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BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY MEETINGS, THE OECD, THE OSCE, THE NATO SCHOOL, AND THE GEORGE C. MARSHALL EUROPEAN CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES

HON. JOHN S. TANNER
OF TENNESSEE
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. TANNER. Madam Speaker, from February 14-21, I led a bipartisan House delegation to NATO Parliamentary Assembly meetings in Brussels and with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris, and to additional meetings at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna, Austria, and the NATO School and Marshall Center for Security Studies in Germany. The co-chair of my delegation was the Hon. JO ANN EMERSON. In addition, Representatives JOHN BOOZMAN, BARON HILL, CAROLYN McCARTHY, CHARLIE MELANCON, JEFF MILLER (Brussels only), DENNIS MOORE, MIKE ROSS, and DAVID SCOTT, and staff, worked to make this a highly successful trip during which we examined current NATO issues, above all NATO's engagement in Afghanistan, the alliance's evolving relations with Russia, and the effect of the global economic downturn on NATO operations.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) consists of members of parliament from the 26 NATO states, as well as members of parliament from candidate states Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia (or Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM),

and other associated states such as Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine. Last fall, I had the honor of being elected to serve a two-year term as President of the Assembly. In this capacity, I preside over meetings during which delegates discuss and debate a range of issues of importance to the alliance. Delegates have the opportunity to listen to presentations by specialists from NATO and on NATO affairs, and to engage in discussion of the issues raised. An additional element of the meetings is the opportunity to meet and come to know members of parliaments who play important foreign-policy roles in their own countries. These responsibilities can include setting defense budgets and determining the operational restrictions placed on deployed forces. Some of the acquaintances made through the NATO PA can last the duration of a career and are invaluable for gaining insight into developments in allied states.

NATO will celebrate its 60th anniversary at a summit in Strasbourg, France and Kehl, Germany on April 3-4, 2009. Discussion during the NATO PA's February meetings were dominated by four key issues expected to be addressed at the April summit: NATO's stabilization mission in Afghanistan; its evolving relations with Russia; plans to draft a new NATO Strategic Concept; and the effects of the global economic downturn on national security and allied commitments to NATO. Our counterparts from NATO-member parliaments also expressed particular interest in the foreign policy goals of the 111th Congress and of the new U.S. Administration. As I

will elaborate in a moment, my colleagues and I took the opportunity to respond to questions on these issues and to present our views on the current direction of U.S. foreign policy.

The key issue facing the alliance is NATO's effort to bring security and stability to Afghanistan. NATO has staked its reputation on accomplishing the Afghan mission by sending a sizeable force, extolling the alliance's capability for global reach, and expending resources to rebuild the political and economic structure of a country from which emanated the most devastating terrorist attack in western history. Failure in Afghanistan would likely call into question the future of the alliance. Approximately 55,100 troops from 39 countries currently serve in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), with NATO members providing the core of the force. The United States now contributes approximately 24,000 troops to ISAF. In February, President Obama announced that the United States will send an additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan in the coming months. Forces from the United States, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the UK bear the brunt of the fighting. The inequity of burden-sharing in combat operations remains an important point of contention in the alliance, and is a factor in domestic opposition to the conflict apparent in states that contribute the most combat forces. Each of us on the delegation made an effort to urge our counterparts from NATO parliaments to support ISAF and to contribute the forces and resources necessary to stabilize Afghanistan. Our delegation also emphasized that success in Afghanistan will depend on more than just military efforts, and called on the alliance to develop a more comprehensive political strategy for the region that includes increased engagement in Pakistan.

Relations between NATO and Russia in 2008 reached their lowest point since the end of the Cold War. Russia vocally opposed U.S.-supported proposals to strengthen NATO ties with Georgia and Ukraine, and Moscow's opposition to a proposed U.S. missile defense installation in Poland and the Czech Republic has sparked contentious debate about the merits of the U.S. plans. Tensions between NATO and Russia escalated in the wake of Russia's August 2008 invasion of Georgia, after which the sides suspended formal ties in the NATO-Russia Council (NRC). Low-level cooperation between NATO and Russia resumed in January, and formal ties in the

NRC could resume after the April summit. NATO members remain divided on how to manage relations with Russia. Our delegation contributed to a number of forceful discussions on the future of NATO-Russia relations and emphasized the importance of developing a unified approach toward Russia within the framework of a broader alliance policy toward the east.

Proposals for a new NATO Strategic Concept were a third topic of discussion at NATO PA meetings. NATO's current Strategic Concept was drafted in 1999 and a growing number of allied governments have called for the creation of a new Strategic Concept that clarifies and updates the scope of NATO's activities. Such a document could address a number of important issues facing the alliance, including a possible streamlining of NATO decision-making and commitment to more equitable cost-sharing of missions; a clearer commitment to the missions of counter terrorism and counter proliferation, and possibly energy and cyber security; and a rationale for future enlargement. The April Summit's Declaration on Alliance Security could serve as a foundation and impetus for a new Strategic Concept that would be approved in 2010.

While in Brussels, our delegation met first with Ambassador Kurt Volker, the U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO. He provided a briefing and responded to our questions on a wide range of issues including those I just outlined and NATO's ongoing peacekeeping operations in Kosovo. There followed three days of meetings of the NATO PA's Defense and Security, Political, and Economics and Security Committees. The meetings raised such issues as NATO's current political agenda, NATO's relations with the countries of Central Asia, NATO defense policy, and U.S. and European responses to the global financial crisis and economic downturn. At the request of our fellow NATO PA delegations, I presided over an open joint session of the NATO PA's Political, Defense and Security, and Economic and Security Committees during which members of the U.S. delegation presented views and answered questions on the foreign policy priorities of the 111th Congress and the Obama Administration. Representatives McCarthy and Ross each made forceful and provocative presentations during which they emphasized U.S. willingness to listen to its allies when determining the way forward in Afghanistan and in other key foreign policy areas. At the same time, they expressed their hope that allied countries

would increase their commitments to NATO efforts across the globe. Representatives Emerson and McCarthy also gave comprehensive responses to numerous questions about the U.S. response to the current global economic downturn and the effect of the downturn on U.S. foreign policy. Many of our counterparts from allied nations expressed their hope that the new U.S. Administration would reaffirm its commitment to multilateralism and international diplomacy.

We also held meetings with officials at NATO headquarters in Brussels and at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium. I had the opportunity to meet privately with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer to discuss developments in Afghanistan and priorities for the upcoming April Summit. Half of the delegation then attended a meeting of the North Atlantic Council, the alliance's governing body, comprised of representatives from the 26 member states. A range of issues – Russia, energy security, developments in the Arctic, and piracy in the Gulf of Aiden among them – was discussed. We ended the day at NATO headquarters by meeting with U.S. General Karl Eikenberry, who is a member of NATO's Military Committee, and a former commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan. He briefed the delegation on NATO's mission in Afghanistan and highlighted the need to create a secure environment for upcoming Afghan national elections, to boost the capacity of the Afghan National Army and Security and Afghan security forces, and to address the complexities of the political situation in Pakistan that is affecting Afghanistan's stability. The other half of the delegation visited SHAPE headquarters in Mons, where they received an insightful presentation on NATO military operations from NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), General John Craddock. The group also toured NATO's Special Operations Forces Coordination Center.

The following day, our delegation attended a meeting of the NATO PA's Economics and Security Committee at the European Commission. At the Commission, we engaged in interesting and informative discussions on Europe's response to the financial crisis, the state of the transatlantic trade relationship, and European Union (EU) policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia. A highlight of the day was an exceptional presentation by the EU's Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs,

Joaquin Almunia, who gave a lively presentation and concise overview of the consequences in Europe of the global financial crisis and of European proposals for an enhanced global response to the crisis. The delegation also met with the EU's Director General for Trade, David O'Sullivan, who outlined the principal points of controversy in transatlantic trade relations and the Doha round of trade talks.

The delegation then traveled to Paris for NATO PA meetings at the OECD. On the evening of our arrival in Paris, we held informative discussions with the Charge d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in France, Mark Pekala, and several of his staff. French foreign policy priorities and the prospects for French reintegration into NATO's military command structure were key topics of interest. The delegation welcomed the possibility of France's full reintegration into NATO, which could lead to an enhancement of France's already significant commitments to allied operations. The following day, after a brief session with our Charge d'Affaires to the OECD and his staff, we attended sessions at the OECD and met with the OECD's Secretary General, Angel Gurría. The state of the world economy, the global financial crisis, and the International Energy Agency's Global Energy Outlook were key subjects of discussion. The OECD is playing a crucial role in monitoring global economic trends and national and multilateral responses to the financial crisis at a time when global economic security and national security issues are becoming inextricably linked.

That evening, we traveled to Vienna, Austria, for a day of meetings with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its Parliamentary Assembly. The 56-member OSCE is a key instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation in an area spanning from Vancouver, Canada to Vladivostok, Russia. As President of the NATO PA, I was invited to address the 320-member OSCE PA during its opening plenary session. Our delegation also held informative private meetings with the OSCE Chairwoman in Office, Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis, OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, and the U.S. Charge d'Affaires to the OSCE, Kyle Scott. Two of the key topics of discussion were Russia's calls for a new European security framework and the future of the OSCE's monitoring mission in Georgia. Russia hopes to convene a European security conference later this year to discuss proposals for a reform of the

European security architecture that some view as an attempt to weaken support for NATO. Members of our delegation made clear that while we are willing to engage in dialogue with Russia on all issues, we would staunchly oppose any effort to counter or exclude NATO from the discussions. In my address to the OSCE PA, I called for robust dialogue and cooperation between NATO and OSCE member states to ensure that the current global economic downturn does not spark nationalist and protectionist measures that could become a source of conflict between societies. I also called on international organizations such as the European Union and United Nations to enhance and better coordinate their development initiatives in Afghanistan. The effort in Afghanistan is neither only a NATO effort nor solely a military effort.

The following morning, we traveled to Munich, Germany for site visits and meetings at the NATO School in Oberammergau and the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. I am proud to report that ours was the first U.S. Congressional Delegation to visit the NATO School in its 56-year history. The NATO School is a U.S.-German bilateral institution that serves as NATO's premier operational-level education and training center. NATO School Commandant, Colonel James J. Tabak U.S.-MC and Deputy Commandant Colonel (G.S.) Enrico Werner DEU-AF briefed the delegation on the school's wide range of training and education programs for officers and civilians from NATO member states and partner countries. We were particularly impressed with one of the school's flagship programs that prepares NATO members deploying to serve in NATO's Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan. By building operational capacity and fostering collaboration between allied countries, the school plays a crucial role in preparing the United States and its allies to face the evolving security challenges of the 21st century. The delegation would especially like to recognize and thank all NATO member and partner nations who enable the NATO School to continue its mission by sending top training personnel on fully-funded rotations to the school.

The final stop on our trip was the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. The Marshall Center is a German-American partnership dedicated to creating a more stable security environment by advancing democratic institutions, promoting peaceful security

cooperation, and enhancing partnerships among the nations of North America, Europe, and Eurasia. At the Center, we were welcomed by the Mayor of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Lord Thomas Schmid, and the Center's Director, Dr. John Rose. Dr. Rose briefed the delegation on the Marshall Center's wide range of programs and activities. These include courses for government officials on security and terrorism studies and in-depth research projects on a broad array of security and governance issues. We then had a lively discussion with the Center's faculty members on issues including the future of U.S. and NATO relations with Russia to international counterterrorism efforts. A highlight of the discussions was an in-depth debate facilitated by Representative Scott on Russia's possible involvement in Kyrgyzstan's recently announced decision to close the NATO supply base at Manas.

As always, members of the United States military contributed greatly to the success of this trip. The logistics of such a trip, compressed into a tight time frame, are complicated and require lengthy and detailed preparation. Our military escorts were from the Air Force's Legislative Liaison Office and the aircrew was from the 932nd Air Wing at Scott AFB, Illinois. They did an outstanding job, and I thank them for their hard work and dedication to duty.