.R #1, Tantallon N.S. B0J 3J0

VANA member and long-time *Update* editor Cec Muldrew spent the first part of June this year in hospital with heart and kidney trouble. He is now back home, convalescent, at Victoria Beach near Winnipeg and is unable, for the moment, to continue work on the *VANA Update*.

**Get well soon, Cec!**

With love and best wishes from all your very appreciative readers of the *Update*.

deterrence. For deterrence against a surprise first strike to work in a de-alerted nuclear regime, the delay between the decision and launch has to be approximately equal on both sides. Agreed methods with different launch systems have to be worked out to give equal delays. Verification would be necessary and would require elaborate and intrusive methods to ensure against cheating. All arrangements would have to be acceptable to both political and military establishments on both sides. To appreciate the difficulty, think about the problems in maintaining verified de-alerting for submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Agreement might prove unachievable; at best it would require years of expert planning and diplomatic negotiation.

Compare that to the simplicity

of a no LoW policy. Both sides want to avoid an accidental nuclear war and both have taken elaborate measures to reduce the risk but, surprisingly, they leave the LoW in effect.

Either side abandoning LoW approximately halves the risk to both sides. The other side does not even need to know it, nor believe it if they have been told. There is no need for verification. It is just a matter of policy change, plus a change in standing orders and operating procedure that no retaliatory launch takes place before a nuclear explosion is reliably reported to the central command. The changes can be made in a day.

Why do the two sides keep to this apparently irrational policy? The reason must be a dogmatic following of deterrence theory and failure to think

through the adversarial situation and the risks clearly.

The original reason for LoW was the theoretical possibility that one side might believe a surprise attack in which the launch of many nuclear rockets in the first salvo would be so perfectly timed for simultaneous detonation on the distant targets, and so effective, that it would weaken retaliation down to a tolerable level of damage to the attacker. If either side believed that, it would weaken deterrence.

Yes, it is a theoretical possibility, but not a likely one. In practice, the side contemplating attack would have to be sure that complete effectiveness would be achieved, the first time. They know that if enough enemy weapons survive to fight a nuclear war, even from submarines, that will be the end of both countries. And deterrence theory depends on the two adversaries behaving rationally. They could not even be sure that their adversary had changed to a no-LoW policy, or stayed that way when it said it had. (Verification would actually tend to weaken deterrence.) Does either of them even want to destroy the other, at a minimum cost of long lasting and severe radioactive contamination of a whole continent, spreading to a considerable extent over the whole world?

The two heads of state should be persuaded to face the choice between LoW and no LoW, and decide which of the two risks to take more seriously: the theoretical danger of their adversary making a first strike as a result of this change of policy, or the actual danger of an accidental war due to a false warning, which is known to have happened a number of times, and would happen with a single wrong decision by a threat conference in one of its hurried meetings.

The governments or the heads of state are not likely to work this out for themselves. It is the task of the NGOs of the world to persuade them. A nuclear war between Russia and U.S.A. would permanently nullify all other NGO efforts, and all our prior successes. "No LoW" ought to be our first priority.

Source: *Mondial*, April 2002. Published by the World Federalist.



**“Castle Bravo,” a 15-megaton hydrogen bomb explosion on March 1, 1954, was the world’s largest atmospheric test. Fallout from this blast contaminating hundreds of people on the Marshall Islands. The fallout also hit 23 Japanese fishermen on a ship called the “Lucky Dragon,” as well as US servicemen who were monitoring the test.**

## Is Intervention Justified?

On Feb. 15, 2002, Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan participated in a seminar at the International Peace Academy in New York City. The topic was the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). For several years Mr. Annan has been urging the international community to forge a consensus on the sensitive issue of the right of humanitarian intervention. Responding to his challenge, in the fall of 2000 Canada established the ICISS, with a membership of 12 (including 2 Canadians). After a year of intensive worldwide consultations, research, deliberations and discussions, in Dec. 2001 the commission released its report entitled "The Responsibility to Protect."

### Intervention versus sovereignty

Intervening in another country's affairs has always been a very sensitive issue. States with the military capability may be criticized when they step in to protect populations in danger -- as happened in Somalia in 1992-3, Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999. At other times they have been blamed for not intervening -- as happened in Rwanda in 1994, when genocide took 800,000 lives.

The ICISS wrestled with one major question: Should the international community accept the sanctity of state sovereignty and do nothing to stop massive human rights violations, or should it intervene to protect populations in danger? The Commission unambiguously favoured intervention, with the proviso that any military action be a last resort and that the decision to intervene be based on a key principle: Sovereign states are responsible for protecting their own citizens from disasters that can be avoided, whether mass murder, systematic rape or famine; but when they are unwilling or unable to act, the responsibility must be borne by the international community.

In the view of the Commission, this responsibility of the international community -- and especially of the UN Security Council -- entails certain explicit obligations. Among them: the responsibility to prevent conflicts by eliminating their root causes, and to undertake reconstruction in the aftermath of a conflict.

### Changing the discourse of diplomacy

The ICISS report was warmly welcomed by Minister Graham, who commented, "By changing the discourse of diplomacy to the responsibility to protect, the Commission has made an extraordinary contribution to the theory of international affairs." He added that he was very satisfied with the recommendations of the report, and that Canada would now play a leading role in ensuring that it receives appropriate follow-up and sustained, positive and constructive attention from the international community.

Mr. Annan thanked Canada for establishing the ICISS and lauded the work of the Commission. To ICISS members he said, "How to protect individual lives while maintaining and even strengthening the sovereignty of states has become clearer with the publication of this report. You are taking away the last excuses of the international community for doing nothing when doing something can save lives."

"From Kurdistan to Kosovo, Western political leaders have embraced humanitarian adventurism with gusto. Troops have been deployed for 'active humanitarian service,' more often than not to disguise a dismal lack of political vision in tackling the root causes of crises at hand.

Humanitarian assistance has become a cheap form of foreign policy bringing short-term PR gains to politicians."

Source: Margaret Melichavora, "Special Agents," *Peace Matters*, Summer 2002.

## Isotopes have very long memories

By David Morgan, President, VANA

Atomic war that blazed out on this Earth upon the people of Hiroshima, is an event we may wish to forget. But Americium two-four-one has not forgotten and in four-hundred years will only half-forget that man-made hell-on-earth

Do you forget the nuclear weapon tests held in Nevada and at the atolls of Bikini, Eniwetok and at Kazakhstan, Novaya Zemlya, Easter Island, Mururoa Atoll? It is so easy to forget these tests. But Carbon fourteen remembers them quite well and will do so, long after we are gone. In five thousand-seven-hundred and thirty years Carbon fourteen will still relate the tale of these bomb tests to our great great - (repeat one hundred and ninety times 'great-great') grandchildren that have survived our nuclear age. What other messages have we for them?

Nuclear reactors of the world produce more than twenty thousand kilograms of Plutonium 239 each year and since ten kilograms can make a bomb there is no chance that we will soon run short of stuff to make the bombs for our "defence."

But long, long after wiser heads than ours have given up these suicidal bombs Plutonium 239 will still be here reminding generations yet unborn for more than twenty-thousand years how foolish were their long dead ancestors.

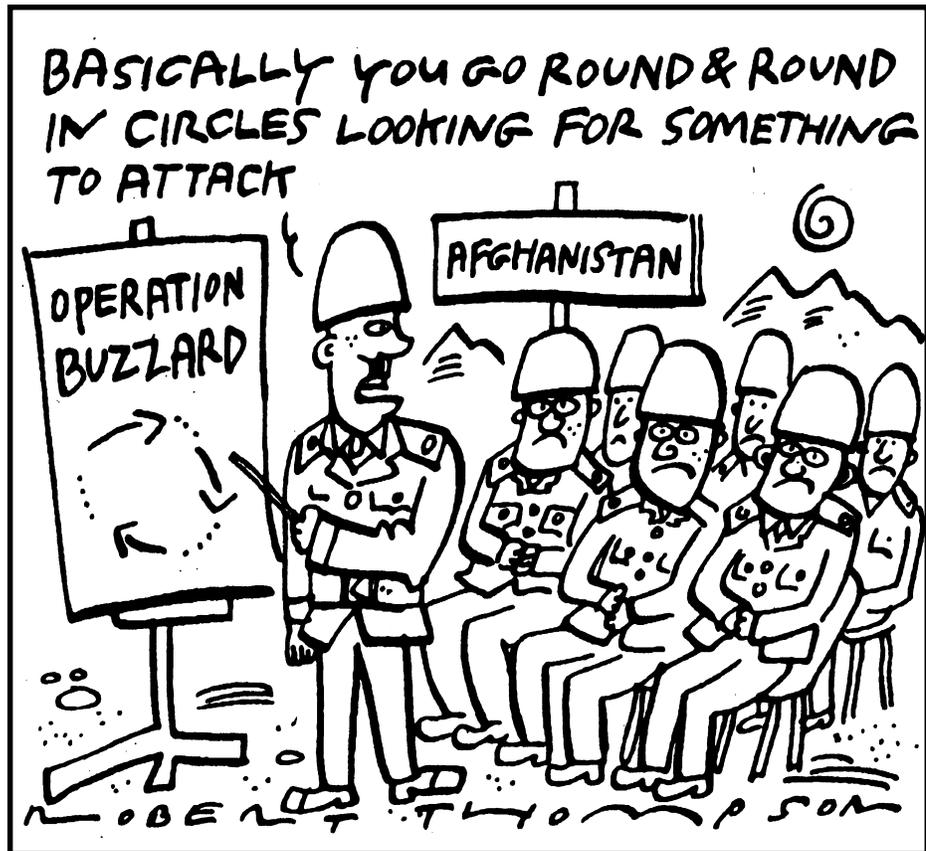
## Short Shots:

### Peacekeeper Missile Test

An unarmed 21-metre Peacekeeper missile was launched on June 3, 2002, in a routine test of the US intercontinental ballistic missile system, the Air Force said. The 89,100-kilogram missile lifted off from the central California coast at 1:01 a.m. and sent nine unarmed re-entry vehicles toward a target 7,720 kilometers away on the Kwajalein Missile Range in the Marshall Islands.

The U.S. arsenal of land-based long-range nuclear missiles includes 50 Peacekeepers (each of which is armed with 10 warheads) and 500 Minuteman IIIs (with three warheads apiece).

**Source:** Associated Press



## President Bush and the US Department of War

By Chris Matthews

President Bush wants to change the Department of Defense back into a War Department. No longer are the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines to defend America and American vital interests. In his speech at West Point last weekend, the president showcased a Washington war agenda that included fighting for 'human liberty' against "terrorists and tyrants" and for "free and open societies on every continent."

Unrestrained by the ABM Treaty which it has abandoned, the U.S. is moving ahead with the development of space weapons. The Missile Defense Agency has requested \$1.3 billion to develop and test "kinetic kill vehicles" -- a system of rockets situated in space. The Agency wants to spend an additional \$285 million for research on space-

based lasers. Space will become the next battlefield unless the international community quickly moves to create a binding international agreement against the weaponization of space.

The weaponization of space risks instigating a dangerous and costly arms race and would jeopardize the peaceful commercial and scientific activities of some 1,100 companies in 53 countries using space for many kinds of communications and financial transactions. This annual \$81 billion business would be put in peril.

**Source:** "White House warmonger," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 9, 2002.

## Pentagon looks at combining commands

By John Diedrich

The Pentagon appears poised to merge the Colorado Springs-based U.S. Space Command with U.S. Strategic Command in Nebraska and put the headquarters in Omaha, according to those close to the deliberations.

This merger is the one that makes sense to Pentagon planners. Space Command oversees all military satellites,

### "Use all necessary force..."

On September 15, 2001, the US Congress passed a resolution authorizing the president "to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks... or harboured such organizations or persons."

including nuclear missile warning systems. Strategic Command is responsible for the nation's nuclear weapons.

It's not the first time the merger has been considered.

In 1993, a study concluded the merger wouldn't save much money. It said Canadians, the United States' partner in NORAD, would object to being in the same organization that commands offensive nuclear weapons. NORAD has been under the same commander as U.S. Space Command since the mid-1980s.

But much has changed since the last study. NORAD will be paired with Northern Command, making the Canadian concern moot.

**Source:** *The Gazette*, June 10, 2002.

# VANA Convention 2002

## Nominations for VANA National Executive

The following VANA members currently hold office.

These offices are up for election in September 2002:

**President:** David Morgan

**Vice President:** Ed Livingston

**Treasurer:** Ted Powis

**Secretary:** Cynthia Llewellyn

**Membership Secretary:** Bas Robinson

**Three Members at large:**

Cec Muldrew, Ed Shaffer, (unfilled)

## Election:

1. All current members of the National Executive are running for reelection
2. Nominations should be mailed to Mary Kitley by Monday 26 August 2002. Nominations do not require supporting endorsements
3. Ballots will be mailed to all paid up VANA members on 9 September 2002.
4. Marked ballots should be mailed to Mary Kitley post-marked no later than 23 Sept 2002
5. The election results will be announced by Mary Kitley during the Conference-Call At-Home Convention on Saturday 5 October 2002.

## Resolutions:

1. Resolutions should be presented at branch meetings for discussion and then forwarded to David Morgan, 240 Holyrood Road, N. Vancouver, BC, V7N 2R5 by 1 September 2002. This does not apply to members who are unable to attend branch meetings. They can mail in their resolutions directly.
2. The resolutions will be consolidated by a Resolutions Committee in Vancouver on Monday 9 September 2002.
3. The consolidated resolutions will then form part of the Convention Kit mailed to each branch participating in the conference call.

4. Branches can debate the resolutions and vote on them. Voting results can then be announced by each branch during the conference call. Debate on the resolutions will not be possible during the conference call due to costs.

## Conference-Call Convention

1. We expect a conference call lasting 2-3 hours. David Morgan will chair the call.

2. All active VANA branches (holding regular meetings) will be involved in the call, ie:

Nova Scotia/ New Brunswick, Ontario/Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Vancouver. This list is not exclusive.

3. "Delegates" will be any paid-up VANA member attending the branch meeting involved in the call.
4. The call will be opened at: 9:00 a.m. Vancouver time on Saturday 5 October 2002. This of course corresponds to 10:00 a.m. Alberta time, 11:00 a.m. Saskatchewan & Manitoba time, 12:00 a.m. Ontario/Quebec time & 1:00 pm. Nova Scotia & New Brunswick time.
5. The Convention Kit which will be mailed to each branch before 23 September 2002, will contain, the Agenda, Call procedure, President's Report, Treasurer's Report, Membership Secretary's Report and Resolutions. Additional items can be added to the agenda. It will be important to be familiar with the Convention Kit's contents before the call takes place.
6. As with any Convention, the purposes of the CCC will be to review past operations, vote for a new executive, consider future operations, give members involvement and empowerment and re-invigorate the organization in an atmosphere of warmth and goodwill.



## Resolution:

### To Protect Canadians from Acts of Terrorism

VANA Ontario/Quebec Region, unanimously adopted the following resolution at its membership meeting in Toronto on July 9, 2002:

**WHEREAS:** The Anti-Terrorism Act was conceived and enacted in haste; and it duplicates provisions already existent in Canadian law for apprehending and penalizing criminals; and its penalties of jail and recognizance would not deter persons skilled in deception and desperate enough to commit suicidal terrorist acts; and it gives police extraordinary powers inconsistent with a free society;

**WHEREAS:** acts of terrorism are the last resort of those with unresolved grievances against ruling authorities;

**WHEREAS:** U.S. economic, political, and military powers have brought chaos, poverty, and powerlessness in Asia, Latin America, Africa, the Balkans, and the Middle East; and the U.S. government's unilateral actions, and its rejections of international treaties and agreements weaken international law, jeopardizing all peoples everywhere, and border on state terrorism;

**WHEREAS:** Canadian support for U.S. policies and actions provides peoples worldwide with legitimate grievances against Canada; and the best protection for Canadians against acts of terrorism is for Canada to distance itself from U.S. unilateral actions and work toward removal of the poverty and powerlessness from which terrorism springs.

**THEREFORE:** Be it resolved that VANA Ontario/Quebec Region calls upon the Government of Canada:

1. to repeal the Anti-Terrorism Act
2. to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan
3. to announce that it will not support the U.S. in arbitrary attacks upon any nation in the name of anti-terrorism
4. to replace military interventions by preventative diplomacy and by substantial foreign aid for the humane alleviation of poverty and illness, and
5. to reaffirm and act upon its commitments to International Law and the U.N. Charter