

NZ troops out now!  
Fact sheet: Afghanistan

### ***The situation:***

The United States launched the war on terrorism in response to the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11th 2001. Called 'Operation Enduring Freedom' (OEF), the 'war' began with the bombing and invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. Early combat operations included a mix of air strikes from land-based B-1, B-2 and B-52 bombers; carrier-based F-14 and F/A-18 fighters; and Tomahawk cruise missiles launched from both US and British ships and submarines.

The New Zealand government sent troops to Afghanistan immediately after the September 11, 2001 attacks. They have been there ever since. The Labour government has been a keen supporter of the US war on terrorism and they are anxious to provide on-going military support for the US operations. The NZ government uses rhetoric about 'security' and 'fighting terrorism' as a justification for the continued involvement of the NZDF. The language used by the government creates the image of altruistic action by the military. Soldiers are 'peacekeepers' sent to do 'reconstruction' – all of this obscures the reality that the Afghani government was installed by the US for its economic reasons. It was only after the media revealed that the NZSAS (Special Air Service) was there that the government admitted to their involvement. They loudly trumpet the 'reconstruction team' as 'humanitarian aid' when in fact they are there to prop up the US military occupation.

### ***New Zealand's military role:***

Currently, there are approximately 120 New Zealand Defence Force troops in Afghanistan. It is unclear if the NZSAS is currently deployed there, however, they were involved in "snatch-grabs" -- missions to round up terrorist suspects to hand over to the United States for detention and interrogation on previous deployments.

The NZSAS specialises in the planning and execution of long-range reconnaissance and direct action missions inside Afghanistan. They operate with other special forces from countries contributing to coalition forces in Afghanistan, the US and the UK. It is unclear precise nature of what the SAS soldiers are doing, however, they did turn over more than 70 Afghani people to the US military.

The provincial reconstruction team (PRT) is part of the 'hearts and minds' campaign. It is charged with extending the power of the government in Kabul led by Hamid Karzai. Specifically, the NZ PRT Bamian is tasked with maintaining security in that province. It does this by conducting frequent presence patrols throughout the province. The PRT also supports the provincial and local government by providing advice and assistance to the Provincial Governor, the Afghan National Police and district sub-governors. Thirdly the NZ PRT identifies, prepares and provides project management for NZAID (NZ Agency for International Development) projects within the region. The PRT comprises NZDF, NZ Police, NZAID representative, US Armed Forces, representatives from the US Departments of State and Agriculture, and a USAID (Agency for International Development) representative.

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**Special Air Service (SAS):** Current commitment unknown. Believed to have been deployed in April 2007. During 2005-2006 the 1st NZ Special Air Service Group completed a six-month operational tour in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. 1st NZ Special Air Service Group also conducted exercise BLACK ADDER and exercise SARACEN to evaluate and maintain counter-terrorist skills.

**Provincial reconstruction team:** 108 troops sent 16 October 2006 (Bamian province in the North and Bagram Air Force Base, Kabul). These troops are rotated every six months, and the government has said this commitment will continue until 2008 at the earliest. The troops in Bamian are supported by officers at Bagram Air Force Base just north of Kabul. This is a US Air Force Base for some 11,000 US soldiers.

**Afghan Army training team:** Two instructors are attached to the UK Afghan National Army Training Team (UK ANATT) and are deployed for six month rotating tours of duty. "The New Zealander's are a small yet significant cog in the American led Training and Advisory Group (TAG) set up to produce the required standard and numbers for the Afghan National Army." (NZDF website)

**Middle East support for Afghan mission:** Five NZDF personnel are in the Middle East to provide a support mechanism for NZDF force elements deployed to Afghanistan and to assist co-located coalition partners. There is no information about where in the Middle East these troops are deployed. They are providing assistance to coalition partners, e.g. the United States

**United Nations deployment:** NZDF contribution to the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) is one officer. The officer works as a Military Liaison Officer (MLO) providing the strategic interface between multi-national forces and Afghan authorities.

**NATO involvement: The NATO mission is called the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Afghanistan.** NZDF has two staff officers and a driver attached to HQ ISAF. They work on policy and procedures to assist in the clearance of mines and munitions and help in the smooth running of the HQ ISAF camp.

**United States Command:** Two staff officers to HQ Coalition Joint Task Force (HQ CJTF 76) & Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan (CFC-A).

### ***Why we oppose it:***

According to Jonathan Steele of the *Guardian* between 20,000 and 49,600 people may have died of the consequences of the invasion. It is estimated that in Afghanistan there are 1.5 million suffering from immediate starvation, as well as 7.5 million suffering as a result of the country's dire situation.

The initial invasion of Afghanistan was both illegal and immoral. Ostensibly, it was in retaliation for the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack. But the 9/11 attacks were neither

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orchestrated by the Afghani government or the Afghani people. The war and occupation of Afghanistan have little or nothing to do with stopping terrorism. In fact, the US was happy to do business with the Taliban government of Afghanistan up until early 2001. At the time, they were totally unconcerned with the treatment of women, the heroin trade or anything else going on in Afghanistan. The interest of the US was in a gas pipeline across the country that would allow them to access the resources of Central Asia.

The occupation continues in order that the US government can ensure that it has secured control of the area and the political decision-making process in Afghanistan. It has installed a puppet government in Kabul, that of Hamid Karzai, and has set about instituting a capitalist economy.

With its contribution of troops, the New Zealand government is assisting in this occupation. Amina Shams, a representative of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) said on a recent tour of New Zealand that "any troops in Afghanistan are not assisting the people of Afghanistan, they are assisting the occupation." The New Zealand government's propaganda about 'peacekeeping' is a lie. The troops are simply an extension of the US military presence there, and are, in fact, under the overall command of the US military.

Some New Zealand businesses, of course, will enjoy benefits from this occupation. Similarly, the New Zealand government receives significant acknowledgment from the US for its troop contribution. The cost of the occupation is borne by the people of Afghanistan whose lives and freedom are being sacrificed everyday.

New Zealand troops should not be in Afghanistan. It is part of an occupying army that seeks benefit a small handful of corporate interests in the oil and weapons industries. We demand an immediate end to all New Zealand military involvement in Afghanistan.

### ***Background information on Afghanistan:***

- The country contains many different ethnic groups. The Pashtuns, from whom Afghanistan's traditional rulers have come, constitute 52 percent of the population. The Hazaras are 19 percent of the population. The Tajiks in the north constitute 21 percent; Uzbeks, also in the north, 5 percent. About 85 percent of Afghans are Sunni Muslims, and about 15 percent, among the Hazaras, are Shia Muslims.
- The Soviet Union invaded in 1979, but was forced to withdraw 10 years later by anti-Russian mujahaddin who were sponsored by the CIA. The Communist regime in Kabul collapsed in 1992. Fighting that subsequently erupted among the various mujahaddin factions eventually helped to spawn the Taliban, a hardline Pakistani-sponsored movement that fought to end the warlordism and civil war that gripped the country. The Taliban seized Kabul in 1996 and were able to capture most of the country outside of Northern Alliance strongholds primarily in the northeast.
- Since approximately 1996, Osama bin Laden had been resident in Afghanistan along with other members of al-Qaeda, operating training

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- camps in a loose alliance with the Taliban. Following the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Africa, the Clinton administration fired cruise missiles at these camps with limited effect on their overall operations. After the September 11th attacks, investigators rapidly accumulated evidence implicating bin Laden.
- As the likelihood of military action became more imminent in October 2001, the Taliban offered to extradite bin Laden to a neutral nation. Moderates within the Taliban allegedly met with American embassy officials in Pakistan in mid-October, in order to work out a way to convince Mullah Muhammed Omar to turn bin Laden over to the US and avoid the impending retaliation from the United States. President Bush rejected these offers made by the Taliban as insincere.
  - The Afghani and New Zealand governments established diplomatic ties in January 2002.

***Links:***

*US invasion of Afghanistan*

[http://www.aljazeera.com/me.asp?service\\_ID=10297](http://www.aljazeera.com/me.asp?service_ID=10297)

*Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan*

<http://www.rawa.org/index.php>

*New Zealand forces complain at US treatment of Afghan prisoners*

[http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/afp/070228/world/nzealand\\_afghanistan\\_us\\_1](http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/afp/070228/world/nzealand_afghanistan_us_1)

*Helen Clark and Winston Peters: Apologists for Mass Terror*

<http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=49&ItemID=12411>

**Articles:**

Andrew McAlley, "Army Recruits Soldiers for New Secret Service," Waikato Times, March 19, 2005.