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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)): Good afternoon, my dear colleagues

[*English*]

Welcome. This is meeting 23 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, on Thursday, April 10, 2008. Today we will hear from Canada's Chief of Defence Staff as part of our study on Canada's mission in Afghanistan, and later in the day we will have a briefing on the crisis in Sudan and investments.

We will have time for committee business towards the end of the meeting. I remind all members that we are televised today and we should ensure that our cellphones and our BlackBerrys, all communications devices, will not disrupt our meeting. I say that to members of the committee as well as members of the audience, and I guess with that, the chair had better be certain that his is off as well.

In our first hour we are continuing our study on Canada's mission in Afghanistan, and we have appearing before us, I believe for the third time, from the Department of National Defence, General Hillier, Chief of Defence Staff.

Certainly we welcome you here. When we began the study from Foreign Affairs and International Development on Afghanistan, I think you were the first witness, and this meeting will conclude witnesses. So it's not that the first shall be last and the last shall be first; it's both. You're first and last.

We thank you for coming before our committee today, and we certainly look forward to the comments you have. You've been here before, and you also understand that there will be questions coming at the close.

I would like to remind my colleagues that General Hillier must catch a plane, so right at 4:30 he will be concluding his comments.

Again, welcome, and we look forward to hearing what you have to say to us, General.

General R.J. Hillier (Chief of the Defence Staff, Department of National Defence): Mr. Chairman, thank you for that welcome. I've been called many worse things than bookends, that's for sure, so thank you for the opportunity to be here.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for your invitation to appear here today. But I have to tell you that it is difficult for me to see where I can be of service after seeing how Canada's mission in Afghanistan has evolved since the beginning of the year. As you are well aware, the report of the independent panel on the mission was tabled in January and a good deal of debate ensued. As a result, you voted in favour of extending our mission to 2011. This decision to extend the mission sets a very precise timeline which will certainly help the Canadian Forces in our planning. Your decision was followed by the NATO summit in Bucharest last week, where member countries undertook to deploy about 1,000 additional troops in Kandahar. That increase will certainly improve security in the province by preventing the Taliban from launching any offensives.

[*English*]

Having said all of that, but also having just returned from a trip to Afghanistan, where I spent five days on the ground, I had the chance to discuss the situation with many of the key players and leaders and engaged men and women there and to travel significantly in the region around Kandahar City. I had a chance to see, if you will, what is sometimes described by our folks as Taliban country and to talk to almost every one of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and airwomen, and to almost all of the civilians who are engaged in that mission there.

Let me just give you four points of view from what I saw, and that would be my assessment, over time, of the progress with the Afghan national security forces, the visible development, and the main threats against our men and women. I'll also just finish up with a little something about our men and women.

Let me just say I am one of the few people who have had the great privilege to engage in this mission, really, from very early on. I'm one of the folks, because of my responsibilities, Mr. Chair, who gets to see it continually, consistently, and who gets to see all parts of it over a longer period of time. As perhaps you know, my first engagement started back in 2003. I spent a lot of time there in 2004 as the commander, and since we've re-established operations in Kandahar province itself, I've been back 20 to 25 times since August 2005.

Let me just tell you what I saw in the last 18 to 19 months in Kandahar province and use that as a bit of a measuring stick, which is what we do. When I went into Kandahar province in October 2006, we were at the tail end of Operation Medusa, during which the Taliban tried to isolate Kandahar City. They wanted to cut off Highway 1, which is the main highway that goes around Afghanistan, and they wanted to show NATO or, more importantly, show the Afghans that NATO could not stand up to them. Fighting had taken place for about seven or eight weeks in some intense combat involving our soldiers.

When I arrived in October 2006, the area of the Panjwai, Pashmul, and Zhari districts outside of Kandahar City was a combat zone. There was a lot of destruction. The roads were in poor repair. The only people who moved were the Taliban or our soldiers. We did not have any Afghan National Army soldiers or battalions with us; there were very few police with us, and most of those who were we did not trust. The number of people living there, from the population of that valley area—the triangle out there that normally has a population of about 45,000 to 50,000—was almost zero. They had all departed.

I was back again at Christmas. Not a whole lot had changed, except that we had taken the initiative away from the Taliban and they truly now were retrenching or trying to leave the area. We were seeing people come back into their homes in the morning time, but mostly they would still leave at night, and they'd come back in and try to repair a few things—maybe repair a wall, repair an irrigation ditch—and get ready for the future.

I was back again last spring several times, throughout the summer and early fall, at Christmastime, and then back again three weeks ago, and what I saw was this. Now in that valley, 45,000 to 50,000 of the people have moved back into their homes. They have repaired the damage that took place almost completely. They've actually gotten along with new construction, and that new construction is pretty small by some of our standards. Building a grape-drying hut is a big thing to a family who depends on drying gapes for their livelihood.

They're back in. They've rebuilt, with our assistance—and I mean a whole-of-government assistance—some of the schools in the area that were destroyed completely. I particularly went and saw one at Ma'sum Ghar, and now in that school there are three shifts of children going to school every day because that's the way they can get their education. Traffic back in the area—economic traffic, in particular—has grown enormously, kids are out waving on the streets, and men are actually working in the area. In fact, we have about 400 of them working for us now, building a road that they desperately need.

What was most striking as I stood there, in fact, with Minister MacKay at Christmastime was this. When we had looked out over that valley a year ago, it was completely dark at night. Now you look out over that valley and you see clumps of lighting—yes, the electricity is not all on throughout the place—and the valley actually looks almost like a normal lifestyle that you would see in Afghanistan, and that's an incredible change over just 18 months. They're back there, they're working, they're growing their crops, they're doing all the things necessary to earn a living, and they're getting their children on with the education they want them to have so they don't repeat that cycle.

That's just what I've seen, and I've seen that many times now as I've gone back and forth, and we have many measurements that go against that.

The Afghan national security forces....

● (1535)

[*Translation*]

For me, one of the most important benchmarks is the improvement in the Afghan national security forces. As I mentioned, in 2006, our forces conducted Operation Medusa with no meaningful support from Afghan forces. Currently, our forces and the Afghan National Army (ANA) regularly conduct operations together in Kandahar province. Canadians work in partnership with three infantry battalions, or *kandaks*, a combat support battalion and a service support battalion, and they provide a mentoring service at their brigade headquarters.

● (1540)

[*English*]

We have six operational mentoring and liaison teams with an Afghan National Army that has three battalions to manoeuvre in and around Kandahar and help provide their security. We've been working with one of the battalions for just over a year, the others less. They are not up to their full strength. They are certainly not up to the operational capabilities they'll need. They don't have all the equipment they must have to be able to do the essential work, but they have come a long way from the zero start we had 17 or 18 months ago in Kandahar province itself, and every day we work with them to improve the operations they can do. The improvement is significant, and we see them leading operations routinely now and conducting operations with us. Canadian troops never conduct operations alone.

For the visible development part, I can tell you there's nothing more visible and nothing more important than roads. When you talk about trying to change an economy from growing drugs to one that grows something that's legal, you don't need roads to take opium and get huge returns on it. You don't need roads to do that, because you can take out an immensely valuable crop worth millions of dollars on a mule train. If you want people to replace that crop with rice or watermelons or wheat, you need to build a transportation system to take 10,000 tonnes or so.

Standing on Route Summit, which traverses those districts immediately to the west of Afghanistan, where a large number of people live, and standing on the causeway, both of which we helped them build to connect that road, Route Summit, into the main transportation network, and being there just three weeks ago and watching 400 Afghan men working under our sort of security with the Afghan police and Afghan army participating in that, to build, rebuild, and pave Route Foster—all three projects were done at the request of Afghans for their livelihood, well-being, security, and their economic vitality—is to see very visible work of which they are very proud and which they protect. Of course, we believe it gives us long-term progress to be able to switch from a drug economy, to be able to get the terrorists away from those sources of money, and at the same time to improve security for the people who live there.

The direct threat is still very real. The mission continues in a positive direction, but that threat remains, especially obviously in the south part of Afghanistan and especially, from our perspective, in the west and north of Kandahar City itself. The Taliban have given up the direct engagements, by and large. Occasionally they will hit us in small ambushes, but now, because of the losses they have taken because of our successes, they prefer to engage in indirect attacks, with improvised explosive device attacks against us, with suicide bombers and small ambushes.

They don't care who they kill. Yesterday they targeted a vehicle in Kandahar City, international forces, and did not cause significant damage to that vehicle. But while they were executing that attack, they killed eight Afghans and wounded, severely in some cases, another 22. We deal with those threats in a variety of ways. There is no silver bullet.

It's imagination. It's ingenuity. It's tactics. It's leadership. It's equipment. It's intelligence. And it's joining up operations, making the best of our characteristics and the best of the Afghan security force characteristics.

For example, in IED attacks we put a lot of emphasis on before the blast, how our intelligence can predict what's going to occur, how we can get surveillance in using a variety of methods to prevent things from being put in, how we can spot the signs that are going to lead to that kind of attack.

During the attack itself, if we can't pre-empt or prevent it, we put a huge amount of emphasis on protecting our soldiers and the Afghans with whom they work, whether it's the kinds of vehicles, the enhanced route-opening capability, or upgrades in the LAV III. I know there are some folks here from General Dynamics Land Systems. I'll tell you the LAV III is an awesome vehicle, and our soldiers love that vehicle. We have improved it to the maximum extent we can.

Then post-blast, when it does occur—and you know they do—we do a thorough analysis. Within two hours we have an assessment team on site, and we pass those lessons around the theatre and pass those lessons back here.

We are keeping the initiative from the Taliban. We're denying them sanctuary and those secure lines of communications and areas from which to operate in Zhari, Panjwai, and Arghandab districts. We're having success with the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police, and we're doing all those things to help Afghans get on with their lives and be able to live a life free from fear. We're doing those things inside a whole-of-government approach; whether that's capacity-building for the police, where our police OMLTs work with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to help improve the training of the Afghan National Police, or working with the ANA, we're taking this approach.

● (1545)

Let me conclude and give you the option to ask me questions and focus on any area you would like.

Our men and women in this mission are Canada's greatest citizens, I believe. Now, I should be saying that, because I'm their Chief of Defence Staff, but I actually believe it.

To go and meet those two and half thousand young men and women is to go and leave with a source of inspiration, a source of pride in our country and the incredible young Canadians, many of them 20, 21, 22 years old, who wear our flag on their left shoulder, who represent our country in Afghanistan in just an incredible manner, and who really are the credentials of Canada.

They represent me, they represent you, and they represent every other Canadian around the country when they go off and do that mission. They need to know that they have your support, the support of Canadians throughout the nation.

I'll close by saying that the outpouring of support across the country over the past weeks, months, several years, has actually allowed these young Canadians to believe they are not alone. When they're 10,000 kilometres away from home, and they're on a dirty, dusty, dangerous trail, and somebody is shooting at them; when they could be forgiven for thinking that they're all alone, that they're all by themselves in this, the outpouring of support in the variety of ways that we have seen over these past months convinces them that the country is with them, that Canadians support them in what they ask them to do for our country.

I'll close there, sir, and I'd be delighted to get any questions. *Merci beaucoup.*

The Chair: Thank you, General Hillier.

Mr. Patry and Mr. Rae.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will ask my question and Mr. Rae will ask his right afterwards.

[*English*]

My question is about the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to the Associated Press, the U.S., Afghan, and Pakistani officers opened, last Saturday, the first of six joint military intelligence centres along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, an effort to cut down on militant movement in this region of rising terrorist activity.

Is Canada involved in the opening of these centres? When will such an intelligence centre be opened between the province of Kandahar and the Pakistani border?

The Chair: Mr. Rae's question as well, please.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): General, let me welcome you and say how proud all of us are of what you and the troops are doing. I'm sure I speak for all members of the official opposition when I say that. I look forward to an opportunity to visit with the troops as soon as that's possible.

What is your understanding of the relationship between the OEF and the ISAF forces in Kandahar, and what exactly will be the relationship between the ISAF troops and the American troops that we have been told will be supplemental to our efforts in Kandahar?

I'd like to know in particular whether the rules of engagement are the same, whether the general philosophy and approach of the two groups will be the same, and just how that coordination is going to be taking place.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rae.

General Hillier.

Gen R.J. Hillier: Sir, I'll start with the second question first, if you don't mind. There are two military missions in Afghanistan: the OEF and the ISAF mission. The key issue here is to ensure coordination, so that we don't have a conflict during operations.

We work with the ISAF mission under the control of NATO. Our operational commander of Joint Task Force Kandahar works directly under Regional Command South, who works under COM ISAF. He gets his direction from there.

To deconflict operations, we work at both the ISAF in Kabul and at Regional Command South. This is also done directly with our commanders, so that if OEF should be conducting operations in the areas where we work, we know about it and can have that deconfliction. This way, there is no chance of blue on blue or things happening that we wouldn't have control of.

That system, we believe, has worked very well over the last 18 months or so. In fact, I cannot list for you any operation that has caused an issue because we didn't have synchronization or deconfliction between OEF and ISAF. We focus on the ISAF mission, of which we are a part, and we seek to make sure we have deconfliction for OEF.

On the ISAF and the assets coming in from the United States of America, all the details of how they will work are not yet hammered out, but they are coming in to work for the ISAF mission. In other words, they are declared to NATO forces, which means they work under the NATO rules of engagement. They are directed by the NATO commander both at ISAF headquarters in Kabul and at Regional Command South in Kandahar.

Therefore, they will fit with the ISAF campaign plan in the operations they conduct. That was all being walked through. In fact, when I was there three weeks ago, I had a chance to talk to all of those commanders, and they were seized with how to get the best impact from the marines that are starting to arrive but are not yet operational, and then from the forces that they were expecting. This was pre-Bucharest. They were expecting forces to be declared at Bucharest and come in later on. These forces are not working for OEF but for NATO and are under the same chain of command as we are, responding to the same campaign plan.

● (1550)

Hon. Bob Rae: Just as a quick supplemental, are the 3,000 that were supposed to be coming this summer, as I understand it, going to be under ISAF and not under OEF?

Gen R.J. Hillier: Sir, there are actually two pieces. The first part is that the 3,000 divides down. There's a manoeuvre group. They will work for NATO, and then there are about another 1,000 out of that 3,000 that are actually going to go directly into training the police organizations, and that organization is still under OEF but is actually training police as opposed to conducting operations.

So with regard to the marines arriving for manoeuvre, any manoeuvre forces there will work for ISAF under the NATO mission.

The Chair: Thank you, General Hillier. To the first question, the Pakistan-Afghan border is part of...?

Gen R.J. Hillier: Yes, sir. Can I just say, first of all, that I think the opening of the joint intelligence centres is actually an excellent move. It's a step forward. I was in Pakistan on the last day of the week that I was in Afghanistan, and I had the opportunity to talk to their chief of general staff who runs the army, General Kayani, and the head of their intelligent services, both of whom are much engaged in this. They are established.

We as a country specifically are not engaged in it. Our Canadian commander, Region Command South, who works for NATO, our NATO commander, is engaged in the oversight of what is occurring from that perspective. But we specifically as a country don't have a direct role in it right now, except to support the NATO part of this one. That is work going on.

We actually think the Pakistanis are stepping up their efforts on the border in a way that we have not yet seen. They are well aware of the challenge. They are very concerned—at least, this is what I got when I was there—about the threat they have in Pakistan that comes from the Taliban strength in the federally administered tribal areas where there is very little governance, very little development, and very little security, except what the Taliban bring. They realize this is a major threat to Pakistan, and that's their first concern, so their efforts to contain it and to actually bring governance into that area to help develop that area have been stepped up and are stepping up significantly. We see evidence of that.

The joint intelligence centres are one good example of making sure the border doesn't become an artificial separation that allows the Taliban to stay on one side or the other.

The Chair: Thank you, General Hillier.

We now move to the Bloc.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Bourgeois, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, General Hillier. You mentioned a mission that is going on at the moment. Is the real threat in the south, the west or the north?

Gen R.J. Hillier: Unfortunately, I did not understand you completely, Madam.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: You have just told us that the mission was going on at the moment and that there was a threat in the south, the west and the north. Are there pockets of resistance in the north? Is the situation more critical in the south than it is in the north or the west? Where is it most critical?

[*English*]

The Chair: General Hillier.

Gen R.J. Hillier: Sir, Madam, what I would do is quote President Karsai, who said that Kandahar province is "the centre of gravity" for his country. There is where the Taliban first developed. That is their homestay, if you will, and that is where the threat is most significant. That is where the efforts are required, because as Kandahar province goes, so will the rest of the country. There are threats, much less organized and much less lethal in most cases, that occur from time to time around the rest of the country. But in the south—Helmand province, Kandahar province, Zabul province, and Oruzgan province, certainly the south part of Oruzgan province—is where the main part of the Taliban efforts are focused and where we see most of their commanders, fighters being recruited or forced to fight for them, and therefore where we see most of the security operations.

If you actually take a look at the statistics that NATO just put out, something like 94% of the attacks against either the Afghan government officials, humanitarian aid agencies, or international military forces took place in about 10% of the districts across Afghanistan. So slightly less than one-tenth of the country is a major threat, and most of that is in that southern area of Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul, and Oruzgan provinces.

● (1555)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you.

I am going to echo the question from the Liberal Party. I understand that some American troops are going to withdraw from Kandahar next October. Is that correct?

[*English*]

Gen R.J. Hillier: What I've heard about the American forces in the south is that the marine unit that is coming in now has been given a mission that takes them through to November. What I understand about the commitment from the Americans at the NATO summit is that by the end of January 2009, they would have met what our ask was of NATO to have another manoeuvre battalion in Kandahar province itself.

So the marines are in. Whether they are extended in the next several months and stay on through or whether they leave and then are replaced is a question that the United States armed services would work through.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: We know that Canada has received 1,000 more troops in the south. Next October or November, the Americans are going to pull a number of troops out of Afghanistan, specifically from Kandahar. I want to know how many they are going to withdraw.

[*English*]

Gen R.J. Hillier: I can't give you a detailed answer, Madam, except to say that my understanding is that the 3,000 marines who are going in now for a seven-month mission are the ones who are scheduled to come out in November also.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: OK.

You talked earlier about working with the Afghan government. You have a top-down approach. This week, we met someone from Oxfam-Québec who prefers a bottom-up approach, working with representatives, the community or tribal elders' council, for example, so that all social and community work goes back into Afghan communities.

Have you had contacts with the various NGOs on the ground who prefer working in that way?

[*English*]

The Chair: General Hillier.

Gen R.J. Hillier: Mr. Chairman, first of all, I would say that we, as soldiers, but then we as part of the whole-of-government approach from Canada, working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and CIDA, work with the government structures inside of Kandahar province right up through to the national level in Kabul all the time.

We work with the district leaders and their shuras, the gatherings of the elders who help run that district. We work with the provincial governor, Governor Khalid, and the government of Kandahar province. And obviously we work with the national government. We work with them to facilitate all the things they want and need to do, including the return of refugees, some of whom have been out of the country for 30 years or more. So we do that all the time.

What we do not see much of on the ground in Kandahar province are the international or non-governmental organizations that could facilitate that direct work on the ground itself. There are not many of them in Kandahar province itself, and we'd like to see more there.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam.

We'll go to Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Obhrai, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you, General, for coming. As usual, it's a pleasure to listen to you. I'll be sharing my time with my colleague.

General, I have two quick questions. When Mr. Manley came in front of the panel he stated that you had made a request for 1,000 additional troops. When the question was asked whether 1,000 troops were sufficient to meet the security requirements of the region, he said that was something you had recommended.

Perhaps you'd like to advise us as to whether this additional 1,000 would meet the total requirement. Why would you stick to just 1,000, and not more?

Regarding my second question, the day before yesterday, 17 workers who were building roads were killed by the Taliban, which clearly indicates the need for security. It's very important if development is going to take place. Without that security umbrella, the development aspect of it would become quite difficult, as this killing of 17 workers has indicated. That leads to the question of how quickly this security umbrella can be passed on to the Afghan army and the Afghan police themselves, with our forces taking an advisory role.

Perhaps you can give us a picture on those points.

Mr. Lebel, if you have a question, you can ask it now.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Good afternoon, General Hillier.

Earlier, you called on us to be proud of our troops, and we are heeding that call. I phoned several young soldiers in my riding when they came back to Valcartier after a tour of duty in Kandahar. We are proud of what you and your troops are doing in Afghanistan.

My question follows on from Mr. Obhrai's. What are the chances of success of our mandate to train the Afghan police and army? Are we going to keep concentrating on that in the next months? Are the Afghans receptive to the training we are giving them?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lebel and Mr. Obhrai.

Go ahead, General Hillier.

Gen R.J. Hillier: Mr. Chair, thank you for the questions.

Let me just say that I did tell Mr. Manley and his panel that we needed another manoeuvre battalion group in the south, specifically in Kandahar province. The first thing that led me to say that was that NATO had done the assessment almost two years ago and had said the structure in Kandahar province should include two battalion groups, and we had one. My point was to have us help NATO coalesce its efforts to fill its own structure, which it had laid out two years previously but had not been able to do.

We're doing some very good things now and making some very good progress. If we get more troops, we can make more progress more quickly and possibly at less risk to our soldiers and other security folks, including Afghan folks involved in that mission. The more troops you get in Kandahar province in the shorter term, the better you can actually improve things and the better space you can get to allow development like roads and electricity to take place. Then you can start winning the population over irreversibly to a non-violent approach, to a democratically elected government approach for their country for the future.

So the 1,000 troops, based on the assessment NATO had done and also based on our assessments, would give us a much greater capability and allow more progress to take place quickly.

Actually, it's a growing realization that the more troops you have, even beyond that, the better you can do. That's one of the reasons we're trying to build an Afghan National Army brigade with the Afghans in the south. As I mentioned, too, 18 months ago there were no Afghan soldiers there. We went through Medusa and we had none with us, despite our desire to start building that capacity.

Now we have the three battalions. We have what we call a combat support battalion, which is artillery, engineers, and those kinds of things. We also have a combat service support battalion, which is the beans, the bullets, and the medical assistance. And then we have headquarters over that. Those battalions are not all at the strength they're going to be yet. They don't all have the equipment they need yet. And they have a variety of training issues and leadership challenges, because they're still very new in their development. We know in the Canadian Forces just how long it takes to rebuild a brigade or a battalion after you've emasculated it over a period of time or to change it if you already have it in place. It's a long-term process developing leaders at the level of Brigadier-General David Fraser, for example. That's a 20-year product. There are leaders like that there. How can we enable them over the shorter term?

Let me just tell you this. We had a training team over the last two years in Kabul that worked at the Kabul manoeuvre training centre. They took every single battalion coming through during that timeframe and ran them through a three-week final exercise. They trained some 30,000-plus soldiers with Canadian NCOs and Canadian officers. That was their sort of graduation exercise. Those soldiers went out in the battalions, and over the last 18 months, that brigade showed up in Kandahar.

We now have an OMLT team of about 25 to 27, depending on the battalion, with those battalions. We've helped equip them with the C7 rifle, which is certainly a significant step up from where they are right now. We've helped them build an operational, training, and recuperation cycle, because those same soldiers have now been in the fight for 18 months. You understand that they need a break from intense operations. Many of their families are located all around Afghanistan. If you keep them away continuously, you'll destroy them. Also, when they get the first opportunity, they'll leave and vote with their feet and go back to their families. We've helped them get pretty close to a sustainable cycle, thereby reducing attrition and increasing their capability to the point that when we did operations in the Arghandab, just before Christmas, that battalion, which we had move into that area, did most of the planning for it—yes, with our assistance—and did most of the lead in the operations.

The second part that's given us some great measure of what they are capable of doing is that in Zhari district we have withdrawn our significant combat team that was there and moved it to Arghandab. We have left Zhari district security, by and large, to the Afghan National Army battalion and to the Afghan National Police. They've reached a decent level of training. Yes, they are supported by us in a variety of ways. Yes, we're ready to go back in if they meet something that's beyond their capacity, but we've brought them to that level.

The third part, which we're now moving to, and this is from NATO and from SACEUR, Supreme Allied Command Europe, where they want to focus in the future, is not just the OMLT team with the Afghan battalions; it's partnering our units, our rifle companies, for example, with their battalions and operating together. We provide a bit of a core for them to do things and stretch past what they're doing normally, so that they have confidence that they can actually go out and do something and that they have the right stuff with them.

● (1605)

We're moving towards that now. That's part of what the marine unit will do when it comes in.

We've made good progress. We have a long way to go. It takes a long time to build an army. We're building a brigade of that army. We don't control all the pieces that come into it. If the Afghans can't recruit and the Americans move a battalion out, all things change. But with what we're doing, we're making great progress in building our army.

Truthfully, I've seen an amazing move forward over the past six months. When they'll be able to take over complete security for themselves is something I can't say. We have just moved one of their battalions up a level of validation because of the progress they've made, and we keep working that one hard.

The Chair: Thank you, General.

We'll move to Mr. Dewar, please.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

And thank you, General, for being the opening act for the committee—and the closing act, because I think you'll be our last witness before we do our report. Thank you for coming today.

I want to start with the Manley report and the motion that went through the House. It obviously was about the 1,000 troops, but also about the helicopters and drones. Can you tell the committee what the approximate costs of the helicopters will be? We've heard different figures thrown around, so I wonder if you could help us with your knowledge of this.

Gen R.J. Hillier: Sir, first of all, no, I cannot. That's not because I'm trying to avoid the question or sidestep it or anything. It's simply this. We're in a real short-term process to see how quickly we can meet what the Manley panel said. Much of this, that we needed helicopters, that we needed UAVs, came from me; it was also reinforced by others. We're in a short-term process to see if we can lease helicopters in the next several months. So contract negotiations and those kinds of things are ready to start. You cannot define the cost of that until you're actually in those contract negotiations.

Secondly, we want to see if we can offer the government an option to buy some CH-47s that are already operationally equipped for the mission in Afghanistan from the U.S. Army. They're slightly older helicopters, but they're operationally fit. We don't know what they will cost at this point in time. We have to walk through that first part, define the cost, and say, here's what we can get for this amount of money, or here's the value we can get that we think is operational, and here's what it will cost.

Mr. Paul Dewar: The government put a ballpark of $4.7 billion on the 16 CH-47 Chinooks. We're hearing that the costs of the Chinooks are between $15 million and $20 million. Does that sound about right to you?

Gen R.J. Hillier: You're talking about the cost to buy the 16 Chinooks?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Right.

Gen R.J. Hillier: I personally think the—

Mr. Paul Dewar: I guess what I'm saying is, do you have a ballpark figure? I think one of the concerns that people quite rightly have is that if we're going to have the extension of the mission to 2011 and it's going to come with the demands we've been asked for—the 1,000 troops, the helicopters—it's a fair question to get an approximation.

I understand what you're saying. It depends on whether you're going to lease or buy; there's a difference in what you're going to get. But is there an approximation of what it will cost? I guess you're saying that we don't have that approximation to date.

Gen R.J. Hillier: If I could try to help focus it, first of all, we're not operating on "if" we're going to have an extension to 2011; we're planning on getting on with it, sir.

● (1610)

Mr. Paul Dewar: So how much will it cost?

Gen R.J. Hillier: Second, the 16 helicopters we're buying for the longer-term operational capability of the Canadian Forces for Canada are not going to be delivered in time to meet the demand that the Manley panel.... So we're looking at something different, but hopefully connected, and I don't have the numbers to give to you for that.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I would like to turn to some of the questions that Mr. Rae had. I asked Mr. Manley when he was in front of the committee, before the motion passed, a question around how the command and control will work with the American troops. I had predicted at the time that we would have the American troops as a complement to the 1,000. I think that was fairly well-known. We now have the French moving to the east, so the Americans are freed up to the south.

My concern, General, is that when you look at the marines and the way they operate in the field, many would suggest it's very different from the way we operate in the field. They use air more than we and others do. Notwithstanding your explanation to Mr. Rae about how that works through the regional command, my concern is the effects it will have on our command and control. If they are indeed reliant on more use of air strikes than we are, what will the outcomes be vis-à-vis civilian deaths? We've seen civilian deaths go up in the last year. It has not been intentional, let me be clear, but that's been the outcome.

General, many of us want to know your best guess as to the effects on our troops with the Americans in the field. They'll be under ISAF and OEF, but it's my understanding—correct me if I'm wrong—that the ones under ISAF usually dance to their own drummer, and they usually don't take command from other countries, generals or anyone else in the field.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dewar.

General Hillier.

Gen R.J. Hillier: Thank you for the question.

Let me just say, you can say "dance to your own drummer" for every single one of the countries that are involved in the NATO mission from time to time, depending on how you look at it.

I actually have a great deal of comfort. Let me just tell you that they are going to work for the NATO commander as part of the NATO mission, and with that there are NATO rules of engagement and there is a standard that has been established.

I can tell you for sure that despite the violence caused by the Taliban in heavily populated areas, there is a laser-like focus by the NATO chain of command at every single level, right down to our most junior soldier of any nationality, to ensure that collateral damage is prevented, if at all possible, and minimized.

That includes the marines, because they understand that success for their mission is not going in and having significant collateral damage and having the people of that area turn against them and therefore support the Taliban more. They're going to operate under the same rules of engagement. They're an incredibly professional organization. We've had the opportunity to establish liaison with them. They'll work to the NATO rules of engagement. They're professional soldiers. We know that from our perspective. And I don't necessarily believe they will use, for example, more air strikes, unless those air strikes are warranted, but they will certainly not use them in any conditions that would be unwarranted, than any other troops on the ground would.

I have a confidence that comes from an association with some of the United States armed forces before, but also from the command and control structure we have in place in Afghanistan, which is NATO.

There is a focus, I'll tell you, because we know what the winning conditions must be. That has not been a part...having immense collateral damage and therefore turning the population away from us. There is a huge focus on it to make sure all of the methodology is there.

The Chair: Thank you, General HIllier.

Gen R.J. Hillier: Sir, I'll tell you, it won't be perfect. That's the only thing I will say. You know that, and we know that too.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I appreciate that. I just wanted to know the context, the difference between the Americans and us. I think you've shed some light on that.

Gen R.J. Hillier: Thank you, sir.

They don't speak with a Newfoundland accent. That's the only thing I'd say about those folks coming in.

The Chair: That's right.

Mr. Goldring, you have five minutes. This is the second round.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, General Hillier.

Certainly the men and women of the Canadian armed forces are to be commended for the wonderful work they're doing, and at great personal risk.

Going back to the question of the helicopters, I think it's probably more of a responsibility, a duty, for us as a government, that if men and women go into the field, they have the best kit possible; they have the tools that are necessary to do the job. That should be an ultimate responsibility of any government before sending them into the field.

Could you explain, please, in what way these new helicopters are expected to be used tactically and maybe talk a bit about that? I think that's the real importance here: how do you perceive it to be benefiting you?

And then I'll pass a quick question to my colleague.

● (1615)

Gen R.J. Hillier: Yes, sir, I'd be delighted to speak to that. There are two aspects of the mission and setting success for the mission that helicopters enable, overall, under the umbrella of flexibility.

The first aspect is force protection. We have soldiers, sailors, airmen, and airwomen, not just our nationalities, in places throughout Kandahar province, at forward operating bases, or patrol bases, or out at police substations. As I mentioned earlier, the number of roads and the number of kilometres of road in that area are very limited. So when you're moving back and forth on the ground, you become predictable. Most of the roads and the ones we're trying to pave now that will reduce that somewhat are gravel roads. Therefore, it's very easy to dig them up; it's very easy to put in an improvised explosive device of any size and then camouflage that so you're not going to see it.

We take a lot of steps, obviously, to prevent that, but the first thing you can do, and specifically with the leased helicopters, is the hash and trash, getting all the beans and bullets and water and spare parts, and all those kinds of things, from Kandahar airfield out to that forward operating base, or that patrol base, or that police substation, and quite literally jump over that route, not be predictable and not be constrained to it, and therefore not be such a vulnerable target with a high probability of getting hit by an IED.

That's part one with the helicopters. It really does reduce the logistics support traffic, and that, I believe, would lead to a reduction in some of our casualties, along with other things we do.

The second part, given our manoeuvre forces, is a mobility throughout to be able to take the initiative away from the Taliban and to go to wherever we consider they're staging and strike them there before they can strike in Kandahar City or in Panjwai.

That's why something like the Chinook helicopter gives us an air mobility option. All of a sudden, you're into the area. You're not seen a long way off, coming down a road and raising clouds of dust and therefore somebody is either waiting for you with an ambush or else has long disappeared. That gives flexibility, a mobility that reduces vulnerability and allows us to take, in a huge way, the initiative away from the Taliban and therefore be more successful at improving the security in Kandahar City and the districts surrounding it, and just enabling a bit more space to build the other things we're trying to do: the army, the police, and the developmental projects.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Thank you, General.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): I will take you back to Pakistan, and I am very encouraged by your comments.

From my communications with the current political leadership of Mr. Zardari, and from his public statements that it is Pakistan's war, I think the public in Pakistan now, with the political system they have, realizes the seriousness. I also have a lot of confidence in General Kayani; he's a very capable general and a good soldier.

It has also been suggested that perhaps there should be some dialogue with the new government in the northwest frontier, to get their view and to move forward.

But my main question is, can you tell us how the new reality of the military-civilian circumstance that has evolved in Pakistan has made a difference and is benefiting our combined strategic interests in that area?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Khan.

Very quickly, General Hillier, please.

Gen R.J. Hillier: Sure.

What I would say is that it has helped take away some—some—of the freedom of the Taliban leadership to reside inside of that federally administered tribal area in Pakistan, where governance really is non-existent, security is very much limited, and development is just not visible, and where they have been able to hide, plan, recuperate, and to recruit and pay and get folks to go back into Afghanistan to mount attacks, or else to mount them inside with the existing Taliban.

The increased number of troops up there has helped in the past to do that. It's also helped directly through the operations that have been conducted to remove some of the Taliban leaders. In the last year, we had the number three man in the chain of command of the Taliban, Mullah Abdullah, taken out; and as result of joint operations, we had Mullah Dadullah, probably their pre-eminent commander, killed because of that kind of joined-up operation.

Lastly, you start to see an effect on the border itself, where you see constraints on the number of fighters who are coming in to join the Taliban; difficulty for their commanders moving back and forth, which is most important for us; and constraints on the routes they can use, which makes it easier for Afghan forces, or us, in supporting the Afghan forces, to interdict them and prevent them from getting into places where they can launch attacks.

I don't need to make excuses for Pakistan's forces. They are not used to fighting a counter-insurgency operation. They really are focused on a big armoured threat from the continuing Pakistani-Indian tensions, and they have great difficulties doing that. We need them to do all they're doing and we need them to do more, and if they can do more in a joined-up fashion with the Afghans, I think that would bring a great deal of effect.

● (1620)

The Chair: Thank you very much, General.

We'll move back to the official opposition, and Mr. Chan.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): Thank you, General, for the great briefing you gave us.

I would echo the respect that Canadians have for you and the soldiers in the field. Every Christmas, every December, I am asked to go to schools to collect Christmas gifts and cards to bring back to your department and to pass on to the soldiers in the field. Occasionally, the students get a reply from the soldiers, and they're very happy to see that. So through you, to the soldiers in the field, the next time you're there, let them know that those reply cards are very welcome.

I have two questions for you, General.

The witnesses who have come to the committee, particularly from the NGO sector, have been saying there are increases in the hostility or indiscriminate nature of the Taliban's attacks in the south. So my question to you, General, is whether that is the case. Do you expect to be able to contain the increases in those attacks? They are saying those attacks are jeopardizing the achievements we have been able to attain so far.

The second question I have, General, is that you talk about welcoming NGOs, international NGOs, to the southern part and to Kandahar. In my riding, there are some NGOs willing to go to work with local NGOs there and to deliver some support to the locals in the south. Do you think it's safe enough for Canadian volunteer workers to go to work in the Kandahar region at this moment?

Thank you.

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

General Hillier, again, please.

Gen R.J. Hillier: Sir, let me just say that indiscriminate attacks by the Taliban have increased—and I emphasize the indiscriminate part. They've switched some of their attacks away from us, because we are a hard target, to the more vulnerable, the more fragile.... School teachers have been killed. In this past week three schools were attacked with explosives designed to destroy them. If they can, the Taliban focus on international members of the IOs or NGOs, but also local Afghan folks who work for these; and they also focus on the Afghan National Police where they possibly can. At one point last year, the minister of the interior told me that the casualty rate for his police across Afghanistan was 12 police officers killed a day, and that's because the Taliban focuses its indiscriminate attacks on those who are simply trying to bring sustainable security to Afghanistan.

So from that point of view, yes, the number of attacks overall has gone up, in part because we have more troops and police in the south and have really gone there to take the initiative away from the Taliban itself. So now we're having violent actions in areas where we didn't before, and sometimes—not always, but sometimes—it's because we've gone there to confront the Taliban with the Afghans and the police itself.

I'll say that the security situation for international civilians, folks who are trying to build the Government of Afghanistan out in those districts, folks who are trying to build a school or a hospital, is still very fragile, and it is going to remain that way for a while yet. In the Zhari district, despite the Afghan National Army battalion and the Afghan National Police largely having taken over security responsibility for the district, we are going to have, for the foreseeable future, the occasional IED attack; we're going to have suicide bombers, whether on foot, bike, or vehicle; and we're going to have the occasional ambush itself. Those kinds of things will continue to frighten away people who work with IOs and NGOs with the honourable intention of trying to help people who are desperately in need of help.

The indiscriminate part of the attacks is what I would emphasize. I think the Taliban has shown its true colours, and it is despicable.

● (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, General Hillier.

We'll go to Madame Deschamps.

[*Translation*]

You have five minutes.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am going to start by asking you two questions. If I have time, I would like to be able to ask a third. I will be brief.

General, in your presentation, you mentioned the detection of homemade bombs. Canadian soldiers have sustained proportionately more loss of life than any other country, and the losses can be attributed to homemade bombs. The equipment for detecting those bombs was defective and we are told that it still is today. If that is so, I would like to know how we can justify that sad state of affairs.

The Prime Minister made a statement in the House last January in which he said that the army never told the government that it had stopped handing over detainees to Afghan authorities. I would like to know who is telling the truth. Who is right and who is wrong here?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Deschamps.

General Hillier.

Gen R.J. Hillier: Madame, let me just respond to that first question. First of all, you're incorrect; we have not taken more losses than other countries. The British have had now, I believe, almost 100 soldiers killed in action in the operation in southern Afghanistan. One loss, from our perspective, is one too many. We put our entire focus on trying to—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I was talking about losses that can be attributed to homemade bombs.

[*English*]

Gen R.J. Hillier: It's very hard to talk precisely about losses in, say, Kandahar province versus losses in Helmand province. You heard what I had to say about where we are operating. The lack of roads means that we are sometimes predictable, but we are doing a variety of things with enormous intensity to continue to reduce the risks while there.

The equipment is not faulty, Madame. We have the most high-tech equipment available, the best technology available in the world right now. I will just give you an example of the enhanced route-opening capability held by us and the Americans, the only two countries in the world who have it, which goes out and clears the roads, etc. We have mine rollers and mine plows on our tanks going out before us on the roads. We have UAVs, which do surveillance on those roads, and a variety of tactics to do this.

However, we also have an enemy who is thinking and who is, of course, unconstrained by the laws of war, unconstrained by any sorts of policies from a government to actually do things with good values and good interests at heart, and they have found some ways to slip some IEDs in, which we sometimes cannot detect, or they have sometimes come in after we've gone across a route, targeting our young soldiers there. We work at this constantly. We learn lessons and we analyze every attack. You heard what I said about the work we do before the blast, at the blast, and after a blast.

Let me just tell you, having been at Trenton and met most of the families of those young soldiers, this one is my number one priority —and we work hard at it. The equipment is not deficient. There is the simple fact that an enemy, given enough time, enough opportunity, can actually find a way to strike you and find a vulnerability, and that is what they have done with those IEDs. That is their weapon of choice. We continue to work against that.

Madame, we have a responsibility to keep the Government of Canada informed as to what we do, and I am very confident that I meet those responsibilities to our government. It doesn't matter whether it's operations, detainees, or anything else.

The Chair: Thank you very much, General.

That concludes—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I would like to have had an answer about the Afghan detainees from...

[*English*]

The Chair: I think we are pretty well out of time, Madame Deschamps. General Hillier has to catch a plane and he said specifically that he would have to leave at 4:30.

We thank you, General, for again coming here. You've spoken somewhat about the technology and the equipment that's available. I can tell you that we as a government are very committed to making certain that our men and women who lay their lives on the line daily for us have more of this high-tech, top-of-the-line equipment.

We thank you, and we would ask you to pass on to our troops our appreciation for the very good work they are doing in Afghanistan.

We will suspend for one minute and allow the general to take his leave. Then we will invite our witnesses for the second hour to come to their seats.

Thank you.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (1630)

The Chair: We'll call this meeting back to order and welcome each committee member back.

In the second hour today, we are very pleased to have two guests with the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. The first is from the International Crisis Group, David Mozersky, the project director for the Horn of Africa. Also, we will hear from Martin Amyot, the vice-president of corporate development for La Mancha Resources Inc.

This is in regard to the study by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on Sudan, and to listen to different individuals and organizations that come forward to brief this committee on the crisis in Sudan and Darfur.

We welcome our guests today. I'm not certain if you have appeared before our committee prior to this. We look forward to an opening statement, and then we would move into a time of questions and hopefully answers.

Welcome, and I'll invite Mr. Mozersky to begin.

● (1635)

Mr. David Mozersky (Project Director, Horn of Africa, International Crisis Group): Thank you very much.

The ongoing crisis in Sudan represents one of the greatest challenges to the Horn of Africa region and the international community today. Despite significant high-level international attention and engagement over the past several years, we're still far from a sustainable peace in a country that still hosts multiple active or simmering conflict areas and plays a role in regional conflicts in Chad, the Central African Republic, and northern Uganda, among others.

Progress is possible, but it will require a significantly more coordinated and consistent approach from the international community and possibly a radical change in the way we've approached policy making in Sudan. We've done a commendable job of averting catastrophe and helping to keep people alive through humanitarian support in Darfur and elsewhere and through support to the various peacekeeping operations in Sudan, but this alone is not enough. This is treating the symptoms of the problem, while leaving the causes of Sudan's multiple wars intact.

Sudan today has an active war in the western provinces of Darfur; a fragile peace, the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, or CPA, in south and central Sudan, which has seen increased military clashes over the past three months in the contested area of Abyei; a weak and largely unimplemented peace agreement in eastern Sudan; and new potential conflicts in the central region of Kordofan and in the far north where local communities, unhappy with the construction of the Merowe and Kajbar dams, are threatening to take up arms against the government.

This pattern of civil war, which is more than 50 years old in the case of southern Sudan, yet new to equally underdeveloped regions like Kordofan in the far north, stems from a common set of problems relating to poor governance, centralized and opaque decision-making, and the control of resources and power by a small and ruling elite at the expense of the broader population.

We must understand that the current regime in Sudan is benefiting from today's status quo despite the international outrage over Darfur, a conflict that the regime has fuelled and continues to fuel. The ruling National Congress Party is selling its oil on the open market; has had consistent protection in the UN Security Council from China, Russia, and others; and views the political reforms that address the core governance problems in Sudan as a threat to its survival.

Despite having committed to many of these reforms in the 2005 CPA and enshrining them in the Interim National Constitution, it has resisted the codification of these reforms through new legislation. Thus, tackling the deeper causes of conflict in Sudan requires not only addressing technical issues like establishing a functioning and inclusive federal state, or complex issues in Darfur related to traditional land tenure systems and grazing rights, but doing so in a context where the ruling National Congress Party will resist progress each step of the way if it determines it somehow threatens its political survival.

Darfur remains the most urgent and tragic crisis in Sudan. Yet despite the past four years of international attention and engagement, the outlook for civilians and for an end to the conflict remain negative. Civilians continue to face a myriad of threats on a daily basis.

The National Congress Party remains the main driver of conflict in Darfur, but the situation is further hampered by significant rebel divisions, a proliferation of armed groups, and an escalated proxy war between Sudan and Chad. UNAMID is slowly deploying, held up by government obstruction, UN bureaucracy, and tepid support from troop-contributing countries. What is far more worrying, however, is that the political process is completely frozen, with little urgency seen anywhere in the international arena.

Without progress on the political track, the peacekeeping mission, even if fully equipped and deployed, can at best provide increased civilian protection for static populations in IDP camps and increased humanitarian access. But these are symptoms of the larger problem.

A resumption of peace talks in Darfur will probably require a significant amount of time to carry out preparatory work, focusing on rebel unification and broadening of participation, to give the talks even a minimal chance of success. This is not happening and it is not being prioritized. The joint African Union-UN mediation team is stuck, and therefore we see attention shifting once again to the peacekeeping force at the expense of the more difficult, but ultimately more important, political process.

The 2005 CPA is the bedrock upon which peace and national reform can be based. Its provisions include a significant governmental reform agenda, as well as a democratization process that is supposed to lead to elections in 2009. Yet the pattern of implementation more than three years into the agreement is one of systematic undermining of national-level provisions by the ruling NCP and uneven implementation by the southern-based SPLM.

In October, the SPLM suspended its participation in government due to these NCP violations and the parties came close to returning to war on several occasions in November and December. Although the suspension was resolved peacefully between the parties without external intervention, and the SPLM returned to government in late December, the fundamental challenges remain.

● (1640)

The NCP's ruling clique view implementation as a threat to its survival, while the SPLM is challenged by internal divisions and capacity issues. The most volatile issue, the contested area of Abyei, remains unresolved and has seen a series of deadly clashes in the surrounding areas since late December.

This is not a recipe for sustainable peace, but instead carries a high likelihood of an eventual collapse of the peace agreement and a return to war, unless something changes. A collapse of the CPA would have devastating consequences for all of Sudan and torpedo any peacemaking efforts in Darfur. It would have significant negative ramifications on each of Sudan's nine neighbouring countries.

So what must change to improve the chances of sustainable peace in Sudan? I believe the answer, or at least part of the answer, rests with the approach of the international community. Three things must happen for a more effective international response.

First, there must be a consistent, coordinated message from the international community to the Sudanese government and other actors. This requires a common international strategy towards Sudan, but this is currently lacking and poses a significant challenge in the context where the UN Security Council is sharply divided.

Second, such a strategy must be comprehensive and address Sudan as one country with multiple conflicts stemming from a common set of causes. We must understand the inter-linkages between Darfur, the CPA, and the greater region, and adapt our policies accordingly. For the past three years, most international actors have viewed Darfur and the CPA as two separate conflicts, have developed two separate sets of policies, and, in trying to balance these agendas, have ultimately ended up undermining both. For example, the CPA holds the seeds to begin to address some of these structural issues, but these are not sexy, do not make headlines, and have too often been ignored.

Finally, we must build leverage with the parties. In some cases, this means just backing up threats already made in existing UN Security Council resolutions and using it to push the parties down the path that will lead towards peace. This does not mean regime change, but we must be more effective at holding the parties to their commitments in the CPA and in Darfur. By doing so, we support the political transition and reform agenda already embedded in the CPA. By creating political and economic costs for non-compliance, the international community can make a peaceful transition the best political option available to the parties and greatly reduce the risk of renewed conflict or be prepared to better manage renewed hostilities.

Canada has an important role to play. In addition to the crucial support that Canada is providing in Darfur on the humanitarian side and through support to UNAMID, as well as in southern Sudan in the transitional areas, Canada is a consensus-builder in the international arena. The Sudan file needs leadership and vision in developing a comprehensive strategy and an international consensus around that strategy if we are to make progress on consolidating peace in Sudan.

Thank you for your attention.

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

In fact, you came in under the time. Not very often do we have that, but we appreciate it. We look forward to your comments in the questions and answers.

Mr. Amyot.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Amyot (Vice-President, Corporate Development, La Mancha Resources Inc.): Thank you very much.

When the decision is made to impose sanctions on a country, economic sanctions are often those that first come to mind. We are one of the few companies currently conducting activities in Sudan. In the document that has been distributed to you, we try to describe for you the vision of a mining operation in Sudan. I should say at the outset that the comments in the presentation are made from the perspective of a resource company. It is of course possible that the various economic sanctions that could be imposed might approach the question from various angles, depending on whether mining companies, the oil and gas industry or any other operation were involved.

Let me now quickly put things into context. Currently, supply and demand of natural resources are not in balance. This is true for practically all kinds of minerals, and for oil. As we show in slide 3, this is also what explains the significant rise in demand for gold in recent years. According to Bank of Montreal economists, among several others, the demand is going to last for some time because of the time needed to increase capacity to match the sudden spike in demand. This spike, as you know, is often attributed to the rapid development of the economies of China and India. So it is likely to last for some time yet.

A little less known is the fact that, previously, operators and producers of natural resources, certainly mining resources, essentially all came from the big four countries, namely Australia, Canada, the United States and South Africa. Very recently, that old order has changed. Whether in mining or oil and gas, the producers are increasingly new players that we have identified on slide 4. They are China, Indonesia and Russia. They are playing an ever more active role in the production of natural resources. They are homes to growing companies that are making a greater and greater mark on the world stage. It is important to remember this. Any freeze in Canadian activities in Sudan, for example, whether in mining or in oil and gas, could benefit the emerging players in China, Russia and Indonesia.

With the context now set, I would quickly like to introduce the company that I represent today, La Mancha Resources Inc. La Mancha is a Canadian company headquartered in Montreal. It is listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange, the TSX, has a market capitalization of $61 million—as of last March 31—and is presently operating two mines, one in Côte d'Ivoire and another in Sudan. The latter is the Hassaï mine, 150 km northeast of Khartoum.

The Hassaï mine has been in operation since 1992 and has produced over 2 million ounces of gold to date. The forecast production for 2008 is about 100,000 ounces of gold. Once produced, every ounce is sent to Canada where it is refined and sold on the international market. We presently employ 850 people, of whom 20 are expats, and 830 are locally hired and trained, Sudanese, that is. The mine is presently the only one in operation in the country. But we must remember that there is a lot of exploration going on at the moment and, unfortunately, it is not being done by Canadian companies, but exclusively by companies from China and Indonesia.

As a producer, La Mancha has a relatively short history. We began production activities after having acquired the assets of AREVA, a company based in France. A few months after we had acquired the Sudanese assets, the Sudan Divestment Task Force (SDTF), which appeared before this committee a few weeks ago, placed La Mancha on its *highest offenders list* because of our company's operations in Sudan. The objective of the Sudan Divestment Task Force is to provide financial markets with information about the operations of various public companies conducting activities in Sudan.

Their initial recommendation, based on information available in the public domain, was rather damaging. The organization put us on its *highest offenders list* simply because of our presence in Sudan.

● (1645)

However, the dialogue that came after August 2007 allowed us to describe the benefits resulting from La Mancha's presence in Sudan, the type of operations we had, our positive influence on the local population because of the training and instruction we provide, the working conditions in place at the site, the company's environmental policy, and so on. As a result, the Sudan Divestment Task Force reviewed its position and removed La Mancha from its *highest offenders list*.

This position was confirmed in November, when consultants appointed by the Sudan Divestment Task Force came to visit our operations in Sudan to confirm the statements that had been made to the Sudan Divestment Task Force committee.

A little more practically, not preventing companies like La Mancha or other Canadian producers from operating in Sudan has a number of advantages. I describe them in a few of these slides. First, it creates favourable working conditions. I can mention no discrimination in hiring and promotion, workforce training, respecting workers' human rights, and their religions, and so on. Most Canadian companies observe these policies and continue to do so outside the country. We do so in Sudan.

The same goes for environmental policies. It is important to know that the people developing the resources of a country are doing so responsibly. Again, blocking access for Canadian companies runs the risk of opening the door to companies whose environmental policies are less dynamic than is the norm among publicly traded companies in Canada.

Looking at regional development, many Canadian companies, including La Mancha, continue to have policies that are very socially oriented in their actions and their overseas operations. This deserves to be highlighted; several schools and hospitals have been built thanks to funding provided by our company, for example. We have provided water and electricity to a number of places.

In a few words, that is our position. If economic restrictions are to be imposed that would limit commercial links between Canada and Sudan, it is important that companies developing natural resources be exempted from those restrictions. Once again, the present great demand for natural resources means that any space vacated by Canadian companies would be immediately taken by Chinese, Indonesian or Russian companies.

As the example of Talisman Energy very recently showed, this is not necessarily beneficial for the local population. In the folder you have received, you will find an article describing what has happened since Talisman Energy left Sudan several years ago. Clearly, this special case is not necessarily representative of everything that can happen in those situation, but it is still an important example to keep in mind.

Of course, we are ready to take your questions.

● (1650)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Amyot and Mr. Mozersky.

We'll move into the first round of questioning, and we will go to Mr. Rae, please.

Hon. Bob Rae: Thank you, gentlemen.

It's an interesting “two ships passing in the night” presentation from Mr. Mozersky and Mr. Amyot. I'd like to try to bring the two together and ask you both to comment on each other's testimony today, just to get a sense of how Canada can be successfully engaged.

David, if I may just ask you directly, since you talked about leverage with Sudan, would you recommend continuing a disinvestment program with respect to Canadian activities in Sudan, or would you recommend the type of engagement that Mr. Amyot talked about?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rae.

Mr. Mozersky.

Mr. David Mozersky: I'll be frank in my response.

Hon. Bob Rae: That's why you're here and that's why we're here. We're all frank. We're frank all the time here.

Mr. David Mozersky: There are two points. The first is that I think Sudan is quite an extreme case. You have a government that is not moved by many of the mechanisms and levers available in the international system. They're not moved by naming and shaming. They're not moved by public outcry, and the threats, which the international community, including the Security Council, has made over the last four years related to its activities in Darfur, have largely gone unfulfilled. Therefore, the credibility of our threats, the degree to which our leverage has clout, just by our words, is quite low.

The second point to make is that the government, or specifically the ruling National Congress Party, is threatened by a peaceful transformation of the country. They're maintaining power. They are embedded in the status quo. They are opposed to peaceful transformation, peace and stability in Darfur. They're opposed to the national level reforms included in the CPA. That provides the context.

Economic sanctions, particularly those that have already been authorized by the Security Council, make sense as a disincentive, as a political tool to hold the government accountable, hold the parties accountable, to their commitments, but they'll only work if they have sufficient clout to create a real change in the government's calculations.

The short answer is that Canada alone will not make that difference. Canada is a minimal player in Sudan's economy. This leads to the broader point I tried to make in my presentation, that if we're going to be effective, there needs to be a more coordinated international approach to Sudan.

I'll leave off there with that point. If we're to see significant change, recognizing the difficulties of the context we're working in, it's only going to come with a heavy push from the international community and probably not from unilateral actions.

The U.S., for example, far bigger than Canada and a much bigger player economically, has had a robust set of sanctions on Sudan since 1997. The Sudanese government is not unaffected, but they've been operating perfectly fine with those in place for more than 10 years.

● (1655)

Hon. Bob Rae: If you take Talisman as an example, the effect of the steady campaign against Talisman was not that oil exploration or oil production ceased in Sudan, it was that somebody else did it.

Obviously, what you're saying is in order for sanctions to be effective, they have to be applied by everyone. Until that's the case, I take it your view would be—not to put you on the spot—that Mr. Amyot's company could continue to operate in the Sudan.

Mr. David Mozersky: I think it's a moral call. I can answer from a position in principle, but I don't know the specifics of La Mancha and what it's doing or not doing.

I think the damage that Talisman did in Sudan, not only to Canada's reputation but to the civil war itself, is that Talisman was the enabling factor in the development of Sudan's oil sector and was part of that initial consortium that saw the displacement of as many as 300,000 people in block 1 and block 2.

The fact that Talisman sold its operations in 2004 and that ONGC Videsh bought them is almost a secondary point. The point is that in 1999, 1997, when they bought their stake from Arakis, I think, they were there and they had the technical expertise to build the pipeline and develop the oil sector, and we can't undo that.

For sanctions to be effective, everyone needs to be on board, and that means thinking outside the usual players and including China, Malaysia, and those who do have—

Hon. Bob Rae: There's no sign that China or Malaysia are the least bit interested in participating in sanctions.

Mr. David Mozersky: I think there's an argument to be made there. We haven't engaged them sufficiently yet. The argument is, particularly for China, that they're active in Sudan's economy, but they're disengaged for the most part from the political activities of the international community and are essentially providing almost blanket support to the National Congress Party and the UN Security Council.

The implication is that they're putting all their eggs in the basket of the National Congress Party. Now, it's increasingly clear that the policies of the National Congress Party are going to lead to renewed conflict, and potentially a collapse of the CPA. In that scenario, China's oil investments and its investments in the hydro-energy sector will be threatened. If there's a new war in Sudan, nobody will benefit.

The military situation is not what it was in 1999 and 2000, when Talisman was there and the government was able to protect its investments. Those troops have pulled out of the south. The SPLA is there; that's the new front line.

So there's an argument to be made that it's actually in China's national interest to see a stable transition. And it's in Malaysia's national interest to see the CPA implemented, to reduce the risks of a return to war. But again, that takes a level of coordination and a level of cooperation that we haven't seen yet.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Madame Deschamps.

[*Translation*]

You have seven minutes.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Will we have time left for committee business, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Pardon?

[*English*]

Yes, we are over time. But there are no votes today, so we'll save some time for committee business at the end.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Good afternoon, gentlemen.

I have a question or a comment. Mr. Mozersky, after your presentation, you painted us a general picture of the situation in Darfur, as opposed to the one in Sudan. You tentatively suggested a plan for lasting peace that contained three points that you emphasized. For example, we need better coordination in order to send a consistent message from the international community.

You mentioned a national strategy but hardly mentioned Canada's presence or role. Could you explain how a national strategy would be established? Who would take the lead? How would the strategy be able to resolve the underlying issues like poverty, drought, famine and wealth distribution. Could you tell us more about that vision, please?

● (1700)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Deschamps.

Mr. Amyot, did you want to respond to her question, or Mr. Mozersky?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: My question...

[*English*]

Mr. David Mozersky: Just to clarify, the question was where is this strategy outlined more clearly, where was it developed, and how does it lead to dealing with humanitarian issues and issues fuelling conflict and poverty. Is that it?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: The second point in your presentation mentioned a common national strategy. In the international community, who could be in the best position of leadership to resolve the underlying issues like poverty, drought, famine and wealth distribution?

[*English*]

Mr. David Mozersky: You hit the nail on the head. It's an excellent question. Part of the problem is that there hasn't been a leader within the international community in developing policy in Sudan. After the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, many people assumed that the UN would take the lead. They set up a 10,000-person peacekeeping mission, and other bilateral actors who had previously had the lead in the peace process took a step back. The U.S., Norway, the U.K., and other international partners ceded some of the political direction to the UN mission. What happened was that the UN mission became sidetracked with the conflict in Darfur and failed to provide an adequate balance.

With the deployment of UNAMID in Darfur, we have two separate missions. The UN mandate has been bifurcated. UNMIS, the UN mission in Sudan, has a mandate for monitoring the North-South Peace Agreement exclusively, and UNAMID has a mandate for monitoring Darfur exclusively. So we can't rely on the UN to provide national leadership because they've taken themselves out of the game.

I think we have to look at other places, at other countries that have not traditionally been leaders in Sudan. This brings me to the point I made about Canada's having an opportunity to play that role. We have been heavily involved in Sudan in supporting humanitarian activities in Darfur, under the African Union and UNAMID. But we haven't been leaders in the political process. So there's a gap right now. No one is leading in the political process in the international community. The traditional countries—the U.S., Norway, and the U.K.—have not stepped up to fill the vacuum. I think Canada is well placed to push the process forward, to develop the necessary coordination and consensus.

There are efforts. There was a meeting in December that Italy hosted, a preparatory meeting, through the framework of the IGAD Partners Forum, which was the international support body for the north-south peace process. That meeting could be revived, and I think it's a forum that Canada could easily take the lead in.

● (1705)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mozersky.

We're going to go to the government side.

I would like to ask Mr. Amyot a question first, if I can have the prerogative of the chair.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Don't take my time.

The Chair: You said there were a number of things that have changed since Talisman left Sudan in 1999 and 2000. We noticed that when Talisman left, China moved in. One of the positive things that took place was that Talisman, according to a number of witnesses we've had, has become much more socially responsible. In fact, we've had witnesses appear before our committee who have stated that Talisman, PetroCan, and other firms are now world leaders in social corporate responsibility.

Mr. Amyot, in response to what Mr. Mozersky said, how have you and your company, since 2000, improved your social responsibility record?

Mr. Martin Amyot: I'd say that the entire national resources sector has been improving drastically in that domain for the past 10 or 15 years. These days, in the organizational chart of most of the mining and oil and gas companies, you'll find at least one officer responsible for social development and community relationships. Developing a mine or an oil field has become impossible in almost any part of the world without good communication and good relationships with the local authorities and the local populations.

Reputational risk is now a big weight in the way a company is valued on the stock market. It is a concern that all natural resource companies have in mind whenever they decide to start a project in a foreign country, or even locally.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Amyot.

We'll move to the government side with Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, for your information, my daughter worked for Talisman in corporate social responsibility. They do have a very good division of that. It's a conflict; I agree.

David, I'm going to respectfully tell you that I disagree with your analysis. I know from looking at your.... I just came back from Sudan. I was there with the minister, and we went to Darfur. We went to south Sudan and we met with the Government of Sudan, and although the general analysis of the attitude of the Government of Sudan is interesting, a lot of other factors are taking place. Your analysis is very negative; I would say we would have to look at the positive side. I've just come from south Sudan, and it is an amazing situation. You see the birth of a nation taking place in south Sudan, the birth of a little nation starting from ground zero, and they are working around that. What we found was that although we talk about the CPA and its breakup, and it is a possibility, the realization is coming that south Sudan is probably going to be an independent nation in due course, with its own president and all these things. Sure, politics are always part and parcel of the game. Tugs-of-war are always going on, but that is part of it.

An important aspect in that country is the oil revenues, although they will be shared equally, it does provide a basis for a zero economy to move up, for south Sudan, although for the government.... The situation in Darfur is very different. The governor of Darfur met us and said he was very grateful to have NGOs and everybody come to address the humanitarian crisis, but what about the development of that region? No development people will come, because in these refugee camps they're able to find food and everything, so more and more people are coming, just for economic reasons.

We passed a motion for investment in Sudan, and colleagues were tough with that. We have come back to revisit this question, to say you cannot penalize these regions that are growing now, like south Sudan. When we put a blanket sanction on Sudan to punish the Government of Khartoum, we are punishing the government of Juba as well. When we were there, sanctions were biting. You can't use visas and other things. Quite interestingly, I am seeing the Government of Khartoum using the Government of Sudan to go to the international states and try to work within the sanctions.

I'm not going to comment on this mining issue, on your company, at this stage, but I think from the international crisis aspect of it, you will have to change your analysis and say there is a lot of progress and good things happening at a very slow pace. The international community needs to focus on getting south Sudan and all these things moving forward, not as an international basket case but moving forward because they have the potential, and in Darfur, addressing the humanitarian crisis of the war going on.

In the long term, how is the economic development of Darfur going to take place? If you're not going to do economic development in Darfur, I can tell you those IDP camps will never disappear in Darfur.

● (1710)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

There are a couple of questions for both our guests.

Very quickly, we have about 30-second answers each, Mr. Mozersky and Mr. Amyot.

Mr. David Mozersky: I have a brief response to that final point. I agree with much of what you said. Certainly southern Sudan is a different case and should not be penalized for the actions of the National Congress Party in Khartoum. I glossed over it in a brief presentation, but we've discussed it in detail in our report. Both the governments of southern Sudan and Khartoum rely on oil revenue. If you cut off the oil revenue, the CPA collapses and the south collapses.

Having said that, the risk of the CPA collapsing is not coming from southern Sudan or from the SPLM. It's coming from the National Congress Party, who are systematically undermining elements of the agreement, and that's where there's a need for pressure. They've signed up for things. They've committed themselves to things. They are refusing to implement because they view it as a threat to the status quo. That's where the international community needs to push.

I respectfully disagree with you on the need for economic development in Darfur. Yes, it's absolutely part of the solution, but it's not the solution today. It's a solution down the road when you have a government that is willing to provide the political space for Darfurians to come together, turn off a military offensive, and allow access for the UN and for humanitarian communities. We need progress on the political process in order to get there. We need equal attention given to reviving the peace process that we're giving to the peacekeeping force if we're going to get to a position where we can talk about development, because certainly it's fuelling conflict in Darfur. It's part of the solution, but it's not the solution tomorrow; it's the solution a couple of years down the road.

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

I'm pleased to have Mr. Marston here today. Mr. Marston serves on the human rights committee and one of our subcommittees, and he's been quite outspoken, certainly, on the mining issue and others, so we appreciate your being here.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): I was going to say, Mr. Chair, after a year and a half to two years there, I thought we had—

The Chair: We do. We do have a better understanding of who we are. That's right.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Well, I like the way you expanded on the analysis after the government question. I think that's important to put that perspective on the table.

How can Canada best support the UN mission? Would it be through the supply of material goods or personnel or both?

Mr. David Mozersky: I think actually that's only part of the solution. There's also a need to work within the UN, to work in New York, to press DPKO and press the leadership of the mission to do a better job than it's done so far on staying engaged on the political issues. Just to repeat the point, we're not going to get to a solution.

The UN—no, it's not only the UN; it's the UN together with the AU; they have done a lousy job on reviving the peace process. They need to be pushed there. With the North-South Peace Agreement there are specific crisis areas—I mentioned one, Abyei—all along the north-south corridor. Those are the flashpoints. The UN has to be pushed to redeploy its troops from areas that are less volatile to those that are most volatile. That's what makes the most sense.

DPKO is unwilling to do it because it means revisiting MOUs with troop-contributing countries and rejigging the mandate. They're stuck in bureaucratic ways, but they need pushing from international member states and partners.

In Darfur, certainly support with equipment and support with personnel is necessary. But I think, just again, that the missing plank in the solution is really on the political side and there's not much attention, not much focus or outrage, going on about the fact that the political process is stalled and there's really no work going on in the short term to revive it.

● (1715)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mozersky.

A very quick one, Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Our other guest today started to expand on what had changed in the companies, I heard, but more specifically in your company. The corporate and social responsibility is a significant piece of our view on our subcommittee on human rights. Has that report or the development of that report in any way influenced your particular company?

Mr. Martin Amyot: That's basically where we think the solution is in a situation like Sudan. We think that making Canadian corporations that are operating abroad more responsible for their actions, more responsible for the environmental consequences of the operations they have abroad, more responsible for the employees they hire, train, and use for their operations is a part of the solution. Making them responsible assures that their presence in a country like Sudan is more beneficial than detrimental to the country.

To get back to the point I was presenting earlier, there is currently a shocking demand for most of the natural resources. It's more specifically for oil, copper, zinc, gold, and so on and so forth. So leaving the space in a country like Sudan, which is rich in natural resources, only opens up opportunities to other producers that might not be subject to the corporate responsibility that we've seen improving here in Canada and in the United States, for example.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Marston.

Because there were a couple of people who really wanted to put forward a very quick question—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: —I'm going to go to Mr. Patry, and if you would give your question and then, Madame Bourgeois, give your question, then we would have both answers.

Mr. Patry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you very much. My question is for Mr. Amyot.

You mentioned the social responsibility needed by companies, and I very much appreciated that. I read all the documentation that you sent us today. You have a regional development fund and contribute 4% of your annual profits. You have built schools, medical clinics and so on. We are still waiting for the current government's response on the round tables that were held on mining companies.

Do you agree with the creation of a position of a Canadian ombudsman to monitor all our mining companies working overseas?

[*English*]

I have a comment also for my colleague Mr. Obhrai.

I would just like you to read today in *The New York Times*, where it says there is a major problem between the south and the north right now in Sudan. In fact, the militia attacked the people to prevent them from going back into the south, to be sure they could not register for a census that could be quite important for the independence of the south.

I just want to let you know about this. It's something new.

The Chair: Thank you for that comment.

Madame Bourgeois.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: My question is for Mr. Amyot.

As I read your document, I have no doubt that your approach is responsible. But what intrigues me is the joint venture you have with the Sudanese government to the tune of 56%. French involvement amounts to 4% and your company, La Mancha, contributes 40%.

Could you provide the committee with a written explanation of what the 56% interest of the Sudanese government means? What implications does it have?

Then I would like to ask Mr. Mozerski, if possible, to tell us ways to avoid harming companies that seem to have a responsible approach, like Mr. Amyot's, but would target the Sudanese government, which is causing the problem.

● (1720)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Quick answers from our guests.

Mr. Amyot.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Amyot: As for the ombudsman, that comes right back to the comment I made before. It is certainly the best way to make sure that the resources being developed in one way or other in a country like Sudan are developed in a responsible way. Canadian companies must become accountable. The idea of an ombudsman moves in that direction. It is much more productive, in my view, than imposing economic sanctions on companies like La Mancha, for example.

As to Ms. Bourgeois' question about our relationship with the government of Sudan regarding the mine, I would say that the situation must be looked at from a historical perspective. Our mine in Sudan has been in operation since 1992. For it to have been in operation from that year, exploration and set-up work must have been done at the end of the 1980s. in fact, exploration started in 1988. At that time, the dynamics were completely different. The AREVA group, based in France, our predecessors who owned the mine at the time, had an association with the French government to develop the mine in partnership with the Sudanese government.

Following up on Mr. Patry's question, I think that the most beneficial way for host countries to develop mining expertise and benefit from their own resources is to become involved in mining projects. That was sort of the approach in 1988 when this project was launched.

Twenty years later, the situation has evolved significantly and is completely different. The only question that we should answer now, in 2008, is this: should a company like La Mancha have to withdraw and leave the door completely open for the government of Sudan to develop the mine? One way or the other, I think we would all agree, the mine is going to continue to be developed, given the very strong global demand for natural resources, and specifically for gold.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Amyot.

Mr. Mozersky, did you have a very quick response as well?

Mr. David Mozersky: Yes. What we've advocated for in the past are targeted sanctions against those most responsible, not blanket sanctions that can affect civilians in the broader population, but targeted economic sanctions or targeted travel bans against those most responsible for atrocities in Darfur, for poor decision-making within the regime, or for other violations.

The UN Security Council has a sanctions committee on Sudan. It has five reports documenting violations, recommending sanctions. It's fallen on deaf ears in the Security Council and it hasn't been acted upon, but there are ways to target those who are responsible for the decisions and the obstruction without targeting the broader population.

The second point is that sanctions are a political tool as much as anything else, and we have to make sure that if we use them, we make clear to the parties that are being targeted what it is we want them to do, how they get out of it, and what the political path is that we're pushing. And that requires, again, a comprehensive strategy and a coordinated international approach.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We do appreciate your coming. I think all members of Parliament are being lobbied, and rightly so, by constituents who are concerned about what's taking place in Sudan. I received, just in the last couple of days, 23 letters, I believe from the Walk for Darfur Club at Augustana, University of Alberta, calling on Parliament to take a look at what's going on there and to take action.

We passed a motion, brought forward here, to do a study on Sudan, and this committee is intent on doing that and making some very specific recommendations to the government. It's a comprehensive study on what's taking place in Sudan and Darfur, the plight of Darfur. Like many Canadians, we certainly look forward to making those recommendations.

Thank you for being here and helping to kickstart that study, although we have already been taken with the crisis in Sudan.

We are going to suspend now, and then we're going to move into committee business for a very short period to discuss a budget. We'll just give our guests the opportunity to exit.

We'll also ask that we stop the televised portion of this meeting.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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