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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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● (1530)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Welcome, colleagues.

[*English*]

This is meeting 14 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, on Thursday, February 14, 2008.

Today we will continue to look at our study on Afghanistan. Actually, we'll return to our ongoing study of Afghanistan.

In our first hour we will hear from Paul Manson, the president, and Alain Pellerin, the executive director of the Conference of Defence Associations; and from the

[*Translation*]

Francophone Research Network on Peace Operations, Marc André Boivin,

[*English*]

deputy director. Appearing as an individual, we have Seddiq Weera, senior advisor, Independent National Commission on Strengthening Peace, and senior policy advisor to the Minister of Education in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

In our second hour—he's with us here today—we will hear from retired General Lewis MacKenzie, appearing as an individual; and from Strategic Forecasting Inc., Kamran Bokhari, director of Middle East analysis.

We welcome you here. We look forward to your testimony. I'm not certain if all of you have appeared before our committee in the past. It's fairly simple. We listen to you, and then you, hopefully, will answer some of the questions our committee may have.

Mr. Manson, you have approximately seven minutes, I believe. Then we'll go into the first round of questioning.

Thank you.

General (Retired) Paul Manson (President, Conference of Defence Associations): I thank you for this opportunity to appear before your committee this afternoon to talk to you about Afghanistan.

I am the president of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute, which is the research arm of the CDA itself. The CDA is Canada's oldest defence organization, going back 75 years.

I am accompanied this afternoon by my colleague, Colonel Alain Pellerin, who is the executive director of the Conference of Defence Associations, as you just mentioned.

In this short time available, allow me to present several points regarding Canada's mission in Afghanistan that I believe to be of particular importance at what is, after all, a critical juncture.

First, and perhaps most important, our detailed study of the situation in Afghanistan over the past five years leads us to believe that contrary to the pessimistic view that's taken by many in Canada today, things are actually going quite well in Afghanistan. To be sure, there is yet a long way to go, but the country is seeing some remarkable improvements as it recovers from the devastation brought about by 30 years of conflict.

On the military front, the Taliban are not occupying ground in the way they did in the mid-1990s, when, in a brilliant military campaign, they came to power following the Soviet withdrawal and the ensuing political vacuum that existed at that time. This time around, the Taliban forces have been soundly defeated every time they've met coalition forces head-on in battle, and they've given up trying to conduct any form of conventional warfare. Instead they have resorted, as we know so well, to suicide bombings, roadside bombs, assassinations, and kidnappings. In my view, these are last-resort measures that will not win victory for them in Afghanistan, and they're certainly not winning the hearts and minds of the people of that country.

Looking at the important matter of development, the picture is encouraging here too. At the macro level, the gross national product of Afghanistan is increasing at a rate that's reminiscent of China's, albeit starting from a very low base. Education is burgeoning throughout the nation, with millions now attending schools, many of them young women who were not permitted to get any formal education whatsoever under the Taliban regime. It is particularly interesting to note that the Taliban have been burning down schools by the hundreds and murdering teachers who dare to allow girls into their classrooms. Clearly, education is anathema to the insurgents. But in spite of their destructive efforts, progress continues. Imagine the long-term impact of massive education on the nation's governance, respect for the rule of law, industry, health care, infrastructure, the media, and other elements of an emerging and enlightening society.

In these early days, development efforts are starting to make a difference—mostly at the local level—and even in Kandahar province, where the Taliban are doing everything they can to disrupt development projects.

A measure of success in helping Afghanistan get back on its feet will be the extent to which freedom of movement allows local enterprises to thrive and to spread, offering the benefits of a free market economy to all citizens, especially those who live outside of the more secure city areas. Here again, there is a long way to go, but the beginnings are increasingly evident.

I don't want to paint too rosy a picture, but before I touch on some of the key problems that must be faced, it is important to hear from the Afghan people themselves. Recent polls indicate that about 85% of the people of that country support the presence of the coalition forces and more than 90% oppose a return to power by the Taliban.

Canadian troops are in Afghanistan under a United Nations mandate, as part of a coalition operating the international security assistance force under NATO auspices. Together with our 35 allies, we are wanted and we are needed.

There are problems in this huge international undertaking, of course. Some of them are very difficult and rather evident these days. Here are the principal ones, as we see it. First and foremost is the security challenge posed by the insurgency forces, loosely referred to as the Taliban. They are nasty, murderous people who are not bound in any way by the Geneva conventions or international humanitarian law. So they have an enormous tactical advantage over our soldiers. They don't wear uniforms, they hide behind civilians, they use booby-traps, and they employ unimaginable brutality against their own people. Yet, as I pointed out earlier, they are not winning.

● (1535)

Secondly, there is a problem of a massive and illegal narcotics industry, the profits of which feed drug lords, warlords, and the Taliban itself. Elimination of this plague can occur only when a strong measure of central government authority is exercised over the poppy-producing regions, which are almost exclusively in the southern string of provinces in Afghanistan.

Third, closely related to the poppy problem is the matter of corruption. This is not a new phenomenon in the region, of course, but the vast profits from the heroin market have allowed a culture of corruption to exist at all levels of government, and it must be corrected.

Next, Pakistan has emerged as a source of difficulty in the battle against the Taliban, for reasons that are perfectly well known and are reported daily at this critical time.

Finally, and this brings the whole matter back to Canada, there's a political question about the future of the Canadian mission. The Manley report has offered Canadians an excellent summary of the situation in Afghanistan, and it proposes what I think is a reasonable way ahead for Canada's involvement in that land.

Here, I would like to make two simple but important points, which I hope you will consider in your deliberations.

It would be a disastrous error, in my view, for Canada to announce a fixed deadline for its military mission. That would be handing the Taliban enemy victory on a platter. Unless other NATO nations were willing to move in to Kandahar to fill in this large void left by Canada, which seems unlikely, that vital ground—and that term is important, it is vital ground—would be lost, with military, political, and psychological consequences that could be very severe indeed. So you can imagine, incidentally, the impact that such a move would have on Canada's international reputation: from being a much-admired leader in the war, we would be seen as having initiated a negative turn in the struggle to get Afghanistan back on its feet.

The political answer, in my estimation, is simple: set a new mandate to 2011 or 2012, but allow the government of the day to review the situation at that time before deciding upon the next step. No one—no one—can predict what the situation is going to look like two, three, or four years downstream.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, honourable members, its very troubling to note the calls for Canada to limit its military involvement to training or self-defence, with no so-called search-and-destroy mandate. That makes no military sense. Even worse, it would place our troops in the field in an impossible position. Rules of engagement would be so complex and inhibiting that they simply couldn't operate effectively, and it would likely expose them to greater risk. Furthermore, it's naive to expect that Canadian troops could tutor Afghan army personnel in the comfort and security of a garrison and then send the Afghan troops out into the field on their own. It doesn't work that way. Side-by-side operations, sometimes involving combat, are essential if this mentoring process is to be effective.

Mr. Chairman, members, there is so much more I could add on what is an immensely complicated and sensitive subject. For example, I didn't even touch on the question of the impact on Canada's national security interest from a withdrawal of Canadian Forces from Afghanistan, but at this point, at the end of my seven minutes, I'll bring my remarks to a halt and say that Colonel Pellerin and I are now prepared to answer your questions.

Thank you.

● (1540)

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

Actually, you were at the beginning of your ninth minute, but I let you go.

We'll take the next testimony, and we will proceed to Monsieur Boivin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Boivin, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Marc André Boivin (Deputy Director, Francophone Research Network on Peace Operations): Good afternoon.

My name is Marc André Boivin and I am Deputy Director of the Réseau francophone de recherche sur les opérations de paix. I have previously had occasion to go to Afghanistan. I personally conducted interviews, in particular of people from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, NATO and Operation Enduring Freedom. At the invitation of NATO, I also did a tour that took me to Islamabad, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar and Mazari Sharif. I was somewhat able to see both sides of the coin, that is to say the civilian and military sides.

For the purposes of today's discussion, I intend to focus on Canada's role in Afghanistan, even though there are many other things to say.

[*English*]

In 2007, Afghanistan stands at the 174th rank in the 178-country human development index published by the UN. The misery of the Afghan people, in itself, justifies Canada's involvement, yet it would be shortsighted to think that this is a sufficient explanation for the level of resources put by Canada in this country. After all, there are many other countries at the bottom of this ranking in dire need of help.

The actual core reasons behind Canada's intervention in Afghanistan lead back to the attacks of September 11, 2001. Now, it is easy to castigate the W. Bush administration's disastrous response *ex post facto*, but there was at the time a genuine international outcry for action against such a display of international terrorism's extreme and indiscriminate violence. Related to this, there was also pressure on U.S. allies to overtly display their solidarity in a time of turmoil.

This was deeply felt in Canada. The two countries are interlocked in a form of uncomfortable symbiosis, where keeping the United States' goodwill is far more important to Canada than the other way around. The governmental apparatus of the U.S. and Canada are intertwined, and even more so in security-related matters. At times, this means that the U.S. pressures on the Canadian government can be exerted not only through traditional channels but also by directly conveying the message through key Canadian public servants.

In a report on Afghanistan's insurgency in the south, published in November 2006, the International Crisis Group writes:

> Indeed, troop presence in Afghanistan often appears to be about demonstrating an alliance with the U.S. rather than meeting the country's needs.

This is certainly true when we look at the motives behind the sustained high level of engagement Canada has had in Afghanistan.

A second motivation also gradually gained importance: the need for the Canadian government to heighten its international profile. Despite its flamboyant rhetoric, Canada has a mixed record when it comes to its actual role in conflict management. While Canadian officials complain of assuming an undue share of the burden in Afghanistan today, many countries blamed Canada, for most of the Cold War, for being a free rider and not fulfilling its commitment to NATO allies in the defence of western Europe. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, this situation was made worse by drastic cuts in government spending that especially targeted National Defence, Foreign Affairs, and CIDA.

Now, Canada's participation in crisis management missions was, by the end of the 1990s, mostly in ex-Yugoslavia, and even its modest contribution was proving a severe strain on the military. If anything, 9/11 was a rallying call for the importance of international security issues. Canada wanted its own signature and relevance to be recognized. Accordingly, military spending was significantly increased, with a special focus on expeditionary capabilities, and Foreign Affairs got special attention from the Prime Minister's office.

Despite being virtually absent from UN peacekeeping since the mid-1990s, Canadians cherish a mythological image of themselves as the world's foremost peacekeeper and the honest broker to whom people turn to negotiate peaceful settlements. Adept at exploiting this image, successive governments used it to sell their foreign policy agendas. In turn, it became a bit of a self-intoxicating political slogan.

Now Canada needed to regain its international standing, and peacekeeping was its way. Afghanistan was to be the proving ground for this renewal.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

I'm going back to the core reasons behind the length and intensity of our commitment in Afghanistan because they should serve as real reference points for all thinking about the past, present and future of Canada's presence in that country. However, we can only acknowledge that the government has made little sincere effort to explain the reasons underlying its commitment, which is full of consequences, in Afghanistan. The repetition *ad nauseam* of a series of achievements and the unqualified picture of Canada's positive role in Afghanistan may be interpreted as a blindness verging on ignorance or, even worse, a latent contempt for the judgment of the Canadian public. Let's hope that the frankness of the picture provided in the Manley report opens a new chapter in this area.

Furthermore, in the stormy debates caused by a divided Parliament and increasingly skeptical public opinion, it is easy to forget these core objectives. The deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan and the high tension among Canada's partners threatens them directly. If we stand back a little and evaluate, slightly more than six years later, the impact of Canada's intervention in Afghanistan, we see that there have been advances and setbacks.

With regard to advances, Canada has definitely obtained a certain degree of recognition from the United States for the scope of its commitment, but also for its ability to absorb hard hits in Kandahar without flinching. This is all the more true following the lesson in humility that the Americans received in Iraq. The Canadian Forces are definitely perceived as more serious, and Canada's voice will count in discussions of interventions in crisis situations. On the other hand, this exposes the government to more international pressure. Canada now has a more credible military tool; it remains to be determined what it wants to do with it.

The appointment of General Hillier to the head of the Canadian Forces came with an ambitious reform plan. The purpose of that plan is to shift from a Cold War structure to a more flexible structure suited to the ad hoc crises of the post-Cold War period. The major investments accompanying those reforms have enabled the government to establish a military instrument maximizing Canada's weight on the international stage, an advance with an impact that goes beyond Canada's involvement in Afghanistan.

At the same time, however, the costs of that involvement in the toughest areas of the world have put the Canadian Forces under serious pressure. Today, more than 85% of troops overseas are posted to Afghanistan. Signs of attrition, such as the increased use of reservists, a large number of physical and psychological injuries, and the start of a third rotation for certain contingents, should encourage Canadian leaders to adopt a certain reserve.

As for reversals, Canada's intervention in Afghanistan has largely evolved at the pace of a project dominated by the defence pillar. Everyone agrees today that there is no military solution to Afghanistan's problems. However, the Canadian presence in the field is still dominated to date by its military component.

Advances have been made with the very recent establishment of a coordinating body reporting directly to the Prime Minister. It is disturbing to note the extent to which the preeminence of civilian power over the military has been compromised in key decisions on Canada's mission in Afghanistan. The government definitely has a duty to be more vigilant and to ensure that its foreign policy priorities are reflected in overseas troop deployments.

● (1550)

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Boivin, you're following the text, are you? We're at about nine minutes, and you're about halfway through. Can we just have a summary, and then we'll move to our next guest? Maybe some of what you say in your testimony that's in print here we can leave and put into the record, and you may even want to touch on some of that in the questions.

Mr. Marc André Boivin: Yes, I'll jump to the recommendations.

[*Translation*]

What is necessary now is to strike a fair balance in order to achieve these objectives and to attempt to improve the fate of the Afghans.

If I must stick to essential recommendations, I would say that the task for Canada is, first, to ensure it obtains significant military support in Kandahar from one or more other countries. I believe that things are already being done to that end at the present time.

Second, there must be a plan for a gradual reduction of Canadian troops in Afghanistan to achieve a sustainable level and to allow the Canadian government a reserve for other crises or needs.

Third, efforts must be rebalanced for the benefit of the diplomacy and development pillars.

Fourth, it must be ensured that civilian authority is preeminent over the military apparatus. As I've already noted, measures have already been taken in that direction.

Fifth, we must be transparent and provide full and relevant information to the Canadian public.

Sixth, provision must be made to require the Canadian government to hold debates in the House in the event of any significant troop deployment overseas.

Seventh, internationally, the Afghan government must be required to meet its obligations in the areas of human rights, freedom of the press and freedom of association and to fully shoulder its responsibilities to its population.

Eighth, support must be provided for the appointment of a senior international officer responsible for both the UN and NATO missions.

Ninth, pressure must be brought to bear for the UN mission in Afghanistan to clearly assume leadership of international efforts, thus restoring the precedence of political rather than military management.

Lastly, it must be ensured with U.S. authorities that anti-terrorist activities do not undermine other missions in Afghanistan.

[*English*]

The Chair: *Merci, monsieur Boivin.*

We'll move to our final guest, Mr. Weera. Welcome.

Mr. Seddiq Weera (Senior Advisor, Independent National Commission on Strengthening Peace and Senior Policy Advisor, Minister of Education, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, As an Individual): Thank you.

Honourable committee members, I'm thankful for the opportunity to share my observations and the results of my research and work on Afghanistan. This comes from my living in Afghanistan. I was born there, lived there, studied there, worked there. I am living in Burlington now, but I have a job in Afghanistan and have worked for the last six years with the Government of Afghanistan.

My observations and opinions do not reflect the position of the Afghan government. Rather, they come from my involvement with the peace movement, my career at McMaster University, and negotiations and talks I have had with members of the Taliban and their supporters, Hekmatyar, political leaders, and a network of people with access to cabinet members, including the president of the country.

I would like to start by saying that the war in Afghanistan cannot be won without a peace track, a political track. Why? Because there is a big political component in the conflict in Afghanistan, and a political component cannot be resolved through war alone. The political component has at least two dimensions: one is the unresolved civil war; the other is the regional factor in the conflict.

I want to take you back to pre-September 11, 2001. In Afghanistan, before September 11, there was a nine-year-old civil war and a five-year-old conflict between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. These parties and factions were not much liked by the public. Both parties, both factions, were seen as failed, whether viewed as governments, parties, or groups.

Both sides of the civil war committed crimes against humanity and violated human rights. There was no al-Qaeda or war on terror then, but there were two parties killing each other's members. This created a deep political fragmentation. Later, it became predominantly ethnic. Ethnicity was not really part of the agenda, but the composition of the groups that were fighting each other became more and more ethnic.

My observations take into account the government and the politics around the government. The civil war is hampering governance and civil service reform. Good governance is impossible to achieve unless this conflict is resolved. There is a winning side and a losing side: the winning side is in and around the government; the losing side became affiliated with al-Qaeda in 1996 and is still fighting against the government.

Not everyone who fights against the government and its international allies is a terrorist. There are hundreds who do not share the objectives and the vision of al-Qaeda and international terrorism. There are national grievances. They feel they have been treated unjustly. They're not included in the Bonn agreement, the Bonn peace process. Their enemy won, and the international community is supporting their enemy. They are not treated as citizens of this country, and they are discriminated against because of their identity.

Now, I want to turn this discussion to the Manley report, a great work. Lots of issues are brought to light, including recommendations for diplomatic efforts.

● (1555)

I want to remind everyone here that the war in Afghanistan is not continuing because we have 1,000 fewer troops. It's not going on because we have less coordination among allied forces. It's not going on because we have too few helicopters. It's going on because of a mixture of determinants, one of which has not been addressed. To fight poverty is quite a reasonable effort. Lots of investment and meeting the basic needs of the people is good. Improving development is very good. Improve governance, yes. But unless you create a political track, you're not going to win the war. Why? Because you're fighting a mix of ordinary Afghan citizens who are in the hands of Al-Qaeda and terrorists.

With war alone we are producing, most likely, more recruits for Al-Qaeda. We may be supporting Al-Qaeda by not breaking up the lines of Taliban and Hekmatyar followers, those who are not terrorists and those who are interested in peace negotiations. There is no medium or mechanism for peace negotiations that can address the issues. What are the issues? Which issues can we resolve without compromising the values and the accomplishments we've had?

Going to the regional dimension, in the civil war, Afghanistan had support for the warring parties from Pakistan, India, Iran, Russia, and the Arabs. That surrogate war, somehow fought in Afghanistan, is still affecting the dynamic. Pakistan, India, and Iran all have some legitimate concerns, and there is no medium or mechanism to address those. There is no way, no dialogue, no process, no team, no mandate for the United Nations to develop and establish a peace track to try to find peaceful resolutions for those who are not terrorists.

What do I mean by peace track? First of all, you may know that the UN is not mandated to do peace work in Afghanistan. The UN mandate is not war, but it's not to lead peace negotiations and peace processes either. Afghanistan needs multi-level dialogue with those who are interested in peace and have no agenda—who have no terrorist and Al-Qaeda agenda—to integrate them into the political system.

Remember, we did integrate half of one side in the civil war in Bonn in 2001-02, and they were as good or bad as the Taliban or Hekmatyar in terms of ideology, in terms of the Islamist view they have. Sayaf is an example; Rabani is an example. They were brought into the political system. They are doing okay. They are shouting in their parliament instead of shooting on the mountain. The others will be okay, too, we can safely assume. So one level of dialogue is for integration.

The other level of dialogue is to bring the parties in the civil war to a reconciliation. The winning party is destabilizing the government, and they might do more of that if they feel they're going to lose their monopoly on power—because they know only one thing, that the Taliban is on one side of a win-lose game. Either you win and have everything or you lose and have nothing. So the winning side is also nervous, and both sides have been put in a very helpless position: the winning side has to stay in power and keep the enemy away and sabotage the peace processes, and the losing side has to fight, no matter who they get weapons from. If it's Al-Qaeda, so be it.

The third level addresses the regional dimension. We have no mechanism except military coordination between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and NATO for that.

The last point is that without the political process, war is not going to win. Why? Because you are fighting against non-terrorists, against people who are ordinary Afghans in the south. And they feel that their warlords and criminals are treated unjustly. While the other side's warlords and criminals are generals and marshals and are in the government, our criminals are treated differently. That's why you will not have public support in winning peace and stability, and when you don't win peace and stability, how can you do development? Because of the tension between the two parties, the winning party is now using all its energy to keep itself powerful so it can survive. That's why the governance is not going to happen.

● (1600)

My last point is that Canada can take the lead in creating a peace track, a political track, for political resolution. That might require revising the mandate of the United Nations in Afghanistan to make it a mandate for peacemaking. That might require revising the blacklist, because we have people who deserve to be on the blacklist, and they are on the government side as well. We have to treat everybody across the board in the same way. Those who are interested in a political solution might need to be removed from the blacklist temporarily.

● (1605)

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

We're going to go into our first round of questioning. If it's all right with the committee, just given the time, we're going to cut the rounds to five minutes instead of seven, and then I think we'll be able to stay.

Mr. Wilfert.

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

Thank you, gentlemen, for coming.

Having been to Afghanistan, I can say there's no question that our troops are doing a phenomenal job. I wanted to make an observation and ask you to comment on it, given what you've said.

The Manley report, on page 28, recognizes that "no insurgency—and certainly not the Afghan insurgency—can be defeated by military force alone". They certainly look at the issue of an immediate impact, reconstruction, better coordination, etc. They conclude on page 35, that "a successful counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan requires more ISAF forces".

A Department of National Defence October 2007 report entitled *3-D Soviet Style: A Presentation on Lessons Learned from the Soviet Experience in Afghanistan* makes two interesting observations at the end. Under the military, it says that the "Red Army's technical superiority and battlefield victories could not be translated into strategic success". The other was that "the policy of 'National Reconciliation"—which speaks to the last speaker—is "more successful than military operations".

I'll put that on the table.

My colleagues have a couple of quick ones.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): Again, I would like to ask some questions about how long our participation there needs to be.

To Mr. Manson, based on your optimistic and a pessimistic scenario, how long do you think we need to be there before they can provide security for themselves?

Secondly, do you have any comments about the number of troops we have there? There are a lot of reports saying we don't have enough. I would appreciate it if you could comment on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chan.

Just so our guests know, when we have a five-minute round, that's for questions and answers, so make them very concise and precise.

You have one, too?

All right. I will cut him off at five minutes.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Thank you all for being here.

Gentlemen, if you cannot answer this question within the time, if you wouldn't mind writing it to the committee, we'd all be grateful.

Mr. Weera, could you march us through what the political reconciliation process would be like to resolve the issue between the Northern Alliance and the Pashtun?

General Manson, if you could give us some indication of how you would amend the Liberal Party motion in order to make it more realistic—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Keith Martin: —or how you would amend the Liberal Party motion, we'd be grateful.

Thank you very much, General Manson.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Boivin, you talked about advances and setbacks, but I especially want to talk about the setbacks. You mentioned that everything was controlled by the Defence Department. The other "Ds", that is diplomacy and development, currently aren't part of Canada's intervention in that country. I'm not going to ask you for an answer today, because it would be much too long, but I would like to know how development should be carried out in the Kandahar region.

Thank you.

[*English*]

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

Mr. Manson, the first question was perhaps directed to you and Mr. Weera. It was the question of Mr. Wilfert.

Gen Paul Manson: Yes, counter-insurgency has been around a long time. It's not a new form of warfare, but the type of counter-insurgency that's being encountered in Afghanistan today is really very different.

It's sometimes difficult to bring past experience to bear in military tactics and strategy, but there are some examples. In Malaya, the British forces fought an insurgency there and were really very successful. It took 14 years—which comes to answer an earlier question about how long we might be in Afghanistan.

The problem of national reconciliation ties into counter-insurgency as well, and this comes to the points that were made by two of my colleagues at the table here about just how we might bring a peace process into action in Afghanistan. Everyone around the table acknowledges there is no military solution to the situation in Afghanistan. It's necessary, but not sufficient, to establish security before other things can take place, such as development and peace negotiations, but it is not sufficient to solve the problem. That's something that has to be borne in mind.

Counter-insurgency is tough business. It does require military activity of a very special kind, and in itself, it is not the solution to the problem.

● (1610)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Manson.

Mr. Weera, I think there were a couple of questions directed to you.

Mr. Seddiq Weera: Yes, I would like to answer the question on reconciliation between the two sides, which are ethnically dominated by Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns.

It's not a war between the people, but a case of the majority of parties happening to be made up of one ethnicity.

If it were done without having international recognition of the need for a peace process, through private processes, the person or team doing so would automatically endanger their lives by being labelled. If you were from the Taliban side and wanted to talk to the north, they would be suspicious. If you wanted to talk to the Taliban and you were in the government, you'd automatically be labelled as pro-Taliban.

A mechanism for a peace process is required, but how can it be done? There are a lot of worries. One could start with a UN mechanism, for instance. What are their fears and concerns? What is the damage and harm that has been done to you? And how can you live together on the foundation that has been established by this government?

I have, on a micro-level, talked to the leaders of the Northern Alliance, and you will see that they have a lot of issues that go back 250 years, from the royal family being Pashtun. There are grievances and stories of oppression of non-Pashtuns by the royal Pashtun family. And it has been the same over the last 30 years, as the Taliban, Hekmatyar, and their supporters among the Pashtuns would also say there has been political injustice.

I just want to tell you that one senior Taliban guy was telling me, we want to return with dignity. I asked, what do you mean? They responded, oh, we were ministers in the cabinet, so we should be something in the government. And the other one said, we don't want to be labelled on the blacklist as terrorists; if there is accountability, it should be for all of us, all parties, all sides. And the other person would say, we want safety when we return and a political presence, a political party.

These are the types of things that, without compromising all of the accomplishments today in Afghanistan, could be accommodated.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Weera.

We'll move to our second round and the Bloc.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Barbot, you have five minutes.

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

Thank you for being here today, gentlemen.

Mr. Manson, I was a bit surprised to hear your description of what is currently going on. You tell us the situation has vastly improved. However, I've seen a map representing the present situation in Afghanistan. We could see on it that the Taliban were much more dispersed across Afghanistan than originally. So I was a bit surprised, particularly since you say that war is not the solution, that we won't succeed by military means. When you talk about Afghan troops who no longer carry on a traditional, but rather an underground war, that makes me think more of Vietnam. However, we all know what happened in Vietnam.

In these conditions, tell me how you see the “solution” contemplated by the present government, that is to say to send in another 1,000 soldiers. If the situation can't be resolved militarily, how can this initiative change anything?

Furthermore, you said—and correct me if I misunderstood—that a search and destroy type of war should be conducted. So the idea isn't to train soldiers. In other words, Canada will be there forever.

I'd like to hear your comments on that subject.

● (1615)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Barbot.

Mr. Manson.

Gen Paul Manson: I'm going to defer to my colleague, Colonel Pellerin, who is an expert in these matters and can elaborate on some of the things I said and can help to answer your questions.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: So, it's not fair.

Colonel (Retired) Alain Pellerin (Executive Director, Conference of Defence Associations): What is important to understand —and this touches somewhat on what Dr. Martin was asking—is the aspects of our mission that we should change. I believe we have to understand what the mission currently consists in. It has changed a great deal in the past year. I was in Afghanistan last year, and a transition was already underway in the military mission, which was essentially becoming increasingly a mission to train the Afghan armed forces. All that started about a year ago, in February, when the first Afghan battalion arrived, which wasn't prepared for combat and which we trained. There are currently four Afghan battalions of 400 to 500 persons, nearly 3,000 Afghans.

What must be kept in mind, in the case of a counter-insurrection operation, is that there are two important elements: patience and a lot of what we call boots on the ground. Patience eventually leads us to success, and when I say patience, I'm not necessarily thinking of operations such as the one you cited, search and destroy, but rather of operations in which the priority is protecting the population. That's what our Canadian Forces are increasingly doing, at least in the Kandahar region: we're providing a certain degree of security, particularly in two districts, Panjwayi and Zhari, which didn't exist a year ago, for various reasons. One of the reasons is that there are now more Afghan forces on the ground. Consequently, when we push back the Taliban, we can occupy the terrain permanently and ensure the population is secure. The goal isn't necessarily to search and destroy, but rather to ensure that the security perimeter is expanded over the years, months. That's what we've been doing for a year now, but it takes patience and it takes more forces on the ground, whether it be Afghan forces which will eventually be able to take the mission in hand—and that's the goal: to develop that capability—or Canadian Forces or other allies, or both.

Lastly, counter-insurrection operations have worked historically. Think of Malaysia, for example, and Northern Ireland. But on average, it's taken about 14 or 15 years to achieve success. You have to be patient. That doesn't necessarily mean that we'll be in the field for 14 or 15 years. The Afghan forces will eventually be able to take over. They're already doing a good job in the field. Lastly, we have to be patient. It must be borne in mind that the goal isn't necessarily just to destroy Taliban, but also to provide the population with security so that people can continue normal lives.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pellerin.

[*English*]

Your time is pretty well up.

I'll give you a little more time, Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: You say it takes patience. I understand that, but didn't General Hillier know that it took patience when he convinced us to go fight the Taliban? We were told that it would be for a year or two and then it would be over.

Col Alain Pellerin: General Hillier gave the government his military opinion, and it was the government of the time that made the decision, just as the current government or Parliament will decide whether or not to extend the mission. All General Hillier does is provide a military opinion. That's his role.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pellerin.

We'll move to the government side.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you very much to all the witnesses for coming.

If I don't ask Alain or Paul any questions, that's fine. I'm going to go to Mr. Weera, because he had a press conference and talked about the peace process.

Mr. Weera, you rightly pointed out that Afghanistan is a land that was fraught by war. There are hardly any institutions there. There are hardly any democratic institutions either. Afghanistan had to start from zero. By the time the international community came, progress had been made in slowly building the democratic institutions of Afghanistan and the rule of law.

You made an excellent statement, that half of the groups that were supposedly fighting are now shouting in the parliament. That is the ultimate objective of the compact. That is why Canada is there. Canada is not there for war. You keep saying war. We are not at war. We are not there to invade Afghanistan. To expect these institutions to be functioning at their best capacity is asking too much.

I notice that you are an advisor to the strengthening of peace and policy to the Government of Afghanistan, so you are in a position to provide what you're telling us. We understand that these are slow processes.

As we have in this motion—and don't worry, we'll be able to change the motion—we, in Canada, are interested in what Canada is going to do over there. We have 2,500 soldiers there. It's not a big contingency if you want to call it a war. We are there to provide security. The most important aspect of that is to build the Afghan army, the police, and the judicial system so that they can take over. Afghanistans have to take over.

Canadians are saying that we are providing security. We are not in a war. We are there to provide that umbrella, as has been pointed out, so that the Afghan people can build. You rightly pointed out that with all these factions arising out of the war and everything else, it's a tough time getting them on the table. You can't talk to the hard-core Taliban, but you can talk to the soft-core Taliban. The old president has already issued a statement saying he is willing to talk. I think all these are steps in the right direction.

We want to see progress. I want to hear from you as to whether progress towards building Afghanistan is taking place slowly but surely and whether it's going in a direction so that Canadians can be assured that their dollars in diplomacy and development, as well as the lives that Canadians have lost, are working toward the people of Afghanistan.

● (1620)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Weera.

Mr. Seddiq Weera: The Canadian contribution is quite significant in Afghanistan. Moving towards institutions that are built and the security that people feel in half or more than half of the country are tangible results.

There is a huge gap that I'm trying to bring to the attention of everyone here. That is the lack of a political process. I'm saying that everything else you do to improve development is good and to improve coordination is very good. To increase troops? There is a question.

I'm saying that without having stability and security, which you can achieve through a political process, the investment might be at least partly wasted. We are losing Canadian lives in Afghanistan. There is $1.2 billion, at least until 2011, being spent with the generous support of the Canadian government, taxpayers' money.

But there is still a counter-insurgency focus, and that focus is going to fail us. Even Manley's report is telling us how we can win the military intervention. It's a military track that we are focusing on only to achieve peace, and I'm saying that you are fighting war on terror in Afghanistan in the wrong way. Isolate the terrorists and bring the Afghans to the political mainstream; for that there is no process.

Karzai announcing and everybody else announcing is not a process. That's not a track. That's a call for surrender. It didn't work in the Communist era. There was a reconciliation in the last years of Soviet-supported government, and it's not going to work now. It's just an invitation: come and join us. It's not asking what are the issues and how can we resolve them, back-and-forth shuttle diplomacy, track-one and track-two documentation.... This is the process that is missing.

The winning side of the civil war is also spending all of its energy protecting themselves from the fear, if the Taliban comes, of what will happen to them: “We are all going to be destroyed, so let's keep the power, let's have wealth, let's keep our positions in the military, in the intelligence.”

Both parties are using their energy for destruction, those who are not terrorists. That's why I'm trying to say the Canadian package is missing an important component. I feel morally obligated to tell the Canadian public that you might lose more of your sons and daughters, more of the many, but the approach without having a political track is not going to bring stability and reconstruction and good governance. Why? I know what assertion means. I'm a researcher. But I do have enough evidence to give me the confidence to make this statement.

● (1625)

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

We'll move to Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to our guests.

To quote from the Manley report for Mr. Obhrai, the first line in the introduction is, "Afghanistan is at war and Canadians are combatants"—just for the record, to clarify exactly what is going on around here.

I just want to say to two of our panellist guests that I understand your expertise, your background. This panel, however—and it's a question of relevance—is looking at CIDA's participation in Afghanistan and making sure it investigates possible approaches to establishing a lasting peace. I appreciate your expertise from a military background.

I also know that your organization is a recipient of funds from the government and from NATO. I think that's important to underline because of what we're trying to do at this committee, different from the defence committee. You're receiving $500,000 from the government to give it advice. You're shaking your head, so I guess I'm wrong in that. But I have the contract here to the Conference of Defence Associations for your contract date, 2007, and it is until, interestingly enough, 2011. It's a multi-year contract to provide advice.

I just want to say this for the record, because I wasn't aware that you were coming to committee. I say this with the utmost respect; I'm the grandson of two World War I veterans—

Col Alain Pellerin: We were invited by the chair.

Mr. Paul Dewar: By the chair. That's what I was trying to get to.

We didn't know about this, Chair, until late last night. I know, and I was about to ask you—

The Chair: First of all, Mr. Dewar, they are on the list.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Well, not on the one I had. And last night, late, I got the....

I'm not taking issue with you; I'm just perplexed as to how we ended up at the last minute with—

The Chair: No, no, just a moment here.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Pellerin, this isn't about you; it's about them.

The Chair: Mr. Dewar, first of all, what happens is the clerk issues the invitations. I guess Mr. Pellerin—

Mr. Paul Dewar: So it was on the initiation of the clerk, not anyone else?

The Chair: Yes, it's through the list the clerk has.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay.

I just wanted to lay that down, because the reason I'm concerned—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have a point of order, Chair.

Mr. Paul Dewar: This isn't on my time, I hope, Chair, because we have very little time, and I want to get to the issue at hand.

The Chair: On a point of order, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I didn't ask for a point of order. I was saying we're at war, and according to the clerk—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Part of this committee is to invite everyone, to get a balanced view. If this party does not like what—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Is this a point of order, or debate?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: It is, because then this thing becomes unbalanced. It's against the NDP dictatorship, which they want—

The Chair: Okay, we have Mr. MacKenzie coming after.

Mr. Obhrai, just one moment. I will accept that.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Talk about balance.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Dewar—

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, I welcome your response.

The Chair: On to your point, Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes. I just have a problem with the way this panel...not with our guests. I have an issue with the last-minute.... I got it late, and I apologize if this is—

The Chair: At the last minute we were all looking for witnesses.

Everyone who is appearing today has been given very short notice as to their appearance today. In fact, the clerk at one point said she had tried eight. There were none of those eight, and some of these folks were able to come, so that's the reason.

We'll go back to your time, Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'll go right to the questions.

I just want to put it on the record, in terms of the background of the Conference of Defence Associations, that you do receive money from both NATO and from the government. Is that a fact or not?

Col Alain Pellerin: Mr. Chair, can I address that?

● (1630)

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's a question.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Col Alain Pellerin: We do get a grant from the Department of National Defence. We've been in existence for 75 years—

Mr. Paul Dewar: I understand.

Col Alain Pellerin: —and we've been receiving grants, so it's not a question of pointing a finger at this government.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'm not.

Col Alain Pellerin: The money we got from NATO is $5,000 to run our annual seminar next week—

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's good.

Col Alain Pellerin: —and that has nothing to do.... So you're putting aspersions on the character of the CDA, which is—

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, I'm not. I'm simply stating a fact, Chair, that the money they received.... I would ask the same of the panellists here, which I will in a second.

My question is actually to our guest, and it is this. For the record, since we're into it, it says here that under the contract that is received —

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Excuse me, I have the floor.

Mr. Wajid Khan: I have a point of order.

Mr. Paul Dewar: He's not recognizing you.

Mr. Wajid Khan: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Mr. Chair, can we get to the questioning rather than—

The Chair: Mr. Khan, that's not a point of order.

With all due respect, the NDP have their time and I'm planning on giving them their time.

Continue, Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I was going to get to my questions, but I'm being interrupted.

I'm just pointing out that one of the things that is conditional in the grants is support of the Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces and their mandate. I'm reading from the grant application.

My question to Mr. Weera is simple.

You have said that the counter-insurgency approach, which is being advocated by the other panellists, which is being advocated by the government, and which is now actually being proposed by the Liberal Party to be continued till 2011—unless they've changed their policy again.... But I'm asking you, in terms of the UN and what it can do here, what are some of the institutions within the UN that can provide a space and a place and make sure reconciliation and peace negotiations are attempted?

Are there institutions within the UN that you would point to that would actually do that kind of work?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Weera, you have approximately 30 seconds.

Mr. Seddiq Weera: The United Nations had a track record of negotiating in the nineties. Brahimi said off the record to someone in the Afghan government, and I'm quoting here, that the biggest mistake he made is—Bonn was probably not the best place, but later on, in January 2002—that it did not include the Taliban in the peace negotiations.

But I learned that the mandate of the United Nations, the Security Council, does not have peacemaking explicitly. That's what needs to be addressed.

The UN is the best placed, it is trusted, it has the infrastructure. We need a neutral body to broker peace. If Afghans could have done it among themselves, why would war and terror be housed in Afghanistan today?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Weera.

That concludes our first hour. I want to thank all our guests for being here today. We very much appreciate it. I know Mr. Boivin had his presentation written out, and we will translate that presentation and see that it's circulated to all members, although his time was shorter than what he had anticipated.

Yes, Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Can I make one quick point of order? Mr. Chairman, in defence of the clerk, we received a revised witness list for hearings on Afghanistan, and Mr. Pellerin and former Major-General Lewis MacKenzie are on it, so when Mr. MacKenzie comes, we should also note that he is on the list as well.

Unfortunately, the witness we asked for got ill today and wasn't here, but this is the list you should be looking at, ladies and gentlemen.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

We will suspend and we'll come back—

Hon. Raymond Chan: One more point. Can I ask the panel here today to give us written answers to those questions that were not able to be answered in person today?

The Chair: Very good point, Mr. Chan. There were a number of questions, I think, especially from Mr. Patry. If they could be responded to in some way, we would appreciate it.

We'll suspend for about one or two minutes and we'll come back.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (1635)

The Chair: I'll call the second portion of today's meeting to order.

In our second hour we'll hear from retired General Lewis MacKenzie, who is appearing as an individual before our committee. We'll also hear from Strategic Forecasting Inc., Kamran Bokhari, director of Middle East analysis.

Welcome, gentlemen, to our committee. You've seen how we operate here. We look forward to your comments, and then we will move into the first round of questions.

If I could have a little more order, please. Thank you.

Mr. MacKenzie, or General MacKenzie—

General (Retired) Lewis MacKenzie (As an Individual): No, no, I'm “Mister”.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for the invitation,

[*English*]

even though it came a bit late last night.

I'd like to start off by saying that nobody is paying me for anything, and I didn't know I was the second choice on the list of people who were supposed to show up today.

By the way, the sheet I was sent told me I had 10 minutes, so I'll aim for that. There's is no time for an introduction, but thanks for inviting me.

I want to point out that in Afghanistan today we have, for the first time in recorded military history, individual nations providing contingents to a multinational force and dictating exactly what they can or can't do once they arrive in theatre. It's actually given the word “caveat” a really pejorative meaning. In all other circumstances in the last half of the 20th century, as far as I know, the mandate creating the multinational force dictated, before the force got there, the limits of what it could do in theatre.

In my last two UN commands, involving troops from 42 countries, every one of the countries had exactly the same restrictions on how I could employ them. I knew those restrictions, but they were exactly the same for everybody. In UNPROFOR in 1992, when we and the headquarters were forced out of Sarajevo, I wanted to take a fighting force back in to secure the airport. Not one of the 31 countries could legally agree without permission from their capital, as this kind of action was not included in the mandate. In fact, I was quite proud of the fact that the Canadian government was the first to agree to operate beyond our mandate. Shortly after, the Dutch followed suit.

In Afghanistan we have the bizarre situation of individual countries dictating what their contingents will do within a multinational force. It's a commander's worst bloody nightmare, particularly when NATO has provided him with about 50% of the troops he needs to achieve his mission in a timely manner. This is not my comment only, but also that of a previous ISAF commander on his return to the U.K.

In the past, when I would rant against the failure of the United Nations New York leadership in places like Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and East Timor, the latter before Australia rescued it, I thought to myself that if only NATO ran this particular mission, the alliance would sort it out in no time at all. Was I wrong! After the ill-conceived bombing campaign, on NATO's 50th anniversary, against Serbia, Kosovo, I debated General Wesley Clark at the Wye River in the U.S. on the wisdom of the decision to bomb, and after the debate he shared a story with me.

During the bombing campaign he was making small talk with the Greek ambassador, and he said to the Greek ambassador, “Coming from an Orthodox country, this must be really difficult for you. There must be a lot of controversy in Greece about this bombing campaign.” “No,” said the ambassador, “there's no controversy at all—we're all against it. But we're in NATO, so we're here.” Why? No risk. Nobody scratched themselves, let alone suffered a casualty or a fatality.

Based on NATO's performance in Afghanistan, I've discovered that NATO, regrettably, is an even bigger debating society than the Security Council.

Now to our Canadian role. I'll provide a little background, because I think it's important for context. In early 2002, the delayed deployment of 3PPCLI, owing to a lack of strategic lift and very hesitant high-level decision-making beyond Canada's control, took us to Kandahar. We were not there for bloody peacekeeping, as even the media keeps reporting, but as one-third of the combat power of the U.S's airborne brigade, part of the 101st Airborne Division. We stayed there six months, and everybody remembers when it ended.

Coincidentally, as we were leaving a training exercise, my regiment suffered four killed and eight seriously injured in a friendly fire incident. The Prime Minister of the day said he couldn't find 800 soldiers to replace 3PPCLI, until somebody came sniffing around in Canada looking for support for the Iraq invasion. Then, magically, after a one- year hiatus, we found 2,000 soldiers—over the objections of the military, which is fine, since politicians make these decisions—to send to Kabul to secure the capital. Poor President Karzai was more like the mayor of Kabul in those days, because he couldn't get outside the city limits.

In early 2006, Canadians returned to Kandahar, and I was there at the time they were moving south. This is important: they found the Taliban surrounding the city, organized in company groups of up to 100. Their strategic objective was to take over the city, their Jerusalem, the historic capital. This threat was soundly defeated by those led by our Canadian battle group. I think that's an important point.

● (1640)

Let me make an analogy. How many of you have heard people say, “My God, wasn't the world a safer place during the Cold War?” Well, look at it through the prism of the worst-case scenario—a nuclear holocaust, the end of mankind, and the destruction of the world. Things were pretty serious during the Cold War. Now look at Afghanistan through the prism of the worst-case scenario. Two years ago, it was losing Kandahar city and losing southern Afghanistan. What we have in Afghanistan today is an enemy that's been pushed back from the capital. They are being pushed out of areas that the Canadians and our allies have secured. This is classic insurgency, and not the grossly misused Vietnam-era description I keep hearing, “search and destroy”.

The ISAF mission is to expand the secure areas until they overlap and to maintain the security for the local population until they trust you. They, the local population, will defeat the insurgency, not us. They defeat it by not supporting it and by trusting that we aren't going to turn tail and leave ahead of schedule.

NATO's challenge is to maintain the security in those areas, and that takes troops on the ground. Without more of them, the number of secured areas are limited until the ANA—the Afghan National Army—can take over more of that task.

This is not 2002, when we went into the mountains around Tora Bora searching for bin Laden and his supporters to kill or capture them. Our soldiers now create or expand secure areas for the local population. If the Taliban resist our mission—in other words, seek to destroy us—we deal with them.

The thought that the Canadian battle group in southern Afghanistan could play a meaningful role, with the caveat—and it is a caveat, no matter what anybody says—not to participate in the establishment and holding of these secure areas is, in a word, ridiculous.

To conclude, imagine the commander of region south—Major-General Marc Lessard, a Canadian, who is commanding troops in all three southern provinces—calling his 12 commanders together, including the Canadians, after February of next year and saying, "I'm going to establish a new secure area and I need six nations, and Canada, you're one of them. We're going to push the resisters out of that area and we are going to establish a secure area over a hundred square kilometres for the local Afghans, the IDPs, and the refugees to come home." And the Canadian CO says, "Sorry sir, I can't do it." That's just not acceptable.

Thank you.

● (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKenzie.

We'll move to Mr. Bokhari.

Mr. Kamran Bokhari (Director of Middle East Analysis, Strategic Forecasting, Inc): Honourable chairman and members of the committee, thank you so much for inviting me to share my thoughts. I too was invited late last night, and unfortunately I don't have a written document to share with you.

A lot can be said. One is perplexed with the complexity of the topic and about how to size it down to seven to ten minutes, but let me try to highlight or underscore certain issues.

I think the best way to look at the situation in Afghanistan is to ask how to get from where we are to where we need to be. Obviously, where we need to be means Afghanistan being more or less stable, so that NATO forces can begin withdrawing.

Before I jump into that, I want to highlight something that is very disappointing to me as an analyst: the huge amount of poverty of thought that exists globally on this issue. This poverty of thought is intellectual more than anything else. It is caused by three things. First, there's the sheer superficiality of knowledge about Afghanistan —and of course about other areas, but since we're dealing with Afghanistan, we'll stick with that. Number two, there is very little knowledge of the complexity that is Afghanistan. Number three is that there are just too many voices, and the real crux, if you will, of the matter is drowning within those voices.

So where are we right now? We are witnessing a surge in the insurgency, both in terms of actual fighting, the guerrilla-style fighting, and suicide bombings.

We're also seeing this in neighbouring Pakistan, which wasn't the case, at least a year and a half ago—in the last year and a half we've witnessed an uptake in Pakistan. The Pashtun areas of Pakistan are undergoing a Talibanization, if you will.

The debate, the discussion, amongst NATO states, at least at the surface level and to the global audience, shows a sense of disarray concerning what needs to be done. What is the objective? How are we supposed to reach it? All of this is boosting the confidence of the Taliban.

I can tell you for a fact, based on intelligence, what every single Taliban commander is telling the fighters who are under his command is: these people are going to leave; they're only here for a short period of time; and our job is not to win the battles but to make sure they leave sooner rather than later.

So this debate about whether we should stay, whether this is a military conflict, whether we should engage in combat, engage in development work—all of that is only adding to the confidence of the Taliban while we're debating the whole issue.

Of course, the Taliban are being approached. There's a lot of talk about a negotiated settlement. What does that mean? Do we negotiate from a position of relative weakness? Do we allow the other side to dictate terms that at this point in time are not favourable by any stretch of the imagination?

Negotiated settlement also assumes that we know who to negotiate with. We tend to look at the Taliban as this one email address or one door that we can knock on and they'll come out and say okay, we're ready to talk. That's not the case; neither do we have an address, nor is this a monolithic entity.

Quickly going through what the Taliban constitute today, there are at least three categories. I agree that these are theoretical categories and that reality is much messier, but as an analyst, I can't help but come up with theoretical models.

One type of Taliban are those who are in country, in Afghanistan, who are commanders who report back to the Shura, led by Mullah Omar. They're based in Afghanistan; they're waging the insurgency there. Then there are Taliban who are connected to elements within the Pakistani state and society; and then there are Taliban who are connected to al Qaeda.

These are three separate, very broad categories. These are not factions. These are not well-defined groups but broad categories. How can we begin to talk about negotiating when the Taliban themselves are a complex phenomenon?

● (1650)

I mentioned earlier that the insurgency is growing. Of course, this is not the nineties: the Taliban are not taking over territory; that's not what they're aiming for. They're aiming to make life difficult for NATO forces so that the whole idea or confusion in NATO capitals about this perhaps not being the right mission, that we need to modify it, that we're not sure what we're doing, is exacerbated in our minds, so that one day we will pick up and leave. Will that happen? I don't know, but that's what they're trying to do.

We did not see Taliban activity in the Herat region; that's not a traditional Taliban area. North of Kabul we're seeing activity in Kapisa and Badghis provinces, and even along the Turkmen border, which are all areas of operation. Obviously, the supply lines are not running that long. We're not talking about infantry, but about the ability to stage attacks. The recent attack on the Serena Hotel is an eye-opener to all of us as to the enhanced capabilities of this insurgency.

We tend to talk about either military conflict or negotiated settlement as if it's a black and white dichotomy, an either/or situation. It is not, because every military conflict ends with a negotiated settlement—and each side knows that. There is no war for the sake of war; we're not going to be in Afghanistan for the long haul or just for the sake of occupying the country. We need to get beyond that and to understand how to reach a negotiated settlement. Right now it is too early for a negotiated settlement, because we don't know what that negotiated settlement would look like, let alone try to negotiate it.

Pakistan is in disarray because of the political turmoil and the growing jihadist insurgency. Pakistan has a large role to play in the future stabilization of Afghanistan, so we need to see how that plays out.

Perhaps there are lessons to be learned from the American experience in Iraq. There was a time, when the regime was disbanded, when we saw a de-Baathification process. Now we're seeing a re-Baathification process. Perhaps the solution lies in bringing back certain pragmatic or moderate Taliban—but we're not there yet.

There's a question of why we need to stay in Afghanistan, and this is becoming the hallmark of the debate. We definitely need to develop institutions, but what are the primary institutions that we need to develop and upon which every other institution will rest? These are the security institutions, the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army. But they're not there yet, and they're not going to be there for a very long time. We need to admit that and to acknowledge it. Until such a time, we need to be able to support these institutions.

You see, you can't build anything when you're being shot at. If you're being shot at, you're going to shoot back. Our troops, our NATO forces, are having to do two things: develop, and keep the Taliban from shooting at them, and of course at those in Afghanistan who support the NATO mission. We can only hope that by 2011 the ANP and ANA can increasingly begin to take responsibility for security, but that is something we can't discuss in greater detail because this is a very futuristic assessment.

I think that ground reality will determine in 2011, or in the years to come, where we stand. Instead of having this lack of a coherent policy and allowing this to become a political debate or a punching bag for a political vendetta, I think the politicians should let the technocrats, the military commanders, the intelligence officials, and the experts give them the ground reality upon which any further policy is to be based.

Am I running out of time?

● (1655)

The Chair: Yes, you are, sir.

Mr. Kamran Bokhari: I will wrap up by saying that, sure, they—the Taliban—are not winning, but we're not winning either. We shouldn't take comfort from that. Therefore, we need to do what needs to be done, which is to support the security institutions that can then build other institutions.

I'd like to end by saying that my organization doesn't take money from anybody. We are a very for-profit organization, and we don't take any cheques.

Thank you.

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

We'll go to the first round, and Mr. Patry and Mr. Wilfert, I'll let you folks sort that out.

Go ahead, Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: General MacKenzie, at the beginning you talked about the rotation of Canadian Forces in and out of Afghanistan. Quickly, there are two things: one, do you believe in the principle of rotation?

Two, on page 34 of the Manley report, it talks about the move towards reorienting our mission there from combat to intensified training of the Afghan army and police—which we all believe is a laudable goal. The question is, if you rotate, you will then, presumably, on both of your flanks—if the Canadians are there—take more of the offensive heavy lifting, if you will.

I want your comments on that, and then I'll turn it over to Mr. Martin to put his question on the table.

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: Yes, I must have misspoke on rotation. I don't believe in rotation. You waste all of the time and energy and money you've invested into contacts and knowledge of the area and getting to know the local people, the people who are going to win the insurgency. The rotation, in my world, is always the nation itself rotating its own troops in and out, which is exactly what we're doing.

As far as moving from combat to training, that's exactly what's going on now. On my first trip to Afghanistan, I'll tell you, I was pretty uneasy standing among about 200 soldiers all armed with live ammunition, AK-47s. A year later when I went back, I participated in a rundown, a live firing exercise, at platoon level. I was as totally at ease as I would be with Canadian soldiers. They're coming a long way. You don't have to teach Afghans how to fight; they know how to fight. What you have to show them and mentor them on is combined operations where large groups are operating together and maybe injecting some indirect fire or artillery or whatever, controlling air. But as far as sneaking through the hills or running across the fields and attacking people, you don't have to teach the Afghans how to do that.

So we're doing that. We're weaning ourselves from the combat role, by way of percentage of energy expended, to the training role, and it has actually been quite successful. There's a problem with the training. For some reason, NATO has the Germans doing one thing, the French doing another thing, the Americans doing another thing, us doing another thing. We all have slightly different tactics, and when they come together, it could be done better.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Thank you, Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: Thank you both for being here today.

Mr. Bokhari, what are the internal political mechanisms that are required to deal with the insurgency that is coming not only from Pakistan but also from other countries in the region? As a second part to that question, is a regional working group that includes Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and other countries required?

General MacKenzie, the failure to deal with the Afghan National Police has been, I'm sure, very concerning to you as to others. In your view, General, what do you think is required, and how do we get our allies to make the strategic investments in the Afghan National Police to be able to ensure that they are equipped, trained, and paid for the job they do, along with the two other components of the pillars of security, the Afghan judiciary and their corrections system?

Thank you.

● (1700)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

Mr. MacKenzie or Mr. Bokhari or whoever.

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: Well, Mr. Martin, ever since we started training the police, I believed it was not going to work. The reason I think it's not going to work is because they're trying to establish a national police force. The national army is working, but the national police force has problems, because even when they're paid, they have to hitchhike 1,200 kilometres to get the money home to mother, that type of thing, although they are working on some electronic transfer now. Nevertheless, there's a loyalty within the tribe. There's a loyalty within the region, within the province.

I personally—and I'm no expert—would see this organized as a minimum on a provincial basis as opposed to a national police force. The way the police have been paid in the past—and I ran across this in my three tours in the Middle East—is to have a little share. If you're broke, you put up a roadblock in front of your police outpost and when people go by, you charge them a toll, and that's how you have enough money to eat. If you pay the police chief, in most places where I've been involved, the chief takes half of it and then shares the rest with the police.

So it's a problem that I think is better addressed at the provincial level as opposed to the national level.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Chan.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Mr. Bokhari, based on what the generals have said, that we only have 50% of the troops we need out there, and with all the caveats and so on, I guess we don't have to argue, well, we're now south. Everybody knows that the NATO commitment isn't there and they can all predict that sooner or later we have to leave. You said it's going to take a long time for the institutions to be established such that they could carry on with the rebuilding.

How long do you think, with the current commitment we have, that would take?

Mr. Kamran Bokhari: It's very difficult to actually give a date or a timeline arbitrarily like that, because there are a lot of variables involved, but what I can tell you is that if we are, at this point in time—and when we say "we", we mean NATO member states—still debating as to what needs to be done. That alone tells me that it's going to be some time before we can actually invest and spend that time, instead of debating what needs to be done, implementing a more or less coherent policy.

Once we start implementing, then we'll see the results. Right now we're not in that situation. Again, I'll repeat that by 2011 I hope the ANA and the ANP can begin to increasingly take responsibility. As they stand up, we can stand down, using the words of George Bush in the case of Iraq. That's the model that I see.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bokhari.

We'll move to Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you for being here today.

General, you mentioned at the outset something that I didn't know: this is the first time that a mission has involved soldiers from different countries and that those countries have determined the conditions in which they are going to work. Obviously, as we noted, some countries say, for example, that their soldiers won't go out at night, and so on. I imagine that's having an impact on the present mission.

Can that be changed? Is it necessary? What effect is that having on the mission? It's all the more important to know this since we, as politicians, are accountable to the Canadian public, which is telling us that it does agree that we should take part in this war, for the reasons that were given us at the outset and that have not been confirmed. People have trouble understanding what our soldiers are doing there. For the average person, if Canada wants to withdraw, it should give advance notice, and it should be able to do so. That has nothing to do with the mission as a whole, since Canada is one of a number of countries. It's up to NATO to find soldiers elsewhere.

What you're saying about the formation of the mission seems to me important for our understanding of the mission as such. As an army general, what is your vision of this question? How can we continue in what is clearly a war with partners who don't feel more bound by an obligation to continue? I understand that was the situation at the outset, when people made the commitment. In any case, what we were told was that it was for a certain time and for a certain purpose. Can you explain to us something of your understanding of the mission currently, from that standpoint?

● (1705)

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Barbot.

Mr. MacKenzie.

[*English*]

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: We are currently fighting for a draw, and with NATO it's unacceptable. The trick is how to change it, and so far that hasn't happened all that much. It's totally unacceptable that NATO nations put caveats on how their troops will be employed.

I trained with NATO for almost my entire military career in what they called "interoperability", in the central front in Germany. Everybody followed the same rules, and there were no restrictions. Everybody showed up to bomb a sovereign nation from 10,000 feet, no risk, everybody was there, no restrictions.

Now we have risk, and we have blood and gold being expended and all kinds of restrictions are showing up. In Turkey, 700,000 troops who could be there helping us are sitting on their hands—just 1% of them, for heaven's sake. Some of them are busy in northern Iraq, but not that many, and they're outstanding soldiers. I just don't understand it.

For over a year I've said, look, if we don't get additional troops in Kandahar, I won't be at the head of the parade in 2009 saying Canada should stay behind. The trouble is nobody much has shown up, and therefore if we leave, we lose Kandahar province, we lose southern Afghanistan. I'm backed into a corner. God bless our people for what they're doing and their families and the government for supporting them.

The wash-up when this thing is over is not going to be pretty. I see a new alliance of like-minded nations to deal with problems that are in our interest, and they're nations like the U.K., U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. I am very disappointed in NATO, and I never thought I'd have to say that.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: To what extent can adding another 1,000 soldiers, which Canada is currently requesting, change anything in the present situation?

[*English*]

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: I recommended 4,000, but with 1,000 more there would be more secure areas in which you could maintain security. Our problem up until now is that we move into an area, we secure it, and then we have to stay there and stop securing more areas. They were turning it over to maybe 10 Afghan policemen who were hanged by their heels and had their throats cut. It would allow you to have more soldiers to stay and secure. People don't trust you in the first couple of months or year. You have to show them they can count on you to be there.

One thing I've never understood—and I'll inject this very quickly into the conversation—is why the Taliban just doesn't stop fighting and just disappear from the battlefield. Could you imagine what would happen in NATO? Within six months all of us would be screaming for our troops to be brought home. We'd bring them home, and then they'd come back and occupy.

Academics have told me it's because of the macho attitude. It's why when they pick on a convoy they don't pick on the fuel bowser, the most valuable target, but they'll take on the most heavily armoured vehicle in the column because it's macho. At night you can't get them to sneak around and be quiet and cut a few throats. No, they'll scream and holler and fire their guns because that's the macho thing to do. They're great fighters, they're warriors, but if they just stopped fighting, NATO would collapse within a year.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Barbot, for bringing those questions.

We'll move to the government side, to Mr. Khan and then Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for being here, gentlemen. I'm delighted that we heard some views that reflect the practical experiences on the battlefield, as well as your analysis, Mr. Bokhari.

I'll touch upon a couple of things. Mr. Weera is not here, but my friend, Mr. Dewar, is here. This gentleman is the senior advisor to the Independent National Commission on Strengthening Peace and senior policy advisor to the minister of education in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. I'm sure he was being paid from both organizations. He was here giving us some advice. I wonder what advice he gave to his government, which has not been adhered to?

Getting back to the subject at hand, I'd like to point out some of the developments that have taken place, which could not have happened without our being in Afghanistan as part of NATO: over six million kids are in school, one-third of them girls; 83% of the population has health care services; there are 40,000 fewer infant deaths per year; we have 600-plus projects in Kandahar; 530 councils have been elected; total projects, 16,500; and 19,200 community councils to tell us what projects to do.

I also want to touch upon some of the military operations that we currently call "war". If the troops are there to secure a situation, as with the Kajaki Dam producing electricity, they have to take action to secure the area, fix the dam, and provide support to businesses and individuals. I am very surprised that we have taken our eyes off that aspect of this mission. The last combat casualty for our troops was in September of 2006. The rest of the casualties since then have not been in combat.

I would also like to ask you, General MacKenzie, what the effect is of the debate we are having at home—and there should be a debate—about whether we should pull our troops out or put caveats on them. Also tell me, please, because I've been searching and I have not found anywhere in the history of the world that we gave an exit date to the enemy: "Look, if we don't beat you by then, we're going to leave."

Could you answer that question, sir?

● (1710)

The Chair: Before you do, I'm going to have Mr. Goldring very quickly—

Mr. Wajid Khan: I have one quick question.

The Chair: Well, you won't get it in, if there's an answer.

Mr. Goldring, quickly.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): General MacKenzie, here is one quick item. You were on a TV program the other night where you corrected one of the reporters when he left the impression that the enemy was really up to as many as 40 million of the Pashtuns, and you corrected that because it gave an impossible kind of answer to it.

The second one is that an earlier presenter here said—and he brought politically biased commentary into it—Canada's commitment was a demonstration of an alliance with the United States rather than a response to a demonstrated need in Afghanistan. Yet he followed this up in his closing remarks by saying that there was sufficient military support by other governments to replace Canada's and calling for Canada to reduce its own military, which I suppose, by extension, would mean that the replacement government also would be sharing an alliance with the United States rather than responding to a need in Afghanistan. My point here is that we're having a bit of political obscuration going on, as well as some other comments that seem to need to be corrected.

Could you comment on those two?

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. MacKenzie.

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: I would just say that it is disappointing to me when I hear this referred to as "Bush's war", because just maybe he did something right in his presidency and maybe Afghanistan was one of those things. Not only that, I think half the Canadian population genuflects in the direction of UN headquarters in Manhattan on a daily basis, even though the only characteristic of most UN operations in the last 12 years has been the apology that follows the Srebrenicas, Rwandas, Bosnias, Croatias, and Somalias. They don't have a sterling record. Nevertheless, there's a UN resolution and the NATO charter was called, and that's 26 nations. They might not be doing a great job, but it is very much a multinational organization.

Did the Americans reduce their number of soldiers too much and send them to Iraq? Yes, but they should have been able to predict the future, I guess, and that's unfortunately the way it's turned out.

As for the end date, it's this damn UN resolution. That's what it is, the mandate—it's always been six months. UN mandates were always six months, from 1956 until now. Why? Because the Security Council only votes funds for six months and the UN Assembly only approves them for six months. So we all get used to six months. It doesn't apply to non-peacekeeping operations, but it is sort of in Afghanistan. Some troops are there for six months, some for nine, some for twelve. Nevertheless, to predict an end date.... I was asked that on television the other night: "What's going to happen in 2011?" I said, "I don't even know if I'm going to be here." Who the hell can predict what's going to happen in the world, let alone Afghanistan, in 2011? At least word it in such a way that we'll take a look at it a year before 2011, but not in 2008.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKenzie.

We'll move to Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our guests.

You've already declared your financial interests; I actually wasn't going to go there.

And I didn't mean to upset our guests. I was simply providing for the record where people receive their moneys from. There is a screening process for the moneys received, and part of the screening is the degree to which the activities give clear evidence that they support Canadian Forces policy.

● (1715)

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: You'll have to check with my wife for mine.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Same.

I want to just direct the committee back to what we're studying at this committee, and perhaps remind our guests. I'm not sure if they were given our motion, but our motion says that we're to conduct a study that is to assess, among other aspects, CIDA's participation in Afghanistan, also making sure to investigate possible approaches to establishing a lasting peace in Afghanistan.

As I hear both your testimonies, I guess I'm understanding that you would support what seems to be the direction of the Manley recommendations in saying...and maybe, Mr. MacKenzie, you would say that there needs to be more troops, not less. He says 1,000 and you're saying 4,000.

Am I correct in saying, to you first, Mr. MacKenzie, that you would follow not the Manley report but...?

I think it's interesting, when you look at the Manley report and the recommendations, that one could argue they certainly don't flow; certainly I would make that point.

So would it be correct to say that you support the recommendations but you say go further, that instead of 1,000 it should be 4,000?

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: I'm on record as saying that the force should have been doubled two years ago. In southern Afghanistan we needed 10,000 more, with 3,000 to 4,000 of those in Kandahar.

But perhaps I can address the CIDA issue. I have maybe a different opinion on that.

I think CIDA gets unnecessarily beaten up. They're very much long term, and they move the money through other institutions, that sort of thing. If we build these projects—as we did, as many of you who were there will know—and we have a Canadian flag on them, they're destroyed. Of 200 projects where we came in the back door and provided the project management, empowered the local people, and gave them the money, only one has been destroyed.

I know that the signature project with the Canadian flag is a popular idea. I just don't think it would last very long.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Well, this might be worthy of reporting somewhere, but I couldn't agree with you more. I think it's absurd—a 1950s, perhaps pre-colonial attitude—to say that we have to have signature projects.

For that matter, I think we look at CIDA as going and making everything well. Someone gave the analogy that CIDA is like going to a gym where they're going to deal with your physique: it's going to take a long time. We're looking at them as if they're going to be able to do triage, and they can't do that. We don't understand, really, what they're there to do. So I would agree with you on that. The question, I guess, is that....

You certainly know where we stand as a party, but it's one thing to say “Troops out”; I don't want you to leave with the message that this is our party's proposition. The proposition is that perhaps people should look at other ways of dealing with this conflict, this war, and of resolving it.

I note you mentioned many UN missions that didn't work, but some have. I was in El Salvador in the eighties, and we know that was counter-insurgency. The UN was involved there eventually, and the same with Cambodia and Timor, as you mentioned in your opening.

And I agree with you on NATO—for maybe different reasons—but do you not see any possibility of the UN...? The cart and the horse are mixed up here; you have NATO as a lead, and we believe —maybe you would disagree—that in fact the UN should be at the lead.

Do you see that as a no-win situation at all?

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: I don't see it as the ideal solution, because the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, who handles the military side in the UN, admitted a year and a half ago what the numbers have been saying for years: they're incapable of conducting military operations.

What I would see the UN doing, though, is that as they've now reappeared in Iraq.... There's too much emphasis on the military, but that doesn't mean you reduce the military. That means you increase the diplomatic side and the development side, as possible.

Right now, on the diplomatic side, I was delighted with what the Manley report said to the Prime Minister: grab this file and start phoning around to other NATO countries, as opposed to—with all due respect—just the ministers doing it.

That has been done, and it's had some modest—

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's a cabinet committee that is being chaired by Minister Emerson—

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: But what I'm talking about is—

Mr. Paul Dewar: —when he called NATO partners.

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: —the Prime Minister calling to the President of France, to the President of the United States—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes, asking for more troops, more supplies.

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: That's the level it has to be. It's had a modest impact. Whether it'll have more, I don't know.

The thing is that with fewer troops, you're going to continue to fight for a draw. You're not going to lose, but you're going to fight for a draw, and I don't know of any military alliance in history that has fought for a draw.

● (1720)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yet we can't win militarily.

The Chair: Thank you.

That pretty well concludes our testimony today and our questions.

Again, we want to thank both of you for appearing today. We appreciate it.

I have one question. I guess it's the prerogative of the chair.

You talked about the Afghani troops. The average income in Afghanistan is between a dollar and two dollars a day, based on GDP, for each person. What do we pay the Afghani troops we're trying to recruit?

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: When I was there it was $80 a month.

The Chair: So they're being fairly well paid in comparison with the average citizen.

Do you think that's enough?

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: No, because the Taliban will give you about $220 to $230, and the police are getting a little bit more. Once again, the problem is that you have to hitchhike home to the family to deliver the money. It might be a long way, and by that time you've been ripped off for about 20% of it, at least. And when you get home, you don't then turn around and come right back. You come back when you've run out of money. Therefore, the absentee rate is unbelievably high, except, for some reason, that the units that have been formed in southern Afghanistan are really quite reliable and are sticking around. There's a bit of an esprit within the organization. Don't ask me why it's there and not in the police force, other than for the fact that I think the police are more regionally oriented.

The Chair: Are Canadian dollars the major component of what the Afghan army is being paid with?

Gen Lewis MacKenzie: No. I'm speaking on thin ice here, but I don't think Canada is responsible for the payment. I think Canadian funds end up in the pool that goes to pay, but we don't physically.... We tried for a while at the police stations, where we have our men and women serving with the police, to actually pay the police themselves, as opposed to through the chief. I understand that was somewhat problematic, because it would have been humiliating to the chief.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much.

I'm going to ask the committee to stay. We have a couple of items of committee business, dealing with the budget, in order to get some witnesses here.

Again, thank you, General MacKenzie and Mr. Bokhari.

We will go in camera, as we are to discuss a budget. I ask that the committee stay fairly close.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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