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NATO Parliamentary Assembly

SUB-COMMITTEE ON TRANSATLANTIC DEFENCE AND SECURITY COOPERATION (DSCTC)

VISIT TO ROME, ITALY

MISSION REPORT

6-7 JULY 2011

International Secretariat

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* This Mission Report is presented for information only and does not necessarily represent the official view of the Assembly. This report was prepared by Alex Tiersky, Director of the Defence and Security Committee.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Nearly 30 members of parliament from 17 NATO nations travelled to Rome 6-7 July 2011 for a high level series of exchanges on the Italian contribution to the implementation of the Alliance's Strategic Concept adopted in November 2010.
2. The visit of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation was led by the Sub-Committee's Chairman, Sir John Stanley (United Kingdom) and hosted by the Italian parliament. The Assembly's Sub-Committees regularly travel to NATO countries for dialogue with officials and independent voices to improve members' understanding of national views and contributions, and to collect information for each Committee's analytical reports.
3. The delegation's exchanges with senior government and military officials included discussions with the Secretary of State for Defence, **Giuseppe Cossiga**, and the Chief of Defence, **General Biagio Abrate**. The delegation also visited the headquarters of the Italian Carabinieri, as well as the NATO Defence College.

II. ITALY IN OPERATIONS

4. Italy currently deployed over 7,200 troops abroad in 30 operations covering 28 countries, the delegation learned from a briefing at Joint Operations Headquarters provided by its Commanding Officer, **Lt. General Giorgio Cornacchione**. Italy is the 17th force provider in the UN system, although the first 'western' country; it is the fourth-largest force provider under the NATO flag and the 2nd under the EU flag. Among its most notable deployments, Italy engaged 4,200 troops in Afghanistan (including 650 trainers and leading Regional Command West); dedicated roughly 1,500 to Operation Unified Protector (Libya); 1,600 in UNIFIL (Lebanon); 600 personnel in KFOR (Kosovo); and 73 to the NATO Training Mission-Iraq. Italy also participates in the NATO and EU antipiracy missions off the Horn of Africa.



Sir John Stanley signing the book of honour with General Cornacchione to his left

5. The Joint Operations Headquarters (HQ) itself represented a new structure created in the late 1990s, which was designed in order to place the Chief of Defence squarely at the head of operational deployments, which had grown more numerous and complex. It is responsible not only for planning, coordinating and conducting joint, multinational and national operations and exercises, but also for the overall direction and coordination of all military contributions to the resolution of national disasters and other emergencies.

6. The institution also serves as one of five European Union Operational HQs, and has been designated as the HQ with responsibility for the EURFOR Libya operation. This particular HQ was not deployable and would be augmented by personnel from EU member nations should it be activated for an operation.

7. The delegation had the opportunity to discuss developments in Afghanistan by video-link with the ISAF Regional Commander West, **Brigadier General Carmine Masiello**, based in Herat. With roughly 8,000 troops from ten countries under his command, General Masiello stated that from a military point of view, he saw no difficulty with the plans for transition to Afghan security lead in the coming period, while warning that terrorist attacks were possible, as they were anywhere.

8. General Masiello praised the qualitative increase in the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in his area of responsibility, stating that they were demonstrating very good combat skills; leadership and planning capabilities were two areas in which further progress was necessary. The Afghan National Police – in particular the well-trained and supported Civil Order Police or ANCOP – had demonstrated its very high effectiveness and had reacted quickly and successfully to deal with a recent attack on a regional Provincial Reconstruction Team.

9. The General suggested that the anticipated spring offensive of the insurgency had not appeared as significant as in previous years, and the shift by the insurgency towards greater use of suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) might be a sign of a turn towards desperation – something of a 'last resort.' He also offered his impression that the local population in Regional Command West was gaining trust in the ANSF as well as in international forces, as demonstrated by the increasing number of IEDs locals provided information about.

10. General Abrate, Italy's Chief of Defence, suggested that as transition occurs, Italy would restructure its contribution to emphasise trainers and instructors.



Delegation during briefing at Joint Operations Command, Rome

III. ITALIAN MILITARY TRANSFORMATION AND NATO

11. The transformation of NATO under its new Strategic Concept mirrored that of the Italian Armed Forces, according to Secretary of State for Defence, Mr Cossiga. Italy had been transitioning to a professional armed force from conscription since 2000. Italy had since averaged 9,000 soldiers deployed abroad annually, with a peak of 12,000. Plans for increased annual funding to ensuring training and specialization of the professional forces had fallen victim to political shifts in Italy; nevertheless, at a time of scant financial resources, he said, Italian armed forces had increased their bond with Italian society and provided real benefits.

12. Indeed, defence reforms had successfully moved the Italian Armed Forces from conscription-based, static, single-service forces focused on border defence, to professional, deployable, joint/combined forces geared to global contributions to peace and security, General Abrate, Italy's Chief of Defence, told the delegation. Italy kept 61,000 forces ready for deployment, with 30,000 in a state of high readiness, he said. Italy was participating in the NATO

reform process and would make significant contributions in the discussions on NATO's Defence and Deterrence Posture Review as well as in the realisation of the Alliance's initiatives on missile defence and cyber defence.

13. General Abrate suggested that re-inventing the wheel of NATO's military structure was not necessary; the structure has been tested and passed these tests successfully, in particular in rapid response to the need for an operation in the Libyan context. General Abrate reminded the delegation that Italy did not consider itself a global power or actor, nor was it a nuclear power or permanent member of the UN Security Council. On the other hand, beyond its significant contributions in the NATO, UN, and EU contexts, it considered itself a major player in the enlarged Mediterranean area.

14. Italy is strongly committed to international cooperation on armaments and seeks pragmatism in this regard, according to National Armaments Director, **Lt. General Claudio DeBertolis**. He called for greater harmonization and clarity of armament requirements across NATO and the EU, and more flexible contracts that could be adjustable in mid-course as means to ensure value for money in capability development. General DeBertolis also called for greater impetus to the European Defence Agency, which he said could deliver real value.

15. The ongoing transformation of the Italian armed forces was necessary but faced many challenges, according to **Valerio Briani**, Associate Fellow at the International Affairs Institute. The difficulties were both organisational and cultural. Organisationally, the budget of the Italian armed forces was skewed towards personnel costs due to many factors, including an excessive proportion of officers to petty officers. Such economic realities meant that training, essential to modernisation and effectiveness, was subject to under-funding. Procurement was similarly affected.

16. While solutions to these problems were possible, Briani stated, they were further complicated by a generalised lack of defence culture in the political elite. For fifty years, military operations and investments have been justified solely on coalition and Alliance grounds; discussion of the Italian national interest has been lacking from the debate. Parliamentary scrutiny focused not on strategic questions, according to Briani, but on marginal aspects of major decisions.

17. Both Briani and **Professor Stefano Silvestri**, President of the International Affairs Institute, endorsed multi-national arrangements such as pooling, sharing, and specialisation approaches to capability development, suggesting that there simply was no alternative. Mr Silvestri, however, noted that a completely 'specialised' Europe could not have launched the Libya operation, given that Germany chose not to participate – thus raising the danger that excessive specialisation could lead to paralysis.

IV. SPECIALISED ITALIAN UNITS

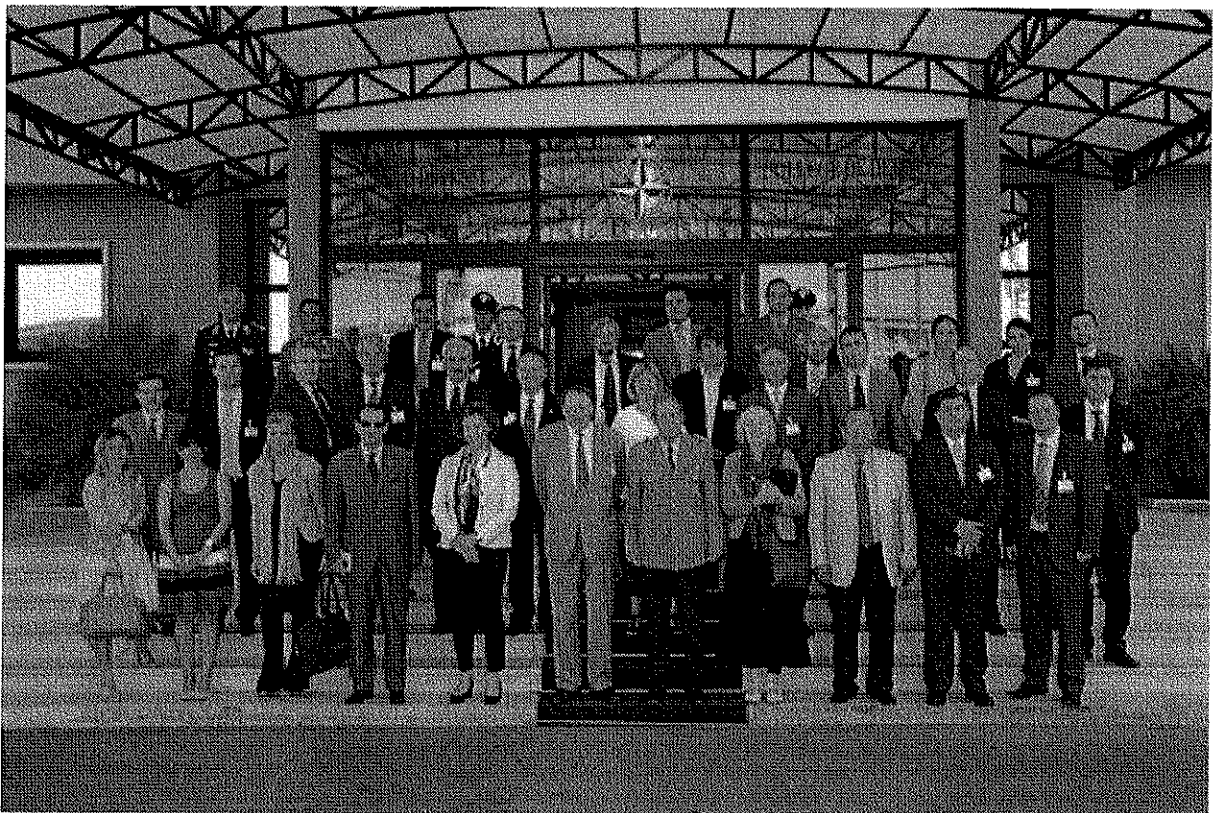
18. The delegation was briefed on the Italian Joint Special Forces Operations Headquarters (COFS), which was launched in 2004. The HQ calls on forces from each military service's special forces in support of Italian and Alliance operations; interoperability with NATO Special Forces policies was assured. Such forces had been very effective in the Afghan context, the briefer suggested, in activities ranging across various regional commands.

19. In a visit to the Carabinieri Corps, the delegation learned about the dual responsibilities for national defence and public order and security of this exceptional force. As both an armed force and a police organisation, the Carabinieri report to both the Ministries of Defence and Interior, respectively. Some 5,300 Carabinieri personnel are deployed on Italian soil, in a presence

extending to even the smallest villages. In addition, 620 Carabinieri are deployed abroad, with roughly 500 of those employed in diplomatic institutions. Carabinieri had deployed in NATO missions in Kosovo, Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Georgia, Congo, and elsewhere, conducting tasks such as training and mentoring of local forces, crisis monitoring, and military police tasks. The establishment of the highly-regarded Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units also offered a unique contribution to the further development of the civil-military nexus that the Carabinieri represent.

V. THE NATO DEFENCE COLLEGE

20. The delegation took the opportunity to visit the Rome-based NATO Defence College (NDC), an educational institution founded by US President Eisenhower in 1951 to prepare officers for leadership in the Alliance context. The College's efforts are based on three pillars: education (including the well-known Senior Course), outreach (to Partners and others), and research (publications and conferences). Major new initiatives such as the Middle East Faculty program have demonstrated the NDC's continued evolution to address current challenges. The NDC's Commandant, **Lieutenant General Wolf-Dieter Loeser**, suggested that the difficult financial climate for military education increased the College's value as a 'smart defence' initiative, as it pooled resources from many nations. He called on nations to ensure that the 'right' students were sent for courses at the College – namely those with significant future leadership potential – and to continue to fund faculty and research positions, given the exceptional value they deliver as part of the NDC's staff. Finally, the delegation engaged in a spirited debate with **Dr Karl-Heinz Kamp**, Head of the Research Division, on NATO's nuclear policy.



Delegation in front of NATO Defence College, Rome
