



EBTC INFORMATION BULLETIN

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SUBJECT: North American Summit

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Border issues, Arctic sovereignty and Canada's mission in Afghanistan topped the agenda yesterday as Prime Minister Stephen Harper met U.S. President George W. Bush at the start of a North American summit that has been shortened to allow Mexican President Felipe Calderon to return to his hurricane-threatened nation.

Mr. Bush and Mr. Harper met for 90 minutes at the historic Château Montebello resort on the banks of the Ottawa River before a dinner with Mr. Calderon. At the meeting, Mr. Harper raised Canadian concerns about U.S. passport rules, its about-face on border pre-clearance proposals and Canada's territorial claims over the Northwest Passage.

"It is really important that we keep talking about those things we don't necessarily agree on," a senior Canadian official said.

The White House said the meeting allowed Mr. Bush to gain a better understanding of Canadian positions on a number of key bilateral and multilateral issues.

Dan Fisk, senior director for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the U.S. National Security Council, told reporters that Mr. Harper explained to Mr. Bush "the dynamic" of how Afghanistan is considered within Canada, noting Parliament would have to vote on an extension of the combat mission beyond February, 2009.

Mr. Bush repeated the U.S. commitment to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, which imposes the passport requirement, but said the two leaders "were also sensitive to the need to facilitate the exchange and the movement between legitimate travellers and commerce."

Mr. Fisk also said that Mr. Bush came "away with a far better understanding of Canada's position" on Arctic sovereignty, but he repeated the U.S. policy that the Northwest Passage is an international waterway. The White House had doused any expectations of significant accomplishments even before the meeting started. White House spokesman Gordon

Johndroe told the press corps aboard Air Force One that he didn't expect any major announcements.

In separate discussions with Mr. Calderon, Mr. Bush discussed plans for U.S. support for a Mexican plan to fight the drug trade and criminality. Talks are believed to be under way for a massive program similar to Plan Colombia, which involves U.S. aid to the Colombian government to fight cocaine trafficking.

Shortly afterward, Mr. Calderon announced he would be leaving Canada early this afternoon to oversee Mexico's response to what is expected to be the devastating impact of hurricane Dean on its Yucatan Peninsula. Mr. Harper's office later announced that the summit, called to discuss the Security and Prosperity Partnership, will end about 90 minutes early.

Mr. Calderon had planned to stay in Ottawa until tomorrow for a series of bilateral talks with Mr. Harper. Instead, bilateral talks were held last night, after which Canada and Mexico announced plans to set up a working group to discuss labour mobility and a second on forestry and the environment.

As the three leaders met behind a massive police security cordon, several hundred anarchists, activists and the Raging Grannies group made their objections known, in spite of efforts to keep them well away.

Quebec police in full riot gear used tear gas to disperse the protesters, who had gathered just outside the entrance of the hotel and launched rocks, boards, apples and other projectiles at police. CTV reported that rubber bullets were also fired at protesters. Police had urged protesters to restrict their demonstration to a field about one kilometre west of the resort, but that plan was shelved. "We're going to reject the field. We're not sheep. We're not cows," shouted veteran protester Bill Clennett, who is best known for having his face grabbed by former prime minister Jean Chrétien during another protest.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Calderon and five of his ministers attended a luncheon at Ottawa's Rideau Club with about 30 senior Canadian executives and 15 Mexican businessmen, most of whom represent Mexico on the North American Competitiveness Council, a high-profile business group formed last year to advise the Partnership.

The laid-back nature of the meeting was evident from the arrival of the leaders at the sprawling cedar-log hotel. All three left their neckties behind and were wearing matching light-blue open-neck shirts. Instead of limousines, Mr. Harper and Mr. Calderon used golf carts on the hotel grounds, while Mr. Bush dived into a crowd of hotel workers who greeted him on his arrival.

After completing his bilateral meetings with his two NAFTA (North American free-trade agreement) allies, Mr. Bush took a spin on his mountain bike around the huge property, accompanied by Canadian Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day.

The protesters objected to what they said was the secrecy of the meetings and the fact that the decisions do not require the approval of their elected legislatures.

"The police presence here is appalling and I find it obscene," said Maude Barlow, head of the Council of Canadians.

When asked earlier in the day about the protesters, Mr. Harper said there were only a few hundred outside.

"It's sad," he said.