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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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● (1535)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): We'll call this meeting to order. We are about five minutes late.

We have one witness who has not shown up yet from Montreal. If he does end up making it here, we will give him the opportunity to make an opening statement when he does.

This is meeting number 17 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Thursday, March 6, 2008. Today we're continuing our study of Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

As witnesses we have, from the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Peggy Mason, senior fellow; and from the University of Ottawa, Nipa Banerjee, professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, International Development and Globalization.

If retired Lieutenant Colonel Rémi Landry is able to make it here today, I would note he is from the University of Montreal.

Towards the end of our meeting we will have time for committee business, so we'll go to that.

I would invite our guests to give us their opening statements. Again, welcome here on a wintry March 6. Then we will go into a couple of rounds of questions.

We'll begin with Ms. Mason. Thank you for being here.

Ms. Peggy Mason (Senior Fellow, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs): Thank you very much for inviting me to give testimony before this committee.

You have my CV before you, I think. I would like to draw your attention in particular to my work over the past several years in training NATO officers, specifically the command group, for peace support and crisis stabilization operations, including for Afghanistan. My role in these training exercises as the special representative of the UN Secretary General is to help foster unity of effort and close cooperation between the military mission and the UN political mission, so that the military effort supports the overarching peace process. This kind of training is an effort NATO has been involved in for many years now.

I would like to situate my remarks today in the context of what has come before. I am a member of the Afghanistan Reference Group, although I'm here speaking in my personal capacity. I helped prepare the document that formed the basis for the presentations last November by Stefan Lehmeier of the Peace Operations Working Group of the NGO network Peacebuild, which I chair; and by Gerry Ohlsen, of the Group of 78, of which I am a past president. I wish also to associate myself with the testimony of Graeme MacQueen of McMaster University and, in the new round of hearings now under way, of Seddiq Weera of the Afghanistan Ministry of Education, and before that, of McMaster University. Of course, that preliminary report very well summarizes the testimony I'm referring to.

Stefan Lehmeier, Graeme MacQueen, Gerry Ohlsen, and Seddiq Weera have all come before you, as I do, asserting that there is an urgent need for a reorientation of the international focus in Afghanistan from the failing counter-insurgency campaign to the development of a comprehensive, multi-dimensional peace process based on UN best practices in diplomatic peacemaking—ideally led by a high-level UN envoy of the stature of Lakhdar Brahimi, someone acceptable to all sides of the conflict and with deep knowledge and understanding of the region and of the craft of negotiation.

Professor Graeme MacQueen, when he was here, outlined some ideas already tested on the ground in Afghanistan on engendering local dialogues as the first step toward a more formal negotiating process. Seddiq Weera talked about his discussions with many disaffected Afghan fighters, warlords, drug lords, and Taliban commanders, their willingness to negotiate—not all of them, of course, but many of them—and their desire for “peace with honour”. He also talked about the impossibility of the Karzai government—however much it may want to—ever making real progress on good governance when its primary concern has to be watching its back, as the Taliban and other armed forces aligned with them make seemingly inexorable gains in their armed battle for control of Afghanistan. I associate myself fully with these remarks, which are on the record before this committee in the first part of its hearings.

The urgency is even greater now as the security situation, which has steadily deteriorated since the end of 2001, continues to deteriorate further, to the extent that the former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, General James Jones, in a new report for the Atlantic Council, has called the military situation in Afghanistan a “strategic stalemate” now. Some other analysts would go further and say the momentum is now clearly with the insurgents.

Since your preliminary report was released, we have heard from the Manley panel. I would draw the committee's attention to some key insights in the narrative of the Manley report, which are fully in line with the analysis offered by ARG members, and also by Seddiq Weera.

The deteriorating security situation is noted on page 12 of the report. There is also the recognition on page 17 that the current fighting is a continuation of the 30-year civil war, and an acknowledgement on that same page of the need for an eventual political reconciliation and for Canada to support efforts to that end.

● (1540)

On page 27 there is a recognition of the key role of regional actors and the devilish complexity of the regional situation. I have a quote in my paper from the Manley report on that regional situation, but in the interests of time, I won't go into it.

On page 33 of the report there is a call for Canada to press for a "comprehensive political-military strategy and for more coherent leadership" of the international effort.

Having concluded that more of the same will lead to failure in Afghanistan, the report then sets out a series of specific recommendations. In addition to those recommendations that everyone has been focusing on in the media relating to more troops from NATO and more medium-lift helicopters, the report recommends a more robust Canadian diplomatic position, including a heightened focus on the regional dimension, and Canadian support for the early appointment of a high-level civilian representative of the UN Secretary General is urged.

But when the precise wording of these recommendations is considered, one finds they do not actually include anything about Canada seeking support from within NATO, and the international community more broadly, for a new political framework for Afghanistan with diplomatic peacemaking at its heart. The role of the new UN special envoy is to be specifically focused on ensuring "greater coherence in the civilian and military effort", which surely is secondary to the development of a winning political strategy around which to align the diverse array of international actors in Afghanistan.

As for the regional dimension, here is the recommendation: "Forceful representations with Afghanistan's neighbours, in particular with Pakistan, to reduce the risks posed to regional stability and security by recent developments in that country".

No country could possibly have been more forceful in its representations to Pakistan than the United States in seeking to get Pakistan to rein in the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the border areas. It didn't work. Exhortations, no matter how forceful, must be buttressed with international support for processes that address the deep democratic deficit that is at the roots of Pakistani insecurity in the border areas. The results of the recent elections in Pakistan offer a new opening to begin to do this, given the stated desire of the winners of that election to pursue political dialogue with disaffected local leaders in the border area.

What about the strategic review of Afghanistan policy now ongoing in NATO, the results of which will be announced at the Bucharest summit in April? The Manley report is silent on any inputs by Canada to this process other than to push for greater military-civilian coherence, and focuses instead on the idea that the Canadian government should concentrate its efforts on getting NATO to agree to an additional thousand soldiers as a condition for Canada's continued military participation in the south.

It seems to me that Canada should be using its very hard-won influence within NATO, literally purchased with the blood of Canadian soldiers, to seek to secure the support of the alliance's 26 members—comprising much of the key donor community in Afghanistan as well as the troop-contributing nations—for what is most urgently needed: a new overarching political framework for international engagement in Afghanistan with much more emphasis on creating the conditions for a comprehensive peace process.

I believe that there is already a lot of support for this approach, not least within those NATO countries opposed to their forces' participating in the counter-insurgency military effort. Eminent persons, like Lakhdar Brahimi, who was himself a special representative of the Secretary General in Afghanistan in the period of the Bonn process, have spoken out about the urgent need for diplomatic peacemaking. What is lacking is a country willing to take a leadership role within NATO to secure agreement on this new approach.

In these opening remarks, I have not addressed the revised motion before Parliament to extend Canada's military mission in Afghanistan. I would be pleased to take questions on that important topic. It follows from my opening comments, however, that a reorientation of the military mission alone is, in effect, putting the cart of military support before the horse of a winning political strategy to bring a sustainable peace to Afghanistan.

Thank you very much.

● (1545)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mason.

Welcome to Lieutenant Colonel Rémi Landry. We heard that your —

Lieutenant-Colonel Rémi Landry (Associate Researcher, Research Group in International Security, Université de Montréal): The train was late by 45 minutes.

The Chair: With the winter weather, we can expect all kinds of things, but we're very happy you're here.

In the meantime, we'll go to Ms. Banerjee. I believe she has some opening comments, as well.

Professor Nipa Banerjee (Faculty of Social Sciences, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, International Development and Globalization, University of Ottawa): Right. My comments are more from the development perspective. I don't know if I have recommendations as strong as Peggy's, but I will refer to a number of issues that should be taken into consideration.

The analysis in this presentation is based on my experience living and working in Afghanistan for three years, my continuing visits to the country, and findings of research on the results of the international community's actions in other post-conflict countries.

I will focus on seven areas: the Afghan people's views; the objective of Canada's mission in Afghanistan and the strategies required to address the objectives; the effectiveness of aid; linking capacity building to state building; aid dependency and the poppy economy; the volume of aid and the number of Canadian civilian deployments; and whether the war is winnable.

Here is the view from the Afghan window. Afghans have no interest in going back to the Taliban regime. In their view, an army presence is necessary for the establishment of initial security, but they are not in favour of the continued, long-term presence of foreign troops in their country. They prefer the increased visibility and presence of their own government.

They are disappointed by the deteriorating security situation. Despite heightening security concerns in general, common Afghans bear positive attitudes towards Canada and Canadians. Educated Afghans, however, disagree with the claims of foreign troops on progress in winning the war and their argument that increased suicide bombing is an indicator of the Taliban losing ground. Afghan officials regard use of this indicator as reflective of insensitivity to the Afghan people's plight, when two suicide bombings managed to kill 250 Afghan civilians in two days recently.

With regard to clarity of Canada's Afghanistan mission objective, Canada must set a clear objective. In 2001 the objective set by the international community was to build a new Afghan nation by promoting reconstruction, reform, and development that would improve the stability and security environment and expand the Afghan government's legitimacy. Afghans dreamt of such a secure nation and poured their hearts into electing a president to lead them.

Their dreams were shattered, not because their material well-being has not been met. In fact, given the zero-base capacity with which the Afghanistan transitional government started, progress in the post-Taliban period in social and economic sectors has been commendable and has overreached the achievement of other south Asian countries within the first five years of their independence.

Afghans acknowledge these successes, but their priority is human security. In reality, security sector reform, the prerequisite to stability, became a secondary affair in the interest of rushing the political objectives of the Bonn process. The Afghan security forces and the army are not yet strong enough to resist aggression. The police force is unable to win the trust and confidence of the people. Reforms to the Ministry of Interior Affairs have not been implemented, and access to justice is non-existent.

The legitimacy crisis of the Afghan government could be abated through a leadership role taken by Afghans and with a coordinated donor strategy supporting the leadership. Instead, domination of Afghanistan's institution building process by the international community has tilted the entire process of nation building into a decline from which Afghanistan may not recover, ever.

The international community's response to institution building is totally uncoordinated. Despite the rhetoric of coordination by addressing the Afghanistan Compact benchmarks, it is quite clear that the international community has no shared vision, much less a common strategy.

● (1550)

To stabilize and secure the state, we must develop firm strategies and guidelines to address the central objective of our Afghan mission through the use of our defence, diplomacy, and development instruments. No project, program, action, or dialogue should be approved and implemented without screening it through the lens of the strategic objective. To what extent would a program, project, or policy serve the cause of strengthening the Afghan government's control and hold up its territories?

To this day, no clear strategy has been established and shared with the Afghan government or the Canadian public except the make-believe that quick impact projects will win the hearts and minds of Afghans. Quick impact projects are a temporary force protection, but not long-term legitimacy for the Afghan government.

On the other hand, the financing of national programs designed and delivered by the Afghan ministries do earn the support of the people. There is evidence of that. It is not management-efficient to finance similar programs through bilateral project assistance mechanisms, as suggested by the Manley panel.

The national programs are planned as large multi-donor programs with a sector-wide approach and financed through multilateral organizations. Accountability and reporting mechanisms are built in. If these are not found adequate by the Canadian government, tighter accountability requirements might be demanded, but just for the sake of tracking Canadian dollars.

Parallel bilateral project interventions will only manage to undermine the government-delivered programs. Observe the “do no harm” principle by avoiding an approach that is counter-productive to the objective of expanding the Afghan government's legitimacy.

Canada can bring value-added to multilaterally financed programs through inputs into critical policy dialogue and influencing critical reform directions and actions. This is a role that Canada has successfully played as a middle country for decades and earned a good reputation.

On the effectiveness of aid, expenditure tracking alone cannot make aid effective. Performance measurements for aid effectiveness is essential. Results on the ground in terms of addressing the strategic objectives of the Canadian mission in stabilizing the country and legitimizing the authority of the Afghan government will determine the effectiveness of aid.

On state building linked to capacity building, at the base of the state-building agenda lies capacity building. With a $1.6 billion investment in capacity building, the international community has failed to build sustained capacity in the critical Afghan ministries and institutions. Capacity buying and replacement for quick and easy management solutions have failed to build sustained capacity. A slew of overpaid, inexperienced, and untrained recent graduates from the northern countries have used ODA resources to develop their own capacity, working in the ever-expanding aid industry that has engulfed Afghanistan.

On aid dependency and the poppy economy, effort must be devoted to free Afghanistan from aid dependency and the curse of opium. A government's primary accountability is to its people. Both overdependence and long-term dependence of a government on aid transfers the government's accountability from its citizens to the donor community. This is undesirable. Therefore, an exit strategy and a sustainability plan should be an integral part of the Canadian aid and development strategy in Afghanistan.

With respect to the poppy economy, even limited legalization of the poppy will be a disaster in a country where there is no rule of law. As experts say, there is no silver bullet but to address farmers' needs through integrated rural development programs. This is not a short-term proposition.

● (1555)

I turn now to the volume of aid and number of Canadian civilian deployments. These are issues that need to be scrutinized well before implementation. Large volumes of aid will be of no consequence if not properly programmed, producing results on the ground. Disbursement is not an indicator of success.

Although decentralization of decision-making authority to the field is a critical issue, deployment of a large number of civilian officials is not necessarily the most effective response. It is not the number that matters, but the quality and experience. Owing to the insecure situation in Afghanistan, recruitment of experienced field officers is difficult. Placement in the most complex part of the world of a large number of recent graduates with no overseas experience, few analytical skills, and meagre networking abilities will not serve any useful purpose.

The living and work conditions and benefits and allowances have vastly improved when compared with the time we were first deployed. The Canadian government had basically exploited the first batch of officers and paid no attention to the horrific living and work conditions they were forced into.

The sacrifices made by the very dedicated first ambassador and his small three-member team remain unrecognized. As the only CIDA representative, I worked 18 hours a day to program and disperse $150 million in the first year. Our government should look into every possible instrument to attend to the needs of the current and future generations of civilians posted in Afghanistan.

Lastly, is this war winnable? This is a million-dollar question. My response is that this war can be won only if the combat is accompanied by an appropriate state-building strategy and Afghan-government-led negotiation and reconciliation with the various levels of recruits within the Taliban. You cannot kill them all. The solution must be political. Bringing them within the rubric of the political order is the only sustainable solution.

Thank you.

● (1600)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Banerjee.

We'll move to Lieutenant Colonel Rémi Landry. Welcome.

LCol Rémi Landry: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Distinguished members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, good afternoon and thank you for your invitation; it is an honour to be here.

Having had a quick look at the many organizations and distinguished guests who have contributed to the work of this Committee, as well as the preliminary report that you tabled in January, I humbly admit that my comments today will not provide any new information as regards the situation in Afghanistan and the Canadian mission.

[*English*]

The Chair: They're having trouble with the translation.

Continue. It was just the translation, so we're all right now.

[*Translation*]

LCol Rémi Landry: My comments will focus on certain aspects of the Canadian engagement which, in my opinion, need to be clarified, are confusing and weaken Canada's effort in Afghanistan. I will do so by referring to certain aspects of the Manley report, and providing a number of comments and recommendations.

Let us begin with the Manley report. It is difficult to criticize either the report or its findings. Indeed, I believe it has something for everyone, to a certain extent. Unfortunately, however, it is superficial in a number of areas. For example, it would have been nice to have been given a more detailed assessment of the consequences of a potential unilateral Canadian withdrawal from the mission, both in terms of our alliance and our commitment to the UN and Afghanistan.

In addition, Canadians must be made aware of the nature of our current alliances, particularly the fact that these commitments are consistent with our values. I am not sure that this view is what is currently being conveyed to Canadians or is even shared by most Canadians. It is important to demonstrate, for example, the humanitarian significance of support for the reconstruction process in Afghans, as long as Afghanistanis require it. As well, Canada has to set specific objectives with respect with what we are prepared to do for the people of Afghanistan and what is likely to become a very lengthy process for the international community. And that should be done, not in terms of a specific time frame, but in terms of actions that can be measured.

Do I need to remind you that we are now at our fifth UN mission in Haiti—and the situation has only deteriorated? We spent 34 years in Cyprus, and I believe the UN mission is still in place there. Should we treat the Afghans differently because it is a more dangerous environment for us and for them? Canada obviously has to be consistent in terms of its commitments.

The first thing I said to myself when the independent panel was appointed was that none of its members had any military background, even though they were tasked with assessing the military component of the mission. In my opinion, it would have been appropriate to select a retired member of the military, possibly someone who had been part of the land force, with considerable knowledge of NATO processes, and whose contribution would probably have clarified the military requirements set out in the report and had credibility in that regard. As I understand it, members of the independent panel asked the military in theatre in Afghanistan if they had any specific needs, even though they did not have the necessary expertise to comment on them.

The Manley report recommends sending 1,000 additional soldiers. The term used is “battle group” without there being any definition of what such a group would comprise. Is it a battle group made up of mechanized combat soldiers, armoured vehicles, military engineers or artillery? What is the extent of the support provided, and should that amount of support be included?

As you know, to support a battle group, we are talking about several hundred individuals who focus only on that. As well, the more heavily mechanized the battle group is, the higher the ratio of logisticians and the greater the numbers. Why 1,000? Why not 1,500 or 500?

One also has the impression, reading that part of the report, that this was added following complaints from the military about the delay or pushed back timeline for delivery of the tactical helicopters, and from the politicians about the lack of commitment on the part of our allies to fulfilling their obligations. That seems to have been added in order to satisfy all Canadians.

I still believe that particular commentary was added at the last minute. I will give you a specific example. The Manley report refers to an additional 2,500 Afghan soldiers in Kandahar between August 2006 and February 2008, and ti an increase of 120 Canadian soldiers for the purposes of setting up mentoring teams. The same report, on page 16, predicts that within a year, there will be an additional 10,000 Afghan soldiers joining the ranks in Kandahar. Who will be doing the mentoring? And it's the same thing for mentoring—on a smaller scale—Afghan police officers. Who will provide these resources composed of the most qualified military personnel? Will it mean cutting back on our operational staff? Our combat staff? Who will take responsibility for it?

The other aspect of this that has been completely ignored—recognizing that this was not specifically part of the independent expert panel's mandate—has to do with the ability of the Canadian forces to maintain such an intensive commitment after 2009. There are currently 300 more soldiers there than in February of 2006, and preparation no longer takes just six or seven months; it takes more than a year. In addition, one has only to consider the number of militia that are part of the current rotation—I'm told there are about 500 of them, or almost 20% of the entire military establishment, to realize that it will not be possible to sustain that level of engagement for a very long period.

● (1605)

To those figures, one must factor in the commitment made to soldiers that they will not be forced to do a second tour of duty in Afghanistan. One also has to consider the Vancouver Olympics in 2010, which will necessarily require military support. Again, soldiers will have to prepare themselves and train for that.

I can tell you that I, personally, have not yet seen any evidence that we have the necessary staff to fulfill our obligations, considering the number of soldiers who are currently deployed. I hope I am wrong and that all of that has been considered.

Last Tuesday, I took part in a debate on Canada's mission at Concordia University. I must admit there were few government representatives there to support National Defence. As usual, the poor military man had to answer all the tough questions. As happens every time I take part in a debate on this subject, there was a large proportion of participants who are opposed to the mission—not because they are die-hard pacifists or are against the military, but simply because they do not see the mission as being legitimate and because it is primarily perceived as an occupation of Afghanistan to promote western and American interests in the region. There are many reasons for that. Operation *Enduring Freedom* is confused with the ISAF mission, which is supposed to be focussed on assistance.

In that regard, it would be a good idea for the government to confirm and explain its contribution to that operation. Let's not forget that on April 18, 2007, MCpl Klumpenhouwer, a member of the Special Forces, died somewhere in Afghanistan. Is Canada still contributing to operation *Enduring Freedom* or are we only concerned with the ISAF mission?

Despite their presence there, the UN does not seem to be doing much coordinating, as it does in other missions. There seems to be confusion as regards both the priorities and the areas where efforts should be focussed. Everyone has their own priorities. However, we may be forgetting Afghan priorities. In the final analysis, one is left with the impression that the Americans, with NATO, are the ones making the decisions and dictating their strategy to the Afghans. The Afghans do not seem to be playing the role that they should within the process. Are they truly sovereign? Are we really in Afghanistan because the Afghans asked us to be there? The leadership role that Canada should be playing is misinterpreted. And, is Canada truly playing a leadership role in Afghanistan?

There is no doubt that the Manley report presents a number of possible avenues to be explored, but it seems to me that some areas have not been fully developed. For example, since the report was tabled, we have been awaiting greater transparency. It is increasingly difficult to stay abreast of the situation and find out exactly what is going on in Afghanistan. That only helps to feed rumours. On the contrary, we should be stimulating debate, holding regular briefings on our strategy, on changes that are occurring and benefiting fully from the centres of expertise that regularly conduct studies, getting people involved and making this mission Canada's business, rather than the business of a small elite.

The fact that this is a mission carried under the aegis of the UN has not been fully exploited. People seem to forget that NATO has to report to the Secretary General several times a year as regards renewal of the mission. It is essential that the United Nations play the role it should be playing. In addition to the Secretary General's Special Envoy, tasked with really coordinating all military, development and diplomatic efforts, by all the players, with a view to securing the long-term success of the mission, the United Nations must also take advantage of the mechanisms that have been in place since the mid-2000s. In 2005, for example, the UN established the Peacebuilding Commission—the organization with primary responsibility for providing advice on restructuring. Are we taking advantage of that organization? There have been a lot of initiatives since the mid-2000s, as I was saying, with a view to enabling the UN to better coordinate these very complex missions, through better mechanisms.

As well, there is a need to restore dialogue with regional partners, as was the case when the former Special Advisor to the Secretary General, the Algerian diplomat Lakdhar Brahimi, set up a task force with six countries bordering Afghanistan. The idea was to properly integrate Afghanistan within the region and collaborate on building bridges with all of its neighbours, so that when the mission was completed, Afghanistan would be in a position to stand alone in relation to its neighbours. It is also important to ensure that Afghanistan is present and has its say within all the different coordination and decision-making centres. Canada has to do what it says it's going to do. That means the 3Ds in its area of operation, but it also means making its presence felt there politically, and not only within NATO.

● (1610)

Canada has to be at the decision-making table and politically influence the process, rather than always having to react. It has to do what it has always done well in the past: join with countries of a similar mind, show leadership and act as a counterweight to other powers, in order to ensure that no one forgets the real reasons why we are in Afghanistan.

There is also a need to explain to the people of Canada that Canada's presence makes a difference on the ground—a difference that can be made only by Canada, that our standards are high and that our respect for human values has an impact on our allies. Withdrawing Canada prematurely from Afghanistan would have an impact on those standards. That is something I noted in the many operations I contributed to: Canadians do things differently. We do things well. That is an advantage for Canada on the ground.

Two other observations show that we may have strayed from Canada's actual mandate in Afghanistan. I would like to read you an excerpt from the mandate given to ISAF in 2003 by the Security Council, which has been renewed annually since:

> [...] to support the Afghan Transitional Authority and its successors in the maintenance of security in areas of Afghanistan outside of Kabul and its environs, so that the Afghan authorities, as well as the personnel of the United Nations and other international civilian personnel engaged in particular in reconstruction and humanitarian efforts, can operate in a secure environment, and to provide security assistance for the performance of other tasks in support of the Bonn Agreement; [...]

The Manley report mentions the following:

> Canada's action should focus on clear Canadian priorities and meet a dual goal:
>
> 1. to provide the security needed for development to occur in Southern Afghanistan;
>
> 2. to assist the Afghan government to enforce the principles of good governance and build a better future for its citizens.

The goals set by the United Nations and NATO, as described in the report, are as follows:

> —that all NATO countries assist Afghanistan's efforts to create the security conditions necessary for development, as well as to build a better life for all of its citizens;
>
> —that Afghanistan no longer serve as a haven for international terrorism.

Is this a roundabout way of saying that we are still engaged in Operation *Enduring Freedom*? I believe that it is the kind of thing we have to look at, to ensure that we are acting in accordance with the UN mandate.

My final point relates to the lack of clarity regarding our role and the problem of setting clear priorities around our efforts.

We cannot solve all the problems simultaneously, and I believe that this is a reality that is gradually becoming an obstacle or, at the very least, weakening our efforts in a context where resources are increasingly scarce.

The priority should be to restore order and establish institutional structures to support it. Social justice is an essential factor for the future of a society that takes the welfare of its citizens to heart; unfortunately, however, that cannot be accomplished where there is no order and, too often, we seek to provide justice before there is order. All of this results in there being no priority whatsoever, because, where justice is concerned, everything is a priority: freedom of the press, access to health care and education, a fair legal system, an adequate detention system, and so on.

We seem to be forgetting that in our democracies, progress towards greater social justice did not happen before there was order in society.

Thank you for your patience.

● (1615)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Landry.

[*English*]

We'll go into our first round.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Patry, you have seven minutes.

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

I will be sharing my speaking time with my colleague, Mr. Chan. Thank you, Ms. Banerjee, Ms. Mason and Mr. Landry, for being with us.

[*English*]

I'll go quickly, because time flies fast.

Mrs. Mason, I'll pick a few of your sentences. You said there is an urgency for a reorientation of the mission. I really agree with this. And about the special envoy for the UN Secretary General, whether he is ready to pinpoint much more diplomacy, I agree with this too. But you said the momentum is on the side of the insurgents right now. This is what you said in your remarks. You talk about the peace process. My question is really about the peace process, in a sense that now we just have one of the Ds. We have defence. Development in the south region is not there. There is a little bit up north where Germany is, in some of the regions, but in the south it's not there at all. Also, we didn't do anything in development in the Kandahar region, for many reasons.

If we're looking at who we're fighting, the Taliban itself is not a country; it's nothing, it's nobody and everybody in a sense. Looking at the parallel of Haiti, it took us three years in Haiti just to fight a band of *voyous*. They were people who didn't have any suicide bombers, didn't have any Kalashnikovs or anything like that, and it took us a long time just to get out of Cité Soleil. For me, there's no way at all you can win a war in a sense, and we need to go back to diplomacy and development. This is one hundred percent for sure.

Now, when you talk about Pakistan, knowing that in Pakistan before, with Beluchistan north, south—that is to say the Northwest Frontier—it was never really run by Pakistan itself. It's difficult. It's so difficult over there.

My question is this. You talk about a peace process, but with whom are you going to make the peace process? You say the warlords are fed up, they're willing to discuss this. You talk about the Taliban. But how can you engage a peace process? I fully agree with the sense that you need to also engage India, even if it's not bordering, and Pakistan, Iraq, even Russia. But who are you going to start with to get a peace process? We're not going to solve the problem without having diplomacy in a peace process.

That's my question.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Patry.

We'll have Mr. Chan ask his question. Questions and answers are within a seven-minute time period.

Go ahead, Mr. Chan.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): Welcome to the committee, all of you.

From time to time, all the expert witnesses who have come to the committee so far point to a lack of focus and also a lack of resources, both on the military side and on all other fronts.

Is it because NATO and the western world just don't have the commitment to do a good job in Afghanistan?

I think the major problem we have right now in Afghanistan is that there's no commitment at all for NATO to do a good job there, as compared with what we have done in Bosnia or in the former Yugoslavia.

Because of the lack of commitment, it is impossible for them to have a winning situation, and this is why they're afraid to be transparent, to be open to debate. They just want to mess around with the process and try to drag it along and eventually they give up.

I wish the expert witnesses today would give some answers along that perspective.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chan.

There are two very different types of questions there. I think Mr. Patry's first question was directed to Ms. Mason.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you very much.

First of all, I very deliberately started, at the beginning of my presentation, referring back to the testimony, much of which is in your preliminary report, where there are lots of suggestions on how you might be able to start a peace process and the kind of preliminary work, for example, that Graeme MacQueen talked about: dialogue at the local level.

When I talk about a peace process—and others before me have used the terminology—it's of a comprehensive multidimensional process reaching down to the grassroots level, encompassing as many of the parties as possible within Afghanistan, but then this regional dimension as well. I think there's lots in the report about how this might be done.

But the first lesson of this type of peace process is that each one is very specific to the situation at hand. That's why it's so important to choose someone who's acceptable to all the parties, who has the stature and has the weight of the international community behind, to actually examine, to enter the dialogue behind the scenes and try to see what the best process might be.

In other words, in a way it's not really for us to sit here saying this is the best process or that's the best process. It's really to try to identify...to throw our weight behind, first of all, the idea that the process is necessary: to champion this, not ad hoc efforts.

In fact, there are many ad hoc efforts going on, including some by Canada. Virtually all of the countries who are troop contributors are there talking at the local level. We're heard of Pakistan doing this. Karzai himself is trying to do it, except that he doesn't have the trust with the parties to do it.

All of these ad hoc efforts are going on, so the peace process lacks coherence too. That's why there needs to be an overall lead, a lead individual—and I think it also has to be through the UN—to do this.

The problem is getting the process started, and that goes back to the history of the conflict and the fact that the Afghanistan mission began—if we recall, it was in the heyday of the Bush administration's unilateralist approach.... They've moved off that now. At the time the Taliban were overthrown, Lakhdar Brahimi, as a special envoy, said this is the time to negotiate.

The U.S. government at the time was not interested. They didn't think it was necessary to negotiate. They said no, these are the winners; we'll support them. In fact, they didn't even want a UN-authorized mission, an ISAF mission, in the south, because they wanted a free hand with Operation Enduring Freedom to track down what they saw as the remnants of al-Qaeda.

That goes back to the fundamental problem with our strategy, which is that we are pushing together all of these elements. We are conflating disaffected warlords and the Afghan Taliban with al-Qaeda—what kind of strategy is that?—instead of following a peace process that would separate the hardest of the hard-liners from all the rest.

I had better stop there.

● (1620)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will get back to Mr. Chan's question, maybe in a second round.

We'll move to Madame Barbot.

Madame Barbot, *vous avez sept minutes.*

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to thank all of our guests for being with us today.

Everything you said this afternoon jibes with many different reports and studies saying that the NATO mission in Afghanistan is heading for disaster. There doesn't seem to be the necessary cohesion there. Everything we have been hearing leads us to believe that the dice are loaded and that everything that we are doing now is only prolonging the disaster.

The Afghanistan Study Group, an American group, has conducted some very significant research. American diplomats and generals recently noted the following in their reports:

[*English*]

“weakening international resolve...and a growing lack of confidence...”.

[*Translation*]

Considering all of that, is it possible to win in Afghanistan as a whole without a new NATO strategy? Specifically, is this war winnable?

I would like to hear your thoughts on that, and perhaps you can tell me what Canada's responsibility is in that regard. Canada likes to see itself as playing a leadership role in this war. But, what responsibility does it have in the current situation, and how can the few measures suggested in the Manley report help to reverse the process? Is that possible?

My questions are addressed to Ms. Mason and to LCol Landry.

● (1625)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Barbot.

Lieutenant Colonel Landry.

[*Translation*]

LCol Rémi Landry: I don't think your assessment of the situation is entirely appropriate. My feeling is that NATO is slowly — very slowly — starting to score points. However, a greater concern for me at this time is the lack of progress. For example, why have the provinces of Helmand and Kandahar still not been secured? Why is there such a delay in securing these provinces, as well as part of Southern Afghanistan, when order has already been restored in the regions of Herat and Mazar-e-Charif, where we are really helping people to build a better life?

What concerns me greatly is that lack of progress, procrastination and apparent lack — and I emphasize the word “apparent” — of determination to join the Canadians in securing that area as quickly as possible.

I would like to come back to what Ms. Mason said about what we learned from the early operations in Bosnia, at the beginning of 1990s. Those operations demonstrated exactly the same problem. When all parties are focussing on their own needs, even with the best of intentions, there is a lack of cohesion. There is a real need for an organization, a central secretariat that could ensure that NATO plans and strategies are consistent with medium- and long-term development and reconstruction strategies and, in particular, that there is some consistency.

In my opinion — and this is a partial answer to Mr. Chan's question — NATO countries, such as Canada, should probably commit to NATO to meet specific goals. At the present time, there are no specific goals. Those countries have a duty to provide security. On the other hand, each of the individual countries could commit to meeting a specific goal over the next 18 months — such as securing half a province.

If we are unable to secure Kandahar province, then let's agree on securing part of it. At the present time, we have no specific objective. The more time passes, the less interest there is in this, just as the less public support there is for the mission. There is a battle to be fought on the home front, but we are not fighting it. We are not fighting it at all. People think the mission is not legitimate. People think that we are not there for the right reasons. That is why we have to restore the UN dimension to this mission. Heaven knows the United Nations has made progress since the early 1990s.

I referred to some of their initiatives intended to better coordinate the action of multiple stakeholders and, in particular, to arrive at a specific mechanism for integrating the development process, to ensure that what is done militarily won't have to be done all over again or will not contribute to a slowdown in reconstruction. I believe that is what they are trying to do right now in Haiti.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Barbot, you have two minutes left.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: In that case, why isn't…

[*English*]

The Chair: Maybe Ms. Banerjee has some points on these questions.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: First of all, even if the Taliban is expelled for a little while, they will come back. This is not a winnable war. The Pashtuns belong to Afghanistan and they need to be part of the political process. They have to be brought under the political rubric. This was not done in the beginning. It should be done now. It is not possible to get them out forever. It was done in 2001, but they came back. Maybe for a year they can be expelled, but they will come back. It is just not possible to let them out. There has to be some kind of process—I don't know if you call it a peace process—and I'm not so sure that the UN will be able to do it. In my mind, the UN is part of the problem in Afghanistan. They are coordinating the aid. It is messed up.

I don't have much faith in the UN process, but Afghan leadership is required, together with the support of the international community. A super-envoy might be a good idea.

I don't know about military strategy. The only think I know is that the Taliban cannot be left out of the country. It is their country and they will have to be part of it. Maybe not the very hard-core, but the mid-level people are not really terrorists. They are recruited. They are unemployed youth, illiterate. They have no life opportunities, no life chances, and they're recruited into the Taliban. It is possible to negotiate with them. I don't know if it's a peace process, but I must say that it must be the Afghans who take the leadership and not the UN. That is not possible.

● (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Banerjee.

Mr. Goldring and then Mr. Khan.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you, witnesses, for appearing. I have just a few comments.

I think it's extremely difficult to compare the situation in Haiti with the situation in Afghanistan. I have concerns about the many comments to do with negotiating. I wonder what the Afghan women members of Parliament who were here on the Hill would think. What would they negotiate away in these negotiations? Their jobs, their lives, their children's lives, education, governance? Where do you start and stop? I believe that eventually there will be dialogue and consultation, but I believe you negotiate from a position of strength.

My major question to Ms. Banerjee would be this: do you not feel that the best way to buttress the country against the extremes of the Taliban when they return would be by building the governance capacity, building the institutional capacity, and educating the youth? Even if it takes a generation or two, these are all very important things that will require assistance until the country has the capacity to refuse to accept the extremes of the Taliban.

As you said, the more moderate members of the Taliban could possibly fit into this method of increased governance—and quite nicely. But it's a little premature to be having these discussions. You're going to be losing an awful lot of the characteristics that these members of Parliament expressed to us when they came to the Hill. I would think that we have much more work to do on the governance and capacity-building level. Maybe you can comment on how we can improve and bring that along more.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: You're talking about how the capacity building could be done?

Mr. Peter Goldring: Yes, I believe the Manley report had optimism. We are there and it would be too early.... Those women members of Parliament expressed their need for help. Looking at this positively, there are good initiatives that have been done by CIDA. We heard last week of the good work that is done in certain areas. What else can we do with respect to governance, capacity building, and long-term plans that would be effective even after the process is turned over to the Afghan people? Can we buttress the country against the return of the extremists?

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: To start with what the women parliamentarians were saying, I think women are concerned about negotiation with the Taliban because women suffered most during the Taliban regime. So they do not want that kind of negotiation. But what most people are talking about is not negotiating away everything. There is no way Mullah Omar is going to come and negotiate with Karzai or anybody else. So we are not talking about the hard core again and the return of a repressive Taliban regime.

Mr. Peter Goldring: But what capacity building can we do to improve on that to help—

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: I mentioned in my presentation that we need human security. Right now, mothers are worried about sending their children to school because there is no security. It's not only security from the Taliban; there is no protection from the police force. The police are corrupt and the ministry of the interior is corrupt. Secondly, there is no justice system. There is no access to justice for anybody. There is no proper legal system.

These kinds of things need to be straightened out. It cannot be done overnight; everybody is saying that. That's why I say the army presence is necessary. It's not that the army presence should be taken out. The combat, if necessary, should continue, but that is not going to lead to a successful and permanent expulsion of the Taliban.

● (1635)

Mr. Peter Goldring: Would you not say then that Canada should stay the course in the interim to help build this capacity? It's my understanding that more and more military now are being trained, with the idea of them operating more and more independently. There are always things to do to improve on the policing and bring more confidence. I believe Canada is doing quite a bit of work in that field too.

Things don't happen overnight, but there seems to be a lot of progression toward that. From what you're saying, it is too early to open negotiations for a return of the Taliban at this time.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: I'm not saying that. The army presence can continue, but negotiations should start now.

Yes, Canada has made progress on the socio-economic side, but we have completely failed on the security reform side. The police are not working out. They are corrupt. We have invested funds in the justice system, but it is not working out. The ministry of the interior that is responsible for the police force is extremely corrupt. Counter-narcotic strategy has failed. None of these things have worked.

I'm not blaming anybody, but in this kind of complex situation things can fail. We should learn from the lessons and try to coordinate better. Canada is training the police force or the army its own way, the Germans are doing it a different way, the Italians are doing it a different way, and the U.S. is doing it a different way. The country is not going to gain that way.

Therefore I am saying that capacity building requires better coordination in the international community. Leadership and design must come from the Afghans, and then the international community should coordinate. Otherwise it is not going to work.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Can I say something on the women's rights aspect?

The Chair: Probably not. I'm trying to keep everyone to seven minutes, so we will pick you up on a second round right after Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Dewar, please.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): I'll cede to Ms. Mason on the point she was going to make. Then I'll ask a question.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you very much.

I started out working on the Hill on issues on status of women many years ago, and I find it extremely problematic to suggest that we are protecting women's rights best by the failing approach we are taking now.

The most vocal woman parliamentarian on women's rights in Afghanistan, Malalai Joya, was thrown out of Parliament because she denounced members of Parliament and the Karzai government, including the former defence minister Dostan of the Northern Alliance, for their treatment of women.

Part of the entire problem with how we have approached Afghanistan is this demonization—one side is all good and the other side is all bad. Unfortunately, as Major-General Lewis MacKenzie said in a very different context about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, how do I choose between someone who has killed 10,000 and someone who has killed 5,000? There is too much blood to go around, so we have to get beyond that.

I would suggest that women's rights are not being advanced in Afghanistan in a situation where the security of everyone is deteriorating on a daily basis. That is not the way to protect women in Afghanistan.

Thank you.

● (1640)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you for that.

I think it's important to note, and you touched on this, Ms. Mason, in your opening comments, that we are now faced in our Parliament with a motion that I think will continue the same strategy we've followed in the last couple of years for another number of years. The government says that will be it and then it will be fine, which from the testimony we've heard I think is folly. I don't think anyone could predict that. You know, “Give us to 2011, extend the war for a few more years, then we'll achieve our goals and we'll pull out. We promise.”

I think anyone who has viewed this conflict, no matter what side you're on, will note there's no way to predict the future and say it's going to be all done. That's been noted from some of the examples—Cyprus being one.

I'd like to start with you, Ms. Mason. You mentioned Manley's report in your opening comments. By the way, I agree with most of his observations, but not his conclusions. But if it's not the right direction, what direction should Canada be taking in the next couple of years? You said that the counter-insurgency approach has failed. I would like to hear what you believe should be the direction that Canada takes.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you very much.

Of course in my opening comments I emphasized where I think Canada should be putting its weight, on trying to bring NATO along. I believe that if we take that lead, many countries in NATO, if not most, and possibly also the U.S., depending on how the election ultimately goes, will come around to the need for a really invigorated effort towards laying the foundation for an Afghan-led peace process.

I completely agree, when one talks about a UN envoy, one is talking about a third-party facilitator, an honest broker, who has the credibility and the trust that perhaps the parties themselves don't have. But to be successful, any peace process has to be owned by the participants.

On the point about the UN being part of the problem, no one can coordinate an effort to rebuild Afghanistan without a common vision. I think we all agree that's lacking. There isn't a common vision. There are very different views about the way forward. I believe the possibility of a common vision lies in getting behind a broad-based peace process.

In terms of Canada's military role, what disturbs me so much about the revised motion before the House is that it seems to fail in one of the strongest areas of the Manley report, and that is greater clarity about this mission. The revised resolution talks about training. We know from the Manley report that Manley, at least, thinks that training must include mentoring in combat. I can say a lot from the NATO training I do about how that's not necessary. I mean, obviously you can have that, but you don't have to.

The next subsection of the resolution says “providing security for reconstruction and development efforts”, but there's absolutely no clarity about how that security is going to be provided. Right now the counter-insurgency mission is justified on the basis that it's providing security. But it isn't providing security. In 2007, at least as many innocent Afghan civilians were killed by Afghan army and allied forces—that's us—as by the insurgents. That was because of the heavy reliance on aerial bombing in particular when the allied forces got into trouble.

Nonetheless, those that support the counter-insurgency mission say we are “providing security for reconstruction and development efforts”. To have a resolution that has that statement “providing security”, with no clarity as to how that's going to be done, delegates everything down to the military mission on the ground. These are political issues of the highest concern. They are not tactical-level questions.

I would ask what they mean by “providing security”. In my view, the Canadian military is in an impossible position. They can't provide security without ending the war, and they can't end the war by military means. That requires political intervention. In fact to suggest otherwise is to really hide behind the troops.

When I talk about a reorientation of the mission, I would like to see our focus on trying to get a real political process going, which all the NATO countries get behind. In the meantime, forces on the ground in the south would have to adopt a defensive posture—a purely and totally defensive posture—to hold ground so the Taliban doesn't take over, even more than they're taking over now, while negotiations get under way.

That's not easy. Hopefully we're ultimately looking at a new configuration of forces, much more Muslim-complexioned forces, for example, who might be willing to come in if a real peace process gets under way.

● (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Mason.

We'll go back, on the second round, to Mr. Khan.

I'll remind you, Mr. Khan, question and answers, five minutes.

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

You never give me seven minutes. Next time I'll go in the first round.

Thank you very much.

I will talk a little bit about Pakistan before I go to Afghanistan. But before I do that, I want to read to you what an Afghan MP said who implored Canada to stay the course. She is an elected member.

> Afghan parliamentarians implored Canadians not to abandon them as the House of Commons argued Wednesday over the timing of a vote on the future of the mission in the war-torn region. Fawzia Koofi, among six lower house Afghan MPs visiting Canada...said this:
>
> “We need to provide security and justice to the people and we cannot do it alone,” said Koofi... "This message needs to be clearly given to your public."

Going back to Pakistan, it has been argued many times that we should put more pressure on Pakistan. They are not doing enough. Let me suggest, when you have deployed more than 100,000 troops and the total casualties are many more times the total NATO forces—you have 17 million Pashtuns on this side of the border, Pakistan's side, three and a half million on the Afghan side, four million to five million refugees during 1979 and 1989—I think somebody should be talking about.... And the insurgents have attacked Rawalpindi, the army base, and have killed soldiers there. They have attacked Sargodha, the air force base where I flew from. And just recently they attacked the naval facility at Lahore, across from Aitchison College. It is very important to understand a country of 160 million people, which is facing the Taliban and the al-Qaeda eyeball to eyeball. It is time to appreciate that and look at it from a prism of Pakistan and not Afghanistan.

Here we are spending billions of dollars building capacity in Afghanistan. I think we should also look at building similar capacities so they can fight the very people who are destabilizing Afghanistan while committing atrocities on women, children, and the whole country. I think a parallel approach needs to be looked at.

As far as the negotiations are concerned, Washington and Karzai began these negotiations, these talks, way back before we started talking about talking to these guys. They started this in 2002 and 2003. Since then, NATO continues to talk, since 2006. These talks are ongoing. The British have done it. Pakistan has done it. The Americans are doing it. Sometimes you get blamed for negotiations. All the British were blamed for negotiations in Helmand and for ruining the mission. Pakistan was blamed for negotiations in Waziristan.

I think we need to have a clear view of the reality of what is on the ground. All conflicts end in negotiation. But has that time for negotiation arrived? At what point must negotiations be held? Who should we be holding negotiations with? Please, give me their address and I'll go do the negotiation myself. It is amazing that I've heard from so many people, “Let's negotiate”. Tell me, with whom? Mr. Karzai has been begging for negotiations. And I agree that all Taliban are not terrorists. There are murderers in other groups, but where are they?

I think it is time to say that we, as a NATO.... Canada in particular has done such a fabulous job. CIDA has done such tremendous work there. You want to provide justice. Fine, we are training judges, teachers, and others. You want to provide developers? Yes, 19,200 community councils have been developed. Schools, teachers.... Yes, some of the schools have been damaged by the insurgents. Should we stop doing all that development?

I would argue, Mr. Chair, that success will come only when we have the new generation, the men, women, and children who are getting education, who are developing themselves, and who are getting some taste of democracy as have these women who have visited us in Canada. And this is what is going to change.

I think we need to manage our expectations. We should manage our timing. We expect to wave a wand and everything will be okay. It's not going to happen.

Yes, it is not a perfect mission. Is there effort being made? Absolutely. Have billions of dollars been invested? Yes. Is the life of people getting better? Absolutely. There are six million or seven million kids in school, and two million of them are girls. Is that development? I would say yes.

● (1650)

Economic development, the community development infrastructure, the Afghan National Army, all these things are commendable and need to be perhaps improved, and yes, we should look at how we can focus our development further. Our PRT teams have taken the ministers out in the field, enhancing and increasing the writ of the government.

Are my five minutes over, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: A long time ago.

I will move to Mr. Bell, quickly.

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Thank you.

I've found the answer to Mr. Khan's question. It's illuminating, so thank you.

I've heard the statement that there's no military peace that is achievable in Afghanistan, that the only way you really will achieve it is by diplomacy and I guess negotiation. It has to be an Afghani peace; it can't be an imposed peace.

The focus I've heard has to be on reconstruction and development. I have not been to Afghanistan, but I've seen the pictures, both video and stills, that show it is one of the poorest countries in the world, and what we see in those military shots is what the country's really like. There's basically no infrastructure. There's a lack of electricity. There's a lack of water. The comment was made, however, that if the infrastructure were to be built up—which is the reconstruction—that if it is not Afghani infrastructure, if it is UN infrastructure, it would be attacked by the Taliban and destroyed.

I was trying to wonder what role Canada could play. Could we suddenly determine that we're going to provide water systems or we're going to provide electrical plants, but if we were to do that, would they be in fact eliminated?

Perhaps the colonel could respond.

The Chair: Maybe we can ask Mr. Landry to get in on this first.

LCol Rémi Landry: The answer, Chair, is simple. That's what they are doing right now. They are empowering the people, and that's what we've been forgetting since the beginning. People are saying we are fighting a war, and I still think we are there for the Afghan people. So we have to work with them, and they are the ones who, when they are empowered, will make this country safe. That's why I've been making a comparison with Haiti, because in the five missions that I've seen in Haiti, the people were always forgotten. And that's exactly what's taking place here—we are forgetting the people.

Right now there's a project. The military are building a road, a hard road, and instead of using all kinds of machinery they are hiring the people with shovels and wheelbarrows to build the road. It will take probably six months to build, but then this road will belong to the people. They sat with the people and they asked them: “Where should we build the road? How should we do it?”

So that's what I'm saying. By sitting down with those small communities, because the Pashtun is not homogenous.... As a matter of fact, we'll find there are many types of tribes within the Pashtun. Each village has its own tribal leader. So we have to sit downwith them, we have to empower them, and empowering them and providing order, that's what I've said since the beginning. We have to provide order.

Mr. Don Bell: I appreciate that, and the move would be to go from the search and destroy that we have right now, I would presume, to the defensive talk that Ms. Mason mentioned. But the question that I heard asked was, does that mean we just sit there while we're shot at? “Defensive” also means, I presume, defend and pursue. So if somebody shoots at you, you go after them. You just don't go out looking for them. You go out after them if they attack you. Is that reasonable?

● (1655)

LCol Rémi Landry: I was in Bosnia, under chapter 6, and I saw a village put to flames, with people in it, and UN members were around the village not being able even to use their weapons to protect those people. So what I'm saying is that either you are in a defensive position or you are advancing. You need the capability to be able to protect the people, and to be able to protect the people is not to wait until somebody fires at you. It's to be able to protect. You have to do things that eventually will provide this. It's no good to protect people if they are all dead.

So that's what they are doing right now, and again that's the reason I asked this question. Why are we there? Are we there to assist Afghanistan or are we there to fight the Taliban? Those are two totally different types of missions. Are we with Operation Enduring Freedom right now? Is it Enduring Freedom that tells us what to do? Or are we there to assist the Afghans? If we are there to assist the Afghans, well, it's totally a brand-new strategy. They're totally different tactics, but it still requires the power to be able to do the job you're supposed to be doing there, to protect them until they are able to provide their own order themselves.

The Chair: Thank you.

You have 15 seconds.

Mr. Don Bell: I don't know if these figures are right, but I heard that currently there are 40,000 Afghan military, and within three years there could be 70,000 trained. Is that realistic?

● (1700)

LCol Rémi Landry: It is.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: But there is a problem with the fiscal balance. By increasing the numbers in the army, there will be a problem with the fiscal balance. They may not have the funding to do that. There could be funding from outside, but eventually this will need to be from within the Afghanistan budget, and that may not be possible.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Banerjee.

Mr. Miller, you're new to our committee. We welcome you. I think you have a question on this.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a couple of comments, first to Mr. Landry. I certainly agree with you that our role there needs to be to, as you put it, "assist and protect" the community. At the same time, we all realize that sometimes that means confrontation with the Taliban. That's the unfortunate part of it, but it's reality.

I'd also like to thank you, Ms. Banerjee. You mentioned earlier that you worked 18 hours a day for a while, through CIDA. I can tell you, as a farmer in my other life and even sometimes in political life, that I know what those kinds of hours are. So I thank you for that.

There's something that maybe you or any other witness could answer. How many years is it that Afghanistan basically had a democratic government and what have you? Do you know that figure?

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: It's doesn't have its own government.

Mr. Larry Miller: It's in place now; I'm just....

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: Well, the thing is, at this Bonn process—which was also imposed—Afghan leadership really was lacking during the Bonn meeting and the Bonn process. It became a western democratic model that was to be placed in Afghanistan; the election brought it in.

Mr. Larry Miller: Approximately how many years has that process been under way?

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: Bonn was in 2001, so it's been since then.

Mr. Larry Miller: The reason I ask that question, ma'am, is that—

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: But the democratic institutions are not there, and without the democratic institutions—

Mr. Larry Miller: It's my time, so I'd like to go on here.

The reason for asking the question is to point out the fact that it's very young—and you can interpret whether you want to call it a democracy or not, but you have to start someplace. I can tell you that we're very lucky to live in a country with a history that goes back to England and what have you—a long democracy. We've improved it, and we can still improve it; all you have to do is go into the House of Commons some day. So that was my point in bringing that up.

Do any of you know how many children are now going to school in Afghanistan as compared with 2003 or 2001?

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: It's a huge number. There were no girl children going to school. The number of children going to school was extremely low. There is a huge increase in that; in those social and economic areas, there has been benefit.

By the way, in answer to Mr. Wajid Khan—

Mr. Larry Miller: No, no—

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: Okay. It's just that we never answered that one.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: About 38% of the girls are attending school now.

Mr. Larry Miller: Thank you very much.

Mr. Landry, I have a question for you. You have been involved in Bosnia; I'm going to mention Bosnia because that's the one you talked about the most. I take it you were involved in the development process there.

LCol Rémi Landry: Not necessarily in Bosnia, but more or less in Haiti. In Bosnia I was serving with the EU observer mission in Zenica.

Mr. Larry Miller: Now, I know you haven't been in Afghanistan—

LCol Rémi Landry: I have been.

Mr. Larry Miller: Oh, you have been; okay.

LCol Rémi Landry: I was there for at least two weeks.

Mr. Larry Miller: I read your résumé, but I missed that.

LCol Rémi Landry: It wasn't long, only two weeks.

Mr. Larry Miller: In your opinion, from what you know about Afghanistan, is the development process there similar to what needs to be done in Haiti? Is it harder, easier...?

LCol Rémi Landry: It's definitely harder because of the security environment, but it's still the same thing. If you go outside Port-au-Prince, there is no law. So what's the use of having police officers if you don't have jails, if you don't have tribunals, and if you don't have the necessary equipment to perform—

Mr. Larry Miller: So we need to work on the—

LCol Rémi Landry: What we need to do is empower the people, and I think the solution is with the people. Provide them order and empower them.

Mr. Larry Miller: You made that quite clear, and I agree with that, Mr. Landry.

Ms. Mason.

Ms. Peggy Mason: I would like to come back to the point about providing order. We'd all like to provide that. I think everyone agrees that we want security and order for Afghans, but that's not what's happening.

There has been much discussion about how long it takes, and I think the development community's consensus is—

Mr. Larry Miller: Ms. Mason, you've made it quite clear in your other testimony that you don't agree with what's there. I may not totally agree with that, but I respect that.

I'm just wondering about the balance of my time, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: You have no more time. I have been fairly strict with our guests, and I intend to be strict with you as well.

Madame Gagnon, did you have any questions?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): I want to come back to what you said earlier about military missions in Haiti, Kosovo and Cyprus. The general public was much more favourable to those missions than it is to the one in Afghanistan.

Why is it there is no synergy in Afghanistan, which would make for a more receptive public? In Quebec, a majority of people does not want to see soldiers return to Afghanistan, partly because the mission requires human and financial resources, and also because there is no progress being made, as you said. How is it that in missions like the one in Haiti, for example, the various strategies that were employed did create solidarity?

LCol Rémi Landry: Well, Canada was in charge of the mission in Haiti. Therefore, the methods used were Canadian methods. In Afghanistan, as people have already told you, there are a number of chiefs. But, what I can tell you, having personally visited Canadian troops in Afghanistan, is that we are doing extraordinary things there. We are close to the people, we listen to them, and we work with them. We have no imperialist ambitions there. I guarantee you that most people recognize the modest success that Canadians have had everywhere they have been posted in Afghanistan. There is a good reason why you see military amputees on television saying they want to go back.

Canada is playing a constructive role there and that is the danger: that our country will decide to pull out because it has its own way of doing things. We do make a difference. The government has to show leadership and show initiative at the political level to ensure the consistency of our efforts there.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: But, do we have the capacity?

Lcol Rémi Landry: My sense is that it's because we want to make a difference that we got out of the UN missions and decided to concentrate on Afghanistan.

● (1705)

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: One gets the feeling that the resources allocated to the mission are inadequate. They are asking for more men elsewhere. There is a plan to abandon part of the mission we are currently investing in in Afghanistan. One doesn't get the feeling that current resources are adequate to meet the tremendous need. The Russians were there for quite a few years…

LCol Rémi Landry: Yes, but they were an occupying force.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: But it is my sense that people see us as an occupying force. They think we are there more to occupy than to assist.

LCol Rémi Landry: I fully agree with you.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: There is no sense of the humanitarian side of things. Parliamentarians are being asked to agree to an extension of the mission. However, based on what we see now, we feel it would be difficult for us to support it.

LCol Rémi Landry: I am told that, unfortunately, your time is up.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Already? At the Health Committee, we have lots of time. I usually sit on the Health Committee.

[*English*]

The Chair: I just want to make sure the committee knows, I'm in your hands here, and we can either break right now and go to committee business or have a couple more questions. I know Madame Gagnon had a question.

An hon. member: No, I think we should carry on.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, we have always said that we would keep 15 minutes at the end for Committee business.

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, 15 minutes, so if that's the case—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we have witnesses here and there are some questions that we need to discuss that are more important.

The Chair: Yes, but we also have the procedures. We have tried to allow 15 minutes for questions.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: When—

The Chair: I'm going to thank our guests for being here. We've actually had more time than with a lot of the other guests, who have been here for one hour. We thank you for your willingness to come and testify and answer our questions.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Chair, just before you dismiss our guests and thank them, there were a couple more points. I wanted to ask questions particularly on development signature projects. Would it be possible to learn more on some of the points our guests raised, particularly on Operation Enduring Freedom, which I think the colonel made a point of because we're about to enter into, it looks like, another couple of years in the conflict, and it might be with the Americans coming in. I'd like to know the points on Operation Enduring Freedom that the colonel wanted to make and his concerns around that.

If Ms. Banerjee and Ms. Mason, on UN capacity for peace building, could provide more information on signature projects to the committee for the report, I'd be very thankful.

The Chair: There were a number of questions asked that will show up in the minutes of the meeting. Would you like to bring forward some of the answers to those questions?

Mr. Goldring, on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Mr. Chairman, in a similar light too, I wish to explore a little further some of the comments from Mr. Landry vis-à-vis the initiative in Haiti and the comparables to it. But I wish also to emphasize the point that wasn't mentioned, that Afghans genuinely like the Canadian presence and of course that Canada is viewed internationally as a nation that will not remain in the country forever. They're not known to be occupiers and they're very well received for that. So as long as they're well received—

The Chair: So if we could get some answers on the Haiti-Afghanistan comparison, we would appreciate it.

Thanks again for being here.

We'll suspend for one minute. Just stay here, committee.

● _____ (Pause) _____ ●

● (1710)

The Chair: Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, I just wanted, if I may, to present an emergency motion. It's to do with the tragic events that happened in Jerusalem. We actually got notice of it when we were in question period today. I just wanted to bring this forward. I've talked to some members of the committee.

For those who haven't heard this yet, there have been seven, and some reports of eight—I think it's seven, though—rabbinical students gunned down in Jerusalem in a seminary, and up to ten, and possibly more, wounded. I just wanted this committee, as the foreign affairs committee, to pass a motion stating as follows:

> It is with great sadness that the committee learns of the tragic loss of life in Jerusalem as two gunmen attacked a rabbinical seminary. The committee sends its condolences to the families of those who were killed in this attack. The committee condemns violence against civilians at all times. The committee calls for a peaceful resolution to the ongoing crisis in the Middle East.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dewer. I want to thank you for bringing that to the committee's attention before the meeting.

We do have a point of order here with Mr. Obrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I want to talk on this.

The Chair: Oh, okay. You wanted to speak on this?

Even now, I hesitate to do this, because sometimes when we allow motions like this, we say that we'll take a motion, and that sets a precedent. When seven are killed in Kenya, are you going to allow motions? We always recognize when there are deaths.

I'm in the committee's hands here. We will need unanimous consent to bring this motion forward, because it does not have the 48-hour notice.

I will rule that if we have unanimous consent, we can bring it forward and discuss it—it's debatable. But it is a precedent: when we have an atrocity in Zimbabwe, why don't we do it then?

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: First of all, before we move the motion, do we have unanimous consent to move the motion?

An hon. member: No, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, I would like to vote in favour of the motion. However, I simply want to point out, with all due respect, that last week we were unable to deal with the motions that were tabled. We supposedly set aside 15 minutes to discuss them, but something always comes up that prevents us from doing that. The Committee's ability to function is seriously deteriorating because we can't do our work.

● (1715)

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Barbot, with all due respect, I think the committee can work well if we work together. All sides have to determine in themselves to work together.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, if you let me finish…

[*English*]

The Chair: Just hold on. I'm going to allow Madame Barbot to finish, because she had asked for it, but I thought you were coming with a point of order. Madame Barbot had given me notice that she wanted to speak.

Go ahead. Continue, Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, that's exactly what I mean. I am asking all Committee members to ensure that we can work together and move forward. Therefore, at the next meeting, I would like to see the committee devote a half hour to its business, so that we can at least do the work we have to do.

Having said that, I am in favour of the motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Barbot.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, with all due respect, being attacked here is unbelievable.

Let me finish here. This is a point of order. You allowed her to talk, and I am wanting to talk.

The Chair: Okay, if this is a point of order, very quickly let's hear it, before we get into debate on this motion.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'm not debating his motion.

The Chair: All right, it's on the point of order.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'm debating what was being said here, that this committee is not working and all of those things.

I am saying yes, this committee is not working because this committee has been partisan from the time there was a change on the other side. It has been said many times that the opposition gangs up on the government all the time. Now when these things happen to them, they suddenly cry about it.

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

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Then I'm going to—

The Chair: Before we go into debate on this motion, I have to know whether we have unanimous consent to move this motion.

An hon. member: No.

The Chair: There is not unanimous consent.

All right; we will not move the motion.

Now we go into committee business.

Madame Barbot ...? Are you wanting to bring something forward or not? No?

The bells have started. We can't take a vote.

We are adjourned.

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