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# DOCA

Defense Orientation Conference Association



## DOCA's Canada Visit Overview

April 2014

Nineteen DOCA members, including new member Karl Dean from Nashville, TN met in Ottawa, Canada last week to learn more about one of our most important allies. The unseasonably frigid temperatures didn't detract from the warm welcome we received from both our own Embassy personnel and the Canadian government.

After Board and Executive Committee meetings on Sunday afternoon at the Westin hotel we enjoyed an Ice Breaker reception in the beautiful Bonaventure Suite on the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor overlooking Parliament Hill. The next morning, we made the short drive to the U.S. Embassy where a dozen or more key members of the Country Team discussed their varied responsibilities and answered our many questions. This was followed by an enlightening presentation from two senior officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, (Canada's State Department). Then it was back on the bus to attend a panel discussion with a Canadian non-profit organization that is older than DOCA and even more closely tied to their defense establishment: the Conference of Defense Associations. Retired generals and other senior officers from Canada's armed forces were arrayed across from our group to describe the consultative and advocacy role that their dozens of member organizations play in Canada's defense strategy and procurement. The CDA and DOCA may differ in terms of our membership base and charter but we found that we certainly share close philosophical and social bonds.

On Tuesday morning, we traveled to the Department of National Defense, (Canada's Pentagon), for high-level briefings regarding their defense policy and procurement which, not surprisingly, differ very little from that of the U.S. Just as the United States has placed a priority on the "Air-Sea Battle," (the F-35 fighter, naval modernization and innovation), and the renewed focus on the Pacific, (the "Asia-Pivot"), so has Canada. A follow-on visit to the Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) reinforced this. CJOC is sort of a hybrid of the U.S. Special Operations Command, Northern Command and the former Joint Forces Command all combined. After a brief respite to freshen up at the hotel we had an opportunity that evening to re-engage with many of the Canadian and U.S. officials with whom we had met at the beautiful home of the Charge ad Interim Richard Sanders and his wife.

Sadly, on Wednesday, the worst Nor'easter to hit the north Atlantic seaboard in about twenty years cancelled our flight to Halifax and our planned meetings with the U.S. Consulate and Canadian Navy there. We will certainly look for the earliest opportunity to reschedule that portion of the program.

The common thread through all of our meetings from both U.S. and Canadian officials was how closely our two countries are linked economically, politically and militarily. Americans generally give little thought to our northern neighbor and perhaps take our relationship with Canada for granted. That's unfortunate but, then again, isn't that often the case between best friends?