House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on National Defence

NDDN • NUMBER 006 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, June 13, 2006

Chair

Mr. Rick Casson

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

This is the sixth meeting pursuant to Standing Order 108(2). The committee is dealing with a motion to study the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan.

We want to welcome our witnesses here today, Mr. Boivin and Mr. Massie.

We will allow you an opportunity to present your offerings here, and then there will be a round of questioning, one or two, whatever it takes to satisfy the committee. Feel free to take a reasonable amount of time. So 10 to 15 minutes would be nice, if that's what you have, and then we'll turn it over to the committee for questions and hopefully a good give-and-take during that time.

Mr. Boivin, are you going to start?

Go ahead, the floor is yours.

Mr. Marc André Boivin (Coordinator, Réseau francophone de recherche sur les opérations de paix (ROP), Centre d'études et de recherches internationales de l'Université de Montréal (CÉRIUM)): Thank you.

My name is Marc André Boivin. I work for a research group that's called the Réseau francophone de recherche sur les opérations de paix, which is at the University of Montreal.

First, I'd like to do my presentation in two parts, first basically *un état de la situation*, and then I'll close with some general recommendations as far as the Canadian policy in Afghanistan is concerned.

Let me start with *l'état de la situation*.

[*Translation*]

Since the fall of the Taliban regime at the end of 2001, the international community has begun a long-term process to stabilize and rebuild Afghanistan. Since, much of the groundwork has been laid. A true race to govern is on between this political project endorsed by the international community and the Afghan forces that presided over the dismantling of the country for more than two decades. Unfortunately, recent developments lead us to believe that the international community is currently losing this race to govern.

Let's talk about the difficulties. Canada is one of the new Afghan government's first and most reliable partners, and Afghanistan has an enviable role in Canada's foreign policy. It is important today to clearly understand the difficulties involved in the stabilization and rebuilding process that is underway and to put into context the potential impact of Canada's action in this area.

The main difficulty is the resurgence of extremist elements, the return in strength of the Taliban and other elements who are opposed to recognizing the authority of the government in Kabul. The spectacular rise in violence, namely in southern sector where the Canadian soldiers were redeployed, is also a symptom of the central government's loss of control over entire regions. A report recently published by the London Senlis Council confirms, following a study in the field in the Helmand, Kandahar, and Nangarhar regions, that government authority does not extend beyond the main centres where foreign troops are deployed. The actual power of the Kabul authorities in the regions has always been well below its ambitions. However, the problem is that developments and these ambitions are moving in opposite direction and that the initiative is now controlled by insurgents in entire regions, mainly in the south and the east.

The second difficulty is the marked increase in the production and sale of narcotics. The Taliban's return in strength is explained in part by considerable illegal revenue from a spectacular increase in the production and sale of narcotics. This increase affects, among others, the region of Helmand and Kandahar, where British and Canadian contingents are deployed, and where, not coincidentally, the insurgents are among the best organized. A natural alliance has been formed among producers, traffickers and insurgents, all of whom are strongly opposed to recognizing a state of law. This dynamic became significantly worse because of the policy to eradicate poppy fields favoured namely by the American government. That alienated local people by depriving them of their livelihood and provided the Taliban with an opportunity to score political points. Moreover, the eradications tended to hit the poorest peasants especially hard, thus strengthening the sense of injustice and alienation vis-à-vis authorities in Kabul. Any kind of solution will require a long-term strategy to progressively restore a lawful economy through a combination of targeted measures for development, incentives, and repression.

The third difficult stems from the Afghan government's fragile foundation. This measured approach is an integral part of the Afghanistan Compact, itself inspired by an Afghan national development strategy submitted by the Karzai government. Its main aim is to develop the capacity of the Afghan government so that it will one day be autonomous and responsible. To date, the bulk of its budget is provided by international donations, which is not only untenable in the long term, but also contrary to exercising its sovereignty and damaging from a domestic point of view. International efforts have come up short in terms of training Afghan police officers, and have done even worse in establishing a legal system. Moreover, countries continue to prefer direct investments instead of assistance through the Afghan government, a more effective short-term approach but which hinders the development of the Afghan government's administrative capacity in the long term. According to some Afghan officials, the world is providing Afghanistan with intensive care, instead of providing it with a remedy.

The fourth difficulty is the lack of consistency in international efforts. Canada's action is part of international efforts that have proven to be inconsistent and disparate. Three missions are currently active in Afghanistan: a UN mission responsible for development and coordinating development assistance, a NATO mission with a peacekeeping mandate, and a US-led counter-terrorism operation.

● (1535)

Discussions to merge the two military missions, Enduring Freedom and ISAF, have encountered squabbling between the Americans and Europeans, who do not agree on including more offensive aspects as part as a unified operation. Yet most countries are participating in both missions. It must also be added that NATO had enormous difficulty convincing its members to agree to substantial deployments. The countries have moreover imposed the various restrictions that strictly limit the action of forces on the ground.

The fifth difficulty stems from action with too much of a military focus. Security has been placed at the centre of international involvement in Afghanistan. That echoed the dramatic events that precipitated the instigation. But establishing sustainable peace for Afghanistan will require economic development and political stability. Canada is no exception to that trend, with the presence on the ground but it's essentially military in nature. I reiterate that there is currently a race on to govern Afghanistan. A solution that is strictly military is counter-productive in the longer term, as witness the recent deterioration in the security environment after five years of efforts.

The sixth difficulty is the conflict's regional dimension. Afghanistan is the epicentre of a highly unstable region. Its two main economic partners, Iran and Pakistan, are also its two main potential sources of political and military problems. So Afghanistan could suffer a backlash from the current confrontation between Iran and the United States. Evermore seriously, Pakistan is closely tied to decades of several war that ravaged the country. The tribal regions, namely at the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, are used as refuges for the Taliban and other extremist elements, and have played a significant role in their recent resurgence. A rise in violence has had a direct negative impact on relations between Islamabad and Kabul. The complexity of the situation is increased by the link to the rivalry between Pakistan and India. Moreover, Pakistan's military dictatorship is based in part on radical Islamic doctrine, which limits its ability to take action.

● (1540)

[*English*]

Now I'll go to the recommendations.

Canada has played an active role in Afghanistan from the start, and it should see its commitment through. However, we should not underestimate the significant obstacles awaiting the completion of our mission there. The situation, as noted, significantly deteriorated in recent months, putting Afghanistan's recovery further in the future and raising doubts on the current stabilization and reconstruction process.

The first recommendation is to stay the course, but with an open debate.

Canada's involvement follows a humanitarian imperative and our focus on failed states. It is also a necessary gesture towards our American partner and is consistent with our latest international policy statement. But Canadian support has been dwindling, and the Canadian government cannot shy away from explaining its foreign policy choices.

In the current political situation, Canada's involvement in Afghanistan cannot remain the sole prerogative of the Prime Minister's Office, and attempts at doing so are eminently counter-productive. All four parties stated their support for the mission during last April's debate on the issue. How could the renewal of the mission vote go so awry only three weeks later?

As in other democracies, notably in Europe, Canada should discuss and vote in Parliament on the renewal of major international deployments well in advance and on a regular basis. The pitfall is the possibility of inconsistency, but the Prime Minister's Office is not immune to such a risk. Furthermore, this would shed more light on Canada's foreign policy and bring the debates closer to the Canadian citizens.

The second recommendation is that emphasis should be put on the political and development aspects of the mission.

Part of the Taliban resurgence in the south and east can be blamed on the strictly military character of Operation Enduring Freedom. It took two years for the American command to recognize that in order to be successful, they needed to engage in nation building. Even the subsequent provincial reconstruction teams were dominated by military personnel and considerations.

President Karzai lately has been critical of some of the blunt methods used by the Americans and coalition partners, namely, house searches and aerial bombardments. Canada has an extensive and distinguished record in stabilizing post-conflict societies, yet our involvement in Afghanistan has also been mainly through National Defence.

The 3D approach, advocated in the international policy statement, is sensible. The time has now come to put more emphasis on diplomacy and development if we are to help the Afghans sustain peace by themselves in the long run. The Afghanistan Compact offers a unique opportunity in this sense, as well as the programs set up by the UNDP and the UN in general.

The extension of ISAF to the south, of which the Canadian military is part, will probably bring a more balanced approach to the fore, in which security is viewed in a larger sense than the dubious war on terror and consequent hunt for terrorists allow. This is not to say that the military should not engage in offensive actions; rather, they should avoid being strictly focused on them, this being especially true in the alarming situation that now prevails in the Kandahar region.

On the third set of recommendations, Canada's action is part of an international effort. Related to this point is the fact that Canada should try to exert a positive influence on its partners in Afghanistan. To the United States, Canada should point out that the job in Afghanistan is not done and that Iraq should not make it deviate from its responsibilities.

Commitment issues are also a concern with our European partners who, when they commit troops, tend to severely restrict their use. Furthermore, Canada is in an ideal position to mediate between the Europeans and the Americans and foster a deal that would unite the two military missions in Afghanistan. The United States should probably be aware by now of the benefits of a more legitimate multilateral NATO tag to its actions, however curtailed they may be.

Finally, on awareness of regional dimensions, geography has put Afghanistan in the middle of powerful regional players with vested interests in the country. Peace will not be sustainable without their consent and support. The most important actor in this respect is no doubt Pakistan. Canada should keep a close watch on the Pakistani government's actions and inactions. The issues of democratization and decentralization, Kashmir, and radical Islamic militancy will all directly affect Afghanistan.

● (1545)

If we want our efforts to bear fruit, we need to be mindful of these complex realities and make good use of our diplomatic assets.

To conclude, Canada cannot solve all of Afghanistan's problems by itself. But by deploying a significant contingent, sustaining a high level of development assistance, and providing political support, it has earned a place at the table. It should put that to good use and push for a more encompassing, sustained long-term approach to establishing peace in Afghanistan. It's our only valid exit strategy.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We'll get back to you during questions, hopefully.

Mr. Massie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie (Research Associate , Chaire de recherche du Canada en politiques étrangère et de défense canadiennes, Université du Québec à Montréal): Good afternoon. My name is Justin Massie and I hold the Canadian Research Chair for Foreign Policy and Canadian Defence at the Université du Québec à Montréal.

Today I would like to speak about a domestic and political aspect of the Canadian Forces' role in Afghanistan and that is, the current confusion and division among Canadians regarding the rationale, appropriateness and nature of this mission.

This division continues despite many efforts by Members of Parliament and the media to explain Canada's mission in Afghanistan. These efforts appear to be in vain. The most recent survey, of June 8, 2006, showed that 44% of Canadians are opposed to the mission. Compared to the 62% and 45% opposed in March, and 54% in May 2006, these figures show that a considerable number of Canadians disapprove of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan, essentially since Canada took over command in Kandahar.

In principle, such a division should not be worrisome. Public opinion is volatile, and the country should not be governed by public whims. The role of the CF abroad must address other imperatives in order to become more consistent. It should be noted, for instance, that a majority of Canadians were opposed to Canada’s participation in the Gulf war in 1991 before it began, yet a majority approved after the fact.

However, the noteworthy aspect of the current situation in Afghanistan is the confusion over the nature of Canada’s role, confusion that is at the root of the division that is evident in public opinion. I think one of the criteria for a mission’s success is the collective belief that the forces are acting fairly and by necessity. To achieve this, the government cannot ignore the fact that a significant group of Canadians does not understand why the CF are deployed in such large numbers in Kandahar or what the justification is for soldiers being killed.

The persistent ambiguity among members of Parliament, in the media and in public opinion in general is, in my opinion, the result of a widening gap between the perception of Canadians and the actual operations conducted by the CF.

From 1956 to 1960, a significant attachment was quickly formed with respect to the role of Canadian peacekeepers, so much so that their role became more mythical than real. Barely 10% of Canadian troops were assigned to peacekeeping operations during the cold war. This is nevertheless the symbol and trademark that the CF inherited, both in Canada and abroad. Canada is inevitably linked with the emblematic United Nations peacekeepers.

In spite of the change in the nature of conflicts, including the increase in civil conflict as opposed to conflict between states, Canadian governments have persisted in justifying the deployment of CF abroad by invoking the peacekeeping image. Responding favourably to this image, Canadians developed the notion that Canada is a peaceful nation, which promotes peace. Underlying this perception is the widespread idea among Canadians that war is an aberration and is avoidable and that it can be prevented through cooperation and negotiation.

The 1990s saw exponential growth in the number of peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council, the tendency of a number of Western countries to favour NATO over the UN, and the growing participation of developing countries in UN peace operations. In reaction to this, Canada considerably reduced its commitments to the UN to focus instead on NATO missions.

This shift in the role of the CF was not marked, however, by a significant public attachment to any particular role. Faced with change in the nature of its operations, Canadian governments justify interventions with new concepts, including human security and peace building, which were a reflection of the ideals underlying the peacekeeping image of previous years. During that time, Canadians were tempting to find a new role for Canadian Forces that corresponded to their concept of war.

It was following the attacks of September 11, 2001, and especially in reaction to the US foreign and defence policy response, that Canada was forced to more clearly define its international role. The new international context involved fighting terrorism as the primary if not sole imperative of US foreign policy. Furthermore, the resurgence of new transnational threats compelled Canada to change the traditional role of the Canadian Forces from the cold war period, and to clear up the ambiguity that persisted in the 1990s. Only the former was achieved.

● (1550)

What we can see today is the fact that the Canadian Forces are standing resolutely beside their traditional allies in a fight against terrorism, at the expense of their former peacekeeping role, which is deeply rooted in the national psyche. The combat operations that are an inherent part of the Canadian commitment in Kandahar, in order to fight insurgents, are in sharp contrast to the fifty-year-old image of the Canadian Forces. There are, of course, Canadian soldiers assigned to humanitarian roles in Afghanistan. This is a role that receives a great deal of media coverage for its actual scope, but the primary role of the forces deployed there is to pursue Afghan and other insurgents, using force.

In order to succeed in rebuilding Afghanistan, we need to first ensure that a government is legitimately elected, second, ensure that the country is monitored and that it is secure, and third, establish those infrastructures that are necessary for sustainable socio-economic development. We are currently at the second stage, which we must complete before moving on to the third.

The Canadian mission in Afghanistan, which will oversee the transition from operation Enduring Freedom to the ISAF, is acting within the frame of this second stage. Combat operations are therefore much more extensive than the rebuilding efforts.

In my opinion, this mission is based on a different concept of war from what predominates in Canadian society. In order to effectively fight terrorism, it is in my opinion sometimes necessary to prevent its emergence and sometimes to counter it offensively. The idea behind this reasoning is that confrontation is inevitable and thus that military efforts are essential to achieving peace.

As a result, there is great confusion among Canadians at present. Consider, for example, the withdrawal of the Canadian Forces from the Golan Heights, the few forces deployed in Haiti, and the few troops available for a significant deployment in Darfur. These three missions correspond to the traditional peacekeeper image. Compared to the current engagement in Kandahar, this situation implies first, a reduction in the ability of the Canadian Forces to intervene in missions that are more traditional for the Canadian Forces and, above all, demonstrates the will to depart from the previous role to a more dangerous and warlike one. Major military and political consequences should be expected, including the difficulty of operationalizing military requirements in a manner that is consistent with humanitarian necessities.

The reason for the current confusion and division in Canadian society can, in my opinion, be attributed to the gap between a political will to create a new military role for the Canadian Forces, based on new strategic imperatives, and the public perception of the international role the Canadian Forces should play.

In order to reduce this gap and to win Canadians support for a new role for the Canadian Forces, the symbols and myths of the past will have to be tailored to Canada's new commitment in Afghanistan or, alternately, this commitment will have to be tailored to Canadian's values and principles.

The difficulty in reconciling ideals and strategic imperatives stems from the unique relationship between Canada and United States. The image of an elastic is often used to illustrate this dilemma. Canada must stretch the elastic as much is possible in its relationship with the United States, without breaking it. On the one-hand, Canada must accept the power and international strength of the U.S.—political, economic or military, and adjust to it. On the other hand, Canada's independence must be preserved by invoking images and symbols, including that of a peacekeeper, that enhance Canada's distinctness.

The dilemma between the need to move closer to the United States and the need to develop a distinct foreign policy can be resolved. It is a question of manoeuvring so that America's might can contribute as much as possible to furthering and developing Canadian interests, while also reassuring the United States that our interests are compatible with theirs.

The peacekeeping role of the Canadian Forces, combined with a firm commitment to NATO during the Cold War, solved this dilemma. Today, along with a firm commitment to the fight against terrorism, there must be a new uniquely Canadian trademark.

Thank you.

● (1555)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll start our first round of questions. It's a seven-minute round. We'll start with Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today.

In listening to you, I feel I'm listening to myself. I agree with you that the merits of foreign engagement in Afghanistan have not been made very clear to the Canadian public, nor has the understanding of the reality on the ground been made clear even within our own caucuses.

My question today is on the Bonn accords. The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program, DDR, was slow to bear fruit. How do we sell the benefits and dividends of the ISAF's counter-narcotics policy and overall stabilization policy to former and current members of the Afghan militia forces, i.e., the descendants of the mujahedeen?

The second question is, what in your view is driving the current high level of Taliban and Hizbi Islami Gulbuddin, HIG, activity in the southern province?

The last question is, given the problems with phase three's fourth-generation processes, is there a real chance that we could find private military companies, PMCs, more active in Afghanistan in the future?

The Chair: Do one or both want to tackle that?

Mr. Boivin, go ahead.

Mr. Marc André Boivin: Regarding the DDR scene and setting the counter-narcotics priorities, I mentioned in my presentation that the Afghanistan Compact mentioned this. It is truly critical because in order to sustain peace you need to have economic dynamics favourable to establishing a peaceful solution.

The Afghanistan Compact, the UNDP, and the World Bank have all set up programs that are much more balanced in how they manage this phasing out of opium, the basic idea being that the production of opium is not necessarily being directly attacked so much as its relative importance within the economy is being gradually reduced.

What that entails for the local Afghan who is growing poppies for his livelihood is that the crop is not being hacked down by the army and westerners, and then the next morning he has to feed his family, and the Taliban turns to him and says, we offer protection, this is a legitimate livelihood, and anyway it's for western consumption, etc.

This is related to your other questions, which is just how difficult phase three was for NATO. Personally I have many doubts regarding private military companies, most of which have to do with accountability. We've seen all sorts of problems in Iraq regarding this, and I would tread very carefully here. That being said, phase three has been extremely difficult, and phase four promises to be extremely difficult as well. How do you solve these problems? We might have to go through that, but let's be very cautious here.

I'm not sure I understood your second question about the level of Taliban and extremist activities.

● (1600)

Mr. Wajid Khan: What is driving the activities so high? The Taliban is using a new modus operandi of suicide bombing, al-Qaeda has reinvested itself, and the activity is much higher than before. What is causing that?

Mr. Marc André Boivin: Probably the main factor is counter-narcotics and the revenue that it brings, but also the fact that Pakistan has been at least tacitly allowing for activities to develop in certain regions.

I'm not a specialist regarding Pakistan's case, but I can tell you it is very complicated. You have different regions with different realities. Some of these regions on the border are controlled by Islamist powers, and the Pakistani army has been trying to put down these movements. Having a refuge has helped the Taliban and different extremists—al-Qaeda and so on—tremendously to regroup, rearm, and reorganize. You have a group with a refuge, training camps, and money. In the long run, that delivers the results we see today.

Mr. Wajid Khan: We had a visit there, and I know for a fact that the Minister of National Defence has been there. There are 74,000 to 80,000 troops deployed on the Afghan border. You realize that with the terrain it is virtually impossible to stop the infiltration. I met with the military attachés of the United States, and they were very impressed with the work Pakistan is doing. They said they could not succeed without the cooperation between the commanders on either side.

My question to you, sir, is, is there a will in the NATO nations and the national resources to continue with this mission rather than cut and run?

Mr. Marc André Boivin: The question is addressed to me?

Mr. Wajid Khan: Either one.

Mr. Justin Massie: I would just like to answer the previous questions.

[*Translation*]

With respect to opium and the production of narcotics in Afghanistan, it is indeed important to fight against warlords and narcotics. However, I believe that it is imperative for Canada, NATO and the Enduring Freedom mission to first gain control over the territory and secure it, even if that means progressively casting the warlords aside. In other words to ensure a certain amount of political stability, we cannot cast aside key individuals in Afghanistan who hold power or have influence in certain regions of the country. We must first try to stabilize the situation with the players who are there and then demilitarize and progressively disarm them.

The insurgents' resurgence in Afghanistan is linked to a greater international presence in some regions of the country and, in the case of Canada, to its presence in Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan. With media coverage of these events and an increase in coalition forces, which will continue progressively in the months to come, we can expect to see a rise in insurgency activity.

We are dealing with people living in a failed state, as is the term used in Afghanistan. Yet at the same time we know that terrorism stems more from hatred than poverty. There are a number of countries in the world where people live in totally inhuman conditions, but where there is no terrorist activity. Some individuals are using ideological manipulation to make people hate the principles and values of a number of international societies.

I have the same reservations as Mr. Boivin does with respect to private military companies. Given the accountable nature of their activities, their involvement must remain at the level of providing logistical support to the Canadian Forces or any other coalition force in Afghanistan.

● (1605)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Bachand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your presentation. I think that your statements reflect to a great extent the Bloc Québécois's position.

In fact, I had the opportunity to go to Afghanistan a few weeks ago, on an invitation from NATO. We were brought to Kabul, to the headquarters of the International Security Assistance Force and we visited a provincial reconstruction team in Faizabad, in northern Afghanistan, in order to see how these troops worked. However, the military personnel was German. We were told that the provincial reconstruction teams were not all working under similar circumstances and, for example, they did not want to send us to Kandahar because the situation there was very unstable.

I did make an attempt to go there, however, when a female Canadian soldier was killed, but I was told that it was not possible. My impression was simply that this was a polite refusal.

During our stay there, we heard some very interesting briefings. I'd like to hear your comments on this because I think that the points made reflect to a certain extent your own concerns.

The name of the commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan is General Richards. Currently, we're told, the northern part of the country is stable. The forces are now in the western part of the country and soon they will go south.

In fact, General Richards raised some interesting points about Canadian soldiers. He said that the formula currently being used to fight the Taliban needs to be somewhat changed. Canadian forces should be focusing on security so that the population and the people on the ground see progress being made, that is, more schools, more health services, more infrastructure services such as roads, drinking water, etc.

I imagine, after having said the same thing to other witnesses, that this must be music to your ears.

In other words, Canadian soldiers should somewhat contain their efforts. Rather than advancing with a view to removing the Taliban, they should be content with establishing a security perimeter in order to give civilian forces an opportunity to focus on reconstruction. I would like to hear your comments on that.

My other question is on changing agriculture. I have heard two things and I'd like to hear your opinion.

Let's start with poppy cultivation. We all know, as people have pointed out to us, that poppies are used to produce morphine which is used in hospitals, for health purposes. It has been suggested that western countries make room for Afghanistan in order to ensure that a part of the supply come from Afghanistan.

The most important point is that changes have to be made within agriculture and there has to be a guarantee to Afghans that European economic community countries or NATO countries will purchase their production. It's easy to tell a producer to burn his poppy field, and then leave the rest up to him. He's going to want to know who will buy the potatoes he's going to be producing.

Several people from the European Union are saying that we must be prepared to purchase a part of their production in order to ensure that the agriculture changes are successful.

Those are my two questions.

Mr. Justin Massie: Firstly, on the matter of reconstruction, which is always seen as a diametric opposite to combat or fighter operations, it has to be understood that, for as long as insurgents are prepared to act as suicide bombers, it will remain difficult to build schools, or indeed any infrastructure. Ensuring security has to be the number one priority, and the support of the local population remains key to meeting this objective. When active in a future of operation, Canadian Forces must always ensure that there is more local support for their operation than there is for those of the insurgents. To my mind, it is a little like walking a tight rope and I do not have a model solution to offer soldiers. I think that Canadian soldiers in the field would know more about this. It is always important to tread carefully to ensure that the local population has a positive impression of Canadian forces and their operations. This is key to having access to information, which is crucial for the Canadian Forces. Intelligence gathering in a country such as Afghanistan is no easy task. Satellites and other technologies are not the answer, what is needed is dialogue with those who are attune to what is happening in the field, in Afghan villages. If the Canadian Forces are able to rise in the esteem of the local population by securing their villages, they are likely to be privy to more information and will, in turn, experience greater success in hunting down terrorists.

As regards agriculture, I think it would be a good idea to commit to purchasing a certain percentage of Afghan production. However, bear in mind that selling opium generates far higher revenues than selling potatoes or other commodities. It is far easier for Afghans to grow poppies on their rugged terrain. This means that if we commit to buying Afghan commodities, we will have to be prepared to pay not the regular international market price, but a price that will allow the local population to meet their needs. In today's context, it is easy to see why the father of an Afghan family would prefer to grow poppy seeds as opposed to wheat or other crops.

● (1610)

[*English*]

The Chair: There's only half a minute left. Could you give a quick comment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc André Boivin: You asked about hunting-down terrorists versus security, my answer to that would be that General Richards will be taking over command of the Canadian troops from July 31 onwards. I think that should answer your question. As I fully explained in my brief, a broader vision of security will be implemented.

However, as Justin said, when you are in a situation of war or a virtual war, it is difficult to build schools during the day while knowing too well they will be burnt down at night.

You also asked a question about changes in agriculture, but I do not have time to answer because my 30 seconds have expired. I'm sure I will have other opportunities to answer your question.

[*English*]

The Chair: Very good. Thank you.

Ms. Black.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Thank you very much.

Thank you both for coming and making your presentations to the committee today. We appreciate what you've presented to us.

I had an opportunity to read your presentation ahead of time. At the very end, you said that in order to win Canadian support for the Canadian Forces, symbols or myths will have to be tailored to the new role that Canada has under Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. As an alternative, you proposed that the commitment be tailored to fit more within our Canadian values and principles.

Which approach do you think might be more useful?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: I knew that somebody would ask that question. It is a difficult choice to make. Unfortunately, I think that a lot of Canadians perceive Canada's role in Afghanistan as having been reduced to following US leads. As such, the difference between Canadian and US involvement seems fuzzy, if not inexistent. More has to be done to put a truly Canadian stamp on our involvement. This has always been one of the problems with Canadian foreign policy. I am fortunate enough not to have to make such decisions, but I believe the Canadian presence in Afghanistan to be necessary. To my mind, the needs of the local Afghan population, the international security context and Canadian interests all mean that it would be inappropriate to consider withdrawing Canadian troops.

However, changes could be made to Canada's commitment in Afghanistan. I'm not necessarily talking about changes to the types of operation that our troops carry out, but, rather, the way in which the facts are presented. Firstly, I believe it's important to state the facts as they are, rather than simply talking about the fight against terrorism. That is not to say, however, that we should seek to provide easy solace to Canadians by saying that our mission consists of reconstruction and allowing young girls to go to school.

At the moment, the Canadian mission consists primarily of guaranteeing security, maintaining control and undertaking combat operations. To my mind, therefore, accepting to assume the command of the transition between operation Enduring Freedom and ISAF was a political decision that is not in keeping with the spirit of the symbols and myths that characterize Canadian foreign policy.

However, assuming command of the NATO operation which, if memory serves me well, is scheduled for 2008, would better reflect the Canadian myths and ideals that have made our foreign policy what it is today. This is because NATO is an international organization and the type of operations the Canadian command is likely to undertake in such a context are more likely to correspond to Canadian ideals.

● (1615)

[*English*]

Ms. Dawn Black: That takes me to my next question, because I want to ask both of you about your understanding of the changes on the ground when we leave Operation Enduring Freedom and are under the ISAF-NATO mandate. What do you perceive to be the difference in the operations of this mission under that mandate as compared to the OEF mandate?

Mr. Marc André Boivin: First, there is a major difference between the two. I've been very frustrated at the media coverage and some of the comments that I've heard during the debate in Parliament. From the get-go, the Canadian Forces were sent in the south to be part of the stage three of ISAF. There was quite a bit of confusion regarding what exactly the troops were doing there, and it was not mentioned enough that it was part of ISAF's extension, not part of Operation Enduring Freedom. That's the first point.

The second point is that ISAF was initially created by the UN. It's under a UN mandate, supported by UN resolutions. And the British.... It's not directly UN because it was not managed by the PKO at first, but the British took command, then the Turkish, and eventually NATO took it over. But contrary to Kosovo, it's UN-mandated and UN-supported.

These are important points to make for the Canadian public. ISAF, from the get-go, has been more peacekeeping-oriented and general security-oriented rather than hunt-for-terrorist-oriented, as Operation Enduring Freedom has been. That's not to say that Operation Enduring Freedom does not play a useful role. Some of the regions in Afghanistan have been a refuge to elements that are violent, that have been extremely disruptive to Afghanistan and the Afghan people. But they're more of a strategic reserve for punctual action than they are right now at the centre of the action. So it's better if ISAF's at the centre of the action, and that's what's coming on the ground.

I think it's reassuring to hear Mr. Bachand's interview with Commander Richards, who said that there should be a more encompassing idea as to what the security should be.

Just to get back to your drug purchase point.... I'm sorry if I took some of your time.

[*Translation*]

Alain Labrousse, a drug expert, has told me that these programs have already reached their limits and that it would be impossible to purchase everything that Afghanistan produces. Therefore, there are limits to what can be done through what you mentioned earlier.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Dawn Black: You indicated that poppy production was in the purview of the Taliban, but are not other warlords participating in poppy production as well? My understanding is that it's not simply the Taliban who are participating. Some people from the side of the Karzai government, in fact, are participating in poppy production as well.

I guess that leads to my question, which is whether either of you can inform the committee about the support of the average—if there is such a thing as average—citizen of Afghanistan now for the Karzai government. My understanding is that support is starting to slip. I think that's very worrying in terms of the future in Afghanistan. I wondered if you could comment on that.

● (1620)

The Chair: It will have to be a brief comment from one of you, please.

Mr. Marc André Boivin: There were recently major riots in Kabul following a car accident involving U.S. troops. I think that says a lot about the atmosphere of what's happening in Afghanistan. During my presentation, I insisted on saying "extremist elements", but there are not only extremist elements; there are also opportunistic elements. The whole Karzai government machine has been set up to try to include some people who used to be, or at least were thought to be, war criminals and profiteers of different sorts—

Ms. Dawn Black: Except the Taliban.

Mr. Marc André Boivin: Except the Taliban. But some of the Taliban have actually joined the Karzai government because there were amnesty offers made. A lot of people in the south, who are officials in villages now, are former Taliban members who were not involved in the worst excesses of the regime. There is a very difficult situation on the ground, and there is no easy answer on that account.

The UNDP program always includes accountability. Along with drug eradication, there is also accountability for the government, to answer some of your questions.

The Chair: Good. Thank you.

Mr. Hawn, go ahead, please.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for being here.

I'd like to go back to the assessment of progress or lack thereof, and so on. You do get different assessments from people. I assume you have been on the ground there. I have not. I've talked to a number of people who have been on the ground. The assessments by people who look at it from here are different from those by people who have actually been there. I refer to some people, including the Chief of the Defence Staff, who feel that we are making significant progress on the ground.

We talk about the mission focus being virtually all military and not very much reconstruction and so on. I'm wondering how much of the mission focus presented to the Canadian public is a matter of the media focus on that part of the mission.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: I will go first, but I should point out that I have not been out in the field in Afghanistan; I can, however, talk about media coverage.

To my mind, it is perfectly understandable that there is a lot of media coverage of combat operations in Canada. Combat operations are not everyday occurrences and, therefore, I cannot blame the media for focusing on them. However, I do deplore the fact that when Canada's contribution is discussed in the political arena, the emphasis is on reconstruction. It is important to call the situation how it really is. At the moment, media coverage by independent networks and officially sanctioned political information are equally ambiguous.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc André Boivin: As far as the improvement on the ground is concerned, I think that you'll find very few people today—and I've spoken to a number of people who've just come back from Afghanistan—who will say to you that the situation is improving. The types of riots in Kabul in the year 2006 have not been seen since 2001. The signs are there. There was an article in *The New York Times* just last Sunday, which mentioned just this, that the situation on the ground was very difficult now.

Should that prevent Canada from continuing with this commitment? I do not agree with that. I think we've taken the right approach, generally speaking. And I think that the extension of ISAF to the south is a good thing. It will probably make matters better. But is the situation improving today, in 2006? I don't think so. I must say I don't agree.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: The CDS disagreed, but that's okay.

We talked about the ultimate aim being peace in Afghanistan, and obviously what everybody wants is a peaceful, stable country that can survive on its own. How do you define that? A lot of people have said, "Well, what's our exit plan? When are we leaving? Tell me when." My personal view is that you can't define a date. You have to define a state.

How would you define the state of peace in Afghanistan that would allow us and our allies to start withdrawing?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: The international community has no collective extract strategy in mind. We cannot leave until the term "Failed State" no longer applies to Afghanistan; we cannot leave until the situation has been redressed.

The question of an extract strategy would probably be less of an issue for the Canadian Forces, given that Canada's contribution depends on its capacity. We cannot do everything. Securing and assuming control of Kandahar could be an easier undertaking for Canada than ensuring Afghanistan's overall development. It is an achievable objective. From that point of view, if I am not mistaken, assuming control of ISAF in the region, and increasing the number of Dutch and British troops, constitute progress.

● (1625)

[*English*]

Mr. Marc André Boivin: From our different experiences in the 1990s, Justin mentioned that peacekeeping in general has evolved and that we've come to understand that there are three main actors in any peacekeeping operations. There are military, civilians, and police.

We've seen conflicts in Bosnia, in Africa, and it usually takes about 10 years or so. If my memory serves me right, Hillier himself, a former commander of ISAF, said that we were looking at a horizon of 10 years.

Now, what does that mean in practice? When you come in you usually have a situation of internal war that is very hot and very intense, and the military takes most of the importance, the biggest part. As the situation evolves and you have lesser and lesser attacks... and what do I mean by lesser attacks? As is the situation now in Kandahar, if you have attacks on outposts by hundreds of armed fighters, that means you're pretty much fighting a strong enemy in Afghanistan. If the violence goes all the way down to occasional suicidal attacks, occasional targeted assassinations, I think you can generally say, okay, the violence is going down here, the enemy is no longer able to organize or foster units of such large magnitudes as we have seen recently.

As the process evolves, the military takes most of the responsibilities at first, then the police, because usually these civil wars entail criminality problems, as we've seen with the drug problem in Afghanistan and what that entails. And eventually you get to the civilians having the bigger say in everything, and you switch to development strategies.

Now, this is the exit strategy, but if Canada is serious about getting involved in Afghanistan, it is there for the long term.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I would like to follow up on that. The Taliban-like elements are always going to be there in Afghanistan, forever. Can we ever ensure lasting peace without at least getting to the stage where we have eliminated them to the point where the Afghan army and the Afghan police can then take over that continuing job? It's going to be a continuing job for as long as that country exists. Can we ever get to that point without eliminating them—making that transition to the Afghan police and army?

The Chair: A short response, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: I think it's possible, but the point is to win the hearts of the Afghan population rather than eliminate the Taliban, which is impossible, all the more so because they are motivated by hate.

If the local population rejects the actions of the Taliban, and if the Taliban, generally speaking, do not receive the support of the people, therefore local insurgents cannot hide amongst the people, and any actions carried out by the Taliban would be characterized as isolated events. Once that is the case, the Afghan army and police force will be able to take over that aspect of the work.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, but you'll have to get back to that.

We're going to start the second round. For five minutes each, the order of speaking is from the official opposition to the government, to the Bloc, to the government, to the official opposition, to the government, to the official opposition, in that order. Get yourselves ready for a question.

Mr. McGuire, you're starting. You have five minutes, please.

Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks for your very interesting presentations here today.

Both we and the press continue to ask the Minister of National Defence if we are at war. Is Canada at war? I'd like to know your answer to that. Are we actually? Is Canada in a state of combat, of war, in Afghanistan?

What would happen if not just Canada left, but the international forces left as well, before this war is over, before the job is done? When we committed ourselves to the First World War or Second World War or the Korean War, I don't think we put a time limit on it; we stayed there until it was over. There were peace negotiations at the end.

I'd just like to know your opinion. Is this an actual war in the traditional sense, and what would happen if the international forces left before this particular problem was settled?

● (1630)

Mr. Marc André Boivin: That's a tough one.

I don't really like having it that this is peace while this is war, with a clear line between the two. It's a continuum; at various points along it, you're rather more at war or rather more at peace.

Is Canada at war on the scale of what it was in Korea? I don't think so, but there are definitely aspects of what's going on in Afghanistan that could be considered war.

Pakistan has played a critical and very important role in much of the trouble of the last few decades. I don't believe Afghanistan will be at war with itself, with Pakistan, or with its neighbours forever. I think we can come to terms, but it's a very difficult, very complex situation.

Is Canada at war globally? No, but we sure as hell are close to it on the continuum.

If Canada leaves, what happens? I don't believe the Afghan government today can stand on its own feet. Here is just one number to fathom this reality: about 58% of the Government of Afghanistan's budget is coming from foreign donors. If you cut 58% of your income, cut your foreign troops, and so on, Afghanistan is going to fall back into civil war. In the long term there are definitely going to be problems that will be exported to the region and possibly to the entire world.

The Chair: There are a couple of minutes left, Joe.

Hon. Joe McGuire: Are you aware of the attitude of the British in this particular international force in Afghanistan? We know they're in Iraq, but they are also committed to the international force in Afghanistan. What is the debate in Britain over the commitment to their forces? I think they know what happens when you don't confront tyranny early enough. It can really spin out of control, and they have experienced two world wars because of that—particularly the Second World War.

What is their attitude? What is the attitude of the British people to their involvement in Afghanistan?

Mr. Marc André Boivin: I know the attitude of the British military. I think General Richards pretty much said what was at stake for them.

The British people, of course, suffered devastating attacks not so long ago, but I would be very careful comparing what's happening in Afghanistan to the Second World War. It's not that simple. Terrorists are not states, and it's very important to make a difference. Terrorists use terror—

Hon. Joe McGuire: Do they control Afghanistan?

Mr. Marc André Boivin: Terrorists do not control Afghanistan as of today.

Hon. Joe McGuire: The Taliban control Afghanistan. Would they be considered non-terrorists?

Mr. Marc André Boivin: The Taliban do not control Afghanistan.

Hon. Joe McGuire: They terrorize their own people.

Mr. Marc André Boivin: I think there's a distinction to be made between the Taliban and al-Qaeda. I think they allow them to train and organize. They certainly brought the terrorists closer to statehood. But there's a major difference between interstate wars, with the resources and the way you can do it.... It's very different.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses.

It was mentioned that there's a gap between Canadian operations in Afghanistan and Canadians' understanding of the operations in Afghanistan. Do you have recommendations about what would assist Canadians in understanding the current mission?

● (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: A communications expert could make specific recommendations in that regard. In my opinion, that is exactly what is at stake. If the political decision is taken to indeed commit Canada to an operation like the one under Enduring Freedom in Kandahar, which is the opposite of our traditional position, or of traditional types of engagement, the question is whether Canadians will be willing to adopt this new role. Do we want Canadian Forces to do that kind of thing in the long term, and will Canadians support it, or is this just a temporary role? If that's the case, a long-term commitment would mean that Canada would play a traditional role, and we would not have to justify the presence of Canadian Forces in combat operations rather than when it is involved in a reconstruction effort.

I have no specific recommendation as to how to present this role to Canadians, except to say that we are upholding the Canadian principles of human rights and democracy, which is one way to gain their support over a short period of time.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Go ahead.

Mr. Marc André Boivin: One of the recommendations would be to bring the debate to the Parliament. I think it was incredibly refreshing to see these issues being debated in Parliament last April. It certainly gave the Canadian public at least a chance to see some of the issues surrounding our policy in Afghanistan. I think this was a good thing. It should not be a one-shot deal. I mean, it was a good example of how the government can put forth and explain its policy in Afghanistan and discuss it with the other members of Parliament.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Neither of you have been to Afghanistan. My next question is, how are you obtaining your information? I think we mentioned that the public is largely receiving their information through the media, which as you mention is generally reporting on events that have a shock element, whether it be to sell newspapers or attract viewers. The reports I have, from civilians on the ground and the soldiers themselves, are that they're being embraced by the Afghanis, the non-combatant Afghanis, and that soldiers are actively building trust with the village elders. Where possible, they have tea and go through that ritual.

My questions is, what are your sources of information on our participation there? There's this constant mention that we somehow have a change in mission from peacekeepers to combatants. Admittedly, the Kandahar region is less stable due to the presence of insurgents. Aren't our soldiers merely adapting to the changes in the theatre of operation, as opposed to changing the roles of soldiers?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: I agree with the fact that the nature of conflicts has changed and that Canadian Forces have adapted to that change. What I am saying reflects the information which is available to Canadians. But there is a certain level of misunderstanding, which is also reflected in the media and the type of coverage you get. If we are saying that things are going well on the ground, why is this not common knowledge?

I also get my personal information from other people who have been to Afghanistan and whom I have spoken with. I have not personally heard that the situation has slowly improved over the last couple of months. As a citizen, I would like to receive this information so I can gain a better understanding of what Canadian Forces are doing in Afghanistan.

[*English*]

The Chair: You're just about out of time.

Mr. Bouchard, and then back to the government.

● (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Thank you for your presentations. You are certainly presenting us with a different point of view.

My question is for Mr. Boivin. Even though we have been there for five years now, the situation has not improved. There has been an increase in violence and in the illegal drug trade, and the government has lost control of the situation. Long-term corrective measures, if it comes to that, will be taken. What criteria will Canada use to measure progress in Afghanistan and over what period of time would that progress be measured?

Mr. Marc André Boivin: There has been an increase in violence, but only in certain areas. The overall picture is not completely negative. It varies from place to place. We have made significant progress. A government was elected, even though some aspects of it are problematic, but overall, the election was legitimate and has been recognized by various international institutions. Of course, it's always possible to focus on the problems which plague Afghanistan, such as the increase in violence in certain areas and the illegal drug trade, but we cannot tarnish the entire country with the same brush. Certain areas are affected by these problems, particularly the area we are talking about here, and where Canadian soldiers are deployed. The situation is worrisome.

As for corrective measures, it's simply a matter of investing more in development programs and programs which promote political stability. One of the main problems with Enduring Freedom is that it is strictly focused on military action. With the deployment of ISAF in the south, and with Afghanistan Compact, which was presented, we are taking a step in that direction.

As for how to measure progress, Afghanistan Compact contains a whole series of measures on how the situation has evolved, on corruption levels, on services provided to the Afghan population, and so on. The tools are there. For Canada, it's simply a matter of taking advantage of these instruments which have already been created.

Mr. Robert Bouchard: My second question is for Mr. Massie. You said that historically, when Canada is conducting a peacekeeping mission, the public has the impression that the country was doing just that. You yourself would like to see Canada's presence in Haiti and Darfur. Yet Canada has dedicated considerable resources to the Afghan mission, to the extend that it may not have enough resources to intervene elsewhere, such as in Darfur. Are the Canadian Forces low on staff or have too many military personal been assigned to the Afghani mission?

Mr. Justin Massie: I wish to clarify that my opinion is based on an impression. It is based on Canadians' impression, and not necessarily on actual facts. During the Cold War, peacekeeping was not the must important aspect of the Canadians Forces' work. I did not state personally whether or not we should be more active in Haiti or Darfur, but rather, that those missions better reflect the image that Canada has maintained over the years, and had we taken part of those missions, internal strifes in those countries may not have reached the point they are at today.

Nevertheless, I feel that the Canadian Forces' commitment in Afghanistan is substantial enough for us to reduce our ability to intervene elsewhere. When we are involved over a long period of time, given the rotational means and recruitment difficulties, we would have a hard time intervening elsewhere in an equally significant military and non-policing way.

● (1645)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Thanks again, gentlemen, for being here today. I found your testimony to be quite interesting.

One of the things I wanted to touch on here is the influence of the United Nations. I think it could be argued that influence is waning. You said that Canadians are confused about the role in Afghanistan, but I think Canadians are also confused about just how relevant the United Nations is in today's new world, if we want to call it that.

I'm just wondering, would you say the United Nations might be considered a symbol of the past, whereas NATO seems to be a little more effective in dealing with some of the international issues, especially in Europe in recent history? Shouldn't that be one of the things we should also be looking at—educating the public to some of these new realities?

Mr. Marc André Boivin: Personally, I would tend to disagree that the UN is a symbol of the past. That is not to say the UN does not have its problems. A significant overhaul was attempted last fall, and that overhaul was not generally accepted per se. But certain aspects of it were accepted and were advanced.

The UN is not a symbol of the past in the sense that in the Democratic Republic of Congo it is pursuing a mission with the MONUK that is in many ways similar to the mission in Afghanistan. They've taken a very bold stance in the Democratic Republic of Congo, conducting offensive operations in the eastern parts, and they are taking the fight to the different groups involved in horrible activities throughout the eastern conflicts.

Is the UN a symbol of the past? It seems to be a symbol of the past if we look at the last 10 years in Canadian foreign policy. Since the mid-nineties, most of the Canadian deployments have been through NATO, and so this is not a new reality, this is a 10-year-old reality. NATO definitely has assets, and the western countries have pulled out, ever since the catastrophes in Somalia, Rwanda, and Srebrenica. Not only Canada, but all the western countries have pulled out of the UN and have tended to use tools closer to home, like NATO.

Now, this is not entirely a bad evolution. The Africans have done it with the African Union, and we do it with NATO. But we need to be careful here. I don't think Canada should disengage completely from the UN, because some of its work is definitely relevant, positive, and still up to date.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: The UN is the only legitimate, international and truly global decision-making body and Canada must participate actively in efforts to reform such organization. NATO can better support Canadian operations, but legitimate, international approval must be given by the Security Council.

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you.

Just changing the course of the questions here a little bit, I'd like to get back to some of the discussions regarding the positioning of the operations in Afghanistan and the perceived problems with the border with Pakistan.

You mentioned in your testimony that there were opportunities for al-Qaeda or the terrorists—the Taliban, for example—to regroup in Pakistan. It's very difficult terrain, and I know the Pakistani government has deployed about 70,000 to 80,000 troops there. The Government of Pakistan is under considerable political pressure from the United States and its allies in this war on terrorism, and in its effort through Operation Enduring Freedom, to make sure we root out this evil.

Also on the ground in northern Pakistan, I believe it's not exactly the most conducive place, from a domestic perspective, for President Musharraf to be able to exercise his will. So he's torn between trying to appease international allies on that front and keeping the domestic peace where he doesn't have the command and control he would like to have.

I'm just wondering if that's true, if you could elaborate on some of the difficulties. Without being able to get rid of or to stop the migration of people and arms and other things like that across that border, to be successful, are we looking at a much larger role for the Government of Pakistan?

● (1650)

Mr. Marc André Boivin: Obviously Pakistan will need to play a very essential role if we are to achieve any sort of peace in southern Afghanistan. Barnett Reuben, who is an imminent specialist in Afghanistan, who has been there several times—and it's not in the media—said that in order for Pakistan to control, or at least to help Pakistan to control in the long term, you have to talk about democracy. Right now you have a military dictatorship, which in itself has limits as to what it can do on the ground with its internal stability and necessities.

Pakistan is a very prickly issue. You poke it on one side and another problem comes up, all throughout. I think the Canadian government should pay very close attention to what's happening in Pakistan and try to better understand the internal dynamics of Pakistan, but at the same time, keep the pressure on to deliver results in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's role is not solely negative either, because lots of commerce in Kandahar, legitimate commerce, is with Pakistan, and they share also an ethnic Pashtun identity.

So it's a prickly issue, but definitely one to pay close attention to.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go over to Mr. Hubbard, and then back to the government side.

Hon. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly interesting to listen to the presentation.

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

I too am perplexed about what's going on with our efforts in Afghanistan. With it, of course, we're talking about our foreign policy, we're talking about our defence policy, and also the effort in terms of domestic policy not only in Canada, but for our allies to... [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

It appears rather difficult in terms of defence that we have over 60,000 people in uniform in this country, and the effort in Afghanistan completely cripples our defence policy in terms of peacekeeping in other places in the world. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]...in our defence department. That is a perplexing point of view.

More perplexing in terms of Afghanistan is the history of the area. I would like to pose a question in terms of the concept of the Russians being there before us, the attitude of the Afghani in terms of foreign intervention. Maybe you can give us some evidence in terms of the Russian effort. They spent a long period of time and put tremendous effort in, and lost thousands of soldiers in trying to subdue Afghanistan. What are we doing differently that's going to win the respect, the hope, the love, and the comfort that we would need to make better relationships, in terms of making Afghanistan a westernized state that will be in love with democracy and accept the rule of law and the rule of government that we as Canadians perceive as part of our effort?

It's a long question, but what are we doing differently from what the Russians did that can cause us to get out of there as friends of the Afghani people and as victors in terms of our efforts in trying to westernize and democratize the Afghani state?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: Democracy is not something that can be forced upon, that cultural issues must be taken into account, and attempting to make Afghans fall in love with democracy is rather absurd. To my mind, the strategy must be more about allowing ordinary Afghans to benefit from the presence of foreign troops, and the will power of the international community to be involved in Afghanistan. Afghans must be given concrete opportunities to experience progress, such as farming a different product other than poppies, that will bring in just as much income and free them from the control of the militia, insurgents or others.

As for the difficulty in deploying more soldiers, of the 60 000 Canadians soldiers, one must bear in mind that most soldiers cannot be deployed in combat operations. One should also consider the logistical and command support required for any deployment, as well as the difficulties inherent to rotation. Canadian forces members also need to come back home after six months or one year to rest, and not be asked automatically to return to duty.

As regards recruitment, the biggest difficulty is the lack of instructors. To my knowledge, and according to my information, many Canadians want to join the Canadian Forces, but applications are not processed quickly enough for lack of instructors to train them. Because of this, soldiers are not being trained fast enough in order to be integrated into the armed forces, thereby allowing soldiers who are already deployed more rest time.

● (1655)

[*English*]

Mr. Marc André Boivin: It's 2,500. I spoke with the commander of the Quebec region, who explained to me some of these numbers, which for us as civilians can sometimes be puzzling.There are actually somewhat more than 60,000. You have to separate them between the naval, aerial, and ground units, which means for starters, let's say, that we're talking about 20,000, not 60,000. My understanding of logistics is that for every one combat soldier, you need seven to support, so you add in that factor.

What the general told me is that 2,000 to 3,000 is the long-term presence sustainable. We can go all the way up to 5,000 with our current contingents. Does that mean Afghanistan is crippling? I think the word would be a bit strong. The international policy statement made by the Liberal government mentioned that we should focus on certain crises instead of trying to sprinkle our presence all over the place. I think that's what the previous government did and the current government is doing, and I think it's the right approach.

We should bring up the number of our military. It's a good initiative started by the Liberals and continued by the Conservatives. It's a step in the right direction.

Are these 2,500 troops crippling? I think the word would be a bit exaggerated.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Hiebert, please.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you both for being here today.

I appreciate your last answer. In fact, that's the information I've been given as well.

We've seen some recent events that show that the war on terror extends outside Afghanistan and the Middle East, with our own experience here in Toronto.

I note, Mr. Massie, that you and your colleague Stéphane Roussel have been working on a paper addressing the issue of North American security perimeters. Could you elaborate for our committee the advantages to Canada of this concept of a North American security perimeter and estimate whether Canada is capable of taking advantage of this concept?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: I think that it's already happening. The term "security perimeter" has not been used as such, but in reality, there is collaboration between the Canadian and American security forces and political authorities that involves talking about a security perimeter.

I do not think that the war on terror will happen through military force. Therefore, we shouldn't be looking for solutions or answers to the dilemma we're faced with at the level of cooperation in terms of defence, but rather at the level of cooperation between police forces and intelligence agencies. To that extent, the progress made on the new NORAD agreement, and the Maritime alert, is a step towards greater cooperation, improved sharing of information, and a more efficient battle. The threat does not necessarily lie at the border, but rather within borders because hate knows no borders. It is much easier to disseminate ideology today with the means of communication at our disposal, and the military defence equipment that we have, whatever it may be, is not sufficient to counter terrorism effectively.

● (1700)

[*English*]

Mr. Russ Hiebert: I'll share the balance of my time with Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

Tell us what type of intervention you'd recommend, in your opinion, to combat the violent, mob-like entities that are attempting to dominate the area.

Right now we have soldiers, and we have the RCMP with the PRTs, but do you believe soldiers are the right entity to be dealing with that faction?

Mr. Justin Massie: Personally, yes, of course.

[*Translation*]

In Afghanistan, we're talking about combat operations. The situation is not at all the same as that within our country or within the United States. As long as the population in that country is not secure, we need to use the military. Then the police can provide internal monitoring. Military forces need to be there in order to counter operations such as the ones being carried out by the insurgents in that country, whether it involves artillery or other means such as soviet arms from decades past. In that regard, the Canadian interventions are appropriate.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc André Boivin: I would like to add to that.

As I mentioned earlier, every peace operation has three main aspects or pillars: civilian, police, and military. The more violence there is, the more the military has a role to play. Provided the situation in Kandahar improves, we will gradually see more policing activity and then, strictly, development activity, if all goes well. But these three pillars act simultaneously. Their relative importance evolves, but all three of them are present at different stages in this activity.

Right now the military has the main role, which is important, but you need to sow early on the seeds of an eventual recovery. And the civilian people we have there, from CIDA mainly, or the police staff we have there.... Right now, I think the PRT in Kandahar is mostly military personnel, but there are a few policemen as well. All these people have to work together to plan, in a long-term approach, how to make the situation better.

Making the situation better is not just killing the bad guys; it's also making sure the population sees you as the good guys. In that sense, I think the major difference between the Russian effort and the current effort is that for the ordinary Afghans, it's quite obvious that they see the international effort as being much less self-interested than previous interventions.

The Chair: Okay, that ends that.

Now, there's a slot here for the official opposition to question. If not, then we go back to the government. Are there any further questions?

Go ahead.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: You mentioned that you thought that in the last four or five or six months or so, your position differed from that of the Chief of the Defence Staff on where you thought that significant progress was being made on the ground in Afghanistan. I'm wondering if it has something to do with the size of the contingents there. I know the Canadians have about 2,500 people there. I think the entire international contingent there, from a military perspective, is only about 6,000, if that's correct.

In order to provide the peace and security that you would need for doing the provincial reconstruction, how many more forces do we need from the international community to actually deliver the result we are looking for, which is delivering reconstruction efforts, humanitarian aid, and still providing security?

There's nothing that frustrates me more than hearing a report that Canadian soldiers go into a village one day, deliver a bunch of aid, do some good work, and then drive on to the next village, and then the Taliban and al-Qaeda run down from the hills, steal all the blankets, and take all the food and everything like that. In order to be effective, what size of force are we going to really need there?

The second part of that is that I think that's going to have to come from the Afghans themselves. I think that's the idea, to train the Afghan people to work along with us. How close are we to getting a large enough contingent of both the nationals who are already there and the international troops that would be required in order to effectively bring peace, reconstruction, and stability to the region?

Mr. Marc André Boivin: First, I think it has to be said that Canada has stepped up to the plate and has certainly delivered in Afghanistan. Now, if we are to compare our involvement, our commitments, to our partners in Afghanistan, they would pale in comparison.

Does Canada need to send more troops to Afghanistan? I think we've pretty much stepped up to the plate already and provided a significant contingent in Afghanistan. We need to be mindful and keep certain room for manoeuvres in other international engagements.

How many forces? At least as far as Canada is concerned, I think we've pretty much reached the levels we want to reach. That does not apply to Canada's partners, who should at least try to provide, certainly, a significantly superior effort to what they're doing right now.

This is related to another question, because there's a huge chunk of military forces that are currently under Enduring Freedom, which is distinct from the ISAF mission. On the ground, this has caused all sorts of trouble. Where you have two sets of rules of engagement, you see French soldiers in ISAF but there are also French soldiers in Enduring Freedom. People get confused as to who's doing what, which troops are part of what. So Canada should work and is in an ideal position to try to foster a deal and merge the two missions and have a common outlook as to how to bring security to Afghanistan.

There's been an alarming development regarding the national Afghan army. This is a program like pillars for reconstruction, and this pillar was and still is under U.S. supervision. The U.S. has a professional army and has a technologically intensive army. What does that mean? Per soldier, that means it costs a lot of money. Now, we're in Afghanistan here, and the government cannot afford to pay the levels of money that the Americans pay their soldiers.

The original figure was 70,000 Afghan national troops to be trained. We're up to 30,000 today, as the Secretary General mentioned in his last report. The Americans just announced that they want to bring that goal to 50,000, because it is becoming cumbersome and expensive to have these soldiers trained and then supported by the Afghan government.

If you look at regional numbers, per head the number of military, Afghanistan should have an army of about 140,000. So I think we need to be mindful of local circumstances, local conditions. If most of the countries in the region have conscripted armies that cost less, but our troops on the ground are present and are providing security, then perhaps it's time to talk about Afghan solutions to Afghan problems.

● (1705)

The Chair: Mr. Calkins, you're just about out of time.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Last one, if I can sneak it in.

From the perspective of when we do establish a truly democratic and independent state there, I'm wondering what your opinion is. Based on the fact that it is mostly an Islamic state, the concept of Sharia law comes in, and I'm wondering what your opinion is on what our exit strategy should be. Are we looking for a democratic western state or should we be allowing the Afghans to decide for themselves what...? Without law and order, there's no point in leaving, so I wonder what your opinion is on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: If we are consistent about wanting to bring democracy to them, we must let the elected officials decide what is best for their own country, unless that undermines the security of their neighbours or the international community. There are countries with governments that do not enforce laws that we would like, but we respect them nevertheless, because they have a legitimately elected government.

Imposing legislation to be voted on or even a type of constitution that would reflect western principles in a country with a different culture would be met with disapproval. We must respect the will of the people and the forces present or the ideological majorities that have been elected by a majority in any other country.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Bachand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

There is a difference between what is happening today and the war occupation let by the Russians that was somewhat Imperialist. Throughout the country, they were perceived as people who had come to dominate, to take natural resources, and so on. I found in Afghanistan that the people are still giving the international community the benefit of the doubt. They realize that this is not a war of occupation. However, I realized that they wanted changes to their living conditions, which are unacceptable. The riots in Kabul lead me to believe that there is a problem. The Afghans realize that people want to help them, but they are not seeing any changes to their living conditions. Everything is in ruins as before, they have no more food than they did before, they still have problems with water, and they are wondering what the international community is doing for them.

I also realize that as far as security is concerned, it is being played out as we speak. These people want to live the peaceful life they have never known. In some villages, they wonder if they should side with the Taliban to ensure their protection, or with the coalition forces to ensure their security. Meaningful results must be delivered as quickly as possible.

What worries me the most is the pitiful state of the current government. It will say that Karzaï is the mayor of Kabul, nothing more. He has no credibility in Kandahar or elsewhere. At NATO, where the situation in the country is being monitored, they appear to be moving towards a kind of tutoring system for elected officials. Their parliament is very basic, and I was very surprised by that. Mind you, I was very impressed—Ms. Black, you will be happy to learn this— by the women. Twenty seven per cent of the members of parliament are women. I had an opportunity to meet a couple of them. I can assure you that they know where they are going. They will, however, need the third D, diplomacy, and some tutoring.

I was surprised when Mr. Karzaï told me that, when he wanted to write a letter to a head of State, he had to do it himself, because no one around him was able to do it. That is serious. Discussions have begun on tutoring. It is not about imposing anything on them. I am one of those who will contact a member of parliament there and offer advice. This is a good avenue for the Canadian government to explore. It could ensure that all members of parliament there are able to carry out their duties, thereby saving the government's credibility. These people have just been democratically elected. If everyone loses confidence in their government, then we will have to start over from scratch. What do you think about the idea of tutoring, that is being talked about these days in Europe or elsewhere?

● (1710)

Mr. Justin Massie: I think that the presence of a political adviser from Canada or elsewhere is always a good idea when a democracy has been set up, because that is not self-evident. We can understand it, because we have lived in a democracy since birth. The problem in Afghanistan is that although there is a willingness to commit, there is no formal commitment on the part of the international community, namely on the financial level. The Karzaï government lacks the resources it needs to meet the objectives that it has set, and most of its budget comes from that source. We understand the importance of that.

The second issue is the deployment of foreign troops. Moving ISAF into southern Afghanistan is positive, because that will mean an increase in the number of troops, if it is done quickly enough. The difficulty presently facing western nations is determining who will do what, who will conduct combat operations, who will conduct reconstruction and humanitarian assistance operations, and so on. The majority of Canadian troops are involved in combat operations outside the area or in more isolated areas, to counter the insurgents where they have taken refuge. Once there are more troops in the field, part of the contingent will be able to remain there, and the other part will have to provide protection for certain villages. And increase in the number of troops will perhaps make it possible to provide greater security.

● (1715)

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm afraid we'll have to move on.

Ms. Gallant, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: We have two motions to consider. Given that the bell will start to ring at 5:30 for a vote, I would not want to be told that we cannot consider them. At what time are we going to consider the motions?

[*English*]

The Chair: We're hoping to get through this round and then move to the motions if we have a few minutes at the end.

Go ahead, Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Recognizing that peaceful civilians are difficult to distinguish from suicide bombers, how would you suggest that Canadian soldiers get closer to the peaceful Afghan citizens?

Mr. Marc André Boivin: I think that in the last few years a considerable amount of experience has been gained. I think the Canadian contingent has developed and has evolved in the way it trains soldiers. I have certainly witnessed some evolution in the training being provided.

It's always a difficult notion. You have young kids who are 20 years old, out of a country like Canada, being sent far away, and they have to make some very tough calls. But it is paramount that we approach this in a humane way, that we are not trigger-happy, and that security doesn't work against long-term security. That is, if you shoot up every vehicle that comes close without asking questions, then obviously there are going to be consequences in the long term. That is the trade-off, of course, for our troops' paramount need for security.

So I think they've taken the right approach. I think they've changed their training recently to take advantage of some of the lessons being learned, namely by the Americans and British in Iraq and in Afghanistan. I think the Canadian military is looking at these issues quite closely and quite professionally.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: The main aspect is the need to obtain intelligence from the local people who are not opposed to Canadian troops. In that context, if they can obtain intelligence, they will be able to take a more preventative approach, without pulling the trigger.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I have two unrelated questions. I'm just going to ask them so we can respect the time, and you can judge your responses accordingly.

It's interesting to hear you say today that this is the military phase and that we should be playing a major role in the region until it has been further stabilized. We heard from some NGOs who raised concerns about the blurring of roles that they claim arises when our soldiers provide humanitarian relief.

On one hand, we're told that the soldiers must win the hearts and minds of the Afghan citizens, yet the NGOs say that this is dangerous for the NGOs. In your opinion, should soldiers be providing humanitarian efforts while they're there on a peacekeeping mission?

On a completely different question, the role of Pakistan has been raised. You mentioned that stability in Afghanistan would provide economic benefit through trade and commerce. Would you explain any advantages that Pakistan would have from the extended instability of Afghanistan?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: Unless security on the ground is effective, the presence of NGOs is not recommended. The soldiers, the military forces should provide essential humanitarian aid.

Once a kind of security perimeter has been established around a village or a region, we can start accepting the presence of foreign civilians. Otherwise, it might cause greater insecurity for the people and require more Canadian troops to guaranty the safety of the NGOs, when their efforts are required elsewhere to provide security or to meet their objectives on the ground.

Everything depends on the security phase or the level of control that exists on the ground, that determines whether troops or civilians should provide humanitarian assistance.

[*English*]

Mr. Marc André Boivin: Personally I think that the military providing humanitarian aid is just a bad idea. NGOs were present in Afghanistan long before any foreign military personnel were there, and the NGOs' concern at seeing their efforts so politicized is a serious one, because if they're seen as biased to one party or to the other, the Taliban or whichever insurgent will say, well, the grain you're providing is for the international effort, so we'll shoot you up. And that's it. You will not be able to provide any aid at all.

So I think, yes, the military should be doing military tasks. Providing security is essential for providing aid, and on that I agree, but to mix military-political missions with aid is inherently dangerous for the NGOs.

I'll just take a minute for Pakistan. On Pakistan, once again they're very complex issues. Some of the support for the military regime comes from Islamist parties, and these Islamist parties obviously have interests in Afghanistan, but they're also very useful for the conflict in Kashmir, for the introduction of terrorists on the Indian side of the border. So all these issues are related and are very difficult to contain.

Also very important is that Pakistan played a key role in organizing and financing the Taliban in the nineties, with of course the consent of the Americans. These affinities still prevail in some parts of the military apparel today, so obviously there are difficulties there as well.

● (1720)

The Chair: Thank you.

The next spot is Liberal, and there's no question, so it's back to this side, if there is one.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: I have the support of my opposition colleagues to continue asking questions.

I would like to reference the comments that you were making in your presentation.

You made the comment during your presentation that attempts to allow public opinion polls to govern government foreign policy are misguided. That is the impression that I got from your statement.

You've made reference to the declining opposition, in fact, or the increasing support for our presence in Afghanistan by pointing out that back in March 62% of Canadians were opposed to the mission, and in May that number had dropped to 54%, and in the most recent poll—June 8 is the date you refer to—it had dropped to 44%. So I actually see declining opposition, or increasing support for our presence in Afghanistan, which I find very encouraging.

How would you explain this level of volatility within the public in terms of their support for our mission in Afghanistan, and to what degree should that play a role in directing government foreign policy?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Justin Massie: We must not be influenced by an increase or decrease in public support for the mission. If some Canadian soldiers were to die a tragic death next week, public support for the mission will probably go down. So political decisions must not be based on public opinion or media coverage.

If I addressed that aspect in my presentation, it was more to show the confusion that exists about the mission than to show a lack of public support. There may be differences of opinion as to the role, but when there is confusion as to the relevance or the very nature of a mission, that is dangerous politically speaking. We must work twice hard to obtain a consensus. If we clearly explain the stakes and the merit of a mission to the people and the people continue to oppose it, that must be taken into account in the long term, unless it is not considered important.

[*English*]

Mr. Russ Hiebert: I have a question.

Last week there was a NATO meeting in Brussels where members of the NATO gathered and expressed an interest in doubling the number of troops to Afghanistan. I was wondering if you have any comment in terms of why they would wish to do that.

Does it reflect the fact that they didn't have enough troops there to begin with, or is it an effort to expedite the process, perhaps thinking we've had enough troops, but by increasing or doubling the forces we'll be able to shorten the length of time we have to be in Afghanistan? How would you explain their interest in the doubling of the troops to Afghanistan?

● (1725)

Mr. Marc André Boivin: This doubling of effort was actually agreed upon a long time ago and did not wait for last week. It's part of a gradual extension counter-clockwise of the ISAF mission to Afghanistan in general. ISAF was originally created by the UN, but only to provide security in Kabul. Following a Security Council resolution, they decided to extend ISAF's mandate to the whole of Afghanistan, but in order to do this, they needed to take gradual steps. They started with the PRT you mentioned in the north, which was one of the more stable regions. Then they went to the west to Herat, which was another rather stable region. Now they've taken a bold step in the south.

All in all, I wouldn't characterize this effort as quick. This extension was agreed upon in 2003, and we're in 2006 now, and we still haven't covered the last eastern regions with ISAF missions. I would think this is perhaps related to the difficulties in coming to terms as between the Enduring Freedom mission and the ISAF mission.

The Chair: Thank you. That just about does it. We have two spots left in the third round. One is for the Liberals and they're done.

Ms. Black, this is where you get back into the picture, if you want to use your time for this or for your other issues.

Ms. Dawn Black: I have two motions, and we have six minutes left.

So thank you very much for coming. I appreciate your presentations.

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen. You did very well. I thought you answered the questions as directly as you could, and we appreciate it very much.

As time is short, let's move on.

We have two motions presented by Ms. Black. I would like to deal with one, a routine motion that the chair accept no dilatory motions while the committee is hearing witnesses.

Ms. Black, would you like to comment on that, as the presenter?

Ms. Dawn Black: Yes. I was shocked when I was called in Vancouver on Friday to hear that the meeting had been adjourned when witnesses were here prepared to participate and to take questions from the government side, and that the government side had chosen to shut down the meeting. I found it really shocking, particularly when we understand that CARE Canada was involved and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation was involved. These are the people who are leading projects to make poverty history.

I would present this motion in the hope that people would not in the future use a dilatory motion to adjourn the debate and pre-empt information coming to the committee.

The Chair: Is there any other comment concerning dilatory motions?

Mr. Russ Hiebert: In reviewing this motion, it came to mind that one of the consequences of accepting a motion like this might be that it closes the door on this committee's future operations. There's no telling what the consequences might be if we adopt this motion, in the sense that there might be a time when it is appropriate that we leave this kind of freedom to the committee to decide for itself at a moment's notice whether or not it wants to proceed along those lines.

I would suggest that all members consider that there are all kinds of unintended consequences that might occur if we were to adopt this motion.

Further to that, according to the procedures governing the House of Commons, this kind of motion requires unanimous consent. I suggest, Mr. Chair, that you will not find that kind of unanimous consent around this table for this particular motion.

Ms. Dawn Black: Well, if there's not unanimous consent, I'm happy to withdraw the motion.

The Chair: Well, if it's your wish to withdraw it, then it's up to you.

The motion has been withdrawn by the presenter.

The next motion to deal with is Ms. Black's.

I believe it is presented by you yourself. Do you have any comment?

Ms. Dawn Black: Speaking again on the debate last Thursday, when we as a whole committee had invited particular people from Canadian society to come to make presentations to this committee about their views, their expertise, and the positions of Canadian people on the topic we're studying, the mission in Afghanistan, having that meeting adjourn before the time was up, without consideration that these people had been asked—actually at the last minute—to come to make presentations because we weren't able to get other witnesses to appear was, I think, the height of arrogance and rudeness. I was just appalled to get the phone call on Thursday when I landed in Vancouver and to hear that this had happened.

That's the basis of this motion, to ask that this committee apologize to these particular witnesses. And with that, I would like to put the question.

● (1730)

The Chair: Is there further discussion?

Do you have a comment, Mr. Bachand?

Mr. Claude Bachand: No, I just wanted to put the question.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, it would seem to me that, with all due respect—and I say this sincerely to Ms. Black—if there is anybody who should be apologizing to the groups that were present at this committee last Thursday, it would be she herself and her party for being the ones to ask these groups to attend and then not giving them the courtesy of actually being at this particular meeting. On that point, perhaps you have a good explanation that you can share with the committee as to why you were absent after you invited these groups.

Further—

The Chair: No, we're not going to get into that.

Ms. Dawn Black: My political party was not absent.

The Chair: You'll have to direct everything through the chair, if we're going to start that stuff.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: It seems quite apparent that these kinds of motions are simply playing political games and distracting us from our primary objectives. If it's truly the case that she was really concerned about these presentations, then perhaps she could have worked with her opposition colleagues to ensure that there was the support needed to make sure the presentations could continue. But this was not in fact the case. Perhaps she's looking in the wrong direction and she should be looking to her side of these tables.

Finally, Mr. Chair, if you consulted the rules that govern committees, you would find that according to Marleau and Montpetit this motion is out of order, as there is, and I quote from Marleau and Montpetit, "the well-established rule which holds that a question"—and I'm referring to the question in terms of the one to end a committee session last Thursday—"once put and carried in the affirmative or negative, cannot be questioned again."

I think the motion is out of order.

The Chair: Are there any other comments while we sort this out?

Ms. Black, do you have any further comment? There has been a question raised as to whether this is indeed in order.

Ms. Dawn Black: While he's looking that up, I would just state that the New Democratic Party was here for the full tenure of the meeting, right until the end. My party has only one member on this committee, and a member of the NDP was here for the entire committee meeting. We were not absent, as Mr. Hiebert indicated.

The Chair: In addressing Mr. Hiebert's comments, the clerk has researched this previous to this meeting and just comments to me now that there is a difference between the actual treatment and the question. That's how he referred to it. In his view the motion is in order.

We have a contrary view that the motion is not in order. I'm not sure if it's up to me to decide if it's in order or not.

Okay, it is up to me to decide if the motion is in order or not, and I guess that's why they pay us the big bucks.

It came out of the rules under which the House operates, and of course, the House operations and the committee operations are somewhat separate. I am going to rule that this motion is out of order. This leaves some avenues here. I will rule that and allow us to get to the vote. If you have discussion—

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Chairman, if the motion is ruled out of order, how is there a vote?

The Chair: That is to allow us to leave to get to the vote.

I've made that ruling, and the time has expired and we have to get to the House.

So this meeting is adjourned.

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

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

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