NORTH AMERICAN SECURITY RELATIONS

An Address by Gordon Smith to the North American Section of the Trilateral Commission, November 2, 2002

Geography dictates that the security interests of the United States and Canada are very closely connected. Today an attack on the territory of one is truly an attack on the other.

Nonetheless the two countries play a markedly different role in the world, and sometimes also have differing views as to what is the best coun.6 12 0 0 1212 0 lpond212 apprehended21hreats. 05 TcE

The United States Government and many of the American people feel, quite correctly in my judgment, that their country has been attacked by a serious enemy in al Qaeda and that the threat of future attacks from that and other Islamists sources is very much present. Add to the mix some antagonistic – and not very predictable - governments developing weapons of mass destruction, and that increases the perception, and reality, of threat. This perception is, it seems to me, shared by most Americans.

Canadians generally understand that sense of being threatened which is felt by our southern neighbours, but do not feel that they are similarly under a parallel direct threat of an attack on Canada. I do not think this has changed even after the recent bombing in Bali which was evidently not primarily directed at the US but instead at another country rather similar in many respects to Canada - Australia. There is an "it can't happen here" attitude in this country.

In Canada there was a sigh of relief that the perpetrators of the attacks of September 11th, 2001, did not enter the US through Canada. Nonetheless, the myth that some did so remains, surfacing periodically in the US media and in conversations with Americans. It is understood in Canada that al Qaeda is present in Canada and that measures need to be taken to counteract it. In fact Canada (and, of course, the United States) was extremely fortunate that the terrorist Ressam who several months before 9/11 boarded a ferry only a mile or so from my home in Victoria, wau

st be taken to ensure our country is not used to prepare for attacks on the US. There was worry that border measures might become so tight that normal commerce would be affected. Indeed that is exactly what happened in the aftermath of 9/11. Tom Ridge and John Manley, delegated by their respective leaders, have been working hard to ensure there is in place an effective regime

good news is that in Iraq there are no war lords. Yet. There is little feeling of national unity among Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds, and that could lead to something similar.

Putting together a coalition for a war against Iraq has not been easy. The US Administration has clearly been putting great effort, not to say pressure, on countries in the region – "you are with us or you are against us". The costs of this approach could be huge if the US attacks virtually alone. While there are some who believe a liberated Iraq could become the beacon of democracy and market economy in the Middle East, there are others who argue that war could ignite the entire region, vividly fulfilling Sam Huntington's vision of clashing civilizations.

One needs to bear in mind that many, very many, people in the Islamic world still do not believe that Osama bin Laden was behind the attacks on the World Trade Centre. To many he is a "hero" for speaking his mind, and acting on his beliefs, about the evil that is the United States. Some people really believe that Israel, perhaps the Mossad working with the CIA, was behind the attacks of September 11th. One of Osama'a objectives was without doubt to stir up public opinion against Moslems in general and Arabs in particular. Saddam too could become a martyr, particularly if, as with Osama, it is not clear at the end of the battle whether he is dead or alive.

Moreover Iraq is not the only problem on the agenda. There is nothing resembling peace in sight between Israel and the Palestinians. The US is perceived amongst Arabs as totally biased in its approach towards Israel. The US is hardly credible as an "interlocuteur valable", much less as a peacemaker. Yet peace must be found.

The support the US gives to repressive regimes in the Middle East for reasons related to oil (Saudi Arabia) and to avoiding a united front against Israel (Egypt) is a major subject of contention in much of the world. Building democracy and protecting human rights do not seem to be major priorities affecting US policy choices in the region. These perceptions exist not only in Canada but in much of Europe.

Indeed, to many in Canada, the US seems focused entirely on the manifestations of terrorism rather than working on its root causes. Many feel this is too narrow an approach. Not wrong, but too narrow. Interestingly the National Security Strategy referred to above calls for more to be done to tackle the root causes; Canada would hope that will be the case.

The issue of the day is the role of the Security Council and what resolution or resolutions it will pass. It now seems likely there will be a resolution agreed to, or without objection by, any of the veto wielding members of the Security Council. Hans Blix and his team will then arrive in Iraq. It seems unlikely that they will have access anywhere, anytime. The question will then be what happens next. Saddam will play for delay and division amongst the P-5. The US will push for immediate action. It is only then that we shall know for certain whether the US allies – except for Britain which is certain – will be supportive of an attack. Prime Minister Chrétieu 397sons of

Security Council authorization, Canada would send forces. The implication seems to be that, without that authority, Canada will not participate. But I could be wrong.

What does this mean for North American security relations, and the role of the Trilateral Commission? Here are my conclusions.

1. The most serious threat to the United States today comes from al Qaeda. It is real and present. It is "existential", in the sense that the enemy wants to "destroy" the US.
2. The direct threat to Canada is also real, although less acute, particularly as long as we are seen as a US ally.
3. The greatest threat to Canada at this time, however, comes from Canada being used as a staging area for attacks on the US.
4. Canada must do everything in its power to secure its borders, maintain a vigilant watch in Canada of potential terrorists, and help protect the border with the US.
5. The border between the US and Canada must be kept open for goods and people; this will require both better technology and money.
6. There is no higher priority for Canada than helping in operations such as we have seen in Afghanistan; we must have the military capability to do so.
7. A major effort has to be made by the US and others to bring about peace or something reasonably closely approximating thereto in the Middle East; this means two states living securely within their own borders, with sufficient economic development in Palestine as to constitute a real constituency for peace.
8. The US and others should be trying to bring about "regime change" more generally in the non-democratic Arab world.
9. Canada should take a lead in rallying international support in an effort, even if last ditch and apparently doomed to failure, that will serve to underline Iraq's determination to develop weapons of mass destruction and thus brazenly flaunt UN Security Council resolutions.
10. Inspections should be possible anywhere and anytime; detail needs to be provided on what is known about Iraq's activities in the WMD field; tight deadlines should be set; only then should an attack be executed; the coalition will at that point be easier to build. And I hope will include Canada.