

Canadian NATO  
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire  
canadienne de l'OTAN

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
respecting its participation to the Visit to Helsinki of the  
Political Committee's Sub-Committee on Transatlantic  
Relations**

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

**Helsinki, Finland  
September 21 - 24, 2009**

# Report

The Political Committee's Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations visited Finland on 21-24 September. The delegation discussed Finnish security and defence issues, particularly the security situation in Northern Europe, Nordic security co-operation, relations with NATO and Russia's role for European Security. The 10 members of the delegation, led by Senator Sergio de Gregorio (Italy), met with senior officials from the government and parliament as well as with independent experts.

## I. FINLAND'S SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

1. Host country officials considered Finland's security environment today "better than ever". Under Secretary Markus Lyra and others ascribe this positive situation primarily to the end of the Cold War. The enlargement of NATO and the EU, particularly the inclusion of the Baltic States into the two organisations, has significantly improved Finland's security environment, he explained. There are no immediate threats to Finland, as stipulated by the Finnish White Paper on Security. Nonetheless, Finland must continue to prepare for military threats to her territory or to her society's vital functions, Finnish officials underlined. Moreover, the August 2008 war in Georgia demonstrated that the use of military force in Europe is still possible, they argued. As global security challenges increasingly affect Finland's security it must prepare for more demanding military and civilian crisis management along and beyond the borders of Europe, Finnish defence officials underlined. They anticipated WMD proliferation, terrorism, and conflicts between states to be among the most relevant security challenges in the future. Speakers generally considered the importance of crisis management operations to increase in the future.

2. Unlike most countries of the Alliance, Finland retains its defence stance, which is based on territorial defence and general conscription. These two features remain the cornerstones of Finnish national defence and are fully supported by the huge majority of the population (more than 80% are in favour of conscription). Finland has been a frontier state for 800 years and 'when it needed help it did, in most cases, not get any', the State Secretary in the office of the Prime Minister, Risto Volanen, said. He explained that, in contrast to most NATO member countries, Finland did not receive a peace dividend after the end of the Cold War. Therefore, both the size of the Finnish armed forces and the defence budgets have been relatively stable. Compared to its population of 5.4 million, Finland disposes of a rather large defence force. In wartime, its armed forces can muster 285 000 from the army, 30 000 from the navy and 35,000 from the air force. The 2009 defence budget amounts to approximately €2.7 billion, equalling about 1.55% of GDP. This figure does not include additional expenses which are allocated to crisis management. The Finnish White Book on Security and Defence, which is updated every four years and was approved by government and parliament in February this year, recommend spending 2% of GDP on Defence from 2011. However, Finland is as much influenced by the global financial crisis as any other state and the crisis is likely to have an impact on the country's defence investments, the delegation learned.

3. The Finnish defence has undergone significant changes in the past four to five years and there have been major adaptations in the army structure, where the number of

headquarters has been reduced. Instead, Finland established a defence command which is able to conduct joint operations. Maintaining a credible defence capability is a top priority for Finnish defence policy. The mobilisation strength of the Finnish Defence Forces (FDF) is approximately 340-350,000. This figure will, however, decrease to slightly above 200,000 by around 2015, the Defence Minister informed the delegation. The war time forces are divided into two basic categories: territorial and operational forces. Peace time strength should be reduced to 15 000 personnel. The FDF annually take 25,000 conscripts into the services, representing approximately 75% of the age group. Finnish defence officials believed that general conscription continues to be an effective solution for Finland, although voluntary military defence is increasing in importance. To meet future requirements, Finnish defence planning looks into developing military capabilities which can be used flexibly in versatile tasks, officials at the Ministry of Defence explained.

**4.** To maintain the current level of capability in the future, major re-evaluations of the system or considerable increases in defence appropriations are needed. As Finland alone will not be able to meet all the security challenges alone it strives to increase international co-operation. In particular, co-operation aiming at developing interoperability, force planning and resources as well as increasing participation in NATO training and exercises.

**5.** The delegation also had the opportunity to visit the Karelian Air Command in Kuopio, where it obtained a good overview of the responsibilities of the Finnish Eastern Air Command. Colonel Ari Jussila, Commander of the Karelian Air Command, informed the delegation that the Finnish Air Force is in the process of being modernised. One of the major modernisation programmes is to improve the capabilities of the F18 Hornet aircraft, while another emphasis is on further developing the Air Force's surveillance system, in particular upgrading the air ground surveillance radar. The peace time strength of approximately 3,000 servicemen will be increased to about 35,000 in war.

**6.** Finnish contribution to crisis management operations: The delegation also received extensive briefings on the Finnish participation in Peace Support Operations as well as Crisis Management operations. Finland has traditionally a very active contributor to international peace support operations the delegation learned during the visit. More than 50,000 Finnish servicemen have been deployed since the country first participated in peace support operations in 1956. In 2007, Finland established a Crisis Management Centre (CMC), based in Kuopio, a governmental institution and a centre of expertise in civilian crisis management whose main tasks are to train and recruit experts in international civilian crisis management and peace building missions. CMC Finland acts as a national head office for all seconded Finnish civilian crisis management professionals and also conducts research focusing on civilian crisis management, Ari Kerkkänen; Director of the CMC informed the delegation. Under-Secretary Lyra noted that the limited availability of experts continues to pose a problem for Finland. Another challenge that needs to be addressed is finding an appropriate employment upon their return, he added. Under Secretary Ritva Koukku-Ronde stressed the link between security and development and bemoaned the fact that compartmentalised thinking remains prevalent in most countries. Therefore, enhancing policy coherence is crucial, she said noting that the best – as well as the cheapest - approach to conflict prevention

is poverty eradication. At present Finland has some 144 civilian and 720 military personnel deployed in crisis management operations, the delegation was informed. Of the latter, the majority (412 military personnel) is deployed to Kosovo. The CMC also regularly participates in NATO-led training activities and co-operates with NATO Member and Partner countries in the framework of Partnership for Peace; it has personnel seconded to the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC).

## **II. FINLAND'S RELATIONS WITH NATO**

**1.** Finland has a longstanding co-operation with individual NATO member countries as well with NATO as an organisation. Apart from Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean, Finland participates in all NATO crisis management operations; Under Secretary Markus Lyra informed the delegation. At present, 720 Finnish soldiers take part in different operations, with the highest number deployed in Kosovo. 200 Finnish military personnel are deployed to Afghanistan. General Ari Puheloinen, the Chief of Defence, added that Finland

is also initiating co-operation with NATO's cyber warfare centre. Defence officials, including General Jarmo Lindberg, Commander of the Finnish Air Forces, also stressed that close co-operation is also reflected by the fact that the FDF are in large part compatible with those of the Alliance. Finland is also part of the Strategic Airlift Consortium (SAC) which currently involves 10 NATO Member states as well as Sweden. Finnish co-operation with NATO and other international organisations benefits the development of the Defence Forces' capabilities.

**2.** Finnish officials repeatedly underlined that Finland wants to continue and, where possible, deepen its relationship with NATO, including, among others, crisis management. One Finnish official also did not exclude the possibility that Finland could contribute to the NATO Response Force (NRF) in the future. However, while the FDF seek to develop capabilities that make them compatible with NATO forces, Finland does not seek membership now. Although future membership in the Alliance is not excluded there is currently neither a political consensus among decision makers nor sufficient popular support among the Finnish public, as Under Secretary Markus Lyra and others explained to the delegation. The political elites are divided about NATO membership, he added, with the right of the political spectrum favouring Finnish membership in the Alliance, and the left part of the political spectrum against. At present, there is no majority of Finns in favour of NATO membership, Director of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs Raimo Väyrynen pointed out.

**3.** NATO is for Finland the most important tool to enhance interoperability and military capability and the most important organisation to maintain security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Finland participates in seven areas of co-operation as well as 22 action plans within the PfP context. Finnish Foreign Affairs and Defence officials also follow the discussions on the update of the new Strategic Concept of NATO and Finland has decided to host a seminar on the concept in March next year, the delegation learned.

**4.** Finland-EU: Finland is also a strong supporter of the EU's fledgling military muscle, the delegation learned. Host country speakers pointed out that as of 2011 the country

will participate in two battle groups; namely in the Nordic battle group and in another battle group led by the Netherlands. Finland is also very supportive of other EU structures that help to improve the military capabilities of EU member countries, including, among others the European Defence Agency (EDA), which, speakers said, will develop into a very important instrument. Under Secretary Lyra also stressed that the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) is immensely important for Finland. However, Finland does not want the EU to become a military alliance, NATO already exists, he said. Finnish speakers recognised that NATO-EU co-operation continues to fall short of what is possible and necessary. However, the problem is political and Finnish interlocutors did not expect a major improvement in the short term.

### **III. NORDIC DEFENCE CO-OPERATION**

1. Host country officials underlined the high significance of Finland ascribing to the Nordic Defence Co-operation, the delegation learned during the visit. The co-operation among Nordic countries focuses on three main areas, namely, the Nordic Co-ordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support (NORDCAPS), which emphasises the development of joint training, logistics and operations; on Nordic Armaments Co-operation (NORDAC), which foresees the joint development and procurement of defence materiel; and the Nordic Supportive Defence Structures (NORDSUP) which aims to bolster the countries' operational capabilities. In contrast to NATO membership, over which the Finnish public is currently split, Nordic defence co-operation enjoys strong popular support in the country. For those who are against joining NATO it is seen as a good alternative to membership in the Alliance, for those who are in favour of Finnish NATO membership it is seen as a good supplement for it. Finland, which chairs the Nordic Defence Co-operation in 2009, is responsible for the overall development and co-ordination of Nordic co-operation in the field of defence. One priority of the Finnish chairmanship has been to develop co-operation for operational capabilities in as many areas as possible. Moreover, Finland has put an emphasis on defining common steering function and co-ordination mechanisms for the co-operation.

2. According to Under Secretary Lyra and other speakers, Nordic Defence Co-operation will further develop according to the lines suggested in the Stoltenberg report. The report was presented by former Norwegian Foreign Affairs and Defence Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg to the Nordic Foreign Affairs Ministers in February 2009. Looking at the next 10-15 years it identifies 13 areas where Nordic countries can increase their co-operation and makes recommendations regarding a closer co-operation between the five Nordic countries, including peace building, air-policing and maritime monitoring, security in the High North, cyber-security, co-operation between foreign services and defence.

3. The High North: although Finland is not a key player in Arctic security, speakers underlined Finland's important role in protecting the borders of the High North. Geopolitics in the Far North are changing because of global warming, the delegation was informed. The arctic sea is going to be accessible for the nations around and disputes may arise on the natural resources and other interests may emerge. Defence Minister Jyri Häkämies added that there are already signs of an increased military presence in the High North. The military presence in the area is going to be more visible than it used to be before, when the access between the two seas was not open.

It is “imperative” to share information about the maritime picture in the High North, he said. Another speaker said that it is unclear whether Russia will be “aggressive” in the exploitation of natural sources in the Arctic, but it is clear that it will exploit as much as possible.

#### **IV. AFGHANISTAN**

**1.** Afghanistan is very much on the Finnish political agenda, not only because 200 Finnish soldiers are participating in ISAF, according to Raimo Väyrynen. Finland also has 20 police trainers deployed in Afghanistan. The priorities of Finland’s engagement in Afghanistan are on good governance and the development of rural areas.

Afghanistan is the second highest recipient of Finnish development aid and the increase in assistance is the highest among all recipient countries; only Mozambique receives more assistance. In addition to the engagement of the Finnish state, ten Finnish non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been active in Afghanistan for many years.

**2.** Finnish briefers suggested that the international community has not understood the country. Moreover, the international community’s response to the challenge posed by Afghanistan has not been “mature”, as it has thus far primarily focused on a primarily military response. One Finnish independent analyst suggested that the international community cannot win the war or the peace in Afghanistan. Rather, the international community can only win time in Afghanistan.

**3.** Finnish speakers said that military force is necessary for providing more security and stability. Host country speakers also consented that Afghanistan needs comprehensive, long-term international assistance. Recognising that success in Afghanistan requires a broader regional approach, Finland has also established a special co-ordinator for its policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan, the delegation learned during the visit.

Briefers also emphasised that Afghanistan needs to take over more local ownership and that it must tackle corruption and build stable institution. The complexity of the situation in Afghanistan will require patience from the international community before the situation can significantly improve. Strengthening the country’s security and stability will also require negotiations with Taliban groups, some speakers argued, adding that the Taliban are not monolithic, but consist of different groups.

**4.** Though the media tends to provide primarily a “gloom and doom” picture of Afghanistan, the engagement of the international community has produced a number of achievements, Finnish interlocutors stressed during the meetings. Among others, they pointed to the passing of a constitution and the earlier elections, the development of governance and state institutions, particularly the army and the police. In addition, GNP has grown between 6% and 8% over the past few years, infrastructure has improved and health care has progressed, which has also led to a significant decrease in infant mortality.

**5.** On the other hand, serious challenges remain, particularly the continued insurgency. The number of attacks has increased and violence has spread almost all across the country. It appears as if the insurgents are not having difficulty recruiting people, one speaker commented. In this context he pointed to the approximately 20,000 Madrassas schools, which provide a recruitment ground for terrorism.

## **V. RUSSIA**

1. Having the longest border with Finland, Russia was high on the agenda during the Sub-Committee visit to Finland. Thus, for Finland, Russia is the single, most important factor to be included in any security estimation, said Major General Mika Peltonen, Chief of Plans and Policy of the Finnish Defence Ministry. Russia is the most important factor in Finland's security environment, the delegation was informed. Another independent speaker considered the three main security challenges for Finland today to be "Russia, Russia and Russia". Russia is totally different from the former Soviet Union and, from a Finnish perspective, is a much easier neighbour that the Soviet Union had been, Under Secretary Lyra informed the delegation. Russia has been developing in a positive way, but there are many causes for concern, including freedom of the press, human rights, as well as the situation with NGOs.

2. Russia has strategic interests in areas adjacent to Finland, including the Northern sea areas, the Kola Peninsula, St. Petersburg and the Baltic Sea transport corridor. The North Stream gas pipeline currently under construction will further increase the strategic importance of the Gulf of Finland, speakers pointed out. State Secretary Volanen suggested that Russia does not have sufficient financial resources to make major, necessary investments in its energy infrastructure, which are desperately needed. Another speaker suggested that Russia, except for its armaments industry, does not dispose of any competitive industries; but it is an economy built on energy and raw materials and has 'no real will to reform its economy'.

3. Russia is seeking to restore its great power status, taking advantage of its huge energy resources and extensive energy transport network. Russia is also prepared to advance its interests by projecting military power outside its national borders. Although the modernisation of the Russian armed forces may be delayed due to its weakening economic situation, its capabilities will improve little by little, speakers commented. Another speaker commented that Russia is, supported by the huge revenues it is reaping from oil and gas, on its way of becoming a world player again.

4. At the same time, Finland sees Russia as an opportunity, not only as a challenge, one Finnish official said, adding that "we should be smart about how we draw Russia in to be a responsible player and a partner in our part of the world". In a similar vein, State Secretary Volanen said that it is important to also engage Russia.

5. The meetings also provided the delegation with an opportunity to hear Finnish views on NATO-Russia relations and their analysis of the short war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008. Arkady Moshes, Programme Director at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, considered that Russia-West relations deteriorated in 2008, primarily due to the war. He considered that the outcome of the war allowed Russia to obtain certain tactical gains in the Caucasus. Moreover, Russia demonstrated that it was willing to fight and accept casualties, he said. The speaker also proposed that Russia 'got what it wanted', namely to hamper – or push back - Georgia's bids for memberships in NATO and the EU. Moreover, Georgia has been weakened seriously, both economically and militarily, he said. In his view, the peaceful way of restoring territorial integrity was already ruled out before the war, now also the military way of

restoring it is ruled out. Independent experts also suggested that the credibility of Western security co-operation has been weakened.

**6.** However, these gains are only “tactical” and not “strategic” and Moscow does not know what to do next, he suggested. Turning to South Ossetia, he said that Moscow does not fully control the government of South Ossetia. Although annexation and incorporation into Russia appears as the logical next step, as it would be popular among South Ossetia’s, it is not the solution which Moscow would favour. Russia has provided considerable financial assistance to the region over an extended period. However, the financial assistance that is provided by Russia is essentially “pocketed by the regime” in South Ossetia. Russia, however, wants to build infrastructure. The situation in Abkhazia is more complicated, because Abkhaz people prefer independence. If the “Kosovo model” had been applied to Abkhazia it would have been a much more viable entity, he argued. Abkhazians would also prefer investments from other countries, not only from Russia. Moshes also stressed that the Russian policy with regard to South Ossetia and Abkhazia has received absolutely no support among the CIS countries, and even Russian soft power has failed to influence the stance among Russia’s CIS partners.

**7.** In addition to the unsettled situation in the South Caucasus, the situation in the Northern Caucasus has deteriorated considerably. In this context, he pointed to the number of abducted and killed human rights activists and the high number of casualties among the police forces. Thus, among Russians, Chechnya is now sometimes called “internal abroad”, he added. It is therefore difficult to say what the impact of the Georgian war is on Russia’s foreign and security policy.

**8.** Moshes suggested that the continuation of NATO’s “Open Door” policy will be a crucial factor for the development of NATO-Russian relations. Overall, however, he considered that there is only very limited room for progress in strengthening the relationship between NATO and Russia. In this context he pointed out that the relationship had not really functioned in the past, as neither the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) nor the NATO Russia Council (NRC) worked well, which was mainly due to Russian self-isolation. When asked about Russia’s reaction to a possible membership application by Finland he responded that this would instigate negative reactions in Moscow at first, but would stop once Finland had become a NATO member country.

**9.** A visit to F-Secure, a leading software company which specializes in the development of programmes that protect computers and networks against malware, concluded the very successful visit of the Sub-Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Leon Benoit, M.P.,  
Chair  
Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)



## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Visit to Helsinki of the Political Committee's Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Helsinki, Finland
<b>DATES</b>	September 21 – 24, 2009
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Ms. Cheryl Gallant, M.P.
STAFF	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$3,898.08</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$901.13</b>
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$607.89</b>
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,407.10</b>