

Canadian NATO
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
canadienne de l'OTAN

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation at the Parliamentary Transatlantic
Forum**

Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)

**Washington, D.C., United States of America
December 7-8, 2015**

Report

INTRODUCTION

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) and European Union member countries gathered in Washington for the annual Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum, held from December 7th to 8th in Washington, D.C., with the United States National Defence University (NDU) and the Atlantic Council of the United States (ACUS). The Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum provides NATO parliamentarians with the opportunity to discuss US national security policy issues impacting alliance affairs.

During the meeting, parliamentarians had the opportunity participate in dialogue with policy experts and Washington-based journalists and deepen their understanding of US strategic priorities and the ways the US domestic politics are shaping that country's international vision.

Canada was represented at the Forum by the Honourable Michel Rivard, senator.

DEALING WITH RUSSIA AND FIGHTING AGAINST HYBRID TACTICS: ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGIES BY THE UNITED STATES

All participants were concerned and had questions about Russia's intent to combat Daesh. Instead of bombing positions held by Daesh, Russia is bombing the opposition forces in Syria, thereby reinforcing the Syrian regime and undermining the efforts of the United States and its allies.

Russia's efforts are delaying the departure of President Assad and preventing the start of negotiations that could lead to forming a new government and achieving lasting peace in Syria.

UNDERSTANDING AND FIGHTING DAESH

A year and a half after its emergence, the Islamic State is as strong as ever. The air strikes carried out by the international coalition on jihadists in Iraq and Syria have not resulted in decisive victories. While Daesh has experienced some setbacks, the self-proclaimed caliphate appears to have a limitless supply of fighters ready to die in combat, and it has maintained all of its offensive capabilities.

A consensus seemed to emerge that sending ground troops is the only way to get rid of Daesh. However, most participants doubted that their own countries would agree to it. Support for this approach is growing and it is likely that more and more people will call for ground troops after the Paris attacks. The United States, having been burned by its previous experience in Iraq, was opposed. For now, the Obama administration prefers long-distance strikes and support for local ground troops fighting the Daesh, such as the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and the Shiite militias, also supported by Iran.

NUCLEAR DEAL WITH IRAN – CONSEQUENCES FOR REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

This agreement would see Iran discontinue its nuclear program by dismantling its Arak reactor and decreasing its number of centrifuges, in return for having its nuclear sanctions gradually lifted by the international community.

Observers expressed generalized concern about the Iran nuclear deal. One concern was that lifting the embargo would lead to Iran resuming its oil exports in order to upgrade its air forces and long-range cruise missiles and acquire new fighter planes. This could also mean that Iran would intervene in the Syrian conflict by supporting the Assad regime, offering both military and economic support.

The Obama administration was cautiously optimistic; it hoped that the agreement would decrease the hostility that Iranian society feels toward the United States and the West in general.

2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS – THE CAMPAIGN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

To provide a better understanding of the nomination process for Democratic and Republican candidates, the panelists explained the origin of the primaries. The system dates back to the late 1960s, when the nomination process was reformed so that rank-and-file party members could choose their candidate. The nomination process became more open and party leaders could no longer choose the candidate on behalf of party members.

As a result, there is a higher degree of uncertainty, which can lead to close presidential nomination races, as we have seen this year.

It was put forward that the international situation (Iraq, Syria, relations with Russia and China and the nuclear deal with Iran) could become an election issue, given that the American economic and fiscal situation has much improved.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant, M.P.
Chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary
Association (NATO PA)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)
ACTIVITY	Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum
DESTINATION	Washington, D.C., United States of America
DATES	December 7-8, 2015
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Michel Rivard, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 843.11
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 711.47
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 328.19
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$189.11
TOTAL	\$ 2,071.88