

Canadian NATO
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
canadienne de l'OTAN

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the Visit of the Political Committee Sub-committee on
Transatlantic Relations**

Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)

**Warsaw, Poland
September 17-19, 2008**

Report

The Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association has the honour to present its REPORT on the Sub-committee on Transatlantic Relations visit to Warsaw, Poland, held September 17-19, 2008. The Canadian delegation was represented by Senator Raynell Andreychuk who is the General Rapporteur for the Political Committee.

POLAND IN THE ALLIANCE

Polish representatives emphasised the continuity of Poland's foreign and defence policy. Janusz Zemke, Chairman of the Defence Committee of the Sejm, noted, Poland's defence budget increased between 5 and 10 percent in real terms over last years, though the increase started from a very low level. Under the current government, Poland was also abandoning conscription and moving towards a volunteer army. Poland promotes close co-operation with its neighbours, General Franciszek Gągor, Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, underlined. He pointed to the Polish-Lithuanian and the Polish-Ukrainian battalions that currently exist. There are plans to merge the two into one tri-national brigade, following the model of the Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian Peace Force Battalion that is currently deployed in the South-Eastern part of Kosovo. The General briefed the Sub-Committee on Poland's contributions to NATO-led missions. Poland contributes to all important NATO-missions, including International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Kosovo, Operation Active Endeavour (OAE) in the Mediterranean, as well as the NATO Training Mission – Iraq (NTM-I). As to OAE, NATO's only article 5 operations; Poland provides a submarine in winter time and a frigate in summer time.

AFGHANISTAN

As for ISAF, the operations in Afghanistan had shown the importance of close interoperability among Allied forces, General Gągor informed the delegation. This also included information sharing, which remained a challenge, he added. Opposing military forces were learning fast and were using the internet for communication and information, thereby becoming increasingly sophisticated. Human intelligence (HUMINT) was tremendously important, not only for military operations, but also for civil-military co-operation. The operations had also underlined the need for a sufficient number of helicopters as well as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) which were essential for the success of operations. Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) significantly hampered the freedom of movement of Allied forces in Afghanistan. The General underlined the need for more air transport capabilities, particularly helicopters which could also provide close air support, as well as additional UAVs which could be used to counter IED as they allowed monitoring roads around the clock. Moreover, national caveats, i.e. restrictions that NATO members place on the use of their national forces, should be reduced to a minimum.

Speakers and the delegation repeatedly stressed that Afghanistan was a long-term mission. Responding to questions by the delegation, the General said that the general security threat in Afghanistan was growing, but that there were also improvements on

the local level. A positive development was that the new Pakistani government was beginning to address security threats more actively. There was agreement that the challenges that NATO and the international community faced in Afghanistan were multifaceted. Poppy cultivation and border control remained main concerns, according to General Gagor who added that the money from drug production was supporting insurgency. The General was hopeful that Afghanistan can succeed, provided the security situation improved and the international community delivered the means to help building the necessary infrastructure. Donor countries, including Poland, needed to improve the distribution of aid money earmarked for reconstruction projects in Afghanistan. Often, aid money was distributed according to national regulations which did not correspond to the reality in the country, the General elaborated and argued that the distribution of aid should become more flexible and allow for speedier distribution.

A serious and continuing challenge is the lack of good governance in Afghanistan. Polish officials noted that the Afghan government must tackle widespread corruption and improve its overall effectiveness. The military could address economic, political, and social problems but that the non-military aspects of security have to be addressed by non-military means, General Gagor stressed. However, in the absence of sufficient non-military assistance, NATO forces could possibly be used to address some of the shortcomings by, for example, taking out drug laboratories and intercepting drug traffickers or by taking on a limited role in training police (which remained a “neglected challenge”).

ENLARGEMENT AND EUROPEAN SECURITY:

Polish speakers also provided their views of the future development of NATO. Discussions revealed unanimity among speakers and the delegation that the enlargement should remain a top priority for the Alliance, particularly with regard to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as Georgia and Ukraine.

Discussions revealed agreement that the developments in South Eastern Europe remained important for European security. An analyst from the Center for Eastern Studies described the current situation in the Western Balkans as “cold peace” and argued that Allies “put on a bold face” while the situation remained complicated. The quest for identity continued, he said and pointed to a deepening rivalry between Albanians and Serbs. Moreover, there were still unsolved border issues, such as between Croatia and Slovenia, Bosnia and Croatia, etc.

Defence Minister Bogdan Klich and others considered a closer NATO-EU co-operation and institutional links crucial for an effective transatlantic relationship. To that end the Minister suggested the enhancing the “Berlin Plus” agreement and the strengthening of political relations between the two institutions. Professor Roman Kuzniar of the Institute of International Affairs of the University of Warsaw cautioned that NATO and the EU were very different institutions with different missions, which made co-operation difficult. However, he and others saw the possibility of closer co-operation between NATO and the EU in geographic regions like in Georgia and Ukraine. Eugeniusz Smolar, President of the Center for International Relations, reminded the delegation that 21 countries were in both organizations. He criticised that the same governments behaved totally different when they talk about NATO and the EU.

THE UPCOMING NATO SUMMIT

Defence Minister Klich underlined that NATO needs to review Strategic Concept and the Minister anticipated that a new Strategic Concept should be adopted in 2010, following a more general “transatlantic declaration” which is likely to be adopted at the 2009 Summit in Strasbourg and Kehl. In his view, a new Strategic Concept should focus on four main points:

Collective defence – which remained the key role for NATO. While capabilities for non-article 5 operations outside NATO’s traditional geographic realm had become increasingly important, the Alliance must retain, and if possible further improve, its ability for conventional defence of its member states. The Minister also stressed the need for article 5 contingency planning.

The transatlantic link remained main core of the Alliance and should be strengthened. NATO was an exceptional forum to discuss everything that was relevant in terms of security. The Minister also stressed the need to improve NATO-EU co-operation which he considered insufficient at present. To that end he suggested creating an institutional framework between NATO and the EU.

Enlargement and new partnership activities: NATO should offer Georgia and Ukraine the participation in the Membership Action Plan (MAP) as soon as possible, the Minister said. Relations with Russia remained important, but that thinking in the categories of “spheres of influence” or aggressive Russian behaviour, like against Georgia, was not acceptable. The Minister added, however, that Russia and NATO shared a number of security interests, like in Afghanistan.

Strengthening NATO’s military capabilities: Like other NATO member countries Poland was continuing the process of the modernisation of its armed forces which should be completed around 2010.

There was also broad agreement that the August war in Georgia had an impact on the threat assessments of NATO member states and that the war underlined the importance of article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Discussions centred on Russia’s possible foreign and defence policy and the relationship between the Alliance and Russia. Defence Minister Klich stressed that Russia reapproaches standard of democratic world and the processes of international institutions.

THE WAR IN GEORGIA AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

The visit took place relatively shortly after the Russian intervention in Georgia in August. Not surprisingly, the war and its possible implications for Euro-Atlantic security were high on the agenda of the discussions. There was a general, strong condemnation of the Russian military intervention in Georgia. Polish experts stressed that the recognition of South Ossetia’s and Abkhazia’s independence made the reintegration of the two provinces into Georgia no longer realistic. Moreover, due to the refugees who have fled as a result of the war, Georgia is facing serious social problems, Krystof Strachota, Head of the Department of Caucasus and Central Asia, said. In addition, Georgia has lost control over a part of its territory. Russia tried to disintegrate Georgia, he said and anticipated that Moscow would escalate the conflict with Georgia by, for example using its economic leverage, including Georgia’s dependence on energy

supplies from Russia. Hence, relations between Georgia and Russia were likely to remain very tense, and both sides did not want to talk to each other after the events in August. He added that Georgia is not able to defend itself and that Georgia would not survive without Western support. Several speakers noted that even though they would be difficult to measure, the political and other costs of the August war would also be high for Russia. Marek Menkiszak Head of the Department of Eastern Studies at the Center for Eastern Studies suggested that the Russian policy in the region could lead to a destabilisation of the region, including the North Caucasus, and he added that Chechnya was a hidden challenge.

Mr. Strachota argued that Georgia was a litmus test for the Alliance and that it would be detrimental for NATO's credibility, particularly among partner countries, if Georgia could not count on measurable benefits from being a NATO partner. Therefore, NATO should include Georgia in the MAP process and increase its footprint in the region. He suggested, however, that Georgian President Michail Saakashvili had lost respect and trust of the West.

Polish speakers and members of the delegation also consented that it was not possible to create security in Europe without Russia. However, there were different opinions about NATO's future approach to Moscow. Some speakers suggested that NATO as an Alliance and NATO Member States had not treated Russia as an equal partner and had not taken Russian concerns seriously enough. There was unanimity, however, that whatever the possible shortcomings of Allied governments in the relations with Russia, there is no excuse of Russian action in the Caucasus.

Przemyslaw Grudzinski, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, suggested that Russia's military intervention in Georgia demonstrate that it "did not like the status quo in Europe" and that Europe may enter a stage where the use of force is coming back to the arena. He added that the international order had been undermined and it would not be easy to come to a new understanding. The State Secretary warned against an over-reaction against Russia and stressed the importance of unified approach of NATO Allies towards Russia. Rasa Jukneviene (Lithuania), Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships, wondered if NATO has to rethink the security of the Baltic area and if the capability to defend the Baltic territories sufficient. General Gagor noted that NATO needed a proper mix between territorial defence and expeditionary capabilities. He added that the current focus of NATO exercises was on crisis response, and that it would be necessary to put more emphasis on Article 5 exercises.

Host country interlocutors repeatedly expressed the view that Poland wanted good relations with Russia, even though that this was not always easy. Lukas Kulesa, Deputy Head of the Research and Analysis Office, Polish Institute of International Affairs, said that Russia acted extremely unpredictably. Russia faced serious problems, particularly with regard to social issues, but it appeared as if the well-being of population was of secondary importance to its political leadership. Mr. Menkiszak suggested that the Georgia war marked an "offensive stage" of Russian foreign and security policy and aimed at punishing Georgia for its pro-Western policy. Moreover, Russia also wanted to signal that it would not accept closer energy relations of the countries of the region with the West. More generally, Russia aimed at repositioning itself on the global level as a

force to be reckoned with. Mr. Menkiszak proposed that a larger part of the Russian elite had developed a feeling of “sense of greatness” and a sense that the current arrangements were not just to Russia and needed to be adjusted to recognise Russia's true role. Russia was strong enough to weather the global financial crisis and its economic presence expanded globally, but this had not – yet – translated into a more visible political role.

Mr. Kulesa suggested that it would be difficult to influence Russian external behaviour directly. However, NATO Allies could “check” Russia if it would pursue an assertive policy towards the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Independent Polish experts also referred to the Russian media, which had shown full support for the Georgia war. One speaker noted that there was an open censorship in Russia and that the print media were relatively free. However, their impact on public opinion was much less important than that of the electronic media, which were completely controlled by the Kremlin. He added that television was the most important medium to obtain information, especially in the provinces.

A pessimistic outlook for NATO’s relations with Russia was provided by Mr. Menkiszak. He said that there was deep distrust on both sides and that Russia did not want closer cooperation. Russia wanted to stop further eastward enlargement of the Alliance, which Moscow saw as an erosion of its influence, and also wanted to limit deeper co-operation between NATO and the CIS countries. He suggested that Russia wanted NATO to become a more political, and less military, organization which could ultimately open NATO for Russian membership.

However, Mr. Menkiszak did not believe that Moscow would “replace” its partnership with NATO and the West by a closer relationship with China. He commented that the Russia-China relationship was very tense and that a strategic relationship between the two was unlikely. For Russia, the Shanghai Co-operation Council (SCO) was an organization to limit China's influence in Central Asia, he suggested. The two also had a “troubled economic relationship” in the region and clashing energy interests while there were also tensions in security co-operation.

Commenting on the EU’s European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), he said that the mechanisms were highly voluntary and that the lack of membership perspective resulted in the lack of incentive for reform in partner countries. In contrast, the Polish-Swedish venture of “Eastern Partnerships” promised more effectiveness. The delegation also briefly discussed the situation in Belarus. Mr. Wojciechowski said though it was “morally right” to support the opposition, he acknowledged that it was completely ineffective because the opposition was weak. Therefore, it would be necessary to deal with President Lukashenko, even though he would tend to play Russia against the West and the former was likely to have the better offer than the West.

The delegation also discussed EU-Russia relations and the general view of Polish speakers on the subject was that the influence of the EU over Russia was negligible. Mr. Menkiszak suggested that Russia did not see the EU as a Union, but as a concert of powers. He added that Russia was drifting away from European standards and that it attempted imposing Russian rules on trade. He also spoke of a “clash of interests”

between EU and Russia, particularly in the countries of the “European neighbourhood”. The relationship was asymmetrical in the energy sphere, as Europe would remain dependent on Russian energy deliveries. However, there were also possible areas of co-operation, including ecology, energy efficiency, and migration.

The visit provided the delegation with a much better understanding of Polish and regional security issues. The Committee will continue to monitor the developments in the region and plans to put a special emphasis on the continuing enlargement process as well as the development of the relationship with Russia.

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 Political Committee Subcommittee on Transatlantic Relations
DESTINATION	Warsaw, Poland
DATES	September 17-19, 2008
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Senator Raynell Andreychuk
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	
TRANSPORTATION	\$3,574.71
ACCOMMODATION	\$578.04
HOSPITALITY	\$0.00
PER DIEMS	\$260.58
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$4,413.33