



House of Commons  
CANADA

# **Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan**

---

AFGH • NUMBER 002 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

---

**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, March 26, 2009**

—  
**Chair**

**Mr. Rick Casson**

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

## Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan

Thursday, March 26, 2009

• (1145)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

Today we are having meeting number two of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan. This is pursuant to the order of reference of February 10, 2009, from the House.

We have two parts to our meeting today. The first is from the PCO: David Mulroney, deputy minister, Afghanistan task force.

Committee, we have to be out of here at one o'clock for another committee. I'd like to leave 15 minutes at the end for an in camera meeting to deal with committee business. We won't delay. We'll get started and we'll get as deep into the rounds of questions as we have time for.

Mr. Mulroney, thank you very much. As you know, this committee hasn't sat for a while, so we are keenly interested in what you have to tell us about the recent developments in Afghanistan.

Sir, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

**Mr. David Mulroney (Deputy Minister, Afghanistan Task Force, Privy Council Office):** Good morning and thank you for inviting me today. I am grateful for the chance to provide an update on developments since my last appearance before this committee.

At that time, in June 2008, new policy priorities for our Canada's mission in Afghanistan had been established and programming refocused to increase our emphasis on diplomatic and development contributions. The first quarterly report to Parliament had just been tabled.

[English]

Over the last nine months departments and agencies, led by the cabinet committee on Afghanistan, have been focused on fulfilling the commitments made in the government motion of March 13 last year and the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan.

These actions have included a significant increase in our civilian deployment, including more senior people and more managers. When I last appeared before you in June, we had a total of 52 people in Afghanistan. We're now close to 100 and we'll grow beyond that in the coming months. Significantly, most of those people are in

Kandahar and are working side by side with the Canadian Forces in Kandahar.

Since I last saw you, we've established benchmarks to better track progress. We've pushed out and increased authority delegated to our people in the field. As you know, we've deployed helicopters and UAVs. We've tabled two additional quarterly reports since I was last with you. And I think we've established a focused and connected whole of government effort that's increasingly seen as a Canadian innovation and success.

At the same time—and we've spoken frankly about this—the overall security situation in Afghanistan has remained dangerous and has deteriorated in the last quarter, despite international efforts and the efforts of the Afghan national security forces. Insurgent attacks are indiscriminate, killing both civilians and military personnel. Incidents in both Kandahar and Kabul, and indeed elsewhere in Afghanistan, illustrate how difficult the work of Canada and its partners is. But we continue to do our work, and that's one of the things I wanted to report to you today.

Despite the challenges, Canadians, military and civilian, continue to do what we have asked them to do. Just last week I was in Kandahar and Kabul with ministers Day and Cannon, and among other things, they met with the team that is planning the implementation of the Dahla Dam in southern Afghanistan. They met people who were working up at the dam, walked along the irrigation systems that lead from the dam down to Kandahar City, and even did an investigation of the tunnel that takes water through the mountains the last part of the way. And they met with local officials to talk about the dam and to talk about the important role that local officials, councils, and shuras would play in guaranteeing its success.

We met with civilian and military colleagues who are training the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police and correctional staff in Afghan prisons, and we met with colleagues in Kabul who are implementing our new governance support office, which is deploying experienced Canadians to a range of Afghan government departments to enable them to perform better and to build capacity.

And while we haven't hesitated to speak frankly about the challenges we face, particularly in terms of security, we also need to stay focused on what's going right. I'd like to quote three specific instances that the UN's special representative in Afghanistan, Kai Eide, listed in his March 19 statement to the Security Council. Here I'm quoting Mr. Eide.

First: “After all the changes that have taken place over the last six months, the Afghan government is today better and more competent than ever before. And the level of provincial governance is higher.”

Second: “The cooperation between key elements inside the government has improved. That applies most prominently to the security ministries and institutions.”

Third: “The improved internal cohesion we now see emerging could help us cover the fragmentation which has hampered coordination with the international community.”

So as Kai Eide pointed out, we have seen developments that represent potential success stories. Turning them into reality will, to a large extent, depend on the ability of the international community to respond quickly, but most importantly to the Afghan government, to continue to welcome and support these reforms.

I believe what has been achieved in the last year is something Canadians can be proud of. I think we're leading the way in terms of civilian-military partnership. This is increasingly something we get asked about in other capitals because we're deploying, as I say, more civilians to our PRT, our Provincial Reconstruction Team, than anyone else and we're deploying them in a very difficult part of the country.

We've resolved to make transparency and accountability the touchstones of delivering what was committed to by the government, and I think our quarterly reports represent that. We've developed new ways of communicating with Canadians in an effort to increase public awareness and understanding of how Canada is contributing to the international effort in Afghanistan. If I could cite two examples, over the last few weeks and in coming days, we've had people like General Denis Thompson, the previous commander of Task Force Kandahar; his deputy, Colonel Jamie Cade; and Elissa Golberg, who was the senior civilian in southern Afghanistan—the person we call the RoCK, the representative of Canada—meeting audiences in Canada and internationally to talk about what Canada's doing in southern Afghanistan.

Secondly, we've spent a lot of time moving from a period when we had numerous government websites on Afghanistan to a single government website that captures the entirety of the mission. Yesterday some of you may have seen Minister Cannon explaining that to Canadians and showing them, for example, the kinds of footage and reports we have, the podcasts on the various development projects we're undertaking, and a pretty unique map that allows people to click on particular areas and find out more about specific projects.

[Translation]

In closing, it is important to keep in mind that Canada is one of many countries and international organizations working to improve security, development and governance in Afghanistan. We share a common purpose with Afghans, our partners, and our allies: To protect international peace from the dangers that form in the violence of failed States.

International meetings over the next few weeks will allow us to work for greater coherence, sharpen our focus on key issues like ANSF capacity, and continue to transfer authority to Afghans.

● (1150)

[English]

Progress in Afghanistan will not come easily, and the country's transition to a more secure and stable society will take time. Nevertheless, our focus is on building Afghan capacity, ensuring that this process of transition is increasingly planned and led by Afghans. We are contributing to a better future for Afghans in a way that corresponds to Canadian values and to Canada's security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll get right into the questions. We'll start with the official opposition.

You have seven minutes, Mr. Wilfert.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, I'll be splitting my time.

My question, through you to Mr. Mulroney, is this. There has been a lot of discussion and evidence of very weak public institutions that clearly are not capable of countering the insurgency, and this had led clearly to feeding the insurgency, allowing the insurgents to win over public support. People are frustrated, particularly the poor, at the lack of real governance, lawlessness, the absence of essential services, and ultimately the issue of corruption, which we're hearing more and more about, particularly from key figures within the Afghan government. Could you respond to that in terms of what Canada is doing in responding with our allies in dealing with the situation? Clearly, if there's a lack of public confidence, we're not able to advance the goals you have articulated this morning.

Could you keep it as short as possible, so I could then go to my colleagues?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** We're addressing that in a number of ways.

First, our priority is building up Afghan national security forces, so we have Canadian Forces mentors who are working with the Afghan National Army. We report on this quarter by quarter and we are seeing success in terms of the ability of the Afghan National Army to mount security operations where they need to mount them.

Policing is, I think, more of a work in progress, although we've established a police training centre at our own PRT and we're beginning to have some success at the local level. We're also bringing in more RCMP and civilian trainers.

I talked about the governance support office. We have Canadians who are working with institutions like the Ministry of Interior, which manages the police. The new Minister of Interior, as one of his first acts, fired a number of police chiefs in different parts of the country. We think we're seeing a change there, but I won't suggest that it isn't a big, big challenge that we have to stay focused on.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Mulroney, I'm a little surprised that you didn't talk about two issues that put some of this in context. The first one, obviously, is the question of the election and the impact that it's having with respect to the Afghan constitution—whether President Karzai will be in fact allowed to stay beyond May, given that the election is not taking place until August.

The second one is the question of Pakistan and the question of the overall regional issue. I've been harping on this question for some time. I would certainly appreciate it if in any future discussion you could tell us more about what's taking place in the northwest of Pakistan, which is the training ground for the Taliban. Unless we get a handle on that subject, I don't think we're going to be able to deal with the nature of the insurgency.

Could you touch on those two points?

[Translation]

Mr. Coderre will have a question afterwards.

[English]

**Mr. David Mulroney:** On the elections, there are a couple of things I would say, Mr. Rae.

One is that I think we can take some satisfaction from the fact that registration unrolled more smoothly than many had anticipated. We had something like four million additional registrants, in addition to the 12 million who had registered previously. So while we're not taking our eye off the ball vis-à-vis the elections, which happen in August, I think there is a growing degree of confidence that the Afghan national security forces performed well.

We have contributed to the UN process in support of the elections. UNDP ELECT will be spending additional funds for voter education and citizen awareness to help build a sense of what elections are all about and the rights and responsibilities of people.

What happens after May 22, in terms of President Karzai's authority, is something that will be worked out politically by the Government of Afghanistan and the opposition parties. I think that's happening now. I can't predict what the outcome will be, but that's the appropriate course, and I think they are following the constitution.

On Pakistan and the regional dimension, I think there has been an increasing focus internationally, as we've seen. It's not an easy thing to manage in the absence of any regional institutions. What Canada has been doing over the last year is that we've been coordinating with our two missions and two heads of mission, working together on joint policy recommendations. For example, how can our support of programming in Baluchistan, which neighbours Kandahar, reinforce what we're doing in Kandahar? When ministers Day and Cannon were in Kabul last week, one of their meetings was with our ambassador to Afghanistan and our high commissioner to Pakistan, who reported to the ministers how we're working together.

We're continuing to encourage a resumption of what we call the Dubai process, which had border officials from both countries meeting together. That was suspended last year when Afghanistan suspended its direct relations with Pakistan. We're working at getting that back on track. So we're engaged on that file, as are others, and I think the increasing international focus on it is a good thing.

• (1155)

**The Chair:** You have two minutes, Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Thompson told us that people thought the security rating had gone from 55% to 30%, and that the number of attacks had doubled. So there is a growing feeling of insecurity.

[English]

Some of the local leaders and the people in the field right now are saying that Afghanistan is on the brink of chaos. Do you agree with that, given that even in Wardak province the Taliban are controlling about 60% of the territory?

[Translation]

Given that the number of attacks has doubled, do we have the equipment we need to carry out our mission properly? We purchased 100 tanks, and 40 of them are not ready yet and are at the Longue-Pointe base.

**M. David Mulroney:** Mr. Coderre, as you—

[English]

**The Chair:** Make it a short response.

[Translation]

**Mr. David Mulroney:** It is true that there has been a decline in security in recent months.

[English]

It's true that security, by many measures, has deteriorated. That's a fact measured in the statistics and shown, for example, in the complexity of the ambushes being staged. Whether that means that Afghanistan has reached a state of chaos, though, does not necessarily follow. If we look at the ability of the Afghan national security forces to manage the election registration, for example.... The last election was an ISAF-managed election; this one is an Afghan-managed election.

One of the objectives of the insurgency is to undermine public opinion, and that is working, but it is not leading to chaos, because we're seeing a resolute response from the Afghan national government.

I think Canadian Forces, if not the best-equipped forces in Afghanistan, are among the very best-equipped forces in Afghanistan. The tragedy is that as we arm and equip and protect our people, insurgents continue to develop more insidious IEDs, improvised explosive devices. They're bigger and more complex in terms of the number of people involved in triggering them.

There are couple of things that I think we have going for us. One is the increase in troops in Afghanistan, the increasing number of American troops. Two, the use of helicopters and UAVs to have more eyes on where Canadians are working will be a positive. But we will continue to face that challenge. The insurgency is a very determined insurgency.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Bachand.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, Mr. Mulroney. Your presentation was similar to what we generally hear. I have nothing against your optimistic nature, because it is important to be optimistic—I too am an optimist. However, at some point, optimism verges on inaccuracy. There is a failure to take into account some important facts that show we are losing the war in Afghanistan.

I have some very disturbing statistics here. For example, there were 983 attacks in August 2008, a 47% increase over August 2007. We have not met the control and security objectives. There have been 120 attacks on humanitarian aid workers and 92 kidnappings, and these figures are increasing as well. There were 1,523 civilian victims in 2007, and 2,118 in 2008. So this figure has gone up as well.

Between 40% and 50% of the country is not accessible to humanitarian aid workers. Costs are rising considerably as well. From 2001 to 2008, the war cost \$10.5 billion, and from 2008 to 2011, it is expected that it will cost \$7 billion. The cost of this mission is getting higher and higher. There is also been an increase in the number of Canadian and American troops who have been killed since 2001. We are losing more and more soldiers.

We have been saying for a long time now that the mission must be changed. The American plan could be released tomorrow. We have to determine how we can complement the American effort. In your last report on Afghanistan, the inter-ministerial report of the five ministers, you said that to some extent, the situation had worsened over the quarter. I think it is getting more and more serious all the time.

Have we reached a crossroads, a time when the mission in Afghanistan must absolutely be changed? Everyone says that we cannot win the military conflict, and yet we are increasing the number of soldiers there. Is the solution not to ask the forces to build some security perimeters so that schools, clinics and irrigation systems can be built? At the rate we are going, it is clear that we will be unable to control this insurrection or to win. I do not think that the situation can be turned around by 2011.

Am I too pessimistic or are you too optimistic?

• (1200)

**Mr. David Mulroney:** We talk about security in very frank terms in every quarterly report. We made the point that security had deteriorated in recent months. That is a fact, and we were very clear about it. However, we also have to determine how Canada and the other countries can correct this situation.

[English]

We've talked very frankly about the nature of the insurgency—how the insurgency has changed, how very desperate it is to undermine civilian confidence, and the real impact it has had. It makes doing our work very difficult. But the sentence doesn't end there. We haven't stopped doing our work. We spend a great deal of time working with the Canadian Forces and with Afghan national

security forces, thinking about how we respond. The very intent of the insurgency is to get us to down tools.

In each of our quarterly reports, while we talk about how difficult the security situation is, we also say that we've completed three schools and we're working on 22 more. We're continuing to plan the implementation of the Dahla Dam. We are working with the World Health Organization to immunize people in southern Afghanistan.

We're not for a minute saying that it's easy or that we don't face challenges. We're saying that we're determined to carry this out and to report frankly to you each quarter in terms of what we're doing.

What is more positive? I think an increasing U.S. presence in southern Afghanistan is a positive thing. It will deal with some of the challenges we face in being able to cover territory, and hold territory, over the longer term. But more important, I think we are beginning to see increased ability and increased capacity on the part of the Afghan National Army and parts of the Afghan government. It's not the entire government—it's still a work in progress—but we are seeing, in certain key ministries, a degree of connectedness that we hadn't seen before.

I'll offer a very short example. When Minister Oda was in Afghanistan in January, I was with her. We talked about the Dahla Dam with Kai Eide and also with the minister responsible for agriculture and irrigation. We talked about the irrigation that the Dahla Dam would provide and the link between that and the development of agriculture in southern Afghanistan. The Arghandab district was the breadbasket of southern Afghanistan. The irrigation systems fell apart. Agriculture itself fell apart. We're beginning to change that. That's now a \$20 million industry just outside of Kandahar. That will grow if we stay focused and we are determined in our response.

• (1205)

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** How much time do I have left?

[English]

**The Chair:** You have a minute.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** If possible, I would like you to tell us about the strategy Canada will be unveiling at the upcoming NATO meeting in April. Will Canada do what it usually does, or will it be putting forward a different plan, that will focus more on diplomatic and development efforts, and less on our military contribution? Could you take a few seconds to tell us what Canada's position in Strasbourg will be?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** First of all, Canada wants Afghanistan to continue to be a priority for NATO. Second, it will be asking for assurances that the Afghan capacity to manage the challenge will be strengthened. Third, we want NATO to develop the Afghan National Security Forces.

However, before the meeting in Strasbourg, there will be a meeting in the Netherlands that will be chaired by Mr. Eide. It will involve NATO members, Afghanistan's neighbours and some other very important countries. Under Mr. Eide, and in partnership with NATO, the issues of development and governance will be discussed. So there is a fundamental international coherence in this regard.

[English]

Our strategy continues to focus, of course, on the security, but the Canadian goal is to meet the objectives set out in the parliamentary motion—that is, rebuilding, governance, and increasing Afghan capacity.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC):** Thank you very much.

Thank you, David, for coming back here again.

I want to stay on the topic of the new developments taking place. You've given your quarterly reports to Parliament as per the motion. They state what Canada is doing and what Canada's progress has been. But a couple of new developments are taking place. One is what you just alluded to, the Hague conference in Holland, where the regional players are coming. Iran, I've just noticed, has accepted the invitation to come. At the same time, the Obama administration will also give its policy on Afghanistan, which seems to be looking at a lot of development effort, diplomacy, and all these things. Pakistan as well is coming to that. I would like to know the government's thinking in terms of our going there. What will this do to enhance our presence there?

There's one other point you could address at the same time. Today, or perhaps yesterday, there was a changing of the guard at the UN. Our ambassador was replaced by Mr. Galbraith to be the second in command to Mr. Eide. These developments indicate more active international presence. This should not be seen as a negative thing; it should be seen more as an international coming in—especially the Obama administration, coming back in there after their focus in Iraq.

So those are just some things that are coming up on the horizon. Could you tell the committee and Canadians who are listening today about these developments?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** The international meetings in the next week—both the meeting in the Hague, presided over by UN special representative Kai Eide, and the NATO meeting—have some common objectives. They're objectives that have been Canadian objectives since the Prime Minister attended the NATO Summit in Riga more than two years ago.

First, Canada is seeking, and I think we are now seeing, a greater international effort. That's an effort not just in terms of troop commitments, although we're seeing that with the Americans and certainly the French and many others in southern Afghanistan, but also in terms of more partners coming to the table. You've talked about some of that. Because there is a burden sharing to be done in terms of funding, training, and capacity building as well, the meeting in the Hague is referred to the big tent meeting. That has been and is an objective of ours.

The second issue is coherence. How do you bring all of that together in a way that actually leads to results? That has been a Canadian objective. We were very successful in focusing NATO last year at Bucharest. We'll be working very hard this year to make sure that as all of these actors come onto the stage, we do it in a coherent way. The leadership of the UN and Kai Eide is tremendously important.

As you indicated, Kai's number two for political affairs was a Canadian, Chris Alexander, who used to be our ambassador in Kabul. He'll be replaced by Mr. Galbraith, who also has some Canadian lineage through John Kenneth Galbraith. We continue to support the leadership of the UN in that sense.

The third objective is to have a chance to share best practices. We have different actors doing different things in Afghanistan. It's really important that we take time out to learn what's working. There, both in the Hague and at NATO, Canada will have a good story to tell. There is increasing interest from other countries in deploying civilians. If you want to do governance and development in a big way, you need to have civilians who are specialists in that, so we're getting a lot of questions in terms of how we have done what we have done in southern Afghanistan.

There are also a lot of questions about benchmarking. The UN itself is now talking about benchmarking.

Finally, there are questions about how you stand up the Afghan national security forces. The Canadian Forces in particular have a very good story to tell. They're among the very best in terms of training the Afghan National Army. This will be a stock-taking, and Canada can share some real success stories.

● (1210)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Do you want to go ahead, Mr. Hawn?

**The Chair:** You have three minutes.

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

Thank you, Mr. Mulroney, for being here again.

For some of us, even those who refer to themselves as optimists, the glass seems to be perpetually half empty. That's understandable and that's okay, but I think one of the measures of the ability to conduct the mission is the level of activity of our civilians in DFAIT, CIDA, and so on, outside the wire. Can you comment on the level of activity they have been able to conduct?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** The last visit I made was my tenth in two years. At the start, we had a very small civilian presence in Kandahar. One of the observations of the Manley panel was that we didn't have enough eyes on or enough ownership of our development and governance work; it was delivered out of Kabul or elsewhere, and we weren't getting the results we needed.

What I see now is that young foreign service officers and CIDA officers are out at the forward bases working with captains, setting up local councils and shuras, and really working creatively together. It's quite inspiring to see. I see Correctional Service officers and RCMP and DFAIT officers in Afghan prisons monitoring, training, and supervising infrastructure improvements.

I see a lot of work. For example, I mentioned the Dahla Dam. A key to success on the Dahla Dam will be not just doing our infrastructure improvements by 2011, but leaving some Afghan capacity behind to keep managing that. So I see civilians out working with the local communities that are responsible for water management in their particular regions and talking about what the dam will do and how we expect them to step up.

There has been a real change. It's partly the number. It's also that we're sending more senior civilians out there. We now have a civilian who is the counterpart to the brigadier general, known as the RoCK, and the current one is Ken Lewis. We have a senior civilian at the Provincial Reconstruction Team who is a counterpart to the colonel, and then we have senior people for each of the core departments. They're making a difference.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** The other thing is that the impression that seems to be left with the Canadian public is that when we talk about the balance of the mission, people keep talking about ten-to-one military-civilian funding and so on, which is very, very misleading. Can you comment on what the military engineer teams at the PRT are doing?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** A lot of what ultimately gets done just at the very grassroots level, whether it's repairing bridges or irrigation works or dams, is done not necessarily by Canadian military engineers, but through their expertise and with their support. What we're seeing are combined teams of people from CIDA, CF engineers, and local Afghan contractors who are out there doing the work right out where it counts. It's a very productive and very effective partnership.

**The Chair:** That was exactly seven minutes. Thanks.

Mr. Dewar.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Mulroney, for your presentation on the work that you're engaged in.

I want to start off with some comments that you made to Mr. Obhrai on where Canada is going.

One of the issues we're focusing on is reconciliation. You didn't mention it, but to be fair to you, it's in the reports. In order for peace and reconciliation efforts to actually succeed in stemming the violence, which you acknowledged is increasing, I believe the military initiatives have to be aligned with a political strategy and a diplomatic initiative. Can you help us here? There's going to be a American troop surge of 17,000. There'll admittedly be more violence. I don't think it's controversial; it's a fact that has been laid out. If that is happening, I think we also need to have a clear political strategy or diplomatic strategy. What concrete recommendations and initiatives will Canada offer at the conference next Tuesday?

I was going to ask for your comments on Mr. Alexander being replaced by Mr. Galbraith, noting that Mr. Galbraith is also someone who is American in terms of his viewpoint. You have certainly worked with Mr. Holbrooke. I'm concerned about where the Canadian influence and confluence are, at a time when Canadians want to see us push diplomatically. They want a diplomatic surge to be something that Canadians do. We've seen the Americans talk about a diplomatic surge. That's what Canada does. It's our history. We want to see that happen.

I guess what I'm asking you is this. Where's our diplomatic surge? Where's our diplomatic plan? What are we going to be offering on Tuesday?

• (1215)

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Thanks, Mr. Dewar.

First, on UN personnel, one of the reasons Canada tends to have a lot of people in senior jobs at the UN is because they act as UN officials and they don't have a Canadian agenda. It's why Chris Alexander's work was recognized. We don't think of Kai Eide as a Norwegian, although he is a Norwegian and a very distinguished one; we think of him as a UN official. We will expect Mr. Galbraith to act on behalf of the UN. That's a fundamental objective.

Secondly, we've been working very closely with all of our partners, including the U.S., to ensure that we have a sensible and practical plan for southern Afghanistan. At the end of the day, our objective is the same as the U.S. objective, and it's certainly the Afghan objective. The objective is success. The Americans realized going in that there were a lot of things they were going to have to learn in the south. I spent a lot of time in Washington, Kabul, and Kandahar talking to them. I can give you a specific example.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I'm sorry, but my time is short.

Are we offering anything on Tuesday in terms of a diplomatic plan that you're aware of?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** We already have a plan for the development of Kandahar that was carefully worked out with Afghan officials and Canadian Forces.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** It's the reconciliation process that we prepared.

**Mr. David Mulroney:** No, there's an action plan for the development of governance in Kandahar that the Americans have already accepted. It will continue to be the plan for development.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** But beyond that, in terms of the region and a diplomatic plan to push for what many people agree is the solution, there will be regional talks and regional players. Is Canada going to be involved in that, as far as you know?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Canada will definitely be involved, as will Minister Cannon,

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Are we looking to push for that on Tuesday?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Canada has for some time advocated the need for a regional solution. We've recognized that all along. I can tell you that our diplomats, like John McNee in New York, are leading in the UN on the American friends of Afghanistan group.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** We're looking forward to something on Tuesday that will show that Canada is offering something in terms of a diplomatic plan and will push for what I'll call a diplomatic surge, but you can call it something else. Will we see Canada being involved in that part of the discussions?



**Mr. David Mulroney:** You will see Canada, in the person of Minister Cannon, continuing to advocate for a sound and comprehensive regional strategy that contributes to peace in Afghanistan and peace in the region.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** If I may, some have called for an eminent persons initiative through the UN. Lakhdar Brahimi is a name that has been suggested. I can throw in another name, a Canadian, Mokhtar Lamani, who was with Mr. Brahimi in 1998 when he was reporting on the ground in Afghanistan. They are two very eminent people.

Some say it's a way in which to go, including people who are specialists in the field from the Norman Paterson School here in Ottawa. Canada could get behind that kind of initiative, which would actually open up regional talks with countries such as Iran and others. It seems to me that it would be something to consider. Have you heard anything along those lines? Would it be something to follow within our framework?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** I saw Mr. Hampson's article not so long ago. I think the real challenge is, as I say, coherence. We have to reinforce the actors who are there. For Canada the eminent person is Kai Eide, who is the Secretary General's special representative. We need to do, as we have done, everything we can to support him in his efforts to bring coherence to development and diplomacy in Afghanistan. That is Canada's long-standing position, and Canada, in the person of Mr. Cannon, will continue to advocate for that next week in the Hague.

• (1220)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I would simply suggest that we should look towards that eminent persons group and have a Canadian component to it. It's not that they would bring a Canadian lens, but that there would be a Canadian contribution, and we have the people to do that, as you know.

I think most Canadians are looking for the next steps from Canada diplomatically, notwithstanding all the good work that was done. I went with the committee last spring and we saw some of the good work that's being done. What they're looking for is getting out of the frame we're in, which most would agree isn't working well on the ground for Afghans and certainly for Canadians, and we know the story there. I hope we push that. We're having a take-note debate tonight in the House of Commons on what's going to happen next. I would hope that those other ideas are looked at, and we'll certainly be pushing those ideas.

**The Chair:** You're just about out of time. There are 20 seconds.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I'll leave it at that. I won't push it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Have you any response, Mr. Mulroney?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** I think one of the reasons Mr. Cannon is so supportive of what's happening in the Hague next week is that it is a very inclusive meeting and it will bring in some new actors. So Canada wants to be sure there is international burden sharing and that everybody who can play a part in achieving a peaceful solution in Afghanistan plays a part.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

That ends the opening round. We'll go to a five-minute round. We start with the government and then we'll go to the official opposition.

Mr. MacKenzie.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. If there's any time left, I will share it with Mr. Hawn.

Thank you, Mr. Mulroney, for being here today. Just so everyone understands, we're operating under a motion passed by the Parliament of Canada and we are on that path—if that's a fair assessment—and the guidelines are within that motion that was passed in the House. I'm wondering if you would expand a little bit on that.

My other concern is that when we talk about what's going on in Afghanistan, so frequently we talk about the military and some of the other things that we're doing there, and we sometimes miss the fact that we have a number of police officials and prison officials there. And I believe I recently saw where we're going to enhance that and also perhaps pay for some of the Afghani police officials. I'm wondering if you could tell us a little bit about both of those things that I've asked there and explain it so that Canadians would understand that we are taking a broad approach to what we are doing there.

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Thank you very much.

In response to the parliamentary motion, the government really set about transforming the mission. It meant a real change in terms of our focus, so that we were focused very specifically on the development and rebuilding of Afghanistan, and that we also took seriously the time limitations, the fact that we have work in southern Afghanistan that will take us through to 2011. In everything we do, we're entirely organized around that. You'll notice that our public benchmarks reflect specific goals to address the things the motion asked us to do. The fact that we are benchmarking and reporting is also part of the motion. We've staffed up; we've put people in place to ensure that we're doing this as carefully and rigorously as possible. I meet once a quarter with key people from headquarters in Ottawa and the field, civilian and military, and we talk about how are we going to go month by month, quarter by quarter, to navigate to 2011. So that is our entire focus.

I should say we have military police who are also training Afghan National Police. We have about 40 now. We've got 30-plus civilian police. That will go to 50 by the middle of this year. They're working on a couple of levels. First is basic survival skills so that the police know how to do their job safely. Secondly—and this is what the minister saw last week—they're teaching them how to manage a crime scene, how to do their job professionally. It's quite impressive to see them do their work. The announcement that ministers made last week of our new contribution to the law and order trust fund will effectively ensure that salaries are paid for Afghan National Police in southern Afghanistan for the next couple of years. We're also working very hard to ensure that they get that salary money. We've worked on an electronic payment system so that officers can actually collect the money themselves on a monthly basis.

We're working hard to ensure not just that we're doing the training but that we've got some of the other conditions of service right.

• (1225)

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Would you concur that putting in civilian police and the prison officials and the judiciary is a big part of the security going forward for a country like Afghanistan?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Very much so, and you're right in reminding us that this has three parts: the police, and you also have to have the judicial system right, and you have to have the correctional system right—because if you're arresting people but you have no courts and no place to send them, you have a problem.

I'd say we're making real progress with the police, although it's a challenge. The judicial sector is a challenge in itself in that we have to get more and better-trained judges into the south, and we've got to figure out.... There's a local dispute resolution system on issues around property that probably should remain as it is. It's a traditional system and it works well. We're listening to Afghans on the question of how much direct intervention of the judicial system is required there.

On the correctional system, Canadians are in Afghan prisons more than people from any other country, so I think we have a better sense. We are establishing very important relationships with the senior managers and the people who actually manage the prisons, and we're seeing that is having an impact in terms of how they operate. That side of things is also a challenge, but I think we're pretty well engaged.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go over to the official opposition, Mr. Wilfert, and then back to the government.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mulroney, Afghanistan is our number one recipient of assistance, and last year when we were in Afghanistan we discovered concerns with regard to a disconnect between the aid that's going there—the assistance, the job building—and the failure to really employ and coordinate working with the local officials and with the local people. That's reinforced again by the Kabul-based Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies, which talks about the failure in terms of our work both through CIDA and through the PRT, that it's not coordinated with the local government, that local people are not

being hired. This is not just in terms of Canada's role, but in terms of other countries' assistance.

What are we doing to address that, given the fact that it's not helping? People are not going to be very supportive of a government if in fact they don't feel their own standard of living is improving, because in fact they're not being part of the equation.

**Mr. David Mulroney:** The finance minister of Afghanistan met with Minister Oda recently, and he congratulated Canada as being one of the lead countries in terms of putting funding through Afghan government institutions, including his ministry. At the end of the day, you have to show you have confidence in the Government of Afghanistan and fund through them. So about half our funding goes through them, but there are good reasons why we don't send all our funding through them.

First, we have NGOs working in Afghanistan who are very, very competent. Think of Rory Stewart and Turquoise Mountain—the British former diplomat and soldier who set up a project in central Kabul. Canada is one of the lead funders of that. Peace Dividend Trust works to ensure that the money the international community spends in Afghanistan stays in Afghanistan. We fund Peace Dividend Trust.

So we fund the Afghan government. We run some of our support through them and through the UN, some of it through NGOs, and some of it we spend directly in Kandahar because the NGOs aren't operating there or the Afghan government isn't operating there. So we have three chains, but we're very, very focused on ensuring that at the end of the day we're helping to build up Afghan capacity to manage its own affairs.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Are we measuring this? Clearly there is a problem that has not been addressed satisfactorily.

**Mr. David Mulroney:** We have benchmarks that measure the capacity of ministries like the ministry of finance. We are measuring it and that's why we're putting people...for example, in the education ministry, we've got the former deputy minister of education from Manitoba.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** I'll split my time.

Finally, can you provide those benchmarks and results so far?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Yes, they're in our last two quarterly reports.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Rae.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** One has the sense, Mr. Mulroney, that the issue of the narco-economy has almost gone by the boards. It wasn't mentioned in your report. I don't see it in very much public information. Half the GDP of Afghanistan is tied up in the opium industry, and we don't seem to have been able to develop a coherent strategy to deal with that.

Do you have any comments on that?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Defeating the narco-economy, the problem in Afghanistan, is going to take a long time, if we're to take the measure of any country where it has flourished—think of Southeast Asia or Turkey. There are no shortcuts.

Canada is doing a couple of things. First, we are funding, to the tune of about \$30 million, a program that includes money for alternative livelihoods—i.e., encouraging people to grow other crops—and also to improve the courts and the police and the prosecutors, to get the people upstream. So it's not just focused on the farmer; it's focused on the bad guys who actually make this business work.

The other thing we're doing longer term is economic development in Kandahar. A poppy grows, first, where the roads end and the insurgency begins, but secondly, it grows in places where irrigation isn't available, because unfortunately poppy is very hardy. Because there is no irrigation in southern Afghanistan, farmers turn to that often as a last recourse. Once we begin to get traction on Dahla Dam and irrigation, we think we're going to make it possible for people to grow wheat. Afghan farmers don't want the risk of growing poppy. It runs counter to their religion; they have to deal with very bad, scary people who take money from them; they can't feed it to their livestock. So there are a lot of reasons why they don't want to do that.

Economic activity and alternative economic prospects work against that. So we're working on it on a number of tracks, but it's going to be a long-term problem.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** You have one minute left, Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** One of the problems, Mr. Mulroney, is that the Taliban control more and more of Afghanistan. The future of Afghanistan will also have an impact on the future of NATO. For example, in the northern region, the Germans and the soldiers from other countries have a mission that is completely different from that of the Canadians, the Americans and the British.

At this meeting on April 3 and 4, will there be a redefinition of the duties so that there is a single mission in Afghanistan, or will countries continue to be allowed to do what they want?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** It is true that there is a difference between the conditions in northern and southern Afghanistan. However, in the south, there has been a steady increase in the number of troops

there, not only the NATO force but also Afghan troops as well. There will also be 17,000 more American soldiers there. That will change things. At each NATO meeting, we can see progress in the areas of coherence and coordination.

[English]

It remains a challenge. Because there are different conditions in Afghanistan, people are focused on slightly different things. If we could go back and redesign and redefine how Afghanistan was managed, I think the international community might do that, but we don't have that luxury. We've had a system under NATO where different people have done different things in different parts of the country.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** The definition of the mission itself is different. Governments are not doing the same thing as the—

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Region by region, I would say that the tightest coherence and unity of vision is in the south. And we're not alone in the south. There are many partners—the Danes, the Romanians, the Brits, the Dutch, along with the Americans, the Australians—and we very much see things the same way. That is building up as we go north in Afghanistan, but we still have some challenges.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We have enough time for just about three spots. We'll go over to Mr. Abbott and to the Bloc, and then back to the government.

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Mulroney.

I was interested in the questions of Mr. Bachand in particular because they're reflective of the perspective that somehow, without having a strong military presence at this time and sometimes taking aggressive action to rout out the opponents, do the kind of development work that we're doing, we could, as it were, pull back our Canadian military and continue to develop schools, the dam, and other humanitarian work, as though the two things are mutually exclusive.

I wonder if you'd like to comment on that.

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Security and development and security and governance are really tightly interrelated, and nothing we do in southern Afghanistan is done without really close coordination between the civilian authorities and the military. In fact, one of the things that people are taking notice of is the degree of integration in the Canadian plan, that it's jointly developed by the civilians and the military.

But the most important factor is increasing Afghan military presence, and the last time I was here I think I described briefly how last summer the Taliban, as they have done in previous summers, infiltrated Arghandab region, which is to the northwest of Kandahar City and is a vital strong point to the north of the city. In previous years it has fallen to ISAF to remove the Taliban, to push them out of Arghandab. Last summer the Canadian Forces, commanded by General Thompson, provided guidance to the Afghans, but they led the mission. They even flew in troops from Kabul, which is not an easy undertaking for any military, to bring troops into a battle situation in short order. And the Afghans chased the Taliban out.

So the ultimate measure of our success is increasing Afghan ownership of the security situation, but as we do that, we have to do it hand in hand with the Canadian Forces. They enable the rest of the mission to take place.

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Thank you. You still have three minutes.

Mr. Hawn.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** I'll finish off the time here.

Can you comment, Mr. Mulroney, on the impact of the new airway?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** The new air assets that we have are serving a number of functions, and I had the great pleasure of accompanying the ministers to travel in a Canadian Chinook last week. First of all, we're able to deliver people, civilian and military, to places they have to go. We're not going to be doing as much road transport. It doesn't eliminate road transport, but it allows us to get people around. It makes our Canadian Forces more mobile, but certainly when we talk about the Griffon helicopters and the UAVs, they give us eyes on the situation. They are already making a difference in terms of spotting, for example, IED implementation, ambushes, and things like that.

So it has added a big dimension to what Canada can do, and it has also sent a very powerful message within NATO of Canada's continuing engagement. We are building up to 2011, when our mission ends. We're not losing focus. We're not losing commitment. That has been a real positive addition to the NATO effort.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** We've talked a lot about the meetings coming up and the 17,000 additional American troops. In your view, is that going to change the nature of our six priorities?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** It won't change the nature of the six priorities. To follow up on Mr. Dewar's earlier comment, a great deal of our diplomatic strategy in Washington and in Brussels, London, and other places is ensuring that we have an effective partnership with the Americans. The Americans have accepted the six priorities. They've accepted our plans, they think they're sound, and they're willing to contribute.

There will be a geographic division of labour, and the Americans will soon make that clear to us. They will be present in some parts of Kandahar where we have not been able to be present, or where we've had to withdraw and the Taliban have come back. The key effect will be that Canada will be more focused on major population centres in and around Kandahar City, which is exactly where we want to have the impact with our priorities.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Is it fair to say that Canada is leading the effort and the Americans have accepted our leadership and guidance in that area?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** The Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team will lead on governance efforts in Afghanistan. The Americans have told us that, and it will continue to be the case. That being said, we will partner with them in the security area, and we will have a very capable partner to assist us in dealing with the insurgency.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Paillé.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I have any extra time, I will share it with Mr. Bachand.

I would like to thank you for being here today, Mr. Mulroney.

I would like to come back to the plan you were speaking about. We already have a plan in place. You said that Mr. Cannon will be presenting a different plan. Will the new plan be along the same lines as the current one, or will it change the Canadian mission?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Mr. Cannon's plan will continue to emphasize the importance of an international partnership and UN leadership. That is not new. That is the Canadian plan that Mr. Cannon will be presenting next week.

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé:** Does this plan contain any targets or objectives for the various projects in which Canada is involved? For example, there was the building of the dam and the 22 schools that you referred to. Are there any target objectives in this plan?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** We have some target objectives for our efforts in Kandahar and in Afghanistan. They are included in our quarterly reports.

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé:** In relation to the forecasts and the targets, what percentage of the work has been completed so far? Do you believe that some work may not be finished before Canadian troops leave in 2011?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** We are now in the process of completing all our work. It's a bit early to determine the final situation for each category. I am confident that we are in the process of completing it now.

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé:** If everything goes as scheduled, Canada's troops will leave Afghanistan in 2011. Has anything been done yet in terms of the transition? Canada has taken on many responsibilities, and we have been in the field for seven years now. I suppose that it will take some time to ensure the transition with the authorities who will be taking over. Is there some kind of plan or mechanism for others to assume Canada's responsibilities in Afghanistan?

• (1240)

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Our projects and priorities in Kandahar must end in 2011. That has already been planned for. We are working on the Dahla dam and on the schools. As for the transition, we now know that an additional 17,000 American soldiers will be arriving. That will be finalized later. This is not the time to begin the transition, because we still have two years before the 2011 deadline. We are focusing on our objectives for 2011.

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé:** I see. Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** You have two minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** I would like to talk to you about Mr. Karzaï because the election will be held in late August. I sense that the Americans are somewhat impatient when it comes to Mr. Karzaï. Everyone knows about the argument he had with Mr. Biden. In the NATO circles that we travel in, often we hear people within the American delegation expressing the hope that a candidate might run against Mr. Karzaï.

As for you, you are constantly rubbing shoulders with the five ministers who make up the inter-ministerial committee. We have the committee's report here, and it was very well done. Furthermore, there is one provision, or rather, a chapter, that talks a great deal about governance. Is Canada also lacking patience when it comes to Mr. Karzaï? I do not want to interfere with the Afghan democratic system, but we must acknowledge that ever since he became president, the situation has not changed very much, and many people have lost confidence in him. People still call him the Mayor of Kabul because he has a great deal of difficulty extending his authority beyond Kabul.

In your opinion, would the Canadian government look favourably upon another person running against Mr. Karzaï? Has the Canadian government lost patience with Mr. Karzaï, as has the American government?

**Mr. David Mulroney:** I believe the Afghans themselves should decide who their president will be. As far as we are concerned, the bilateral dialogue focuses on our objectives. So it's not a question of who the next Afghan president will be, but rather, we want to provide the Afghans with the necessary support so that they can make progress on each one of our priorities. That's the content of our bilateral dialogue.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** So you do not intend to interfere in any way in the Afghan campaign.

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Not at all.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That just about uses up our time. We have to suspend for a minute, and that will give us exactly 15 minutes left. It's the government's time slot, but I'm afraid there is no more time. I hope it wasn't too burning a question, sir.

Mr. Mulroney, thank you very much for bringing us up to date.

**Mr. David Mulroney:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** We'll suspend for one minute while we switch to in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

---





**Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons**

**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:  
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

---

**The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.**

**Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.**