

Canadian NATO  
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire  
canadienne de l'OTAN

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
respecting its participation at the Visit of the Committee on  
Civil Dimension of Security (CDS) to the Observer  
Programme of Exercise 'Armenia 2010'**

**Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)**

**Yerevan, Armenia  
September 16-17, 2010**

# Report

A delegation from the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) participated as observers in NATO's disaster response exercise ARMENIA 2010 on the outskirts of Yerevan, Armenia, on 16-17 September 2010. Canada was represented by Mrs. Cheryl Gallant, M.P.

The scenario of the exercise comprised an earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale causing damage to the local infrastructure as well as various incidents, including land slides, a chemical spill and a car accident involving radiological materials.

The ARMENIA 2010 exercise, organised jointly by NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response and Coordination Center (EADRCC) and the Armenian Rescue Service, brought together 17 teams from 13 NATO member and partner countries, as well as representatives from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and NGOs. 15 other nations also contributed staff and experts to the exercise.

ARMENIA 2010 was the tenth international field exercise conducted by the EADRCC to test NATO's disaster response mechanisms and promote greater interoperability among the national emergency services of Allied and partner countries. This was the second time that the NATO PA had sent a delegation to observe an EADRCC exercise, following a previous participation in the IDASSA exercise in Croatia in May 2007.

The NATO PA delegation was able to observe rescue operations at several sites and witness first-hand the co-operation on the ground between response teams from NATO member and partner countries.

The Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security regularly discusses the challenges posed by international terrorism and natural disasters and the role of the Alliance in enhancing national preparedness and international responses to such events. Over the past few years, the Committee has adopted a number of reports on issues such as NATO's role in civil protection, critical infrastructure protection, and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) detection. Participation in these EADRCC exercises continues this work.

Members of the delegation commended the EADRCC for organising these annual exercises, emphasising the benefits of bringing teams from different countries to practise together in a foreign and unfamiliar environment. Learning how to operate under the direction of the host country's authorities is another important objective of such exercises, and members were told that the performance of the participating teams in this respect could be assessed very positively. Members of the delegation also noted how these exercises help develop practices and procedures and create interpersonal bonds, which would undoubtedly be invaluable assets in the event of a real emergency.

The exercises also include an assessment mechanism, which helps draw lessons learned. The delegation was informed that some of the lessons from previous exercises had already been implemented. These related *inter alia* to the need to:

- provide more room for analysis and decision-making about the management of resources;
- set up sites in a manner that would be more challenging for participating teams;
- make better use of existing guidelines and international standards;
- enhance interactions with the host nation and engage the entire national response system in the exercise.

In addition to NATO member countries, EADRCC exercises are also open to the 22 partner countries of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), the seven partners of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the four partners of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), i.e. a total of 61 nations. Many of these, like Armenia, are situated in areas where major natural disasters have taken place in the past, or regularly face emergencies.

The following partner nations contributed teams to the ARMENIA 2010 exercise: Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Israel, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Ukraine. Members also welcomed the staff contribution by Russia to the exercise as a positive example of practical cooperation between NATO and Russia. In this regard, it should be emphasised that the EADRCC was created on a Russian initiative.

Members cited this breadth of potential participants and host countries as another unique and particularly worthwhile feature of NATO exercises. They also welcomed the fact that such exercises can provide opportunities for countries, at odds politically, to put aside their differences and focus on practical co-operation.

Members further emphasised that training for providing as well as receiving international assistance, and perfecting national procedures and preparedness, are vital objectives for NATO member and partner countries alike. They thus encouraged the largest possible number of NATO member countries to send teams – rather than only experts – to future exercises, as far as this is feasible taking into account, in particular, the logistical and financial constraints that might make their participation difficult.

Looking ahead to the upcoming NATO summit of Heads of State and Government in Lisbon and to the planned adoption of a new Strategic Concept, members hoped for a clear acknowledgement of NATO's contribution in the field of civil emergency planning and disaster preparedness. They stressed that the NATO PA's contribution to the new Strategic Concept, which was presented to the NATO Secretary General on 13 April 2010, recommended giving the EADRCC and its role in disaster response greater visibility, as this provides a positive example of "the many ways in which [the Alliance] is directly relevant to the security concerns of its citizens".

The Assembly's document also emphasised the Alliance's "special role in enhancing capabilities to mitigate the effects of the use of WMD" and recommended that "the Alliance should use its Civil Emergency Planning assets to train first-responders for WMD contingencies and augment rapid reaction units that could assist those first responders if requested by a national authority".

In this regard, members welcomed the fact that exercise scenarios now routinely include a CBRN element and were impressed with the performance of participating CBRN teams from Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Poland and Ukraine. They hoped that

CBRN preparedness will feature even more prominently in future exercises, including also scenarios of manmade incidents.

One of the key objectives of such exercises is also to help enhance the co-ordination of international assistance in the event of a disaster. In this regard, members of the delegation welcomed the presence and active participation of representatives of OCHA, the UN's lead agency for the co-ordination of disaster response, in the ARMENIA 2010 exercise. They deplored, however, that the participation of NATO and EU representatives in each other's exercises has still not become a reality.

The co-ordination of reception of international assistance was the main theme for the seminar organised by NATO's Civil Protection Group (CPG) as part of the observer programme for the ARMENIA 2010 exercise. Per Anders Berthlin, consultant for UN OCHA, reminded participants that current international mechanisms for the co-ordination of disaster response are borne out of the experience of the 1988 earthquake in Armenia. This major disaster was a wake-up call for the UN system and other international actors that co-ordination mechanisms were desperately needed.

Colonel Gamlet Matevosyan, Rector of the Crisis Management State Academy of the Armenian Rescue Service, recalled the scale of the destruction caused by the 1988 earthquake: 25,000 people died; 514,000 were left without shelter; the cities of Spitak, Gyumi and Vanadzor were respectively 100%, 75% and 25% destroyed; and the material loss was estimated at a minimum of USD 9-10 billion. Armenia, he explained, was caught completely unprepared for such a disaster: Seven hours went by before the initial response to the earthquake was decided and information to the public was virtually non-existent. Armenia had no rescue force, no state body in charge of co-ordinating domestic or international assistance, and no capacity to direct the work of the rescue teams that had been sent to Armenia from 17 different countries.

Lessons learned from the Spitak earthquake thus led to a complete rethink of Armenia's emergency management structures, with the creation of a state rescue force, an agency and later a ministry for emergency situations, and the crisis management academy, which today helps train Armenia's cadre of emergency responders.

As Mr Berthlin emphasised, the creation, in 1992, of the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs and that of UN OCHA in 1997, were also a direct consequence of the Spitak experience. Through its clusters approach, UN OCHA provides an inclusive platform for all governmental and non-governmental actors in the field to co-ordinate their interventions in each specific area, e.g. health, water and sanitation, etc.

Nevertheless, Mr Berthlin stressed that many challenges remain. Some have to do with the new environment in which disasters take place today:

- a growing number of large scale disasters, affecting larger groups of population;
- the difficulty of dealing with a faster and increasingly dense flow of information;
- an increasing number of responders, including new actors from the private sector; it was emphasised however that the willingness of these private actors – such as mobile phone and shipping companies – to support international relief efforts also creates many new opportunities;

- concerns regarding the security of humanitarian workers in certain theatres;
- interventions in countries where national capacity is weak, e.g. Haiti.

Ragnar Boe, Chairman of NATO CPG, also pointed to the separate challenges of requesting, receiving and donating assistance. In terms of requesting assistance, he cited:

- the importance of a thorough assessment of needs;
- the need for a good knowledge and understanding of the profiles of the different potential national and international responders;
- the importance of pre-established agreements, e.g. on cross-border transport.

Taking into account these challenges, NATO has developed a set of non-binding guidelines for requesting assistance, which aim to facilitate the process of requesting international assistance.

Challenges to receiving assistance include:

- interoperability, as few international standards exist in terms of equipment, procedures, etc.;
- language / communication;
- the need for appropriate procedures and standards to speed up the process of receiving assistance.

Finally, providers of assistance also face a number of choices and legal issues:

- choosing between bilateral and multilateral channels for the delivery of their assistance;
- deciding whether to provide donations or reimbursable assistance;
- clarifying the legal status of first responders; Mr Boe informed delegates that a NATO project currently aims at addressing this issue;
- waving claims for compensation in the event of damage done to property.

Mr Boe highlighted the assistance that NATO can offer through the EADRCC and its voluntary mechanism for requesting and providing disaster relief, through a pool of over 380 civilian experts, through its tools and procedures – including preparedness exercises, advisory support teams and rapid reaction teams –, as well as through the framework it has established for the use of military assets and capabilities in support of humanitarian operations.

John Seong from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the lead US body for foreign disaster assistance, described his agency's role in assisting stricken nations. He explained that assistance can be delivered through 5 main channels:

- immediate cash disbursements to the local embassy or mission;
- the deployment of disaster assessment teams, followed by disaster response teams;
- grants to UN, European and local relief agencies;

- the shipment of commodities, including from the three pre-positioned stockpiles located in Miami, Pisa and Dubai;
- the operation of a 24/7 response management team in Washington, DC.

Mr Seong mentioned that the US military is also occasionally deployed in response to foreign disasters – sometimes at USAID’s request –, but USAID retained the lead role, with the US military in a supportive role. Mr Seong stressed that co-ordination between civilian and military efforts was improving.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Senator Jane Cordy  
Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Visit of the Committee on Civil Dimension of Security (CDS) to the Observer Programme of Exercise 'Armenia 2010'
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Yerevan, Armenia
<b>DATES</b>	September 16-17, 2010
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Cheryl Gallant, M.P.
STAFF	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	\$9,354.74
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	\$599.28
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	\$0.00
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	\$317.84
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	\$0.00
<b>MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES</b>	\$90.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$10,361.86