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Chair

Mr. Rick Casson

Standing Committee on National Defence

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● (1535)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)): Colleagues, I'd like to call this meeting to order, as we're pressed for time.

Before I introduce our witnesses today, there's some housekeeping we need to take care of. We will be as quick as we possibly can.

As you recall, at our previous meeting the request from committee members was to ask for the Minister of National Defence to appear before the committee. We've been notified that, given his schedule, the minister is not available to come before our committee before mid-October. I'll put that on the floor for any discussions or any comments. The floor is open.

Monsieur Dosanjh.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Well, it would have been good if the minister had come here and talked to us about where things are before attending the NATO ministers meeting, which I believe is on the 28th. Obviously there are some concerns about NATO now looking for more troops. Whether or not it was in the plan before remains a question, although we understand that's what is now being said. In that sense, it would have been good to hear from him and for him to hear from all of us as to what our concerns might be, so that when he goes to the NATO ministers meeting he's fully prepared.

But be that as it may, I'm disappointed.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Are there any other comments?

Mr. McGuire.

Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I agree that there certainly is disappointment that the minister can't be here, and I think we should ask him again.

The Prime Minister has called this a war, and I think it's incumbent upon the minister to brief the defence committee as soon as possible on what's going on in the war. Not only that, Mr. Chairman, I believe we should also have weekly briefings on the war, as we did in the past with the Gulf War. This committee should be brought up to date on at least a weekly basis, if not more often, and we certainly should have the minister here since he was in Afghanistan not too long ago. He should be here to talk to the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence and give us an update on what's going on there.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Thank you, Mr. McGuire.

Are there any other comments on the minister's response?

● (1540)

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Can we subpoena him?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): I don't know what the privilege of the committee is. To my understanding, no; we can do what Mr. McGuire has suggested, and that is to request again. I know the comments from the two previous speakers were reflected in our last meeting, given the circumstances, but we have a response from the minister concerning his availability, and it's not before mid-October.

Monsieur Bachand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: I was kidding when I said the minister should be subpoenaed to testify. Perhaps the committee clerk could enlighten me.

It was my understanding that the National Defence Committee had the authority to subpoena witnesses. Am I to understand then that because of some regulation, the minister cannot be subpoenaed? Can he refuse to appear before this committee and do we not have the authority then to issue a subpoena?

The Clerk of the Committee: The committee may subpoena witnesses, but in order for it to be enforceable, the committee must report to the House. The House then moves a motion declaring the summons enforceable. Only rarely is a Minister of the Crown summoned to testify.

Mr. Claude Bachand: What if I wanted to invite Mr. Pellerin who is seated over there to testify, but he refuses to appear. If that were the case, would the committee also be required to go through the House?

[*English*]

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): I have a point of order. Mr. Chair, before this gets out of hand, I think it's important for the members to know that the minister is eager to attend this committee. He is simply unavailable in the short term to make the visit happen. I am sure the former ministers on this committee can understand the heavy workload that the Minister of Defence has to experience. So before we take this too far and revert to using some heavy-handed measures to get him here, perhaps my honourable colleagues would cut some slack for the minister and give him an opportunity to adjust his schedule as quickly as possible.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): We'll go back to Monsieur Bachand and then to Ms. Gallant.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: I'm quite willing to give the Minister the benefit of the doubt, but he has to understand that this issue is a hot potato. If he is unwilling to rearrange his schedule, perhaps more drastic steps could be taken. I'm talking from a procedural standpoint, of course.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): I'll go to Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): The interest seems to concern being briefed on what is going on in Afghanistan. Perhaps the clerk could arrange for us to have briefings at DND on a regular basis, if you feel that's necessary—if that is the true intent of being kept up to date on what's going on.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): I'll go to Mr. Dosanjh.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I think that DND briefings are appropriate from time to time, as we may see fit, but ultimately the minister is responsible for the entire department. Therefore, the real accountability rests with the minister. I think it's important for him to show up.

I recognize the time constraints and the burdens on a minister, but we are in a very complex and difficult situation in Afghanistan. The minister had said that he would provide regular reports to the House. We haven't had a report to the House so far. At least he could report to the committee. I believe the situation has escalated in the three or four months since we last met. It is important to hear directly from the minister as early as possible.

He may not be able to do so before the 28th, although it would have been preferable for him to be here before then, because he is going to the NATO ministers meeting, which is very important. We may have learned something from him, and as a result, we may have been able to make some suggestions that he might have found reasonable. It is not about this committee taking somebody to task; it's a matter of the exchange from which we can all learn, and the minister can also learn.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Thank you.

I'll go to Mr. Bouchard.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): The House doesn't sit during the week of October 10. I think it would be best if the MInister meets with us before the break, particularly as we need information. If he doesn't appear until after the break, we'll already be past the midway point in October. I think we should revise our motion and ask the minister to rearrange his schedule so that he can appear at an earlier date, if possible, sometime between now and the end of September.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): I'm getting two different views here. One the one hand, you're asking me to request that the minister see whatever he can do to fit us in as early as possible. On the other hand, on hearing from Mr. Hiebert, I understand that the constraints are not that the minister doesn't want to be here. He wants to be here, but scheduling on his part makes it rather difficult. So I'm at your pleasure in terms of what—

Mr. Dosanjh.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I think both of those positions are in consonance with each other. Mr. Hiebert is saying that the minister might find it difficult to be here. We are saying that he should give it another try, and I think we should send a request for him to reconsider.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Yes, Ms. Black.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): I second that motion.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): So your instruction to the chair is to communicate again and immediately with the minister, seeking his appearance before our committee. Am I correct?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Ask him to reconsider.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Yes, Monsieur Bachand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: I could support the motion, but I need some convincing arguments. In my opinion, the situation in Afghanistan demands our urgent attention. Furthermore, our committee deserves some respect. It's work is very important and that's something the Minister needs to acknowledge. We're not looking to cause a major disruption. We're looking for answers and looking to address a major, urgent problem. I'd like these two points to be made clear in our letter or request to the Minister.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Let me say I have confidence that the minister fully respects the committee and the work the committee is doing, having also been a member of this committee prior to his current responsibilities.

Mr. Hiebert.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: I would just suggest that if you wanted to contact him informally, that would be a more appropriate measure, instead of asking this committee to pass a motion that would require 24 hours' notice and what have you. Perhaps in your capacity as chair you can make a request to the minister's office to evaluate his schedule a second time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): That's an excellent suggestion, because it does save us the 24 hours. Thank you for bringing that to our attention. Again, it shows the good intentions.

Mr. Dosanjh.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Well, you could do both. We could pass a motion, but in addition to the motion, you could take it upon yourself to send a note.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Sure, and that's accommodating both sides, if we're all in agreement.

Do we need to vote on it? We can vote on it, or do we move forward with those two suggestions?

Mr. Russ Hiebert: I think we have some suggestions on the table. Perhaps we can proceed with the informal request, and if there is a need to move beyond that, then we can proceed with the motion if that in order. I think taking this one step at a time would be an appropriate measure. We're not dealing with a minister who is seeking to avoid this committee, so let's give him an opportunity to evaluate things, and let's try to avoid getting a little bit heavy-handed in how we deal with this situation.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I appreciate that. I don't think we're trying to be heavy-handed; I think all we're trying to do is do the best we can to try to persuade the minister. I think the chair can be in touch with the minister, in addition to the motion. The motion does no harm. It is not as if he's being cited for contempt; the motion is simply a formal way of trying to persuade the minister to reconsider.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): I think that's the formal procedure, if I may just emphasize that, in terms of the motion, but on your behalf I will approach the minister tomorrow if he is in the House. I don't know his schedule, but on your behalf I will approach him personally and through our clerk as well.

I see an accommodation here for time constraints. We can use both approaches—unless there's a vote. The chair is at your pleasure. We can vote on the motion or we can move forward with unanimous consent. However, we have a motion on the table in terms of the request and we have your proposal as well. Let's move forward on this, because we also have witnesses with whom we want to spend as much time as is needed.

Do we need to vote on it?

● (1550)

Mr. Russ Hiebert: You can't without 24 hours' notice.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Mr. Dosanjh.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Are you suggesting we need 24 hours' notice for the motion? Is that what you're suggesting?

Mr. Russ Hiebert: To vote on the motion.The rules state that you have to have 24 hours' notice to vote on a motion.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I hereby give that notice, and we can vote the next time.

Hon. Joe McGuire: I think we've had a motion and we voted on it. You may want to reiterate. It's kind of redundant. I think we had a motion at the last meeting.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): We did. I'm just trying to go back through the notes of the previous meeting on Monday. But if I recall, we did pass the motion, we put in the request, and the response back from the minister's office was that he could not make himself available before mid-October. So technically speaking, we addressed that motion, which brings us back to reintroducing the motion, which would go back into the 24-hour period. If I'm out of line here, I'll ask to be corrected.

Okay. As the clerk has informed me, you're correct that the 48 hours' notice is required for a substantive motion to be considered by the committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, and that the notice of motion be filed with the clerk of the committee and distributed to members. That means we don't need 48 hours' notice on this specific request, as has been clarified by the rules of the committee.

So we can now move forward with the motion that is before us. As I said to you, colleagues, my sense is that nobody around the table is trying to be heavy-handed, but as I've heard from both sides, these are unusual times, difficult times. The minister, I know, is interested in coming before the committee to brief us and give us updates.

It would seem there's no consensus, so I'll put the question on the dual arrangements.

(Motion agreed to)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): We will then notify the minister on the dual arrangements that we have.

The next piece of housekeeping is very brief. You've all been notified that we're going to be visited in Canada by the Minister of Defence from Croatia on October 9. They've been requesting that if our committee or whoever is available...I know that's break week, so the House is not sitting. Perhaps you can let us know within the next 24 hours if anybody's available on October 10 to be here in Ottawa to meet the minister. Kindly let us know as soon as possible. Look as your schedules—we surely know what we're doing a couple of weeks from now—so that in all fairness we can notify the minister.

That concludes the housekeeping. We'll introduce our witnesses.

I'm pleased to have with us here today as witnesses from the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan, which is the order of the day, from the Conference of Defence Associations, Lieutenant-General Richard J. Evraire, retired, who is the chairman; and also Colonel Brian S. MacDonald, retired, senior defence analyst. We also have with us, from the Royal Military College of Canada, Dr. Sean Maloney, associate professor of history.

Gentlemen, welcome to the committee. We look forward to hearing your presentations. We normally have 10 minutes per individual, as I recall. If we can follow the previous pattern we used when I chaired, we'll go to each one of you individually, and at the end of your presentations we'll go to questions, if everybody still agrees with that format.

I don't know if you've drawn lots as to who's going to go first, but I have on my list Mr. Evraire. Should we start with you, sir?

● (1555)

Lieutenant-General Richard Evraire (Retired) (Chairman, Conference of Defence Associations): Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I will make a presentation, and Colonel MacDonald will assist me in responding to questions at the end of the presentations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chairman, the Conference of Defence Associations is grateful for this opportunity to comment on Canada's military commitment to Afghanistan.

[*English*]

This presentation of the CDA will deal with five topics: criteria for assisting the ISAF, the international force mission's effectiveness, a paper on which is included in the background information we have provided your committee; the ISAF concept of operations; a word or two on an assessment of the success of ISAF operations to date; comments on the relationship between the Canadian mission's combat operations and efforts in reconstruction; and to conclude, a comment on the state of personnel and equipment of the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, the CDA believes that the ISAF mission, and Canada's considerable part in it, is an honourable undertaking being conducted with the utmost professionalism by the Canadian Forces, and that it will be considered to have been effective and successful if and when the campaign of terror being waged by the Taliban and their extremist allies fails; if security is restored to the point that ordinary Afghans enjoy personal liberty and freedom from fear; if the Afghan army and police become effective in ensuring security; if the country's market economy begins to flourish; if the central Afghan government control spreads throughout the country; if human rights are respected; if significant infrastructure development programs are under way; and if the elements of a made-in-Afghanistan democratic system of government spread to all parts of the country.

It is obvious that achieving the foregoing objectives is a phenomenally complex and difficult undertaking. Nevertheless, the CDA believes the absence of any one of the above criteria would put the successful completion of the ISAF mission in doubt.

[*Translation*]

The mission of the NATO-led ISAF is to conduct military operations in order to assist the Government of Afghanistan and the international community in establishing and maintaining, with the full engagement of the Afghan National Security Forces, a safe and secure environment that will allow the government to extend its authority and influence, hold free and fair elections and thereby facilitate Afghanistan's reconstruction.

From its inception, the ISAF's mission has consisted of five phases. Phase 1 is the assessment and preparation phase, including operations in Kabul, which are now completed. Phase 2 involves geographic expansion. It should be noted that in October 2003, the UN Security Council authorized the expansion of the NATO mission beyond Kabul. In October 2004, NATO deployed forces to the North and in September 2005, to the West. It also bears mentioning that expansion to the South was completed on July 31, 2006, that is a scant six weeks ago. Phase 3 of operations, the stage in which Canadian Forces are presently engaged, is a stabilization phase. Phases 4 and 5 will be ones of transition and redeployment.

Canadian Forces were recently deployed in Kandahar province with the launching of phase 3, the stabilization phase. However, the ISAF has been engaged in the North and West much longer than in Kandahar province, and in these districts, a relatively high level of stability has been achieved, which gives us reason for a certain amount of optimism.

[*English*]

The September 12, 2006, executive summary of the Afghanistan opium survey, published on an annual basis by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, is the most authoritative source in the world on the opium and heroin trade in Afghanistan and is an excellent independent and empirically verifiable source from which the progress and success of the ISAF operation can be measured. It is also a source of robust indicators of changes in opium production and of the level of security, both of which are themselves useful indicators of the degree of success, on a regional basis, of the ISAF stability operations. The report indicates that most of the provinces and districts of the north and west are identified as low risk in security terms, whereas the south, where ISAF has been in place for only six weeks, has a much higher proportion of provinces and districts assessed as high or extreme risk.

Another measure found in the UNODC report is the change from 2005 to 2006 in the total area under poppy cultivation. While the geographical boundaries of the various regions used in the report do not exactly parallel the ISAF regional boundaries, they are close enough to allow for meaningful inferences to be drawn. We find that the area under cultivation in the north declined by 20% on a year-over-year basis, whereas the area under cultivation in the south shot up an alarming 121%, though interestingly the area under cultivation in Kandahar province, the province which is the responsibility of the Canadians, declined by 3%.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

From these two indicators identified in the recent UN report on opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, namely the area under cultivation and the level of security in each province, we conclude that ISAF operations in the North and West have been moderately successful. We believe it is reasonable to expect similar results in the South.

[*English*]

A critical problem for the Afghan government is the huge disparity between governmental sources of income and those available to the drug traffickers.

The UNODC Summary Findings of Opium Trends in Afghanistan, 2005 reports that the total export value of opium to neighbouring countries amounted to $2.7 billion. Of that sum, the farmers received $560 million, whereas the drug traffickers retained $2.14 billion, or about 80% of the total export value. Since Afghanistan's GDP for that year was reported to be $5.2 billion, opium exports stood at about 52% of GDP.

Set against that is the Afghan government's revenue base. The Asian Development Bank's key indicators of developing Asian and Pacific countries for 2004 shows the total revenue of the Afghan government in that year as $652 million, or about 5.2% of GDP.

In 2005, opium production in the southern region amounted to 43% of total Afghan production and will have provided drug traffickers in the south with an annual income of about $900 million. In 2006, the UNODC reports that the south will account for 61% of total production. If export prices remain similar, this would put approximately $1.9 billion in the hands of the drug traffickers.

It is, we believe, self-evident that the great disparity in financial resources between the drug traffickers and the Afghan national government would somehow ensure the complete overthrow of Afghan's national government forces in the south.

If the ISAF were to withdraw, the country would quickly pitch back into civil war, which at best would lead to a decline in regional warlord control, and at worst would see the coming to power of a neo-Taliban structure financed by the drug traffickers. Afghan would evolve from an narco-economy to a narco-state. To those who recommend that we cut and run, understand that they are favouring the return of a terrorist Taliban-al-Qaeda regime over the admittedly difficult birth of a fledgling democracy.

[*Translation*]

Reconstruction in Afghanistan is simply not possible unless a relatively secure and peaceful environment exists in which Canadian aid and development agencies, other NATO nations and numerous other countries around the world can set about to rebuild or build anew the infrastructure needed for a market economy to flourish. Given that from the beginning of Canada's involvement, the nature of military operations against the Taliban and their allies has constantly evolved, and Canadian Forces have of necessity modified their methods of operation and their inventory of military equipment, the CDA recognizes and acknowledges the professionalism of Canada's troops and their commanders. Canada's military has been able to accomplish its mission, a *sine qua non* of future reconstruction in Afghanistan.

[*English*]

It must be remembered, however, that the state of the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan and their capacity to accomplish their assigned mission within ISAF needs to be viewed within the larger context of their ability to help meet and fulfill Canada's other international obligations, as well as its domestic and continental North American obligations.

This is why the CDA continues to encourage all decision-makers to accept that we are today living in an insecure world in which defence and security preparedness, aimed at providing citizens with a safe and secure environment, is the single most important responsibility of government.

It therefore is essential that the government continue to meet its obligation to the men and women of our Canadian Forces by providing them with the necessary levels of trained personnel and the appropriate equipment they require to pursue and successfully accomplish the missions assigned to them.

The CDA therefore views the recently announced addition to the CF ISAF mission of a tank squadron, an infantry company, combat engineers, and other elements as a prudent and commendable response to the needs of the mission as articulated by the commander responsible for the operations, who constantly assesses the evolving situation in his area.

Such decisions will provide a significant improvement to Canada's ability to meet its current mandate in Afghanistan.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

In the same vein or for similar reasons, the CDA also applauds the stated intention of the Government of Canada to take significant steps to deal with the recapitalization of Canadian Forces' strategic and tactical lift capabilities.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, thank you for your attention. Retired Colonel Brian MacDonald, an analyst with the CDA, and I will both be happy to answer your questions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Thank you for the presentation.

We'll go to Mr. MacDonald.

Colonel Brian MacDonald (Retired) (Senior Defence Analyst, Conference of Defence Associations): Mr. Chairman, as General Evraire has remarked, I had a hand in the drafting of this, so I will not present an independent testimony. I will assist General Evraire during the course of any questions the committee may have.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Thank you. We look forward to your responses—in person, not just on television, which is very interesting. It gives us more time, actually, to put in more questions.

Mr. Maloney.

Dr. Sean Maloney (Associate Professor of History, Royal Military College of Canada): I've been asked to make myself available for questions on the current state of operations in Afghanistan, so I'd better provide you with some of my background.

I'm a military historian. I currently teach contemporary warfare at the Royal Military College. I have travelled to Afghanistan annually for the past four years, starting in 2003. I've observed Canadian and coalition operations for the following organizations: pre-NATO ISAF; American operations during Operation Enduring Freedom; NATO-ized ISAF, including the provincial reconstruction teams in the north; Canadian PRT operations in the south; and most recently, this summer, task forces Aegis and Orion and the PRT, which are the collective Canadian operations in the south.

I have a variety of conceptualizations on how the war has evolved and how it's being fought, which I can make available to you. I can make comparisons between various techniques and operational evolution in the theatre. I can provide you with some insight into the threat situation, or what our enemy may be thinking.

I won't proceed beyond that; I just make myself available for questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Thank you very much, Mr. Maloney.

We'll go to questions from the committee members. I would just remind members that it's seven minutes each in the first round, questions and answers. We'll try to get as much in there as we possibly can.

Mr. Dosanjh.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Thank you.

Let me ask my first question of perhaps Mr. MacDonald, or Mr. Evraire.

You said that in terms of the deployment of tanks and engineers and the like, the additional deployment is being done at the request of the commanders on the ground, as it should be, based on operational advice. Obviously it's required for the safety and security of our troops, and that's always job one. But I want to ask you a question with respect to what impact that would have on the hearts and minds question.

I read Mr. MacDonald's comments that hearts and minds can flow in different directions. That battle can take many contours. Obviously, while tanks provide security and safety for our troops, they are not known for reconstruction or development. They're usually known for blasting and demolition and destruction. From your perspective, as a military person, how does that impact on the issue of hearts and minds?

Then perhaps Mr. Maloney can follow up, based on his knowledge of Afghanistan, on how that might impact the feelings of the Afghanis we're trying to win over. Ultimately, if we want stability and security in Afghanistan, in addition to military presence we have to have a lot of development, and a lot of peaceful development, if we can ever get there.

● (1610)

Col Brian MacDonald: Mr. Chairman, to respond to that question, the number of main battle tanks that have been added to the force has been said to be between four and fifteen. Regarding tactics, the army has taught for years, based on its own very lengthy experience, that you must have a combined arms battle team that consists of infantry, artillery, and heavy armour. The interaction between these three components is critical to the success in any tactical battle because each of them brings unique characteristics to the battlefield.

If you attempt to engage in conventional operations, for example in attacking a dug-in fixed position, you will find that using artillery and infantry alone makes for a very long process, particularly at the attack point. In such a case, the infantry, as it approaches the objective, is supported by the artillery, which fires on the objective, preventing the soldiers on the other side from directly firing at the infantry.

At some point, the infantry will get so close to the artillery that the artillery must stop firing because the fragments that come from our own artillery then threaten the lives of our infantry. At that point, in a space of about 300 metres, the other side is then able to emerge from its trenches and direct fire on our attacking infantry. At that point the infantry takes the majority of its casualties.

In order to reduce that further, main battle tanks move forward with the infantry, equipped particularly with machine guns and their main armaments, to provide the intimate fire support when our supporting artillery is forced to lift, and to continue the process of suppressing the defensive fire from the other side in order to place our infantry successively on the objective.

Most recently, neo-Taliban forces have changed tactics from using what might be described as hit and run operations to actually adopting fixed dug-in positions. It was the assessment of the commander, General Fraser, then, that if this is to be a possible line of tactics of the neo-Taliban in the future, he will require main battle tanks in order to be able to deal with such a situation.

I might observe as well that in addition to that squadron of tanks, the drafts of new additional troops being supplied to General Fraser include a number of combat engineers, particularly experienced officers who understand that as well as doing combat engineering things they can also supervise construction tasks. Those officers have been provided to act as project officers to deal with the small development and reconstruction tasks emerging, since these have been identified by the local people as something they require. The provision of these combat engineers plus additional funding through CIDA, through the provincial reconstruction team, allows them to deal with the smaller-scale reconstruction details that may include such things as driving wells, cleaning out the irrigation ditches that are involved, repairing roads, and doing that sort of thing. In addition, some of their own engineering armoured vehicles have been deployed with them. These are tract vehicles with the dozer blade on the front, and an arm that looks very much like what you'd find on a civilian backhoe, allowing them to do those sorts of tasks as well.

This additional deployment has a component directed towards improving the tactical balance of the Canadian Forces under General Fraser's command; an additional company provided to allow greater security for the joint civilian-military provincial reconstruction teams; and specialist engineer officers who are capable of undertaking and supervising these reconstruction projects, including hiring local labour to be part of that.

I would emphasize that this is an additional set of resources, ranging from those designed to deal with combat scenarios to those that are now dealing with practical, smaller-scale development scenarios.

● (1615)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Just because we're nearing the time, I would like to give Dr. Maloney an opportunity to respond to the question put.

If you would like to add any comments, sir, go ahead.

Dr. Sean Maloney: One of the problems we have in the public domain debate over what we're doing in Afghanistan relates to the artificial distinction between combat operations and developmental aid and the continuum that exists between the two.

On the ground, the enemy—and the enemy is not just the Taliban, there are a number of enemies that work together—employs a variety of techniques to accomplish its objectives. I could go through the list, but fundamentally you're familiar with them: suicide attacks, political mobilization, and political intimidation—what we would call guerilla operations. They use a variety of techniques; they do not use a singular technique.

Each one of these techniques has to be met with a different tool. To emphasize one tool over the other at a particular time is not a useful exercise. You have to have a variety of techniques at your disposal, and we have those. In this case we've just decided to add a few more. The techniques we have in theatre are very good. The enemy has had a hard time trying to crack our system, if you will. But I personally don't view the addition of firepower resources as detracting from the Vietnam-era term “hearts and minds campaign”. I wouldn't call it that. I'm even hesitant to call it a reconstruction campaign.

Then we have to get into the heads of our constituency on the ground, and we have problems with metrics in that area.

So the mere presence of a certain piece of firepower or kit on the ground is not necessarily going to have a detrimental effect on our other efforts. We're dealing with a culture that's been at war arguably since 1979. They're used to levels of violence. They're used to equipment being present. They're even used to civilian deaths. Again, the presence of this particular force package is not necessarily going to have a detrimental effect on what we're trying to accomplish vis-à-vis the population. Indeed, the opposite could be the case. If we do not employ our forces effectively, we may in fact lose respect from certain parts of the population.

So I'd ask you to keep those things in mind when you're dealing with issues relating to Afghanistan and not focus on a particular piece of equipment, because that is only one part of the package.

[*Translation*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Thank you very much, Mr. Maloney.

Go ahead, Mr. Bachand.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chairman, I often say that the Vietnam war wasn't lost in Vietnam, but in the United States, because of people's perception of what was taking place in that country.

At this point in time, Canadians and Quebeckers believe that 95% of the mission is devoted to hunting down the Taliban, rather than to achieving security objectives. It's not that they object to our military hunting down the Taliban, they just don't want that to be their exclusive mission.

We should also put ourselves in the Afghan people's position. As a military historian, you know that the Afghan people have always resisted invaders. I'm not implying by this that NATO countries are invaders. On the contrary, I think of them as liberators. However, there is a risk that the Afghans may no longer look upon NATO forces as an army of liberation, but rather start seeing them as an occupation force. The fact is that they have not seen their day-to-day lives improve since the arrival of the ISAF.

Personally, I have some concerns about this mission. When we held a debate in the House of Commons last June, I recall that virtually all political parties stressed the importance of the reconstruction efforts, namely building hospitals, restoring infrastructures, building schools, and so forth.

Today, Canadians and Quebeckers have the impression that our forces are not involved in reconstruction. Moreover, you clearly described the military instruments in your possession. A growing number of people, myself included, are beginning to doubt if ever democracy can be restored and the country rebuilt solely by resorting to weapons.

I'd like to hear your views on the subject. My comments reflect what many of our constituents in Quebec are thinking. Some maintain that we need to withdraw our troops, while others say we must stay the course. However, we're not going to win over the hearts and minds of people by killing as many Taliban as we can or by hunting them down in Pakistan, if need be. I think we need to take another approach, but I'm not sure if we're ready to yet.

● (1620)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): We have just five minutes. I want to remind you that it's seven minutes between questions and answers, and if we want our panel to have time to respond we have to be cognizant of that.

Dr. Maloney.

Dr. Sean Maloney: I'm sure I can address that on a number of planes.

One of the problems we have is that many Canadians have a vision of what's going on in Afghanistan through the media and not actual ground experience. Part of the media's problem is that it tends to focus on the more exciting aspects and not the unexciting aspects of it, which involve the things you're talking about, such as school construction, etc. However, if you have enemy forces wandering around—and I've encountered this myself—they will assassinate doctors and cut the heads off schoolteachers unless there's some form of security. This is what I was talking about before. There's a yin and yang here between combat operations, non-combat operations, and how all this fits together.

So the media has not done its job in conveying these unexciting aspects. We have tunnel vision on a number of issues here.

Let's talk about democracy for a minute. The Afghans have their own form of government at the district and village level that is almost like ancient Greek democracy. We don't want to tamper with that and we're not trying to. So there are already governance mechanisms there that are not Taliban-like and that we don't even have to encourage.

Indiscriminate use of firepower will cause all sorts of problems with the population. That's what the Soviets ran into, and that's what the Americans ran into in Vietnam. We're not doing that here. It may look indiscriminate, but again we're dealing with a media perception of it through a camera lens or somebody describing it. We don't have people who go out and try to get into the heads of the people who are on the ground, in terms of the media, and then convey that to people in Canada. So I think we really need to be careful about the information we're deriving from these perceptions.

We're not out there just to generate a body count, but sometimes you have to kill these people. You have to kill them effectively and give them a bloody nose. How are you going to do that? You just cannot have reconstruction and development unless there's security. It all works together.

[*Translation*]

LGen Richard Evraire: Mr. Chairman, clearly it's not just Quebeckers who perceive the situation this way. We've noted it across Canada and elsewhere in the world.

I tend to agree with Mr. Maloney when it comes to the media reporting on incidents in Afghanistan. All I'm saying is that there have been some major changes since 2001. A total of 4.8 million children, one third of them young girls, are back in school; 12,000 villages now have access to clean drinking water or to funding to secure clean water; 63,000 soldiers have been disarmed; 11,000 pieces of heavy equipment have been secured or put out of commission; 3.7 million refugees have returned to Afghanistan. Unfortunately, these developments are not reported on by the media.

In terms of governance, two elections have been held since 2001, including parliamentary elections in which 25 per cent of the representatives elected were women, the country has a new constitution, provincial councils, and so on.

If these developments could be relayed to Quebeckers and to Canadians through this committee, in my opinion, that would help us convince Canadians that this mission is important and although admittedly a difficult one, that considerable progress is being made.

● (1625)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): We've got 35 seconds, Dr. Maloney, if you can fit something in there. I'm just giving you the exact time, but this committee has been known to be very generous.

Dr. Sean Maloney: I've been to this country, as I've pointed out, on numerous occasions. When I was there in 2003 in Kandahar, there was virtually no justice system. Justice was cutting somebody's throat and hanging him from a bridge with a sign saying not to fire rockets at the camp. We don't have that now. We have pretty much clean streets, with street signs, in Kandahar. That didn't exist before. The irrigation systems I've seen up in the hills have dramatically improved since I was there in 2003.

So I can see signs of progress every time I go over there. But they're incremental. And again, we're dealing with a Canadian population that wants it now. We want success now, so we can get out of there now. Well, it's not like that there. The concept of time in Afghanistan is completely different from the concept of time here. To try to force aid down people's throats—and I've watched this—is extremely counterproductive. There has to be some form of natural evolution, given existing structures. This has me greatly concerned because there are a number of organizations, in Canada and elsewhere, trying to accelerate development of this country. It's their country, and they should be the ones deciding how far that progresses, and when.

We actually assist it. You never hear about this. The media never reports about Strategic Advisory Team - Afghanistan, and how Canadians have been able to assist the Afghan government in creating the Afghanistan national development strategy, which was critical for the buy-in of the IMF, so the IMF could provide money. But you know, having SAT-A's influence in the course of Kabul was dependent on the blood of our guys on the ground. It all works together. We wouldn't have that influence if we didn't have guys on the ground down south, or people in the provincial reconstruction team, or special operations forces, whatever. The package gives us the influence to do that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Maybe the media doesn't report it because they're not communicating effectively with the professional analysts who could advise them, and they're reporting wrongly.

Dr. Sean Maloney: It will take 50 minutes to explain this to my students, but....

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Thank you.

We'll go to Ms. Black.

Ms. Dawn Black: Thank you very much.

Thank you to all three of you for coming today and sharing your expertise with us.

Dr. Maloney, you indicated that you've travelled several times and watched the evolution in Afghanistan over the last several years. In your opinion, is this a counter-insurgency mission? If it is, what have been the lessons from history about the best tactics to use, particularly with regard to the civilian population and the issue of taking prisoners.

I'm also interested in your opinion on the role of Pakistan. Do you think they will ever be in a position to prevent the insurgents from crossing back and forth across the border? It's a continuing problem, and I'd like to know what you have to say about that.

Dr. Sean Maloney: What do you want to tackle first?

Ms. Dawn Black: You can choose, I'll just get them out there.

The last thing I wanted to ask you—I have three questions to ask you—is this. Are we now seeing a shift from guerrilla tactics—I think you alluded to this—into a more conventional positioning of the Taliban staying in one place; and if that's what's happening, what does that mean for the mission?

Dr. Sean Maloney: Okay, we have a bunch of diverse questions. Which one do you want me to talk about, the first one?

Ms. Dawn Black: It's up to you.

Dr. Sean Maloney: Let's talk about what the enemy are doing. Are we seeing a shift? We see constant shifts in Afghanistan in terms of how the enemy do business. We've seen this over the past several years. They'll try to move back and forth between different levels of violence and different techniques to try to counter what we're doing, because we're constantly evolving as well.

So in one case, in this particular case of Pashmul, you may have seen a shift for that particular zone. But that doesn't mean that is going to translate to that type of defence elsewhere in the south, because of terrain and the nature of our forces. They're going to adjust, depending on what we're doing. So I wouldn't view this as a linear shift. There's a Maoist construct where you go from essentially a guerrilla type of operation to a more conventional operation. I don't see that model applying yet. I have yet to see evidence that the Taliban thinks like that. I think they're more Viet Cong-like, where they're going to apply the types of resources that they think will provide the most disruptive effect on us in theatre, and then for the largest impact outside of theatre, specifically the Canadian public and our allies' publics as well.

I don't personally view this as a grand shift in everything they're doing. I think they have attempted this particular technique in this particular place. If we saw this all over the place, maybe, but I haven't seen it all over the place. This is a counter-insurgency mission, absolutely.

● (1630)

Ms. Dawn Black: And what are the lessons from history?

Dr. Sean Maloney: Let me describe what I mean by counter-insurgency. There is a lot of confusion in the electorate, particularly, about the terminology we use to describe missions. The way I teach it at RMC is this.

On the spectrum of what we're dealing with, there is interpositionary peacekeeping, which would be like Suez in 1956, where we have two countries and we have, by political agreement, a UN force that's lightly armed separating them. It is interpositionary.

The next phase you have is a stabilization operation, which we got into mostly in the 1990s. Unfortunately, people call stabilization "peacekeeping", so it confuses everybody. Stabilization operations tend to be within a country that's fragmented and where there aren't necessarily representative governments. You have to use different types of techniques and higher levels of force than you would in interpositionary peacekeeping.

Ms. Dawn Black: I was asking you specifically about the civilian population and the issue of prisoners, as well.

Dr. Sean Maloney: I'll get to that.

The next phase, counter-insurgency, is a particular mission type that closely resembles stabilization operations but in fact uses higher levels of force, has a much more integrated approach, and like in Afghanistan, is usually in support of a sovereign country. That's as opposed to stabilization, where you have a country that's broken up and the international community is intervening. That's the way I distinguish between the three. We're engaged in counter-insurgency in Afghanistan.

The impact on the population depends on where we're talking about in the country—in the north, south, east, west, or in Kabul.

Ms. Dawn Black: Right now we're—

Dr. Sean Maloney: You're talking about where we're operating in the south?

Ms. Dawn Black: Yes.

Dr. Sean Maloney: They've seen this before. In fact, they've seen worse before. Remember, the Soviet Union killed two million people there over a 10-year period. They're used to high levels of violence. What we're doing is relatively minor compared to the historical experience, which is passed on, by the way, through oral tradition in the various communities.

Ms. Dawn Black: Surely you're not saying that they're okay with this because they're used to it.

Dr. Sean Maloney: Actually, yes. When I've talked to them....

Remember, we're dealing with a completely different culture from urban Canada. We're dealing with something that is so radically different you actually have to be there and encounter and talk to these people. I have made great attempts to do this when I've been there, because it's so easy to sit with our guys and just see what our guys are doing. I have gone out with the Afghan security police and the Afghan National Army, and I have hung around in some of the villages and talked to people specifically about the Soviet period. I'm really interested in this as a historian. I have asked what they think about what we're doing here. They say, "This is nothing. You should have seen the Soviets when they napalmed an entire village or used chemical warfare or whatever. We can handle this, we've seen this before."

Ms. Dawn Black: That is contrary to what I heard from the young woman, a member of Parliament from Afghanistan. That's certainly not her point of view.

Dr. Sean Maloney: That's fine. Everybody is entitled to their point of view. I've talked to a lot of people who—

Ms. Dawn Black: I'm just saying that I can't quite believe that people could be quite that cavalier about being bombed and killed.

Anyway, Pakistan is my last question.

Dr. Sean Maloney: Pakistan. The main issue here is what we're looking at when we look at Pakistan. Are we looking at a unified country? Are we looking at a nearly failed state? Are we looking at a nearly failed state with nuclear weapons?

Balujistan especially, which is right across the border from Kandahar, has had an insurgency going on for decades. However, we have not put the pressure on Pakistan that is needed, in my opinion, to start shoving things down in there. We can explore the specifics behind that with an expert on Pakistan. But in this case—

Ms. Dawn Black: Do you think we'll ever be able to, though? Is there really hope that we'll be able to, given all the problems in Pakistan itself?

Dr. Sean Maloney: I think so, because they were able to operate fairly effectively with Waziristan, and they shut a lot of stuff down in Waziristan. I think the will is lacking right now; I think we need to put a lot of pressure on Pakistan to deal with this. I think it can be done.

Ms. Dawn Black: Will we be able to do that?

Dr. Sean Maloney: That may be beyond the confines of this mission. But I think it can happen, which leads me to a further point. When you look at Afghanistan, you have to look at it as a regional situation. You can't just look at it as a single country.

Ms. Dawn Black: Yes, I agree.

My final question is a very quick one, and it's about—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): A little question now, because the buzzer just went.

Ms. Dawn Black: Did it? Okay.

It's about the opium production, because—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): That's going to take a little bit too long, I think, unless there is a quick response.

Ms. Dawn Black: It's just that General Evraire gave us figures from the last time, since ISAF has been there, but the opium production has been going on since Operation Enduring Freedom was there, and Canadians were there under Operation Enduring Freedom. So I'm not sure that it's fair to start your numbers in the last six weeks when the Canadians entered under ISAF.

● (1635)

LGen Richard Evraire: You have a point there.

Indeed, Mr. Chairman, the fact remains, though, that there is a trend up north. There was an improvement up north because of the presence, basically, of the forces, originally of Operation Enduring Freedom and later NATO. But I guess the best way we could look at it is to be optimistic; there was a trend, and we can only hope that it will also obtain in the south.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Thank you.

Mr. Hiebert, the floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Thank you.

First of all, I would like to extend my appreciation to all three of our guests for making an appearance before this committee today.

I have a follow-up question for Mr. Maloney, but first of all, I have a question for Lieutenant-General Evraire, and possibly Colonel MacDonald, if you'd like to comment as well.

As you know, the leader of the NDP recently demanded that Canada remove our troops from Afghanistan. I'm wondering if you could tell me what effect that would have on the morale for our troops and, specifically, if such statements place our front-line troops at any greater security risk?

LGen Richard Evraire: Thank you for that question.

Mr. Chairman, I think it's been reported fairly widely that one of the things the Canadian Forces would dearly like to continue to have from Canada is support for the mission they're doing there. Indications that there isn't overwhelming support would have some impact.

I have to add, though, and I'm sure Mr. Maloney would corroborate this comment, that the soldiers on the ground are really quite focused on what exactly is going on operationally over there. Although they do have information coming to them from Canada, their focus is entirely on preparing for the next mission. It might upset them to some degree, but I don't think it would really have a serious impact on the morale of the troops, who I think we recognize are imbued with a very high morale.

When you look at the most recent unfortunate incident, with the loss of four soldiers, a number of soldiers who were interviewed following that incident, soldiers who were very good friends and acquaintances of those who were killed, indicated that they were even more interested in making sure the mission succeeded. I don't think as a consequence that we would say the morale was in any way diminished.

I think it's very normal for any group operating outside our borders, particularly on this sort of mission, to hope that everybody back home is applauding their efforts. I think it would simply be reasonable to limit the reaction to being one of disappointment, as opposed to any impact on morale per se.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Colonal MacDonald, would you like to respond to that?

Col Brian MacDonald: When you look at the military, I think you're dealing with a very distinct social organization, and the individuals, in terms of morale, depend heavily upon each other because they're dependent on each other for their lives. The intimacy of that social relationship is far more profound than anything we can find in civilian life. In that sense, what is most critical to their morale is the folks around them.

Characteristically, according to the comments of people who return, they are also very conscious of the moral imperative of what they are doing. They see the need for the people of Afghanistan; they see a destroyed state, a state that is showing some signs of revival but is still an enormously fragile state. They see it every day, and in that sense they are tremendously directed to the idea that the mission be achieved, which is the stabilization of a fragile country to allow reconstruction to take place. The impact of the withdrawal of Canadian Forces on the troops would be that sense of having abandoned a critically important mission that is so important to the people of Afghanistan and the world, and the feelings they would have of almost being betrayed by the people who had decided to withdraw those forces.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: My second half of the first question was what impact this would have on the security situation. Do the Taliban monitor the international comments made by political leaders? Do they understand the impact this will have on troop morale, or commitments on the part of particular governments?

● (1640)

Col Brian MacDonald: Well, the answer to the second half of the question is, of course they do.

The answer to the first half of the question is that if we withdrew the Canadian battle group from the brigade in the south, it would make the position of the rest of the brigade perhaps untenable, because in Kandahar we sit on a line of communications that supplies the British battle group in Helmand province. The entire brigade is composed of some of our closest historic allies—the Brits, the Danes, the Dutch, the Australians—people who have been the closest to us over many years. As a consequence, the possibility exists that this would have a devastating impact on our reputation.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: My second question is for Professor Maloney, and again, it's tied to the comments that have been made by the leader of the NDP, demanding that our troops cut and run from this mission.

I'm wondering if you can indicate to the committee what impact that would have on the security situation in Kandahar province, and further, what effect that would have on the ability of our troops and the provincial reconstruction team to bring aid and reconstruction benefits to the community such as those that are currently taking place.

Dr. Sean Maloney: Let me address it in this fashion. Any counter-insurgency war is a psychological war. We've focused on dealing with the psychology of the population; let's talk about the psychology of the enemy, and the psychology of our population, and the psychology of our friends.

Let me backtrack. I can draw a distinct line between the Americans leaving Somalia, after what everybody knows as the Black Hawk Down operation, and 9/11. We can draw that line. Osama bin Laden, in his own writings, was emboldened by that event, that the Americans would cut and run after taking 18 casualties. He called the United States a “paper tiger”, and that emboldened further operations.

In this case, the precipitous withdrawal of the Canadian contingent would be a significant psychological victory for the enemy. So I view with great circumspection questions or suggestions that we negotiate with the enemy or withdraw from that place. Our reputation in the world would be severely damaged—I mean severely damaged.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: And in terms of the impact it would have on our ability to bring aid and reconstruction?

Dr. Sean Maloney: Oh, forget it. Our provincial reconstruction team would have absolutely no credibility with the Afghans, with the government, with our allies, and we wouldn't get the resources to do what we need to do. Again, it all works together. You cannot just have a PRT there and no combat force.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): There's room for flexibility here. The reason this has flexibility is that two of you gentlemen did not take up the 10 minutes, so I'll give you some flexibility time, if you want to go quickly.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: You seemed eager to respond to my opening question to the other two, so perhaps you'd like to comment on the impact it would have on the morale or the impact it would have on the risk to our troops, knowing that.... I think you were nodding in agreement that the enemy is monitoring what's going on here in Canada.

Dr. Sean Maloney: I am very familiar with the enemy monitoring what we do. They keep very close track of what goes on here. We suspect, for example, that the suicide campaign in Kandahar that started in 2005 may have been an attempt to convince the IMF not to commit funds to the country by generating artificial instability and making it look like Kandahar was out of control and therefore the whole country was out of control. There is that dimension that we have to look at. The enemy is extremely adept at information operations.

There are jihadi websites that have pictures of our guys in coffins. There are jihadi websites that show Russians in Chechnya getting blown up and assassinated, and it's the same with the Americans in Iraq. These are in languages that we generally don't speak, and so we cannot access that world, but we can see the images they employ. They keep very close track of what goes on.

We're into the area of intelligence here, so I'm not sure how far I should go with this. It might be better to bring in someone from the intelligence world who can talk specifically to this. But it's there, and there are links.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: You are affirming that they are listening to what we're saying.

Dr. Sean Maloney: Absolutely.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): And we don't have people who can interpret what they're saying?

Dr. Sean Maloney: Oh no, we do. I'm just talking about how, if an average Canadian goes on the web and starts looking at this stuff—I'm not quite sure—it might look like just a news story to them when in fact it may be a jihadist message.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): But our people in theatre can and do understand what is being transmitted from their side.

Dr. Sean Maloney: Yes, absolutely. We have very good Afghani contacts in this regard.

Mr. John Cannis: Good.

Well, we'll move on to the second round, and that is five minutes, so I'll make both the member and our guests aware of the five minutes.

We'll go to Mr. McGuire.

● (1645)

Hon. Joe McGuire: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, welcome to our committee.

A lot of people in the last number of years have become more familiar with the history of Afghanistan. There's a lot of debate going on in the country with politicians and citizens who have become somewhat familiar with the history. They're wondering if we can ever get out of the country with our heads high, or if we can get out with an exit strategy that improves the situation for Afghanistan. For the price we're paying there, is it worth staying in? They are becoming very discouraged, I believe, with what they're reading and learning about the country and what the Russians and Brits...and the Greeks, depending on how far back you may want to go in this benighted country.

The Prime Minister says that he will leave when he's successful. As an exit strategy, there's no...and it's difficult to put a time limit on it. How do you put a time limit on a war? When we entered World War I we didn't put a time limit on it, I guess, or on World War II.

I see the article here by General Paul Manson, who outlines conditions for an exit strategy and how long it may take. Based on your experience, how long do you think it's going to take to actually leave this country, when its population is able to take over? How long will it take the Afghanis to become masters of their country, masters of their own fate? When will the NATO forces be able to leave there, with a successful operation behind them?

Dr. Sean Maloney: The closest model we have right now is Bosnia. We were there 14 years. Bosnia was simple compared to Afghanistan, so I would be very hesitant to put a date or timeframe on this. It's going to be at least a decade, and we've already been there five years.

We were in Cypress from about 1964 to 1993, so we can handle protracted conflict. The question is.... You've anticipated my next *Maclean's* article, actually, which deals with exit strategy. We've never had an exit strategy in Canada. We've never had to conceptualize one before. We've gone along with the flow, hopped on board with another international institution and let them do the thinking for us. In this case we can't do that, which means we have to mature and start thinking strategically. What do we want? What are the conditions going to be?

The main problem, as I see it, is the Afghan security forces, primarily the police. That's a real problem. The Afghan National Army is marginally better. Those two institutions definitely need work, because they're the ones who are going to handle the security.

Now, I've said that, but let's recognize that you have a Canadian general who's in charge of police transformation there. They've just initiated a program to try to work on this. This will take time. There is no easy fix. As I've pointed out, time is of a different construct in Afghani society.

Again, one of the initial reasons we're there is to form this shield so that these other efforts can take place behind it. At some point, that shield will have to go away and be replaced with an Afghan shield. In terms of being masters of their own destiny, they already are up to a great deal in a number of areas, but not in all areas. That's one of the reasons we're there.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Anybody else on this?

Go ahead.

Col Brian MacDonald: Let me give you some numbers. The average GDP per capita in Afghanistan is approximately $228 U.S. per annum. The revenue base of the Afghan government, according to the Asian Development Bank in 2004, as we've mentioned, was a total of about $625 million, of which $300 million came from the normal tax and other revenues to the Afghan government and another $325 million in direct assistance, and on top of that of course was the indirect assistance of the various programs conducted by international organizations.

When you are looking at the resources of the Afghan national government in a scenario in which there is no international participation, you are then facing a government with virtually no resources and tasking them to conduct the normal security operations that we would expect in a country of the west. That simply at this point is not something they are able to do at all. So we are looking at a very long-term development program in order to raise the GNP from legitimate sources of the government, allowing it to move from a central government expenditure of about 5% of GNP to a more normal developing world relationship of about 20% to 30%, to a developed world of somewhere between 40% and 60%.

When one looks at an exit strategy, I look at it in terms of simply the task of, first of all, reconstructing the destruction that has been left by 25 years of war, which has ruined everything, and then once you have that basic restructuring done, perhaps something similar to the Marshall Plan in Germany, and then looking forward at the long-term development assistance program that is going to take us out 20 or 25 years. The idea of disappearing quickly is simply a non-starter in real terms.

● (1650)

Hon. Joe McGuire: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...or in decline or they're controlled by either the Pakistanis or by the.... There's never going to be safe reconstruction or an increase in the GNP if the Taliban comes in and blows everything up as fast as it can be constructed. When do you foresee the forces of evil or the Taliban ceasing their operations, and who is going to be able to do that?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Two quick responses.

Dr. Sean Maloney: The whole country is not in as bad shape as the south. The Taliban do not control the bulk of the country; they control part of the country.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): A quick response?

Col Brian MacDonald: In defence of Professor Maloney, in the northern part—

Hon. Joe McGuire: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...a bigger part. They will continue to take a bigger chunk of it, as they did before.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Mr. McGuire, I am over-flexible now.

Col Brian MacDonald: The northern part of the country has been making good progress, in terms of both stability and then in the development that can follow once stability is in place.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): We have to move on. I apologize. As you've noticed, I'm very flexible, as in the past, and I try to be fair to everybody.

Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, for coming up with what I think will be fairly quick answers.

In your view, based on some of the discussions we've had about the Taliban monitoring what's going on over here, would you agree or disagree with a statement that the Taliban is not just targeting Canadian soldiers and others, but the Taliban is targeting the Canadian population and, more specifically, members of Parliament in Canada?

Dr. Sean Maloney: This gets into my rant about where al-Qaeda fits into all this. When you talk about several enemies, the Taliban are only one of the enemies we're engaged with. We're engaged with the al-Qaeda movement, an organization called HIG, run by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, and we've got the Khani tribal organizations. We've got a number of enemies, of which the Taliban are the most numerous. I believe that through their cohorts in al-Qaeda, who provide them with most of their information operations support, Canadian politicians and the Canadian public are the targets of information operations. I have no doubt about that.

LGen Richard Evraire: I would add simply that the timing of the VBIED, the bicycle-borne IED, and the lives of the four Canadian soldiers at the opening of Parliament was not just a coincidence.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: We talk a lot about the message not getting out because the media clearly have another agenda. Who, in your view, Colonel MacDonald, should be getting the message out to the Canadian public about what's actually going on?

Col Brian MacDonald: First of all, if you take the case of media—because as you know, I have more than an occasional contact there—the old rule of thumb was that if it bleeds it leads, and that determines, of course, the stories that go on the screen, and the quiet stories don't get on the screen. I have also observed over the years that the media attention span has shortened. When I was doing a talk-back during the first Persian Gulf war with Lloyd and CTV, we would be having perhaps two minutes and forty seconds in one of those. By the time of the second Persian Gulf war, we were down to one minute and twenty seconds, and as a consequence you are then looking at very fast glimpses, very shallow glimpses of what is going on.

So in that sense, the media is doing the things that the media will do, because that's the way the media operates. In terms of who should be responsible for getting things out, I would strongly encourage the defence department and the Government of Canada to continue their program of explaining over and over again to Canadians what is going on.

● (1655)

Dr. Sean Maloney: Could I augment that?

I'm going to speak from a very personal perspective here. When I was there in July, I was subjected to a suicide vehicle-borne IED attack, which my driver and I walked away from. But 10 people in the crowd didn't. I later found out that a stringer who was associated with a Canadian media outlet allegedly filmed the attack, knowing full well we were going to be attacked. So I think we need to start really looking at the media interface on this very carefully.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: To the last gentleman, General Evraire, there are organizations in Canada, like the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, that have recently come out with what I feel are fairly simplistic predictions of casualties. What's your view of the accuracy of those—and obviously you don't know—or the usefulness of that kind of commentary?

LGen Richard Evraire: I would point out that I'm not familiar with their statistics. I suspect, though, that focusing on that aspect of the operation over there is less than instructive and is alarmist, to say the least. We can't verify the accuracy of their statistics, and so I don't spend a lot of time looking at those.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I think it's just simplistic arithmetic.

Professor Maloney, you touched a little bit on how Op ARCHER, which is assisting the Afghan National Army and the Afghan police force, and Op ARGUS, which is assisting the development of the Afghan government, are ultimately probably the things that will allow the Afghans to carry on themselves. How are we doing there, and can we do more than just continue?

Dr. Sean Maloney: Yes, we can do a lot more in those areas, specifically ANA training, specifically police training—absolutely. I can give you specific numbers. When I was there in December 2005, we had two RCMP officers from Kandahar at the PRT. That was increased to ten, of which eight were deployed. That's not enough. We need to have a more coherent approach to police training coming from Canada. That's absolutely critical.

When I visited the National Training Centre this summer, I was told that we had very few—about 12—people for the embedded training team there. We should triple that, easily. With the Americans running the training, one of the other problems we have is that the Afghan army is becoming dependent on American air power. We can't have that. When the Americans take their air power away, you still have to have an army that can function. So still a lot needs to be done.

I've tracked ANA development since 2002, and it's bounced back and forth between different missions. We're starting to get somewhere with it, but a lot more needs to be done in that area, and that means that if this is going to be part of our “exit strategy”, we've got to invest more in that, and it has to be much more coherent.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I have a really quick question on equipment, and I'll give it to anybody. We have some of the best equipment of any of the allies over there right now, though perhaps not enough of it. Is there a critical item of equipment—and we've talked about Leopards, so forget those—that you think we should have? Anybody?

Dr. Sean Maloney: Yes. I think we should have Predator B.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I know what it is, but could you quickly describe it?

Dr. Sean Maloney: It's an unmanned aerial vehicle capable of delivering Hellfire munitions and of performing surveillance. Or we could have AH-64, possibly, the attack helicopter. I'd go for Predator. I'd get rid of the existing tactical UAVs that are there, and I would definitely get Predator B, right now.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Are there any other quick responses?

Col Brian MacDonald: A quick response is that there are a number of items in the government's long-term equipment program in terms of heavy airlift—heavy helicopters, for example—that would be enormously useful if they were present.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Great.

Monsieur Bouchard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to welcome the witnesses and to thank them for joining us today.

My first question is directed to Colonel MacDonald.

You're familiar with the situation as far as our inventory of military equipment is concerned. Is the equipment being used by Canadian Forces in Afghanistan suited to this mission? In your opinion, what kind of equipment not currently available do our troops need the most?

● (1700)

[*English*]

Col Brian MacDonald: I think the Canadian Forces have taken advantage of the more flexible equipment procurement processes, which involve unforecasted purchases that allow them to bypass the very slow normal equipment procurement process. And I think of such things as the acquisition of the M777 howitzers and the Nyala armoured vehicles, which are precisely the types of equipment that are necessary for the forces there and which have been procured in a very short time. So in that sense, I certainly have confidence in the government's willingness to respond to the statements made by the General Officer Commanding in Afghanistan in terms of what his requirements are and then taking steps to use a procurement process that will deliver those needed pieces of equipment in very short order.

At this point, I'm not sure I would be prepared to superimpose my judgment over the judgment of the people who are on the ground there who know intimately what is required. I would simply say that if General Fraser determines that a piece of equipment is appropriate, then my position would be that I'm quite prepared to accept his judgment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: My second question is for Mr. Maloney.

You teach courses on military warfare at Canada's Royal Military College. You stated that a culture of violence existed in Afghanistan, at least among a certain number of Afghani. You also said that you have travelled to Afghanistan several times and spoken to the people.

Who are the Taliban? To what do they owe their existence? What do they want? What outcome are they seeking? What is their stated mission?

[*English*]

Dr. Sean Maloney: I'll start off with the origin of the Taliban. I'll keep it short, but fundamentally the Taliban was a creation initially of the merchant class in Quetta, which was concerned about the routes leading through from Quetta to Spin Boldak to Kandahar for trade. At that time, Afghanistan was wracked in what we call the civil war or the war of the commanders, so there was essentially warlordism.

The Taliban then became augmented by the Pakistani intelligence services and the Pakistani armed forces and essentially became a tool of Pakistan to assert domination on Afghanistan, on what it saw as a chaotic situation. Then there's a radical Islamist thread that comes into that as well.

When they achieved control of part of Afghanistan—remember, they were resisted mostly by Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek populations, keeping in mind that the Taliban are predominately Pashtun, which is 38% of the population—they basically took control of large chunks of Afghanistan by the sword. Then they invited al-Qaeda in to create a series of base areas, and al-Qaeda developed a parasitical relationship with the Taliban.

Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001 strips away the Taliban shield so we can get at the al-Qaeda meat. So the Taliban disperses as an institution and flees to the south, and al-Qaeda tends to flee east and then into Pakistan.

Who are the Taliban? Fundamentally, we have different types of Taliban. One type would be the hard-core people from that period who have melted back to their particular villages or towns in the south. They may have been fighters at the fighter level. Then there's sort of a leadership caste, who decamp from Pakistan. They're mostly in Quetta and Balujistan. On top of this, you have hard-core jihadists. They're entering into Afghanistan, facilitated by Taliban cells. They're usually trained by al-Qaeda or affiliates. They could be Chechen, they could be Punjabi, or they could be Canadian. You get all sorts of people coming in who are facilitated into the country to do particular things. Then the Taliban has sort of a militia. They're trying to gain a constituency with teenage boys by approaching them with weapons, motorcycles, and money, and saying “Join us”. So you have these different layers.

The debate centres right now on what they want. The only thing we can infer is by their actions. As far as we can tell, they are interested in the southern part of Afghanistan. They do not appear to be interested in the non-Pashtun parts of Afghanistan right now, maybe later, but it's very evident to me that they're trying to create some kind of enclave. They're trying to drive us out of the south and create what I would call flippantly Pashtunistan, under a radical Islamic sort of caliphate structure, create this enclave that can't be assailed by the international community.

That serves a number of purposes. It serves the Taliban's purpose of trying to gain some form of control or domination over the tribal groupings in the south on both sides of the border. It serves an al-Qaeda purpose, because that becomes a psychological defeat of the west.

The fact that we're in Afghanistan and we kicked the Taliban and al-Qaeda out of it in the first phases of the war is our first victory over the al-Qaeda movement globally. This is very big, and you can look at it in the al-Qaeda documentation. They lament the loss of Afghanistan. When we're talking about different enemies and different objectives, it tends to be going in the same direction.

So if we're going to target those populations, we want to target them with different resources. The kid with the AK-47 and the motorcycle we may be able to convince away from that particular lifestyle. The jihadists we're not going to be able to convince; we'll have to kill them. The leadership caste we'll probably have to kill too. That's the way I'm looking at it right now. I'm not saying this is the only way of looking at it, but given the information we have right now, that's the best way of looking at what the objectives in insurgency are. They appear to be limited to the south right now, but they may have larger designs later.

I hope that answers your question.

● (1705)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): You're well into the flexible time. You get five minutes, and I'm usually more flexible to allow questions and answers.

Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much, gentlemen, for being here today.

I want to talk a little about the NATO aspect of this operation. Afghanistan is geographically a relatively small country, yet despite the presence of numerous international forces, NATO has asked its members to commit additional troops. Given the evolution of what NATO was created for, what it did in the past, and what we're asking NATO to do now in the present, does NATO have the resources and expertise to command this mission?

LGen Richard Evraire: The debate over the contribution of resources to Afghanistan by NATO nations, of course, is ongoing. We recognize that there has been less than a rush to the gates to provide additional troops and equipment.

I should point out that if we look at the history of NATO since its inception in 1951, we should not be surprised that there appears to be a crisis right now in the response that is expected of some of the NATO nations. Crises, I think, have peppered the history of NATO from its very beginning, and interestingly, the alliance has managed through very difficult times—in the Cold War and since then in the changes to its mandate—to survive and survive rather well. It has undertaken in former Yugoslavia, for the first time in its history, offensive operations and it is continuing to do that in Afghanistan now.

Yes, indeed, we recognize that the response is slow. All we have really heard of, to my knowledge at this point, is an additional potential contribution from Poland, and we can only hope, following the upcoming series of ministerial meetings, that more will be offered.

I should point out as well that despite the increased number of member nations in NATO, some of the newer members are not necessarily in a great position to provide assistance in the sorts of operations that are going on in Afghanistan. Counter to that, of course, is the rather amazing and delightful contribution of Romania, a very small country, admittedly, and in terms of military capability one that we're delighted to see there. But I think we in Canada are probably a little disappointed at the response of alliance members. I can only repeat what I said a moment ago that the sorts of difficulties within the alliance are almost a standard feature of discussions and that these discussions will continue, no doubt, with the express purpose of eliciting from those who have not yet responded, in terms of increase in their contribution, to do so.

I would also point to the fact that the very large percentage—the majority of the NATO nations—are in some form or another contributing to the conflict. And counter to the argument that some—a very small number of NATO nations—are doing most of the heavy lifting, I guess it's almost our turn in the sense that over the years, during the Cold War certainly, where we initially presented quite a strong contribution and later decided to reduce it substantially, others were doing the heavy lifting. It's not only a question of it being our turn, but certainly I think it will be recognized fairly soon that if this NATO mission is to succeed—and I'm sure the alliance would expect that to happen—others will come forward.

● (1710)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: That kind of leads into my next question. There are numerous other NATO allies there who have fairly restrictive caveats placed on what their troops can and cannot do. I was wondering if I might get an historical perspective, perhaps from Mr. Maloney, on whether or not that's traditionally been the case, and I think I've already heard a little bit of that. Perhaps it is Canada's turn, but maybe there are some other NATO allies who have to take a turn as well, who haven't perhaps shared much of the heavy lifting in the past.

Where do you see the future of these caveats? You know, if NATO is going to be an effective organization in the future and it's going to work at bringing about some stability against the threat of terror internationally, does NATO need to maybe reconsider its own structure and its own governance so that sometimes these caveats might not be so restrictive in allowing the commanders who are in the field to actually produce the results that we expect of them?

Dr. Sean Maloney: The first time I heard the term “caveat” used was with ISAF in Kabul. I know that the concept existed before, particularly in Kosovo, and in prototypical form probably in SFOR. But the first time I really started to hear it and the restrictions on the various national contingents was in ISAF, when I was there in 2004, and this was a huge problem. This reflected national control over national forces, and it was completely legitimate, given the nature of the alliance. It was up to the commander of the force to apply his resources, given the limitations he had at the time. That caused a number of problems.

As I understand it, once we handed off Enduring Freedom to ISAF in the south, this hasn't quite been the case. The countries that don't want to be committed into that environment are committed elsewhere, particularly in RC West in Herat, and RC North. The people who want to be able to contribute in a robust way will go down to the south.

This becomes an issue of diplomacy on the one hand, and troop motivation on the other, in these various countries. Without having access to the information, it would be interesting to see, from the various members of NATO, how they assessed the motivations of the various forces in this environment or any other environment. In fact, if you do an historical analysis you'll find that the so-called heavy lifting has been borne by the ABCA countries, and usually The Netherlands. So it's been America, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, The Netherlands, and sometimes Germany.

You'll find that ABCA and New Zealand are always there. You can track those guys in almost every operation. I think I did it in an article somewhere. Then some people will show up and some people won't. I just have to take it as the state of affairs. That's going to form the core of any force going in, and all sorts of other things will attach to it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): We'll go to Mr. Dosanjh.

● (1715)

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I heard recently somewhere that the Taliban fighters, as Dr. Maloney said, come from different backgrounds. Many of them are Pashtuns, but there are others as well. I understand—and correct me if I'm wrong—that Chechen fighters, who are much better trained and organized, are now beginning to appear on the ground as part of the Taliban.

Dr. Sean Maloney: They just leave and then come back. There have been Chechens there since 2001.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: They never left?

Dr. Sean Maloney: No, there have always been Chechens there. This is not new for the region.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Are Chechens part of the flow back and forth from Pakistan?

Dr. Sean Maloney: Yes. Chechens were part of al-Qaeda's conventional formations when the take-down took place in 2001. Some of those remnants were there, but they were augmented with other Chechens later.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Are there more Chechens flowing in from Chechnya?

Dr. Sean Maloney: I don't have the specific numbers, but they are part of a general jihadist inflow. There are other nationalities doing this, but they are one of them.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I believe I saw General Jones on television today, and he was talking about the request to various NATO allies for the 15%. He was saying this was not an act of desperation; it was already in the plan. But the fact is that there are no commitments for that 15%.

The question is awkward, but would it be prudent for NATO to go all out in the kind of combat we've seen, believing the fulfillment of that 15% was important to the battle or battles, and yet not have firm commitments from NATO allies before the expansion into the south and the kinds of battles that are taking place?

Col Brian MacDonald: The commitments were on an alliance-wide basis. The actual delivery fell at about the 85% level. General Jones said a week or two ago, “You have promised me 100%; you have delivered 85%; I want the remaining 15%.”

Can you mount operations at less than 100%? Of course you can. You can't do as much with 85% as you can with 100%, but you can certainly achieve the objectives over a specific area. In order to achieve all of the objectives, you need that 100% and possibly more, because you then have to deal with the flow of reinforcements to replace casualties. But you can go forward with less than 100%.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: But the question is, was it prudent, knowing what you know now that the calls are becoming more frequent for the quota or the 15% to be filled? Under the circumstances—I'm not asking you to second-guess people on the ground, but as an independent observer sitting far away—would it be prudent to go into the kind of dangerous combat we are in, in southern Afghanistan, without the full contingent?

Col Brian MacDonald: There is an old saying in the military that no plan ever survives first contact with the enemy, and I think here we are seeing, of course, changes in the actual tactics that are employed by the Taliban. The calls for specific capabilities reflect the realization that since the facts on the ground have changed, then our response to those have changed as well. I'd also come back to my earlier statement that of the most recent Canadian additional commitment, a good chunk of it was directed towards animating the provincial reconstruction team, as opposed to simply providing the additional combat power.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I have one more very brief question. I'm going over old territory covered by my colleague.

You have seen the piece by one of your colleagues, General Manson, “A Rational Exit Strategy for Afghanistan”. He lists a certain number of indicators that he believes ought to crystallize before a rational exit can take place, and he says that in fact he can't tell how long it would take.

When I read these indicators, which indicate the Taliban decline, security being restored, the Afghan army and police becoming effective, market economies locally beginning to flourish, human rights increasing dramatically, central government control spreading, the development of infrastructure, democratization—all of these things that we know in the west to be important preconditions for a stable society—I'm not asking you to look at your crystal ball, but would it be fair to say this could take 20 to 30 years in Afghanistan?

● (1720)

Col Brian MacDonald: The short answer is yes. Over time during the course of that 20 or 30 years, the requirement for forces at the level they are at now would decline, and the national resources then supplied could result in a decrease in the military resources supplied and an increase in the developmental resources that are supplied. I would see this as an evolutionary process: that once stability has begun to be achieved, then it continues to move.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: And I may agree with you; I'm not an expert on these issues. But for security to increase, you would agree with me that stopping the flow, the leaking back and forth, through the Pakistan border is essential; that if we cannot stop that porous border from providing additional supplies and additional personnel to fight on behalf of or as part of Taliban, we may not succeed for a much longer time.

In that context—not that I am asking you to pass judgment—I have not seen international initiatives, initiated by either our government or the United States of America or by NATO, to rein in Pakistan. What does that say about our preparation and deliberate forethought before expanding operations the way we have?

Dr. Sean Maloney: A quick response is that's an American prerogative, because of their special relationship with Pakistan. And there's a lot of stuff that goes on behind the scenes that the public doesn't see.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: But it's our men and women dying too.

Dr. Sean Maloney: Exactly.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: So why is it not our obligation to initiate that discussion, both publicly and privately?

Dr. Sean Maloney: How do we know it hasn't been done privately?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Nobody has ever told us that. Those are questions that we ask in the media, just as you do every day.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

To the witnesses, thank you for your responses thus far.

I was looking at the CDA articles last night. One is entitled "Could Canada Pull Out From Afghanistan? A "What If' Scenario". There's an estimate of the principal results of a Canadian decision to pull out, and I'd like a commentary on the one scenario. It states that "...in showing such weakness in the face of fanatic terrorism, Canada will have made itself a lucrative target for future attacks. Will we talk some day about New York, London, Madrid, Bali and Vancouver?"

I'd like you to expand on that particular statement.

Col Brian MacDonald: I think that if you are looking at any group of states, you are looking for the point of entry that gives you the most leverage. In other words, what is the weakest state that you are faced with? By attacking there, you are attacking at the point of weakness, which allows you then to leverage your effect. I would think then that if Canada were to demonstrate that it was a weak member of the coalition psychologically, shall we say, or in terms of public opinion, we would find much greater attention being directed in our direction by the folks on the other side. That might very well result in some sort of action taking place on Canadian territory, and Lord knows we are vulnerable enough a thousand times over to that sort of activity taking place here.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Dr. Maloney, would you have anything to add?

Dr. Sean Maloney: I just want to reiterate the fact that when we're fighting the al-Qaeda movement, we're an enemy of the al-Qaeda movement, we're seen as a soft target already, as the Liberia of immigration—I think that terminology was used by somebody. We have cells operating in Canada. Obviously they can operate more effectively against the United States if we're not too engaged in hunting them down. There is a psychological component of this, and if we do a "Somalia" with Afghanistan we're going to have all sorts of problems later on. The Americans learned this with 9/11. We will be viewed as weak; we will be viewed as much more vulnerable to manipulation, both in the information operations sphere and within our own society.

I could get into the regional implications around Afghanistan as well that relate to the Pakistani nuclear stockpile, people like A.Q. Khan, or what's going on in Iran. Do we really want to be the people who are going to facilitate the entry of a nuclear device onto American soil inadvertently? No, we don't. That's one of the reasons we're dealing with Pakistan. We've got to be very careful. One of the reasons we've been able to uncover some of the networks is through the cooperation of the Pakistanis. There is a link between the takedown of the A.Q. Khan nuclear Wal-Mart, the blocking of operations against airliners this summer, and what goes on in Afghanistan. These things are not delinked.

So this is why I'm talking about a fine line being crossed when we're dealing with this. You are correct in the sense that we are losing people because of part of this, but somebody is going to have to sit down and explain that this is for our greater good.

● (1725)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: How would a failure in Afghanistan affect the future of NATO and therefore the defence of its member countries?

LGen Richard Evraire: I think it would be a serious blow to the alliance, quite obviously, and you can be sure that the alliance members aren't hoping that this would happen at all. As has happened in the past for as far back as you want to go in the alliance history, the members of the alliance have not let that sort of thing happen. And given the situation where we're almost there and this thing is going to fall apart, it's a point in the process typically and historically where the alliance members have coughed up, and I fully suspect that the ongoing discussions, the next ministerial meetings, will certainly make that point in spades. I can't quite see any member of the alliance reneging on what would ultimately be necessary for final resolution of the problem, because it is in the interest of every single member of the alliance, not only in Afghanistan but in so many other parts of the world as a consequence of what might happen in Afghanistan, for them to own up to their responsibility and complete that missing 15% of contributions. It would be devastating, there's no doubt.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Do you want to take advantage of your flexible time?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Yes, I have a very short question.

Previous witnesses have stated that the interruption of opium production is detrimental to the farmers. It was stated earlier today that we managed to decrease it by 3%. Could you, just for the record, explain why this is of Canadian interest and how it impacts on the insurgents and thus the threats to the troops?

Col Brian MacDonald: Could I perhaps respond to that? I think the text said it was interesting that this reduction took place. That I don't think was really a consequence of the Canadian activities, because in order to eliminate crop production you have to stop the planting, and the planting takes place, actually, at about this time of year and it will be harvested next year somewhere in the April to June timeframe. There certainly, on the other hand, has been more successful poppy eradication in the north.

Dr. Sean Maloney: I have two things that I'm going to throw at you on this. There are two things I've noticed.

Remember, in a counter-insurgency war we're dealing with how we're going to get people to side with us, essentially, and there are two things in parts of the rural south that interfere with our ability to gain allegiance from the population. One of them is poppy eradication, and the second is gender equality being pushed on them in the rural areas. They resent both—again, this is from people I've talked to—but the eradication issue in particular is very sensitive.

There's a schizophrenic split. The U.S. State Department, and to a lesser extent the British, have been pushing poppy eradication for a variety of reasons. When I talk to military commanders on the ground, they view this as counterproductive to trying to deal with the people, because we're taking away their livelihood. The alternative livelihood programs are mixed in terms of effect, and it's unclear as to what the best strategy is to deal with this problem, particularly in Helmand province, where the Brits ran into a lot of problems this summer. You wind up with a nexus between the insurgency and poppies. And then you have poppy people who are not part of the insurgency, but will go with whoever is in charge, etc. So you have different variations on the poppy side.

So when we're dealing with the population in the rural areas, if we show up and start doing things and tampering too much, they get annoyed, and then the Taliban show up say, “See, we told you they would do this.”

● (1730)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): We'll go to Monsieur Bachand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: I'm delighted to have the final question, because I want to discuss an issue that has not yet been raised.

Last May, I travelled to Afghanistan then on to Paris to attend a NATO meeting.

There is one region of the country that we haven't yet discussed this afternoon, namely the East. As far as I know, NATO currently controls the North, South and West. The US has always wanted to maintain control over the East, but I don't know if that is still true.

I frequently hear people mention General Jones who commands the US forces. However, I met more often with General Richards in Afghanistan because he commands the NATO forces.

I was concerned about some of what I heard in Paris, namely that the North, West and South would be the theatre of anti-insurrection operations, while the East would be theatre of anti-terrorist operations. That would explain why the Americans want to maintain control over this area. I could foresee problems in terms of different rules of engagement. For example, how would NATO have to proceed to call on the Americans to maintain fighter cover? General Jones and General Richards did not have any ready answers to that question.

Can you tell me if the Americans still control the area in the East and if that could create problems for the entire operation?

[*English*]

Col Brian MacDonald: The east is currently still under American control. The plan had been for the south to come under ISAF control in the spring of this year, which in fact it did. The plan had been for the east to come under ISAF control in the fall. I think, in fact, the working plan originally had been to go out just about this date, or one or two days on either side of it. That has not yet taken place. I am not familiar with the reasons why that has not taken place, nor am I able to project a specific date when that will take place.

Even when ISAF has control of all four regions, assuming that will take place, there will still be a requirement for an interface with United States Central Command, which has its headquarters located in the gulf area, as you know, because they control the air assets, the A-10s that accidently strafed our troops, and all the other assets that are not there as part of the NATO inventory. So there will still be a continuing American involvement in that sense.

General Jones is the Supreme Allied Commander for NATO; he's not Commander of Central Command.

Mr. Claude Bachand: And Richards?

LGen Richard Evraire: And Richards, of course, reports to General Jones as the NATO Commander in Afghanistan, overseeing the three regions, and eventually, one assumes, the fourth region. We should not lose sight of the fact that the NATO nations in Afghanistan, at least the longer-in-the-tooth members of NATO, have had a number of decades of operations with the American forces as members of NATO, quite obviously, so accommodations, in terms of operational requirements and requests and that sort of thing, ought not to be that new, certainly, and not difficult.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Thank you.

As we close the meeting, let me just say that it's a great disadvantage being a chair, because you can't participate, but one privilege that the chair does have, in closing, is to add his few comments.

Perhaps I may just ask a brief question. Mr. Maloney, you said, and I'll quote you, that Canadians want success and want it now. I beg to differ with you in these types of situations. I think Canadians are a realistic people, first of all, and quite intelligent. When they go into a theatre like this, or a mission like this, or a conflict like this, they want to deal with facts, and not innuendoes. Maybe the media sometimes doesn't put the proper picture out.

As far as I can recall, I don't think there was ever a mission or a conflict, or any type of military theatre, where a nation, or NATO, or whoever undertook the mission has said, we're going in on such a date and we're coming out on such a date. If somebody can tell me that there was one.... Even though 300 Spartans went in to fight, they didn't know when it was going to start and when it was going to finish. These are the conflicts that are unfolding, I believe, today.

What is puzzling here is this. You refer to three engagements that the Canadian military has engaged in. You used Cyprus, Bosnia, and Afghanistan. Cyprus was a very different mission completely—if you disagree, please let me know. Bosnia, again, was a very different mission in comparison to Afghanistan. Today we're looking at a mission where NATO has an obligation. When we were going into these missions in years past and now under the NATO banner, there was always a plan; it wasn't a plan that unfolded overnight or in a week.

So the question I have is this. We committed our men and women to the Afghanistan mission. We knew, because we were in Brussels with this committee some time ago and spoke to our representatives there.... When the Canadian government committed to this mission, surely NATO had a plan following two years. Please elaborate if you can, because I'd like to know. In our previous missions, we had an obligation under NATO to go in for, let's say, a year or two, or whatever, and then the other NATO members were to come in and fill that slot. Is that not the case here, or has the NATO mandate changed?

● (1735)

Dr. Sean Maloney: How much time do we have?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): I'm closing. I get five minutes as well. I've taken up two and a half; you have two and a half minutes, and some flexibility. I've accorded the flexibility to everybody.

Dr. Sean Maloney: When we're talking about NATO, are we talking about the commitment to ISAF, the original Canadian commitments to OEF? Which Canadian commitments in Afghanistan are we talking about?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): Any commitment. I'm just trying to understand better how NATO works.

Dr. Sean Maloney: No problem.

Part of the problem with ISAF, as an institution, is that it started off as a non-NATO organization that was neutered deliberately to get buy-in by the UN. Essentially, as far as I understand it, they couldn't get anybody to take control of ISAF, ultimately. So Canada came up with an idea where, okay, we'll take it over, but we want it "NATO-ized" so we can bring a lot more resources to bear.

There were plans at various stages, but the problem was that they had to assess what ISAF is going to do and when it is going to do it, and where does this fit vis-à-vis Operation Enduring Freedom. This split structure has been a problem, which hopefully will be eliminated when we get the RC East. This has been a problem going right back to the creation of the organization.

Under Canadian control there was a plan. The prototype of the ANDS came out of the Canadian period, but the follow-on people who took over six months later dumped it in the bin, saying, well, we don't want to be involved in this. So in the next six months somebody took over and said, well, wait a minute, maybe we should do this. There has been a continuity issue in this particular mission, I would suggest.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): So NATO's credibility's on the line? Is that what you're also telling me?

Dr. Sean Maloney: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Cannis): I have no further questions. I think I've taken more than the amount of time I'm entitled to. Thank you.

On behalf of all the members here, I want to thank you all for being here and providing us with your expertise, your knowledge, and your insight as we move forward on this most important file, and more so for the support and protection of our men and women in theatre.

Thank you very much. We'll adjourn.

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