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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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● (1115)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Good morning. This is meeting 47 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Thursday, March 29, 2007.

I remind each one of our members that today's meeting is televised. In our first hour this morning we will again have an update on the situation in Afghanistan, and perhaps Canada's roles and responsibilities there.

We will also hear from Barnett Rubin from the Center on International Cooperation. He is no stranger to our committee. We had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Rubin in New York a couple of months ago. He is the director of studies and a senior fellow at the University of New York.

From the University of Victoria we have Mr. Gordon Smith, executive director of the centre for global studies and professor of political science. I'm not certain how many meetings of the foreign affairs committee Mr. Smith has attended—hundreds perhaps—as a former deputy minister of foreign affairs.

I also remind our committee that we will reserve a little time at the end of our meeting today for some committee business.

Before we begin, I want to encourage the members to review the public work on democratic promotion written by our committee's researcher, Gerry Schmitz. Angela, our clerk, has provided us with a synopsis and the links to this work that he wrote in 2004.

Mr. Rubin and Mr. Smith, welcome. Our committee format is such that we will give you each an opening time period of 10 to 15 minutes, and then we will move to questions. Each party will receive a time allocation of seven minutes on the first round and five minutes on the second.

Welcome, and we look forward to what you have for us.

Mr. Rubin.

Dr. Barnett Rubin (Director of Studies and Senior Fellow, University of New York, Center on International Cooperation): Thank you.

First, I want to thank the committee. It's good to meet again those of you I saw in New York and to have this chance to meet with you here.

I'm also very pleased to be here with Gordon Smith. I hope you've had the time to look at his paper, which has quite a few ideas that are worthy of consideration. I believe you also received copies of my recent article in *Foreign Affairs*.

I also would feel remiss if I did not thank Canada for the commitment it has made to Afghanistan and the sacrifices it has made. I might mention that I don't mean to say that the life of a senior diplomat is worth more than the life of a young soldier, but we did know Glyn Berry at the Center on International Cooperation. He worked with us on some projects when he was in New York at the permanent mission. I was staying with Chris Alexander, the former ambassador, now the deputy SRSG, at the time that he so unfortunately lost his life in Kandahar.

I regret that the role of Canada is not better understood in the United States, but I think it is understood in Afghanistan. I've met there with your military commanders, soldiers, diplomats, and aid workers, and they are performing very well.

Of course I'm speaking to you in my personal capacity, which is the only capacity I have, and though I'm a U.S. citizen, I'm not here to represent U.S. interests. I've been involved with Afghanistan since 1983. I've been there 29 times and visited all its neighbouring countries and also most of the countries that are now involved in Afghanistan in one way or the other. So I know something about it, the international order, and also about the mistakes that have been made by many people, including at times by me.

I thought I would say a few words about the fact that I understand, though I'm not extremely well informed about it—perhaps I'll learn more here—that there is some political controversy or debate about Canada's role in Afghanistan. I wanted to say a few words about that.

First, a word of understanding. Of course the United States dominates the mission there. It provides about half the economic assistance. And I don't know the exact proportion of troops, but I think something like 70% of the foreign troops in Afghanistan may be American, which means of course that the mission in Afghanistan is cooperating with the United States in what many people see as an American project. I understand that for many people it is very difficult to cooperate with the current administration in Washington. It's even difficult for some senior members of the President's own party in the Senate to do so.

I want to emphasize that Afghanistan should not be victimized because of our leadership. It's not just an American project.

Many governments in the world have some misgivings about various aspects of this operation, but there is no government in the world that officially opposes it. That includes Iran, which is actively contributing to the reconstruction of Afghanistan, and officially at least, Pakistan, which is doing likewise. We'll talk about Pakistan's role, which is more complex.

Most important, everything I've seen indicates to me that most Afghans want this effort to succeed. They want an accountable national government, though they might disagree and they do disagree about how it should be structured.

They want the education, health care, development, security, and rule of law that they expect this government with all its international backing to deliver, even if they disagree about many points, such as the precise role of Islam in the legal system, the relationship of Afghan laws to international laws and standards, and other matters.

They also want a unified and multi-ethnic Afghanistan, although there is a serious issue, which is often not discussed that openly, that they do disagree with each other and with their neighbours on where the border of that unified Afghanistan should be and who exactly is an Afghan.

But that does not mean that they're happy with us, the international community, or with their government. They're not at all happy, and support for both the international presence and for the government has plummeted in the past year or so, although I hasten to add that the lack of support for the government does not by any means always translate directly into support for the insurgency, for the Taliban, or any of the other components of the insurgency. Sometimes it does, sometimes it does not.

But the main complaint is not that we, the west, or the international community is forcing on the Afghans something they don't want. There are some such complaints from people who are inclined to be more Islamic and also from many people, because among the things we have brought there are the unintended consequences of a large presence of foreigners with a lot of money, spending their money and living there, which has created, especially in Kabul, some severe social problems.

● (1120)

The main complaint I hear from Afghans is not that we are imposing something on them that they don't want, but that we haven't delivered what they think we promised, which are basically the things I mentioned above. Why haven't we? In part it's because it's extraordinarily difficult.

I just want to mention something I said when I met with some of you in New York. It's not often realized that Afghanistan is the poorest country in the world outside of sub-Saharan Africa, and it is poorer than almost every country in sub-Saharan Africa. Its GDP per capita is about half that of Haiti, and its indicators of education, health, longevity, and so on are similar to those of Burundi, Sierra Leone, and so on.

That also means it has one of the weakest governments in the world. The per-capita tax revenue of the Afghan government is $13 per year. Those are the entire resources of the Afghan government for security, education, health, and so on. You can imagine, even with aid, the amount of public services it manages to deliver. So the difficulties are great, and then we have the history of the past 30 years. I won't go through that.

It's also partly because of mistaken policies that were followed by the U.S. government, the Bush administration. From the beginning they tried to define the mission as minimally as possible in order to conserve their resources for other things they wanted to do, such as invade Iraq. I can understand the feelings some Canadians may have that they do not want their soldiers and civilians to be killed or wounded because of mistakes made by the United States.

We don't need to have a debate about whether or not Canada should be there—certainly you have the right to have that debate—but we need to have another debate. I would really ask Canada and Canadians to take part much more—and I believe this hearing is a sign of that—in debating what all of us who are in Afghanistan really should be doing, and try to change the approach where it should be changed.

It's very difficult for Canada to affect the policy of the United States, but I've visited most of the countries that are in Afghanistan —Norway, Germany, Spain, Italy, U.K., France—in the last few months, and I find there are many countries that are committed to Afghanistan one way or another, even whose governments have concerns about the policy. In each of those countries there are also opposition parties and independent intellectuals who have such concerns. I believe there was even a meeting—perhaps it was organized by Norway—about six months ago of some like-minded countries in Europe.

What I would really suggest is that Canada—the government, the Parliament, the opposition, and independent figures such as my colleague here—make an effort to collaborate with like-minded people in other middle powers that are engaged in Afghanistan to try to devise some common proposals.

I think you would also find a very willing ear in the United States for that, even perhaps in the government, because they did carry out a reassessment of their policy in the last six months. We see some results of that in the recent supplemental appropriation they have proposed that involves the doubling of reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan, and in their decision to increase the number of troops and put more into the security sector, policing, and so on. I'm constantly in touch with mainly the Democrats in the U.S. Congress, but also with some Republicans, who very much want to have that debate and hope we can do better than we have.

Where do we need to make these changes? I won't mention the proposals here because they are in my article that you have received, and I'm sure you'll want to ask questions about it.

● (1125)

Of course the key changes are the level and pace of economic support, especially employment generation, and the ways international assistance can actually diminish government capacity and legitimacy; the approach that the international community is taking to counter narcotics, which is quite damaging, and I commend what my colleague has said about that; regional questions, in particular the role of Pakistan and how to approach Pakistan in a unified way; and the need for an accelerated and coordinated approach to the domestic security sector, which is police, justice, and corrections.

My specific views are in the article, which you have received.

I thank you, and I await your questions.

Je vous écoute. Merci.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rubin.

We'll go to Mr. Smith.

Mr. Rubin, taking note on what you said in your testimony that the debate should not be on whether or not we're there but on what we're doing there and how we can change what we're doing, I think that segue fits very well into what Mr. Smith has written. He says:

> It is easy to criticize what is happening in Afghanistan. It is a far more difficult task to recommend what should be done. In my long professional life I have not encountered a more difficult policy challenge. I am not sure we have all the right solutions. But I do know we in Canada urgently need a more informed debate on these issues. Much is at stake.

I think it very clearly reflects what Mr. Rubin has suggested, but we look forward to hearing from you, Mr. Smith.

Prof. Gordon Smith (Executive Director, Centre for Global Studies and Adjunct Professor of Political Science, University of Victoria): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just about to read those very sentences—and I really mean what I said in them.

I think it is very important that we get a better debate on these issues in Canada. To me, the debate is so much a polarized one between those on the one side who say we have our troops committed, they're losing their lives, there must be no question but that we are 100% behind our troops—that's the one side—and the other side that says it's impossible, we're losing too many people, and we should get out.

I think both are wrong. I think we need exactly the kind of analysis that Dr. Rubin has been giving. I'm really delighted that this committee is studying this question and I'm honoured that you've asked me for my views on it.

Let me be clear at the beginning that in my view the objectives that have been stated by the Canadian government for Afghanistan are entirely worthy. The question that I raise in this report is, are they achievable? Is it possible to do what that report asks—not wouldn't it be a good idea, but can we do it? Are the resources there?

I also want to make clear that in my view the performance of our military has been of a very high order and we all owe something to those who have lost or risked their lives there. I also have noticed and am impressed by the ways in which CIDA is really trying to change the way it does business, in a fundamental way, so that it can operate in the real world of Afghanistan.

But the question in my mind, which I hope Canadians will examine and certainly this committee will examine, is to whether overall we have anything like the resources that are necessary to achieve the stated objectives, which are, of course, to bring about democracy, a functioning market economy, and respect for human rights. I've been struck by the comparisons that have been made with levels of effort in the Balkans, particularly in the analysis that has been done by James Dobbins, who was, of course, the first U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan. He points out that depending on how you make the comparison, what is going into Afghanistan is 1/25 or 1/50 of what went into the Balkans.

I was just reading in an interesting article that I would commend to you, in the latest issue of *Survival,*—that's Spring 2007—General Richards, the British general, of course, stating just four months ago, "I haven't got enough troops to win this." I think that was a statement of candour.

So I think the first issue that has to be addressed is the number of troops involved, and also the levels of development assistance. I know those have gone up and are going up dramatically, coming from Canada, including those that are targeted in the Kandahar area.

I particularly want to underline, and this article by Seth Jones of the RAND Corporation does that, the critical role that is played by Pakistan. We all know this. The border is open. The Pashtun people live on either side. I haven't had anything like the travelling experience of Dr. Rubin, but I have been up into the tribal areas of northern Pakistan, and the government in Islamabad has never controlled those areas. But I think what is very important is what we now have, and again I will quote just one sentence from this Seth Jones article:

> There is significant evidence that the Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG), al-Qaeda, and other insurgent groups use Pakistan as a sanctuary for recruitment and support. In addition, there is virtual unanimity that Pakistan's Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has continued to provide assistance to Afghan insurgent groups.

I think those situations are becoming more and more difficult, making it complicated to deal with Afghanistan as a country on its own. This is not Haiti, which has water all around it and a relatively benign border. It's a much more complicated environment, and we can get into it in the question period if you would like, the issue of whether the Pakistani government is doing all that it can, but also, we should discuss not only Iran, as Dr. Rubin has suggested, but also the role that is played by India and the reaction of Pakistan to the role that is played by India in Afghanistan.

● (1130)

I also say in the report that I think it's important for us to not forget the original motivation for going to Afghanistan, and that was to deal with al-Qaeda. The al-Qaeda problem has not gone away. Indeed, from the information I'm able to obtain, al-Qaeda is on the increase in northern Pakistan.

In the report, we put forward the idea that, first of all, everything that can be done must be done, although maybe it's impossible to break al-Qaeda away from the Taliban. Secondly, try to bring more people who now associate themselves with the Taliban back into the political process.

The political dimension of this, both with Pakistan and the internal political dimension in Afghanistan, is key. I say that without having any illusions about how difficult this is to do.

There should be no question that we are more than pulling our weight. I came back from a meeting in Brussels just two weeks ago, one the former chairman of this committee, Mr. Graham, was at. One has to be struck by the fact that in Europe, there is not nearly the same sense that there is here or in Britain—if I exclude Britain from Europe for this purpose—that this is their war. They see it as the Americans' war and the war of the friends of the Americans. This is seen in the kinds of national restrictions that I think are intolerably—that's a strong word—imposed on the commitments coming from our European allies.

The final thing I would mention is the area of poppy production, to which Dr. Rubin has alluded. We can talk about it more if it's an area of interest to you, but to put it simply, let me just say that poppy eradication is not working and is causing quite severe political problems flowing from the economic consequences of that. Some means must be found, whether it is through the buying and marketing of opium for drug purposes or in some other way, to change the incentive structure. It isn't simply a matter of destroying the poppy crops. That is one of the critical elements in assuring the support of the Afghan people for the efforts that we and other NATO countries and friends of NATO are making in Afghanistan.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

We will go to the first round of questions, beginning with Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you.

I'll share my time with Mr. Martin, if he's coming back, but he needs to be in the House for twelve o'clock.

Merci, both of you. I think it's fabulous to see Mr. Rubin back here.

It's very difficult to understand all the players involved in Afghanistan. The perception here in Canada—my perception, in a sense, and that of my constituents—is that it's a U.S. war, and not even a NATO involvement, even if 36 countries are involved in Afghanistan.

We're reading that any solution will pass with the cooperation of Pakistan, and that the Pakistanis are not doing enough. I have two questions concerning that area.

In Pakistan, what is the exact role of ISI, the Pakistani intelligence? It seems ISI very strongly supports the Taliban, and the solution will pass with them in a sense.

My other question concerns India. With the long conflict between India and Pakistan, I feel it's still very present in this Afghanistan war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Do you think India should play a larger role, in a sense, or that NATO and the U.S. will let India play a larger role in Afghanistan? Will that bring Islamabad to be more cooperative with the NATO countries?

● (1135)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Patry.

Mr. Rubin.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: Thank you.

First, on Pakistan, I can't say exactly what the role of the ISI is, because it's a secret intelligence agency.

Of course, the official policy of the Government of Pakistan is that they support the international effort, but they think it has been excessively military, not sufficiently political. They argue for a political approach to the Taliban, and also to the tribal areas.

There certainly is, in Pakistan, obvious infrastructure of support for the insurgency, both in the tribal agencies and also in parts of Baluchistan, which includes *madrassas*, training camps, recruitment, videos and DVDs that are sold openly, and so on.

It's not that I see intelligence reports, but people do tell me about them. If they're telling me the truth, there are persistent intelligence reports that working-level ISI officers have been involved in supporting the Taliban, and before that they were supporting the mujahedeen for many decades. They continue to provide some kind of assistance, though it's not in the open and official way that it was done earlier. I might add, though, that Pakistan also denied it was supporting the Taliban throughout the period, when it was in fact supporting the Taliban, as Pakistan has now admitted.

As far as India is concerned, I don't think Pakistan will respond positively by increasing its perception of being threatened by India in Afghanistan. In fact, most of the uncooperative things Pakistan does with regard to Afghanistan are motivated by its fear of an Indian presence in Afghanistan.

Pakistan should not have a veto power over Afghanistan's relations with India. The two countries can have a very mutually beneficial relationship. But the United States, Canada, and others that are there should try to do what they can to assure that India's role is not threatening to Pakistan. There are certain specific issues that Pakistan has raised, like Indian consulates, and Pakistan has tried to at least induce some confidence-building measures and transparency between the two countries regarding their activities in Afghanistan.

Prof. Gordon Smith: I don't have much to add. I agree with everything Dr. Rubin has said. All I would add, though, is that if you look at the ISI, there are degrees of difference. The ISI is part of the Pakistani military, but as much as one can tell, it seems to have considerable autonomy. There are also former members of the ISI who are used by those who are currently in the ISI.

As Dr. Rubin said, the ISI has had a long period of involvement in Afghanistan. That's not going to change. One of the things that I think the ISI brings is a geostrategic view to Pakistan in that corner of the world, Pakistan seeing itself now with India. Their relationship may be a little bit better, but it still is far from a secure relationship. With Iran, there is the whole nuclear weapons question. With Afghanistan and with foreign troops, I think the ISI is constantly looking at and thinking about Pakistan's long-term geostrategic interests.

Otherwise, I would agree with everything Dr. Rubin has said.

● (1140)

The Chair: Mr. Wilfert, did you have a very quick question?

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

One of the things I'm struck with has two parts. One, the Pakistanis have continued to say, as late as three weeks ago, when I was there, that they have 80,000 troops on the border, and if we push them too hard, the alternative to Musharraf is complete and utter chaos. I would like you to comment on that.

Secondly, there is the issue of negotiating. The Taliban is not a monolithic organization. The question becomes whether or not you can split elements of the Taliban in order to negotiate and isolate the more radical elements.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

Mr. Smith, Mr. Rubin?

Prof. Gordon Smith: I'll go first.

There's a debate out there among experts on Pakistan as to whether or not Musharraf is doing all he possibly can. Musharraf has his own problems now, after having dismissed the chief justice. Musharraf is very much a preacher of the military. If he is pushed out, my guess is that he will probably be replaced by some other general.

My own feeling at this point, which is stronger than when I actually wrote this report, is that it's time to put more pressure on Musharraf. That has to be done not by us, but by the Americans and the British.

With respect to the Taliban and whether it can be split, that's exactly what we suggest in this report. Again, it's controversial. Some people think it's possible to try to exclude some of the more extreme elements and to try to bring people who are associated with the Taliban into the political process in Kabul. That will, among other things, end up giving the Pashtun people a greater degree of power in the overall governance of the country.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: First, Pakistan does have those troops on the border, and has been quite active in pursuing al-Qaeda. Of course, al-Qaeda members are not Afghan or Pakistani, by and large; they are Arab, and from other countries. Pakistan does not have any interest in attacking the World Trade Center or the Pentagon. In fact, that created a lot of problems for them, in that Taliban would still be in power otherwise, which is what they would prefer.

So they are willing to do that, but they have not used those troops against the Taliban. Until Vice-President Cheney's recent visit, they had never arrested a senior Taliban official on Pakistani soil. They actually denied that there were any such people. President Musharraf personally denied to me, at a Council on Foreign Relations meeting, that there were any Taliban leaders in Quetta. Then they arrested a former defence minister of the Taliban in Quetta. So that calls into question the good faith of their effort.

The military in Pakistan always says that the alternative to military rule is chaos. However, I find that there are very few Pakistanis who believe that. I might add also that the civilian leaders in Pakistan tell U.S. diplomats, "We have to do what they want, or they'll be replaced by some radical Islamists, maybe by the Taliban or something", which also doesn't appear to be true, from my observation of Pakistan.

I think the military can find another general. The Pakistani political system is mature enough that, despite all of its problems, you can actually have an elected civilian government in Pakistan. It's pretty clear that this is what Pakistanis would want.

I should add, and this is more controversial, that in my view, civilian rule in Pakistan would be more favourable—or at least potentially could be more favourable—to what we are trying to accomplish in Afghanistan, because the military in Pakistan is not just the military, it's actually the ruling party. It has political alliances, and those political alliances are with the Islamist parties. Musharraf's party is in coalition with the pro-Taliban party in the Balochistan provincial government. The Pashtun parties that are opposed to the Taliban actually are in opposition to the military, and would be likely to have more influence if there were an elected civilian government. Of course there would be some problems, but I don't think the blackmail the Pashtun military uses with foreign guests is credible.

Just on the Taliban, I prefer to speak about the insurgency rather than the Taliban, because the Taliban as an organization is only part of the insurgency. There are many people fighting for a variety of reasons. Certainly there are people who can be neutralized or incorporated into the government one way or the other. I think it is much more questionable whether it's possible to create a political or factional split within the structure of the Taliban, which appears to be relatively united under the leadership of Mullah Omar.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Rubin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lalonde, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will be sharing my time with Ms. Barbot.

I would like to thank both of you. I would like to say at the outset that the party of which I am a member is the Bloc Québécois, which has the majority of the seats in Quebec, and the majority of people in this province are opposed to our participation in the war in Afghanistan. My party has defended this position from the beginning. However, we have to rebalance humanitarian aid as compared to our military presence. That is absolutely essential. We must also deal with the poppy issue. At the moment, the drug is devastating the entire Afghan society.

The testimony we have heard at the committee suggests that the type of war being waged in Afghanistan is incompatible with humanitarian aid and with gaining the support of the people. There is no doubt that what we need is the support of the people.

I would like to hear what you have to say about this.

● (1145)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Lalonde.

Dr. Rubin.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Barnett Rubin: I could ask some questions, but I prefer to make some comments.

I certainly agree that we must increase both our humanitarian aid and also our economic assistance. From the beginning, everything I have said has supported this view. We must remember particularly that everything the international community does in Afghanistan must be done in cooperation with the Afghans in order to build a responsible state that can offer the people the services they need and have been waiting for so long. If Canada can do something along these lines, I would support that.

In addition, I very much agree with Mr. Smith about eradicating poppy production. I think this is a serious mistake. This year and last poppy production was reduced in a number of provinces. In neither case was this reduction a result of poppy eradication. It had more to do with security considerations, the political action of the government and economic development.

However, there is a contradiction here. We want the support of the peasants, but the elimination of poppies conveys the opposite impression, because growing poppies is the way they earn their living. As to the way operations are being conducted, I think Mr. Smith made some remarks about this in his presentation. He said that the fact that we do not have enough troops on the ground meant that we turned to the air force, which is very harmful, because it results in civilian deaths.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Smith.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gordon Smith: I am just going to add a few words about something I find particularly striking.

[*English*]

I'm looking at my notes here. The most recent estimates of the value of poppy production at the farm gate, as it leaves the producer, is $37 million for all of Afghanistan in a year. When processed and exported, it translates into $3 billion on the streets.

If we're dealing with something for which the farmers who are there only get $37 million, it's possible to find some other way or some other incentive so that they can end up better off. It's a question of how one structures it.

I might add that although this report has nothing to do with the International Development Research Centre, of which I chair the board, the IDRC along with some government agencies, and certainly including CIDA, are now looking at novel ways to provide incentives to deal with this problem, but eradication is simply not it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Barbot, a very quick question.

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You spoke about the possibility of a debate within our society about Canada's role in Afghanistan. Mr. Rubin, you said that Canada could play a role with countries that want to change the mission in Afghanistan.

Could you please give us some more details about this? How would Canada go about this?

Dr. Barnett Rubin: Thank you.

Let us take the example of poppy production, which we were just talking about. I have discovered that even within the American Congress and among Republicans in the Senate, some people realize that the current policy is not working. It actually runs counter to our interests.

There is a sort of debate about this—and the Senlis Council has done some work on this—but it is rather underground. As far as I know, no official authority has proposed an alternative policy. There is no serious debate about this. The Senlis Council has a few ideas on this. If it is legally possible to purchase poppies and to use opium for medical purposes, we must study the impact of that on agriculture, the economy, and so on. This study must be done carefully and must set out both the expected and unexpected consequences of this.

The Senlis Council has tried to do this, but the initiative must be much stronger and more credible in my opinion. In other countries, including the United States, members of committees like yours are sharing their concerns, but for the moment, they have not been developed.

Mr. Gordon Smith: I would like to suggest another solution. We could use the fact that we are members of NATO. There is also the Council of NATO. I was the ambassador to NATO. With our allies and friends in NATO, it would be quite possible to have a debate about all the aspects of our strategy, including this important problem.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

We'll go to Mr. Obhrai from the government side, for seven minutes.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you very much to both of you for coming and sharing your news with us. It's very interesting, let me tell you. This is a great debate. We can talk about a lot of issues: poppies, NATO—as you said—and everything.

I want to go on with what Dr. Rubin said here when he talked about change where it is needed. We have been in Afghanistan for a while now. NATO has been there for a while. I absolutely agree with you, sir, that Pakistan's role is critically important, and so is India's. These confidence-building measures are completely the right way to go, so that at the end of the day Afghanistan comes out with its interests intact.

I went to New Delhi for the regional economic conference on Afghanistan, hosted by India. I now understand that Pakistan is very keen to host the third one of these that will take place. What clearly came out of that was that the regional players surrounding Afghanistan—although they are not militarily there, because it's a NATO mission primarily, so their military hand is out of this region—all have a very keen interest in making Afghanistan stable, because they've become unstable. They are pouring a lot of money into reconstruction and everything, and that, to me, would be one of those main, strong catalyst points to move into this new strategy you're talking about—the reconstruction of Afghanistan—because everybody is talking about the economics, and you have just laid them out very clearly.

I would say that instead of really focusing on NATO and the security aspects and all these things, the regional players should be the ones to have a far greater interest in having a stable Afghanistan. Would you not say that we should work with them to move to the forefront of providing prosperity for Afghanistan?

● (1155)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Dr. Rubin.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: Thank you.

At the Bonn Conference, the Iranian representative came to Mr. Brahimi, who was chairing it for the UN, and said to him, “I'd like to assure you that from now on, Iran will not interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.” Mr. Brahimi said to him, “Don't speak to me as if I'm a child. It's not possible for Iran not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, but what we want you to do is interfere in a way that's positive.” I think that is the idea that you are proposing.

Part of the motivation of the economic cooperation framework to which you referred is to create incentives for cooperation in Afghanistan on the part of the neighbours. That was part of the idea. Of course Afghanistan, as a landlocked country, absolutely needs that.

However, I would raise a note of caution. I think that experience shows that countries tend to put their security interests first. Certainly countries under military rule put their security interests first. I wouldn't say all the countries have an interest in stability in Afghanistan. They all have an interest in Afghanistan being stable and ruled by their friends. The second-best solution is for it to be unstable. The third-best solution is for it to be stable and ruled by their enemies' friends. That is the source of the problem.

At the moment, for instance, there are two different frameworks for economic cooperation in Afghanistan. There is a Pakistan-Afghanistan framework through Karachi, and there's an India-Iran framework, which goes through Iran and then up to western Afghanistan. Those are also associated with different ethnic groups in Afghanistan, because of the territory through which the trade passes.

I think it's very good to try to invest in its regional cooperation, and Canada has supported that and should do more, but I think that the confidence-building measures on security and fundamental issues of national interest are what will make the regional cooperation possible.

Prof. Gordon Smith: Adding very briefly, and maybe making even more explicit what Dr. Rubin has said, if you look back at the history of Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan, it's hard to say that stability and progress in Afghanistan has been at the top of Pakistan's agenda. I agree entirely with what Dr. Rubin has said. The most desirable thing from a Pakistani geostrategic point of view is that Afghanistan have a friendly government. The second is instability, which it has been prepared to live with. The third, obviously, as he said, are the enemies ruling Afghanistan.

I really think the critical thing here—and this takes one back into one's history lessons—is that how the British drew the Durand Line was guaranteed to make this an area of instability. If you read Margaret MacMillan's *Paris 1919*, you'll see this in a number of other areas as Britain drew boundaries. A lot of it was done to avoid the creation of strong powers and to put unstable situations out beyond where the empire ended.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Chair and gentlemen, this is very interesting conversation and information we're getting today.

Just yesterday or the day before, four ISI personnel were killed travelling in the region. I'm not sure if you're aware of that. I'd like your comment on that.

As well, while I was visiting Afghanistan, I met General McNeill, ISAF commander, and he had high praise for Canadian troops. He also complimented them and Canada for the success of the Medusa operation and for getting involved in 100 projects that are being built in Kandahar.

We hear that the people of Afghanistan believe we are an occupying force, but I can tell you a lot of people there told me that is not the case. So there's conflicting opinion on that. People in the United States, Canada, and everywhere else also sometimes say our governments are not delivering. I think we should take caution when we say that people in Afghanistan by and large do not accept the troops and think it's an occupation force.

However, I would also like your comments on our operation northeast of Kandahar on the Kajaki dam project. Some have viewed it as a military operation, but it is there to provide electricity to two million people—right now it's about 300,000. So securing, developing—all those things are going on, and I get a little concerned when people diminish the developmental work going on.

I'd also like you to comment on whether our expectation or our sights were set so high that we expected things to happen just like that in a country that has been bombed for 30 years. I think we need to re-evaluate our expectations.

● (1200)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Khan.

Mr. Smith or Mr. Rubin.

Prof. Gordon Smith: With respect to the deaths of these ISI members, I think what President Musharraf tries to do is a balancing act for him. At certain times he wants to be seen as being tough on terrorism and responding to the U.S. agenda. At other times he's dealing with his own domestic political problems. The ISI may or may not have some of its own elements at work. I think there are indications to think that it probably does, but it's very hard for any outsider to really understand how the ISI works.

Coming to your point on being perceived as an occupying force, let me put it this way. First of all, the numbers clearly indicate there are growing numbers who see this. They're not overwhelming, but there are growing numbers. But the longer conflict goes on, not suprisingly, the more fed up are the people who are living through that conflict. It seems to me—and this is one of the things we said in the report—it's important to try to bring the conflict to an end as quickly as possible

On the economic development side, I think what you said is absolutely right. You need long time horizons. You need projects that will take place over time. On the other hand, you also need to be able to show very quick results, particularly in the area in which our troops are operating in Kandahar.

Mr. Wajid Khan: May I ask a very quick question?

The Chair: No, we're out of time. We'll come back to you on the second round.

Mr. Rubin, do you want to respond to Mr. Khan as well?

Dr. Barnett Rubin: Okay. If I'm not mistaken, the killing of the ISI officers took place in the South Waziristan tribal agency.

I want to be clear about the tribal agencies. It's not that the Government of Pakistan has no de facto control over them. The Government of Pakistan has no de jure control over the tribal agencies. They are not under the government administration.

The border problem is not where the Durand Line is or recognizing the Durand Line. The border problem is also that these tribal agencies are not administered territories.

Furthermore, the people who live in those territories say they're Afghans and they also say they're Pakistanis. They don't believe they only belong to one country, and yet they don't participate in the Afghan political system, except as fighters. It's actually a bigger problem there.

In South Waziristan right now, the area has a large number of fighters from the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan who are allied with al-Qaeda.

For the local Pashtun tribes, I don't know what their private opinions are, but many of them are organized militarily to support the Taliban and are now actually fighting against the Uzbeks from al-Qaeda because they have worn out their welcome.

The ISI is involved in this very complex conflict between pro-al-Qaeda Uzbeks and pro-Taliban Pashtuns. We don't exactly know who killed the ISI officers in that area, but of course Pakistan's actions are multi-dimensional.

As far as the Kajaki Dam is concerned, it's an extremely important project. I am glad to hear that Canada is helping to secure it. The lack of improvement in the electricity supply in the five years the foreigners have been there is certainly one of the top items on the agenda of Afghans when they complain.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Rubin.

We'll go to Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): I want to say what a pleasure it is to have both of you here before the committee.

Particularly I think you've been calling on all of those concerned about the future of Afghanistan to not penalize or punish Afghanis for the involvement of the U.S. or the manner in which the U.S. has been involved. I'd like to pursue that a little bit further.

I had the opportunity on Thursday or Friday to participate in a full-day seminar on exit strategies for Iraq and Afghanistan. I was struck by an assertion made by one of the presenters that how you exit depends on how you entered. I'm trying to pursue it a little bit further, because I think you both touched on this a little. You made reference to Canadians' assessments or interpretations of what is happening there in relation to the American involvement. I'd like to pick up on two specifics.

Dr. Rubin, I believe it was you who pointed out that government expenditures amount to $13 per capita for the entire range of public programs and services.

● (1205)

Dr. Barnett Rubin: It's revenue.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I'm sorry. It's revenue.

Whether or not you talk about it in terms of revenue or what they have to work with in terms of improving people's lives, it is clearly the case that people are in very desperate conditions.

You will know that Canada's commitment militarily in terms of the dollar amount is weighted nine to one on the side of military commitments versus the humanitarian, diplomatic, and developmental initiatives. If that is the case, can you address the issue of humanitarian aid, the resources targeted to improving people's actual standard of living, and the more robust engagement around diplomacy? There's very little that goes into actual diplomatic engagement, and so on. Do you think a shift in that balance is not necessary if we're actually going to come anywhere close to achieving the stated objectives of the mission?

The Chair: Thank you, Madam McDonough.

Dr. Rubin or Mr. Smith.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: I wouldn't conceptualize the problem as an imbalance, because you can always correct the imbalance by pulling out your troops. I think the problem is that Afghanistan needs more—and more effective—development assistance. Canada has actually been one of the best donors in terms of the way it gives assistance. It has supported the Afghanistan reconstruction trust fund and has even put a certain amount of money, $10 million—I'm not sure whose dollars, but somebody's dollars—directly into the treasury of Afghanistan as a sign of support for the reforms they have undertaken in the finance ministry. But if you can do more, that will certainly be welcome.

If I can just say a word about the exit strategy, there are different scenarios, as one can imagine. But there's a basic problem, which is that we have no reason at the moment to believe that the current territory of Afghanistan possesses enough economic resources to pay the cost of maintaining its own security. In fact, that territory became a state because it was a state subsidized by the British empire to protect the frontier of India, not to provide services to Afghans. That is why it has never developed the capacity to do so.

If Afghanistan is to be stable, either some kinds of continuing subsidies are needed or we have to somehow reconfigure the region so that there are a lot more regional resources and cooperation that enable Afghanistan to produce much more than it has in the past and support itself. Plus, we need to lower the costs of maintaining security by lowering the regional threat environment.

Those are the components of any exit strategy from Afghanistan. But it is very difficult to imagine a situation in which Afghanistan will not in some sense be subsidized by or dependent on the international community in the foreseeable future.

The Chair: Mr. Smith.

Prof. Gordon Smith: I wouldn't propose to give this committee an exit strategy from Iraq for the United States, because I'm not sure at all what it is. Afghanistan is going to be tough enough, as Dr. Rubin has just said.

I've been impressed over the last year or so by how much we have increased our development assistance into Afghanistan as a whole, but particularly focused on the Kandahar area. I think you know that when one makes this nine-to-one comparison, the military is a very expensive thing to have and to use and to equip. The ratio of the military budget to the CIDA budget is probably in the order of five to one all the time, in any event. So I don't think the answer is transferring resources from the military to development. I also think that we're not doing badly on the development side. I think the international community has to do more. That comes back to what I was saying earlier about a lot of people not seeing this as their war.

But I do agree very much with what you've said about the need for more creative political approaches—at least, I'm not aware of them, let me put it that way—both to deal with Pakistan and to deal with the issues of whether it's possible to split off al-Qaeda from the Taliban and the more far-out people in the Taliban from others who just kind of go along. There is a big diplomatic content that seems to be in again. Dr. Rubin can comment on this. The United States, which is the natural leader, is so preoccupied by the war in Iraq that Afghanistan barely comes onto centre stage. That's too bad, because we need U.S. leadership.

● (1210)

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Goldring for five minutes, please.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): I thank you for mentioning Canada's contributions to date in a positive light, and their effectiveness too.

Of course we had our discussions in Washington and New York about what we can do about democracy and how that is interpreted, because there can be many interpretations. But it's all about good governance. You comment in your report about good governance and the weak point there being the judiciary. With the complexities of involvement throughout Afghanistan, from the tribal areas to the remote areas, with regard to the judiciary as it's established and as we're trying to contribute to building and reinforcing, are there other models that could be incorporated? Should there be consideration for—I suppose I would call them “cultural models” or “tribal models” or more flexibility in our understanding? Should we try to contribute to a much more flexible judiciary that would be more acceptable to the mainstream of Afghanistan in the long term?

Prof. Gordon Smith: Yes, I think that's a really important question, and I'd like to answer it even more broadly.

I think that a lot of people, when they talk about democracy, human rights, respect for women...these are all important values for us, which we know and accept. But when you're dealing with a tribal society, they are light-years away. Even if people did nothing but read some of the popular books that are out, like *The Kite Runner* or *The Bookseller of Kabul,* and you get inside what a family is like, one begins to understand this.

One of the encouraging things I've recently learned is that there are more and more local councils being established. In some cases they are mixed, men and women. In the south, which is more conservative, there are women's councils and men's councils. Those were originally established in order to draw priorities for the delivery of aid.

Mr. Peter Goldring: How would you categorize that or classify it, to give a description of it that overall fits what the direction should be? In other words, how do we explain this? We know of our western law and our western structuring, but how would you describe this as a model?

Prof. Gordon Smith: It's *sui generis*, I think.

I think that if we try to put it in western and western democracy terms, we will end up tripping over each other because it won't be credible.

The fact is, now people are electing—it may be the people who would otherwise just be chosen as the village elders, but they are being elected. Once you're elected, as I don't need to say to you, ladies and gentlemen, you become accountable. People will ask you what you've done.

The original purpose of electing these councils was to, as I say, deliver development assistance. But now what is happening, I am told, is they are becoming kinds of village councils to deal with things other than just the delivery of development assistance.

Again, on the legal side, we're not going to move to a court system that is comparable to our own rapidly, in any event, or maybe ever, at least as far as one can see. But there have been traditional ways of dealing with justice that haven't all involved chopping off a hand or something like that, which is totally unacceptable.

I think one has to be prepared to build on tradition and not try to just impose outside models.

● (1215)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

Dr. Rubin.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: I wouldn't like to leave you with the impression that Afghanistan has never had a judiciary and we're just trying to impose one on them. Actually the Taliban had a very effective judiciary. Whenever people in Afghanistan say something positive about the Taliban, that is usually what they compare unfavourably to the current situation.

The reason they can do that is because there is considerable legal capacity in Afghan society, but it is capacity to administer sharia as interpreted by the Islamic clergy, not to administer the state law, which also exists. But in the history of Afghanistan there have been governments that have created relatively powerful judiciaries based on state law.

Alongside the state law, there has also always existed customary law, which varies throughout the country and which has been used as the main mode of dispute settlement. And to some extent the formal, state-sponsored judicial system has acted as a whole as a court of appeal from this customary system when one party or another was dissatisfied with it.

So there is a problem, which is being debated among Afghans, of how or whether to integrate or recognize customary law within the formal legal system—not to give formal approval to things like resolving disputes by exchanging daughters but precisely to try to use the positive capacity that it represents while perhaps, as the Afghan constitution requires, curbing its abuses.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Rubin.

We'll come back to Mr. Casey, but we'll go to Mr. Graham first.

Hon. Bill Graham (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much, gentlemen, for your interventions.

I think you started out on a rather pessimistic note about the perception of Afghans by both the successive military interventions, and more importantly, perhaps, the nation-building that is presently going on in their own country and the ability of their own institutions to respond to their needs.

I think if you were to travel across Canada and to speak to the Afghan diaspora, of which there is a substantial number in our country, they would confirm that. Whenever I speak to anyone in my own riding, and quite often they are taxi drivers in Toronto—and I'm not using this as a joke.... They are in daily telephone conversation with their families and friends in the communities there. In the last few years they have become progressively less enchanted and less hopeful about an ultimate good end to this. This is largely because of lack of security and lack of delivery of services, as both of you have pointed out. And it is attributable to the drug problem. There's no doubt about it.

I'd like to ask one question. Clearly there's a large debate among the military forces themselves at NATO meetings about this. What is the role of the military as opposed to local police? You have said that the American eradication program will not work. What is the chance that the U.S. administration will abandon that? It is being forced down the throats of every other NATO member, whether they like it or not, by the U.S. administration. If Colombia is any example, we're not likely to see them abandon it. If they don't abandon it, where does that take us?

Equally linked to that is perhaps something that hasn't been mentioned so far. A direct result and one consequence of it is the endemic corruption in the country, which is a huge inhibition to the delivery of the very services you said are essential if we're going to get the Afghan population believing that the right thing is being done. Most Afghans you speak to are very skeptical about the problem of corruption being helped. Is there some aid mechanism...? Have we ever found in a society that we can use aid to provide the public services with enough money that they don't have to be corrupt, or that we can eliminate corruption? That would be my principal question.

I have a second question. We haven't talked a lot about Russia; we've talked about every other neighbouring country. Whenever I've met with Sergei Ivanov, or any of the Russian authorities, they've always made a strong point that their intelligence authorities are very supportive of what we are doing in Afghanistan. They are very helpful to us. When I say that, I mean the western powers generally. Is that true, or is there another Russian agenda in the region?

● (1220)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Graham.

Mr. Rubin.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: Thank you.

Let me start with Russia. Russia has supported the effort, but Russia is politically aligned with the Northern Alliance. Therefore, they have a different nuance in the way they support it. They have actually protested against the sidelining of some figures from the Northern Alliance. They continue to maintain relations with them, against the day when they may need to renew them.

Russia has made one very positive move recently. They have basically agreed on the abolition of all their claims of debt against Afghanistan through the HIPC process, which will be immensely helpful.

On the negative side, the kind of political—

Hon. Bill Graham: On the Northern Alliance, I assume it's because they see the Taliban and the Pashtuns as an Islamist threat, which would be reflected in other parts of Russia—Chechnya and other places—and they see the Northern Alliance as a way of containing that threat.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: Yes, that's right. And precisely because of that, Russia is now an obstacle to pursuing some of the political initiatives toward incorporating and negotiating with the Taliban, because there is a list of Taliban figures who are subjected to sanctions under resolution 1267 of the Security Council, and some of the people on that list are now working for the government, like the governor of Oruzgan, but Russia will not agree to remove any people from the sanctions list. If they're on the sanctions list, it's very difficult to invite them, give them aid, and so on. So it would be useful to discuss that.

The sanctions list is also very useful now as a way to counter narcotics. Under a resolution passed in December, the Security Council adopted a proposal from Mr. Costa of the UNODC to add to those names under sanctions major drug traffickers from Afghanistan, because the Government of Afghanistan, obviously, finds it quite difficult to arrest them.

In terms of corruption, we should say briefly that in a way, the word is misleading, because there are different kinds of problems. There is no way to use aid to eliminate corruption in government in Afghanistan—or, I might add, in the United States. I won't speak about Canada. But the real problem is not bribery and corruption. The real problem is the capture of control of governance institutions, essentially by the illegal armed groups and drug traffickers. That's a very different problem.

Basically, what you have is an organized crime problem, in a sense. So resolving the drug problem, either by making it disorganized or by making it non-criminal, is the only way, I think, you can address the major problem of corruption in Afghanistan, which is capture of the state.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rubin.

Mr. Smith, were you going to respond to that, as well?

Prof. Gordon Smith: Yes. Very quickly, on the corruption issue, one of the things, Mr. Graham, that Canada is now doing is providing some salary support money. There's quite a gap between what civil servants are paid and what they would be paid to work for a warlord, or whatever. So I am told that CIDA is now into the salary support business, and I think that's a good thing.

The Chair: Do you have any idea how much money has been allocated to that line of ledger?

Prof. Gordon Smith: No. There may be somebody from CIDA here who knows, but there may not be.

The Chair: That's fine.

Prof. Gordon Smith: He can find out.

The Chair: It's always difficult to follow CIDA dollars.

Mr. Rubin.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: Just briefly too, I would like to relate the problem of salary support and corruption to the problem of exit strategy. One of the problems we're facing in Afghanistan now is that, for instance, to create the army, to recruit people and keep them, we have to pay them amounts that are far above what the Government of Afghanistan will ever be able to pay them for the foreseeable future. The same is true for the police and elsewhere.

There is a serious sustainability question—especially as aid donors operate on yearly budget cycles—which deprives the Afghan government of the ability to plan how much it will have in resources.

● (1225)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Rubin.

Mr. Casey.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Thank you.

The subject of Iraq came up a minute ago. I wonder what the impact will be if the Americans pull their troops out. They've just passed a motion in Congress to reduce their presence in Iraq substantially in less than a year, which is not very far away. The British have also indicated that they are going to reduce their troops in Iraq. What does that do to the balance of power in Afghanistan? Will some of those resources go to Afghanistan on both sides? It might produce an excess of resources on both sides. Is there any prediction of the impact of that on Afghanistan?

Dr. Barnett Rubin: Unfortunately, of course, the way the war would end, under any scenario that I can imagine, would be a tremendous morale booster for the other side.

However, I tend to think that the benefits of ending U.S. involvement in Iraq would outweigh the harm it might do to Afghanistan because of the resources that it would free up. As well, to some extent, the United States in particular—and perhaps it would require a new administration to do that—could signal a different policy and thereby recover some of the legitimacy that the intervention has lost in Afghanistan as a result of the intervention in Iraq.

I do know that Iranian intelligence officials and diplomats are very concerned, however, that some of the Arab al-Qaeda fighters in Iraq might decide to come to Afghanistan and try to start sectarian conflict there. And they would very much like to share that information and that concern with the United States and other western countries, but they're having difficulty doing so at present.

The Chair: Mr. Casey, do you have some more?

Mr. Bill Casey: I do.

President Clinton was here last November, and he made the interesting statement that the United States should never have gone into Iraq; they should have focused on Afghanistan. I can think of scenarios where that might become the new focus, where Afghanistan might become the new focus for the United States.

Do you think they would put a much greater effort into Afghanistan if they did pull out of Iraq?

Dr. Barnett Rubin: The sentiment in the U.S. Congress, certainly, and actually in the administration, is to put more effort into Afghanistan even while we are in Iraq. I don't know if they would add more, but it would certainly make it much easier to do so. I might add that it's a mistake just to conceive of these two operations as part of something called the war on terror and to think that if this war on terror loses one focus, it will have another. It's a much broader political problem. And of course we need a generally different policy towards the entire Middle East also, but that's not what we're here to discuss.

The Chair: Perhaps on another day we'll invite you to come back, Dr. Rubin, and give us your ideas on those. I think all people are questioning the Middle East and the direction we're going.

Mr. Smith.

Prof. Gordon Smith: No, I won't add to that.

The Chair: All right.

Then we'll go to Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of our witnesses said that in any case, as far as he was concerned, Afghanistan was a country of ongoing war, and that we did not have to look for ways out, that we had to get used to this type of war.

I would like to hear what you think about that, because it flies in the face of the reason people agree to go to Afghanistan. They think that even though Afghanistan cannot manage to not be dependent on others, at least the conflict could come to an end.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Smith.

Prof. Gordon Smith: There have been periods of peace in Afghanistan. To say there's continuous conflict I think is a distortion of history. For the last quarter of a century there's a been a lot of warfare, there's no question about that, but if you look back further, there have been periods of peace. These two books that I mentioned both talk of children growing up in a peaceful period and the coming of conflict.

I do think, Madame Lalonde, that one does need to think about what we are doing to try to help the Afghan people and why that is important. As I say, I think we lose sight of the fact that the original reason we went there was after the attacks of 9/11 and the threat of al-Qaeda. And it's a very real one, which we haven't really talked about this morning, but all the evidence I see points to al-Qaeda rebuilding.

I would add to what Mr. Rubin said in the previous question. I worry, with the U.S. defeat, because that's how it will be perceived in Iraq, that this will encourage people to go the al-Qaeda route. It will have a variety of effects, but on the whole, it will be a cause of celebration among the extremist Islamic jihadist community in the world.

● (1230)

[*Translation*]

Dr. Barnett Rubin: It was not said, however, that troops must remain in Iraq, but that is a result that we can no longer avoid.

With respect to the wars in Afghanistan in the last few decades, I would say that they were not caused by the alleged "war-like" nature of the Afghans. They were the result of certain political phenomena that may be transitory or more or less permanent in nature, and that depends on our actions and those of Afghanistan's neighbours.

I have noticed that it is difficult to stabilize this country, but it is not impossible. The people who live there have had decades of peace, for example during the cold war period. The stability resulted from a sort of consensus among the great powers and Afghanistan's neighbours about the country's political regime.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I know this is a long question that calls for a long answer. What would be the geo-strategic effects of abandoning Afghanistan? You mentioned Iraq, but what about Afghanistan?

Mr. Gordon Smith: First of all, I would say that this would be a total disaster for NATO. This would be a failure for NATO.

In our report, we described a few scenarios that could happen. There could be a civil war, or the country could be occupied by Pakistan, on one side, and by the Northern Alliance, on the other, which would result in a partition of the country. There are a number of possibilities.

In my opinion, the consequences of a quick withdrawal from Afghanistan would be very difficult. That is why I said it was not an option. We need a different strategy to get out of the country, not a quick, full withdrawal.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: First, al-Qaida would definitely establish a broader base in Afghanistan very quickly. In addition, I do not know whether the Taliban could take over power in Kabul, because even if the west were to abandon Afghanistan, Iran and Russia would not abandon it. So there would be potential for another civil war.

However, there is no doubt that the impact on Pakistan would be very serious, because the Taliban and al-Qaida are now established in that country. They're not established just tribally, they are starting to extend their influence into administrative spheres, and thus, they could regain power. And since that would be seen as a victory in Afghanistan, it would be very difficult to manage for the Government of Pakistan.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Rubin.

Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One of my questions was answered. I was wondering what will happen to NATO in order to survive.

Going back to my other question, Afghanistan has just formed an Afghan grand jirga on their side, and I met with their foreign relations committee. On the Pakistan side they have two governors for Baluchistan and Northwest Frontier, along with three senior cabinet ministers.

On the success of the jirga progress, I'd like to hear your comments. Some people argue that the solution to Afghanistan also rests in Pakistan and settling the FATA and border settlement areas.

Perhaps you could comment on those two issues.

● (1235)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Khan.

Dr. Rubin.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: The jirga proposal you referred to was one that I believe originally came from President Karzai. He envisaged having meetings of Pashtun tribes on both sides of the Durand Line—he wouldn't say the border—to try to maintain security in the area. Of course, neither the non-Pashtuns in Afghanistan nor the Pakistani government accepted that proposal, so they are now working on something different.

But there's a fundamental problem. Jirga is used as a national institution in Afghanistan, but it's not used as a national institution in Pakistan, so there's no symmetry between the two sides. They're having a great deal of difficulty figuring out how to actually do it, and I don't know if they'll succeed.

On the second point, I think it's absolutely true that this is not just an Afghan problem; it is a regional problem. The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is not just a question of recognizing a line, because the border is more complex, as you mentioned. They refer to it as the three-tiered frontier because the British drew it so there's a line between the administered territories of Pakistan and the tribal agencies that are not administered.

By the way, the Afghan government has certain rights in those tribal agencies. They used to recruit soldiers from there, and they have relations with the tribes. The tribes send messages to President Karzai telling him what they want him to do. These are people on the Pakistan side of the border, and they fight in Afghanistan on both sides.

Afghanistan was under British suzerainty, and the outer border of Afghanistan with Russia and Iran was considered the security border of the British Empire. It's now more or less considered the security border of Pakistan as well. That's what the doctrine of strategic depth is about.

So there's a whole set of issues involving the internal structure of Pakistan, the relations of Pakistan to Afghanistan, and the way Afghanistan is settled in the region, which need to be revisited. It's currently run under a colonial agreement from 1905 between Britain and Russia. It's a good time to revisit this whole set of agreements, because the international community is there and can help with the confidence-building measures and particularly investment in the development of that frontier area, which would provide the people there with livelihoods other than smuggling and warfare.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Rubin.

Mr. Smith.

Prof. Gordon Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I won't add to that, but I do have the information on salary support, if I may reply to that question, thanks to Ellen Wright of CIDA.

This fiscal year, 2006-07, CIDA provided $18 million to the Afghanistan reconstruction trust fund, and a portion of this provided salary support to 270,000 civil servants in a variety of different government departments.

That's an overall figure, and I'm sure more detail can be provided to the committee if you wish.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Do I have another 30 seconds?

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Wajid Khan: They are, as a matter of fact, talking that the Government of Pakistan is probably going to be announcing something this month or early next month about the investments. What they're looking at is putting in schools, hospitals, all those kinds of things. Do you think that's fruitful?

Dr. Barnett Rubin: Yes, I do.

I actually wrote a report with a colleague from Waziristan on the whole border issue, including this. I would note that in the recent supplemental request from the administration there is a request for $750 million over five years to assist Pakistan with the development of the tribal agencies.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Rubin, I believe you suggested in your earlier comments that in your assessment, the Taliban are relatively united behind Mullah Omar. Yet I know both of you have indicated that you recognize the need to try to find ways to engage not just with the Taliban but other insurgents as well. I know you underscored that point.

Can either or both of you point to any examples of where there have been some successes with the engagement of the Taliban or other insurgents, perhaps in some of the other provinces? Helmand is one where I think there has been a bit of reporting about that. And are there are some lessons we can learn from strategies that have been attempted elsewhere, if it is in fact the case that the Taliban are relatively united behind Mullah Omar? It seems like a good theory, and we keep advocating it, but where is there some indication that there have been some successes, either by other NATO allies or more indigenous kinds of initiatives?

● (1240)

Dr. Barnett Rubin: Well, of course people don't surrender when they think they're winning. There haven't been a lot of outstanding successes recently. There are some high-profile individuals who were formerly in the Taliban who are now more or less with the government, or at least are in Afghanistan and not with the Taliban.

Certainly the communist regime of Najibullah, or I should say the post-communist regime of Najibullah, had some success, actually, in stabilizing parts of the country through agreements such as you spoke about, agreements with elders that allowed fighters to keep their weapons as long as they didn't attack the government, things like that, at least as a temporary measure. But it was never possible for him to stabilize the country, because the mujahedeen continued to receive support through Pakistan.

As long as there is, from their point of view, a part of Afghanistan that is not under the control of the Government of Afghanistan because it's in the tribal agencies and in Pakistan, and as long as that area is also not really controlled by Pakistan and Pakistan does not do more to effectively shut down that recruitment centre, then there is a vast reserve that they have that makes it very difficult to create conditions for that kind of political discussion, although it can be done on a local basis within Afghanistan.

The Chair: Mr. Smith.

Prof. Gordon Smith: I have nothing to add to that.

The Chair: Madam McDonough, you do have some more time.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I have one further question. Going back to the conundrum of salary support, which may help to create somewhat more favourable conditions in people's lives but also is anti-corruption protection, and there are obvious benefits of that, the other side of that is really an unsustainable situation relative to the ability of the Afghani economy to actually maintain that. What is the answer to that? It's clearly a conundrum. Do you have any wise thoughts on how this problem can be addressed?

Prof. Gordon Smith: I think they're pretty obvious thoughts, at least on my part. As Dr. Rubin has said, if we're serious, we'd better be serious, because we're there for a long time.

First of all, there's one thing we haven't talked about, but I'm sure all committee members know this. Afghanistan has never had a strong centralized government—far from it. Kabul has had varying degrees of control, but it's a country in which a lot of power is in the regions, and that's not going to easily change.

We haven't really talked about the Afghan national police, the Afghan national army, which is a separate issue, and the Afghan national security agency. The salary discrepancy is also a very important issue. I guess it's not corruption, but people can end up being trained for the army, and they will then take off to join the Taliban, or people can be trained for the police, and who knows where they've come from. They're attached to some warlord somewhere and go back to work with him.

I think a lot depends on salaries. It's not really corruption. It's simply switching sides and opportunism. A great deal depends on salary support, but I can't see any alternative to the reality that we're going to be there for a very long time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

We'll go to Mr. Goldring and then to Mr. Wilfert.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Dr. Rubin, you'd mentioned earlier that from time to time, instructions are sent forward from some of the tribal areas to the central government. It would indicate there is at least a very elemental basis of communication between the tribal area and the central government from time to time.

Is this being built upon to try to bring it within a more regular type of communication? If they're sending instructions from time to time, would there be some consideration given to being part of a more regular dialogue, which would be the building blocks of trying to bring about governance in the region?

Where does education fit into this? Canada has contributed considerably. There are millions more who are regularly attending school now, as well as girls who are attending school. Would education in the long term, generation upon generation, be an essential element to build knowledge and awareness for the community and people on the benefits of governance and the benefits of communicating from remote regions to the central government in order to eventually have a form of interaction in those regions on a regular basis?

● (1245)

Dr. Barnett Rubin: I was actually referring to the fact that the tribes in the Pakistani tribal agencies send messages to President Karzai.

I know that at one time there was an issue involving the border and the Mohmand tribal agency. The Mohmand tribe in Pakistan sent a message to President Karzai saying he couldn't deal with it without consulting them. They consider themselves to be Afghans, as well as citizens of Pakistan, depending on what is more convenient at any particular moment.

I don't always understand how it works. A lot of communication goes on among people who you would think wouldn't be on speaking terms with each other, but they find ways to communicate.

I might add that they are very attentive to media. They listen to the radio, mainly news, for hours and hours a day. They're better informed on many international issues than I would say people in the United States are, even though they may be illiterate.

As far as education is concerned, I would emphasize that the attitude toward education has fundamentally changed in the past several decades. It used to be that the government would try to negotiate with villagers to get them to accept a school, but now they cannot come anywhere close to keeping up with the demand for schools for both boys and girls.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Is it not a common situation, whether it's in Pakistan or Afghanistan, on how to interact and bring this interaction from the remote tribal areas into the mainstream governance of both countries?

The long-term reality and goal would be to build for that eventual interaction in order to have day-to-day communication from a central government and break down this barrier of difficulties in dealing with independent and remote tribal areas.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: I might mention that there's a high level of mobile telephone use in Afghanistan. It's amazing, some of the places they function, including some remote tribal areas.

The problem in the Pakistani tribal agencies, which are not subject to state administration, is different from the problem in the areas of Afghanistan where the social structure is tribal but under state administration. I will say that there are major efforts going on now to try to strengthen the administration at the local and provincial levels in Afghanistan, but it will take a long time to make them more functional.

The Chair: Mr. Smith.

Prof. Gordon Smith: As well, in those areas that are, as Dr. Rubin pointed out, legally not under the power of Islamabad, I don't think one should assume that.... I think the fact is that they are quite happy with their present state. They're quite happy with the independence they have. They can play it both ways. They're certainly not interested in becoming a regularized part of the Pakistani government machinery.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: I believe there are differences of opinion on that. There are strong economic interests in favour of maintaining the current system, because there is a method of licensing commodities in the region. There are also people who are profiting from the war economy. But there are others, and this is articulated by some of the political parties in the region, who very much do want to be integrated, who want to have government services, education, and the things that go along with it.

● (1250)

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to go to the opposition side. Mr. Wilfert's going to ask a very quick question, and then we'll go straight to Mr. Martin. At that point we can deal with both sets of questions.

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

Mr. Smith, you say we have to be there for a long time, but you also say in here that time is not on NATO's side. You have the quote in here from the first U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan. I guess this is the question: Is it winnable?

The Chair: Mr. Martin.

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

Thank you very much, Dr. Rubin and Dr. Smith, for the very fine pieces you've put out in this very difficult challenge.

If I'm repeating something, I apologize; I had to leave to go to the House to speak.

I don't understand how we can possibly beat an insurgency whose bases are outside of the country in which we're actually fighting, in this case Quetta, Pakistan, as we all know. I also don't understand why we haven't put more resources into the Afghan national police. While our troops are doing an outstanding job of knocking back the Taliban, I believe a constabulary force has to go in after that in order to maintain security for the people who are there.

My questions are as follows.

One, do you think a regional working group, able to bring in Pakistan, India, Iran, and Afghanistan, is absolutely essential in order to deal with the political challenges of the arena?

Two, the transference of the poppy crop, the opium production... removing that and channeling that from the production of heroin into the production of pharmaceutical-grade narcotics that can then be sold, particularly to developing countries where there's an 80% deficit, would give the country a value-added resource that the farmers would get a reasonable rate of return on. We'd then also be severing that economic tie to the Taliban.

To Dr. Rubin, if you could share with us any of the U.S. administration's conclusions from their review of Afghanistan, we'd be grateful.

Thank you.

The Chair: We have first Mr. Wilfert's question—Is it winnable?—and then Mr. Martin's questions.

Mr. Smith.

Prof. Gordon Smith: I'll have a go.

Is it winnable? That's actually the title of our paper, *Is it Working?*, and I'm basically saying not at the present time. I deliberately said that as starkly as I did because I think it's important to draw attention to that fact.

Now I've come and I'm answering both questions together here. That is because the timetable that Mr. Wilfert pointed out very much focuses not only on military presence, but also on the kinds of levels of military activity that are going on now. Everybody I know who I've spoken to says the tolerance level inevitably goes down over time, so that's why that part is particularly time-sensitive. Even if there were general security throughout the country, I think there's going to be a continued external military presence there, but not the kind of war fighting we now know. As I was saying to Madame Lalonde, the development assistance is going to be there for a long, long time.

On the question of some sort of regional working group, I guess it wouldn't do any harm, and might do some good, but I think ultimately the key is going to be that of outside pressure. The people who can really make a difference are going to be those like the United States, when it gets fully focused on this set of issues—above all, the United States.

Dr. Martin, when you were out we talked a bit about the poppies issue, and my view is, as you know from the paper, that eradication isn't working. I think from your question you agree with that. Whether it is through the purchase of some form of marketing board and the sale for the use of legal drug manufacture, or whether it's some other incentive form, something has to be done to provide the incentives to the farmers to stop growing poppies or to sell their poppies. It can't be such a great incentive that it ends up encouraging other people who aren't producing poppies now to produce them.

As I understand, only 4% of the agricultural land in Afghanistan is now being used for poppy growth. So you have to make sure you don't make the rewards so great that you end up shooting yourself in the foot.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: The only thing I'll say about the question of whether it's winnable is if we define our goals in a reasonable way, then it's still possible to succeed. It is not possible to turn Afghanistan into a modern, prosperous, stable, peaceful democracy that has a higher level of representation of women in its political system than the United States, in a short period of time, especially with few resources.

I think the point about not being able to beat an insurgency without bases outside the country is very important. That's one of the conclusions of the policy review carried out by the U.S. government, I believe. I haven't seen the policy review, of course, but I've seen the results, which is more attention to the problem of the Taliban in Pakistan, the doubling of the amount of U.S. assistance that has been requested, and in particular, the focusing of a lot of that resistance on building the police, as you suggested. It is belated, and I go into the reasons for that, but it is very necessary, as you mention.

Of course, I just underline again, if you don't have a functioning judicial system, it's not clear exactly what the police are supposed to do except to beat people up, which is what they do.

On the question of dealing with opium, I want to mention there is a serious problem. There is an international legal regime on narcotics, and opium is an illicit drug, and there are very strict rules under this regime, which is administered by the International Narcotics Control Board in Vienna, about who can be licensed to produce legal opium. One of the conditions for doing that is having a sufficient law enforcement system to guarantee that there will not be any leakage. Because one could easily imagine that if you tell them in Afghanistan that now it's legal to grow opium, everyone will start growing opium. And in addition, you will have a very difficult problem of how to allocate the licences to produce opium in a country where people are not registered with the state and there is no land survey. So the degree of control you need to have to administer such a program under the current international legal regime does not exist.

Now, that puts you in a vicious circle where, because of narcotics and the corruption it entails, you cannot create adequate security, and because of the lack of security, you cannot partially legalize the growth of opium. I certainly would be in favour of examining whether, particularly in post-conflict areas, it is possible to have a different approach to counter narcotics into which this could be integrated, but that would actually require possibly some changes in the international regime. I'm part of a project that is investigating just that question.

● (1255)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Rubin.

Mr. Eyking.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for coming here today.

My question is on the reconstruction. As we know, the idea that we should have a Marshall Plan has often been talked about. The Marshall Plan was quite successful in Europe, but in Europe the fighting stopped before the reconstruction started. In Afghanistan I guess we're trying to do both. We're fighting a war and we're also trying to reconstruct, which gives us its challenges.

You quoted in one of your summations about a RAND Corporation gentleman. He was quoted not too long ago about the lack of reconstruction done in the rural areas. Some areas are being done with some success, but the rural areas are really being neglected. He says that there is not much effort in branching out to these rural areas and that unless we get out there and do some sort of construction in these rural areas, these people are not going to see the benefit of their future lives and what we're trying to do for them.

With the countries that are there now, is there enough money put on the table and is there a proper plan in place so that reconstruction is going to be successful, not only in certain pockets, but through the whole region?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Eyking.

Dr. Rubin.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: First, I'm not sure if you're referring to Jim Dobbins and what he said. There is one program in Afghanistan that deals with the rural areas that is rather successful, which is the national solidarity program, which provides block grants to villages for projects that are identified and administered by the village themselves with the help of international organizations to assure accountability for the funds.

This is funded largely by the World Bank and some other donors. I don't know if Canada is funding it or not.

A voice: Yes.

Dr. Barnett Rubin: It is. Canada is also supporting it.

I believe the last I heard it had reached one half of all the villages in the country.

What people often comment about it is not first on the economic benefits, but that for the first time they feel like they're really citizens of a country because they are seeing some benefits coming to them from the government. It is extremely important.

However, those projects are at the village level. What I see that has been really missing in the agricultural sector has been the type of infrastructure and institutional changes that are needed above the village level—for instance, larger-scale and medium-sized water projects, which are very essential, and measures that would improve marketing, such as roads, more information, and things like that. Those are actually very key to counter narcotics also, because people need to be able to market alternative crops and create employment and other types of activity.

● (1300)

Hon. Mark Eyking: Do I have any more time?

The Chair: You have no more time.

Prof. Gordon Smith: May I just add to that?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Prof. Gordon Smith: We are deeply into the national solidarity program, both in Kandahar, where we obviously feel a particular responsibility, and in the rest of the country, and where it has not yet been expanded it's going to be expanded so that it will cover the entire province.

The result has been quite a phenomenal election of these community development councils. I'm told that there are now upwards of 16,000 nationwide and the number of projects that are being funded is increasing dramatically. So I think there is an understanding of the very real problem you point to. I think it is now being addressed.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

I think that pretty well concludes our time here today. Certainly we want to thank you both for appearing before our committee. It is appreciated.

We're doing a fairly comprehensive study on Afghanistan. I think all parties have the intent of finding those areas in which Canadians can improve our role or improve the resources that are going to certain parts of that mission. I think we all understand the importance of democratic development and promotion in countries like Afghanistan, including the values, the principles, the human rights that we believe are important.

So we appreciate your input. We've enjoyed your testimony, as I've mentioned before, in the past in New York. We look forward to hearing from you again and reading the many different reports that both of you have helped author.

Again, thank you for attending.

We're going to suspend for a few moments and give each one an opportunity to grab some lunch, and then we're going to move very quickly into committee business.

So I ask the members of the committee to stay and we will proceed into committee business. We have a number of topics and items for committee business that have just come out of our subcommittee this morning.

Thank you. We'll suspend for two minutes.

● _____ (Pause) _____ ●

● (1305)

The Chair: We'll call this meeting back to order. It's my understanding that we are no longer televised, and that's always good. I always have a problem eating when I know that we're being televised.

We're going to come back quickly and go to our committee business. There have been a couple of things.

You do not have a copy of this budget. This morning in our subcommittee on human rights it was asked that this budget be passed out. It is a budget, according to the clerk, that is very much in line with what a study would need. The amount requested is $9,900, and it is in regard to the human rights study in Iran. It was passed unanimously in the committee.

We're doing a study on China, and now a bit of a study on Iran. Mr. Cotler and a number of others have brought forward a motion, and we're going to move that into a study on Iran.

Do we have a consensus on this budget? We do? Agreed.

This morning there were three reports, and again this is not on your agenda, because I just came from the human rights committee meeting, which was held from nine to eleven. The first report has been filed, and we can discuss this. Certainly I'm not saying that we're going to move this today, but just so you know, it is that the Government of Canada should launch a criminal investigation into the involvement of Iranian Prosecutor General Sayeed Martazevi in the torture and murder of Canadian citizen Zarah Kazemi pursuant to section...and it goes on.

Also, the following was addressed to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development:

> The Subcommittee on International Human Rights expresses its profound disapproval at the failure of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Development to comply with the motion of Caroline St-Hilaire,

—this is an important one—

> adopted by the Subcommittee on November 7, 2006, requesting a copy of a report prepared by Professor Charles Burton.
>
> Therefore, the Subcommittee on International Human Rights demands the unconditional production of the unedited and original version of the report....

That comes from Madame St-Hilaire, and we'll deal with all of these in the next meeting.

● (1310)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: That was passed unanimously, was it not, Mr. Chairman?

A voice: But we are not passing anything today.

[*English*]

The Chair: No, we're not going to. It's just so you know which three they have brought to us.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I just said it was unanimously adopted.

The Chair: Yes.

The third report is as follows:

> That the Subcommittee on International Human Rights urge the Minister of Foreign Affairs to take all steps possible to urge the Prime Minister and the Parliament of Japan to: (a) pass a resolution in the Diet to formally apologize to the women who were coerced into military sexual slavery during the Second World War and were euphemized as “comfort women” by the Japanese Imperial Army; and (b) to provide just and honourable compensation to these victims.

Those three have been deposited with our clerk.

Madame McDonough, do you still want to move your motion and reserve it for the next week? That would give you time to speak on it today as well.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: First of all, I think we all agreed we had extraordinary witnesses and it was an opportunity to use the full time in respectful exchanges, and I think it was a good decision. So I was happy to say there's no magic in the motion today. Then we'll carry over for the next day?

I want to say I think it's something the committee should be celebrating. I don't know who else had a chance to look at it, but I went to get the report itself. Is everyone aware of the motion I had brought forward? It's based on the report that has now come forward from the work that started at the international human rights subcommittee around corporate social responsibility as it related to Canadian companies in the extractive industries, especially in developing countries. I think it's a very good piece of work that is in the best tradition of industry and civil society collaborating, with government facilitating the process.

My point in bringing it forward is to say we really should make sure this moves forward in a timely way, because one of the things that was applauded at the press conference this morning is that so many of these things take forever and they sit around and they languish. In a surprisingly short time, this enormous amount of work was done with round tables across the country. It's pretty unprecedented to have such a high degree of consensus and very specific recommendations coming from industry and civil society with this high level of government participation. I think eight different government departments and agencies were involved in that process.

So I'm happy to leave it for next time, for us to talk about the motion itself, but I would really recommend to people the reading of that report from the advisory committee that held a press conference to release it today. We could discuss it after the break.

Thank you.

So should I move it or just leave it? Okay, good. So we won't start the discussions.

● (1315)

The Chair: I hesitate to say we should move into it now, given that we have gone too long. I want to afford everyone the opportunity to speak to it. It's very important, as you suggest.

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, I think we should come back to this very important study, but I think we should start by reading and finding out more ourselves.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Yes.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I would like to remind you that we passed a motion put forward by Alexa about the IMF and World Bank, but we didn't set aside a time to discuss it.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'll ask our clerk to explain that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: That is to discuss the report.

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mrs. Angela Crandall): The report is supposed to be tabled in the House, probably tomorrow. As soon as it is.... I've already made some preliminary efforts to contact the witnesses who were mentioned in the motion. So I'm trying to set them up, if possible the first week we come back.

The Chair: Mr. Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I want to talk about Ms. McDonough's motion. I don't see a problem, but I just don't understand.

You're asking to discuss the plan for the government. We've done the report and we've already had a response from the government. In their response they asked to get these round-table discussions when we criss-crossed the country. There was a response. Now there is a response from the NGOs, civil societies, the mining corporations, and all these things. If it is that report you want to discuss now—the report that was done by foreign affairs.... If you want to invite international cooperation.... One body was responsible for the response, and I think first we should invite this body to discuss the report—which was not tabled, but came out today—concerning the mining companies that are working with the other ones. But there was a response from the government to our report.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Chairman, what I had agreed to, and the committee had asked, is that we not get into the discussion and debate about it now. But if what you're wanting to clarify is why I am bringing forward this motion, it's because there now is a report with very specific recommendations from the round-table process, and my point is that the original recommendations coming from the international human rights committee were unanimous, as I recall. The same is true of this committee in our contribution to precipitating this very constructive process.

Now what we want to do is make sure that the recommendations that have been released today are pursued in a timely way. There are reasons to feel there's an opportunity for Canada to really lead the way in this, to distinguish ourselves. There are very important meetings happening in June.

So it's to move it forward that next step, to hear a response from the government to those recommendations that have now been made.

I thought we weren't going to discuss it—

The Chair: No, we aren't going to now.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: But now you've ruled it back in order for Bernard to discuss it, so—

The Chair: No, no, I thought it was for clarification.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Okay, so we'll do that next time, Bernard.

The Chair: We'll deal with that next time. I think what Mr. Patry is saying is there has been a government response. The government response was to set up and encourage the round-table discussion, but out of those has now come a report, and she's asking for a response or action from the government.

We aren't going to talk about that this time. We'll talk about it next time.

Is there any other business?

Oh, yes, we have a request for two meetings with delegations from Germany.

Maybe you'd better talk about this. I'm not even too aware of when they're here and what they want.

The Clerk: They're going to be here on April 18. I sent an e-mail around late last night. I don't know if you've had a chance to see it. One is a member of Parliament who wants to discuss the situation in Afghanistan with the committee, and the other is the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. What they've suggested is a morning meeting or a lunch, but they don't want a joint meeting with the two groups, because their interests are different. So what I'm recommending is that we have the MP appear before the committee to discuss Afghanistan, and then have a lunch with the secretary of state.

● (1320)

The Chair: Who are these guys?

The Clerk: Mr. Walter Kolbow is the vice-chair of the Social Democrat faction in the German Bundestag, and he's going to be accompanied by a couple of other people—a director of the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation in Washington—and they want to talk about the situation in Afghanistan.

The Chair: But are they here officially?

The Clerk: Yes, they're a delegation.

The Chair: It's an official visit.

The Clerk: It's an official visit.

The Chair: Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Could we get the information you have?

The Clerk: Yes.

I received this information yesterday afternoon. I asked that the curriculum vitae they sent me be checked, and once I have them, I will send them out to all committee members.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Before setting a meeting, we must ensure that the parliamentarians represent a group or a committee. Otherwise, we will be meeting with them informally.

[*English*]

The Chair: I think we all understand that many MPs can visit other countries and ask for meetings, but we have to be very careful before we start setting up those kinds of meetings. I would ask that we get that information. That may be relayed to us even on our break week, so that we have a little bit of an idea who they are.

We're adjourned.

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