

Canadian NATO
Parliamentary Association



Association parlementaire
canadienne de l'OTAN

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
respecting its participation to the Visit of the Defence and
Security Committee**

Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)

**Afghanistan
October 24 - 27, 2010**

Report

The Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association has the honour to present its report regarding its participation to the visit of the Defence and Security Committee to Afghanistan. Canada was represented by Senator Joseph A. Day.

A NATO parliamentary Assembly delegation led by Jan Arild Ellingsen (Norway), Acting Chairman of the NATO PA Science and Technology Committee, visited Afghanistan for the second time in 2010 from 23 to 27 October.

The delegation, which included members of parliament from Canada, Denmark, Georgia and Poland met with leaders of the Parliament of Afghanistan and senior representatives of NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A), the European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) and the diplomatic community. The delegation also visited a Turkish-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) as well as the Afghan National Police (ANP) training site in Wardak province where it met with the governor of the province.

The counterinsurgency campaign

The ISAF Deputy Commander Lieutenant General James Bucknall stressed that ISAF has the right mix of strategy and resources for the mission, but more trainers are needed to build the Afghan National Security Forces. It will take time for positive results to manifest, but there signs already that the insurgency cannot keep up with increased NATO operational tempo and that the momentum is reversing in favour of ISAF.

ISAF military commanders noted that on the operational level NATO forces focus their attention on the Kandahar and Central Helmand regions. Fierceness with which the Taliban fight in some parts of the Southern Afghanistan is related to the fact that they are cornered. NATO forces are determined to keep pressure and pursue the enemy relentlessly throughout the winter when the insurgents would usually reduce their activity. An extremely positive aspect of counterinsurgency operations is a substantial involvement of the Afghan National Army (ANA): Afghan troops are increasingly in the lead of these operations. Also, NATO forces are receiving extensive assistance from the local population: around 70% of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are found and reported by the Afghani people living in the area. The share of IEDs that are detected is increasing, but a real breakthrough in this field would occur if the network of IED component supply was disclosed. Further developing collaboration with the Pakistani military was also crucial for the success of the counterinsurgency campaign.

While the number of violent events in the country increased compared to 2009, this was mostly due to increase in direct fire events as a result of NATO's offensive in the Southern provinces. The recent parliamentary elections also served as a pretext for the Taliban to increase their activity. Nevertheless, NATO forces succeeded in preventing an increase in civilian casualties. Although there are still some civilian casualties, those caused by insurgent forces outweigh those attributed to NATO forces by a ratio of 15-1.

Although the ISAF leadership would like to have more ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) capabilities, they are generally satisfied with the amount of platforms and manpower that is available. The key challenge is to capitalize on military success and make the progress towards stability sustainable by further developing the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP).

Transition and training

The ISAF leadership emphasised that transition – or *inteqal*¹ – is a conditions-based process of getting from one posture to another, and that it cannot be seen as an exit strategy. Most interlocutors regarded the year 2014 – rather than 2011 – as the year of transition. However, it was also noted that transition has already started. The Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board (JANIB) was established to facilitate transition by extensively involving the Afghan side in the planning process. The transition process will be a subject to reassessments and readjustments in order to make it credible and irreversible. ISAF Deputy Commander Lt. Gen. Bucknall pointed out that establishing transition deadlines can be helpful as they encourage the people and the government of Afghanistan to redouble their efforts to assume greater responsibility for the security and stability of their country.

Development of ANA and ANP is the objective of the National Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A). With a monthly budget of more than 1 billion US dollars, NTM-A is a clear priority of the United States. The NATO PA delegation was impressed by what the mission has achieved so far against formidable challenges. 28 nations committed trainers to NTM-A (additional 21 nation contributes in terms of funding), but Gen. William Caldwell, Commander of NTM-A, noted that more trainers were urgently needed to ensure that the ANSF can become a self-sustaining force.

NTM-A representatives noted a considerable growth in quantity and quality of trainees as well as a significantly reduced trainer-to-trainee ratio. Without this progress, success that was achieved in recent counterinsurgency operation involving ANSF would not have been possible, Gen. Caldwell stressed. Extremely low literacy rate among the trainees is one of the greatest challenges. Another oft-cited problem – that of a high attrition rate – was not as grave as sometimes depicted, NTM-A representatives maintained. They also stressed that training and equipping ANP did not receive adequate attention in the past, but the situation has changed dramatically over the last year. A positive momentum was build and the key challenge is to sustain it. It was expected that the NATO Summit in Lisbon should encourage nations to contribute more to the ANSF training mission.

The NATO PA delegation also visited the European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) headquarters in Kabul and met with the head of mission Brigadier General Jukka Savolainen and his team. Established in 2007, the EUPOL mission is to help training the Afghan National Police as well as to mentor, advise and fund Afghan law enforcement agencies in order to improve their competencies and to promote the rule of law. In terms of training ANP, the EUPOL has a cooperation and labour distribution agreement with NTM-A: while NTM-A conducts basic training, the EUPOL mission, with

¹ The Dari and Pashtu word for “transition”.

its considerably smaller budget, contributes to developing more specific criminal investigative qualifications. The EUPOL also emphasizes the *train-the-trainers* concept and has established a Staff College for higher police leadership.

The Assembly delegation also had the opportunity to visit the ANP training center in Wardak and to meet with trainers and trainees.

Reconciliation and communication

It is widely recognized that a political solution to the conflict is needed, and that the reconciliation process is the path forward. ISAF's brand-new Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) offers incentives to fighters to return to normal life in their communities. The programme is based on the assumption that an overwhelming majority of insurgents are not ideological fanatics devoted to global Jihad. As long as their practical economic, social and personal security needs are met and they accept basic human rights, the reconciliation and reintegration is possible. In return, they agree to refrain from combat and support the Afghan national constitution. The programme offers political, not criminal amnesty. Although the total number of insurgents in the reconciliation process is relatively small, the trendline is positive and the recent ISAF offensive against insurgent strongholds has generated pressure for reconciliation. This progress, however, could be endangered if a ban on private security companies (PSCs) is enacted, because ISAF troops could be tasked to convoy protection and other duties performed by PSCs instead of increasing the pressure on the insurgency.

ISAF is looking for new ways of reaching out to the people of Afghanistan as well as helping relevant Afghan governmental agencies in order to prevent the decline of public support for the post-Taliban course of the country's development. ISAF Traditional Communication Mission is partnering with the Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs and the Ministry of the Hajj and Religious Affairs as well as traditional key communicators to empower credible Afghan voices (such as theology scholars) that promote the legitimacy of the Afghanistan government, highlight the benefits of development and foster the right and duty of all Afghans to stand against insurgency. Supporting the all-inclusive jirgas and closer interaction between governors and elders were also critically important in order to reduce tensions in the society.

To develop an efficient public relations strategy one needs to better understand the complex network of tribal communities in Afghanistan, long-standing hierarchical relationships in the society as well as the ethical code which is based on *honour-shame* value axis (rather than *guilt-innocence* culture of Western societies). The youth was identified as a priority target group since Afghanistan is a very young society. Also, a number of interlocutors stressed the need to step up NATO communication strategies at home, where, pessimistic and alarming information about the situation in Afghanistan noticeably prevails over news about the achievements and positive trends. Speaker of the parliament Mr Yunus Quanuni stressed the need to explain to the population in Afghanistan and to the international community that failure in Afghanistan would make it again the source of extremism and terrorist threats. One has to acknowledge the real signs of improvement of the last few years. The speaker also stressed that the parliament should be more involved in the reconciliation process, but this process can only succeed if military pressure on the Taliban is continued.

Governance issues and development of parliamentary system

Poor governance and corruption remain major internal challenges for Afghanistan. Governance is still embryonic and overly Kabul-centric. Some interlocutors noted that establishment of Prime Minister's position might rectify some flaws in the current institutional arrangement.

Parliamentary elections in September were described as successful compared to the 2009 presidential elections. The election process was Afghan-led (helped by a number of international donors), and the central electoral committee has proven its independence. However, an enormous number of complaints was submitted and the central complaints committee finds itself under considerable pressure. Regional and local electoral committees are also more susceptible to political pressure. There were over 600 incidents on the election day, but most of them were relatively insignificant and failed to disrupt the election on the whole.

The existing electoral system does not favour the development of a viable political party system: the overwhelming majority of candidates were not members of any political party. Over 100 loose groupings exist in Afghanistan, but most of them are focused around individual powerbrokers and do not have articulated political agendas. The parliamentary groupings are therefore likely represent different ethnic groups and different attitudes towards the government and towards cultural values (conservative vs. liberal). These alignments tend to overlap.

Although final results of the recent elections have yet to be announced, it is feared that the largest ethnic community – the Pashtuns – will be underrepresented in the parliament. About 50% of the parliamentarians will be new. H.E. Yunus Qanuni, speaker of the Wolesi Jirga, lower chamber of the parliament, stressed that the new parliament should be neither a puppet of the executive branch nor assume a radical anti-systemic stance.

The delegation also met with representatives of the upper chamber of the parliament, the Meshrano Jirga. The Meshrano Jirga is not elected directly and tends to be more supportive of the President's policies than the lower chamber.

When visiting the province of Wardak, the NATO parliamentarians met with its governor Mr Muhammed Halim. He stressed that good governance, accountability and transparency are his key objectives. Discussing the relationship vis-à-vis central government, he said he was in principle in favour of delegating more powers to the provinces but stressed that it should be done in a prudent manner so as to prevent anarchy and the rise of warlords.

The international community needs to step up its assistance to Afghanistan in terms of reinforcing anti-corruption institutions, strengthening legislative oversight, building investigation, prosecution and judicial capacity and increasing transparency of sub-contracting networks. While it is hardly realistic to expect complete eradication of corruption in the country, the real achievement would be reducing it to the level where it stops fuelling the insurgency. A number of projects to assist Afghanistan in this area were launched, including the EUPOL-mentored Ministry of Interior's Mobile Anti-Corruption Teams. NATO and EUPOL representatives stressed that major challenges

faced in the field of law enforcement include the lack of information sharing among different Afghan agencies, illiteracy, the lack of investigative skills as well as overly hierarchical decision-making culture and fear to take the initiative on lower levels.

Developmental challenges

At the time of the visit, the issue of private security companies (PSCs) was on top of Afghanistan's political agenda. President Karzai has issued a decree that calls for a ban of PSCs. Some of these companies terrorize civilian population and indirectly support insurgency by paying them off as a way of ensuring safety of convoys they are hired to protect. However, some interlocutors noted that the problems posed by PSCs were much more acute in the past and the situation has improved now. While there is an agreement that PSCs should be phased out over time, hasty decisions might leave a significant security gap that ISAF and Afghan security forces are not ready to fill. Most development agencies rely on PSCs for their protection and many would be forced to leave Afghanistan if the decree does not include an exemption for them. Interlocutors at the lower chamber of the parliament believed that compromise solutions should be explored, for instance by placing PSCs under supervision of the Afghan government. The representatives of the upper chamber, on the other hand, urged the international community to support the President's decision and not to use it as an excuse to leave the country.

ISAF and other international actors are conducting an impressive number of development projects in a wide range of areas, from border enforcement, counternarcotics, water management, infrastructure and rural development to health, education and gender programmes. The Assembly delegation was briefed in more detail on the project relating to supporting the civilian airports in Afghanistan with a view to making them self-sustaining. ISAF trains and mentors civilian airport controllers, but unfortunately due to the low salaries in Afghanistan most of them chose to look for a job at airports of richer countries. Overall, international developmental projects bring tangible results for the population – for instance, the road network has improved substantially over the last few years – but Afghanistan still remains one of the poorest countries in the world. More than 2/3 of the population is illiterate, 42% live below the poverty line and 79% have no access to adequate sanitation. Life expectancy of 44 is 219th lowest worldwide. The key challenge of the ongoing development projects is to achieve sustained economic growth that would not collapse once the international projects terminate.

The European Union is becoming an increasingly important and visible actor in Afghanistan both in terms of extensive developmental contribution (roughly 1 billion Euro a year) and active participation in political dialogue between the international community and the government of Afghanistan. The key priorities of the EU-backed projects include the health sector, the security sector reform as well as justice sector reform. The EU representatives said that the earlier approach of dividing tasks among the EU member states (for instance, one country being responsible for the justice sector, another – for counternarcotics, etc.) is now obsolete and the EU is conducting its activities in Afghanistan in a unified manner.

The NATO PA delegation visited the Turkish-led PRT in the Wardak province. This PRT, established in 2006, stands out as being civilian-led and much less military-oriented than other PRTs. Also, its projects are increasingly Afghan-led. From its establishment in 2006, more than 100 projects were conducted with the aggregate budget of roughly 27 million US dollars. The projects focused on a wide range of sectors, including health, education, social protection, agriculture and rural development, physical security, good governance and the rule of law as well as humanitarian aid. The PRT enjoys excellent cooperation with the governor.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Senator Joseph A. Day
Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA)

Travel Costs

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| ASSOCIATION | Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA) |
| ACTIVITY | Visit of the Defence and Security Committee |
| DESTINATION | Afghanistan |
| DATES | October 24-27, 2010 |
| DELEGATION | |
| SENATE | Senator Joseph Day |
| HOUSE OF COMMONS | |
| STAFF | |
| TRANSPORTATION | \$8,876.06 |
| ACCOMMODATION | \$198.44 |
| HOSPITALITY | \$0.00 |
| PER DIEMS | \$274.67 |
| OFFICIAL GIFTS | \$0.00 |
| MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES | \$0.00 |
| TOTAL | \$9,349.17 |