

Rally against the 2012 Halifax NATO War Conference

Posted by Joan Russow

Sunday, 18 November 2012 03:36 - Last Updated Sunday, 18 November 2012 04:09

Haligonians to again oppose the Fourth Annual Halifax International Security Forum

by [Tony Seed](#)



Anti-Nato banner at the 2011 rally in Peace & Freedom Park across from the Westin Hotel



November 21, 2009: Haligonians mount a vigorous protest against the First Halifax International Security Forum, funded by DND and ACOA.



Protest at the 2011 Halifax War Conference

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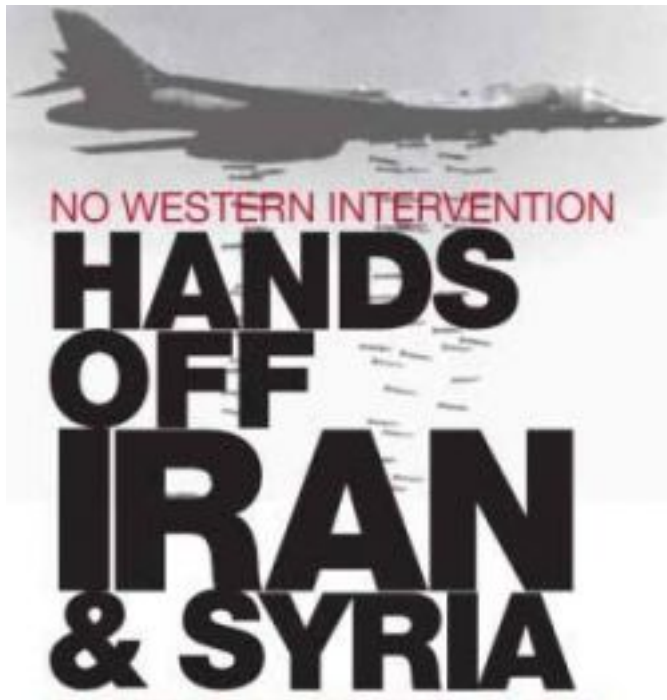
Protest at the 2011 Halifax War Conference



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Saturday, November 17 — 1:00 pm

Halifax Peace & Freedom Park (formerly Cornwallis Park), Hollis and South Sts.

Organized by: No Harbour for War

Endorsed by: Halifax Peace Coalition, CUPW, NSPIRG, Food Not Bombs, St Mary's Activist Group, Canadians, Arabs & Jews for a Just Peace, Independent Jewish Voices, and others

For information: noharbourforwar@hotmail.com

ESTABLISHED four years ago, the Halifax International Security Forum (HISF) is taking place November 16-18 at the Westin Hotel. Warmongers from as many as 50 countries are joining Peter MacKay and some 300 others at the Forum “to learn from each other, share opinions, generate new ideas, and *put them into action.*”

Once again this year, the organization No Harbour for War, joined by many others, has come

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forward to say, "It is unacceptable that Halifax, or any Canadian city, be used as a venue to plan further crimes against the peace and the peoples of the world."

On Saturday, November 17, these organizations are calling on Haligonians to "Bring your banners and placards, bring your music and statements, and most of all bring your friends to oppose this war conference."

Participation in the rally is being fuelled by people's justified anger and outrage against the brutal crimes of Israel against the Palestinians, "Operation Pillar of Defence," and the Harper and Obama government's support for the assault on Gaza as self-defence. All across Canada and around the world people are staging rallies this weekend in defence of the people of Palestine.

The rally is being held on the second day of the conference.

Activists highlight that the "Halifax" International Security Forum is actually based in the capital of the United States, Washington, D.C. In its own words, the HISF is "an invitation only weekend": this means all participants are selected, vetted and invited from the United States.

Even though the HISF features live streaming on its website, three quarters of the sessions are classified as "off-the-record" and thus held in absolute secrecy. Of 34 sessions, 26 are "off-the-record."

The embedded media, consisting of invited senior correspondents and editors from leading mass media in the NATO bloc, any number of whom have been enlisted as moderators, have never been allowed – nor expressed any desire to – to report on the closed door discussions and conclusions which have great ramifications for Canadians and all citizens of the world. The public is excluded. The main feature is that it is organized so that the Canadian people have no say. Despite such significant discussions, no representatives of workers' organizations, or those with knowledge and legitimate concerns or the First Nations of either country are invited to speak about the questions of democracy, sovereignty and peace.

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The opulent hotel is totally locked down, surrounded by HRM Police outside with a private security force inside, becoming an armed camp. Last year the Israeli secret service Mossad accompanied Gen Ehud Barak, head of the Israeli Defence Force who commanded the murderous invasion of Gaza in 2009, killing over 3,000 Palestinians including some 600 children, to the podium where he conducted a 30-minute "public interview session." Meanwhile, following the lively rally outside, over one hundred participants surrounded the plush hotel, shouting over the heads of armed HRM police, "this is what democracy looks like" and "the real criminals are inside!" That said it all.

The first HISF took place in 2009 following the Strasbourg/Kiel NATO Summit during the 60th anniversary of NATO and was inaugurated by then U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates. It was organized by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, also based in Washington, and modelled on a series of similar conferences and forums it had organized in Europe in conjunction with NATO summits.

That event and the next in 2010 featuring Condoleeza Rice, former U.S. Secretary of State in the Bush presidency, concentrated on elaborating the new "strategic doctrine" that was to be adopted by NATO at its 2010 Lisbon Summit, which followed the 2010 HISF. The espousal of "trans-Atlantic values" by which is meant the union of Europe under the U.S. banner was the order of the day. Generals, admirals and strategists dominated in the first two forums.

At the third HISF in 2011, there was a clear shift in emphasis and tactics.

Along with the global expansion of NATO, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta called in his keynote speech for a focus on other "forms of engagement" than military, saying "we must also constantly assess *the forms of engagement* that are most appropriate in light of the capabilities of our allies and the threats that we face."

Towards this end, the 2011 forum highlighted the participation of leading liberal representatives of such agencies of the U.S. state as the National Endowment for Democracy and two of its core agencies, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, together with Freedom House and Human Rights Watch. Its agenda was synchronized with the program of subversion of these agencies known to specialize in the "soft power" techniques of intervention, political destabilization and regime change under the pretext of "people power," "democracy," "open society," "non-violence" and "human rights."

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At the same time, more attention was given to the Middle East and Africa, especially Syria and Iran. For the first time, “dissidents” were introduced as “human rights” “experts” -- all from Syria and Iran and all resident in the U.S. and Canada. Although NATO claimed it had “liberated” Libya, not one single representative attended from Africa, including Tunisia, Libya and Egypt.

Specialists in manipulation and subversion of “colour revolutions” in Eastern Europe and Lebanon and the “Arab Spring” were recruited from the National Democratic Institute, Freedom House and the Council on Foreign Relations to the newly-created board of directors formed in 2011 to operate the HISF. These included president David Van Praagh (NDI, NED), vice-president Joseph Hall (NDI) and secretary David J Kramer (president, Freedom House). In fact, four of the five directors are resident in New York and Washington, where its office is based. The headquarters are located in Suite 610, 1717 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. Importantly, the HISF has no organic connection with Halifax, a small city with a strategic port on the Atlantic coast of Canada, except to appropriate its name and cynically use its locale as an out-of-the-way venue for the U.S. war conference.

This year, the agenda for HISF continues to focus on the role of the U.S. and NATO in the promotion of so-called democracy on a global basis, while maintaining dominance of Western countries in global affairs, especially with respect to China.

Focus on the “Arab Spring” has now shifted to a specific focus on interference in Syria and Iran in particular, with the sub-text justifying Israel’s related and indefensible assault on Gaza.

In statements issued just before the Conference, Peter MacKay, John Baird and Stephen Harper joined the Zionists’ disinformation, trying to construe their aggression and war crimes as self-defence. Israel has sent eight representatives to Halifax, including from Benjamin Netanyahu’s Office of the Prime Minister and two newspaper correspondents, as part of its campaign for a more perfect marriage with NATO as a full member.

The Syrian panel is a pertinent example of how the agenda and format of War Conference is designed and used for war to incite war in the form of further Western “humanitarian intervention” in that country and the region, which has hit a brick wall in Syria, Iran and Lebanon. It is thus one of only six sessions that are classified as open and is being televised for

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elite and public consumption.

One of the main speakers is Washington-based Radwan Ziadeh of the widely discredited U.S.-sponsored Syrian National Council, which has been folded into the “unified opposition” just formed in Qatar by the U.S. and the Gulf feudal regimes to, as Obama falsely claimed in his press conference of November 13, 2012, “represent the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.”

Nevertheless, only Britain has recognized this latest entity as a government-in-exile.

Both Ziadeh and another SNC representative, Mohammad al-Abdallah from New York, work with U.S.-financed agencies, *i.e.*, they represent the U.S. state, not the Syrian people. Ziadeh has publicly called for “Kosovo-stye military intervention” and is involved with the U.S. Institute for Peace on formulating a “transition plan,” *i.e.*, regime change of the Iraqi type. Politically, the SNC calls for a new rapprochement with Israel and a reversal of Syria’s long-standing fraternal relations with th Islamic Republic of Iran. The "Syrian Free Army" has attacked with arms Palestinian refugee camps inside Syria. The HISF has suspiciously kept their SNC affiliation off its published list of invitees, as it did in 2011, presenting them as “dissidents,” academics and independent champions of “human rights.”

They are joined on this panel by a representative of the *Al Hayat* newspaper, based in London and funded by Saudia Arabia, one of the regional organizers of the armed gangs smuggled into Syria, and a Kurdistan member of the Iraqi government. The HISF aims to give the agents of Washington legitimacy and respectability within NATO, other participating countries and the media -- together with an international platform to consolidate elite opinion and disinform public opinion as a necessary part of inciting new levels of intervention.

The implications that the events in the Middle East will have on “energy security” and oil supplies to the U.S. empire are also being brought to the table of the Halifax Conference.

The "on-the-record" panel on energy is headlined by Alberta Conservative premier Alison Crawford and Wyoming Republican Senator Ron Barrasso, champions of the monopoly right of the oil and gas cartel. Their attendance is linked with MEG Energy Ltd. of Calgary, now a “partner” in the Halifax conference. This U.S.-owned monopoly is seeking to make the big score

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from the plunder of the Alberta oilsands, including the Northern Gateway pipeline to export oil to China and the Keystone XL pipeline to carry raw bitumen south to the U.S. empire. This represents the first time a premier other than Nova Scotia's Darrell Dexter and a U.S. senator other than Republican Sen John McCain (Arizona) and Democrat Sen Mark Udall (Colorado) have attended the Halifax International Security Foun.

Concern is also expressed about Afghanistan and Pakistan and how to neutralize the peoples of the region.

Latin America and the Caribbean are noticeable by the near-complete absence of representation with the exception of the Jamaican military (where Canada is establishing one of its new overseas military bases), the Colombia minister of defence, and Mexico and Brazil.

What's behind the media attention?

Another significant feature is that for the first time the Canadian media is heavily publicizing the U.S.-NATO war conference (1) *before* the event; (2) as a so-called Canadian initiative and (3) as a benign "debate" on alternative positions on security. To this end, the CBC TV's Peter Mansbridge was brought to Halifax for a one-hour special, including a one-on-one interview with MacKay. Warmongers are prettfied as "world leaders" and "heavy hitters of the security world."

This facade flies in the face of additional facts. Last year, the Halifax anti-war activists exposed that the Department of National Defence and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) were handing over guaranteed annual funding – to the tune of over \$7.5 million in Canadian taxdollars in an unsourced contract – to the U.S. organizers based in Washington to finance the 2011, 2012 and 2013 conferences.

Four of the five directors of the HISF's board are resident in New York and Washington, where its office is based. The headquarters are located in Suite 610, 1717 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. There is no Canadian telephone. The word "defence" is spelt "defense" on its website. This in itself is a telling comment on the Harper-MacKay-Obama concept of sovereignty and governance. But the question arises as to whether or not the HISF is a covert arm of the U.S. state. Front organizations are reminiscent of all the methods and tactics of the Cold War with its "pass through" conduits.

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Importantly, the "Halifax" International Security Forum has no organic connection with Halifax, a small city with a strategic, ice-free port on the Atlantic coast of Canada, except to cynically appropriate its name and use its locale as an out-of-the-way venue for the U.S. war conference.

Further, the HISF now openly includes as "partners" the NATO military bloc (sending its top commanders), General Dynamic and Irving Shipbuilding (two giant monopolies involved in military production and the arms trade), together with the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the most powerful think tank of the U.S. elite, known as the imperial brain trust. Since May 2005 the CFR has openly demanded the annexation of Canada and Mexico in a United States of North American monopolies. Its *Foreign Affairs* journal and website are a lead manufacturer of the psychosis of the inevitability of war against Iran. It has done this by orchestrating a "debate" between seemingly different views on the viability of a pre-emptive strikes, diplomacy or invasion of Iran and then framing this as the sole policy options. The HISF has incorporated this neo-liberal method in its form.

Characteristically, details of the content of their "partnership" with the HISF are left in the shade but the basic relationship is anti-social, neo-liberal and anti-national as the content and form of the HISF reveal.

Security is based on securing the rights of all

At the heart of the "debate" on all sides at the HISF is that the only way to stave off eventual decline is by striving for domination of the Middle East. Such a debate can only be used to justify U.S. and NATO attacks against Syria and Iran and the Israeli attacks against the steadfast Palestinian people that the U.S. imperialists deem necessary to destroy those countries and peoples so as to secure their domination over Asia.

The agenda items for the fourth Halifax NATO war conference are replete with chauvinism against the peoples of the world. They underscore that this conference is based on an imperialist definition of "values" and "security," which is itself based on U.S. hegemony, the dominance of "western civilization," "might makes right," "responsibility to protect" and white man's burden.

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Importantly, the HISF is advancing these racist and imperialist concepts wrapped in its high profile Canadian flag -- facilitated by the embedded media -- amid a heated debate within the U.S. establishment around the re-election of Barack Obama, the setbacks its proxy forces are facing from Syria and Iran and on the diplomatic front in defence of their sovereignty, the decline of U.S. preponderance and its hegemonic position, the fight over oil and gas, and the growing resistance within Canada which blocks the agenda of big capital and the politicians and generals in their service. This resistance blocks the agenda of big capital and the politicians and generals in their service just as Iran and Syria and the resistance of the Palestinian, Lebanese and Egyptian peoples are blocking the expansion of NATO and the U.S. in the Middle East.

Canadians reject the self-serving definitions of democracy, security and self-defence promoted by the HISF. Canadians reject the "values" embraced of white man's burden. Canadians and the peoples of world do not need condescending saviours to undermine their aspirations for a bright future. The peace- and justice-loving peoples of the world have defined security as fighting for the rights of all. They are fighting to uphold the sovereignty of all nations, big and small, and oppose the use of force as a means to resolve conflicts between nations and peoples.

No Harbour for War!

Not In Our Name!

All Out to Oppose the Halifax NATO War Conference!

With files from TML Daily