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—
Chair

Mr. Pierre Lemieux

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• (1830)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC)): Order. The meeting is convened.

I'd like to welcome you, colleagues, Mr. Mulroney, and our viewing audience to the seventh meeting of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan.

Tonight David Mulroney is in front of us once again. For the viewing audience, Mr. Mulroney is the deputy minister responsible for the Afghanistan Task Force. He's in front of us tonight to discuss the first report by the cabinet committee on Afghanistan. If my colleagues will remember well, the cabinet committee was founded in February 2008. It basically resulted from a recommendation from the Manley panel.

Just yesterday they released their very first quarterly report, entitled *Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan: Setting a Course to 2011*. Today we have Mr. Mulroney to basically discuss the report with us. Of course, my colleagues from the various political parties will have the opportunity to ask him questions on that report.

Mr. Mulroney, thank you for making yourself available to us. Without any further ado, I will turn the microphone over to you.

Mr. David Mulroney (Deputy Minister, Afghanistan Task Force, Privy Council Office): Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen, it's a real pleasure to be back and to have the opportunity to provide you with an update and to answer any questions you might have about the report that was tabled yesterday.

[Translation]

I am sure that you are aware that the first report to Parliament on Canada's engagement in Afghanistan, entitled "Setting a course to 2011" was tabled yesterday in the House of Commons.

The report highlights the transformation of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan, and sets clear priorities and realistic goals for the period from 2008 to 2011. Our ultimate goal remains the same: to leave Afghanistan to Afghans, in a country that is better governed, more peaceful, and more secure.

The report of the expert panel led by Mr. Manley asked the government to prepare a new and more complete strategy commensurate with our resources and leading to concrete results.

The government motion passed in March reflected a number of the report's recommendations.

[English]

Since my last appearance, much work has been completed. The government has now identified six targeted priorities for our work in Afghanistan. Four are focused on the Kandahar level, two on the national level. If I may, I will just go through them quickly: first, maintaining a more secure environment and establishing law and order by building the capacity of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police and by supporting complementary efforts in the area of justice and corrections; second, in Kandahar, providing jobs, education, and essential services like water; third, providing humanitarian assistance to people in need in Kandahar, including refugees; fourth, enhancing Afghan-Pakistan dialogue and border management; fifth, building at the national level the Afghan institutions that are central to our priorities, especially our priorities in Kandahar, and supporting democratic processes like the elections; and finally, contributing to Afghan-led political reconciliation efforts aimed at weakening the insurgency and fostering a sustainable peace.

These priorities significantly increase our focus on Kandahar province, amounting to a shift from 17% of our overall programming previously focused on Kandahar to 50% by next year. Our military and civilian resources will be focused on helping to build a more secure Kandahar that is better governed and that can deliver basic services to its citizens, supported by a more capable national government that can better manage its borders and sustain stability and reconstruction gains over the long term.

Overall, Canada is increasing its ten-year allocation to development and reconstruction in Afghanistan from \$1.3 billion to a total of \$1.9 billion out to 2011. Three signature projects—the rehabilitation of the Dahla Dam, the building and repair of 50 schools in Kandahar province, and the eradication of polio across Afghanistan—will be visible examples of our continued commitment to the future of Afghanistan. By responding to the most visible and urgent needs of the people of Kandahar and the country at large, Canadian assistance will be solely devoted to improving the lives of Afghans and helping the Government of Afghanistan develop the capacity to govern Afghanistan into the future.

The goals for 2011 set by the government are ambitious and not without risk. It is my belief, however, that these goals are also achievable as long as the Canadian effort remains sharply focused on these six priorities and closely aligned with the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan, taking into account, with our allies, the security situation on the ground.

The report tabled yesterday is the first in a series that will be tabled on a quarterly basis in Parliament, representing our effort to better communicate with Canadians on our mission in Afghanistan and responding directly to the wording of the motion in March.

I welcome your feedback, and I certainly welcome your comments or questions relating to this first report.

• (1835)

[Translation]

Canadians can take pride in the work of our men and women in Afghanistan and the way in which they are improving the lives of the Afghan people.

[English]

Thank you very much.

I welcome your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney, for your opening statement and résumé of the first report of the cabinet committee on Afghanistan.

I'd like to proceed with two rounds of questioning. The first round will be of seven minutes, followed by a second round of five minutes. We have the second hour reserved for committee business.

I will start with Monsieur Dosanjh, for seven minutes.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Thank you.

If I finish before seven minutes is up, I'd like to split my time with my colleague.

The first question I'm going to ask you, you may find inappropriate. We noticed that for the first time in the several years the mission has been ongoing, the father of a young man who was killed—the latest casualty in Afghanistan—has been very critical of the mission. First of all, let me just say that whatever the father said, he had every right to say it. His feelings are legitimate; he has lost a loved one. We sent him into harm's way.

From your knowledge of the mission, and perhaps of the families of those who are serving, do you sense a changing mood among the families and relatives, the extended families of the people who are being sent there? It may be an unfair question, and if it is, don't answer it. It struck me when that happened. If I recall correctly, it's the first time someone has said that.

• (1840)

Mr. David Mulroney: I really can't speak to the views of family members, other than to say—and I think the Chief of Defence Staff said it best—we can't imagine the anguish a parent feels, and our hearts go out to the people who have experienced that loss.

For those of us who are working on the mission, it brings home in even more stark terms our responsibility to communicate effectively what we're doing and why we're doing it. This is really what we've essentially tried to do in this report and through the series of technical briefings we've done. We understand that we owe it to Canadians to be as rigorous, frank, direct, and honest as possible, and also to continually update and explain what Canada is trying to achieve.

Incidents like the ones we have seen and the one that you referred to only bring home to us the responsibility we have to Canadians.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Thank you. I beg forgiveness if you felt it was inappropriate.

This is my second question. When the resolution in the House was passed, it was understood that over the year or so that was left before the extension would kick in, the focus and the thrust of the mission would change. You've told us what's happening—there are five more schools and whatever else you've told us. Tell us, in layperson's terms for Canadians to understand, how the mission is changing, how the thrust is changing, and how much it has changed. Are we going to be able to accomplish that change successfully?

Mr. David Mulroney: The core elements of a package, which I honestly believe is transformational, because I've been working on this mission for a long time, are the following.

First is the fact that we've clearly identified six core priorities for Canada. These are the six things we're going to focus on. These will inform our project work. They will inform our bilateral diplomacy with President Karzai along with our allies. They are what Canada will focus on, and they connect all the activities of the various Canadian players in Afghanistan.

Second is that our programming, the money CIDA spends, the money Foreign Affairs spends—that's the largest part of the programming—is going to be and is being focused directly on those priorities. So programming won't be across a broad range; it will be really focused on achieving these results. As I said at the outset, the other part of that focus is to ensure that a larger part of the money we're spending is spent in Kandahar, where Canada has such a high degree of responsibility, where the Canadian Forces are deployed, and where we have a leadership role. Along with that we are establishing public benchmarks, which will be measures of progress to which we'll be held accountable and on which we'll report on a quarterly basis. That's new. While one or two other countries may have established benchmarks, I'm not aware of any that hold themselves publicly accountable, as we will be doing on a quarterly basis.

Finally, along with that, the other part of the mission transformation is the human transformation. In order to do what we want to do for these projects in Kandahar—the Dahla Dam, the construction of the schools, the polio campaign, and the other things we'll be doing there—we need even more civilians, and civilians at a more senior level than we already have. We already have some 24 civilians in Kandahar. We've put in place a new senior civilian who runs the show there. We'll be moving by the end of the year to having 70-plus civilians in Kandahar and at even more senior levels. This is a profound change in how we're doing things. The plan we establish for what we're doing in Kandahar will no longer be a military plan with governance and development aspects to it. It will be a whole-of-government plan that's supported by the military. This is a big change.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have about a minute left for question and answer.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I'm going to wrap two questions into one. There's obviously a battle for the hearts and minds of the Afghani people. We had understood from reading about the frequency of violence in other parts of Afghanistan, as well as in the Kandahar area, that the number of attacks over the last number of months had gone up compared to the same period in the previous year. Are we winning the battle of hearts and minds? Is the violence increasing, not just in our area but in other parts of Afghanistan, or is it on the decline?

• (1845)

Mr. David Mulroney: The report that was tabled yesterday I think tries to be as stark and honest as it can be in describing the security situation. Describing the security situation is a challenging task, because (a) we are trying to look at the country as a whole, and (b) the nature of the insurgency is changing. So what the report says essentially is that the security situation is difficult and may deteriorate further, because we face what they described as an asymmetric threat. That means that the Taliban learned, in the wake of Operation Medusa and other missions, not to confront ISAF forces, not to confront Canadian Forces directly, but to rely on terrorism, improvised explosive devices, and ambushes to really strike at the confidence levels and the ability of NGOs and others to operate. This is a serious threat and something that we take seriously, and of which we have to be conscious.

The other thing is that it's very difficult to find an appropriate measure for levels of security. You can count the number in incidents. I think people who count them in Kabul would say that the number of attacks has actually gone down if we compare year to year. However, the nature of the attacks, the attack at the Serena Hotel, and the attack at the parade were designed to really undermine international confidence in Afghanistan. So this is an insidious threat. It's a threat we take seriously, but it's also one that we and our allies feel we're developing capabilities to address.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney.

We'll now go to Madame Barbot for seven minutes.

[Translation]

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

First, let me ask for clarification on one point. We were not told that we would have to work on this report. We received it yesterday afternoon. No one mentioned that it would be the topic for today's meeting.

Am I wrong?

The Chair: Yesterday, Mr. Bachand attended our subcommittee meeting. We discussed Mr. David Mulroney's appearance before us. We also agreed that the cabinet report would be distributed immediately after question period and that if any party was not in favour of hearing a presentation this evening, that party should contact the clerk or myself before noon today. Hearing no objections, we decided to proceed.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: You mean this report?

The Chair: Exactly.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I was not aware of that. I would at least have appreciated all members of the committee being told that we were going to work on this report.

The Chair: We discussed it at the subcommittee meeting.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Yes, I understand, but the other members of the committee were not necessarily informed. I was not, in any event.

The Chair: At the end of the subcommittee meeting, Mr. Hawn told everyone present to be sure to speak to their colleagues, since we had to know before noon today if we were going to have Mr. Mulroney at the meeting this evening. At the end of the meeting yesterday, I made a point of saying that this meeting would take place if no one spoke up.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: My apologies, I was not aware. So I will give my turn to the member who was present. He has some questions for you.

The Chair: Fine. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bachand?

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, first of all, I would like to thank the staff and the people accompanying the members for leaving me nothing but tomatoes. I very much appreciate their concern for my diet. I would like to thank them sincerely for having left me nothing to eat. I would also like to thank Dawn Black for giving me half a hamburger so that I could make it to 8:30 p.m. alive.

An Hon. Member: You are eating your time now too.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Maybe I am, but I felt that it was important to make the point on behalf of the members.

Mr. Mulroney, I have looked at your report. It is a good one, in my opinion. You know, of course, that an important meeting is going to take place in Paris tomorrow.

Will you be there?

Mr. David Mulroney: Unfortunately, no.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Who is going to Paris tomorrow to represent the Government of Canada?

Mr. David Mulroney: Mr. Emerson.

• (1850)

Mr. Claude Bachand: You must have briefed Mr. Emerson about what is going to happen in Paris tomorrow and about the position that Canada will take.

Does the report before us represent the position that Mr. Emerson will take tomorrow in Paris?

Mr. David Mulroney: The meeting in Paris is about Afghanistan's national development strategy. Canada is a very important player in that process. The report contains all the figures and the details that clearly describe the nature of Canada's support to Afghanistan. Mr. Emerson is probably going to point out that between 2001 and 2011, Canada will have provided a total of \$1.9 billion in assistance and will likely continue to be Afghanistan's third largest bilateral partner.

Mr. Claude Bachand: So Mr. Emerson is going to stand by the report that the group that you chair is presenting to us this evening. He will not be forgetting the benchmarks that it sets, will he?

Mr. David Mulroney: This is the report that Mr. Emerson and his colleagues on the committee tabled in Parliament.

Mr. Claude Bachand: I want to know if Mr. Emerson is going to stand by this report in Paris.

Mr. David Mulroney: Yes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Okay.

Is there a chance that the Paris decision on a new Afghanistan Compact will change the content of this report? Mr. Emerson is going to stand by the report, but the fact remains that 40 or so countries are going to focus on the compact. They are likely going to propose new benchmarks or new criteria with which to evaluate everything that has happened in recent years. The effect of that will be to reopen the compact.

Is it your intention to appear before the committee again after the meeting in Paris so that, together, we can look at the impact of the decisions that were made there?

Mr. David Mulroney: The focus of international aid for Afghanistan is determined by the Afghanistan Compact that was established ten years ago. When we set our priorities, we were guided by the course set in the compact. So we think that it will continue. As you can see in the report, each of our priorities reflects those in the compact.

Mr. Claude Bachand: The Afghanistan Compact contains a number of benchmarks: for governance, for humanitarian assistance, for maintaining security. All those measures are not necessarily in the report.

if the Paris meeting agrees on a new approach that goes further than, or differs from, Canada's benchmarks in the report, are you going to tell us? Would you be ready to come before the committee to explain that the meeting in Paris adopted different benchmarks that Canada was going to observe but that did not necessarily correspond to those in the report that you tabled yesterday?

Mr. David Mulroney: The program of the meeting was designed to strengthen the Afghanistan Compact. So that will not happen in Paris. Everyone agrees to be governed by the compact. I agree with you: it is important for everyone to act as Canada is acting and to respect the goals of the compact. Canada wants to use this meeting to highlight our progress and to emphasize the fact the Afghanistan Compact is a very important guide for everyone.

• (1855)

The Chair: You have less than a minute left, Mr. Bachand.

Mr. Claude Bachand: I have no more questions. But I feel that it is a good piece of work and I hope that minister Emerson will be standing by it in Paris. If the Paris meeting goes beyond what is contained in this document, please report that to us.

Are you aware of what Canada will present tomorrow in Paris?

Mr. David Mulroney: I think that Mr. Emerson's message will be linked to our report and will strengthen our support for the Afghan government and the goals of the compact.

Mr. Claude Bachand: So you are telling us officially that, in Paris tomorrow, Mr. Emerson will be standing by this.

Mr. David Mulroney: This is the policy of the Government of Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bachand.

[English]

Ms. Black, go ahead, please, for seven minutes.

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

Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney, for being with us. I, too, have gone through the report and found it to be a much more realistic assessment of the situation than I've seen put out by the government. I do appreciate that.

It says in here on page 6:

Clean drinking water and other basic services are unavailable to most Afghans. Some 80 percent of Afghans have no access to electricity. The opium economy meanwhile helps finance corruption and insurgent violence while thriving in the social disorder it thereby incites. Development is an urgent imperative.

I agree with that, and I have felt that way from the beginning of our involvement in Afghanistan.

Also, on page 15 in "Priority 6", you talk about political reconciliation. My party believes this is incredibly important and will be the only way that we really see a lasting peace in Afghanistan. You note that reconciliation should be led by Afghanistan and facilitated by Canada. What kinds of resources are going into that part of our mission? How much are we prepared to spend on that task? If the Afghan government asked Canada for direct assistance in peace talks, would we facilitate them, and if so, how?

Mr. David Mulroney: This is a priority that we felt was inescapable. As so many commentators have observed, no insurgency and few conflicts have purely military solutions, so there has to be a political solution. But also important, and we've talked about this before, is that it's really about welcoming people into the constitution and rule of law of Afghanistan. It's not about partitioning Afghanistan and allowing parts of Afghanistan to go back to the horrific state of affairs that prevailed under the Taliban.

Part of what we have to do is to use our good offices and those of like-minded countries, including the UN—the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan plays a big role in this—to encourage the Afghan government to further develop its policy. To be very honest, the Afghan government itself has been a little bit inconsistent in its messaging, but that messaging has to come from the government. They have established their "peace through strength" initiative, which, really, we don't feel has gotten off the ground sufficiently.

So this is an area in which I think the funding we've devoted to this process is about \$14 million. It's not an area where you have significant capital expenditures. What you're trying to do is, first, encourage the government to develop its own processes and to speak with one voice on the way forward, perhaps to facilitate some meetings and some exchanges. The second thing is to encourage the kinds of things that have to happen at the regional and local levels, what we would refer to as "transitional" justice, where people actually recognize that there are some who cannot be reconciled, who are beyond the pale and have to be prosecuted. If there is a natural healing process that has to go on...and that's only in the early stages.

The other thing that we think has to happen is that the government has to be able to communicate more effectively with the people of Afghanistan to explain what it's doing and why. Here we see a connection among some of the things we're doing.

By way of example, we think the Dahla Dam project—our projections indicate that it will create some 10,000 seasonal jobs between now and 2011—represents a pretty important step in reconciliation, too, because you're creating economic opportunities for people who might otherwise lose faith in the government or be susceptible to the offer of money from insurgents and terrorists.

So these things are all connected, but the most important thing in the reconciliation priority is to work with UNAMA, the UN, and with the like-minded to encourage the Afghan government to really unroll its program and get it moving.

• (1900)

Ms. Dawn Black: You also mention in the report the “evidence of political reconciliation among Afghans”. What are the indications of that? What are the indicators that are used to back up that statement in the report?

Mr. David Mulroney: There are examples of mid- to low-level Taliban who have come in from the insurgency and have accepted the rule of law and the constitution of Afghanistan. That's happening in different provinces at different rates. We'd like to see a more consistent national approach. Right now I think it depends on the efficiency and effectiveness of governors. That just has to be much more consistent nationally.

Ms. Dawn Black: You also mentioned the Dahla Dam and that being one of Canada's...“signature projects”, they're calling them?

Mr. David Mulroney: Yes.

Ms. Dawn Black: There is some division of opinion in the development community about signature programs. Does this mean there will be big Canada flags around them? What does it mean?

As well, you indicated that 10,000 Afghans may be employed to do this work. Who would be the contractor or the person leading that kind of huge project?

Mr. David Mulroney: The minister spoke yesterday about signature projects and made it clear that it's not about simply slapping a Canadian maple leaf or a flag on a project. This goes right back to the advice the Manley panel was providing to the government, that in an insurgency you have to think about development and aid in a new way. There's a clock ticking. Even if you're following a traditional path that has proved to be the right path over time but it takes you a decade or two, you may lose in the short term: people lose faith, and they're under such intense pressure because of the insurgency that they're apt to lose faith more quickly.

The panel's advice, and I think they certainly understood all the arguments about aid effectiveness, was that if you're not, after the years you've been in Kandahar, and if the international community is not, after the years they've been in Afghanistan, delivering water, delivering health care, and delivering education, then you're going to lose the population. A signature project is really a signature for the Afghans to say to people that they can believe in some things: we're going to irrigate the Arghandab Valley, we're going to help to restore

agriculture, we're going to create these jobs—this is what your government is doing in connection with the international community.

So the signature message is really to resonate with Kandaharis. If it resonates with Canadians too, that's not a bad thing either, but it's really to bring that message to people at the local level.

With regard to the contracting, there will be a request for proposals issued in the coming days for a contractor—it could be Canadian, it could be international—who will design the first phase of the project. The workforce will be Afghan. As for the contractor, it will depend a little bit on their expertise and the results of the competitive bidding.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. David Mulroney: But this is very much an Afghan project. Minister Zia spoke about this today in Afghanistan. We want to be sure that as we do it, we leave behind with the ministry of water resources at the local level the capability to do this in the future. The ministry of water resources at the local level in Kandahar is a pretty small operation right now. We need to build it.

The Chair: Very good.

Thanks so much, Mr. Mulroney.

We now go over to Mr. Hawn on the Conservative side.

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

Thanks, Mr. Mulroney, for coming on such short notice.

Several of us here were in Afghanistan not long ago, and I have to say that the priorities line up with a lot of what we heard there from the Kandahar provincial council, for example, and from other people. I'm just curious as to how you arrived at these priorities. What kind of process did you follow? How do you see the prospect of changing these if necessary?

Mr. David Mulroney: Some of them flowed from our analysis of the Manley panel and of the direction we were given. Some were absolutely fundamentally obvious, like the standing up of the Afghan national security forces. I think there's pretty widespread agreement that that's job one.

We consulted carefully with Afghans and with our allies, and we went through a pretty rigorous process. At the end of the day, the idea is that we have to limit ourselves and focus on what we can do with the resources we have and the time available. Following this process, our best advice and professional analysis suggest that these are the six areas that are most important to Afghanistan, in which Canada is most able to make a difference, and which really resonate most powerfully in Kandahar.

• (1905)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Is it fair to say, given what goes on in Paris and in meetings like that, and in working in cooperation with all of our allies, including the Afghans, that these may evolve over the next couple years?

Mr. David Mulroney: They're also I think pretty carefully nested in the Afghanistan Compact, as I was discussing with Mr. Bachand, so there's nothing in those Canadian priorities that steps outside of the compact. People like President Karzai have focused on a number of things, like the Dahla Dam, as being pretty important, so they're all designed as well with a view to handing over to Afghan leadership over time.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: With respect to "Priority 4", which was working with the Afghanistan-Pakistan border management, and so on, how optimistic are you about the ability to convince the Pashtuns and the Balochs, through which the Durand Line runs, that all this is a good idea?

Mr. David Mulroney: On this one we're trying to be realistic. It's a long, difficult, dangerous, complicated border, but we thought if we didn't approach it at all, we'd be really shirking responsibility. So we're looking at a portion of the border in Kandahar, with a specific focus on the major border crossing in Kandahar, Spin Boldak. We said, "Let's be realistic and honest about what we can do. If we can get the border mechanism to work more efficiently, if we can get Afghans and Pakistanis talking along that section of the border, it's a small start, but it's not unimportant."

We've now done a series of seminars involving Afghan and Pakistani officials. We've done some in Dubai, some in Kabul, and some in Islamabad. The results of this very initial phase actually exceeded our expectations. At the end of it, the comment from folks on both sides was, "We should have been doing this a long time ago, but we didn't. There are basic levels of information sharing we're not doing that would make life easier for both of us." The other comment that we took home was, "It takes a Canada to do something like this. Only a Canada could bring us together, but now that we've been brought together, we see why we have to continue."

Let me say that this is still a modest step, but we think we'll continue with this program. We'll look at some funding for equipment that you actually need to make a border run more smoothly. We'll make sure that we're connected with the kinds of conversations the Canadian Forces have with both Afghan National Army and Pakistani forces on the other side of the border, and we'll also report up to bodies like the G-8, which are beginning to look at the larger issue. So we think this is now where Canada can make a small but not unimportant contribution.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: With respect to "Priority 5", building Afghan institutions, and so on, concentrating on Kandahar, the strategic advisory team has done good work in the past at the national level. A lot of things are being pushed down to the more provincial-local level. Do you see the role of the SAT becoming a PAT—a provincial assistance team? Is that going to be one of the roles picked up by the increased civilian component in Kandahar?

Mr. David Mulroney: We see the SAT as being part of a natural evolution. They've done a great job. They were created at a time when there were very few civilians in place. I think when the SAT was created we had about four people in our embassy in Kabul. By the end of this year we'll have more than 30.

The other thing is that with the establishment of priorities, part of my job is to be very rigorous with folks across town and folks in Kabul and Kandahar so that we stay focused on what we said we were going to do. Our capacity-building work, the kind of thing the

SAT has been doing, will be increasingly focused on these priority areas. I think we'll see more civilians coming in with specialist expertise, but the next natural step is to think about taking that down to Kandahar.

As well, when people like Education Minister Atmar or Reconstruction and Development Minister Zia come down to Kandahar, we actually help to connect them. We were out talking about the Dahla Dam with Minister Zia, and we were talking with Minister Atmar: "If we give you money for education nationally, how can you help us in Kandahar?" We've really been working to connect those ministers, sometimes as much as helping to transport them down and get them around to the right people at the provincial level.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: We heard over there, and we've also heard here over the last couple of days, that ANA and ANP make up our exit plan. I think you alluded to that as well. Is that...?

Mr. David Mulroney: That's absolutely central to the vision we have for Kandahar in 2011. That's not to say that Kandahar will be a developed city in a developed country, but Afghans will be able to contribute far more than they are now to maintaining their security, which is where everything starts.

As you know, Mr. Hawn, we feel we've come a long way with the Afghan National Army. The Afghan National Police is a work-in-progress, but programs like Focus District Development, which is actually taking groups of police out and training them, are beginning to have an effect. It's a long-term process.

• (1910)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go to Mr. Rae for five minutes.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): I'll ask you some short, sharp questions. I'll put them all together and then I'll ask you to respond, Mr. Mulroney.

There was a report yesterday from the RAND Corporation, from Seth Jones, indicating his belief that there was a very real problem in Pakistan, that Pakistan remained a substantial area of support for the Taliban. Apparently the Government of Pakistan denied categorically this report. That's kind of an important difference of opinion. Where do we stand on that, assessing the accuracy of the RAND Corporation's view versus the view of the Government of Pakistan? That's my first question.

Second, have pan-Afghanistan programs been cut as a result of the focus on Kandahar, particularly with respect to women and with respect to some of the other projects that I know were up and running in the rest of the country out of Kabul?

Third, has the government given any thought to post-secondary education as a long-term investment for Afghanistan, in particular getting our institutions involved in training and engaging with Afghans? Perhaps we could look to other examples—Fulbright scholarships, Commonwealth scholarships, Rhodes scholarships—or other ways of really trying to provide training and cultural formation as a way of dealing with the long-term problem of the force of extremism in Afghanistan.

My final question is ironic. I notice that “Priority 5” is “democratic governance” for Afghanistan, and that Canada will play a role in establishing an Afghanistan independent elections commission. I take it that will be called “Elections Afghanistan”?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bob Rae: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. David Mulroney: I'll start with your first question, Mr. Rae, on the RAND Corporation.

Hon. Bob Rae: You don't have to answer the last question. I just wanted to get that on the record.

Mr. David Mulroney: We have a lot of respect for Seth Jones, and we think the report is correct in attributing a significant part of the problem to the fact that the border is porous, and not enough is being done on the Pakistan side of the border. That's an inescapable conclusion. Where you can differ is the extent to which the Afghan government could be doing more. We think there is more they could do. That's why we're working on things like the border. I think it's also incumbent on us—and this is part of our diplomatic strategy—to work with those who are like-minded to ensure that we're delivering a consistent message in Islamabad.

With the new government, we're seeing some experimentation in how to address issues in the border area. I think it's a little early yet to say anything other than that we would expect that anything they do in the border areas—just as on the Afghan side—would require people to come in under the rule of law, and that they wouldn't look the other way as terrorists were operating. We need a concerted effort. They may need some kind of reconciliation program there too, but the main thing is to ensure that Pakistan is not a haven for the Taliban. No insurgency can ultimately be defeated if people have that kind of access across. So it's a big problem.

Our funding has risen significantly in the last year or two, from about \$100 million a year to, this year, something in the neighbourhood of \$300 million or more. We will keep our funding in the \$280 million to \$290 million range over the next three years, but more of it will go to Kandahar. Money hasn't been allocated specifically into the future as yet, but we will see less funding going largely to some of the multilateral trust funds. We will ensure that we keep money going to those programs that are absolutely essential to keeping the government financing. There are some programs to which Canada is a significant contributor. We've also tried to protect all those programs run by Canadian NGOs that really do some of the things you are talking about. So we will try to minimize the impact on programs that resonate with Canadians and that are important. But there will be an impact at the national level as we try to do more in Kandahar.

Post-secondary education is an area in which we've had some initial expressions of interest. We're doing some things with the university in Kandahar. It's still pretty early going. Our focus has been at the secondary and primary levels. The most interesting discussions we've had have been with people who look at things like distance learning, because it's still difficult to get into actual exchanges or get people into Afghanistan. That's an area into which we have to go in the future.

●(1915)

Hon. Bob Rae: This is just a comment, Mr. Chairman.

We face a long-term ideological struggle. We should be under no illusion about that. I think that's been the case historically, and it's important for us to learn some lessons. The more we can see this as a long-term ideological issue, the more important training and cultural formation and our continuing to play a role in that aspect of our work become. And I think this is just as important as training the Afghan National Army. I think we have to see this as being as important a resistance to terrorism as anything else we do.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Rae.

We'll go over to Mr. Sorenson for five minutes.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Mulroney, for coming today. I think it was a moment yesterday in the House of which we could all be proud when we saw the government table the first quarterly report. We commend you and the government for doing that. Minister Emerson made it very clear that his intentions were to file this report every quarter. So you've lived up to that.

One of the good things about this report is that it announces a significant increase in aid money—\$600 million between now and 2011—to Afghanistan. It also, as you have stated a number of times, moves the level of support in the Kandahar region—as the report says—from 17% to 50% of the funding in which Canada is involved.

I have three questions. First, is one of the reasons we did this so that Afghans could equate the extra funds in Kandahar to Canada, thus making it a signature project? Second, apart from the three signature projects that are announced here for Kandahar province, there aren't a lot of other specific details as to where the money is going. Is the money going to DFAIT? Is it going through CIDA? Do you have the breakdown of how much will go to corrections, for example? How much will go through the Department of National Defence? Is there a breakdown on those four?

Mr. David Mulroney: I think the objective of the signature project and the origin, as I was saying earlier, comes from the observation of the independent panel. They didn't really sense, when they spoke to people in Kandahar, that there was sufficient awareness of the contribution that Canada was trying to make. Their message to us was that unless that actually had a greater impact and was felt by people in Kandahar, we would lose the battle of hearts and minds. I should say that I think it's not just CIDA but also aid agencies in other countries that are wrestling with this. The traditional approaches to long-term capacity building may not be sufficient in themselves in places where you have an insurgency and you have the kinds of problems we have in southern Afghanistan.

The real target of the signature projects is the people of Kandahar. I think it's important for us in communicating to help Canadians understand what we're trying to do, and having signature projects will probably help. These were all chosen because they relate to the basic services that people should really expect from their government. CIDA is the main contributor of money, but Foreign Affairs is an increasingly important contributor. Their funding comes through what's called the Global Peace and Security Fund, and it really complements funding from National Defence, in that it focuses on the police. It also focuses on training judges and lawyers, and on corrections. They work with Correctional Service of Canada. The funding comes from DFAIT, but the planning is by RCMP and the Correctional Service on things like specific improvements, water supply, generators, and things like that for the prisons, so they're operated on a more humane level and reach expected standards.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: So the good news is that all that extra \$600 million isn't simply going into the Department of National Defence; it's being spread out through all four departments. I think that's kind of what you've mentioned.

You talk, and this report talks, about a transition period. We're in a transition that's going to be accomplished by reorienting Canadian programming. The report also says that some programs will be cut back. I think that's perhaps a good news story as well, because it shows that there's ongoing assessment of programs that are working and other programs that perhaps could be better. The report doesn't say, though, which projects will be cut back. I'm just wondering if you can tell us about some of the programs that may be cut back given the evaluation that perhaps the money would be better spent somewhere else.

The conclusion of the report talks about the importance of governance. Just as a note, none of the signature projects has anything to do with governance. I'm wondering if you can maybe answer the question as to whether dollars will be spent on improving the governance in Afghanistan.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1920)

Mr. David Mulroney: The impact at the national level will largely be in those programs through which Canada contributes to what are referred to as multilateral trust funds. Those are funds that are established by agencies of the UN or other multilateral agencies that pay out program assistance to Afghanistan for vast national programs over time. In some cases, we're phasing out, and in other cases, we're reducing our payments so that we can focus more on

Kandahar. This is a direct reflection of the observations made by the Manley panel that too much of our assistance was going to these areas that were one or two levels removed. We didn't have a hands-on, eyes-on sense of how we were having an impact on the ground. It wasn't being as directly felt. It was too long-term.

We'll still be funding some of those programs. As I was saying to Mr. Rae, they'll be the ones that actually keep the payroll going at the central level and keep the government going. But I think we can also expect that Canada doesn't have to do everything. We don't have to do everything at the national level and at the Kandahar level. There are programs that others can step in behind us to fund—we're the third-largest funder—while we get to work and deliver on real change in Kandahar.

By governance, we mean a number of things. When we work on the Dahla Dam, for example, that works on a variety of levels. One is improved irrigation in the Arghandab region, so that finally farmers are starting to get water from this reservoir. The impact of that is the creation of jobs. It also means that they can grow other crops. Poppy flourishes because of lawlessness and because there aren't enough other choices for farmers. So this creates opportunities, and in doing it, we will be working with the water resources people to establish a capability for Afghans to do that.

As we work on the immunization program, we're also working with the public health authorities so they can learn how to operate programs like this. One of the challenges we have in Kandahar is that there is a migrant people, the Kuchi people, who travel throughout southern Afghanistan. Reaching them and helping them is both an art and a science, and we want to be sure that local public health authorities have that capability. We will leave the education ministry better equipped to do its job after those schools have been built and the teachers have been trained. We're looking at passing expertise over to Afghans as we go.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney.

Our last set of five minutes goes to the Bloc.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Mulroney, you have six priorities. Four of those priorities focus only on Kandahar, and the two others on Afghan society as a whole. Do I understand correctly?

Accepting that you are planning to give us regular reports on the progress that is being achieved, I would like to know the present status of the six priorities. I know you cannot give me an answer immediately, but it seems to me that if we had a background document that would let us know where things stand, we would be in a better position to conduct our review. I understand that not everything can be quantified. But, for example, you say that you are going to build 50 schools by 2009. So I would like to know how many schools Canada has already built? How many are open? Have they been destroyed? I would like you to tell us each time you build new ones.

Mr. David Mulroney: We are going to prepare a report on the progress of each priority every three months. The measurements may vary. Sometimes it will be a quantity, sometimes an assessment of progress. At other times, we will prepare surveys. The opinions of the people of Kandahar are very important, in fact. So each report will give details on the progress on the six priorities.

• (1925)

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I understand that, but I am asking you to tell me where we stand now. How many schools has Canada already built in the Kandahar region?

Mr. David Mulroney: We are going to add five years.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Yes, but where are we now? It seems to me that, in order to assess the efforts we have made, it would be logical to know the results we have obtained so far. That is the reason for my question.

Mr. David Mulroney: This report describes the measurements we are going to use. During the summer, we are going to show how each priority will be measured. In the next report, to be tabled in the fall, we will describe how we are measuring our progress. They are different for each priority.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Of course, I understand that, but I do not think that I have explained myself very well. What has Canada done in terms of building schools?

Mr. David Mulroney: Canada is going to add...

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: What has been done already?

[English]

What has been done?

[Translation]

Mr. David Mulroney: Our program began a year ago. Our contribution was made nationally. So it is more difficult for us to measure our progress. Now we are going to concentrate our process in Kandahar and make more specific contributions, such as building 50 schools in Kandahar. Previously, it was difficult for us to assess the impact in each region and in Kandahar too. That is going to change.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: So you are not able to tell me exactly how many schools Canada has already built.

Mr. David Mulroney: We have helped to build about ten schools already, but I will check what has been done in Kandahar.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: When you table the next report, I would really like to have those details. In order to assess what building 50 schools by 2009 means, I would like to know what has been done since 2002. As I said, I understand that evaluating progress is sometimes difficult, in things like diplomatic contacts, for example. But when they can be quantified, and we can be told what the situation is, it really helps us to understand what form the present efforts are taking.

Mr. David Mulroney: What I was trying to say is that it was more difficult to be specific about the impact of our contributions because they were being made nationally. Now we are going to concentrate 50% of our assistance in Kandahar and we are going to try to be more specific about the impact of our contributions there. Before, all we could do was estimate. We can say that we helped to build ten schools, but, since our assistance was really national, it is more difficult to talk about the impact.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, colleagues.

Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney. Once again, your presence tonight, coming so shortly after the report's release, is greatly appreciated. Thank you very much for your remarks and for answering our questions.

Colleagues, I will suspend the meeting for a few moments. The committee business will be conducted in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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