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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1000)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): We'll bring this committee meeting to order. We have met already for one hour on a different subject.

This is meeting number 58 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. In this next hour, appearing as an individual is Sarah Chayes, founder of Arghand, a cooperative in Kandahar.

Ms. Chayes was a Paris reporter for National Public Radio, based in Paris. She was dispatched to cover a number of conflict and post-conflict zones. She left reporting in 2002 and remained in Afghanistan, and that is where she is coming from, via teleconference this morning.

Ms. Chayes has written a book on post-Taliban Kandahar, entitled *The Punishment of Virtue*, and that was published in 2006.

We welcome you this morning from Kandahar.

Before we get to you, we will also have with us this morning, here in our committee room, testimony from the Senlis Council. Norine MacDonald is president and lead field researcher, security and development policy group.

We welcome you.

We're also going to take some time at the end of the meeting for some committee business. At approximately quarter to or ten to eleven we'll do that very briefly.

Welcome to our guests who are here in the committee room.

And also from Afghanistan, welcome.

We will give each of you an opportunity to give an initial presentation. We'll listen to both presentations, about 10 minutes each, if that's all right, and then we will go into the first round of questioning, and each member will have an opportunity to question you.

Perhaps we will have our first presentation from Kandahar.

Welcome, and thank you for being a part of the foreign affairs committee this morning.

Ms. Sarah Chayes (Founder, Arghand (cooperative in Kandahar), As an Individual): Thanks very much for having me. I'm only sorry I couldn't be in the room with you.

I'd like to speak fairly briefly because I think it really is important to leave plenty of time for questions. Basically, I want to make two major points.

One is that I feel very strongly, as somebody who has lived in Kandahar for the last five and a half years, that the role Canadians troops are playing here is absolutely critical. I know this has been an often difficult and painful debate in Canada, both in your fora and in the public, as to the value of what our troops are doing and things like that. Let me tell you, it's crucial that they be here.

We can talk about modalities, and that's what I'd like to get into a little bit in terms of how they behave on the ground, what the context is in which they are here. I might have some comments to make on that, but on the basic question of should they be here, yes.

The second major point is that my sense of the debate in Canada has been that it's kind of being phrased as a dichotomy, either humanitarian assistance or combat, less combat and more humanitarian, things like that. I actually think that's a false dichotomy, and I will go into that.

On the first point, let me simply say that I couldn't be here.... The members of my cooperative, who are all Kandaharis—one Kabuli, but otherwise all Kandaharis—would not be able to continue working on the.... We make skin care products, many of which are sold in Canada, including Ottawa very shortly. They wouldn't be able to continue to function—I think all of them would probably have to become refugees—if it were not for the presence of Canadian troops.

It's really important that you understand what's happening in southern Afghanistan, not so much as an insurgency—that is, an indigenous uprising by locals—but rather as a kind of invasion by proxy of Afghanistan by Pakistan using Afghans. Fundamentally, this so-called insurgency is being orchestrated, organized, financed, trained, and equipped across the border in Pakistan. So in a sense, what your troops are doing here is protecting Afghans from this invasion. Now, that's schematic. It is certainly true that the more Afghans are disillusioned with the government we have provided them, the more likely they are to be tempted to sympathize with this Taliban invasion, is what I would call it.

There are also issues of how troops behave, and that's where I think.... I do know the Canadian command has been thinking very hard about this, but I would urge continued thought. How much do you use air power in what is really a very nitty-gritty, village-to-village kind of combat situation? Air power is not a very appropriate tool for that kind of warfare, and unfortunately there have been unnecessary civilian casualties.

Also, there's been a lot of fear, and it's perfectly understandable in troops that are not very experienced. When they hit an improvised bomb or there's a suicide attack, they become very scared and often will fire almost at random. And it's not only Canadians who have been guilty of this. The Brits have done this at least twice in the last year. Americans did it in a terrible event in a different province, to the north end, east of here.

I would say there definitely needs to be further thought on the tactical battle practices, so that you don't think about the number of Taliban dead as being a sign of victory. If you kill three Taliban and five villagers, you've probably created 15 Taliban, because villagers who lose their loved ones are going to be more tempted to join the Taliban in order to take revenge, or because they have no other means of support, or something like that. So I think battle plans need to be thought out in a slightly more strategic fashion.

That brings me to strategic modalities.

• (1005)

That really gets to the political context in which this whole drama is being played out, which is unfortunately a context of an almost unshakable alliance between my country—the United States—and Pakistan. That is a totally contradictory alliance, because it is clear to me from the experience I have on the ground here that this so-called insurgency is being deliberately orchestrated by members of the Pakistani government. This is not rogue elements of the ISI; this is not the Pakistani government not doing enough to thwart the Taliban. This is an orchestrated movement by the Pakistani military establishment. When I find out that my government is providing \$1 billion U.S. a year to the Pakistani government, supposedly to pay for anti-terror operations, I'm just speechless.

This is a role that Canadians in the political sphere have to play. If I were a Canadian parliamentarian, I would have some very serious questions to ask about my strong ally, the United States. My people are dying in this conflict, which is fundamentally being financed by the United States. That's a major political issue.

My second basic point is that this is not merely a dichotomy between humanitarian assistance and combat. What I mean is this. First of all, in southern Afghanistan, I don't believe humanitarian assistance is even particularly appropriate. Southern Afghanistan is not in a situation of humanitarian catastrophe but in a situation of developmental stagnation. So blankets and schools and even wells are not fundamentally what are needed here. What is needed is a much more difficult, complex, and long-winded effort to help rebuild a functioning economy in a region that is not utterly devoid of resources. What we do is make soap and high-level skin care products—which are selling out the second they arrive in shops in Canada and the United States—using the very valuable raw materials that exist here, such as pomegranates, almonds, apricot kernels, and all of this gorgeous stuff that is the mainstay of local agriculture.

That's one point, but the even larger point I would like to make is that I always hear governance being voiced as an afterthought. We talk about humanitarian assistance, development assistance, or combat, but no one really focuses on the issue of governance as the linchpin in the post-Taliban experience in Afghanistan. I submit that right now it's a free-for-all. The people ushered into power in

this country—again, particularly by my government, and in particular at the provincial and local levels—are just raping the country. It is an absolute free-for-all. You cannot get any administrative task performed without coughing up money. In 2002 and 2003 I would hear from ordinary people that at least under the Taliban there was security, and people knew they could cross the town without being attacked by militiamen. Now I'm hearing people say that under the Taliban there wasn't so much bribery and corruption.

It is a terrible indictment of the post-Taliban experiment in nation-building that we are unable to put up a government that has a minimum of respect for its citizens, and as long as we are not able to do that, then ordinary Afghans are going to continue to desert this experiment for the Taliban. What I find is the support for the Taliban in southern Afghanistan is not ideological. It's not about Islam, anti-westernism, or culture; sometimes it's phrased in those terms, but it is fundamentally very practical. It is that people want a predictable life, one in which they know what the rules are and what they will be punished for and what they will be rewarded for. They want to be able to feed their families and put their kids in school. We have not provided that context.

It is time for us, as an international community, to take some responsibility for the public officials we have ushered into power. That means the diplomatic representation you have on the ground here, and even the military officers, need to take on the role of demanding accountability from the government as a more central part of their mission.

• (1010)

Secondly, I would say that even within this context of corruption, no matter how much development assistance you provide, it's going to be distorted, because it's passing through corrupt channels. So number one, people aren't receiving the benefits, and number two, they see how much of them are skimmed off by their government and believe that this is our policy.

Again, let me repeat, we are the ones who brought these people to power. The notion that the current Government of Afghanistan is chosen by the Afghan people is a fiction. There have been elections apart from the elections for president. They were a travesty. The governor is not elected. The mayor is not elected. Nobody who has direct impact on the everyday lives of people has been elected.

What I'm saying is that if you spend a fortune on development assistance and it passes through corrupt hands, it's only going to reinforce what is essentially a governing system that people are suffering from.

I think the last point I would make in this regard is that Afghans do not make a huge distinction between, let's say, me, a civilian foreigner who's working in the private sector, or an NGO person—so we would be about the same—and the Canadian army and the Afghan government.

Are you looking at the time? Is that what I'm seeing your hand going up for?

The Chair: No.

Ms. Sarah Chayes: Sorry. This is just the last sentence.

The Chair: Okay, good.

Ms. Sarah Chayes: Particularly humanitarian workers like to make a very strong division between them, the kind of white-painted neutral humanitarians, and the soldiers and the Afghan government. Regular Afghans see those three groups as part of an interlocking system, which is the post-Taliban regime.

That means that whatever criminality is performed by the government, Afghans lay at our doors. They believe it's our fault and probably our deliberate policy.

I think I'll stop there, and I'd be delighted to take your questions after the other presentation.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Chayes. It's a pleasure to hear you from Afghanistan, from Kandahar.

I would also welcome a group that has just come into our committee room here, Grant Dawson's class from Carleton University, a class on international security, I believe. I'm not certain exactly what the class is called. We welcome you.

We also have the Senlis Council with us this morning. They will give their presentation, and then we will move into the first round of questions.

Welcome.

Ms. Norine MacDonald (President and Lead Field Researcher, Security and Development Policy Group, The Senlis Council): Thank you.

Good morning. And I apologize for my inability to deliver any part of my presentation in French.

For those of you who don't know us, the Senlis Council is the security and development and counter-narcotics policy group. I'm the president, founder, and lead researcher for the Senlis Council and Senlis Afghanistan. I am a Canadian. We have offices, however, in London and Paris. Senlis Afghanistan is based in Kabul, with field offices in Kandahar and Helmand. Yesterday we just officially opened an office here in Ottawa, and I'm pleased that our Ottawa office is represented by my Afghan Canadian colleagues, two of whom were instrumental in the establishment of Senlis Afghanistan.

I've been living and working in Kandahar and Lashkar Gah for two years now, where I lead our field research activities with a team of 50 Afghan colleagues. I spend my days in the villages and the camps, talking to Afghans on the ground, conducting surveys and interviews to document the situation there from a policy point of view.

We recently concluded a survey of 17,000 men in southern and eastern Afghanistan, and the results were chilling. Of the men surveyed, 50% stated they believed the Taliban will win the war. Over 80% worry constantly about feeding their families. These men are living on about \$2 to \$3 a day to feed their families—when they can get work. These are very bad numbers.

Yesterday we released a report that notes the extreme poverty of southern Afghanistan and the growing disenchantment of the local population with the international presence. The province's refugee camps are full of starving people and have become easy recruiting ground for the Taliban. There has been no substantial food aid into

Kandahar province since March 2006. As was mentioned earlier, civilian casualties continue to fuel local resentment against the foreign presence in Afghanistan.

Kandahar's hospitals are completely inadequate to deal with war zone casualties or even the basic health needs of the local population. We have released a study of the hospital in Kandahar city. This hospital, which is where civilian casualties of the war are brought and which is also there to provide basic health care for the province, does not deserve the name "hospital". There is no effective blood service, no equipment, no medicines, no proper operation facilities. But there is a ward for malnourished babies, without proper food or medicine.

The Afghan people are suffering and they feel we are not addressing their legitimate grievances. Our military is doing a remarkable job in difficult circumstances, but we are not doing what needs to be done on development, aid, or counter-narcotics policies to assure that we have the support of the Afghan people. Without winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, we will continue to win the military battles, but we will not win this war.

Canada's development and aid failures in Kandahar are endangering our substantial military successes there. Yesterday, we called on Prime Minister Harper to dramatically overhaul Canada's development aid and counter-narcotics policies. In these recommendations we called for CIDA to be relieved of its responsibility for development efforts in Afghanistan and to be replaced by the appointment of a special envoy to Afghanistan to coordinate development aid and counter-narcotics policy, with a development and aid budget equal to the military budget. We need a major and immediate overhaul of our approach in Afghanistan. The government must be clear with the Canadian people what our objectives are and state our critical success factors.

In this regard, we have organized some very short, two-minute video clips that will be shown at the end of my presentation to give you an idea of the plight of people in Afghanistan and why we need to redefine and clearly state our objectives.

In this regard, we propose that the objectives follow the internationally agreed best practices that Canada helped to develop: the UN millennium development goals. Our report recommends that Canada adopt the millennium development goals as critical success factors to assist us in managing and measuring the progress of the mission in Afghanistan. In carrying out our mission in Afghanistan, Canada is well able to, and should, take leadership on these issues, just as we did when we led the way with the landmines treaty. The achievement of the millennium development goals is pivotal to bringing peace and economic prosperity to the people of Kandahar and would help to ensure that they are immune to the anti-west Taliban propaganda. The list of development goals is set out in the report that's in the package to be handed out to you today. It deals with hunger, poverty, health, clean water, or a broad spectrum of issues.

•(1015)

I can't emphasize enough the desperate poverty of the people of Kandahar, particularly those living in the informal refugee camps in the region. Providing families with immediate food aid is possible and inexpensive, especially compared to the cost of our military budget. If we're not moved to do this from a humanitarian point of view, we should do this out of a counter-insurgency theory point of view to support our military presence there.

There is increased concern and anger in Afghanistan regarding the increasing number of civilian casualties and the bombing campaigns that are levelling villages and leaving thousands homeless. This must be dealt with.

Finally, on the counter-narcotics point, opium poppy cultivation is the mainstay of the Kandahar agricultural economy. The counter-narcotics program in Afghanistan is based on U.S. drug policies and dominated by the U.S. approach. This has meant a forced poppy crop eradication program. The United States has clearly stated it is now proposing chemical spraying operations for the next planting season.

To date, forced crop eradication in Afghanistan has left the poorest farmers with no means to feed their families, and overall, opium cultivation has gone up. We believe chemical spraying will add to the growing hostility against the international presence in southern Afghanistan. There should be no crop eradication, manual or chemical, until the poverty-stricken farmers have other means to feed their families.

Crop eradication has destroyed livelihoods and generated extreme poverty for entire communities. It's cost hundreds of millions of dollars, and it has also proven to be wholly ineffective. I restate: cultivation is up 60% last year in southern Afghanistan.

By sitting back and allowing this destructive and counter-productive U.S. policy to be prosecuted in Kandahar, Canada is complicit in a policy that is undermining our own military efforts, and they are doing a great job in a very hostile environment.

The Senlis Council has proposed an economic development initiative, the village-based poppy for medicine project, under which poppy grown in Afghanistan would be used for the supply of the essential painkillers, morphine and codeine. There's a global shortage. This proven counter-narcotics strategy would replace the current highly destructive policies of forced crop eradication. Poppy for medicine projects would also serve to support another of the millennium development goals, which call for enhancing access to affordable essential medicines in developing countries. At the moment, there is no morphine and no codeine in Afghanistan, despite it being the world's largest producer of opiates.

A similar system was put in place by the United States in Turkey and India when it was trying to convert Turkey's and India's opium production from heroin to medicines, and that was successfully implemented. Those two countries are now the prime suppliers of opiates for medicine for the United States of America.

Our field research and extensive discussions in the region indicate that a village-based poppy for medicine project is feasible, but the only way to find out if it really works is to test it in the regions in southern Afghanistan. We are willing to undertake such a pilot

project in Kandahar and to share the research findings and expertise with the Canadian government and the international community. We ask the Canadian Parliament for its support of our proposal to run those pilot projects in the next planting season.

We also believe this would send out a positive message to the rural communities that we are trying to work with them in a positive way to find a legal way to make an income, and that in turn would generate support for the Karzai government and reduce support for the insurgency.

My very last point is this. From afar, I have followed the Canadian debate about whether we should stay or whether we should go. As a Canadian, from my experience in Kandahar, I firmly believe that Canada should not pull out of Kandahar. What we need is to radically overhaul our mission in Afghanistan, to clarify our objectives and our measures of success, and to deliver on our commitment made to both the Canadian people and the Afghan people.

What happens in Afghanistan in the next year will have an impact on our own security here in Canada for generations to come. We have to be clear about what our objectives are and how we will measure our success, and we should stay until the job is done.

Thank you very much.

•(1020)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. MacDonald. There are some points where—

Ms. Norine MacDonald: We wanted to play the two-minute video, if you don't mind.

The Chair: Is that coming still?

Ms. Norine MacDonald: Yes, it's just coming up. Pardon me.

The Chair: All right. I'm not certain if the video will be available, if you'll be able to see it in Kandahar.

Yes, it looks like you can.

[Video Presentation]

•(1025)

The Chair: All right. Thank you, Madam MacDonald.

We'll go to the first round of questioning.

Mr. Dosanjh, you have seven minutes.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): I may take less. Bryon may share with me.

Thank you, both of you. It's good to see both of you again.

What you have given us, by way of information and conclusions, is quite pessimistic, with the exception of encouragement to stay because our security is tied up with Afghanistan's security and of course with general peace and development in Afghanistan.

The impression I have gained from listening to you, and over the last year or so, is that we are actually very quickly losing the war of hearts and minds in Afghanistan. And you've given me some ideas as to why. There is this rampant corruption. There is a weakened Mr. Karzai. There is the unstable Pakistan right now next door, with or without controlling Taliban. Then you have the special forces, the air strikes, and the air power being used, causing civilian deaths. And then you have police firing on rioters, just as it happened over the last few hours in Afghanistan. We have NATO refusing to provide more troops, and countries like Germany refusing to fight where the fight is needed. We have our Minister of Foreign Affairs going on CBC, saying he's going to be asking Russia and China to actually provide assistance—possibly troops—to fight in Afghanistan, I assume.

When I look at all of that, despite the fact that our troops and other troops are doing a valiant job, losing lives because we've sent them into harm's way, I'm not filled with a sense of optimism. And I don't see the solutions that you see working. Maybe you see something different from what I see, sitting here, thousands of miles away. I've been to Afghanistan. We weren't able to get outside the wire very much.

I have this question for both of you. Despite what you tell us about what's happening on the ground, despite our good intentions, all of the basic evidence that's on the ground other than the military successes and the loss of our military lives, the rest of the information is so pessimistic. Why do you say that we would succeed?

Ms. Norine MacDonald: I'll be short. Well, we have to succeed, and Canada—

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Beyond that.

Ms. Norine MacDonald: We have to.

Canada is a very privileged and wealthy country that can, if we organize ourselves properly and put the resources and management into it, make a much greater difference in Kandahar. We have our three-D approach. We're doing very good on one D and very badly on the other D. We have to apply the same resources and commitment and management skill to development and diplomacy that we have been putting into defence, and we have to get with that right now. We can't just say it's hard; it might not go well; let's not try. We can do it if we apply the right skill set and the right resources. And we have to show leadership on that issue.

This is our generation's moment, not only to meet this type of challenge but to also show some leadership internationally on this type of challenge.

• (1030)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. MacDonald.

Ms. Chayes, do you have anything you want to add to that question?

Ms. Sarah Chayes: I think it's a sort of reinforcement. I think we may disagree on some of the specifics, but a fundamental message that I think the two of us share is that there needs to be a transformation in approach. We need to stay, but not as we're currently staying, not as we're currently behaving. We need to really think about how we are functioning in Afghanistan. And if we

change, it's not just in terms of resources but in how the resources are distributed and what we require of the Afghan government officials with whom we work. If we can turn some of those things around, then we can succeed. It is doable. Afghanistan was doable in a way that Iraq was never doable, and I think it was really ours to lose.

We're getting closer and closer to a tipping point, I agree, but I don't think we're necessarily there yet.

The Chair: Ms. Chayes, not being necessarily there yet, are you optimistic? Are you pessimistic? Can you take it right down to a level of optimism?

Ms. Sarah Chayes: If you want me to be absolutely honest, here's what I would say. I have not seen any indication in the last five and a half years that the policy of the countries that count—meaning mine and yours at the moment—is going to change in ways that could really make this turn around. I have not seen any evidence that President Karzai is going to take seriously the rampant corruption inside his own government, the rampant placement of hostile individuals in positions of power in his government. He's naming them. I haven't seen any evidence that those things are going to turn around, but I don't think that means they can't turn around.

We are beings with a capacity of free will, so we can choose to change our policy. I think that's the message I'd transmit.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Wilfert, very quickly.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): I want to thank both of you for your presentations. I have a rhetorical question, and I'm going to get to the actual questions on CIDA.

Is the war winnable, and if it is, how will we know when we've won?

The question I have, through you, Mr. Chairman, to Ms. MacDonald, is that you were very critical in your report of the Canadian International Development Agency in terms of its role in Afghanistan, and in particular in the delivery of development assistance. You call upon the government for a special envoy to Afghanistan for better coordination. I certainly support the notion of better coordination.

Could you briefly elaborate to the committee where you see the failure of CIDA and why you think this envoy would be more advantageous in terms of the kinds of needs on the ground that we're hearing about?

Ms. Norine MacDonald: Thank you.

In Kandahar, because the economic situation is so desperately bad, I can just say that CIDA's efforts, despite good intentions and particularly good efforts from those who are actually in Afghanistan, we're just not seeing any impact. We have to see a dramatic impact to support the military, so the idea of appointing a special envoy is to get past some of the structural issues that seem to prevent CIDA from delivering in Kandahar, to set up a new system, with a management system that actually is focused on seeing the results in the very near future and providing the development and aid that will support the military efforts.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. MacDonald.

We'll go to Madam Barbot.

[*Translation*]

You have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Sarah Chayes: Sorry, could I please add something to the previous answer on CIDA?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Sarah Chayes: I actually disagree very strongly with Ms. MacDonald's approach. I think a couple of things. I think CIDA procedures need to be streamlined. Like every public development agency, it's way too bureaucratic.

I'm actually in the process of applying for some money from CIDA. I look at the application form. I have a master's degree from an American university, and I can't read the thing. You need a PhD in development contracting.

The fact is that CIDA has now been on the ground for a year and a half to two years and it has built up an experience. In other words, there were a lot of programs that took way too long in the pipeline that are now, finally, beginning to hit the ground. If you were to halt all of that and create a whole new structure, believe me, you would create a lot more bureaucracy.

What I would look at, again, as a committee, is bypassing some of the extremely rigid procurement requirements and think about how we can make our public development agency more flexible, a more rapid-reaction kind of agency, not just for Afghanistan but for all the other crises that are going to face Canada and other western countries in the future. I think it would be a real waste of an investment to pull CIDA out now.

• (1035)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chayes.

I should also mention that Mr. Greenhill, the head of CIDA, is here listening. There have been times when he's been nodding up and down and times when he's been shaking his head, too—I won't say when.

Madame Barbot.

Ms. Sarah Chayes: All right. Can I put in a plug, then?

The Chair: No, you've already done the plug.

Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, ladies, for joining us.

Your account today of what is happening on the ground confirms the fears of those who want Canada to withdraw from this region. Worse still, something is not very clear about the actions of the soldiers deployed to the region. Their actions are directly putting people's lives at risk, so much so that according to Ms. Chayes, the tactics being employed need to change completely. This shift should have occurred at the very beginning. Be that as it may, five and a half years have elapsed, nothing is working and 50% of the population believe that the Taliban will emerge victorious.

I would like you to give us one good reason why our troops should be in this country, something that I could tell people who say that we are wasting our time or making the situation even worse. You said it yourself. Conditions are worse today than when the Taliban were in power.

Unless I am missing something here, tell me why we should continue to support Canada's mission to this country, aside from the fact that Canada is a prominent nation and is providing money.

Not only are we realizing that things are not working, we are putting CIDA at risk. This Agency is extremely important to us. Some are even saying that CIDA is the problem. I really am at a loss to understand.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Barbot.

[*English*]

Madame Chayes, and then Madame MacDonald.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sarah Chayes: To say that conditions today are worse than they were under the Taliban regime would be an exaggeration. Obviously, some Kandahar residents long for the old days, but it is very easy to be nostalgic when times are hard. If we were to poll residents and ask them if they want the Taliban to be back in power in Kandahar, I do not think the majority would want that. To say the conditions are worse today is an exaggeration.

I think we could do much better. I believe people view the current government in more or less the same light as the Taliban regime. We must not leave because we are responsible for giving them this government. We have a responsibility to the Afghan people to improve the situation that we put them in. The Western world, and in particular the Americans, made the decision to end the Taliban regime and to install a new government. We are responsible for surrounding the president with a number of strong men.

It would be irresponsible of us to abandon the rather impoverished Afghan people to their fate. We put these people in power and we provided them with arms and money, including development assistance. And now we are saying that they are responsible for holding on to these individuals. That is completely unfair. Afghanistan and the rest of the world have already faced a similar situation, namely when Afghanistan was left to contend with a civil war. The repercussions were terrible. We need to be mindful of history, because it does not necessarily have to repeat itself. However, we do need to learn from what has happened in the past.

• (1040)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam MacDonald.

Ms. Norine MacDonald: On why Canada should stay, Afghanistan is now effectively our own backyard. The last time we let the Taliban run Afghanistan they gave a home to al-Qaeda, a global terrorism movement that is dedicated to the destruction of the west. They planned and executed their attacks against the United States from there. We have seen attacks in Britain and Spain. If we allow the Taliban to return to southern Afghanistan and be a home to global terrorism, it will affect Canada's security—the security in this country, the security of Canadian citizens and their families—for generations to come.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam MacDonald.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you very much.

I want to say thank you to both of you for bringing your point of view here. I agree with Sarah, from Afghanistan, that we can do much better to improve. Nevertheless, I agree with both of you that we need to be in Afghanistan, as both of you have stated, because.... This is the only point that I will agree with Ms. McDonough on, when she says it's because of terrorism that we have to stay there.

But beyond that, what I am finding difficult to understand.... Sarah, here, has been on the ground in Afghanistan. But let me tell you what people who have also been on the ground in Afghanistan say. You have stated that there has been no substantial food aid into Kandahar since March 2006. Yet the World Food Programme, which is one of the NGOs that is very highly respected, said in their press release that Canada's support of their operation over the past year has been crucial in Afghanistan and has helped over 10,000 families. As a matter of fact, since the last time, when Canada spent \$4.9 million, we've given 3,425 metric tonnes of food to the region you talked about.

Now, we have here UNICEF, which is respectable, I would say, which says that in 2001 an estimated 30,000 Afghans, mostly children, died of measles. Thanks to the enormous immunization efforts supported by the Canadian government, measles has remarkably declined.

Let's talk about what Dr. Ashraf Ghani, who's in Afghanistan, who is the chancellor of this thing, said when he was asked what he thought about CIDA. You know what he said? He said it's one of the best in Afghanistan.

While we agree that there's room for improvement, and as you said, there is paperwork and all these things, we are making a difference. For you to come and say that we are not is absolutely.... I don't think so, because we have credible people who work over there who are saying that Canada's contribution, CIDA's contribution, is making a difference in that country.

Most importantly, you have talked about the eradication program that the Americans.... As far as I know, the government of Karzai has made a decision not to spray poppies over there. So I'm having a little difficulty understanding where you are coming from.

Look, Afghanistan has gone through a tremendous amount of war. Afghanistan is not a developed country. There are areas that require attention. There are areas, like the hospitals and other things you

mentioned, that require improvement. And there is a desire by the international community to go and help Afghanistan in its effort.

I was at the reconstruction conference in New Delhi, with the regional countries. They all came out there to provide economic activity for Afghanistan.

You mentioned poor people there who are not able to get an economy moving. But this whole business of moving an economy requires a concentrated international effort, of which Canada is absolutely a part.

To just say that our development assistance has failed is wrong. As a matter of fact, as my colleague here has said, you want CIDA out and you want a person over there, a coordinator over there. You know, Canada does not have a single approach. It's a multifaceted approach. We have the RCMP there; we have governance being provided there. And it's all done through our ambassador, who's working in cooperation with everything, and that is where we can put all the focus.

The Prime Minister has actually set up a complete Afghanistan working group in which the whole effort of the Government of Canada is coordinated to go ahead and provide what we do.

So, yes, there are a lot of achievements.

I have extreme difficulty when you say that no development projects have taken place, that development aid has failed, when it has actually not failed. Like you, people who work in Afghanistan have come forward and said that we are doing a pretty good job.

• (1045)

I think we do require a pat on the back. Under difficult circumstances, our aid officers, our CIDA people who are out there, do require a pat on the back for working under very difficult situations, and I think we should help them by recognizing this.

Canada has also increased its aid, and we keep on increasing our aid. We went from \$5 million to \$39 million for Kandahar district. Kandahar is a very tough area, as our friend in Afghanistan has said, because of the insurgency coming from the border with Pakistan. But I think we should give Canada a pat on the back and not keep criticizing all the time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai, for that very eloquent speech.

We have seven minutes for presentation and questions. Unfortunately, Mr. Obhrai has not left any time for answers.

We'll move to Mr. Dewar. Hopefully, you may want to cover some of that on someone else's question time.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

I think you've seen the problem that many of us have with the government's direction. It's all about them; it's not about the people of Afghanistan, and that's sad. It's out of the play book this government has been using in committee.

You've outlined some problems that we have to confront. We have to look at some of the concerns you have about strategy, which Ms. Chayes referred to. I want to say, to start, Ms. Chayes, that I do have some problems with what you said, and maybe you want to correct it.

You talked about the government we have given them. If that's the case, I think that's a problem right there. If you look at the history of Afghanistan or other countries, the problem starts when you start to impose a governance model on them. I guess if you're saying that, then I think, bang on, I would agree with you, that's been the problem. In fact, that's how we got the Taliban, some would suggest.

I'm going to move on because I have some questions.

The other thing is that when we look at Pakistan and address their role here, I couldn't agree with you more. We all know of the instability that they're presently going through, and that's a huge issue.

I want to turn to the fact that, Ms. MacDonald, your organization has really done some groundbreaking work on the whole issue of the economy within Kandahar, and that the approach, the tactic, the strategy we've been using hasn't been working. In fact, I have been reading reports where, right now, police chief posts in the poppy-growing districts are sold to the highest bidder for as much as \$100,000 for a six-month tenure. Guess what the salary is. It's \$60. So the competition is pretty obvious. You'll go to the corruption model over the governance model, which is what Ms. Chayes was talking about in terms of concerns about governance.

On strategy, we know that the U.S. and the British governments are talking about bringing more troops back in, deploying back into Afghanistan. I'm very concerned that this will simply bring back the counter-insurgency model times ten. We're already doing that, and I think that's the failure right now in the south. I'm hearing that in some of your reports. Notwithstanding your notion that we need to remain there, I would agree, but it's how we remain there. We've talked about pulling out the counter-insurgency forces.

Now that we have the Brits and the Americans possibly redeploying and bringing back the counter-insurgency model, I would like to know from each of you, very briefly, what you think the effects of that will be, the effects of bringing back more British and American troops into the south, using the strategy of counter-insurgency.

•(1050)

The Chair: Madam MacDonald, and then Ms. Chayes.

Ms. Norine MacDonald: I'll be very brief. When we talk about a classic counter-insurgency model, that does include this hearts and minds and development and economic aid. In that way, I completely and absolutely support that type of counter-insurgency model. I think what concerned people in southern Afghanistan is more this special forces headhunting with some bombing roped into it that really is not working...it's working militarily, but it ruins our relationship with the rest of the community.

So you're right, there's a concern there about how we go forward from the point of view of those tactics that should be fully discussed.

Also, very quickly, to the gentleman from the government, I agree with you. Anybody, any Canadian, who goes to Afghanistan to work is entitled to a pat on the back. If you get off the plane in Kabul, you are entitled to the full support of the international community and Canadian citizens. I have nothing but respect for every single person who goes there to work.

The problems we have identified—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Excuse me. I don't mean to interrupt and be impolite, but the fact is he didn't give you time to answer the question. I'd like to pivot over to our guests. Thank you.

Ms. Norine MacDonald: I'm so sorry.

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's okay; it's part of what they do.

The Chair: Ms. Chayes in Kandahar, perhaps you would like to respond to Mr. Dewar's question.

Ms. Sarah Chayes: I basically agree with Ms. MacDonald. We haven't been doing terrorist searches. If we had been doing proper counter-insurgency, which means a real commitment to the civilian population in the area we're working in, we wouldn't be seeing the situation we're seeing now. This may be a semantic issue, but on the other hand, I do think there are too few troops here. Believe me, I watched a year of combat at the gates of Kandahar last year, and I know there were serious situations that Canadians simply could not attend to because there weren't enough troops. These were situations, as I said, of what amounts to an invasion and the capture of districts, centres, and things like that right outside town. When ISAF doesn't have the resources, then...if you're going to be here, you have to be here with proper resources.

Just two words on the two other issues you raised. It's not the governance model that's a problem; it's that we're not adhering to the model that we claim to be bringing to Afghanistan. We're talking about bringing democracy to Afghanistan, but what we have brought are stolen elections, corruption, torture. Some people might say that looks like American democracy today, but I would like to think we have something better to offer other countries.

Secondly, on Pakistani instability, I've heard that term used twice today. I think it's very interesting to take a look at what's happening in Pakistan. President General Musharraf has been facing the west with a dichotomy: "Either me or the mullahs; if you don't give me everything I want, if you don't provide me with \$1 billion a year to fight the Taliban, then you're going to get the mullahs instead of me", or "If you push for increased democratization of Pakistan, you're going to get the mullahs."

Look what's happening. Who is demonstrating against General Musharraf? It's lawyers, and it's the civil society of Pakistan, which has been completely ignored in the current debate about Pakistan. I think it would behoove us to provide a lot more support to the huge proportion of the Pakistani population that feels itself to be represented neither by the military nor by the mullahs.

•(1055)

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you very much to both groups for being with us today. Our time is up. We appreciate your straightforward discussion as to what you believe are the concerns and also the areas where we have seen substantial victory over there. We know it's going to be a long road, and we thank you for your presentations.

To Kandahar, we will cut down our transmission now.

I would like the committee to stay around for two minutes. We have committee business.

I'm going to ask Mr. Goldring if he would hold off on his motion that you've all had circulated to you for the next meeting on Thursday. We're going to deal with the motion from Mr. Casey. Actually, it's not so much a motion, and basically it hasn't been given. It's more of an update to Mr. Patry's motion. It's in response to something we want to do a week from Wednesday, and it goes back to Mr. Patry's motion on the detainees.

Mr. Casey, we don't need to clear the room; we're in public. Do you want to give a bit of an update on a motion that just came out of some of our other committee business as well?

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Yes. I would like to propose a motion that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development meet jointly at the first opportunity with the Standing Committee on National Defence to hear the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Public Safety, and the Minister of International Cooperation in relation to the handling of persons detained by the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan.

The Chair: A similar motion has gone forward to the Standing Committee on National Defence, and I think they are probably in favour of it.

This stems from Mr. Patry's motion on the detainees in Afghanistan. This is allowing us to have four ministers before us at the first possible convenience, and they will work on those details—Minister Bernier, Minister Day, Minister O'Connor, and Minister MacKay.

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): What is happening with the motion that was passed calling on the committee to invite the officials who drafted the report, the truncated version of which we received under the Access to Information Act? What we learned from reporters was that...

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Lalonde, that's separate from the motion we're dealing with now, right?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I realize that, but why would we deal with his motion before mine? I moved mine first.

[*English*]

The Chair: His motion is on the motion from Mr. Patry. This is more of a technical motion that would allow the four ministers to come together to explain the detainee problem.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I'm not against it, but I would like to hear from the others.

The Chair: All right.

Do we have a consensus on meeting with the four ministers at their earliest convenience?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Tomorrow we will deal with our steering committee.

Today at the parliamentary restaurant we will meet with the representatives from the Czech Republic. We want as many of you there as possible. The ambassador will also be there.

There's a possible meeting on Thursday, May 31, from 11 to 12 with Mr. Mulet, the UN special representative of the Secretary General for the UN stabilization mission in Haiti. Can we go for that as well on May 31? We weren't looking at the democratic development report that day anyway. We have a consensus.

To the students of Carleton, this is the way these committees work: Liberals, Conservatives, Bloc, and NDP working together for the betterment of your country.

The meeting is adjourned.

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