

July 19th, 2005

News Item

For Immediate Release:

**“Peacekeeper” or “Terrorist Killer”? CANADA OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!
Emergency Picket Responds to Canadian Military’s Shift Toward
Increased War and Occupation**

Press Contacts: Nicole Burton 604 710-4994 or Aaron Mercredi 604 339-7103

Vancouver’s anti-war coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) has called for **an emergency picket at the Vancouver Canadian Military Recruitment Center (1070 W. Georgia) at 3pm, July 21st** to oppose the Canadian Military’s recent call for a larger role in war and occupation around the world, the deployment of nearly 2000 more Canadian soldiers to Afghanistan by early 2006 and the racist comments of Gen Rick Hillier.

Speakers from the Indigenous community, Middle Eastern speakers and student activists will deliver press statements at the picket and demand “Stop Canada’s War Drive!” “Canada Out of Afghanistan Now!!”

On July 14, 2005, Gen Rick Hillier announced that Canadian troops deployed to Afghanistan will target “detestable murderers and scumbags”. He stated, “They detest our freedoms, they detest our society, they detest our liberties.” Gen Hillier also told media that the Canadian Military is “not the public service of Canada” and “not just another department. We are the Canadian Forces and our job is to be able to kill people.”

Responses from every major political party in Canada have been supportive of the racist, war-mongering comments made by Hillier.

Conservative Party: “Conservative MP Gordon O’Connor said Gen. Hillier ‘speaks like a soldier, not a diplomat. He’s starting to give the public an idea that the troops are about to go in a dangerous area and he’s trying to explain why they’re going there in the pursuit of terrorists,’ “ – Globe and Mail, July 16 2005

Liberal Party: “General Hillier is not only a top soldier, he is a soldier who has served in Afghanistan,” Paul Martin said Friday in Nova Scotia. “The point he is simply making is we are at war with terrorism and we’re not going to let them win.” - Canadian Press, July 16 2005

New Democratic Party: “Controlled anger, given what’s happened, is an appropriate response,” NDP Leader Jack Layton said. “We have a very committed, level-headed head of our armed forces, who isn’t afraid to express the passion that underlies the mission that front-line personnel are going to be taking on. A bit of strong language in the circumstances, I don’t find that to be wrong.” – Globe and Mail, July 16 2005

“Welcome to Canada’s Iraq! Thanks to Hillier we can welcome the first honest remarks from the Canadian Administration regarding their illegal occupation forces in Afghanistan. Hiller’s comments expose Canada’s military as a brutal invader, occupier and killer, not the so-called “peacekeeper” that they often claim to be”, said Nicole Burton, a student at Douglas College and organizer with the Operation: Canada Out! Campaign. “The impact of these racist attacks and the derogatory characterization of Afghan people is not only to dehumanize and justify war and occupation abroad but also to allow for racial profiling of Middle Eastern people and further attacks on immigrant and refugee communities at home.”

“Canada is an occupation force, a killing force. In Afghanistan, the Canadian Military been participating and assisting in ‘killing people’. Canada plays a leadership role in the occupation of Afghanistan, with the largest troop contribution of all the NATO forces.” said Aaron Mercredi, Canada Out! organizer and Métis youth activist. “The Canadian government has no right to determine the future for millions living in Afghanistan. As indigenous people, we can look to our own history of invasion and colonization for over 500 years. We know firsthand that occupation brings destruction to a society and its culture.”

Hillier’s remarks, along with the deployment of troops to Afghanistan, come only months after the announcement that the Canadian military budget will be doubling from \$13 billion in 2004, adding \$12.8 billion over the next 5 years. This comes a year and a half after Canada took the leadership role alongside France and the United States in invading the Caribbean nation of Haiti and overthrowing the democratically elected government. Today Canadian RCMP are central in this illegal occupation, upholding the puppet-government by force.

Not only do these attacks on the people of Afghanistan and Haiti violate their rights to self-determination, but reflect an overall development of a long-term vision and strategy of the Canadian military for increased war and occupation.

Since the February 2004 launch of MAWO’s Canada Out Campaign, over 7000 people in Canada have signed on to the petitions demanding an immediate withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan and Haiti.