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Chair

Mr. Rick Casson

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● (1105)

[*English*]

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

Today we are holding our fourth meeting of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan. Pursuant to the order of reference of February 10, 2009, this is a study of Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

We have witnesses today for the first hour and a half. We'll save half an hour at the end for committee business; we have some things to deal with.

From the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, we have Yves Brodeur, assistant deputy minister, Afghanistan Task Force; and Gallit Dobner, deputy director, governance, rule of law and development, Afghanistan Task Force. And from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Raf Souccar, deputy commissioner, federal policing; and Paul Young, superintendent, program manager, international peace operations branch, in Asia.

We're glad to have you here as we continue our meetings on the mission in Afghanistan.

I think you are probably all familiar with the process. You'll have a few minutes for some opening comments, and then we'll open for rounds of questions from the committee members.

Yves, would you like to start?

Mr. Yves Brodeur (Assistant Deputy Minister, Afghanistan Task Force, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank the members of this committee for inviting us this morning and giving us the opportunity to explain a bit about what we're trying to accomplish in Afghanistan on the policing side.

I'll start with a short introduction.

Mr. Chairman, if I go beyond my time, please wave at me and we can shorten that.

[*Translation*]

One of Canada's strategic policy priorities is strengthening the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces. As part of this commitment, Canada supports efforts to strengthen the rule of law by building the capacity of the Afghan National Police to promote law and order in key Kandahar districts, supported by justice and corrections capabilities. The Afghan National Police are a linchpin in building a more secure but also better-governed Kandahar, as they are often the most visible face of the Afghan government across the country.

Today, I will provide you with an overview of the Afghan National Police, the international community's support to the ANP, and Canada's approach to police reform in Afghanistan.

The Ministry of the Interior oversees the Afghan National Police. The appointment of Interior Minister Hanif Atmar in October 2008 resulted in an acceleration of police reform in Afghanistan. With the support of the international community, Minister Atmar immediately established six high-level priorities to improve security and combat corruption. Canada has a good relationship with Minister Atmar, which was further strengthened when Canadian officials facilitated his visit to Kandahar in January 2009.

The ANP comprises six different forces: the Afghan Uniformed Police, the Border Police, the Civil Order Police, the Counter-Narcotics Police, the Criminal Investigation Police and the Counter-Terrorism Police. Given finite resources, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community agreed to a ceiling of 82,000 ANP for the country.

[*English*]

The ANP faces critical challenges, including a lack of sufficient training, equipment, and pay. Illiteracy, corruption, and reported substance abuse further erode their credibility and effectiveness. Moreover, the ANP's casualty rates far outstrip those of the military. In Kandahar, there's an insufficient number of police officers to ensure law and order, and the Ministry of Interior currently lacks the capacity to ensure strategic oversight and logistical support.

Canada is part of a larger international effort to support the development of the ANP. The United States is the leading player in police reform in Afghanistan. Its national focused district development program, known as the FDD, provides an eight-week basic training course to the Afghan uniformed police. To date, the FDD has been rolled out in 52 of 365 Afghan districts. The U.S. is implementing a similar training program for the Afghan border police.

In June 2007, the European Union launched the EU police mission in Afghanistan, known as EUPOL. The mission's mandate is to provide up to 400 police officers to mentor and advise the Ministry of Interior and senior policy officers at national, regional, and provincial headquarters. Currently, the mission has deployed approximately 300 mentors to Afghanistan.

The International Police Coordination Board, established in October 2006, is a multilateral mechanism that serves as a platform for the Minister of Interior and the international community to coordinate their efforts in a strategic and effective manner. Encouraged by the board's restructuring process in fall 2008, Canada became a member of the board in January 2009.

NATO is also looking to increase its support to police reform in Afghanistan. At the NATO summit in April, states agreed to create a NATO training mission to advance NATO efforts in this area. Similarly, the European Gendarmerie is considering options to contribute paramilitary expertise to current police training efforts.

Canada takes a comprehensive approach to building the capacity of the ANP by providing three main lines of support: mentoring and training, infrastructure and equipment, and salary. Mentoring and training is provided to the ANP in Kandahar through 30 civilian and approximately 40 military police mentors.

Our military police are part of the Canadian Forces-led police operational mentor liaison teams, POMLTs—a combination of military police and infantry who provide mentoring to the ANP at police substations, particularly in remote areas, with a view to providing the ANP with essential survivability skills. Canada's civilian police train and mentor the ANP in a range of civilian policing skills that promote law and order and effective force management. As of December 2008, 914—approximately 61%—ANP officers in key districts had completed basic training, and one unit was assessed as capable of near-autonomous operations.

Deputy Commissioner Raf Souccar will explain the role of Canadian civilian police in greater detail.

In addition to training and mentoring, Canada supports the development of the ANP through constructing and upgrading police infrastructure and providing police equipment to ANP in key districts. Infrastructure support is vital in providing secure and defensive structures to the ANP.

The contribution of the Canadian Forces special engineering team is vital in developing and monitoring infrastructure projects in Kandahar. Police infrastructure is supplied with standard living equipment, which raises officers' quality of life, increasing retention. As of December 2008, seven new police facilities were under construction. Canada also provides specialized police equipment to the ANP in order to increase their ability to conduct operations in Kandahar.

Canada provides salary support through the law and order trust fund for Afghanistan, or LOFTA, managed by the United Nations Development Programme. LOFTA allows the international community to support police and corrections officers' salaries. Foreign affairs minister Lawrence Cannon announced $20 million in support of LOFTA during his March visit to Afghanistan, for a total Canadian contribution of close to $70 million since 2002.

Canada also supports capacity-building at the Ministry of Interior to ensure that these three lines of support are sustainable into the future. For instance, Canada has a civilian police adviser directly embedded within the Ministry of Interior to advise the minister on police reform and gender issues and to mentor his staff on policy research.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

We recognize that the Afghan National Police force is part of a broader rule of law system that also requires justice and corrections sectors. Therefore, Canada also supports justice and corrections reform initiatives. This includes measures to improve the justice sector to facilitate a working court system in Kandahar City. This also includes improving conditions in Kandahar's main prison through training of corrections' personnel and upgrades to prison infrastructure.

In the months ahead, Canada will be focused on supporting the Government of Afghanistan's recent announcement to increase the number of ANP in secure areas of Afghanistan, including Kandahar.

To increase the impact of Canada's ongoing support to training, we are expanding the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) training centre. This training centre has been officially accredited by the Ministry of the Interior and will allow Canadian trainers to provide advanced training to the ANP, completing the basic training provided through the U.S.-led FDD program. We expect the expanded training centre will open its doors this fall.

We are also deploying additional Canadian civilian police to Afghanistan. We anticipate a total of 50 civilian officers on the ground by fall 2009. These officers will be placed in strategic mentoring and advisor positions in Kabul and Kandahar, including within the U.S. Combined Security Transition Command, the European Union Police Mission and the United Nations. This will allow Canada to maximize our impact on ANP development and enhance coordination with partner countries and multilateral organizations.

Thank you for your attention. I would now like to turn to Deputy Commissioner Raf Souccar.

[*English*]

Deputy Commissioner Raf Souccar (Deputy Commissioner, Federal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here with you this morning and to speak about Canada's, and particularly the RCMP's, international peace operation program, specifically our efforts in Afghanistan.

Today I have with me Superintendent Paul Young, officer in charge of operations for the RCMP's international peace operations branch. In fact, Paul returned in March 2008 from a one-year deployment in Afghanistan.

I'd like to start by giving you some background on the RCMP's international peace operations branch. The year 2009 marks 20 years of Canadian police contribution to international peace operations, which started with our first deployment in Namibia in 1989. Since then, under the RCMP's leadership more than 2,500 police officers from agencies across Canada have served on missions in 29 countries around the world.

[*Translation*]

The goal of Canada's International Police Peace Operations Program is to promote international peace and security by increasing social stability at the national level, using police-related expertise in countries experiencing or threatened by conflict and in failed or fragile states.

Through two decades of hard work and perseverance, Canadian police officers have made significant contributions to global stability, earning Canada an international reputation for leadership and professionalism. We are proud of those contributions.

[*English*]

The Canadian police arrangement is the policy framework that guides the Government of Canada's response to foreign requests for police assistance. The Canadian police arrangement is a partnership between the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which chairs the arrangement, Public Safety Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency, and the RCMP. As part of its Canadian police arrangement responsibilities, the RCMP manages the deployment of police to international peace operations on behalf of the government.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

The Canadian Police Arrangement supports the Government of Canada's commitments to build a more secure world, through Canadian participation in international peace operations, critical to longer term security system reform and conflict prevention efforts.

Today, there are approximately 160 Canadian police serving on 15 missions in a dozen countries, including Afghanistan, Haiti and Sudan.

[*English*]

Our officers may be tasked with a variety of roles in each mission, but essentially they work as trainers and mentors to help build the capacity of indigenous police services.

Training and mentoring foreign police and providing humanitarian assistance around the globe develops our officers' leadership and problem-solving skills. It also enhances their ability to interact with different cultures here in Canada. That's certainly a positive outcome for them, for their police service, and for the communities in which they serve.

Crime today knows no boundaries and flourishes in fragile states where there's a lack of respect for the rule of law. By helping police in countries such as Afghanistan fight crime at the source, Canadian police officers help reduce the spread of that crime to our communities.

[*Translation*]

This is a win-win situation, because ultimately, a safer world means a safer Canada.

Now if I may, I'd like to tell you about our efforts in Afghanistan.

[*English*]

The role of Canadian civilian police is to assist in building the capacity of the Afghan National Police. In recognition of Canada's reputation for leadership in policing, our officers are often assigned to positions of influence in each of the operations. Since their first deployment to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in 2003, 60 Canadian police officers have served in Afghanistan.

Over the past six months, we have more than doubled our numbers in theatre, with plans to increase to 50 by the fall. Today, 31 officers from seven police services are assigned to four different operations in Afghanistan. These four operations include the Canadian-led Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team, which you may hear me call KPRT; the American-led Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, or CSTC-Alpha; the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan, or EUPOL; and finally, the Canadian embassy in Kabul.

Our officers are involved in a variety of initiatives, from basic recruit training to advising senior leaders within the Afghan National Police and the Ministry of Interior on police reform. At the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team, 24 officers are involved in training and mentoring the Afghan National Police as well as working on infrastructure development. Within the Combined Security Transition Team-Afghanistan, two inspectors hold influential positions, heading up program coordination for focused district development, which is the most widespread police training program in the country.

[*Translation*]

A chief superintendent at the European Union Police Mission is involved in developing policy on Afghan National Police Reform.

Finally, one officer at the embassy of Canada provides advice for the Canadian diplomatic core on police reform issues.

[*English*]

In the near future, a Canadian police commander at the rank of assistant commissioner will be posted to the embassy and will represent Canada on the International Police Coordination Board. This European Union police-led committee coordinates all Afghan National Police training, mentoring, and infrastructure development country-wide. It is critical that Canada has senior leadership within that forum.

Despite the many challenges Afghanistan presents, we have had numerous successes throughout the country. This includes training more than 1,000 Afghan National Police officers as well as teaching them valuable policing and survival skills. What's more, Canadian police officers have consistently demonstrated their resilience, innovation, and courage in the face of these challenges.

One of our officers recently decided to tackle illiteracy among the Afghan National Police. Some Afghan National Police districts only have three or four police officers who are literate. They are often overburdened with administrative tasks. Our officer worked with Canadian and international partners to develop and implement a literacy program for the Afghan National Police that would bring them up to a grade 4 level over 18 months.

Another police officer designed courses for VIP protection and counter-kidnapping strategies.

Canadian police, in cooperation with U.S. and Canadian forces, were instrumental in helping to upgrade or build police stations and obtain uniforms, equipment, and vehicles. This has enabled the Afghan National Police to create a more permanent presence and create a stronger sense of security for citizens. In fact, Superintendent Paul Young, here with me, mentored the Kabul police chief, providing him hands-on support and guidance in the daily operations and restructuring of a police force serving more than four million people.

● (1120)

[*Translation*]

Regarding the future, the International Peace Operations Branch recently developed an extensive policing strategy and a deployment plan for Afghanistan, which we are in the process of implementing. Developed in consultation with Canadian police arrangement partners, the strategy supports a whole-of-government approach to assisting Afghanistan with security sector reform.

[*English*]

The overarching goal of the strategy is to ensure that Canadian civilian police, despite being a relatively small presence, are strategically placed in positions of influence to have a more sustained and significant presence. The strategy also outlines a clear command structure to promote better coordination and communication of the multiple Afghan National Police reform projects in which Canadian police are involved. This will enable our contingent to grow from 30 to 50 in short order while continuing to carry out operations effectively and efficiently. Given Afghanistan's significant issues with cross-border criminal insurgent activities, Canadian police will begin working with the Afghan National Police in developing their border management capacity. The goal is to make the border more secure—for example, helping to disrupt the flow of narcotics in and out of Afghanistan, a country that produces 92% of the world's opium supply.

In closing, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the conditions under which Canadian officers are working are difficult and the challenges they face are significant. Despite such conditions, however, our members speak with pride of the positive difference they are making.

[*Translation*]

Local authorities and our international partners are most impressed and very grateful for the significant effort and accomplishments of Canadian police. Our officers not only help the Afghan national police develop critically important policing skills, but they emphasize our values of integrity, honesty and professionalism.

[*English*]

This is helping to build a sustainable Afghan democratic society based on respect for the rule of law and human rights. The Afghan National Police are gaining ground slowly, gaining self-confidence and the respect of their community. This is key to their success. They will need a lot of support, training, and assistance before they will be able to stand on their own, but they have started on that path. It is a long-term project that will take time and patience on our part as well as on the part of the Afghans. Through our involvement over the past six years and into the future, we and the Canadian police community hope to have a lasting positive impact.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I'd like to thank you for inviting us to be here before you. We'll be happy to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you both for the presentations.

We'll open it up for the round of questioning. It's a seven-minute round, and we'll start with the official opposition.

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

Thank you, gentlemen, for coming.

A number of us have been to Afghanistan on more than one occasion, and I can say first-hand that the work our police do there in terms of training has been quite remarkable under very difficult circumstances.

Weak public institutions feed insurgents. We keep talking about capacity building, and in the report of December 2008, which dealt with Canada's engagement in Afghanistan, we set out a number of baselines. We, of course, are changing this mission to focus on training both the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army. Back in December, I read about those baselines and our targets. Obviously they are of great concern. We keep talking about illiteracy and corruption and poor pay and all those things we recognize, and they're not getting any better. In the long run, they do not seem to be getting any better. We continually express concern about the fact that the police are the face of government in many of these local communities. They are the face. If people don't trust the police, you can't expect them to trust government officials.

As of August of last year, the percentage of ANP forces in key districts that were capable of planning and executing near-autonomous operations was zero. And yet in less than two years, we hope to have that be 80% of ANP. How are we going to make this quantum leap between zero and 80% with the resources that we have currently when in the last few years we haven't been able to advance that?

That would be my first question, through you, Mr. Chairman.

● (1125)

The Chair: Who would like to respond? Go ahead.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: I will take the first crack at it, and then perhaps Assistant Commissioner Souccar may want to complement that.

It is a challenge—there's no doubt about it—to really bring this police force to a level of efficiency that would actually work for all of us. That's a really big issue, a big challenge. We're working hard on it. The benchmarks are ambitious. For us they are actually an objective that we really believe in, and we are putting the efforts and the resources in to achieve them.

I can say that actually, although this progress has been perhaps not as fast as we would like it to be, there really has been progress. This progress has been noted not only by us but by NATO, for instance, which I noticed, in its last report on Afghanistan, made a reference to the improvement of the Afghan National Police.

There's still a long way to go. We are putting more trainers in the field. The international community is getting its act together through this International Police Coordination Board. I would say the Minister of Interior, Mr. Atmar, is probably the most welcome change. He is quite determined. Some of you who have been to Afghanistan know him. You know how dedicated he is and how efficient. And we're supporting him with, for instance, a person who actually helps him on the policy front and also helps him in getting the structure right.

One of the first measures that he took when he got into his job was to fire a number of senior police officials for corruption. That's a pretty significant step forward.

The other thing he did, which is also very important, is ask for an augmentation of the seeding of police officers not only for the Kandahar area but for the country as a whole. He also has been extremely supportive in accelerating recruitment and training of the ANP police officers.

These are only a few examples of, I think, a situation that's moving forward in the right direction, but which we still need to work hard on. So we'll keep doing that. But you're right, the challenges are pretty important and pretty serious, and the ambitions are high.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: The police are only one element, though. We have to deal with defence attorneys, prosecutors, administrative people, and of course there's the whole issue of Sarposa Prison. We saw what happened there last June. There's the issue around whether, when they capture people, they have a secure facility.

Can you explain to us very quickly the interrelationship in terms of the development of those other elements that are absolutely essential? It's similar to in Canada: you arrest somebody, but then what happens? Is there faith in the system? How is that progressing?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: That is also progressing. Again, my personal desire would be to be able to tell you that it's progressing very quickly, but it's hard work.

Let's take it by sequence. Police is one piece of work that's under way. Then people are moved on to prisons. Sarposa is now in many ways a model institution in Afghanistan, certainly in terms of having standards comparable to many other institutions in the developed world. We are training prison guards through Correctional Service Canada. I should underline that Correctional Service Canada is doing a fantastic job.

Some of you travelled there and had a chance to look at the Sarposa Prison after the attack last summer. Canada was fast in coming up with the money to not only repair but also upgrade the facility. Now that we've done that, I think Sarposa is light years away from what it was before Canada started to get involved.

On the judicial side of things, we're just starting. We're providing training to magistrates in Kandahar and trying to help them turn this legal process into something that's smoother and works better, where defence and government attorneys have a chance to do their jobs well. It's something we see working in tandem with the police work.

● (1130)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Do you see the political will on the ground translating into actual...to satisfy the government itself?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Definitely. A big part of what we do—and this is quite important—is help the Afghans themselves take charge of their destiny, so it's capacity building. The work we do on what we call the rule-of-law package includes all the elements you just mentioned. It's taking place in Kandahar, but it's also taking place at a national level. We have people who work out of Kabul together with the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Justice, and other Afghan actors precisely to do that sort of thing, to make sure the connections are there to help support the political will among Afghans. There's a commitment on the part of key ministers. We've heard them. And it hasn't only been words, but action as well. President Karzai as well is committed to that.

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Brodeur.

We have to move on to Mr. Bachand, for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

I'm somewhat concerned by police coordination. Of course, I want to support what was said by my colleagues. We've seen a number of reports showing that the Afghan national army was progressing rather well, but that the Afghan national police was not doing as well.

Mr. Brodeur, in your presentation you referred to the International Police Coordination Board. This organization was created in October 2006, but Canada only joined in January 2009. Why such a long delay? It would seem you joined because you believed the 2008 restructuring was positive. I would like additional detail on this point.

I said coordination was a concern to me. There seems to be a great deal of friction between NATO and the European Union. Oftentimes, in Europe, NATO convenes meetings the European Union does not attend, and vice versa. The fact that these two entities are involved in the police file concerns me somewhat. I would like you to tell me whether there is a genuine attempt at coordination or not, and whether it works.

I would also like to know who commands and controls the Canadian police. I know that when it comes to the Canadian forces there is a Canadian commander within NATO. However, there is also a NATO command. At the end of the day, who makes the final decision regarding the police? It is important to know this type of thing.

I would also like you to tell me about the course and curriculum. Who determined the course for the last eight weeks? Are there courses on ethics? I would think it is important to stress these matters.

Of course, the reports we've received point to a high degree of corruption. I'm quite pleased to hear you say, Mr. Brodeur, that you have dismissed Minister Atmar. While we're discussing his case, can you tell me where he is from? I am trying to do some research on this. Was Mr. Atmar appointed by Mr. Karzaï?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: He's a minister, a member of cabinet.

Mr. Claude Bachand: We're talking about coordination and the fact that the Minister of the Interior and the international community are cooperating in this regard. Does the Minister of the Interior have the final word in matters of coordination? I've always heard that the idea is to restore true power and response capabilities to the Afghans. In the Canadian Forces, mentors bring these people to battle sites and in many cases, let them take the initiative.

Does the same thing happen with the police?

● (1135)

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Thank you very much.

I don't know how much time I have to answer these questions. In fact, they cover almost everything that we do. For the questions about the curriculum and the decisions concerning the deployment of Canadian police forces, I will turn the floor over to my colleague from the RCMP.

I'll begin by telling you about coordination, given that this is the crux of the matter. Coordination for police preparation currently takes place at many levels. First, there is what is called the JCMB. I apologize for using the English acronym, which means the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board. This group brings together all countries involved in Afghanistan, and has produced a charter that is used as a framework. This organization is responsible for setting the maximum number of policemen for the country, which is 82,000.

Under this system, there is another organization, the International Police Coordination Board, which you mentioned earlier and which we joined in January. Why in January 2009 rather than 2006? For reasons linked to the effectiveness of the group. Before we joined, this group was just getting started. It would be fair to say that before last year, the international community was perhaps not as coordinated as it should have been with regard to police training.

Key players were missing, including the United States, which provides most of the police training. Without the U.S., we were somewhat reluctant to participate in this initiative. I would also add to this the reasons that you mentioned, including the fact that EUPOL took some time to get off the ground.

Between the time the decision was made—and it was an excellent one—and the time it was implemented, a certain amount of time elapsed. We had work to do in Kandahar and at the national level, so we decided to go ahead, but still using an approach involving close collaboration with the Afghans.

The final decision concerning the number of police officers, recruitment and reforms belongs to the Afghans. It is up to the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Atmar, to make these decisions. Our role is not to make them in his stead, but to assist him, and that is what we are trying to do right now.

We also talked about the relations between the various players. We already mentioned the first two, and I will briefly list the others: the Afghan Minister of the Interior, CSTC-A, an American organization that coordinates training both for the police force and for the armed forces, EUPOL, that is the European police force, and NATO. NATO adopted a policy concerning police training at its most recent summit.

All of these people work together within this police coordination group of which we are now a member. This should help us achieve better coherence, not as concerns the objectives—because we already know where we want to go—but rather as concerns how to get there.

This is a slightly more difficult question. For example, Canada is involved at the PRT level. We use an approach by district rather than by province, whereas other countries proceed differently. We are trying to make a more coherent whole out of all of this.

You mentioned cooperation between NATO and the European Union. I will now put on my hat as the former NATO spokesperson to explain to you that this question is always somewhat complicated.

However, the Europeans decided to create a group of gendarmes, police officers, and send them to Afghanistan. Some 400 of these gendarmes will be assisting the Afghan police. By deploying them, the Europeans have clearly and firmly showed their intention of providing assistance quickly, whether as part of NATO or under the EU banner. In my opinion, we've already passed this stage.

● (1140)

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, we're out of time for this slot. We'll have to come back to that.

We're going to move to Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

And thank you to the panel for being here today.

This is obviously a very important part of what Canada is involved with in Afghanistan. I just can't help but think about a country, a society that has been in a state like Afghanistan has been, and how important it is to move forward. We sometimes measure Afghanistan against democracies that have been going through this struggle for a couple of hundred years, so starting from ground zero seems to me to be a pretty daunting task. I certainly want to salute those people who take on that challenge.

I'm encouraged by the comprehensive approach that's being taken in this whole building of the police community and a civil society in Afghanistan. From the RCMP's perspective, my understanding is that there are perhaps some new training centres either being built or that have been built. I wonder what that means to the Afghan recruits in the police community and how it is affecting the training and the ongoing development of those agencies.

D/Commr Raf Souccar: A training centre is in the process of being completed at Camp Nathan Smith by the provincial reconstruction team in Kandahar, which will go a long way to doing a number of things. It will provide us with the opportunity.... One of the challenges we have in Afghanistan is the situation of security and being able to get outside the wire, if you will, to provide the training and to return. Having our trainees on site will go a long way to allowing us to provide them with the training.

It becomes very important, because one of the first questions that were asked was with respect to the progress we're making in training and in being able to provide a semi-autonomous capability that has the components to plan an operation, staff an operation, and be able to carry out an operation. This is essentially one of the later goals. You provide the basic training and the basic skills, which then allow an individual, a commander, to identify and select staff—the right people in the right job—to be able to carry out an operation. So you plan an operation, you find the right people to staff it—and they have to have the basic skills—and then you carry out the operation.

This comes with a lot of challenges, because we are trying to professionalize a police force where, in a great number of instances, its members cannot read or write a report, so literacy becomes very important. Yves mentioned earlier the challenges with literacy, and I mentioned in my opening comments our efforts to get us there.

Ethics become very important. Integrity becomes very important. All these things are part of the training provided to the Afghan National Police, along with the basic combat first aid, survival methods, being able to search and seize, and being able to identify IEDs. All these components become very important because they are the pieces of the puzzle that together allow a commander to be able to plan, staff, and carry out an operation.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I appreciate that. I understand fully what you're talking about, the professionalism and the ethics. I think there's another component there, which is pride. And when we build all those other things in.....

I notice, Superintendent Young, that you were in Afghanistan for a year. On the ground, how did you see those three components? Did they change in that period of time, and are we seeing a progressive change within the Afghan army to bring that civil policing component to Afghanistan?

Superintendent Paul Young (Superintendent, Program Manager, International Peace Operations Branch (Asia), Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Within the Afghan National Police, such as with any police force, job satisfaction comes from pride in the job you're doing. Many of the efforts of the international community and the MOI have been directed towards that, to make the Afghan national policeman want to be an Afghan national policeman, and then on to recruiting, to make other people within the country want to take up this profession.

That has been addressed in many ways. The training centres you mentioned in your first question are one of them. Many of the Afghan National Police over the last six to eight years were merely given a uniform and a gun and put at a checkpoint. Trainers could not get to many of the areas that were less permissive, so they could not offer training. But by building the training centres, they were able to bring police into a central location—and these are generally not too far from home. Kandahar is not the only training centre; there are many in most of the provinces.

When the police come to the training centres, the foundation or establishment of pride is one of the first things that are developed. They're set up as a group working together as a team. They're given clean, new uniforms, which instills pride. They're given an insignia that's now their own. It's the pride in being a national police force that's being taught. Along those lines, they are also given the skills to be able to go back to their communities to show they have developed the abilities to interact with their community and to address the problems there. So they are given the foundation for community-based policing. And of course, all of this is intermixed with the survival skills required in less permissive areas.

Giving them the proper training in the proper areas, the proper equipment, and the confidence to go back to their communities to do the job is how national pride is being developed there.

Is it progressing? Absolutely. Even in the year I spent in Kabul province, where the police were very haphazard in the beginning, the sense of pride that rolled out of such training programs was clearly visible by the end.

● (1145)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Thank you.

Mr. Brodeur.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Very, very briefly, since we're on training and the training centre, there are two things I want to flag. One is that the training centre at the PRT in Kandahar has now been certified by the Afghan Minister of Interior. It's important—and this is also a bit of an answer to the question by Monsieur Bachand—because it speaks to standardization throughout the country. So what you basically have now are training centres that are offering the same courses throughout the country, and the people who come out of them are actually comparable in terms of training and certification across districts. That's one thing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bachand, you asked me a question about the curriculum. To give you an overview of the courses offered, I will list some of them. There is training on the identification of IEDs, how to track down and search suspects, how to search vehicles and buildings, control point verification, first aid and investigation methods on bombing sites. I learned about this during my most recent visit to Kandahar. To an extent, this curriculum is comparable to what could be offered to police officers here.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair, and I want to thank our witnesses today for appearing before the committee.

I want to start off with a question to both Mr. Brodeur and Mr. Souccar. Have you read the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission's report on the causes of torture by law enforcement agencies?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: You have.

And you, sir?

D/Commr Raf Souccar: I'm aware of it. I have not read the full report, no.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Brodeur, to you, I guess it's pretty grave. To put this in context, Canada is the biggest donor to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. In other words, we were the biggest donor of this report. The findings were the following: that torture and cruel and inhumane and belittling behaviour is widespread in the majority of law enforcement agencies. In fact, every single region, every single investigation of police methods, indicated that 98.5% of subjects in the study had been victims of torture. This isn't my contention, this is in the report.

I probed further into it. Some of the tools that were used: punches, kicks, slaps, weapons used to threaten; wooden sticks used to lash at hands or tied feet, often during interrogation; cable used to beat blindfolded victims; electric, metal, or plastic cables used for beating on the back, feet, head, face, and other parts of the body; electric shocks passing electricity currents through the victim's body, inflicting electric shocks through fingernails, fingers, and toes; handcuffs and chains used. I could go on. I don't want to.

This is a report by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission that we funded. These are important facts for us to know. I've heard about techniques on investigation, fine; I've heard about first aid, fine. What I'm not hearing is the training—that is not happening, or maybe it is, but it's not effective enough—the police understanding that torture should not ever be used when they're doing their job.

So I guess my question is, where is the training on human rights for police officers?

● (1150)

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Thank you for the question. It's a very important issue, and one that I think is extremely serious.

One thing I'd like to say at the outset is that Canada does not tolerate torture in any way. We actually are acting within international laws and we do provide training to police, and also to the Afghan National Army, to make sure that mistreatment of detainees is not happening.

That being said, I think the point you make speaks to the urgent need to professionalize the police force as well as the ANA. That's what we're doing right now.

In terms of the region in which we work in Kandahar, we have at this stage no evidence that this has happened. I'm not denying; I'm only saying that is the case at this stage, right now. The list of courses that I've named or that I identified—I didn't give you the full list—takes in values, how to handle prisoners, the need to respect detainees and to actually make sure their rights are not violated. That is a priority for us. We're working very hard with the different national security forces, and that includes, as I said, the army, but also the police and the NDS as well, to make sure these different institutions or bodies are actually lifting their standards.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Fair enough. I appreciate that this is no small task, and I appreciate the history of the country and the fact that some say it's starting from zero.

When we talk about the rule of law, we know the laws in Afghanistan and, certainly, the understanding of the laws in Afghanistan are lacking. I would suggest to you—not to the police, because they simply have to enforce the law—that when we have Canada working with a president at this point who either was unaware of a law that would protect rape in a marriage, in other words, a law that was going forward that is far beyond, by the way, condoning rape in a marriage, who either didn't know about it, as we heard recently, or said “Oh, don't worry, I'm going to fix it”, it's not in fact....

The question we're dealing with right now, in other words, Mr. Brodeur, is how can we work with a government that either doesn't seem to care about human rights or is passing laws that abuse human rights? How do we solve that political equation, and how can we work with a government that is either turning a blind eye to the human rights of its own citizens, to its police, or passing laws that will basically cement impunity among its citizens? I think that's a bigger question. But I'd like your take on how we can work with this government if it's not recognizing the human rights of its citizens.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: I think that not working with the government is not the answer. Abandoning the work that we're doing to try to raise the standards would be a grave mistake—

Mr. Paul Dewar: But you understand what I'm saying; the laws being passed are actually not—

Mr. Yves Brodeur: If you would let me answer the question, please....

Mr. Paul Dewar: I will, but I just want to be clear: of course we have to work with them; I'm talking about the results of our work.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Can I answer the question?

Mr. Paul Dewar: My apologies.

The Chair: You only have one minute, sir.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Thank you very much.

Essentially, we have to work with them, and we are working with the Afghan authorities.

The law you're talking about is the Shi’a Personal Status Law, which is an outrageous law, and that's been recognized by the President. It perhaps took some time before he made that recognition, but he did. We're confident that the Afghans will do what they have to do to change and modify, amend, repeal the segments of that law that are unacceptable.

We have a very capable person working within the justice ministry to help draft law. That's one thing. As well, to actually make sure that Afghan authorities are sensitized to the issues of gender and human rights when they draft laws, we have someone who works in the interior ministry, with Minister Atmar, to do the same thing. So there is work being done. We keep talking to the President, at the highest level, to make sure they do understand the importance of these issues and they take action.

I want to say as well that Canada was among the first countries to react, at a very high level, to the law you're talking about. I was with Minister Cannon when he spoke directly with Mr. Atmar and Mr. Spanta to tell them that this was totally unacceptable.

● (1155)

Mr. Paul Dewar: When was that?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: I was in the Hague, so the date was March 31, I think, when it came out publicly.

The Chair: I'm sorry, sir, we have to move on. Thank you for that response.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you.

The Chair: I want to remind members that we are dealing with the training of the Afghan National Police today.

We'll start the second round with Mr. Hawn, for five minutes.

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

Thanks to all of you for coming.

Following on from that, Mr. Brodeur, the challenges are obviously many and significant. We don't see progress with them as quickly as any of us would like, obviously. Is that a reason to leave or is that in fact a reason to stay?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: I'm sorry, I missed the last part of your question.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Are the challenges we're facing and the lack of the progress we would like to see a reason to leave or in fact a reason to stay?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: I can only give you a personal answer, I guess: it's a reason for us to work harder and to maintain the effort that we've invested in the country.

It is showing progress. I would actually argue that if you look at Afghanistan today, at Kandahar, and compare it to where it was, say, two years ago, you'll see a big difference.

Again, to quote from a survey that was conducted by the Asia Foundation—you can find it on the Internet as well as within a NATO report—Afghans actually, by the vast majority of 96%, do not want a return to the previous days under the Taliban regime. More than 80% are actually satisfied with the current government, no matter how imperfect it is.

So I think we are making progress, but it's slow.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: It's a reason to stay; I agree.

To Superintendent Young or Deputy Commissioner Souccar, a number of countries are working at training the ANP and a number are not. Based on your professional police experience and your experience internationally, which countries do you think, among those who aren't helping already, would be best suited to help?

Supt Paul Young: That's a very difficult question to answer.

The key players that we deal with internationally from other countries are in Afghanistan. The countries that we are familiar with that teach standard policing practices and principles and ethics like we teach here in Canada are present and are doing an admirable job there in a coordinated effort.

Who should be there? I guess it depends on what's required at any given time and what expertise can be delivered. For instance, the British are there working on counter-narcotics, and we have different police from different countries providing different expertise. It comes down to what the Afghan National Police require at any point in time, what their requests to the international community are, and who best in the world can deliver that type of training.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: So we probably have the right folks there. Obviously, we'd like more of them where we can get them.

Supt Paul Young: That's correct. I believe we have the right folks there, and I believe they're all working in conjunction now, more than ever in the past.

D/Commr Raf Souccar: The work there is challenging, and as Yves mentioned, it's a reason to stay. It's a reason to not only work harder but work smarter. And I think we're doing that.

It's also important to note that the training provided is simply one component. The individual courses provided for combat first aid, search and seizure, vehicle searches, and so on, are to develop expertise. But what also follows is coaching and mentoring. That goes a long way toward ensuring that the ethics, integrity, professionalism, and rule of law are respected, and that's taught on a day-to-day basis. So when Paul spent a year with the Kabul police chief, a big part of his function on a day-to-day basis was to say, “This is right. It is wrong if you do this.”

I just got back from Afghanistan a few weeks ago, and I found that the police commanders and individuals who receive this training, coaching, and mentoring are very proud of their mentors. I was walking with a commander in charge of the training academy in Kabul, through their grounds. His mentor walked by, said hello to him, and continued walking. I didn't know who that person was, and he very proudly pointed to him and said, “That's my mentor.” So they're very proud of these individuals. They listen very carefully to them and take that as a means of moving themselves forward.

● (1200)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Following on that, leadership is key in any police force, paramilitary force, or business. If you can instill the right ethics, accountability, and so on, in the leadership and they apply it, that will filter down eventually to the troops.

D/Commr Raf Souccar: Absolutely.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hawn. We're right on schedule.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: The Manley report said we need to contribute to a better governed, stable, and developing Afghanistan in order to have a government that can protect the security and interests of the people. We're paying the salaries of the entire Afghan police force in Kandahar. That will not strengthen the institution responsible for law and order. If we're going to have measures like that in the long term, they don't seem to be fiscally sustainable. Secondly, isn't it damaging to the Afghan government in the long term? If we continue to move in an area where we're providing non-strategic investment, how does that help the Afghan government?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Thank you.

I think the payment of salaries of police officers in the six districts we're engaged in must be seen in the context of measures taken to try to attract recruits of quality, but also to deal with corruption to some extent. We have an issue with retention, because if you look at the salaries ANA members are paid compared to police officers, there's a pretty wide gap. So if you're a qualified person you basically go for the best offer, and the best offer is on the ANA side. So we're trying to bridge that gap with the LOFTA fund. I think it's fair to say it's not meant to be a permanent solution; it's to help the Afghans bridge that gap.

We're counting on improvements in the economic situation in Afghanistan to make it sustainable over time. We're not the only contributor to that fund, incidentally. We are one of the largest contributors, but there are other countries as well.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: How do we get to that point?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: We get to that point by creating the right conditions in Afghanistan so the government can actually earn enough funds to pay its police officers decently so they can make a living and resist the temptation of corruption. Is it going to happen next week? No. Is it going to happen next year? Maybe. But basically it's helping right now.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: As the assistant deputy minister for the Afghan task force, tell me what I'm going to tell you is wrong.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: I wouldn't dare do that.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: The Canadian embassy in Kabul is going to spend $33 million on a makeover and operations, and that represents 58% of DFAIT's $57.2 million additional Afghan-related funding. We're talking about strategic investments. We're talking about putting the right tools in the hands of the Afghans.

Why are we spending $33 million on a makeover of the embassy when it could be better used to help these gentlemen and others in terms of the training, weaponry, etc., on the ground?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: I think one doesn't prevent the other from happening. But “makeover” is the wrong terminology, I would say. The money we've been investing in Kabul has been invested to protect the Canadians who are working there. We have now more than 100 civilians in Afghanistan. Many of them, over 50, are working in Kabul. The situation in Kabul, as you probably know, is not an easy one. We have a responsibility—I have a responsibility—to make sure these people are well protected and have living conditions that will allow them to do the very important job they're doing.

● (1205)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Nobody would argue with that. But it's the fifth poorest country in the world, and the answer that I got from DFAIT was that real estate values are very expensive in Kabul. I'm not quite sure how that works.

Nobody's questioning protection. The issue is that we're spending $33 million on a makeover, yet we're looking at trying to get the right resources for helping the police and the army there. I don't know that you can do both when you're asking that 57% of the increase in DFAIT's budget go simply to an embassy. Certainly, as a taxpayer I find that very difficult to swallow.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Well, I'm not too sure exactly where you're going, but let me just say that if you actually don't create the conditions for our experts—colleagues from the RCMP, from CSC, from DFAIT, from CIDA, from GSO—to actually be able to do their job, the bigger part of your investment will be at risk. It is not a cheap mission.

But again, I don't want to call it a makeover. Certainly in my mind, that gives the wrong signal. We are actually creating conditions so that people can do their job, actually do what you just pointed out, in perfect safety.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: You're not questioning the cost, the $33 million? I'll take that as a yes.

Okay, thank you.

The Chair: I'm sorry, we're out of time. We have to move on. Maybe you can get back to it.

He indicated earlier to you, Mr. Wilfert, that he would be hesitant to answer yes or no.

Mr. Kerr, five minutes.

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): I know Mr. MacKenzie has another question. I wanted to ask a bit about literacy.

Any time we find ourselves engaged in any world event, communication becomes absolutely critical to both our understanding, including the exchanges we sometimes hear here, and more importantly, the understanding of those you're training and those who have to carry out the job. Where are we in terms of literacy improvement? I know you touched on it, but where are we, and where do we have to get to to make sure the job is finished, to make sure the Afghans are at the level where they can carry on?

I'm directing that question generally.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Thank you for the question.

The literacy issue is important for us with the police forces. I think, again, we're dealing with a fairly difficult situation where very few of the police recruits were literate. At an initiative of the RCMP, a program was put together to provide Afghan National Police with what I would call basic Pashto literacy skills, Pashto being their language. It's being rolled out in some of the districts around Kandahar where we're active, and we completed a pilot project in January. I'm told it involves delivering two hours of training four to five times a week to a number of police officers. We hope that we'll have around 300 trained in the Kandahar province in a very short while. Again, it's to give them the tools that they need to do their day-to-day jobs, to be able to interact, to write reports, and read.

D/Commr Raf Souccar: If I could add to this, literacy becomes very important in the professionalization, if you will, of a police force, of a law enforcement agency. Reading and writing reports is something I mentioned, but also, for example, they're provided with inventory, they're provided with equipment, they're provided with the wherewithal to be able to do their jobs. In order for them to be able to account for all the inventory they're provided with, literacy becomes important to be able to keep tabs on what is provided. That also goes a long way to preventing corruption, if you will, because they go hand in glove—the accountability, the literacy to be able to account for whatever it is that they've received to ensure that no one at the other end is misusing the inventory that's provided to them.

● (1210)

Mr. Greg Kerr: Thank you.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: I'll just add one thing. I should point out that the Afghan Ministry of Education is working in tandem with us to provide that course. It's interesting because here you see a connection between one very important aspect at work, which is policing, and another one, which is education. We're helping the education department to build capacity to deliver this kind of training throughout the country.

The Chair: There's a couple of minutes left.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: We talked about recruiting in the Afghan police community. I recognize that it isn't only the RCMP who have people there. There are other police agencies in Canada. I wonder if you could explain how we're able to recruit other police agencies and even the members within the RCMP to go to such a difficult theatre. And what training is provided to them in Canada before they go over?

D/Commr Raf Souccar: I'll start, and I think Paul will have more to add.

At this point, with 30 police officers in Afghanistan, 14 out of the 30 are non-RCMP and 16 are RCMP. Through the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, we've gone a long way in communicating to them our involvement in Afghanistan as well as other missions in which we participate throughout the world. It provides them a great opportunity to do a number of things. The world is shrinking, very much so, especially in terms of crime and the ability of criminals to interact with their networks throughout the world. The expertise that these police officers gain in travelling to foreign countries to undertake these missions provides them with a great understanding of the cultures that exist in these various countries. They come back a lot smarter than when they left in terms of being able to deal with issues in-country.

Afghanistan impacts us, and as I said, 92% of the opium world supply comes from Afghanistan. About 60%, or a little under, of heroin coming into Canada comes from Southwest Asia as opposed to Southeast Asia, where it usually used to come from. If you look at our ability to push our borders out to be able to deal with issues long before they come to Canada, this allows us to do that by being able to professionalize a police force in that country to deal with those issues long before they leave their country to come to our country. There is gain for Canada from a police and security perspective in participating in these missions.

There is an advantage for these law enforcement agencies to participate by contributing a resource. I think there are seven police agencies right now across Canada participating in Afghanistan. In fact, there are four from the Ottawa Police Service. The advantage for them is that as they let some of their resources go, they're able to keep back the salaries of these police officers to run their operations in-country. The positions we have under the Canadian police arrangements are fully funded positions that then allow us to pay for these resources to attend those missions. It's a win-win for both.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

You can finish up, but if it's going to take a while, we're going to have to come back to you. I want to save as much time as we can to get through as many spots as possible here.

Mr. Bachand, and then back over to the government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Souccar, I would like you to answer the question that was asked earlier concerning command and control.

Often, the Canadian armed forces give the example of Canadian soldiers who may be under the command of a Dutch or British general, for example. We are told that if the soldiers receive an order to plant anti-personnel mines, they check with headquarters, where the final decision is made. In such a case, they would receive the order from headquarters not to do that, because we have signed the treaty, as you know.

I would like to understand the structure. Can you explain it to me? Are there several levels of command? Is it the RCMP Commissioner or the Minister of Public Safety who has the final word? Please try to answer rapidly because I have a question for Mr. Brodeur as well.

D/Commr Raf Souccar: Thank you, Mr. Bachand.

I would prefer to answer in English, in order to be more clear and concise, if you don't mind.

● (1215)

[*English*]

On the structure, if you will, it's a whole-of-government approach in our efforts in Afghanistan, in everything that's done in Afghanistan. Key components of every area within government participate in order to plan a strategy.

In terms of the police component itself, law enforcement ultimately is accountable to the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police under the RCMP Act.

The head, if you will, of the civilian deployment in Kandahar is the regional representative of Canada in Kandahar, who is, at this point, Mr. Ken Lewis. To the extent of what we do, direction comes from him. As for how we go about doing it, that becomes a police decision, because we have the expertise as to how we can go about carrying out our duties.

In terms of structure within the police contingent in Afghanistan, as I mentioned in my opening comments, we are going to have a Canadian police commander in Afghanistan at the rank of assistant commissioner, who will be based out of Kabul, at the embassy, working alongside the head of mission. In participating in strategic meetings, in strategic discussions with the ambassador, and with the International Police Coordination Board, which is headed by EUPOL, he will go a long way in terms of having more influence in our strategy for police assistance in Afghanistan. He will head our police contingent in Afghanistan, if you will, working alongside the ambassador as well as the RoCK.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Thank you.

Mr. Brodeur, have you had the good fortune, or perhaps bad fortune, to meet Mr. Atmar, the Minister of the Interior?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Yes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Is he a good person? Are you familiar with his past?

Mr. Yves Brodeur: I know Mr. Atmar as a minister. We are currently working with him as Minister of the Interior. We also worked closely with him when he was Minister of Education.

I can tell you that in both cases, we were fortunate enough to be working with someone who is extremely cooperative and receptive, and who has often taken measures that have been extremely unpopular in Afghanistan. He has taken personal risks in order to implement anti-corruption measures, among other things. He is a credible partner with whom we have done excellent work to date and I hope that this will continue.

Mr. Claude Bachand: I find it odd that a Minister of the Interior was part of secret service special units and that he also cooperated with the KGB, at the time.

To your knowledge, did he receive amnesty from Mr. Karzaï? Mr. Karzaï appealed to a great many people, telling them that if they wanted to accept the new order and move Afghanistan forward, he was prepared to welcome them into his ranks. He even appealed to the Taliban.

Is it the same thing in the case of Mr. Atmar? I find it curious that he cooperated with the KGB against the Mujahedeen. That is something I can't overlook. I must confess that I would be discussing this with Mr. Karzaï if I was in his palace today.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: That would be a good idea, and I'm sure he would answer you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Brodeur, sir, I'm sorry, but the five minutes are up—

Mr. Yves Brodeur: I can't answer? That's too bad. Okay.

The Chair: —and we're trying to get through as many spots as we can here.

We'll go to Mr. Hawn and then back to the official opposition.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll just follow on, actually, with Mr. Bachand's question, because the question is also *un peu* bizarre to me. The raw material that the Afghanistan government and Afghanistan people have to work with is not like the raw material that we'd like to think of ourselves having around this room.

As for people like Mr. Atmar, why would he need a pardon because he was part of a secret service, which is a government organization? We may disagree with those government organizations, but they're not ours.

So I'd like some comments in general, I guess, from Monsieur Brodeur about the challenge that President Karzai or the leadership in Afghanistan, whoever it is, has in dealing with people who have come from backgrounds that reflect the history of the country.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: I guess what I will let myself say is that Canada is in Afghanistan not to run the country. As you rightly said, we work with the people who are there, who have been mandated—designated or elected—in Afghanistan to make decisions. Frankly, I think the question that was asked before by a previous member of this committee is one that should be asked to President Karzai.

As far as we're concerned, in working with people we make sure there's a compatibility of objectives in what we're trying to do. I can tell you that so far we've had a very good experience in working with ministers such as Mr. Atmar, Mr. Ghulam Wardak, who is now the minister of education, with President Karzai, and with Mr. Popal, who is the head of the local government agency. These people, notwithstanding what they did before—and I don't know what they did before, but what I know is that now they are the legitimate Government of Afghanistan, and we work with them—are dedicated. They have a vision; they want their country to get better; they want the people of Afghanistan to have a better life. That's really important; it's the key thing. Again, we're not there to actually govern or run the country for them.

● (1220)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: One of you mentioned border management. Obviously that's incredibly important with Afghanistan. Have we had any contact with the Pakistani police at any level that you're aware of?

Mr. Souccar?

D/Commr Raf Souccar: We've taken part in discussions with respect to border management, trying to facilitate the border management between both countries and to determine what, if any, training can be provided to them to set up a more secure border.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Has the ANP leadership been involved in some of those discussions with you and the Pakistanis?

Supt Paul Young: Let me add, sir, that I recently attended, as part of our delegation, the Dubai process, in which we brought together border police from Afghanistan and Pakistan in Dubai. At that meeting we were able to get Afghan border police officers and counter-narcotics officers into face-to-face discussions with their Pakistan counterparts.

One of the initiatives that have come out of that process is that we will attempt, from a Canadian policing perspective, to initiate visitations between the two countries at the various police levels, including the level of the Afghan National Police.

One of the issues that came clear at those meetings was the issue of mistrust between police agencies across the border. In fact, "border" is not a term that was even allowed to be used at the meeting. To generate face-to-face discussions, we will be organizing delegations from each police force to visit training centres and operations in their neighbouring country.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: What's your assessment on the Afghan side of the ANP's leadership, to be able to handle that situation and progress? As I say, there's mistrust.

Supt Paul Young: The Afghan side, in my personal opinion, was very receptive to the suggestion. As a matter of fact, the suggestion stemmed from their conversations with their Pakistani counterparts. They're very receptive.

To go back to a question we spoke about earlier, there's a growing sense of pride amongst the Afghan National Police leadership that they can now hold their own in discussions with their neighbouring police agencies. That growing sense of pride is facilitating their willingness to become more involved.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: You were just going to start some comments on training in response, I think, to Mr. MacKenzie. With whatever time is left, I'll let you continue with those.

Supt Paul Young: Yes, if I could very briefly, in case there are any fears or considerations about how we're training our Canadian police officers we're deploying abroad.

We use a very comprehensive process. Our police training over the last 12 months has moved from a two-week training process to approaching six weeks now. We have moved to a competency-based selection process where we go out to our police partners and we tell them what type of police officer we're looking for based on certain competencies, such as the ability to develop adult learning techniques in the field in very trying circumstances. That's coupled with a very comprehensive psychological profiling to ensure we're getting the right people.

We then bring them to Ottawa, where we conduct specific training activities within our organization, everything from cultural sensitivity to actual rule of law in the country and how our incident management intervention models will apply in a foreign land. We then integrate our training with various aspects of the Canadian Forces. We take part in the Maple Guardian training, which is taking place in May in Wainwright, Alberta. We also take part on the base in Petawawa. So we're integrating survival skills for our officers, which they absolutely need in that country, with the Canadian Forces.

On top of that, in a new iteration of the training we will be starting on Monday for a group of 18 police officers from Canada who are getting ready to go, we are now building in a comprehensive physical training regime. One police officer recently said to me he feels as if he's going back to Depot. We're going to build that in, knowing the hardships they're going to face on the ground in a province such as Kandahar.

So our training has moved from two weeks to just about six weeks. It's integrated. We are working with DFAIT and CIDA and CSC to integrate with their training. We offer our training to any Canadian civilian who's going to Afghanistan. We're growing, we're learning from our experience over there, and our number one goal is to send trained police officers who can do the job that's required, the mission, but more so to bring them home safely.

● (1225)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We just have a few minutes left.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I'm going to have my colleague Mr. Tonks go first.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Thank you. I'm bowing to seniority here. I do not sit on this committee, but I certainly would like to thank you for the tremendous work that's being done against huge hazards, and it's very much appreciated.

My question is training-related in relation to coordination. I think it was Deputy Commissioner Souccar who talked about the European Union police-led committee. What is that committee, and is it a coordinating committee? I didn't quite understand that, and I wonder if our committee could be....

D/Commr Raf Souccar: It is an International Police Coordination Board committee headed by EUPOL. Mr. Vittrup heads it. EUPOL is ultimately responsible as head of the training that's being provided in Afghanistan. All the contributing countries plug into it, so a strategy can be put in place in terms of what and where training is provided.

The need for Canada to have senior representation on that committee is essential. The head of mission sat and still sits on that committee. Our assistant commissioner, whom we're deploying to Afghanistan, to Kabul, will also be part of that committee, so it becomes very important to plug in at a senior level.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: It's also co-chaired by the Ministry of Interior of Afghanistan. So the Afghans are directly involved in this.

Mr. Alan Tonks: There's an old saying, and I think it was Wellington who said that tactics win battles and strategies win wars.

Have you seen analytical documents that come through that committee that appraise what is being done, where the gaps in the training are, where they should be filled, and who they should be filled by? I think that's what the committee would like to be assured of: that the lifting is done with equity and with the degree of support that you have earned, that Canada has earned. Is that something the committee should do in an analytical and accountable way?

D/Commr Raf Souccar: Absolutely, they should and they do. This is not a committee that throws darts at a board to determine what should and shouldn't be done. Information, intelligence—all the countries that are part of this committee have something to contribute. Together this is collected and a rational discussion takes place in terms of a strategy of where to go, based on that.

Mr. Yves Brodeur: There's also something important in going back to the involvement of the Afghans in this process. For instance, the Minister of Interior is now conducting a study about their needs, how many police officers they need, and all that. Eventually, the result of this will be that they're leading. It's their country. These are their needs that we're talking about. We will come forward to a group like this one where a minister, presumably Mr. Atmar or someone from his department, will have to say, well, here is the result, so how do we adapt to this? That's the discussion this group will have. How do we actually need that? Is that a reasonable demand? They'll ask if it works and how we accomplish that.

Mr. Alan Tonks: Good.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Just before we conclude this further, I have one question. I'm not sure who could answer this.

Somebody commented earlier that the losses of the Afghan National Police are higher than those of the army. Where are those losses coming from? Are the police involved with the Taliban, or is that just their duties in their communities? How are those losses accumulated?

● (1230)

Mr. Yves Brodeur: Losses are basically happening in area sectors where there is very little security, where the safety is very low. In most cases, these are attacks by the Taliban and people being shot. I have a few statistics. In 2007-08, they lost 830 police officers in Afghanistan as a whole. There were 1,147 injured. So that gives you a sense of it. This is why it's so important for the international community to teach survival skills in a hostile environment and why we also have our military police officers and infantry involved in this.

The Chair: Thank you. I appreciate that, and I appreciate your being here today and for providing answers for the committee. I think you did a very good job. You certainly helped us bring some light into what's going on as we're training the police force in terms of what has happened, where we are, where we need to be, and the resources that are going to be needed to do that. So I appreciate that.

We'll pause for a minute while we go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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