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## Senior Women Leaders in Defense and Security meet for Strategic Discussion

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Article by Maggie Spivey

Senior women leaders in defense and security from Southeastern Europe met June 26-27 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, for a strategic discussion on capability development. The event, "Engaging Women's Leadership in Defense and National Security", was a collaborative effort between NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), in its capacity as the U.S. Partnership for Peace Training and Education Center (USPTC).

The strategic discussion was led by Vice Adm. Carol Pottenger, NATO ACT Deputy Chief of Staff, Capability Development, and included senior women leaders from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Norway, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia.

The impetus for this event stemmed from a document signed by NATO Defense Ministers in March 2011. The agreement addressed the need for NATO to build capability through multinational and innovative approaches in order to meet future requirements set out in the Strategic Concept signed at the Lisbon Summit in November 2010.

In the document, ACT was directed by NATO's Secretary General to establish a Task Force to facilitate specific recommendations for multinational initiatives, and Pottenger was charged with leading the Task Force.

It was during her attendance at the 2011 Sea Service Leadership Association (SSLA) Women's Leadership Symposium held in San Diego in March 2011 that Vice Adm. Pottenger met with Vice Adm. (Ret.) Phil Quast, USPTC Senior Fellow, and Dr. Maria Pineda, NPS Visiting Professor, and discussed the work NPS was doing with the Peace Support Operations Training Center (PSOTC) in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding women's leadership in security and defense.

Following this initial meeting and because of this prior work NPS had done, Pottenger elected to have NPS support ACT in planning the strategic discussion. Also, as the USPTC, NPS has established a good reputation and academic standing in the region, and had assets and knowledge of regional leaders to help bring the meeting together in short order.

As the USPTC, NPS provided support for the effort by writing the meeting's concept, recommending an agenda, identifying many of attendees, pulling together read-ahead material, and overseeing the logistics. Dr. Pineda and CAPT Barbara Ford, Military Associate Dean with the NPS Graduate School of Business and Public Policy, were critical in their roles as facilitators and thoughtful contributors.

But it was Pottenger who provided the necessary high-level leadership to bring the leaders together. She used the strategic discussion as a resource for her capability development tasking and as a way to focus on ensuring the best and brightest have the opportunity to be integrated into these capabilities. Pottenger also set the tone for the recommendations that came out of the discussion.

The meeting was unique in that it provided a forum for senior women leaders in defense and security from throughout Southeastern Europe. These high-level attendees worked to identify defense and security capability gaps, ways to mitigate these gaps, and how to improve readiness by providing greater opportunity for women.

Participants focused specifically on ways to more fully integrate women into defense and security leadership positions and how that can make a positive contribution to enhancing capability and increasing military effectiveness and interoperability.

From the discussion, the group developed potential recommendations to be considered for inclusion in the Task Force report. These recommendations include the following: holding an annual conference for senior female leaders in security and defense; conducting a regional study of the challenges facing women and developing metrics to provide a standard way of reporting issues relative to women in security and defense organizations; establishing a virtual peer group, website, or portal that enables senior female NATO and PfP leaders to collaborate and share ideas; forming mobile education and training teams to cover a range of related issues; and establishing a formal mentoring network/team. Ultimately, these recommendations provide a significant contribution to consider for future NATO and PfP capability enhancement.

Posted July 27, 2011



Photo credit: Peter Bertelsen

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