

Representative DAVID SCOTT was very engaged on the issue of energy security and was successful in offering three amendments to the resolution proposed on energy and security.

The Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security also heard a report on energy security and the protection of energy infrastructure, along with reports on Kosovo and the future stability in the Balkans, and democracy and security in Central Asia. The Committee also heard presentations on the Balkans and Central Asia.

On Tuesday, the final day of the plenary, the general assembly debated and approved a resolution on relations with Russia. The consensus view was that NATO and Russia should resume their dialogue and continue to find ways to cooperate with each other on critical issues. Also on Tuesday, the Assembly elected new officers to serve during 2009. I had the honor of being elected President of the Assembly and look forward to an interesting and productive year.

Prior to arriving in Valencia for the NPA Plenary, the delegation traveled to Italy on November 10–13 for bi-lateral meetings in Rome and Florence. In Rome, the delegation received a briefing by U.S. Charge d' Affairs, Barbara Leaf and Embassy staff on current relations between Italy and the United States, that continues to be strong. After the briefing, the delegation, in honor of Veterans Day, traveled to the Sicily-Rome Cemetery in the town of Nettuno, just outside the city of Anzio.

During the Second World War, the critical Italian campaign was launched in Sicily and proceeded up the coast of Italy. The delegation visited the resting place of almost 8,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, and airman who died in the liberation of Sicily and in the landings at Salerno and Anzio. The beautiful cemetery is managed by the U.S. American Battle Monuments Commission. Together, the members of the delegation laid a wreath at the cemetery's central monument, "Brothers in Arms." Members of the delegation also visited individual graves of fallen soldiers from their states to place a rose in memory of those servicemen. This was perhaps the most memorable and poignant moment of the delegation's trip. We were deeply honored to visit the cemetery and want to thank Ron Grosso of the Commission and Joseph Bevilacqua, Cemetery Superintendent, for their hospitality and the fine job they do preserving the memory of those U.S. servicemen who gave their lives in Italy.

Upon our return to Rome, the delegation visited the NATO Defense College for a tour and briefing by the College Commandant, Lt. Gen. Wolf-Dieter Loeser. The College was created in 1951 at the suggestion of General Dwight Eisenhower who argued that military officers from the newly created NATO Alliance "needed an establishment where they could meet and learn to operate together." The Commandant briefed us on the work taking place at the College and the issues currently under discussion in the Fall curriculum. We also had the opportunity to meet several U.S. military personnel attending the Senior Course.

Following the visit to the Defense College, the delegation visited the Italian Ministry of Defense. We were briefed by the Deputy Minister of Defense Crosetto and the head of the Italian General Staff, General Camporini who gave us an overview of the numerous oper-

ations that the Italian military were currently engaged in. Italy has approximately 8,000 troops stationed abroad, including 2,200 in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, 2,500 in Lebanon, and 83 engaged in training the Iraqi National Police. This meeting provided a precise, focused discussion of how Italy is contributing to the global security mission.

Also in Rome, the delegation was hosted at a working lunch by Senator Sergio Di Gregorio, President of the Italian delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. We had a very animated discussion on issues ranging from the U.S. presidential elections, to Afghanistan, to Russia and energy security. At the time of our visit, the Italian Senate was in the middle of a debate on their defense budget. With the global economic crisis affecting everyone, Senator Di Gregorio told us that the defense budget for next year would be less than 1 percent of the Italian GDP. As a result, we were told it was unlikely that Italy could do much more in Afghanistan. Following our meeting at the Senate, the delegation met with Mr. Gianni Letta, Under Secretary of the Council of Ministers and close advisor to Prime Minister Berlusconi. Mr. Letta covered a range of issues but spent some time addressing the impact of the global financial crisis on Italy.

On November 13, the delegation traveled to Florence. We were met by U.S. Consul General Mary Ellen Countryman who briefed the delegation on the work the Consulate does in Tuscany and the surrounding region. Tuscany is home to several thousand U.S. citizens, retired, employed, or students studying abroad. While in Florence we also visited the European University Institute which operates a campus comprising doctoral students from all over Europe. We were warmly welcomed by EUI President Yves Menv, faculty and students. A lively discussion followed on the U.S. elections and its impact on transatlantic relations, the differences between the European and U.S. views of the world, and the future role of NATO, relations with Russia, and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our visit to Italy concluded that evening at a dinner hosted by New York University which operates a campus outside Florence for American students studying in Italy. Our dinner was hosted by Ms. Ellyn Toscano, Director of the Campus. Ellyn is no stranger to the House of Representatives where she served for several years as the chief of staff to our colleague, JOSÉ SERRANO.

Madam Speaker, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly provides a unique opportunity for Members of Congress to engage in serious discussions on critical issues with our colleagues from other NATO member states. I believe our delegation, and thus this Congress, benefits greatly from the information we exchange and the personalities we meet during these meetings. I look forward to a very productive Assembly during 2009.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our Embassy staff in Rome and Madrid, our Consular services in Florence and our entire military escort group from the United States Air Force, including the pilots who took us to Europe and back for the NPA sessions. Our diplomatic corps and military personnel provide a quiet but invaluable service in ensuring safety and an efficient schedule for U.S. congressional delegations, and this group of diplomats, servicemen

and women was no exception. I thank them for their hard work and their dedication to duty.

TRIBUTE TO MUNSON'S
CHOCOLATES

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 7, 2009

Mr. COURTNEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Bob Munson and the employees of Munson's Chocolates which is headquartered in Bolton, Connecticut.

During the recent holiday season, I had the privilege of visiting Iraq and Afghanistan with a Congressional Delegation led by Representative GENE TAYLOR of Mississippi and witnessed first hand the important work being done by the men and women of our armed forces. Our group spent time meeting with civilian and military leaders serving on the ground in each country. The holidays are always a difficult time for the men and women of the armed forces as they are away from their loved ones. One of the things that they will tell you makes this time of year a little easier is to enjoy some of the comforts of home.

Thanks to Bob Munson, President of Munson's Chocolates of Bolton, the men and women of the 890th Engineer Battalion and the 926th Engineer Brigade, Multi-National Division currently serving in Baghdad were able to enjoy a sweet reminder of home. A few days before Christmas Congressman TAYLOR arranged for 2,000 pounds of shrimp gumbo to be served to the battalion and Munson's donated almost 600 Connecticut made chocolate bars for dessert. This gift is just another example of the generosity of the Munson family, who for generations has been active supporters of the military community.

The Munson family of employees is no stranger to the heartache families endure while their loved ones are serving overseas. During my visit to the Munson factory, I had the honor of meeting Kay Doherty. Kay's son Stephen recently returned from a tour in Iraq. As Kay can attest, the holidays are an extremely difficult and trying time for military families which is why this generous gift is so timely.

HONORING JADE MOORE, THERE
WAS NO BETTER FRIEND OF
TEACHERS

HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 7, 2009

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, Pinellas County, Florida lost one of the pillars of our community and our teachers lost their greatest advocate December 16th with the passing of Jade Moore.

Jade served for 34 years as Executive Director of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association. In that role, he was the champion for teachers, but he was also the champion for the students they taught.

Jade Moore was a tough but fair negotiator, one who earned the trust and respect of all