

Editorial

## Canada Must Get Out of Afghanistan

Afghanistan has now been occupied by U.S.-led forces for five years. Despite the claims of the Americans and their allies that the purpose of the invasion was to bring peace, democracy and prosperity to Afghanistan none of those stated objectives have occurred. In fact, the opposite is the case. The imperialist war against the people of Afghanistan continues to rage and the resistance to that war continues to grow. Political power has been handed back to the warlords and drug dealers who raped and pillaged the Afghan people for much of the 1990s. The Afghan economy is in ruins and the opium trade has become the main source of revenue for the country. Thousands of Afghanis have been killed and maimed, and their homes have been reduced to rubble, all in the name of bringing them “democracy”.

This reality is the result of the fact that the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan had absolutely nothing to do with the rationale presented by the Bush administration. It had nothing to do with liberating the Afghan people from Taliban rule, nor was it carried out in response to the events of September 11, 2001. In fact, in the weeks following the events of September 11, 2001 the Taliban government of Afghanistan offered to hand over Osama bin Laden to U.S. authorities on presentation of evidence that he was involved in the attacks, but the U.S. rejected those offers. In addition, it is well known that an invasion on the scale of that carried out by the U.S. in October 2001 takes months, not weeks, to prepare. In other words, it was clearly in the works long before September 11.

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## U.S. Announces New Policy for Further Militarization of Space

A new U.S. space policy, signed by U.S. President George Bush on August 31, 2006, was made public on October 11 with the release of a 10-page unclassified summary. The new policy represents a shift that will bring American space policy in line with other Bush administration doctrines of unilateralism and pre-emptive strike. Without openly saying so, the new policy is really an endorsement of fighting “in, from and through” space.

The American space program has always been centred around its military applications. While the U.S. declares that it is committed to the exploration and use of outer space by all nations for peaceful

purposes, it has always held that U.S. defence and intelligence-related activities are ‘peaceful purposes’. In this respect, the new space policy of George W. Bush is the same as the old policy signed by president Bill Clinton in 1996. However, the new policy does differ from the old in some ways.

The language in the old policy balanced the maintenance of American leadership in space with the pursuit of international partnership and cooperation in space activities. For example, the first paragraph of the old policy stated: “We will maintain this leadership role by supporting a strong, stable and balanced national space program.. The United States will

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pursue greater levels of partnership and cooperation in national and international space activities and work with other nations to ensure the continued exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes.”

By contrast, the language in the new policy emphasizes the maintenance of U.S. supremacy in space and downplays international cooperation. The introductory section of the new policy states: “In this new century, those who effectively utilize space will enjoy added prosperity and security and will hold a substantial advantage over those who do not. Freedom of action in space is as important to the United States as air power and sea power. In order to increase knowledge, discovery, economic prosperity, and to enhance the national security, the United States must have robust, effective, and efficient space capabilities.”

The language in the old policy balanced the maintenance of American rights in space with the rights of other nations. For example, the old policy stated: “The United States rejects any claims to sovereignty by any nation over outer space or celestial bodies, or any portion thereof, and rejects any limitations on the fundamental right of sovereign nations to acquire data from space.” The new policy emphasizes the rights of the U.S. over other nations. For example, it has revised the phrase “fundamental rights of sovereign nations” to “fundamental right of the United States”.

This shift is also reflected in the presentation of the fundamental goals of U.S. space policy. The old policy had as the first goal of American space policy to “Enhance knowledge of the earth, the solar system and the universe through human and robotic exploration.” This goal has been relegated to third place and revised to eliminate the pursuit of knowledge. It now reads: “Implement and sustain an innovative human and robotic exploration program with the objective of extending human presence across the solar system.”

The new policy also adds two new goals which it puts as the first and second goals of U.S. space policy: The first is to “Strengthen the nation’s space leadership and ensure that space capabilities are available in time to further U.S. national security, homeland security, and foreign policy objectives.” The second is to “Enable unhindered U.S. operations in and through space to defend our interests there.”

The old and new policy both have separate sections devoted to “civil space guidelines”, “national security space guidelines”, and “commercial space guidelines”. This is the order in which these sections appear in the

old policy. The first sentence of the old policy on national security space guidelines stated: “The United States will conduct those space activities necessary for national security.” The new policy puts the national security guidelines ahead of the other two sections. Instead of “necessary” under the old policy, space activities are now “critical” under the new policy. The first sentence of this section now says: “United States national security is critically dependent upon space capabilities, and this dependence will grow.”

The language of the old national security space guidelines emphasized the “right of self-defense”, “defending against enemy attack”, “assuring that hostile forces cannot prevent our use of space” and “countering, if necessary, space systems and services used for hostile purposes.” The language in the new national security space guidelines is more belligerent and aggressive. It does not talk about “self-defense” but declares that the United States will “preserve its rights, capabilities, and freedom of action in space”, “dissuade or deter others from either impeding those rights or developing capabilities intended to do so”, “deny, if necessary, adversaries the use of space capabilities hostile to U.S. national interests.”

The new policy also adds a principle that does not exist in the old policy. It states: “The United States will oppose the development of new legal regimes or other restrictions that seek to prohibit or limit U.S. access to or use of space. Proposed arms control agreements or restrictions must not impair the rights of the United States to conduct research, development, testing and operations or other activities in space for U.S. national interests.”

Essentially, this new policy declares that the United States will use outer space in any way that enhances its “national security” and “national interests”, that it will oppose any other country using outer space in a way that threatens U.S. interests and global supremacy, and that it will not agree to any international law that would seek to restrict American activities in space in any way whatsoever. It again illustrates that the United States is determined to dominate the entire world including outer space, that it is prepared to attack any country that threatens its supremacy, and that it will use outer space to deliver biological, chemical and nuclear weapons if it chooses. In other words, it is yet another illustration that the U.S. remains the main danger for the unleashing of another world war.

# Stalemate in Election for Latin American and Caribbean Seat on U.N. Security Council

The UN General Assembly election for the non-permanent Latin American and Caribbean region seat on the Security Council is at a stalemate. After 41 rounds of voting, neither Guatemala nor Venezuela, the two official candidates, could garner two-thirds of the 192 votes required to win the seat. There is no limit to the number of votes that can be held. In 1979-80 a record 155 votes took place before Mexico was chosen from the Latin American and Caribbean Group as a compromise candidate because the General Assembly was unable to decide between Cuba and Colombia. The General Assembly has now worked out a schedule for future balloting until the end of the year.

Guatemala won 40 of the first 41 rounds. On the first round Guatemala received 109 votes to Venezuela's 76 votes. On the sixth round each side received 93 votes. The secret ballots in favour of Guatemala have fluctuated between 93 and 116 votes, while Venezuela has received between 70 and 93. Mexico and Cuba entered the race briefly on the fourth ballot, each garnering a single vote before pulling out. The election rules permit any regional member state, with the exception of members and outgoing members of the Security Council, to join the race after the third ballot. No other Latin American or Caribbean country has entered the race.

Ever since Venezuela announced its candidacy campaigning for the seat has been intense. Venezuela joined the race specifically to counter American influence and pressure over the choice of a Security Council representative for Latin America and the Caribbean. According to Venezuela, Guatemala is a proxy candidate for the U.S. and would not really represent the interests of the region. Venezuela is also seeking the seat to oppose American use of the Security Council to pursue its hegemonic and aggressive policies around the world.

Five non-permanent seats on the Security Council were up for election on October 16. Belgium, Indonesia, Italy and South Africa were elected on the first round of balloting to serve a two-year term starting 1 January 2007. Belgium and Italy were the only contenders for the two seats reserved for the

Western European and Other States, and they received 180 and 186 votes respectively, ensuring their election. South Africa, the only candidate in the African group, was elected after picking up 186 votes. In Asia, where there were two contenders; Indonesia received 158 votes and Nepal received 28. The four new members will take the seats currently occupied by Denmark, Greece, Japan and Tanzania when their terms on the Council end on 31 December. The fifth non-permanent seat, contested by Guatemala and Venezuela, is currently occupied by Argentina.

The countries within the Latin American and Caribbean Group are divided. Some countries, such as Chile and Ecuador, are refusing to vote for either candidate. Chilean President Michelle Bachelet said: "If we are to be respected as a region, we need to find solutions through consensus: a representative that gathers wide support." The government of Ecuador issued a press release explaining that "the two competitors, Guatemala and Venezuela, are countries with which Ecuador has excellent relations of friendship and cooperation" and that "in the face of a likely regional polarization and divide, the Government of Ecuador has decided, just like other countries such as Chile, not to take part in this election."

Venezuela's ambassador to the UN, Francisco Arias Cárdenas, said that his country backs the idea of designating a candidate who has overall support at the General Assembly. However, he asked that American UN ambassador, John Bolton, stop putting pressure on other countries, so that they can choose freely. "We agree that consensus can be reached, but the U.S. should let countries elect freely and should not use money or the needs of the nations to ask them to vote for one candidate or the other." Meanwhile, Bolton declared that Venezuela should withdraw its candidacy. He said that "Normally, the country that lags behind chooses to withdraw." He denied claims that he is putting pressure on the UN member countries and said he is simply providing "a rationale why the election of Venezuela would entail problems, and explaining the merits of Guatemala."

This week the two countries held private talks to

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# October 28 Day of Action in Winnipeg

Over 250 people marched through downtown Winnipeg on October 28 as part of the Canada-wide Day of Action to demand the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan. The march began at Central Park, moved through the downtown area and concluded at the University of Winnipeg. There a People's Forum was held. The forum was addressed by Michel Chossudovsky. It also featured a slide show of pictures from occupied Palestine and Iraq, as well as a number of concurrent films and workshops dealing with various aspects of the U.S. "war on terror".

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The geographical location of Afghanistan at the crossroads between the Middle East, South Asia and the Far East explains the real reason for the U.S.-led invasion. Control of this region is a key aspect of the U.S. imperialist attempt to gain control of the oil and gas fields of the Middle East, as well as the Caspian Sea area. It is also an important step in American attempts to encircle both Russia and China and prevent them from becoming major economic and military threats to U.S. hegemony.

Over the past year, Canadian troops have taken over from American forces as the main combat force in southern Afghanistan, freeing up several thousand U.S. soldiers for redeployment to Iraq. Despite all of the claims of the Harper government, or of the Martin and Chretien governments before it, Canadian troops in Afghanistan are involved in neither peacekeeping nor reconstruction of the country. They are there simply in support of U.S. imperialist geopolitical goals. They are not a liberating force, but an occupation force. Their presence in Afghanistan brings nothing but shame to Canada and the Canadian people. On October 28 tens of thousands of Canadians demanded Canada's withdrawal from Afghanistan. Opinion polls have consistently indicated that this is also the sentiment of an increasing majority of the Canadian people. Given the fact that the Harper government is a minority government, it is within the power of the opposition parties to force it to submit to the will of the people. To date, none of the opposition parties has indicated any serious intention of doing so. As such, they all stand in contempt of the Canadian people.

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find a compromise but without success. Neither Venezuela nor Guatemala are willing to give up their ambitions for the seat. One alternative to the ongoing balloting is that both countries agree to step aside to allow a third country to take the seat. Costa Rica or the Dominican Republic are frequently mentioned as alternatives. Both countries have expressed interest in seeking a seat next year. Other choices that have been mentioned are Bolivia, Uruguay and Chile. Still another possibility is that Venezuela and Guatemala share the non-permanent seat with each occupying the position for 12 months.

Although it is almost certain that Venezuela will not win the election, it is to its credit that it has raised another challenge to the longstanding domination and interference of the U.S. in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is also to the credit of Venezuela that it has underlined once again the necessity for a fundamental reform of the Security Council from being a self-serving tool of the big powers, especially the United States, into a body that is accountable to the United Nations as a whole and really promotes and defends international peace.

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