House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

FAAE • NUMBER 009 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, June 7, 2006

Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

http://www.parl.gc.ca

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Wednesday, June 7, 2006

● (1535)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): We'll call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, meeting number 9.

Pursuant to Standing Orders 110 and 111, we are reviewing the order in council appointment of John McNee to the position of Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, referred to the committee on Wednesday, April 26, 2006.

We are pleased to welcome to our committee this afternoon John McNee, ambassador to the United Nations. Ambassador McNee brings a wealth of experience to his appointment. In Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs he has served as director of the personnel division and as director general of the Middle East, North Africa, and Gulf States Bureau. Mr. McNee also served on Prime Minister Trudeau's task force on international peace and security and at the Privy Council Office. Before taking up his current posting as Canada's ambassador to Belgium, with concurrent accreditation to Luxembourg, he had been assistant deputy minister, Africa and Middle East, at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Ottawa since 2001.

This is fairly timely, in that last fall a representative group from Foreign Affairs had the opportunity of visiting the United Nations and Ambassador Rock at the time. Certainly we recognized the job at the United Nations and the reforms that probably are in the works, and how important they are.

Ambassador, we welcome you to the foreign affairs and international development committee. I invite you to make your opening remarks, and we look forward to being able to exchange questions. We await your comments.

Thank you.

Mr. John McNee (Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations, Department of Foreign Affairs): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First, let me say it is a very great honour to be named to represent Canada at the United Nations in New York. I am deeply appreciative to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs for their confidence and support.

[*Translation*]

There are many qualities needed for success as ambassador and permanent representative of Canada to the United Nations.

[*English*]

Four qualities are especially important, in my view: experience, knowledge, advocacy, and leadership. I would briefly like to outline for you my own qualifications.

First, experience: a 28-year career as a foreign service officer has given me wide experience in the conduct of Canada's international relations. Abroad, I've been a consul, a trade commissioner, a political officer, and a head of mission twice. I have served in the Middle East, in Tel Aviv and in Damascus; and in Europe, in Madrid and in Brussels. As you noted, Mr. Chair, I've been assistant deputy minister for Africa and Middle East at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Earlier, I was privileged to serve in the Privy Council Office under Prime Ministers Mulroney, Campbell, and Chrétien. In sum, I think I have the broad experience to equip me well for the wide range of issues that confront Canada at the UN.

A second quality is knowledge. My starting point is knowledge of Canadian values and interests. Half my work experience has been in Ottawa, working closely with ministers, parliamentarians, civil society, and the business community. The other half has been spent serving Canada abroad. This has given me, I think, a good sense of what really matters for Canada internationally and of Canadian's expectations that Canada will contribute to the solution of global problems.

By working with other countries for the common good, Canada advances our own security and prosperity.

[*Translation*]

In terms of the agenda of the UN, Kofi Annan has argued that the UN is really about three things: peace and security, international development and human rights. I have spent much of my career at the intersection of these fundamental goals. As ADM for Africa and the Middle East and from direct experience on the ground in postings in the Middle East, I have developed extensive knowledge of these two key regions, which dominate much of the UN agenda.

I also understand how to advance Canada's objectives at the UN, for example, in advising ministers on human rights and a plethora of other issues over many years.

A third key quality is the ability to advocate and communicate. Our permanent representative to the UN is the advocate for Canada on a multitude of global challenges. This entails public and quiet diplomacy, public speaking and discreet negotiation. I believe that whether in conveying tough messages to authoritarian regimes on human rights or winning the support of our partners and allies, I have demonstrated the ability to articulate the Canadian position clearly and convincingly.

The ambassador's job at the UN is also about building bridges and persuading other countries to work with Canada and support our goals. My track record is of someone who takes a collaborative approach and works cooperatively with others to advance Canadian objectives.

Finally, leadership. Filling positions of increasing responsibility in the public service has given me an understanding of the challenges and importance of leadership.

The ambassador to the UN must provide advice on opportunities for Canada in the multilateral world, the most effective means to pursue our objectives and the consequences. An incredible range of issues is dealt with at the UN: the challenge is also to give leadership in determining what really matters for Canada.

Our mission in New York is composed of a very strong, committed team. My goal is to work with them to deliver the excellence that has long been the hallmark of Canada at the United Nations.

[*English*]

A message I would like to leave with you today is that the United Nations and the multilateral system matter to Canadians. As a nation reliant on trade for its economic well-being, Canada depends on an open, rules-based, international trading system. The safety and security of Canadians is assured by an effective non-proliferation regime, a program of action to control the availability of small arms and light weapons, measures to deal with terrorism, and peace-building programs aimed at failed and failing states. In our world of extensive travel, Canadians are increasingly exposed to new and fast-spreading forms of disease.

These are all challenges that only the coordinated efforts of the international community can tackle, yet the multilateral system—the United Nations in particular—has been under considerable strain in the last two years. The inability of the Security Council to agree on a course of action in Iraq, the lack of control of the oil-for-food program, and the abuse perpetrated by some UN peacekeepers, all have raised legitimate questions. The comprehensive reform effort launched by Kofi Annan resulted in commitments at the 2005 world summit last September, but they only go part way in meeting the challenges inherent in reforming the UN.

A number of steps have already been agreed to, for example on internal oversight, but a lot of work remains. There was success in getting a peace-building commission launched, which will aim to shore up good governance and democracy in countries threatened by or emerging from conflict. Fifty percent of countries recovering from conflict fall back into violence within five years—East Timor is a sad example—so we have to try to do better.

Nations also agreed to establish a Human Rights Council, to which Canada has just been elected. Requirements for membership in the council have been raised. The agenda and method of work of the council are being defined, and we will be working hard to make the council an effective body that contributes to the implementation of human rights around the world.

A panel recently set up by the Secretary-General, and to which the president of CIDA, Robert Greenhill, has been appointed, will present recommendations in the fall for enhancing coherence in the delivery of development, humanitarian, and environmental programs across the UN system. This will be key in ensuring both the effectiveness of UN efforts in the technical cooperation and emergency assistance areas, as well as in guaranteeing value for taxpayers' dollars.

Management reform—that is, reform of the way in which the organization itself is run—is a priority on which my predecessor has spent considerable time, energy, and demonstrated leadership. I intend to pick up energetically where he leaves off. Good management and effective control and oversight are essential to the credibility of the UN. It is therefore essential that errors be corrected and controls strengthened. Important measures have already been taken to enhance transparency, oversight, and control.

While a reform process has been launched, progress will be slow. A pervasive north-south divide permeates the UN, with industrialized countries concerned first and foremost about the peace and security dimension of the UN mandate and with value for money, and developing countries more focused on the social and economic dimensions and on development. Diverging interests and objectives will thus have to be reconciled, but I will work hard to advance Canada's values and priorities in that discussion.

Let me now turn briefly to two of the most difficult political issues facing Canada and the United Nations. The serious humanitarian crisis in Darfur has moved Canadians and engaged the government. The peace agreement recently concluded under African Union auspices in Abuja gives hope that the conflict can finally be extinguished and the needs of affected populations effectively addressed, but the situation remains extremely difficult. The Darfur peace agreement opens the way to the dispatch of the United Nations mission to take over from the current African Union mission, for which Canada has provided much support.

On Iran, Canada has been working at the IAEA and in other fora to convince Iran to resume its suspension of all uranium enrichment and other proliferation-sensitive activities, to cooperate fully with the IAEA, and to return to the negotiations with the European trio towards a diplomatic solution. We welcomed the offer last week of a package of benefits to Iran as the basis for renewed discussions for a diplomatic solution, and we are very encouraged by the willingness of the United States to enter into direct negotiations with Iran as part of the European Union's process, providing that Iran first agrees to resume the suspension of uranium enrichment. The ball is now in Iran's court. We hope Iran will respond positively to these significant developments.

● (1540)

This brings me back to the premise I started with: the United Nations matters to Canada. The UN in New York, its organizations, and notably the Security Council, provide legal authority and hence moral legitimacy to decisions and actions aimed to address geostrategic challenges.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

This is why I am honoured by the government's appointment and will work very hard to justify its confidence.

[*English*]

As I said, I'm very honoured by the government's appointment and will do my very best to work hard to justify it. And I look forward to welcoming all of you to the Canadian mission in New York.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Ambassador McNee.

We will go into the first round of questions and we'll begin with the opposition side.

Mr. Martin, five minutes please.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Sorenson.

Ambassador McNee, thank you very much for being here, and congratulations on your appointment. You've been a stalwart in Foreign Affairs for a long time and one of our best ambassadors, so congratulations.

I have a couple of questions, but first I have a short preamble. I personally hope that we'll see Canada push at the UN more effective preventative measures, particularly in conflicts. I hope we'll be able to move along what is taking place in the Ivory Coast. I also hope that while we're consumed rightly by Darfur, situations such as the Congo and northern Uganda are not forgotten about. And I hope that we're also able to advance some innovations in the issue of food security, where the numbers of people, as you know better than any of us, who are affected make all other conflicts pale in comparison.

My question, Ambassador McNee, concerns a couple of things. One is the millennium development goals, and if you have any ideas on how the United Nations can better address that benchmark upon which we all agreed.

And secondly, there are the UN reforms. If you had to list something you are going to be confronted with, as you articulated in your comments, what specific measures do you think we could champion in terms of accountability and management changes that will reduce overlap among UN agencies and, as you said, get better bang for the buck for the Canadian dollar and indeed all donors to the UN agencies?

Thank you.

The Chair: Ambassador McNee.

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

By way of preamble, I should say that I'm between my assignment as ambassador to Belgium and my new job in New York, which I should start on July 5. I'm not there yet, and don't pretend to be the expert.

On the first point Dr. Martin raised, I think we have to be very aware of the so-called CNN effect, which focuses on one crisis where the international media can get in and get access, to the detriment of attention to other areas—the Ivory Coast is a good example—which somehow slide off the headlines. It doesn't mean that they're any less important or compelling. I think the job of a professional foreign service is to bring those other dimensions to the attention of the government.

The Ivory Coast is still in enormous difficulty, in fact in a sort of civil war. There is a United Nations mission there, but it's certainly one that shouldn't be forgotten.

The Congo is an enormous country of huge strategic importance on the continent, where literally millions of people have died in the last 10 to 15 years, and where there is hope, if we can find ways to support the electoral process and the country going ahead.

In northern Uganda, I think my predecessor and the government played an excellent role in bringing this humanitarian problem to the attention of the Security Council and getting them to focus on it—and in being very active diplomatically. Mr. MacKay has directed us to be even more energetic in trying to work out a solution.

So this is a long way of saying I'm very much in agreement with your preamble that we have to find better ways to prevent conflict. The peace-building commission should be a good first step, but it shouldn't be the only one. Canada has to come up with its own ideas as well.

On the UN millennium development goals, this is a big challenge. The world summit last year, which was five years after the adoption of the goals, was designed to focus attention and say to the world community, how are we doing? If we don't step up our efforts, we're not going to make it. Of course, if you don't make those goals—in Africa in particular, nothing's static—it means a sliding away.

I confess I don't think there's an easy answer to that, or I don't have it, but I think it's important. They are a very important benchmark that we need to keep in mind as more than a goal. Regarding CIDA programming, as you know, the CIDA thinking is very much oriented towards those goals and trying to make sure that our ODA effort serves and advances them.

On UN reform, Kofi Annan has presented the detailed reports on internal administration, which, as a kind of layman, I would say make eminent good sense. They are what I would term the modern management principles, which we would apply in Canada. I think we have to keep arguing for the effectiveness of administration and modern methods.

A big challenge at the UN is that its internal rules and regulations, as I understand them, were designed for another era, when the UN was primarily that building in New York and organized and gave support to conferences. In the last 15 years there's been an explosion of UN operational activities in peacekeeping missions and international humanitarian assistance. The nature of the organization has changed; its own internal processes have to change.

The last question Dr. Martin put concerns overlap.

● (1550)

The Chair: Very quickly, please.

Mr. John McNee: I'm sorry.

Regarding overlap, I think the UN panel Robert Greenhill sits on is trying to look at ways to reduce agency duplication—streamline things, so you can get a better bang for the buck.

Sorry, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you.

Proceeding to the next question, Madam Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): I'm convinced you will be giving me as much time.

[*English*]

The Chair: We always do.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I'm not sure. Next time, I will bring *ma montre*.

[*Translation*]

Congratulations, Mr. McNee. You hold an extremely important position. I have two lines of questioning.

The first one deals with the qualities that you mentioned. The ones that you listed are important, but I would like to add two more. The ability to advise the government and the ability to negotiate. I'm not saying that you don't already have those qualities, but I would like you to tell us what you think. From your vantage point, you can assess Canada's standing in the world, and you can see that the country, because of the recent change in government, can now exercise more influence with certain countries and less with others. You can most certainly influence the government by providing your take on a given issue. In my opinion, the ability to advise the government is extremely important because you are on the ground and you can assess the situation.

As to the ability to negotiate, you are aware that Sudan refused the Darfur proposal to have a peacekeeping force in that country. When that type of thing occurs, what do you recommend to the government? Would the ability to negotiate not be an important asset?

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Chairman, I believe that the ability to advise the government is something that any ambassador for Canada should be capable of doing. In my opinion, it is essential to detect opportunities for Canada within the United Nations context and advise the government of the possible outcome of any given approach. That is a given.

As to the ability to negotiate, well, that comes with the territory. Canada has a sterling reputation within the United Nations. Why? Because we have invested our energy, our ideas, our money and our people in common pursuits. And that, in turn, earns us a great deal of respect within the United Nations.

The Sudan file is extremely difficult and very complex. I see no immediate solution to this problem. Trying to convince the Sudanese government to cooperate represents an enormous challenge. The approach that has been taken so far, namely, to work closely with our African partners, the African Union, seems to be the right one. But we are not on the ground over there. This is an issue that I will be reviewing with my colleagues at Foreign Affairs. I know that it is both important yet extremely difficult. We can't simply wave a magic wand and hope to solve this problem.

● (1555)

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Thank you. We will be in touch with you, because the Darfur and Sudan issue will be on the front burner until some headway can be made.

Neither the Liberal nor the Conservative government has set a goal of 0.7% of Canada's GDP for development aid by 2015. In your opinion, will this be a blot on Canada's reputation and its capacity to influence others?

M. John McNee: Mr. Chairman, any question relating to our development aid objectives should be put to the government. It is not in my purview to comment on government policy objectives.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: How do you think this will influence other countries?

Mr. John McNee: Canada has an excellent reputation when it follows through. When Canada promises to contribute 1,10, or $100 million, it always makes good on its commitments. That is not always the case for other countries. Some countries set goals or make promises and—

Ms. Francine Lalonde: So, in your opinion, it doesn't matter?

M. John McNee: No. That is not what I am saying. However, I think we have a very good reputation, one that is based on fact, and because of that our development aid partners respect Canada's contribution. I have to admit, though, that we are not at the top of the OECD list.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: No, that is obvious. We are at the bottom.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Lalonde.

We will go to Mr. Van Loan.

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to pose a kind of essay-style question.

An international relations student who is a realist might argue today that the United Nations has been a failure. We saw that with the failure to deal with some of the big problems and issues. With Iraq and the former Yugoslavia, the United Nations was largely absent or unable to respond in both cases, and it was left to other multilateral organizations or informal alliances or individual powers. Even today, where you see issues like Iran or the Palestinian process, where the United Nations is involved, it's an add-on, where one might argue that others are carrying the real freight. Other partners in the United Nations are there to provide, perhaps, an air of legitimacy, but they're not really the vehicle that's driving the process.

In view of that, this person might make the proposition that it's best to leave the United Nations to act in areas where there's broad consensus, and for other areas where there is not broad consensus, to look to informal alliances or other alliances or ad hoc groupings or initiatives to get things done. Would you agree with that proposition, or would you disagree, and why?

Mr. John McNee: That one could take a while, Mr. Chair, but I'll give it a quick stab.

Mr. Van Loan points out some “failures”. If we take Iraq and Yugoslavia, they're failures on the part of the UN Security Council to agree on a course of action, and that has had serious consequences, I think. If you step back and take a look at the broader picture, since the creation of the United Nations 60 years ago, you've had a huge expansion of the number of states. There are now 191 members, I think, of the UN, so 140 new states have been created, but the number of state-to-state conflicts has gone way down.

In the last 15 years, the University of British Columbia—and I can't remember which department—did a study, not of state-to-state conflicts, but of armed conflicts, including civil wars and other sorts of wars, and the numbers have gone way down. I think it's partly because the United Nations has been more active recently. It has found ways to head off interstate conflicts and has been addressing the failed and failing states. So there have been some dramatic examples, and Iraq is the one that has shaken the whole United Nations framework. I think we have to be honest about that.

That isn't to say that the United Nations isn't still central in fulfilling its mandate given it by the international community—its first mandate, which is on international peace and security. I don't think that precludes.... Even in the United Nations charter, it foresees sometimes acting with, through, or in concert with regional organizations, when they make more sense. I think the case of Sudan is a good one, where the first recourse, the African Union, makes eminent good sense.

I would be a little more inclined to think that the first resort should be the universal body to which Canada subscribes, the United Nations, and if, for whatever reason, that doesn't work, there may be situations that cry out for other sorts of action.

● (1600)

The Chair: You have a minute and a half, Mr. Van Loan.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: That was a lot faster than you said it would be, but I thank you for that.

The role of the UN might, in the first instance, be more controversial, and we talk about Iraq and so on. Once the so-called flashpoint of the conflict is past, the United Nations perhaps could be more active in stepping into places like that. We saw that in Yugoslavia, if I'm correct, but not in Iraq. In fact, in Iraq there was a tentative effort, and then they pulled out. What does that say about the United Nations?

Mr. John McNee: My recollection is that the United Nations Secretary General pulled his people out of Iraq when their security couldn't be guaranteed and their key people were killed, for number one.

We can't ask the United Nations personnel, who include a lot of Canadians, to take unreasonable risks. But at the same time, the multilateral system has very much come to the aid of Iraqi reconstruction, and Canada chairs the donors group of the multilateral trust funds assisting Iraqi reconstruction.

I think there's a recognition of the importance of Iraq succeeding, but that isn't to say, at the same time, that there aren't lingering deep divisions within the United Nations over Iraq.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McNee.

We'll go to Ms. McDonough. Five minutes, please.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to ask three quick questions. First, you spoke about the importance of the millennium development goals. Every witness, and there were many over the last couple of years, who appeared before this committee stressed that it's absolutely essential for donor nations to meet their 0.7% ODA obligations or the millennium development goals simply couldn't be reached. So I'd like to ask you to address that briefly.

Second, as you will know, the non-proliferation treaty process ended in complete chaos last June, and in October members of the middle powers initiative inaugurated an article VI forum at the United Nations to try to get this back on track. I wonder if you could speak about the middle powers initiative and how Canada can support this, because it really is a very major concern.

Third, today at noon several NGOs sponsored a very interesting and constructive event around the need for Canada to show some leadership in relation to the whole issue of small arms and light weapons. Currently we have a UN program of action on this, but are falling far short. They've pointed out that there are no international standards to even measure progress, and they were urging Canada to announce its support for an international arms trade treaty, which 45 other governments have done, to provide leadership around this. I wonder if you could comment.

● (1605)

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Chair, on the first question, about the 0.7%, it's one we discussed a moment ago.

I think the target is one thing. It's important that donor countries increase their efforts. That's absolutely for sure. Canada has done so in recent years in important ways, and that was confirmed in the budget recently. As I said before, I think that's one question. The effectiveness of aid delivery is very much another one, and that has been very much the credo of CIDA, as you know, and of our other donors.

Finding ways in which the donors can reinforce each other's efforts, cooperate, and... Some very interesting and promising things have been done by CIDA working with some of our like-minded partners, with the British and others, whereby we aren't imposing the same demands on recipient countries, but we'll be satisfied if the British audit a project.

So I think that—

Ms. Alexa McDonough: The British delivered on their commitment to 0.7%.

Mr. John McNee: I have to repeat, as before, that the setting of ODA spending targets is a policy question for the government; it's one public servants implement, and I don't really think it's up to me to comment.

On the NPT, I would agree very much that this was really a signal failure last time. The NPT has been, is, and, I should venture to say, will be central to Canada. I think Canada enjoys particular respect as a country that could have developed nuclear weapons—we had the capacity at the end of the war—but didn't.

I would like to inform myself better about the middle powers initiative. It certainly is a priority for us and a deep concern, I know, that last year no real progress was made on reinforcing the NPT.

Small arms and light weapons are the curse in Africa and in many other parts. It's a complicated problem because in some areas it's related to gangs and criminal violence. In others it's inter-ethnic, so even the definition isn't simple.

As you know, Canada took the lead in the fight against anti-personnel land mines and has been very active on the small-arms front. How we proceed now, I confess, I don't have an easy answer; it's something we should look at carefully, because it's the scourge in much of the developing world.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Obhrai. Welcome, Mr. Obhrai. You have five minutes.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. McNee, for coming.

I was in the UN with Peter MacKay, the foreign minister, and with Alan Rock, and we had the opportunity to sit in your future office. We talked with Kofi Annan and we talked with the assistant secretary general.

Many of the questions that are coming from this must be on government policy issues like 0.7% and the treaty signing and everything, which we'll debate in the House, but the main job that will occupy you when you're there will be UN reform, which is going to become the crucial thing in the coming years. Kofi Annan's reforms come in here, but Mr. Annan will be leaving at the end of this year. I do not find an appetite in the UN for the implementation of Mr. Annan's so-called reforms during his tenure.

We in Canada are a little concerned about how the selection for the Secretary General is going to be done. I noticed that it will be by the Security Council, leaving it again up to the five members in the United Nations with their extraordinary powers that curtail many of the decisions that come from the United Nations because of the politics being played.

In order to make this thing effective, the first area would be—and I want to know your opinion on this—the transition to the new Secretary General. Depending on his own agenda and on how much you and we push for the reform, I believe the new Secretary General will be the guy who does the reform. I'm sorry to say that for Kofi Annan time is running out. I did meet with the Secretary General and the other guys, and although they are working, I don't see the effort.

Do you agree that there is going to be no appetite now and that we should concentrate on seeing who is going to be the next Secretary General and push for the reforms at that time?

● (1610)

Mr. John McNee: I think that's a very good point.

It will be a very difficult act to follow for whoever becomes the new UN Secretary General. Kofi Annan has made a huge impact, especially in terms of highlighting human rights and the humanitarian dimension of the UN's work, but he is in the last months of his second term in office, and that isn't the time when any leader is best placed to push things forward. At the end of the day, though, he is the chief civil servant. The United Nations is the membership, and it's incumbent upon Canada and the other members to try to make the place work better.

Kofi Annan has come up with some excellent ideas. Some have been implemented already—whistle-blower legislation, ethical standards, internal oversight—and that's great. The more sweeping management reforms that he proposed have a lot of resistance from countries in the third world because they fear that it would lessen their say in how the place runs. We have to be sensitive to that but at the same time keep on pushing for what I called at the outset modern management principles and practices.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Let me just intervene for a second.

Your effort would be to work toward getting this new Secretary General.... We have said there should be a broader consensus than the consensus of the Security Council five. That should be where you should be working. Am I right? Would that be a priority?

Mr. John McNee: I'd say briefly that I think Canada launched an excellent idea, which is to let a little sunlight into this process, while respecting the fact that the procedure for selecting the Secretary General is set down in the UN charter and the nomination from the Security Council then goes to the General Assembly. For a position as important as the Secretary General of the United Nations, it really is an antiquated—that's a polite word for it—process, and I think Canada has done a service by suggesting a more transparent, open, consultative process, suggesting that people apply and so on. Let's see where that goes. Sometimes you have to plant the seed before it comes to fruition.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McNee.

Mr. Wilfert, five minutes.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ambassador, at the end of World War II Canada was the only state to in fact be on all of the committees of the United Nations. At one point it was even suggested that we become a member of the Security Council. Now we have a government that.... Mr. Van Loan's comments underline some of our concerns as to how committed this government is to the United Nations. Clearly there is a view that this government is not as committed to the UN as previous governments. So I would ask you a number of things.

In terms of the mandate that you have as ambassador to the United Nations, are you able to tell us what it is, and do you feel comfortable in terms of having the necessary ability to carry out Canada's national interests at the UN?

Secondly, what is your view of the ICC, the International Criminal Court?

An area of concern that certainly I believe we need to be highlighting at the United Nations Human Rights Council is the issue of Burma and human rights in Burma. And in terms of how effective this new council will be—and I realize you're not there yet—what role do you see Canada, or certainly yourself, articulating in light of the Havel-Tutu report from the United Nations?

Fourth, in terms of the whole issue of bringing the UN into the modern age, Japan is clearly paying more than its fair share and it's not getting fair treatment, in their view. Clearly they're now proposing another approach in terms of getting assistance. The Americans are giving lip service, it seems, to that proposal. Can you make any comments of a general nature, at least, on that type of issue? It clearly is going to be on the agenda come the fall.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

● (1615)

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Chair, I think the first question is really, with great respect, a political one, and is a question to put to the minister, if I might suggest. I would simply note that the government has made very clear the importance of our bilateral relations and our multilateral engagement. I think that's in a long Canadian tradition of the conduct of our international affairs.

The International Criminal Court I would put down as one of the innovations achieved in the UN system in the post-Cold War period, and one that I think has tremendous promise to ensure that there isn't impunity from crimes committed. I noted that Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, is the first one to be indicted. This court will cast a very long shadow, I think, and my personal view is that it's an important step forward.

As for the new Human Rights Council, I should note that it's just getting going. We have hopes that it will find ways to be more constructive than the Human Rights Commission, though one has to remember that a lot of criticism of the commission is partly because over the last 20 years its drawing attention to human rights abuses started to sting, and countries didn't like the stigma that attached to it. They wanted to get on the commission, those who misbehaved, so they could blunt that.

I think that Canada will work hard to try to find ways that make this council an effective one. Burma certainly is an area of concern. Whether or not the council will function in the same way of highlighting country situations, I honestly don't know yet, Mr. Chair, and it remains to be defined.

On the question of Japan, I assume that Mr. Wilfert alludes to its desire to join the Security Council. There was a sustained effort, as you know, not only by Japan but by Brazil, Germany, and India, to gain permanent seats. There was not consensus on that. My anticipation is that the issue will come back again, because the composition of the council reflects the kind of anti-fascist alliance that emerged from 1945, and doesn't really represent the current realities. On the other hand, the effective functioning of the Security Council, its accountability to the general membership, and transparency, to my mind, are almost more urgent problems and things we should work on as Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McNee.

Mr. Goldring, five minutes, please.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador McNee, once again, congratulations.

Ambassador, in your remarks today, you mentioned a peace-building commission that had been launched. From what we have seen in some of the countries, Haiti in particular, about real concerns about the effectiveness that the direction of the United Nations, either in its peacekeeping or its military presence there.... You had mentioned “threatened by or emerging from conflict”. I dare say that I think the country is really both.

In the discussions there, when we visited, there was some concern about whether they had a mandate, whether they had strong rules of engagement. In other words, by not clearly defining the mandates and the rules of engagement for the peacekeeping operations, there's a sense that perhaps there is still something missing in the direction. Of course that would lead toward your peace-building commission, which I would imagine would be a follow-up to it.

Will you be directing attention to that, to try to bring resolve to the concern so that when we are engaged in particular areas, such as Haiti and other parts of the world, there will be the troops, the area direction will have a strong mandate, and they will have strong rules of engagent?

I've mentioned an article that just came from the paper about a Canadian RCMP officer who was with United Nations troops. It clearly indicates, once again, that there was a lack of direction on what to do under the circumstance. I wonder if you could respond to that and the concerns.

● (1620)

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Chair, the first thing I'd say is that I'd like to commend the committee for focusing on the situation in Haiti. I think this is a situation of great concern to Canadians; it isn't partisan. Canada has contributed a great deal in Haiti in the past, and it is doing so again. The situation is in our backyard. It has important implications for us.

I know that the mandate of the UN mission is to be renewed, I think, on the 15th of August. I'm going to get there a few days after my predecessor departs in early July. I think it's very important that this mission has the kind of effective mandate to enable it to do its job. Even though we're not on the council right now, the point we'll be making clearly, just as he did, is the great importance of the UN mission being given the right mandate for it to be effective on the ground.

I note, and I only really have the press reports to go on, that the UN is investigating what happened in the tragic death of the RCMP officer. I think it's very important that this be pursued as well.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Well, that is a specific ongoing investigation. When we were visiting the country, the general comments actually mirrored that. What happens is that there's a reluctance to engage; there's a hesitancy about whether they have the total direction to go in. And there's a large area in Port-au-Prince, the red zone, that for some inexplicable reason has been left alone. Maybe it's waiting for a new mandate.

These are the types of things that are of concern for the troops and for the people who are engaged there. For the police, too, not to have the authority of arrest...clearly, these types of situations and authority should be given to help bring the issues along.

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Chairman, just very briefly, I recall that since the elections, the UN has sent a mission to Haiti to try to assess the security situation to determine whether the mandate is sufficient. So I think they're working on it, and we'll certainly pursue it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon, Mr. McNee. Congratulations on your appointment. I believe that you have everything it takes to be an excellent ambassador, particularly since, because of the March 2006 UN reform, last May, Canada was chosen to sit on the new Human Rights Council. I imagine that either you or a government official will sit on this council.

We have discussed important issues, including Haiti, Darfur, and Uganda. There is also an important issue here in Canada. You are no doubt aware that for over 20 years now, the United Nations has been working on a draft declaration to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples, but the new government appears to be ready to jeopardize the historic consensus that exists between the United Nations and Canada.

You have the ability to advise the government and make recommendations; do you think the time has come for Canada to show leadership in aboriginal rights, particularly since it is one of the UN founding nations, and because it has always been a leader in this area? What would you advise the government to do with respect to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

● (1625)

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Chairman, please allow me to clarify something about the Human Rights Council. As you know, the United Nations headquarters is in New York, but the council will be based in Geneva. My colleague Paul Meyer, Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations Office, will be in charge of the operations there. The broad principles originate in New York, but the implementation will take place in Geneva.

I am aware of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, in our system, the advice provided to the government by its officials is confidential. I cannot speculate on any advice I might give the minister from my vantage point in New York. It would simply be a representation, Ms. Bourgeois.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: You must understand, Mr. McNee, that it is an important issue. You have been telling us — and on this I have no doubt because I have read and re-read your brief — that you are an advisor, that you can make recommendations. You are a very important person. You tell us that you are aware of issues that are important to Canada, and you understand Canada's priorities. But you can't tell me if, at the UN, you will recommend...

I understand that the UN has a presence in Geneva as well as in New York. Nevertheless, if you are aware of the issues, then you know that, for the last 20 years, Canada has been criticized for the way in which it treats its aboriginal communities. You are well aware of the fact that the Human Rights Council will be discussing aboriginal rights in Canada. What is your position on this issue? That is what I would like to know.

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Chairman, I think this is a fundamental concept for Canada and for all the other member countries of the United Nations, including those that are members of the new council. All these countries are prepared to review their human rights performance. Canada has always been very open. Of course, there has been some criticism. No country is perfect. In my view, the principle is very important.

With respect to your question regarding the statement, I have not yet studied this issue thoroughly. Once again, I would say that the advice officials give to the government are intended for the government.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to thank Ambassador McNee for being here today.

Certainly, speaking on behalf of our committee, we wish you all the best there. The need for reform at the United Nations is not something that is questioned. I think all people recognize there are reforms that need to take place. It's not for a lack of issues that you deal with, whether it's poverty around the world, AIDS, terrorism, weapon proliferation, you name it, there are just so many issues, but the effectiveness of dealing with it is what your major issue will be.

We hope that the United Nations becomes effective in what it's called to do. Someone has suggested that if it doesn't reform it has the danger of becoming nothing more than a debating club.

We wish you all the best in your position, and thank you for being here today.

We will suspend and await our next witnesses.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (1630)

The Chair: We will resume this meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Pursuant to Standing Order 108, this is a study on Canada's role in complex international interventions that involve multiple foreign policy instruments focusing on Canada's efforts in Haiti.

We are very pleased this afternoon to have with us, from the Department of National Defence, Colonel Denis Thompson, director, peacekeeping policy; and Major Michel Lavigne, desk officer in Haiti, Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command.

We welcome you to our committee. We look forward to what you have to say. I noted that you were here for a little bit of the committee just prior, and you know the regime. We give an opening statement and then we go through a period of time when there are questions. They are five-minute questions, which include the question and the response.

Welcome to our committee. The time is yours.

[*Translation*]

Col Denis Thompson (Director, Peacekeeping Policy, Department of National Defence): Mr. Chairman, committee members, thank you for your invitation to appear here today and speak about Haiti.

My name is Colonel Denis Thompson and I am the director of peacekeeping policy at the Department of National Defence. With me here today is Major Michel Lavigne, who has just left our operational section that deals with Haiti.

● (1635)

[*English*]

I intend to speak to the role of the Department of National Defence as part of Canada's overall effort in Haiti. I am sure you are already aware that Canada is a leader in the current international efforts to reconstruct Haiti. I know you will hear or have heard from other witnesses who will be able to outline for you the considerable investments Canada is making in the areas of humanitarian and development aid through active and constant diplomatic efforts to support the newly elected democratic Haitian government.

As is the case in other fragile and failed state contexts, the key enabler for the success of these efforts is a secure and stable environment. As part of the overall Canadian effort in Haiti, the Canadian Forces have made an important contribution to the establishment of an environment in which reconstruction efforts can begin, along with our counterparts in the RCMP and in other police departments.

[*Translation*]

The main Canadian Forces contribution as part of Canada's whole-of-government approach came at the early stages of the current international engagement in Haiti. Following the resignation of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as President of Haiti on February 29, 2004, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1529, authorizing the creation of the U.S.-led Multinational Interim Force (MIF) with a 90-day mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to assist in establishing a safe and secure environment. More than 500 Canadian Forces members rapidly deployed to Haiti with this force. The CF contribution was based in Port-au-Prince and comprised an infantry Company Group from 2 RCR from CFB Gagetown, six CH-124 Griffon helicopters from 430 Tactical Helicopter Squadron of CFB Valcartier, and National Command and Support Elements. This multinational mission quickly stabilized the country, and it allowed time for the creation and deployment of a follow-on United Nations-led mission.

[*English*]

On April 30, 2004, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1542, creating the United Nations stabilization mission in Haiti, known as MINUSTAH, under a chapter VII mandate. To assist with the establishment of the UN mission, the Government of Canada authorized the extension of the Canadian Forces presence in Haiti until August 2004 to help bridge and ensure a seamless transition from the multinational interim force to MINUSTAH.

MINUSTAH is an integrated mission, meaning that all of the functions to be performed by the United Nations in the theatre of operations fall under one leadership structure, from the security aspects provided by the military and civilian police to the humanitarian reconstruction and human rights functions performed by a variety of United Nations agencies. Thus, the mandate of MINUSTAH encompasses more than the tasks of the military. The main task assigned to the military component of MINUSTAH is ensuring a secure and stable environment in support of the government.

In addition, forces are tasked with the protection of the United Nations personnel, facilities, installations, and equipment, as well as with the protection of civilians under imminent threat of violence.

[*Translation*]

MINUSTAH's current authorized strength is 7,500 military force members and 1,800 civilian police officers. MINUSTAH has symbolic and political importance for several countries. This is the first time Brazil is heading a peacekeeping mission as Force Commander, and Brazil currently contributes more than 1,200 troops to MINUSTAH. This is the first time there has been such a large Latin American participation in a peace support operation in our hemisphere. Uruguay is contributing 981 troops; Argentina 560; Chili 543; Peru 209; and Ecuador, El Salvador and Paraguay are all participating. It is also the first time China has participated in the peacekeeping mission, providing 127 civilian police.

Canada currently provides five senior Canadian Forces officers to the MINUSTAH headquarters.

● (1640)

[*English*]

While this contribution is modest in terms of numbers, in fact these are high-value contributions, providing the United Nations with key enablers in the form of experienced professional staff whom the United Nations needs for its forces. They also give Canada considerable influence over MINUSTAH's military operations and the coordination of humanitarian assistance and law enforcement.

The Canadian Forces contribution includes the military chief of staff, a colonel; this is a key position in any military mission. In addition, there are three other staff officers in important positions in logistics, operations, and planning. And since November 2005, a Canadian Forces colonel has acted as the manager of MINUSTAH's elections assistance task force, an important body responsible for coordinating the United Nations' role in supporting the electoral process in Haiti. While this position is not strictly speaking a military one, the United Nations made a specific request that it be filled by a Canadian staff officer.

I'm sure committee members are aware that the UN has been in Haiti more than a few times throughout the 1990s. It seems the international community has drawn a lesson from past interventions in all sectors regarding the need for sustained commitment. This requires a credible partner on the Haitian side, and most actors seem to believe that at this time there is room for optimism.

With respect to MINUSTAH, in February 2006 the Security Council renewed its mandate until August 15, 2006. At the same time, the Security Council expressed its intention to renew for further periods. This next renewal will take place with Haiti now under an elected and legitimate government, and in preparation a United Nations assessment team will produce a report that will identify new security requirements in the post-electoral phase, in consultation with the new government.

[*Translation*]

On the Haitian side, President Préval has publicly expressed his desire that MINUSTAH remain in Haiti. Political leaders of the Latin American contributors, such as Brazil and Chile, have made public statements expressing their solidarity with the Haitian government, and their intentions to remain committed to MINUSTAH.

[*English*]

For the part of the Canadian Forces, in full expectation that MINUSTAH's mandate will be renewed in August we are preparing to replace the four permanent positions we now have in MINUSTAH. The chief of staff position will change around in July of 2006, with the new candidate set to stay in Port-au-Prince for one year. The other positions will rotate at various times in the autumn.

In conclusion, while we continue to see localized and serious pockets of violence, the general security situation throughout Haiti has improved since February 2004. The remaining security problems in Haiti tend to be criminal in nature rather than to involve opposing groups engaged in armed conflict. It can be argued, therefore, that civilian police officers, both international and Haitian, are better suited for the task than soldiers are. Translating this analysis into gradual and eventual change in the composition of the response in Haiti will be a challenge for the international community, and one we will explore with the experts from the RCMP and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to the committee members' questions on this subject.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for your testimony.

We will move into questions.

Mr. Patry, you'll have five minutes.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I'll share my five minutes with my colleague Mr. Wilfert.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Colonel Thompson and Major Lavigne, for appearing before the committee today. Since you have been to Haiti, you are well aware that the situation there is very disturbing. It is also one of the priorities of this committee and of the Canadian government.

You have given us a report on the mission involving Canada and other countries as part of the MINUSTAH. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has said that Canada would be present in Haiti, provided its presence was required by Mr. Préval's government. We are well aware, as can be seen is happening in East Timor right now, that if we leave too early—and we did leave Haiti too early once—the same problem could happen again.

I have a very simple question about a recent event. In my opinion, human security, the security of our soldiers, police officers, workers and the general public is very important. Why did Mark Bourque not get the help he needed from the peacekeepers who were working beside him? Why was he not transferred to a hospital that was located very close by? That was my first question. I will turn the rest of my time over to Mr. Wilfert.

● (1645)

[*English*]

Col Denis Thompson: If I may, sir, I'll speak in English.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Sure, go ahead. It is no problem at all.

Col Denis Thompson: First of all, there's nobody sadder, I think, than Canadian soldiers and those people who are involved in peacekeeping that this event unfolded the way it did.

The second thing is that it's currently under investigation by the United Nations, and unfortunately we can't comment on an investigation that's ongoing. I don't want to give you the impression that we're trying to skate away from it, but it's an ongoing and open investigation, which we're supporting, and of course I'll share the results of it in due course.

Mr. Bernard Patry: You said there is an investigation and that you're going to receive the report on the investigation. When you receive it, can you share the report with this committee, please?

Col Denis Thompson: Absolutely. There's very little in the United Nations that's classified.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you.

Col Denis Thompson: I believe it will be a public report.

The Chair: All right, so we can expect that report to be passed on to the committee.

Col Denis Thompson: Yes. In fact, your best access to that report —and again, I'm not trying to dodge a bullet here—is Mr. McNee, who is sitting here, because the report will be given to our permanent mission in New York. It will probably come through the colonel who's there as our representative in the permanent mission in New York. It will be shared with our department through them, and it will be shared with Foreign Affairs. And I would be very surprised if it wasn't released immediately into the public domain.

The Chair: When I draft a letter to thank Mr. McNee for being here, we will request that from him, so the clerk can take note of that.

Did we have a question from Mr. Wilfert?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Colonel and Major, for being here today.

Colonel, you mentioned that much of the violence at the present time is of a criminal nature. At the same time, particularly in terms of what you're seeing on the ground, there's a report that will be presented, I believe, sometime towards the end of August, on what the role of MINUSTAH will be in terms of this new phase.

Given that there are these localized incidents, what role do you see MINUSTAH playing in the post-August period? And secondly, what are we doing to empower Haitians to take care of their own security needs?

I realize that you're probably not able to comment directly on the issue of policing, which of course is extremely important, but can you comment in a general nature on security? Because security without a stable environment can't lead to the kinds of economic, political, and social reforms that are absolutely, desperately needed.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

Col Denis Thompson: Again, the answer is simple; it's the implementation that's difficult. The role of MINUSTAH remains exactly the same: to create and maintain a safe and secure environment in which people can go about their daily lives, as you point out.

The way that's done, tactically, on the ground, is largely the same, regardless of what the peacekeeping mission is. So there's a lot of presence, patrolling, a lot of boots on the ground, as we say, people out and about doing their thing. In some cases, we will team up with the local police, the Haitian national police, and do joint MINUSTAH and Haitian national police patrols. All of that will continue. There's a recognition, though, that from a Haitian standpoint, if you're going to hand over human security, or just security in general, to the Haitians, you have to develop this police force. And as you point out, that's the remit of our friends in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

I'm pretty sure that Chief Superintendent Dave Beer, an extremely knowledgeable fellow, was here and no doubt gave you chapter and verse on how that's going to occur. I don't want to speak for him, but I know that one of his hobby horses is to talk about justice reform at the same time as police reform. There's no point having an effective police force if you have nowhere to send it for justice to be administered.

These things take time, so while that's happening, MINUSTAH, the military element, has to remain on the ground. Now, what it looks like, in terms of size and organization, is the subject and the reason there's an assessment mission there right now. I think Mr. McNee mentioned this in the last meeting.

So over the coming weeks the assessment mission will look at a variety of elements of MINUSTAH and report back to the Security Council. The Security Council will consider what's been done. There will be a detailed plan drawn up in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which will be folded into the new mandate, and when the new mandate comes out it will say what the force structure will be—you know, it will have this many military and this many police.

● (1650)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you. We're well over time.

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Colonel Thompson. I apologize, I had to make a telephone call. However, I have read your comments and I have a few questions I would like to ask you.

First of all, everyone including the International Crisis Group and others, agree that the first 100 days are extremely important and that security must be ensured quickly and impunity must end.

I would like to quote a passage from an editorial that appeared in a Haitian newspaper on June 6, yesterday:

> When we listen to the news and the reactions here and there in the homes and in the media, one is tempted to say that we are far from being out of the woods.
>
> The facts:
>
> - A rise in crime, and an increase in kidnappings and killings of police officers.
>
> - Denunciation of the abuse of power of some magistrates by police officials. The denunciation supported by human rights associations caused members of the corporation to come to the defence of the dignity of the judiciary.
>
> - A renewal of the pro-Aristide agitation whose main demands are well known and which seeks to apply intimidating pressure on the new government—

So we need to ensure security, but at the same time, we have a great deal of hope, something we have not had for a number of years. However, the fact remains that the situation is extremely fragile.

Would you be prepared to recommend that we send more police officers and soldiers, particularly French-speakers, to help with the reconstruction? I refer to French-speakers, because I know that when you went to Haiti, after extending your mission by three months, you were asked to stay on, because language is so important in fragile situations of this type.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Lalonde.

Mr. Thompson.

Col Denis Thompson: I think you're absolutely right. All those violations and security problems are ongoing in Haiti. There's no question that's the case. And the kidnappings and general criminality you're describing are the sorts of things that are better countered by police forces and by francophone police forces, without question.

It's also a fact that at this moment the demand for francophone police in United Nations missions worldwide far exceeds the capacity to supply. So there are large missions, not only in Haiti, but in the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi, and these are all missions drawing upon the capacity to produce high-quality professional francophone police; there just aren't enough to go around. So while we might agree the solution is to put more francophone units into the field....

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: For training as well.

Col Denis Thompson: Exactly, for training and even for security and for speaking to people. However, if we do not have the capacity to do that, it is impossible. Our capacity to send civilian police officers who speak French to Haiti is now at its limit.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Why did we not stay there? The soldiers, particularly the French-speaking ones, could have helped out at the beginning.

Col Denis Thompson: It is the same answer once again. It is because soldiers—

● (1655)

Ms. Francine Lalonde: We went to Afghanistan, and French is less important over there.

Col Denis Thompson: No, that is not it. The fact is that soldiers are not the best instrument in a situation of this type. As I said in my presentation, it is better to use civilian police officers.

[*English*]

It's not the right tool for the job. Militaries are blunt instruments. They're not meant to police civilian populations. And what we have here is a circumstance where the military keeps a lid on the general security situation, because militaries are meant to separate armed groups in a peacekeeping environment, or deal with armed groups, not with criminals. That's not our training. You need a general security framework provided by the military, and underneath you get the police working with local police to address the true problems, the local security problems. You can't do that with a military force.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Yes, but MINUSTAH will remain. The Brazilians and the Jordanians are soldiers.

[*English*]

Col Denis Thompson: Absolutely. It's a fact that militaries are cheaper, too. If you want to put a lid on something, you get the military on the ground, and they put a lid on it; then you begin to work on what's called security sector reform: you start to work on the police, the justice sector, and the corrections sector, which is another part of Haitian security sector reform that needs to be addressed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: We must put an end to the impunity.

Col Denis Thompson: Absolutely.

[*English*]

There has to be the full gamut. But it's a plumbing job, and we're electricians. I don't know how else to describe it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I would like to conclude by saying that in Kosovo, I saw soldiers who were both plumbers and electricians. The Canadian soldiers that I know can, I believe, take on two roles.

Col Denis Thompson: Thank you. Anything is possible.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Lalonde.

We will go to Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for appearing here today, gentlemen.

Colonel, we won't discuss the particular instance of the former police officer, but the entire case seems to substantiate previous comments we've heard about a disconnect—threat versus threat reduction, remediation, and a disconnect of authority to act under certain circumstances. This seemed to be a common comment from various places when we visited Haiti. In other words, there's a tying of the hands of the various authorities there, preventing them from acting under certain circumstances.

One of the most obvious examples is of their police officers, who are on the streets but are not allowed to arrest and don't have the charging authority other jurisdictions would normally have. Then, of course, we see the red zone area that Jordanians, I understand, are attending to. The comments were that they don't speak English or French, and that might very well be a difficulty too.

You commented towards the end of your remarks that it would be better to have civilian police officers than to have soldiers. But here clearly you have an area and a zone that requires heavily armoured vehicles if you are to go into it and where the criminals and thugs have far heavier firepower than normal police officers would utilize in their normal street patrolling.

Has there been an authority problem? Has there been a lack of direction, a lack of coordination to explain why that area hasn't at least been cleaned out and mopped up by a military action to set the stage for policing with light-duty weapons or whatever normal tools police officers have, and to provide some authority to begin the actions of a justice system with authority to arrest? Is there a reason why this hasn't been done? Or what stage has the planning for it reached? Obviously you can't just put police officers on the street under a scenario like that.

Col Denis Thompson: First of all, we're talking about maybe a four-square-kilometre patch of Port-au-Prince. This is not the condition of the entire country. Let's be clear that we're talking about a very small patch of ground. The force necessary to control it would probably initially be military. What's happened in the past.... It's not my place to comment on the performance of other nations, or even the performance of another nation's commanders; however, I know there's been a change in the force that's responsible for Cité du Soleil. It's been handed over to a Brazilian battalion, who have taken a bit of a different approach, and I think you'll find that over the coming weeks and months there'll be a change in the security situation in Cité du Soleil.

Do you want to speak to some of the details of that, Michel?

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

Maj Michel Lavigne (Desk Officer - Haiti, Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command , Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

The situation the colonel mentioned is in a small patch of the territory with about 120,000 people in very close quarters. If you visited Port-au-Prince, you'd see it's similar to some of the slums in bigger cities around the world. It's a very confined area in which operations are difficult to conduct.

Strictly doing military operations in such a confined area is very difficult, and it's risky for the population there. You're trying to apprehend one or two bad guys amongst thousands of civilians. You don't want to start shooting just anywhere simply to grab those two.

As I understand it, the Brazilians have developed a more collegial approach to the situation in Cité du Soleil. They will try to win over the population through community projects—civil-military cooperation and what not—to try to clean up the area, and then slowly but possibly surely move into the area and possibly apprehend some of the criminals.

As the colonel mentioned, it's a slightly different tactical approach to the operation. A new commander is on the ground with a new force and a different approach. Hopefully they'll have more success than the previous troops who were handling the area.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Would this have anything to do with the renewed mandate for the action that's coming up in August? Are there any concerns, maybe not necessarily for that, but for the authorities needed to do certain tasks? It sounds to me, though, as if four square kilometres is like a poster board of a failed nation that can't handle the territory, so if you're trying to improve the economic development of a country, it's practically impossible without dealing with that.

Col Denis Thompson: I understand what you're saying vis-à-vis the mandate. Our expectation, and I'll just leave it at that, is that the mandate will be the same. The question is whether the force structure will change. You would know, I'm thinking, from earlier testimony that Canada is a member of the Group of Friends, which is a loose grouping in New York that meets regularly on Haiti and of course have input into the drafting process for the mandate that will be considered by the Security Council. Again, Mr. McNee will be a pivotal part of that process.

What I've seen to date from our permanent mission in New York in the early discussions—it's still early days in there, and we're going to wait for the assessment mission to return—is we're expecting the same mandate with the same executive powers, so to speak, the same chapter 7 powers, to be in place.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Wilfert, please.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I asked a question earlier, Colonel, with regard to empowering Haitians to take care of their own security. Obviously developing either a political culture or a military culture, dealing with authority figures in Haiti, the military or police in the past have been viewed not only with skepticism, which would be kind, but obviously with fear, which would probably be more apt. What is being done to empower Haitians to eventually take care of their own security needs? Do you have any assessment as to how that will unfold?

Col Denis Thompson: It's a bit unfortunate, because the question you're asking directly relates to what the police do. I'll just tell you that—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Unfortunately, I missed it last time. I was in Afghanistan when the police were here, but I thought we could touch on it at least.

Col Denis Thompson: I know where you're coming from. The difficulty in many countries is the police and the security forces exist to protect the regime instead of to protect the public, and that was the condition that existed in Haiti. It's that environment or that atmosphere the police are trying to reverse. The details of how the security sector reform is being executed would best be drawn from a fellow like Chief Superintendent Dave Beer. We're just not part of the training effort for the police in Haiti.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Would you say that the role of the forces that are there currently—the multinational force—is strictly security, or would you say that, as in Afghanistan, there is an attempt in a peacekeeping role to also try to win the hearts and minds of individuals so that they in fact will feel more secure in this environment? What are you doing in that regard?

● (1705)

Col Denis Thompson: Do you mean what is the UN doing? Any peacekeeping force is about two things—deterrence and reassurance. You're there to deter the bad guys by being present, by being in their face, and by actually taking them on when you need to. You're there to reassure the civilian population. All indications are, from the reporting that we read from the UN from our chief of staff who's present on the ground, that in 95% of the country they're achieving success, but there are some patches, in Port-au-Prince in particular, where it's particularly difficult.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: In terms of that assessment that you just gave, do you believe that the forces on the ground have the appropriate tools in order to deal with the current situation?

Col Denis Thompson: I do, yes. However, I would just reiterate that there is a UN assessment team on the ground that will do a much deeper analysis than I can do from Ottawa or than I can do from a two-day trip to Port-au-Prince. I have confidence in the UN mission planning service to actually go in there and determine what the appropriate force levels would be for police and military.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Given the current situation on the ground—you use the figure of 95% roughly—the current approach seems to be working. However, in terms of the assessment, obviously you get reports sent, I would assume, that would indicate where there seems to be a difficulty at the present time and what kinds of things may be recommended, not only through the UN, but from our own forces on the ground, I'm sure. Would that be a fair statement?

Col Denis Thompson: Well, certainly there's no stopping in the MINUSTAH headquarters. They're constantly doing contingency planning, and they're constantly addressing security concerns that come up.

The biggest challenge they had, obviously, was the election, which by all accounts ran relatively smoothly. I'm certain Mr. Goldring can tell us what his impressions were. But generally speaking, the security situation is being maintained by MINUSTAH.

The trick is, you can't leave 6,000 soldiers and 1,800 policemen there in perpetuity. You have to leave at some time. So we have to profit from the fact that we have a decent security arrangement to train and develop the police forces that exist, and we have to be confident that Mr. Préval is able to bring to heel some of the darker elements of Haitian society.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Hence, my "Haitianization", if you will, question in terms of empowering those on the ground.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

We go to Mr. Goldring again.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Colonel, you mentioned that police officers would be preferred to soldiers but that the reality of the situation is it will be a long time before you can remove all of your forces from Haiti. Because once again, your police, unless they have very special tools to be able to deal with scenarios like the riot at the prison and other civil strife and disturbances that can happen from disaster to disaster....

Do you have an exit strategy for this overall timeframe, timetable? You have some 7,500 troops there now. Are you going to have a progressive reduction? And if you do have a progressive reduction, will it be keyed in or tied in to what I would say is a progressive increasing of the authority and responsibility of your police forces that would be there? It's my understanding that they have a very limited authority in actual policing and charging, and I would think you would need to have one in balance with the other.

So is there an exit strategy, a long-term strategy for gradual reduction and at the same time a strategy for increasing the policing level, keeping in mind that our commitment—100 police officers—has seldom been made? I think there are 60 or 70 there now. It's always a problem to be able to supply police officers.

Col Denis Thompson: Again, you're asking me to speculate or comment on the work of the United Nations, and I'm a representative of our department. I'm happy to tell you how the process works, but I can't give you any insights into the inner workings of the mission planning service, because I'm not part of it.

But as I think you know, the UN has a Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and subordinate to it are a number of services. One is the mission planning service. Another one is the force generation service, and then there is a training and evaluation service. That mission planning service is the one that does the long-term strategic outlooks that generate the plans you're referring to.

The fact is that MINUSTAH itself is called an integrated mission, so everybody is under this special representative of the Secretary General. Everybody works for him, including the military forces, the police forces, and the civilian agencies of the United Nations. By doing that, instead of working in stovepipes, you're able to make more progress and have a more joined-up approach. What that should mean in terms of the drawdown of UN forces and the rising up of the Haitian forces is that it's done in a synchronized manner.

With respect to the police mandate—and again, it's a police matter—the UN civil police don't have an executive mandate; you're right. They have a training and mentoring role. Then there are the foreign police units that are meant to do public order duties in case there's a breakdown in public order. But it's not a mission where the Security Council has given the UN police an executive mandate such as in East Timor or Kosovo.

● (1710)

Mr. Peter Goldring: Have the troops that are brought in by the United Nations been sourced from countries where the police do actual civil crowd-control training? I understand that our Canadian military have better training along this line too. One of the comments that was made was that some of the countries provide soldiers who are trained just to shoot and I suppose ask questions later, that some are more just hardened military than soldiers who have been given some civilian training for riot control, crowd control, and whatever.

Is there an active request to try to bring troops in who do have some training in civilian interaction?

Col Denis Thompson: When we talked in Canada, the term was crowd confrontation operations. So if we're talking about public order, which I think is the police terminology, generally speaking militaries are reluctant to get engaged in crowd confrontation operations, because again that's not our part. It's police stuff.

In the case of MINUSTAH, there are foreign police units. I believe there are six foreign police units of 125 policemen, but I'm going to turn to Michel Lavigne to explain the general composition—reminding you again that we're talking about a police component and not something that's necessarily our field of expertise.

[*Translation*]

Maj Michel Lavigne: Mr. Chairman, the United Nations police contingent is essentially made up of two groups. There are police officers who are training and mentoring the Haitian police, and there are also the groups we call the foreign police unit. That is essentially a police unit of approximately 125 officers that resembles an infantry company. These police officers play a slightly more technical and elaborate role, and they have a bit more equipment. There are more possibilities of them conducting

[*English*]

crowd control operations of that nature. Obviously the issue is how they are employed on the ground, which is up to the force commander, and how they're employed in what situation, which I'm not an expert on.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Colonel Thompson, Major Lavigne, good afternoon.

If I understood correctly, Colonel Thompson, you seem almost certain that the MINUSTAH mandate will be renewed in August. And if I have also understood correctly, the Canadian Forces are filling five permanent positions in Haiti. Is that correct? Are the five people assigned to the MINUSTAH headquarters? What exactly do these five CF members do at the MINUSTAH headquarters?

Col Denis Thompson: There are two colonels with the same rank as me, and three majors like...

● (1715)

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: And what does a colonel do?

Col Denis Thompson: One is the chief of staff. He organizes everything. It is like a chief of staff in a civilian environment.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: In politics.

Col Denis Thompson: There is a colonel who does that for the military component of MINUSTAH. That colonel is third in command. There is the commander, the deputy and the chief of staff. Colonel Michel Duhamel is the one who is there now. He is the first colonel. The second colonel is Barry MacLeod. He is working at the electoral commission, also as chief of staff.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: These five people have key positions, positions of command that have an impact on the way in which MINUSTAH works. Is that correct?

Col Denis Thompson: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: The committee heard from a research associate who works at Amnesty International's International Secretariat. He told us that despite the presence of MINUSTAH, the climate in Haiti is still one of anarchy, violence, rape, death threats, intimidation, and corrupt police officers. He also told us that members of the Haitian national police force are committing terrible crimes, that the very presence of MINUSTAH in Haiti has been called into question, and that connivance between the Haitian national police and MINUSTAH is apparent. I have been listening to you speak since you began, and I know that the Canadian Forces are highly respected abroad. So how is it that there are five soldiers in positions who give orders to MINUSTAH, and that you have not yet attempted to eradicate this problem? I am simply asking the question.

[*English*]

Col Denis Thompson: It's a very good question yet again.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: My questions are always good ones.

[*English*]

Col Denis Thompson: So I hear, Madame.

When we speak to these things we need to understand that these officers are working in a headquarters. They're staff officers, *des officiers d'état-major*. While they write orders, they're not the ones on the ground executing them. They're not directly supervising the actions of other soldiers on the ground. So they're at an operational level.

The conditions you're describing are conditions that are best addressed by police forces. So I'll go back to the earlier part of this discussion. We need to keep enough of a force on the ground to keep a lid on things, because militaries are not the instruments that are going to prevent the crimes you are referring to; there has to be an active police force on the ground. Until that's developed we're not going to solve the problems of impunity, of rape, of assaults, of murders. It's just not going to stop until we've managed to train an indigenous police force that can make it happen.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: So you are asking for more police officers. As you did with my colleague earlier, you are trying to convince me that there are not enough people on the ground.

Col Denis Thompson: Precisely. More Haitian police officers need to be trained.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: But the Haitian police service is already corrupt. You are telling me that it will need to be cleaned up, are you not?

Col Denis Thompson: That is why in English, we talk about security sector reform. There must be a period of reform. Regardless, we are talking about police work.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So there are only five senior officers in the country now. Is there any other Canadian military...in terms of Canadian Forces members? The 500 members were deployed to help out in the short term and they came back.

● (1720)

Col Denis Thompson: What happened was they deployed in March 2004, and they deployed for a six-month period. It transitioned from the first 90 days of the MIF, the multinational interim force, into the first 90 days of MINUSTAH, and then they redeployed.

Mr. Dean Allison: Perfect. Okay. That's what I thought. And there are still five staff officers there.

Col Denis Thompson: There are still five staff officers.

Mr. Dean Allison: What about civilian police? Do we have any there?

Col Denis Thompson: The number is 101. The authorized ceiling for the Canadian national police, because it's not just the RCMP, is 101. So there's Chief Superintendent Graham Muir, who's the head policeman, and a hundred RCMP across the island.

At the moment, on the exact number that is deployed, I'd have to defer to someone from the RCMP, because it's not quite 100, is it?

The Chair: I believe it's 65.

Col Denis Thompson: I don't know the precise number.

Mr. Dean Allison: I realize that as the government asks or requests, those will be done, made probably by ministers, etc. I guess my question is this. Will you five have some input in terms of whether the mission needs to be extended, or the request? It seems to me that the challenge of Haiti in the past has been the fact that we tend to pull out too quickly, as opposed to making sure that we have the bodies on the ground so that we can ensure the proper training, get people in place.

So I guess I'm assuming you will be consulted. I realize it's still political.

Col Denis Thompson: Absolutely. We will be consulted. There's no question. Again, it points to the fact of the importance of the positions that these gentlemen hold. So, on the police side, as I mentioned, Chief Superintendent Graham Muir is the police commissioner for the UN police forces on the ground. Any assessment team that shows up in Haiti is going to speak to him. There's just no other way. They're not going to visit Haiti and not talk to the top cop.

They will speak to Michel Duhamel, the chief of staff at the headquarters, to get his sense of it. So those two gentlemen will have an opportunity to weigh in, as it were.

Mr. Dean Allison: Now, is there any sense that when the initial mission is extended through to next year that we'll be able to accomplish our objectives then, or is it too hard to look into the future at that?

Col Denis Thompson: Trying to put a timeline on these things is, to use the vernacular, a mug's game. We talk about end states and not end dates. It's very jingoist, but it's the truth, because you just can't predict when some spike is going to occur that will send things down for a period of time.

Mr. Dean Allison: All right. I have no other questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Allison.

You had a minute and a half on that question. You have one minute, and then I go to Mr. Patry for his five.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: The question we keep asking to help us is what has Canada done wrong or could have done better in the interventions in the past? Specifically, perhaps, in your case, should we have been asking more on the policing and less on the military side?

Col Denis Thompson: Now you're asking me to speculate on what the government should be doing, and I'm not in the business of nation-building.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: On the overall intervention then—what we've done right, what we've done wrong.

Col Denis Thompson: I think it's generally recognized that we didn't stay long enough in order to build properly accountable democratic institutions in Haiti, and as a result we're back to repeating it again. It's not any more complicated than that.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: In terms of our intervention this time, is there anything we've done wrong? Is it the mix of instruments we're using? You talked about the electrician and the plumber. If all you have is a hammer and that's your favourite tool, is every problem a nail? Is it the nature of these interventions that we tend to send the military when perhaps we should be sending more police?

Col Denis Thompson: The fact of the matter is it's the military forces that are available. There are only so many capacities in various fields, so you're often obliged to use, as you say, the hammer.

Mr. Peter Van Loan: If we could invent those resources?

Col Denis Thompson: Well, again that's speculation. I know the Australians, as an example, have between 400 and 500 federal policemen who are permanently on the payroll, set aside to deploy overseas. Again I'm talking outside my line, and it's best to speak to Dave on this. I know that they're in the process of getting a 200-person police force set aside for international policing operations, an increase to their A-base funding.

Those are all positive developments and they all would contribute to nation-building efforts, not just in Haiti, but in a whole myriad of states around the world, because security sector reform is the most difficult thing to do, and it's not the work of militaries, with the exception of reforming armies, and there is no army in Haiti.

● (1725)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Thompson.

We'll go to Mr. Patry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Mr. Thompson, in your opening remarks, you said that MINUSTAH was an integrated mission. I want to mention, in passing, that during my three visits to Haiti, I witnessed the professionalism of our soldiers and police officers. I even walked around Port-au-Prince, accompanied by two police officers from Montreal. I had the impression that I was with people who were very highly appreciated by the general population, as is the case in some neighbourhoods in Montreal. It was very positive.

My question is sort of along the same lines as the question asked by Ms. Bourgeois. During previous meetings of this committee, on several occasions, witnesses told us about corruption in the Haitian national police force. This is a problem that causes considerable harm to the people.

If a soldier or an on-duty police officer from MINUSTAH were to learn that a member of the Haitian national police force had committed public mischief, would he have the right to arrest the police officer?

[*English*]

Col Denis Thompson: I might be sounding like a bit of a broken record. Again, I'm not an expert on the police component of MINUSTAH. I don't believe they have that—

Mr. Bernard Patry: That power.

Col Denis Thompson: I will just comment briefly on corruption, because it's not only in MINUSTAH. If we think of peacekeeping missions in general and we go around the world and look at security sector reform efforts that involve militaries, a principal problem is corruption. If you don't pay soldiers, they will exact their pay from the population, and it's a terrible thing when they do. There are many instances when armies are being reformed right now and direct budgetary transfers are being made to those national governments in order to ensure that soldiers are paid.

Afghanistan is a circumstance like that. It's happening through the Americans in Iraq and through the British in Sierra Leone and there's an EU project under way to do the same thing in the Congo. It's not anything to do with Haiti, but clearly the basis of corruption is usually the lack of pay.

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you.

The Chair: Madame Lalonde or Madame Bourgeois? Anyone else? We have about a minute and a half left.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: I want to emphasize that one point, because it was brought up very clearly. Even the police department and the policemen themselves have to feed their families, so they will go out and be involved in some corruption. Of course it's like the old adage—the first law that you ever break is always the hardest one—and it can go on and on from there, I would imagine. It's very understandable: if you don't pay your policemen, they're going to find some way to feed their families.

The Chair: Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Last Saturday, with Minister MacKay, I met with Quebec police officers. They told us that their mission was very difficult, given the harsh conditions people live in, but that they were well received. Bernard talked about this phenomenon earlier on. We asked them if they were afraid, and they said no.

They did not talk so much about corruption in the police force as they did the problem with impunity. They told us that members of the national police force who are honest will arrest an individual whom they catch red-handed. The individual will then appear before the judge. The judge gives one sentence if it's one offence, and another sentence if it's another offence. The following Monday, he's free. That is discouraging for the national police.

I had a long talk with the police director, Mr. Andresol. He said himself that at least 20% of police officers were corrupt and that the situation had to be cleaned up. But it's not simple. It is a situation where people's friends might come into play. The necessary political will has to be there to clean all of that up.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for coming here.

Unlike Madame Lalonde or Mr. Goldring, I haven't had the opportunity to visit Haiti, but one of the things the testimonies bring out as we study countries like Haiti is how fortunate we are. When we talk about corrupt police forces and corrupt judiciary and prisons in Haiti where prisoners are rioting and they don't even know if they're going to get enough food, it certainly takes a comprehensive plan. And that's why we appreciate your coming.

You say the military is somewhat like a blunt instrument, and yet all these different instruments are needed. That's what our committee is trying to do, to find out as Canadians, the need to send more blunt instruments, how we can be more involved to greater benefit. That's why we appreciate your being here.

We will adjourn.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
http://www.parl.gc.ca

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.