House of Commons
CANADA

Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan

AFGH • NUMBER 019 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, December 1, 2010

Chair

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan

Wednesday, December 1, 2010

● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)): I'd like to bring meeting 19 to order. This is the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan and we're continuing our study of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan.

Before us today we have witnesses from the Allen Vanguard Corporation and the IPA Group. From the Allen Vanguard Corporation we have David Luxton, the president and chief executive officer. Welcome, sir. From the IPA Group, we have John Inns, principal, and Geoff Poapst, also principal.

We welcome you, gentlemen. I presume you will have an opening statement that you're willing to share with us. Normally we allow about ten minutes for that, so you may each present.

Whenever you're ready, you may begin.

Mr. David Luxton (President and Chief Executive Officer, Allen Vanguard Corporation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good afternoon, honourable members, and thank you for this privilege of sharing with you today some thoughts from industry on the role that industry can play in Canada's future engagement in Afghanistan.

I'll tell you a little bit about Allen Vanguard, the company I head. We are a Canadian company, with our international headquarters here in Ottawa. We have manufacturing facilities in Ottawa, as well as in Pembroke, Ontario, some in the U.K. and the U.S., as well as professional services groups in those countries. We export our products and services to more than 100 countries. Our specific focus and expertise is mitigating and defeating the threat posed by improvised explosive devices and other weapons of terror that over the past decade have had a destabilizing effect on an increasing number of regions in the world.

In a NATO context, the improvised explosive device is an expected feature of future operations. Encountering IEDs has certainly become a major feature of the stabilization and counter-insurgency operations that currently occupy the alliance. Counter-IED is now widely understood to encompass three key areas or layers of capability: first, at the pointy end of the threat is defeating the IED device itself by locating and neutralizing it; second, protecting and training security forces against IEDs; and third, developing forensic and intelligence systems to identify and defeat the IED network that supplies, finances, and fabricates these lethal devices.

Increasingly nations are taking a systematic approach to carefully integrating this range of measures needed to protect their own forces from this threat and to defeat adversary IED systems that threaten not only military forces, but civilian populations as well.

In operational theatres such as Afghanistan, NATO has been providing effective counter-IED support to its own deployed nation forces. It has been very preoccupied with that in response to a threat that has grown almost exponentially over the past five years, while at the same time trying to devote some effort and resources to building the same capacity within indigenous Afghan security forces. Given the extremely dynamic nature of the IED threat, both technically and tactically, industry has been an integral part of this effort, not just in delivering timely technological solutions to military forces but also in providing direct operational support to deployed, deploying, and indigenous forces.

The operational partnership between the counter-IED industry and military and police forces is unique, and I would say growing stronger by the day—and not just in Afghanistan. Allen Vanguard's subject-matter experts, many of them veterans of conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, play a very direct role in assisting dozens of nations to develop their capacity to protect themselves against IEDs.

In fact, our personnel have authored NATO counter-IED doctrine under our current multi-year contract to NATO Allied Command Transformation. Our employees have assisted national police and military forces around the world in developing counter-IED policy, strategies, and capabilities. Our highly specialized trainers conduct training in support of these efforts. As well, our scientists, engineers, and counter-IED specialists have developed anti-ballistic protective gear, radio frequency jammers, bomb disposal robots, protection equipment, intelligence products, and mobile forensics laboratories, all employed in the fight against IEDs around the world.

In sum, our people, who are overwhelmingly Canadians, are justifiably proud of the vital role they play every day in saving the lives of front-line personnel and vulnerable populations against the insidious threat of IEDs. It's certainly clear to us that Canadian industry does, and can, play a very meaningful and specific role in support of transition to Afghan security leadership between now and 2014.

Afghan officials are well aware of Allen Vanguard's expertise. As other Canadians note from time to time, we are perhaps better known internationally than at home. In fact, we were invited by Afghanistan's ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Jawed Ludin, to meet with Afghan ministers and senior officials in Kabul in mid-November.

● (1535)

We met with the First Vice-President, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Interior, the head of the National Directorate of Security, the Deputy National Security Advisor, and others, and their messages were consistent and clear.

Minister of Defence Wardak was unequivocal. As he stated at NATO's defence ministerial meeting last June, transitioning to Afghan leadership must, as he said, be conditions-based, and these conditions include building key enabling capabilities currently provided by ISAF. He stated that he is not at all satisfied with the current state of his army's counter-IED equipment, training, and capabilities, and identified this as his top priority in relationship to leadership transition.

Minister of Interior Mohammadi also identified counter-IED capability as one of the biggest challenges to leadership transition, given that more than 80% of Afghan security force casualties are caused by IEDs. We were told that 15 to 20 civilians are dying each day, and on average six police per day, with most of these resulting from IEDs. The minister lamented that his police are on the front line and that today they are, in his words, completely reliant on ISAF response capabilities and are otherwise virtually defenceless against this threat.

NDS director Nabil made a similar plea, and Deputy National Security Advisor Abdali stressed the need for assistance in applying a strategic national approach that will join the efforts of the three security institutions involved to build capacity in an integrated and a sustainable way.

We also consulted closely with NATO authorities in Kabul and were fortunate to be able to meet with both the ISAF counter-IED staff and the NATO training mission representatives during our visit two weeks ago. We learned that, as demand for Afghan soldiers and police has escalated each year, NATO's main focus has necessarily been on training soldiers and leaders to a very basic level. The more specialized functions, such as counter-IED capabilities, have lagged.

They are now developing plans to address this counter-IED requirement, but the availability of specialized expertise to train, advise, mentor, and assist in managing counter-IED capacity-building programs has inhibited progress. NATO's military counter-IED specialists are understandably consumed with providing life-saving support to their own fighting troops, and they have very little if any residual capacity to contribute to building Afghan security force capacity. This is a serious constraint that distinguishes the counter-IED capacity-building need from other more generalized security functions.

This is why industry assistance can make an enormous difference.

To give you a clearer sense of the practical dimensions of the Afghan challenge, together NATO and Afghans have identified a need for almost 300 qualified Afghan counter-IED response teams, including almost 90 for the Afghan National Police, who are at the forefront of protecting vulnerable populations. By the end of August of this year, they had only been able to field one operational police counter-IED team.

I should hasten to add, though, that NATO's focus until now has been exclusively on just generating these individual teams. NATO staff in Kabul are just now able to turn their attention to the institutional enablers that will need to be developed to build a national system, the one that will bind together army, police, and intelligence agency efforts, the one that goes beyond defeating the IED device to defeating the IED network and bringing terrorist suspects to justice.

These are specific areas in which Allen Vanguard's particular expertise has been sought in assisting many other nations. I'm confident, actually, that before long we will be playing a helpful, strategic capacity-building role in support of NATO in Afghanistan as their requirements become better defined.

In conclusion, IEDs are a key factor impeding Afghan men, women, and children from living normal lives and constraining development workers from helping them to do so.

● (1540)

It's certainly clear to us, and I believe widely understood, that helping Afghans to counter the deadly and destabilizing IED threat will figure prominently in any planning for a transition from NATO to Afghan security leadership. And with little spare NATO capacity to commit to this particular effort in the near term, Canadian industry can make a valuable contribution in an area that will have both immediate and a long-term impact.

I'm hopeful that the committee will give this due consideration.

I thank you again for inviting me to share these thoughts. With that, I look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

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

Now we'll turn to the IPA Group.

Are you both going to present or share your time?

Mr. John Inns (Principal, IPA Group): I'll be presenting, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. John Inns: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. It's a great honour for me to be here today.

What we want to do is take a few moments to tell you a little bit about who we are, what we have done in Afghanistan, why management training is critical to building self-sufficiency in Afghanistan, and a bit about our approach to building administrative capacity, and also to offer a word or two about costs.

My name is John Inns. I am a principal of IPA Group. I'm a former government employee and have been an independent management consultant for 20 years. I specialize in organization development, performance management, and training.

[*Translation*]

I am anglophone. I was born in Montreal but I only learned a few words in French when playing hockey in the streets. Therefore, my knowledge of French is not sufficient, and I will speak English only.

[*English*]

My colleague Geoff Poapst has a similar pedigree to mine, and in addition is what I would call a renowned video producer.

We brought all these skills together in 2007 when we were approached by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to design and deliver a western-style management training program for the Afghan National Directorate of Security. That request for western-style training came from the NDS director general Amrullah Saleh, who was the director at the time. He realized that you can teach intelligence officers to investigate crimes and pursue terrorists, but it was still an uphill battle if that manager lacked a fundamental grasp of management concepts like strategic planning, setting goals, and holding people accountable for results.

NDS wanted a more effective organization, with a more open, collegial, and less autocratic management culture. So those were our marching orders. In 2007 and 2008 we put 400 NDS personnel through our program, a mid-management-level training program, and a further 100 senior officials through an executive leadership training program. In our view, all indicators showed that this work was a success.

Several months after the course had been delivered, we evaluated the ability of NDS to implement the training materials we had given them. We toured nine NDS offices, including regional offices in Panjshir, Nangarhar, and Parwan. The graduates from the middle management training program told us that they were working smarter, significantly more effectively. We measured the output of productivity improvements they acquired by using the training instruments and had productivity improvements in excess of 50%. This was gratifying news, which confirmed what we had seen in the classroom—that most senior leaders and middle managers at NDS were open to new ideas and had a real thirst for knowledge. As I said, I'm a professional trainer. I've trained thousands of people in North America. I would say that these were some of the best students I have ever been exposed to in my training career.

Based on those results, NDS saw that we needed to train perhaps 3,000 managers and 500 executives. They saw that a critical mass needed to be trained in western management tools in order to develop an organization that was more effective, accountable, and results-producing. We got the same sort of endorsement from the CSIS director, Jim Judd, and Ambassador Ron Hoffmann. At the time, they wanted us to finish the work required to produce that trained critical mass in NDS, and then to move on to do ANP. At that time we were expected to go back, but the work was suspended because NDS was unable to free up resources, because the writ had been dropped for the Afghan election in 2009. There was no one available to be trained at that point, and we have been on hold ever since, as the Canadian government rethought its strategy on Afghanistan.

With the commitment to move Afghanistan towards self-sufficiency by 2014, we wanted to get back in the game using a program that we think has already proven to be effective. Management training is not as sexy or interesting as building schools or dams, and not as tangible as teaching police how to shoot, do riot control, or conduct investigations. But in our view, technical training will not move Afghanistan towards self-sufficiency. Indeed, the Canadian-proposed efforts to build technical capacity will go for naught if the organizations lack the administrative capacity to put technical skills to work effectively.

I have to tell you that we have been talking to your confreres in the States. We were in Washington in June, and at that time a report was issued by the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction. The report assessed an ANP unit that had been successfully trained and had a vehicle and equipment evaluation that was at the top level. The vehicles were ready to go, but no one was in a position to drive the vehicles. As we said to our American hosts, fixing cars and trucks is a technical challenge, and there's no question that there's merit in technical skills. But making sure you have people who can fix and drive the vehicles is a management challenge. And it's just as important if you're actually going to be effective in catching crooks.

That one case in point sure helped to make the penny drop, as we are now part of a consortium bidding on the U.S. government's $3-billion piece of work to restructure and retrain all of the Afghan National Police, 142,000 people. We also teamed up with Deloitte Consulting to explore opportunities for police-sector capacity-building in Afghanistan, Sudan, and Somalia.

Our experience in Washington was also gratifying, in that we came to appreciate that our training was unique, and also very Canadian. Unlike our American friends, the Brits, or the Russians, we don't tend to go around the world telling people what they ought to be doing, and that shows up in our methodology. Let me give you some of the details of our methodology. We can show you some examples at the end of the presentation if you wish.

● (1545)

First, we are significantly less prescriptive than typical American or European trainers. We don't impose western ideas. We don't lecture participants. Instead we show participants how westerners would handle a typical management challenge that Afghans would have been confronted with perhaps even on a daily basis. We work with them to come up with an Afghan approach and an Afghan management tool best suited to their work environment. In the end, it's no longer a western idea; it's their idea and they own it. With their owning that solution, they are predisposed to using that as a solution to the problem they see.

Secondly, we rely very heavily on custom-made, native video training aids. They tell the participants we've done something special for them, we've made a particular effort. When I turn on the projector, they know they're in for something completely different, but there's also more to it than that. In Afghanistan, as I'm sure most of you are aware, translation is an absolute nightmare. It's very difficult to get your point across. We found we were inventing Dari lexicon because the words did not exist in Dari.

We produced 140 minutes of Dari and Pashto video to illustrate key lessons in management situations and we summarized daily learning for the participants. We also gave them homework assignments to use the management tools that were part of the training program. We shot all this in Toronto, using Afghan Canadian actors.

We also used the video to bring the voice of the boss into the classroom, and this was absolutely critical. As you know, Afghanistan has a very autocratically based public sector. When their minister or their deputy minister comes into the room and explains to the participants that this program is absolutely critical for their career and this organization, and if they don't use these tools they will have no career in the organization, you start to have a fairly motivated batch of participants. We captured that in video and we showed that to every classroom we had access to.

Finally, and this is crucial, we gear our training programs to an overall organization development strategy. We work with the top leaders to find their vision, what their vision is, where they want to go, important policy issues: human rights, corruption fighting, etc. We tailored the program to specifically address those policy issues because we have already identified, with the deputy minister or with the minister, that these are key policy issues he wants to change. That works to address these policy issues through the training program.

It also shows the participants where the organization is headed, and in so doing it makes them accountable to produce a set of results that will make a contribution to that corporate vision. It makes them personally accountable and it gets everyone pulling the organization in the same direction.

That's how we delivered the management program in Afghanistan.

Let me say a couple of words about cost. If you were to take this management course or had some of your staff take this course—I'm an instructor at the Canadian Management Centre—you would take the same course, obviously in English or French, at a cost of $2,500 per participant. We ended up delivering that program to 500 people in Afghanistan at the same cost per participant as we delivered it in Toronto. I think that's very significant. That doesn't include some of the travel costs and that sort of thing, but we're in the same ballpark.

Of course that number would fall if the fixed costs were amortized over a larger participant population, especially if we equipped a contingent of our military trainers to deliver the program. The real cost leverage would come from training Afghans to train themselves. We don't believe that has been properly addressed in Afghanistan to date. We believe if that were significantly dealt with, that would make a significant Canadian legacy.

Let me wrap up by saying that there is more to building the security sector in Afghanistan than simply providing technical training. We must also help them build an effective organization, to develop that organization. From my 1,600 hours of classroom time in Afghanistan, we have a significant amount of ground to cover in the future.

Finally, let me say that administrative capacity-building takes time, and you can't do it in half measures. Critical mass needs to be produced across all levels of the organization, from the technical person up to the management and leadership levels. If you want an organization to change and to be more effective, to be more respective of human rights, to be more vigilant in fighting corruption, you have to train that critical mass. At NDS that number was touted as 3,000. At ANP we believe it to be in the order of magnitude of 30,000 people, and therefore it demands proper, custom-tailored, train-the-trainer programs.

● (1550)

We have a proven approach to administrative capacity-building. We need to tweak it, in view of what we have learned at NDS, but we are essentially ready to go, and the Afghans have asked for this specific assistance.

Omar Samad, the previous Afghan ambassador, said he saw a need for this to be delivered over a thousand times in Afghanistan. The existing Afghan ambassador has urged—and you listened to him a few weeks ago—that the work at NDS continue with the training and development of that organization, because it is the lead entity in the Afghan law enforcement sector.

We're keen to work with the military and the RCMP to make all of this work, put the capacity in place, develop the organizations, and move Afghanistan toward self-sufficiency.

Thank you for your time. I'll be pleased to answer your questions or show you any of the video methodology.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll immediately move to the official opposition.

Mr. Rae, you indicated you want to open up.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Chairman.

I hope our guests understand that we're not in a position to consider the advantages of one company's technology or expertise as opposed to another. As we go forward it's important for us to be very clear that we don't make those kinds of decisions in this committee. We certainly give people an opportunity to talk about what they're doing, but we're not here to advocate on behalf of one company or another.

I've had the opportunity to meet with both representatives, as well as with a number of others, over the last year and a half. I think what they're talking about in each case is significant. I also think it's important for us to recognize, for example, Mr. Luxton, that other companies would also be competitive or engaging in activity and research on IEDs. I can imagine the field must be very crowded right now with companies looking at the technical means of dealing with the impact of IEDs.

These are killer instruments in every jurisdiction where they're being used. Their impact is huge on civilian life in Pakistan and Afghanistan at the moment, as well in as a number of other countries where this kind of device is being used. They're very cheap, relatively easy to use, can be set off with a cellphone, and are widely available. I can imagine that the efforts to counter the impacts of these machines must be equally widespread throughout Europe, the United States, and North America.

Would that be a correct statement?

● (1555)

Mr. David Luxton: It certainly takes a big effort to respond to it, because there's no silver or magic bullet to this. It takes a systems approach. There are a number of elements to that. For that reason, there are not very many countries in the world that have that full range of capability.

One of the things that's attractive to a number of countries—and we know is certainly attractive to the Afghans—is Canada's recognized capability in this area, and that comes largely from industry. Of course they know that our own forces have had very direct experiences with IEDs and their consequences. So there is a perception in the global marketplace that Canada has a unique capability in this regard—certainly a world-leading capability. We find ourselves frequently the go-to organization for providing those kinds of solutions. That is why, for example, we are the lead advisers to NATO under a multi-year contract to provide these kinds of services.

Hon. Bob Rae: Without blowing your own horn—and I realize that's a natural human tendency—and trying to be as objective as you can, what would make Canada in general, and your company in particular, better able to do this than others?

Mr. David Luxton: It's that range of capability. You have to do a lot of things and work together as a system to be able to counter IEDs. I'm not blowing our horn here, but I would be hard pressed—and I think many in the industry and in security forces would be hard pressed—to point to any other organization that has that breadth of capability and has done this kind of capacity-building in as many countries as we have. That's not always done just by Allen Vanguard; it's often done in collaboration and partnership with security forces that are a contributing part of that solution—just to be balanced about it.

Hon. Bob Rae: When we were in Afghanistan—I'm looking at my colleagues, and I don't think we're divulging anything we're not supposed to talk about—we were shown a number of devices and a number of machines that were used to decommission and deal with the IED challenge. Is the possibility of actually being able to detect them or to disrupt the airwaves that would ignite them getting any better?

Mr. David Luxton: Again, not to get into classified areas of this, but the threat continues to evolve, so technology and methods continue to evolve in lockstep. In fact we do a great deal of R and D ourselves to stay ahead of that curve, stay ahead of the threat, and anticipate where it's going. And we do provide a lot of that enabling equipment you would have seen, as well as training and operational support to be able to do the part you were talking about, which is to locate these things in the first place and then neutralize them so that they can be safely disposed of.

Hon. Bob Rae: I think my colleague Mr. Wilfert had a question, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Yes, and just for the information of the committee, we'll let the Liberals finish their round before we go to the House to vote. We'll suspend and come back after the vote.

Mr. Wilfert, go ahead.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I'll wait until the second round. I'll let Mr. Dion go ahead.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Dion.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): We're playing “take time to organize yourself”.

Welcome.

I would like to know more about how difficult it is to learn to use it. What does the training mean? In order to protect soldiers against these weapons, how long does it take to train somebody to use it?

Mr. David Luxton: Of course, as you might imagine, Mr. Dion, there are levels of capability and levels of expertise. It's been our experience in many countries around the world that it is possible to take people from quite a rudimentary level, really take them from zero, and be able to, in a relatively short period of time, start to train them in some of the basics, the pointy end of the problem, which is the identification and location of IEDs and the safe disposal of those IEDs. There is equipment and there are techniques that are quite absorbable by indigenous forces, and we do this routinely with them around the world. They're very teachable.

When you get to higher levels of capability and you talk about trying to defeat the network of the people who finance these, place them, and fabricate them, we are typically then dealing with indigenous security agencies that are quite sophisticated.

My colleague mentioned the NDS, which I'm sure you're familiar with, in Afghanistan. This is a group that is staffed by professionals. They are very impressive, and they have all the capability in the world to be able to absorb the kinds of equipment and the kinds of techniques that we would normally provide so that they can be building up an integrated intelligence picture of the IED network.

● (1600)

The Chair: Mr. Dion, go ahead very briefly.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Is the maintenance difficult to do?

Mr. David Luxton: This equipment is made to be easily maintained and to be maintained by indigenous forces as well as our own Canadian and other NATO forces. So it's an important part of what we provide by way of a solution. There is in fact often a strong preference to be dealing with Canada and have Canadian solutions, because that is the philosophy behind what we provide. Whereas other countries may provide a bit of equipment and they leave it behind and good luck to you, the right approach, of course, is to provide equipment with training and with life-cycle support for that equipment so that there is sustainable capability against this threat that continues to evolve.

The Chair: We'll suspend until after the vote and then Mr. Bachand can ask his questions.

● _____ (Pause) _____ ●

● (1645)

The Chair: I'd like to reconvene this meeting.

We're continuing with our witnesses from the Allen Vanguard Corporation and the IPA Group.

I'll turn the microphone over to Mr. Bachand from the Bloc for his questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to welcome the industry representatives.

What does your acronym stand for? I presume the I stands for Inns and P for Poapst. But what about A...

[*English*]

Mr. John Inns: Associates.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Associates?

Mr. John Inns: Yes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: So you two get along very well.

Mr. John Inns: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Geoff Poapst (Principal, IPA Group): Some people say it means *India Pale Ale*.

Mr. Claude Bachand: This afternoon, I surfed on Internet but I could not find anything about your company. How come? Don't you have a Web site? The only thing I found was this quotation by the honorable Peter McKay:

[*English*]

"Winning the war in Afghanistan is not simply a matter of military might. It's going to require obviously an effort to build the capacity of the Afghan government to deliver more for their people."

[*Translation*]

How come...?

Mr. Geoff Poapst: We do not have a Web site because it is very expensive. There are only the two of us, and up to now, we focused exclusively on the development of training programs. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Did you say earlier that you had trained 500 people in Afghanistan for $2,500 per participant?

Mr. Geoff Poapst: Roughly, yes. This amount does not include security and transport costs, but does include program development and delivery.

Mr. Claude Bachand: I must tell you that, in my opinion, your references are not that good. You mention NDS and Mr. Duke. However we all know what he thinks of the courts, and the total discretion he is asking for CSIS. I have a lot of misgivings about these two people.

You say you want to give management training courses. How do you see 950 military people training Afghan forces? Would you want to be involved? How would you want to proceed?

Mr. Geoff Poapst: We work primarily with NDS, our colleagues in Washington and the national police, but not really with the armed forces. However it is possible that this kind of training has already started with our forces and others.

[*English*]

Mr. John Inns: May I add to that?

I think one of the things we have seen in Afghanistan is that the train-the-trainer idea has not been very well developed. We have seen a lot of mentoring activities. We have, in fact, tried to encourage NDS people to be properly trained to deliver training programs.

Our view is that we have a fully developed train-the-trainer program that we have delivered successfully in North America, and we would like to see that train-the-trainer model using the methodology we spoke about in our remarks, and use that methodology because we think it's more effective. If that methodology were being employed by the military, we think that would turn the military into more effective trainers than might otherwise be the case.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Luxton, you say in your document that there are critical shortfalls in NATO Counter-IED resources.

Could you please briefly describe these shortfalls?

● (1650)

Mr. David Luxton: With your permission, I will answer your question in English. Like my colleague, I speak French like a street hockey player.

[*English*]

The reference, of course, is to NATO's capability in gaps and helping to build up indigenous capability in counter-IEDs. NATO is highly attuned to the need to do this. NATO has a vision that this should proceed. There are gaps, significant gaps, in its ability to resource it, which NATO, I believe, is addressing. And of course with that, there are very significant gaps in the current state of indigenous capability in countering IEDs.

So this is where in fact we are hopeful that Allen Vanguard may, in the near future, be actually playing a strategic role to start that first important part of the process, which is to develop a strategy by providing advisory assistance in this regard to the Afghan government and to then be developing a comprehensive plan for how to build up this capability, to mentor the senior officers from the Afghan security institutions that would then become the nucleus for a national counter-IED capability. From there, it would roll out the program of equipping and training specialized units that would, in total, provide a collective and effective capability against IEDs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: When you talk about the Allied Command Transformation, training and doctrine, are you talking about the institution in Norfolk?

[*English*]

Mr. David Luxton: It is the combination of NATO, ISAF, NTMA —I'm assuming you're familiar with these organizations. Allied Command Transformation may turn out to have a role to play in that, because—

Mr. Claude Bachand: But is it in Norfolk?

Mr. David Luxton: They are out of Norfolk, yes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Okay. That was my question.

Mr. David Luxton: Okay.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Finally, you stress the need to be able to collect and handle intelligence data. This is usually a function of the military. Do you see a kind of cooperation with the armed forces, so that they would give you any intelligence data they have collected?

This is really very important, because people often know where the IEDs are, and military officers can handle this data. Would that be a problem if military officers gave this information to a private corporation supporting them in their counter-IED efforts?

[*English*]

Mr. David Luxton: The role of the private corporation here, as it's normally played in this kind of security capacity-building, is not to be handling intelligence or doing the counter-IED; it's to be providing the plans, the framework, the training, and the equipment to build up that capability. This would be a joint agency capability, as they conceive it, and intelligence information would be passed between those agencies, not to a private company.

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there. Thank you very much.

We'll now go over to the government side.

Mr. Hawn.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Dechert, given the short time that we've got left.

Mr. Inns, we talk about concentrating the NDS, and you have experience with the NDS. We did hear a comment in June, when we were in Afghanistan, from Nadir Nadiri, who is the head of the Afghan independent human rights commission, about how much improved NDS was.

Do you have enough experience with the NDS yourself to give an assessment of that from when you started to when you finished or what you're aware of?

Mr. John Inns: Mr. Chair, our comments have to be restricted to anecdotal information, in essence.

When we were formulating the needs assessment information, working with Mr. Saleh on a direct and indirect basis, he stressed the importance that he wanted to place on human rights, and wanted us to include a significant module on values and ethics to ensure that human rights were being exercised and a proper adherence to human rights was being exercised by his intelligence officers. We designed that into the program, and that's what I was referencing in my remarks about organization development being driven by certain policies and issues that were raised by the ministry's leader himself.

I can't comment on what it was like beforehand. I can only comment that we were asked by Mr. Saleh to include a focus on human rights in the design of the program.

We placed a significant emphasis on that. We had a good way of demonstrating human rights in an organization in a video. That material was well received. We had the same sort of discussion with the gentleman who ran prisons for NDS. He certainly didn't give us any pushback on acceptance of, adherence to, and respect for human rights in the conduct of his duties.

● (1655)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Sorry, I'll cut you off there, because we are a little short of time. But in your view they are eminently trainable, from what you've said?

Mr. John Inns: Absolutely. They had a true thirst for knowledge in virtually all subject matters that we raised. I think the illiteracy rate is lower in NDS than in other organizations. These people are not stupid by any means, and they understood what we were talking about.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Luxton, you talked about 300 counter-IED teams. How many in a team? How long does it take to train a team, and how long notionally would it take to train up 300 counter-IED teams?

Mr. David Luxton: That would be a long-term effort, meaning over the duration of the period now to 2014 there's adequate time to be training up that number of units. These teams tend to be small teams, specialized, and it does take time.

But there is of course now a renewed commitment to the kind of time horizon that will permit all of the elements that have to come together. It's not just training those teams, but it's making sure that they are trained and operating in the context of an overall strategy, and a plan for rolling out that strategy, including the training of mentors and coaching of those who would be training individual teams, and the supply of the necessary equipment.

So this would not happen overnight, but the impact would begin to be felt quickly, and certainly against that time horizon—with the right resources and commitment—there would be a very substantial indigenous capability by 2014, if not sooner.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: On the forensic side of it, what would be your potential involvement in the forensic side? When I say that, I mean to get to the signature on the IED, to get to who is actually making the IED. Is your company involved with that?

Mr. David Luxton: We are very much involved with that. We are in the process of operationalizing that type of capability for the Canadian Forces. This is precisely a part of what we do as this integrated approach to counter-IED.

So with these field laboratories, as they're called, one is able to do full-spectrum forensics collection and interpretation. So our role in that is to provide the laboratories, to provide the necessary forensic equipment, to teach people how to use it, and to help them understand effective ways to integrate that with what's happening with the IED network that's behind this activity and to use those forensics to be able to bring perpetrators to justice.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Gentlemen, thank you for the good work you and your colleagues are doing in Afghanistan.

I'd like to start with you, Mr. Inns. Some commentators have suggested that the Afghan army, the NDS, and the Afghan police shouldn't need to be trained by anyone, since the mujahedeen were able to defeat the Soviets in the 1980s. Do you have any comment on that, having done some training there?

Mr. John Inns: I think there's no question, from our experience, that the material we've put on the table for the NDS managers and leaders was extremely well received.

I would say there were a certain number of people who didn't get it. When you talked about the movement out of an autocratic management style and management culture into a participatory style, some people were not able to make that shift. And if they didn't make that shift, they were not able to get a commitment on the part of their subordinates to produce results.

I think people who did get it understood that this was possible and they understood what the result was that was required and then they pursued the result.

● (1700)

Mr. Bob Dechert: So you would agree that members in the NDS and the army and police there do need some training to be able to take over from the ISAF forces today and provide the same level of security?

Mr. John Inns: I don't think there's any question that this kind of organizational development is absolutely required.

One of the things we found was that there's not a lot of strategic thinking that goes on in the law enforcement sector in Afghanistan. I suspect it's generally across the public sector, but I don't have exposure to the other sectors. These people do not seem to focus on the point of going in this particular direction, and without that I think they react and they follow a process, and that process is not always fruitful.

Mr. Bob Dechert: How many of those employees of the NDS that you've trained would have been around in the 1980s in that organization?

Mr. John Inns: I think a significant number. I was frankly shocked at Mr. Saleh standing beside me in the graduation saying all of those guys were trained by the KGB. I was quite surprised by that.

Mr. Bob Dechert: So they were on the other side. They weren't fighting the Soviets. They were on the side of the Soviets back then. That's interesting.

Where did you do your training in Afghanistan?

Mr. John Inns: In the NDS academy, just down from the Intercon Hotel—

Mr. Bob Dechert: Is it in Kabul?

Mr. John Inns: Yes, in Kabul. People were coming from across the country, so we had representatives from all provinces.

Mr. Bob Dechert: How did you find the security issues with your employees who were there in Afghanistan?

The Chair: That will have to be your final question.

Go ahead.

Mr. John Inns: We were extremely well looked after by the embassy. We did not stay at the embassy. We did not stay in the diplomatic part of Kabul. We stayed as close to the NDS academy as possible.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Were your people threatened in any way while you were there?

Mr. John Inns: We received a couple of bomb threats that were direct, but nothing—

Mr. Bob Dechert: But you're not concerned about their safety going forward?

The Chair: We'll have to wrap it up there.

Mr. Dewar, please, for seven minutes.

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

Thank you to our guests for being here today.

I'll continue just on the questions to IPA Group.

I'm kind of interested in the fact that you had pointed out on page three of your submission to us today that following the U.S. special inspector general's report on what was happening in situ, they had talked about the fact that they have equipment there but don't have people who can actually use it.

It reminds me of how international development was done in the 1970s. We would lay out elaborate irrigation systems, and then when we left, it rusted.

But what I'm really curious about is this evaluation. Do you know of any similar evaluation? We get the Auditor General looking at things, but in terms of our value for money and how things are working in situ from a Canadian perspective, do you know of similar evaluations that have been done beyond your own project? You do an internal evaluation, presumably, but is there anything that's similar to the U.S. special inspector general?

Mr. John Inns: I don't believe so, no.

Mr. Geoff Poapst: I will say that the SIGAR report, as it's called, is a very good read.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay. I think it's something that has been lacking. In fact, we've had some challenges to get a cost of how much we're spending, investing in the mission in Afghanistan, as you probably are aware.

I'm interested in that, because we have had a situation where we've changed the emphasis in terms of what we were understanding the mission expenditures would be. Up until a couple of weeks ago, we were looking at about a $550 million expenditure on primarily a civilian-only mission. Now that's changed, as you know, to $100 million for the civilian and $1.5 billion for military training.

I've asked the government if they could actually lay out where we're at, and they can't. In fact, witnesses the last time we met here were in a bit of a scramble because things had shifted and they weren't informed.

So I guess my question to you would be, is your work...? Would that be seen...? I don't know if you saw the Treasury Board submission. It was made public in August. It was fairly detailed as to where the investments would go.

Would you see the work that you do as being under what I would call more of a civilian mission, versus military training?

● (1705)

Mr. Geoff Poapst: It could fit easily under both categories, because our troops who are there are going to be there as trainers teaching technical skills and also—I would assume, within the military setting—military management skills and strategic skills. There is no reason that these very skilled trainers—if they are very skilled trainers, which I'd assume them to be—couldn't be delivering the program and the methodology we've developed, and the same would apply for our RCMP people who've been there, especially in a capacity as mentors, both at NDS and at the ANP.

At the same time, if you call what we do as a stand-alone organization "civilian", then it could certainly proceed in that respect as well, particularly in the development of an Afghan train-the-trainers program. But it could switch back and forth between the two.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I mean, I'm looking at the work you've done, and I think most of it was outside of the military ambit. It was with NDS.

Mr. Geoff Poapst: Yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I find it interesting, because you were doing, as you say here, work up until 2009, right? What happened? You say here that with the election there was a change in terms of the people you were training. They were re-deployed, I guess. Have you made submissions to further the work you were doing?

Mr. John Inns: Yes, we've been asked two or three times by DFAIT, by the RCMP working with DFAIT, to put forward another submission. Those submissions have gone in, and at first when they asked for the submissions they came back to us and said "We can't go ahead with that work because we don't have any money". Then we were asked to re-prepare submissions to DFAIT, and they came back and said "We have money, but we don't have any time to do the work". They now come back to us and say "We have received a formal request for you to restart your work on NDS, but we have an appetite to train only 225 people, and that can start in the new fiscal year". That's where it sits right at this point in time.

Our view is that you do not assess a critical mass by saying that someone in the Pearson Building knows that you need to train only 225 people.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Let me get this straight. You were requested to put in a submission. You did, and they said "Sorry, we don't have any money"?

Mr. John Inns: That's right.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's happened three times now?

Mr. John Inns: Yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay. I guess it's up to the government to figure out what they're doing, and then maybe you'll get an answer, but you're talking about fiscal year as in the next fiscal year?

Mr. John Inns: I mean April 2011.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Well, my understanding was that there was actually a submission going to Treasury Board, which would have had money for this kind of training, so I guess I would just say that it's too bad this didn't go ahead, because you might have gotten an answer earlier. I know my colleagues down here would have appreciated that before they signed on to the deal they signed on to, but that's their deal.

If I may, Mr. Luxton, I have a very simple question in terms of the work you do. One might say the best way of dealing with IEDs is to have people stop planting them—I'm sure you've looked at that, and you look at the sources—as opposed to just having people trained to be able to take them apart. One of the issues, I would imagine—and I certainly heard this from our folks on the ground—is that they keep on changing methods, and you're trying to catch up to them. It reminds me of what happens with hackers and computers.

One of the more innovative ways that people have dealt with computer hacking and the kinds of damage they do is to actually take the people who were involved and get them on our side. We already have the Russians we're retraining as our special agents looking for the Taliban now. I'm just wondering whether that kind of approach has been taken, so that you have people who were actually involved on the other side now helping you out or helping coalition forces to deal with the IED problem.

The Chair: You have time for a brief answer.

Mr. David Luxton: There is an element in this whole integrated system approach to counter-IEDs that does involve human intelligence, so that gets factored in. Of course that's the most valuable intelligence that can be had. I don't think I'd comment further than that, but it is a valuable contribution to the problem.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Okay, Mr. Dechert, go ahead.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Inns, can you confirm something? With regard to that exchange you just had with Mr. Dewar about funds available for training, can you confirm that DFAIT has now told you that funds are available for training going forward?

● (1710)

Mr. John Inns: Yes.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Okay, thank you. I just wanted to make sure I heard that correctly.

When this committee visited Afghanistan in June of this year, we were told that schools in many areas of Afghanistan had not operated for most of the last 30 years, as that country has gone through various conflicts. What has your experience been with illiteracy in the NDS? And if you have encountered that, how have you dealt with it?

Mr. John Inns: As I think I said earlier, I think NDS is widely recognized as sort of the cream of the crop within the Afghan public sector. There were some individuals who were illiterate, and they were being helped out by colleagues. There were some rudimentary training programs that were available to NDS, and they were trying to minimize the problem as much as possible. It wasn't a major characteristic of the workforce, which was certainly what was rumoured to be the case with ANP.

Mr. Bob Dechert: That was probably the case with the police.

Sorry, Mr. Poapst, did you have a comment?

Mr. Geoff Poapst: If I could add, that's what we see as a major advantage of our video-driven—Dari, Pashto, Kadu, Tajik, or whatever is required—training programs: that you don't have to read.

Mr. Bob Dechert: It's all visual, and....

Mr. Geoff Poapst: It's not all visual, but you could certainly adapt it to dealing with a more illiterate audience. As we all know, people who fight illiteracy aren't stupid; they just can't read. You have to cater to that or you will lose them.

Mr. Bob Dechert: I've heard from both of you that you haven't encountered much of it in the NDS. In the other institutions it may be a more prevalent problem, but there are ways of dealing with it.

Mr. John Inns: With Ambassador Hoffmann's encouragement we had very preliminary discussions with ANP. They saw the program as being applicable to training ANP, but to use their wording it would have to be “dumbed down” for ANP personnel.

As Geoffrey was saying, the fundamental models are pictured in a video. If you can reduce the three-syllable words in the presentation and make the slides a little simpler, I think the message would be easily communicated to an illiterate person.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Okay. Thank you.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Luxton, you talked about the developing threat, spy versus spy, and being able to stay one step ahead. How are we doing in staying a step ahead, and how important is that?

Mr. David Luxton: We can certainly see, through the accomplishments of NATO forces in protecting themselves against this threat, that quite dramatic progress has been made over the years. This is now a continuing but highly managed threat among NATO forces.

That same kind of capability can certainly be put in place for indigenous forces. It's not there today, by a long stretch. There's some very rudimentary work, but a whole program of activity needs to be undertaken to transfer that capability from ISAF forces to the Afghan forces. We certainly know, from the successes with NATO forces in countering IEDs, how to counter that threat, and it is eminently doable.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: A lot of the IED threat is pretty low-tech. Is that a fair statement?

Mr. David Luxton: It can be very low-tech, but that doesn't mean it's easy to defeat. Sometimes, because it can be low-tech, it's that much more effective. It doesn't give you easily discernible signatures. They're not easy to find. That is why it takes a lot of clubs in the golf bag to be able to play this counter-IED game.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Yes, and I guess that's my point. We actually need higher tech to deal with the lower-tech stuff because it is difficult to detect.

Mr. David Luxton: There is a certain amount of this that requires some technology. It's technology anybody can use and is teachable. It can be absorbed by indigenous forces in Afghanistan. There are techniques and procedures that go with it as well. With the right techniques and procedures, IEDs get found. With the right techniques and procedures, if you have the equipment they get neutralized after they're found. With a bit more technology and training, the IED network becomes understood and is mapped. Then the IED network can be neutralized.

● (1715)

The Chair: We thank you very much for coming before this committee. We're sorry for the interruption, but we appreciate what you have relayed to us.

We're going to suspend for a minute and then go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: http://www.parl.gc.ca

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

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : http://www.parl.gc.ca