

**DEFENCE AND  
SECURITY**

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## **NATO Parliamentary Assembly**

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# **VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND ST LOUIS, UNITED STATES**

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## **SECRETARIAT REPORT**

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*Assembly documents are available on its website, <http://www.nato-pa.int>*

## **I. SUMMARY**

1. Nearly forty members of the Defence and Security Committee led by Chairman **Joel Hefley** (United States) visited the United States and met with numerous government officials and experts. After three days of meetings in Washington DC, the committee travelled to St. Louis where they visited US Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base and Whiteman Air Force Base, home of the B-2 aircraft.

2. The main themes of the meetings were operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the general state of the transatlantic relationship and its prospects in the second Bush administration, defence transformation, and counter-terrorism.

3. In general, most officials and non-governmental experts who spoke with the Committee were optimistic about the prospects for Afghanistan. Much has improved over the past year: the Taliban is a minimal presence with little popular support, the national army and police forces are developing at a reasonable pace, and the central government is increasingly gaining control over the whole of the country. At the same time, narcotics production remains a serious impediment to the long-term stability of the country.

4. Iraq was seen as more problematic, although most expected the level of violence to decrease after the 30 January election, and the security situation to gradually improve as the country developed democratic political institutions. Even so, it is expected that large numbers of US troops will remain in Iraq for the foreseeable future. This presents a security paradox in some analysts' eyes; it is necessary to maintain a military presence until the Iraqi security forces are strong enough to stand on their own, but at the same time the presence of foreign troops may be fuelling the insurgency.

5. Government officials and non-governmental experts noted the recent efforts of the Bush Administration to improve transatlantic relations. The first foreign visitor to the White House following President Bush's re-election was NATO's Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, a sign of the president's priorities in his second term. The forthcoming NATO and EU summits are being seen in Washington as an opportunity to strengthen transatlantic ties following the rifts over Iraq.

6. Despite the evident desire to work more closely with Allies, speakers from both the administration and Congress voiced serious concerns about two issues that could re-exacerbate transatlantic tensions. The first of these concerned national caveats - restrictions placed on forces and personnel assigned to NATO missions. This is not a new issue—such caveats caused operation difficulties in Kosovo—but the problem has resurfaced in a potentially more damaging fashion over NATO's activities in Iraq. Although the Alliance agreed to the training mission in Iraq, certain nations are preventing their personnel assigned to NATO multinational staff from participating in this mission. Defense Department officials pointed out that this not only affects the mission in Iraq but, more importantly for the long term, runs counter to the spirit of multi-nationality that underpins NATO's military structure and to the principle of consensus itself.

7. Another issue threatening to cloud the horizon is the prospect that the European Union will lift its embargo on arms sales to China. Several EU members are working to lift this ban imposed 15 years ago following China's crackdown on protestors in Tiananmen Square. The United States is concerned that this would allow China to purchase European weapons systems and increase its ability to threaten the independence of Taiwan. Strength of feeling on the issue varied, but given the heavy presence of US forces in the Pacific, many US officials were alarmed at the prospect that European weapons might be used against American forces in the event of a conflict between the US and China. The most restrained view was that transatlantic defence-industrial co-operation

would be far more problematic if the ban were lifted. However, one Senator said that it was difficult to see how a nation that sold arms to China could be an ally of the United States.

8. The DSC meeting in the United States concluded with visits to United States Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois and to the Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, the home of America's B-2 Spirit stealth bomber fleet. Both provided vivid illustrations of United States technological and military prowess, and the truly global nature of its operations. The visit was hosted by Rep. **John Shimkus** (United States), and accompanied by several members of Congress.

## **II. AFGHANISTAN**

9. **Ian Brzezinski**, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Europe and NATO Policy noted that the mission in Afghanistan represents a significant success for the region and for the alliance. His main concern was seeing that forces are committed to fill the second stage of the plan to increase the presence of ISAF in the country. In particular, he emphasized the need to establish new PRTs in western Afghanistan. He was fairly confident that this would be accomplished by the end of February. He also welcomed the participation of Italy and Lithuania in the new PRT in Herat. Mr Brzezinski also raised the possibility of merging the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom and the NATO-led ISAF mission. The US has favoured this merger for at least a year but some allies have been reluctant to do so given the different character of the mission. But at the point, most troops in Afghanistan in both operations are involved in stability and reconstruction assistance missions, not active combat. Therefore it may be time to reconsider this option.

10. Ambassador **Bob Bradtke**, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, also emphasized the importance of NATO's mission in Afghanistan. He outlined some of the recent developments noting that five new PRTs are being set up in the western part of the country and that the US will put two of its team under NATO control provided that its European partners can find the personnel for the currently planned expansion of PRTs. Mr Bradtke also discussed the idea that we should reconsider a merger of ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom.

11. **Patrick Moon**, the head coordinator for Afghanistan policy at the State Department, also discussed the situation there and underlined the very significant progress of the past year. Militia groups are laying down their arms and rejoining civilian society. This demilitarisation program has been highly successful and 90% of the heavy weapons in the inventory of the militias are now in storage under the control of the national government. There is still a lot to be done on reintegrating former militia members into society, but many have joined the Afghan National Army. Mr Moon also noted that the PRTs have been successful in extending the power of the central government. Now that the security situation is increasing stable, the new emphasis of US policy in Afghanistan will be more on building job skills, education, and increasing foreign investment.

12. Mr Moon also discussed the narcotics problem. 206,000 hectares are under cultivation, providing 90% of the heroin consumed in Europe. The US in close cooperation with the UK is working on a five pillar plan to combat narcotics production in Afghanistan based on education, interdiction, law enforcement education for Afghan police and judicial system personnel, crop eradication, and alternative development. He added that eradication would happen under Afghan leadership and that the role of the US and the UK is to support their efforts through training and funding.

### **III. IRAQ**

13. Mr Brzezinski noted that the Alliance is struggling to fill the training mission in Iraq. Approximately 335 NATO troops are deployed on the training mission in Iraq and it is expected that NATO will eventually set up a training facility with approximately 1700 personnel. National caveats are playing a destructive role, because some alliance members are preventing their officers in multinational headquarters from participating in the operation. Mr Brzezinski emphasized that it is critical that personnel in the international military structure do what they are tasked with by the alliance's political leadership. Not doing so brings into question the entire multinational command structure and the basic principles of the Alliance.

14. Mr Bradtke also spoke about the training mission in Iraq and the need to support a mission that had been approved by all NATO members. The critical element at this point is helping Iraq become more capable of providing for its own security. He suggested setting up some trust funds to pay for transportation equipment and training outside of Iraq for Iraqi military forces. On a more general note, he emphasized the importance of reaching out beyond Iraq to other countries in the region and working with existing institutions such as the Gulf Cooperation Council.

15. **Michael O'Hanlon** of the Brookings Institution gave the committee a non-governmental perspective on the situation in Iraq and US policy options. He said that the security situation in Iraq is bad with little prospect for improvement on the horizon, although the situation may be somewhat better since the elimination of the terrorist bases in Fallujah. Economically the country is in better condition than under the last years of the Hussein regime but there are serious problems. Electricity generation has fallen off due to insurgent attacks on generation facilities. Progress is too slow to change the psychology of the Iraqi population and this fuels the insurgency. Public opinion is self-contradictory: the vast majority of Iraqis want foreign troops to leave the country but also want foreign troops to remain and provide security. Gradual withdrawal is a solution but the US will have to maintain some presence to provide security for the foreseeable future. At the moment, no reduction is being considered; the Pentagon is planning on maintaining current troop levels for the next two years.

### **IV. DEFENCE TRANSFORMATION**

16. Mr Brzezinski noted that although NATO has successfully reduced the number of commands from 20 to 11, there is less progress in cutting personnel associated with those commands. This is an ineffective use of personnel and there should be a renewed effort to trim the personnel structure at military commands by 30%.

17. Reform of the military commands should be matched by reform of the structures at NATO headquarters. The committee structure is unnecessarily heavy and is in some ways a relic of the cold war era. There is no need for four separate budget committees each with its own accounting system. There are other examples of inefficiency that collectively consume \$40 million per year. Mr Brzezinski suggested that this could be a fruitful issue for the NATO Parliamentary Assembly to investigate.

18. **Guy Ben-Ari**, co-author of a recent National Defence University study on defence technology developments in Europe briefed the Committee on the report's findings. The study found considerable reason to question the commonly held assumption that there is a wide and growing gap in defence technology between the US and Europe. The study looked at technologies under development in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden and found fairly sophisticated technologies in command and control, communications,

and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR). Mr Ben-Ari noted significant break-throughs in the area of unmanned aerial vehicles and an up and coming space capability. In conclusion, the study found that the assumed technology gap is no longer really an issue, although there are still large differences in how and how much individual allies choose to spend on those emerging technologies. However, Mr. Ben-Ari also noted that the C4ISR is generally less expensive than large weapons platforms such as fighter aircraft or combat vessels. He stated that the way forward in a cost-effective manner will be to work more on establishing linkages between systems across the alliance and investing in plug-and-play technology that can be easily integrated into existing command and control systems.

19. He recommended that Europe in general should commit to spending more on C4ISR and use the new European Defence Agency as a means of planning defence procurement. Europe should also open its defence markets to be more acceptant of available US systems that could provide a significant boost in capability for a relatively small cost. He also recommended that the US relax export controls and technology transfer controls which are a serious obstacle to transatlantic defence collaboration.

## **V. TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS IN THE SECOND BUSH ADMINISTRATION**

20. **Kurt Volker**, Director for European Policy at the National Security Council, stated that we are entering a new phase in transatlantic relations. We are in a period that requires unity among democratic states to confront the dangers posed by a confluence of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism. Military force is not the solution to all problems, and it is more important to focus on changing the environment that breeds terrorist activity. This was the message of the president's inaugural address and it has long echoes in US foreign policy. Free people develop prosperous societies and the long-term strategy of the United States is to help establish the conditions that will allow freedom and prosperity to take root in the regions currently beset by despotism and poverty. This will in turn eliminate the roots of terrorist activity and benefit our mutual security. It is important that we have a united transatlantic vision of the kind of world we want to see develop. As a united force we project a sense of inevitability, but divided we allow one side to be played against the other.

21. **Ivo Daalder** of the Brookings Institution stated that he is a short-term pessimist on the transatlantic relationship but a long-term optimist. In the short term, he sees very little change in the second Bush Administration. Style may change and rhetoric may be more polite, but the basic policy direction is not likely to change. Before the US elections it was possible for Europe to see the Bush administration as something of an anomaly and not representative of US society. But after his re-election by a wide margin, Europe increasingly views the US as fundamentally different. There is also a structural factor at work regardless of who is in the White House: Europe and the United States are simply less important to one another after the end of the Cold War. The atlanticism that has driven the past 60 years of US foreign policy is over to a large extent. His optimism stems from the fact that the US cannot do all of what it wants to do to by itself and will turn to its natural allies in Europe for assistance. A strong united Europe is a better partner for the US, although Mr Daalder questioned if the current administration understands this point.

22. **Hans Binnendijk** and **Richard Kugler** of the National Defence University looked at the way forward for the Alliance. They noted that some issues show an alliance in trouble, but the missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Afghanistan show that the US and Europe can work together. Both acknowledged that the time is not right to get agreement on a new strategic concept for the alliance, although that would be desirable. Instead, we should focus on more proactive steps that will make the alliance more effective, such as increasing the number of

deployable forces and building a special operations command. They argued for building a standing capability for reconstruction and stabilization in NATO.

23. On a more political note, they pointed out that the recent re-election of George Bush shows some distinct differences in the political climate between the US and Europe. Europe needs to recognize that the president has popular support, but the US must get more serious about the Atlantic alliance. Mr Kugler was more concerned about the US divorcing Europe than the other way around and that the way to that undesirable outcome could be long arguments about the Middle East. To prevent this from happening we should focus on pragmatic steps and then come to a debate on a common strategic vision. He noted that something similar occurred in the 1960s when tensions were high in the alliance.

24. Questions focused on the meaning of the president's inaugural speech and what he meant by spreading freedom. Mr Volker answered that NATO has had a role in promoting democracy for some time but that it could take a more proactive approach. We can no longer take a *laissez-faire* attitude toward non-free societies because of the link between a lack of political and economic freedom, economic failure, popular discontent and terrorism.

## **VI. COUNTER-TERRORISM**

25. **Lee Hamilton**, vice-chair of the US commission charged with investigating the attacks on the United States on September 11 briefed the committee on the commissions findings. He emphasized that terrorism will remain the main threat to the US for some time to come and that four basic pillars would be essential to a successful counter-terrorism program. Firstly, identification of the enemy and their reasons for attacking the US and other countries is critical. Is it a single global entity or a diffuse set of organizations? Are they motivated by a hatred of western values or is it more about specific policies and issues? Those questions are important because it is difficult to shape an effective strategy to combat them unless we have a clear picture of who they are and why they act. Secondly, it is important to better integrate the forces we can bring to bear against terrorists. Mr Hamilton warned that there is no single solution, but rather we need a comprehensive strategy that can integrate all of the elements of power including diplomacy, law enforcement, covert action and public diplomacy. Thirdly, we need to have a truly international effort. We must foster not just better cooperation between the different intelligence and border control agencies in the US, but also between the US and its allies. Fourth, we need to improve our collection, analysis and processing of intelligence. Information was available that could have helped to prevent the terrorist attack on the United States, but there was a failure at different levels to pull together all of the available information. Mr Hamilton noted that approximately four billion bytes of data come through the US intelligence services each day- the real question is how to sift through that large volume of data and find the vital bits of information.

26. Questions to Mr Hamilton focused on how intelligence could be better coordinated among allies and the need for better human intelligence. Mr Hamilton noted that there has been marked improvement in international coordination in some areas but that additional mechanisms are needed. As for human intelligence, he said that there is a long-standing need for better human sources, but the real problem lies in who is willing to be tasked for such difficult and hazardous work. It is unlikely that we will be able to build up a group of western individuals willing to penetrate terrorist cells.

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