

Canadian NATO
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
canadienne de l'OTAN

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
Visit of the Officers of the Science and Technology
Committee**

Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)

Warsaw, Poland

April 24, 2008

Report

The Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association has the honour to present its report on the *Visit to Warsaw, Poland by Science and Technology Committee Officers*, April 24, 2008. The Assembly delegation, led by Committee Chairman

Michael Mates (UK), travelled to Warsaw to discuss the proposed deployment of the US missile defence system in Central Europe. Canada was represented by Senator Pierre Claude Nolin, Vice-Chairperson and Special Rapporteur on Climate Change.

OVERVIEW

The delegation met with Defence Minister Bogdan Klich; Poland's chief missile defence negotiator Witold Waszczykowski; senior representatives of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces; and members of both chambers of the parliament from the ruling coalition as well as opposition parties.

Jerzy Szmajdziński, Deputy Speaker of the Sejm (representing the left-wing opposition), said preliminary negotiations with the United States started as early as 2003 when he was Defence Minister in the then- government. Before turning into an open political issue, the project had been discussed for years at the level of military experts, including talks with their Russian counterparts. According to Mr. Szmajdziński, the missile defence system should not cause any divisions within the Alliance and should not be seen as a threat by the Russians. The proposed system should also gradually become part of an overarching NATO-wide system. He praised the decisions of the NATO Bucharest Summit that clearly outlined the Alliance's position on missile defence.

Answering questions from NATO parliamentarians concerning internal and external opposition to the project, Mr. Szmajdziński said that the benefits of the system should be better explained. Currently some 29 countries possess ballistic missiles. The proposed anti-missile system can provide an effective deterrence against some of these countries' capabilities, thus providing additional leverage for the diplomatic efforts to deal with "rogue states". He also noted that more than 50% of Poles are not supporting the proposal, but he hopes that this percentage will decrease as more explanation is provided. Major political parties in Poland have similar views and support the proposal, although there are some prominent figures on the left, who are still skeptical and call for more public debate on the issue.

Witold Waszczykowski, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Poland's chief negotiator on the missile defence proposal, stressed that time is not a crucial factor in the negotiations with the United States. Instead, what matters is obtaining the right terms for the hosting of the installations. There has been progress in the negotiations between Poland and the United States, but it is not yet clear when a deal might be finalized. The Polish authorities are, in principle, in favour of the plan, but the decision as to whether or not to host the interceptor base will be made only after the negotiations are concluded.

Poland views the US proposal in a broader context as a vehicle to strengthen the transatlantic link. NATO's theatre and territorial defence projects are complementary

and not competing with the "Third Site". The "NATO-isation" of the US system is possible, but for Poland a stronger bilateral link with the United States has value in itself. Mr. Waszczykowski pointed out that the Polish people have experience in national security matters, and the public support can eventually increase. The Polish authorities launched a number of public relations projects to explain the benefits of missile defence, including Internet portals, conferences, books, and leaflets, but the full-scale campaign will only start after the negotiations are concluded and the terms of the deal are established.

With regard to Russia's opposition, Mr. Waszczykowski said that there is a widespread belief in the Russian society that the West is encircling Russia, and the "Third Site" is yet another manifestation of its aggressive intentions towards Russia. Scientific explanations of the proposed system are not effective, due to the politicization of the issue. However, Mr. Waszczykowski believes that some of the harsh anti-Western rhetoric in Russia could be attributed to the recently concluded electoral campaigns. As NATO enlargement has shown, Russian opposition tends to fade once the decision is made.

As a former Polish Ambassador in Iran, Mr. Waszczykowski was asked to comment on the potential ballistic missile threat from that country. He noted that Iran is engaged in suspicious missile, nuclear and satellite programmes that could potentially pose a threat to the transatlantic community. Moreover, negotiations with the Iranian government and sanctions imposed by the UN have largely been ineffective. When all diplomatic means are exhausted, building a defence system seems to be a prudent decision.

Bogdan Klich, National Defence Minister, stressed that his party - the Civic Platform - has always supported the notion of integrating the American missile defence assets into a NATO-wide framework. In addition, the new Polish government believes that the installation of the "Third Site" will require Poland to reassess its security policy strategy, taking into account new challenges such as asymmetric threats and the protection of the proposed installations. Therefore, any agreement with the United States must contain the terms of American modernisation assistance to the Polish Armed Forces. He reiterated that the Polish government has yet to give its consent to the US proposal.

The Minister also believes that the Russian opposition to the project was decreasing. He is not convinced that compromise proposals such as delayed installation of interceptors in silos would be effective, as Russia's opposition rests purely on geostrategic interests in this part of the world. Nevertheless, military co-operation and dialogue with Russia are taking place and can be further expanded. Russia's inspections of the missile defence site could be envisaged, but Mr. Klich explicitly rejected the possibility of permanent presence of Russian military personnel at the base. Reciprocal inspections by Polish experts in Russia could be another precondition. Mr. Mates asked whether the interceptor site could be expanded as Iran's missile threat increases. The Minister replied that the current negotiations with the United States do not envisage such a possibility.

Members of the STC also met with representatives of the National Defence and the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Sejm and the Senate. Polish legislators stressed that Poland seeks to play an active role as a security provider for the Alliance, including the

area of defence against ballistic missiles. They also noted that the increased engagement of NATO in missile defence planning would facilitate the efforts of parliamentarians to convince their voters to support the project. To alleviate Russia's concerns, the US, Russia, Poland and the Czech Republic consider organizing a joint meeting of the parliamentarians of the four countries specifically on missile defence.

The NATO PA delegation also visited the Headquarters of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces. The senior officers of the General Staff briefed NATO parliamentarians on the Polish Army modernisation plans which include full professionalisation by 2010, as well as increased mobility and interoperability with other Allied forces. Currently, 3,650 Polish military personnel are contributing to 9 international peace missions.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)
ACTIVITY	Visit of the Officers of the Science and Technology Committee
DESTINATION	Warsaw, Poland
DATES	April 24, 2008
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Senator Pierre Claude Nolin
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$4,178.35
ACCOMMODATION	\$374.44
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$250.76
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$4,803.55