9th March 2016*

Hon Gerry Brownlee
Minister of Defence
Via email: g.brownlee@ministers.govt.nz

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Public distribution

NZ troops should not be practising invasion in Northeast Asia

We are alarmed at the announcement that 60 Defence Force personnel will be participating in the current US-led military exercises in South Korea. It appears that New Zealand troops will be involved in amphibious landings run by the US Marines, which are widely seen as practice for a possible invasion of North Korea. According to the South Korea press this year’s exercises are the largest ever, involving some 300,000 troops, not far short of the number used in the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The Seoul newspaper Korea Times notes ‘Korea-US drills shifting to offensive ‘ and that the exercises this year are also practising implementing OPLAN 5015 which involves, amongst other things pre-emptive strikes against North Korea. The Americans will be deploying advanced nuclear-capable submarines and aircraft.

One aim of such exercises is to force North Korea to shift resources from the economy to defence and, as always, it is the vulnerable who go hungry in such circumstances. New Zealand should not be party to actions which may result in the malnutrition of children.

Far worse would eventuate if the exercises moved from practice to reality, something which cannot be discounted. An invasion of North Korea would be fiercely resisted and would lead to full-scale war and China would probably be sucked in. Has the NZ Government really thought through the implications of getting embroiled in another war with China?

New Zealand armed forces should not be deployed overseas for combat or for military exercises against states that want to live in peace with us.

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*This is an updated and corrected version of the undated letter sent on 8th March