

## Armouring NAFTA: Is that what Canadians want?\*



NAFTA has been the model used by Canada and the US in negotiating trade and investment agreements with other countries in our hemisphere. Since 9/11, the Security and Prosperity Partnership for North America (SPP) program [also known as NAFTA plus] has been extending collaboration between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico into a wide range of cross-border information sharing and other security arrangements. These ‘free trade’ deals are being enforced by US military’s Northern and Southern Command structures throughout the continent. Based on their prior experience with running Plan Colombia (the U.S. drug war intervention in that republic), Washington has recently convinced the Mexican government to participate in Plan Mexico (called the Merida Initiative) thus forcing it into tighter military integration with the U.S.

### US troops get green light to enter Canada

On February 14, 2008 the Canada-U.S. “Civil Assistance Plan” (CAP) was signed at U.S. Army North headquarters, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, by U.S. Air Force Gen. Gene Renuart, commander of NORAD and U.S. Northern Command, and by Canadian Air Force Lt. Gen. Marc Dumais, commander of Canada Command. This agreement allows the militaries of either nation to send troops across the other’s borders during an emergency. CAP was never announced publicly by the Harper government despite the huge implications that it holds for our continued sovereignty.

### Militarization in the Americas: What is Canada’s role to be?

The Harper government has aligned us with U.S. foreign and defence policy world wide, with grave implications for the hemisphere we share with tens of millions of Latin Americans. Latin America has a long history of commitment to non-intervention and to a non-nuclear continent. But, the U.S. has been quietly extending its strategic power in the region by finding sites for new military bases. It has also taken the US 4th fleet out of mothballs (last used to hunt Nazi U-Boats in the Caribbean) to conduct war exercises in Atlantic waters in order to intimidate the growing number of countries in South America, like Venezuela, that are promoting people-centred development models that are frowned upon in Washington.

### Peace-maker or powder monkey\*\*?

Canada has a choice to make about our contribution to the hemisphere. We need to ask:

- Will Canada pull out of the bilateral Civil Assistance Plan?
- Will Canada oppose further militarization of the hemisphere?
- Will Canada build links with the countries currently threatened by the U.S. – Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador – reinforcing peace and resisting military intervention?

### Citizens concerned about our role in militarizing the Americas should:

Ask candidates what they will do to ensure that Canada is a peacemaker in the Americas;

- Write letters to the editor raising this crucial issue;
- Request that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation cover this issue via their “Assign Us” web page at [http://www.cbc.ca/national/blog/video/politicseconomy/assign\\_us.html](http://www.cbc.ca/national/blog/video/politicseconomy/assign_us.html)
- Spread the word at local union, community or church gatherings.

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\* One of a series of ‘one-pagers’ prepared by Common Frontiers. To see them all go to [www.commonfrontiers.ca](http://www.commonfrontiers.ca)

\*\* Powder Monkey – a helper who carries explosives