

CHICAGO: NATO Loses debate to “Demonstrators”

By [Rick Rozoff](#) and [John Robles](#)

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Video of debate:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSJXklOr7Sc&feature=player_detailpage

Hello, this is John Robles. I am speaking with Rick Rozoff, the Manager and Owner of the Stop NATO website and mailing list.

Hello, Rick. Thanks a lot for agreeing to speak with me. We would like to do a summary on the debate you had last night. Do you think the format was fair and who originally was supposed to speak and why do you think they were removed? And do you think you were treated in a proper manner? In the beginning you were called “demonstrators”.

Yeah right, days before the demonstration, as though our role is simply limited to marching and protests and so forth. That wasn’t fair. I assume that it was inadvertent mistake, though I can assure you that had this been a NATO official, they would have dealt with him with a lot more reverence and deference. But overall I would have to say, given the limitations – the fact that it was held at the Pritzker Military Library and was sponsored by the National Strategy Forum – that they dealt with our side better than we’re accustomed to being dealt with.

The moderator, he made a point of saying that there were only 60 people in the audience? Can you tell us a little bit about the security situation, that was going on there?

It was a very tight security situation, but the venue was small – could only accommodate about 60 people and both sides, as it were, the pro-NATO and anti-NATO forces, were allowed inside, were allowed some 35 people, so that is actually more than 60, isn’t it?. But somehow or another it worked out fairly evenly. The Rev. Jesse Jackson was there, there were international media, but it was a very select audience and kept that way evidently.

We of course, on our end, those opposed to NATO, would have preferred a larger venue, with a larger audience, but these are elite organizations – think tanks and so forth – and they live in their own circumscribed world.

Why do you think the original speakers were taken off the schedule, do you think that was planned?

I am glad you asked that. I’d love to know. As you are aware and as you’ve covered in the past, John, the two pro-NATO spokesmen were to have been the assistant or deputy, whatever he is, Assistant Secretary General James Appathurai and former U.S. ambassador to NATO and State Department official R. Nicholas Burns.

For inexplicable reasons – it was explained to me secondhand – for logistical reasons and problems with the format of the podcast. The fact that it was televised live to a fairly wide audience I think didn't please the two pro-NATO officials. Subsequent to that we heard a rumor to the effect that two former U.S. ambassadors to NATO, Robert E. Hunter and Kurt Volker, were to appear. They did appear in events sponsored by the same organization, National Strategy Forum, earlier in the day where they premiered a video promoting modern NATO, but they also didn't show up.

There was nobody countering their view, so they got to say whatever they wanted to.

Yes, precisely, every other event that's been held in Chicago except for a small one in a church a couple of months ago has been entirely pro-NATO, and this includes several events today and I am sure several in the interim between now and the summit itself. For example, if your listeners aren't aware of this – I live in Chicago, of course – there is a branch of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York that used to be called the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, in recent years Chicago Council on Global Affairs, and they brought in Madeleine Albright, former Secretary of State, they brought in R. Nicholas Burns, the person I mentioned earlier. Albright a few weeks ago went to a high school on the South Side of Chicago to promote NATO. There have been events held throughout elementary schools – grade schools – in Chicago promoting NATO, and in recent days in suburban communities, that is even outside Cook County in Chicago, people have been subjected to a barrage of NATO propagandas, so this was the one real opportunity, not to have our side heard, but to have two people from each side. It was the only balanced discussion to date.

Can you please, for our listeners, we have some people that don't have a chance to get on the internet or won't have a chance to, can you summarize the key points, the key arguments for and against, that took place during the debate, please?

Right, I should tell you who the other three speakers were. On our side a very eloquent, well-informed and heroic young woman named Iris Feliciano spoke. She is a member of the Iraq Veterans Against the War but is a 10-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, who had served in both Iraq and Afghanistan. [Actually only in Afghanistan.] She stated that she and her colleagues want to meet with NATO officials to express their opposition to, condemnation of, the wars that have been waged in Afghanistan and Iraq. I incidentally met a number of veterans after the affair and one of whom was a young woman who'd been in the U.S. Navy during the war against Yugoslavia in 1999 and she and others intend to return their war medals to NATO during the march on May the 20th.

She has a NATO medal for calling in air strikes and helicopter attacks against Yugoslav forces in 1999. So, there were number of veterans in the audience...but Iris Feliciano was extremely poised, extremely well-informed and offered arguments that were impossible for any decent person to refute.

On the other side, the very jocular and avuncular and so force, were the former U.S. Ambassador to both East and West Germany and reunified Germany, J.D. Bindenagel and one John Allen Williams. These are both people associated with universities in Chicago. Williams is at Loyola University and Bindenagel is now at DePaul University, both Catholic universities in Chicago.

Russian officials frequently talk about NATO not being willing to abandon Cold War thinking and what I really heard from Bindenagel and Williams was, not bellicose and not vicious, but nevertheless a complete Cold War worldview: one where they were celebrating NATO for having stopped Soviet divisions pouring across Europe and suchlike, which wasn't true at the time and certainly is irrelevant now in the face of global NATO waging wars around the world. But they seem to be locked, frankly, in a time warp, and the veteran, Miss Feliciano, who had spent 10 years on the ground, she knew what she was talking about, she knows what these wars are about and she knows what plight confronts U.S. veterans when they return to the United States, was able to talk about real history rather than academic perspectives on war.

During the debate you mentioned Dmitry Medvedev's recent statement regarding NATO. How was that taken by the audience?

At the very end of the discussion I made, if I could, an impassioned plea to people. I stated that 25 years after the end of the Cold War, 21 years after the breakup of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, I said: who, 21 years ago would have expected that because of NATO expansion and NATO interference in other countries, that the prime minister of Russia, until recently the president, Medvedev, would make a statement that if countries - he didn't have to name them, we know who they are, they're NATO nations - if they continue military interference into the internal affairs of sovereign nations, this could lead to a full-blown war including with nuclear weapons. That's a rough paraphrase of Medvedev's statement. And then I acquainted the audience with the fact that the Russian military chief, General Nikolai Makarov, within the last two weeks stated that if the U.S.-NATO interceptor missile system develops to such an extent that it threatens Russia nuclear deterrence capabilities that Russia might be compelled to launch a preemptive strike. And I said, who 21 years ago, who 25 years ago, would have believed that you would ever hear statements like that?

How did the NATO officials react when you said these things?

They weren't really NATO officials, but they were NATO apologists. A lot of quibbling, a certain amount of red herrings, you know, dragging up Rwanda for example at one point when that was never a NATO operation and there was no prospect of it being and then when that was brought to their attention they did have to acknowledge that that was a poor analogy, but what I find increasingly is the standard NATO argument over the past 17 years that NATO has intervened to prevent genocide, humanitarian crises and so force, and one of the two pro-NATO people raised the United Nations Responsibility to Protect provision. And I mentioned that shortly after NATO marched into the Serbian province of Kosovo in June of 1999, arm-in-arm with the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army, that within a couple of years a quarter million ethnic minorities had been driven out of Kosovo - Serbs, Roma, Egyptians, Turks, Gorans and others - who will never return again. And I asked them, where are you humanitarian interventionists now? Where are you Responsibility to Protect people now?

And I also, the pro-NATO spokesmen were attempting to suggest that NATO only intervenes for humanitarian and noble reasons and I reminded them that in every single NATO military operation - in Bosnia and Kosovo and Afghanistan and in Libya - NATO entered on behalf of one group of armed belligerents against another; in other words, they took sides in a civil conflict, and a military alliance whose collective population is 900 million and who last year

spent over a trillion dollars collectively on military budgets - with the U.S. accounting for about 2/3 of that, or over 2/3 of that - there's nothing to be proud of that you defeat a nation like Yugoslavia with 10 million people or Libya with 6.5 million people.

What would you say to NATO's claim that they contribute to security and stability in Europe?

That statement was made repeatedly by the two people I mentioned - Bindenagel and Williams - stating that "look what a great role NATO has done, Europe is at peace, there's been no Soviet aggression" and so force. You know, my response to that was, it's very easy for me to say somebody presents a threat they don't present and then when it doesn't materialize say that the only reason it didn't occur is because I stopped it. And to really believe that a hundred Soviet divisions are amassing on the border of the two Germanys to invade all of Europe is foolhardy and the Soviet Union at the end of World War Two had neither the capacity nor the desire to do anything like that, so it was a false rationale to maintain U.S. military presence in Europe, which remains to this day. And the real proof of the pudding with NATO is, again in 1991, 21 years ago when the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union both dissolved themselves that NATO, far from retiring, goes into the business of expanding throughout all of Europe and then starts waging war in areas far removed from the North Atlantic and even outside of Europe. This tends to suggest that NATO contained, at the very least within itself, the kernel of military aggression from its very foundation.

Ok, on that point, let's finish up. Anything else you would like to add?

I can only say it was very heartening. It was very encouraging, afterwards the amount of people who came up and spoke to Iris and myself, and particularly the amount of veterans. I must have spoken to a dozen veterans, easily. These are people who are young enough to be my sons. These are people of the age I was when the Vietnam war was raging and they were very well-informed, they were very principled, they were very brave. And veterans like themselves, of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, are going to be leading the march, as you may know, on May 20th. What better refutation of militarism and wars of aggression than to hear it from the soldiers who were forced to fight them?

I think that's great that veterans are supporting you. That's super. Anyway, what about demonstrations coming up? I am still interested in predictions on how many people you think are going to be demonstrating?

You know, one always goes out on a limb when you estimate the size of a demonstration, particularly if it's one you support. But I can only say from what I am reading, what I am hearing, what I am sensing, this is going to be a big demonstration. It will be difficult for me to tell you an exact number but I'd be very surprised if it was not in the tens of thousands.

I know the occupiers are really going all out here as well.

Thank you very much, Rick.

You were listening to the interview with Mr. Rick Rozoff, the Manager and Owner of the Stop NATO website and mailing list, and a regular contributor to the Voice of Russia.

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