

Canadian NATO
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
canadienne de l'OTAN

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary
Delegation
to the Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum**

Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)

**Washington, DC, United States
December 10-11, 2007**

Report

The seventh and largest annual Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum was conducted in Washington DC, 11-12 December 2007. The Forum was jointly organized by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the United States (US) National Defense University (NDU) and the Atlantic Council of the United States (ACUS). It enables Alliance parliamentarians to hold off-the-record meetings with leading members of the Washington-based policy community. The full report of Forum proceedings can be found at

<http://www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=22>.

The Canadian delegation was composed of Senator Pierre Claude Nolin, Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell, and Mr. Claude Bachand M.P., supported by one Clerk and an analyst.

Over 80 parliamentarians from more than 25 NATO and partner nations participated. Meetings were held a month prior to the Iowa Presidential Caucuses and much of the discussions focused on the critical foreign policy challenges that a new Administration will confront. They also occurred on the very deadline set by the UN for negotiations on Kosovo's final status and at an extremely trying moment for Allied forces in Afghanistan. There were addresses by over a dozen policy specialists on topics such as the forthcoming Bucharest Summit, the debate about the need for a new Strategic Concept, developments in Russia, Missile Defence, and the situation in the Middle East.

The Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Ms. Nancy Pelosi, addressed the meeting and – recalling her time as a member of the Assembly – stressed the key role the Assembly plays for discussion of security issues.

US government speakers included Mr. Dan Fata, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Policy, and Lieutenant General Henry A. Obering III, Director, Missile Defense Agency. The meeting was concluded with an address by General James L. Jones, USMC (Retired), Chairman, Atlantic Council Board of Directors, who was recently appointed as special envoy to deal with security issues in talks between Palestinian and Israeli negotiators.

Forum discussions revolved around major issues expected to be on the agenda of the Bucharest Summit, scheduled for 2-4 April 2008. Highlights of the proceedings are outlined below.

A NEW STRATEGIC CONCEPT

There was general agreement that it is time to consider the promulgation of a new NATO strategic concept. Six different Alliance strategic concepts have been issued since 1949, the last one being adopted at the Washington Summit in 1999. Since then, the international system has become increasingly more complex and multifaceted. New military missions have forced the Alliance to adopt a more expeditionary orientation. Homeland defence, cyber defence and energy security are also matters of pressing concern and the Alliance needs to adapt the way its militaries interact with civilian authorities.

Any new strategic concept should be short, readable and convey to opinion makers and the general public what NATO is, why it is relevant and where it is going. Yet, there are specific matters that obviously need to be addressed.

One of the most pressing is the NATO-EU relationship. A framework agreement between the two organizations should be founded on a shared strategic vision. The goal should be to have such an agreement in place by December 2008, and this should be something that heads of government put on the table in Bucharest.

SMART POWER

American think tanks have begun to reassess the way American power is exercised. Among these efforts has been a bipartisan project on Smart Power led by Joseph Nye and Richard Armitage, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)¹. The project report is critical of the so-called war of terror. It concludes that, short of possessing nuclear weapons, Al-Qaeda poses no existential threat to the US. It is an organization that uses American power against itself and seeks to provoke American reactions. The US has done so, according to the report, in ways that have hurt its international reputation and its leverage.

The report suggests that the incoming US administration would benefit by reorienting the American approach to soft power, engaging in norms based on internationalism and by supporting multilateral capacity building including positive reform of the United Nations. Hard power is not neglected, but put together and used properly, the ideal combination of hard and soft power is thought to be 'smart' power.

COPING WITH THE NEW RUSSIA

The designation of Dmitry Medvedev as the candidate to succeed Russian President Vladimir Putin is seen by some analysts as a genuinely positive development for Russia. Mr. Medvedev is often considered a liberal, at least in a Russian context. He has a track record on issues related to education, health care and housing. He is, in the estimation of some experts, likely to be more tolerant of the opposition and more supportive of transparency in government. He is also thought to be someone with whom the West can do business. Yet, despite these positive indicators, the nomination does not change the fundamental structure of Russian politics.

MISSILE DEFENSE

The US administration is convinced that it will soon have the technological means to defeat a limited ballistic missile attack. It is developing proposals to link the American system to a parallel NATO program, but while progress within the Alliance is apparent, the dialogue with Russia has proven to be very difficult.

THE MIDDLE EAST

¹ An electronic copy of the report can be obtained from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Project website at <http://www.csis.org/smartpower/>. Accessed January 2008.

Considering prospects for Middle East peace, the Forum was told there are three essential conditions for moving forward. The first conceptual step is to recognize that an equitable and durable solution is possible, even if it were not perfectly just. Moreover, negotiations are the only means to move the process toward such an agreement. Third, the US will have to be a protagonist to make this happen. If the peace process does not move forward, the forces of history will deliver a solution that will be to nobody's liking.

There are important historical lessons regarding the Middle East that the US and its allies need to understand. It is a region over which great powers have long sought to impose their will and have failed spectacularly in this achieving this ambition. It is a region of hardened tribes that will always have a greater stake in outcomes than outsiders will.

The Annapolis discussions were held because the Palestinian President had good intentions, the Israelis want to be pragmatic and the US Administration finally recognized that it has a stake in the peace. American threat perceptions are very much driving this process. The Americans sense a dangerous deficit of authority in the broader region and determined non-state actors are challenging the center in Palestine, Iraq and Iran.

In the broader Middle East, the most important change in recent years is the rise of Iran. The balance of power is shifting in its direction, although it remains constrained by many factors including the presence of the US and its allies in the region. Iran is now more influential than it has been for centuries and much of this, in the American view, is due to mistakes the US has made.

As for the recently issued US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran, some analysts in Washington are characterizing it as the most dramatic reversal ever seen in one of these documents. The NIE also states that Iran is a rational state and engages in cost-benefit calculations. The Iranian government recognized that it had a breach in its intelligence and thought it best to shut down its program, but it is still working on fissile material and ballistic missiles.

THE US PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Two speakers, one on the campaign staff of Democratic Party candidate Hilary Clinton, the other on the campaign staff of Republican Party candidate Rudy Giuliani, provided the Forum with interesting insights into the US Presidential race. Among the many issues discussed was the fact that none of the candidates was seen as a strong free-trader. In fact, leading favourites such as Senator Clinton and Senator McCain are thought to be keen on reviewing NAFTA arrangements if they get into office.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)
ACTIVITY	Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum
DESTINATION	Washington DC, United States
DATES	December 10-11, 2007
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Senator Pierre Claude Nolin Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Claude Bachand, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. Jodi Turner Mr. Jim Cox
TRANSPORTATION	\$7,327.62
ACCOMMODATION	\$2,286.18
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$844.58
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$570.58
TOTAL	\$11,028.96