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Chair

The Honourable Maxime Bernier

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● (1100)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC)): Good day everyone and welcome to the 14th meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence. In accordance with Standing Order 108(2), we continue our study of the role of Canadian soldiers in international peace operations after 2011.

We are pleased to welcome two witnesses to the committee: Dr. Philippe Lagassé, an assistant professor with the Graduate School of Public And International Affairs at the University of Ottawa, and retired Colonel Michel Drapeau, an adjunct professor with the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Law.

Gentlemen, you will each have between five and seven minutes to make your presentations, following which we will go to questions from committee members and have a discussion .

You may proceed.

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau (Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the committee members for this opportunity to talk about a subject that is near and dear to me.

[*English*]

When the clerk of the committee phoned last week, I was already in the process of putting together the final touches on the document that has been circulated to you. It should be before you now. The document is titled, “Post Afghanistan - Whither Canada First Defence Policy”. Although plain reading of the paper indicates that the return to international peace operations is and should continue to be a priority role for the Canadian Forces post-2011, I am of the view that before we accept the commitment in that regard, we should give soldiers and their families a welcome pause from operational deployment.

Indeed, as I made clear in the paper, the repatriation of Canadian troops in 2011 would provide the Canadian Forces with a welcome opportunity to attend to several pressing issues. These include the reconfiguration of the Canadian Forces, particularly the army, which is coming off a prolonged, war-fighting mission, and a critical examination of our headquarters system, which consumes much of our limited resources. But there is much more, ranging from the civilianization of the Defence oversight committee, the restructuring of the Canadian Forces grievance system, and a provision, perhaps, of a degree-granting charter to the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean so that this national institution can once again commission French-speaking officers for the three services. I am of course open to questions concerning any of these proposals or the one contained in the paper.

As you know, over the weekend the Minister of National Defence announced that Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie will be assuming the role of the chief of transformation this coming June. It's not only a good thing, it is also an unmistakeable statement of requirement on the part of the defence department that, post-Afghanistan, the Canadian Forces will be required to undergo a transformation of sorts in order to meet the future needs and challenges of the nation. In my opinion, over the coming months this committee should be prepared to participate, if not lead, in the transformation process, as many of what I certainly perceive as critical or urgent requirements for change should be done under the general guidance and support of this committee. I therefore urge members of this committee to take a proactive role in this matter, both in this general application and in specific areas that require modification, changes, and improvements.

Also, as noted before, save and accept a real emergency on redeployment, the Canadian Forces should be provided with a respite from assignment on international missions. Such a respite will permit the Canadian Forces to make the applicable and necessary changes to their structures, their configuration, and their governance.

Before getting into a discussion with you about the need for such a transformation and its impact on the Canadian Forces' ability to deploy, in the short term, on international peace operations, please permit me to make a couple of additional suggestions before I close.

First, given the current situation in Haiti and the fact that full rehabilitation of that nation will be a huge effort of almost Marshall Plan duplication, it might be advantageous for both nations, in the fullness of time, for Canada to establish a garrison within Haiti to assist, to train, and to give aid to the civil authorities.

Second, while it may be a point to the obvious, the world, post-Afghanistan, is still a very dangerous place. Hence, I believe it would be a grave error to put the Canadian Forces into a peacekeeping only configuration. It remains a truism that forces capable of combat operation, however limited, can equally conduct so-called peacekeeping operations. The reverse, though, is not true.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the time you've taken to listen to the issues and concerns, and I would be happy to entertain any questions you may have.

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé (Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, I want to thank you, as well as the clerk, for the opportunity to appear before you.

The issues before your committee are very important to the Canadian Forces and to Canada's international policy. The governments of Paul Martin and Stephen Harper have invested several billion dollars in national defence and in our Canadian Forces. The Harper government has also made a commitment to increase military spending by more than 2% per year.

It is clear from our national defence strategy that the Canadian Forces will continue to play an active role in the world without this having an adverse effect on the defence of Canada or the continent. It is critically important to analyze where our forces should be deployed in the future, with whom they should be allied and under which international command. It is equally important, however, to analyze the number, duration and scope of these future operations.

Canadian Forces have supplied troops for virtually every UN or NATO operation since the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, after Canada began taking part in NATO expeditionary operations some 15 years ago, following the failure of UN peacekeeping operations, the length and intensity of CF deployments increased sooner than expected. The mission in Kandahar, Afghanistan, illustrates this reality quite well. Canadian Forces find themselves involved in a mission that has already laster longer, has cost more and has proven to be deadlier than any other mission since the Korean War.

As we try and draw some lessons from this mission, we need to ask ourselves the following questions. First, is it in the best interests of the Canadian military to take part in the future in counter-insurgency and combat operations along with other NATO members? Second, are these types of missions critically important in terms of meeting Canadian foreign policy and security objectives? Third, will Canada's military have the capability to participate in the future in new operations of similar duration and intensity without CF members becoming exhausted and planned budgets being overspent?

My answer to each of these questions is no. Canada's military should engage in combat and counter-insurgency operations only as a last resort. These operations should not be preferred CF missions. Moreover, such missions are rarely of critical importance in terms of meeting Canadian foreign policy objectives, such as international peace and stability, global influence and the promotion of Canadian values. Participating in these kinds of missions could exhaust our Canadian Forces in the long run and impede their efforts to carry out their operations and resupply efforts without going over the budget set by the government. What options do we have then?

[*English*]

Canada should continue to deploy the CF on expeditionary operations, whether in cooperation with its NATO allies or preferably as part of a United Nations-led mission. But future Canadian deployments must also exercise more discrimination in choosing where and when to deploy the CF. This higher degree of discretion is necessary to avoid overstretching the armed forces, to protect the military's ability to meet its homeland and continental defence commitments, and, perhaps more importantly, to achieve the government's foreign policy objectives in a realistic and affordable manner.

Indeed, I propose that future Canadian governments should adopt the following criteria when choosing to deploy the CF on expeditionary operations.

First, the government should only deploy forces when they are not needed to enforce Canadian sovereignty or to provide sufficient aid to the civil authority or power. Protecting Canada and Canadians must be the CF's real, rather than rhetorical, top priority.

Second, the government should deploy the CF selectively. In practice, this would mean not accepting more than one land force commitment, one maritime force commitment, and one air force commitment, or a single integrated mission at a time.

Third, the government must avoid missions where success is unlikely. This includes missions where local or regional dynamics impede the attainment of objectives, missions where Canada’s largest partners are lacking in their commitments to the attainment of objectives, and missions whose objectives are grandiose, unattainable, or detached from realities on the ground.

Fourth, the government must avoid missions that involve long-term, open-ended commitments. Every CF deployment must have a firm end date, and the services should be prepared to take an operational pause if continuously deployed for more than three years.

Fifth, in all cases, the government must assess whether military intervention is the most efficient and cost-effective means of achieving an objective. If it is not, alternative forms of intervention should be considered.

Sixth, DND's capital expenditures should represent between 25% and 30% of the entire defence budget. The government should avoid deploying the CF on any operation that threatens to reduce this percentage.

And finally, expeditionary operations should only take place when they enjoy a clear, popular mandate. National unity is a fundamental survival interest of the Canadian state. Special care should be taken to avoid military deployments that threaten it.

I look forward to hearing and answering your questions.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen.

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Wilfert.

[*English*]

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

Gentlemen, welcome.

I'll first ask, who was this paper circulated to in government?

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: To members of this committee.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: It was not beyond this?

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: No.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I want to congratulate you on the paper, particularly on areas dealing with national interest. I really would like to explore that a little bit. Obviously, all countries are governed by national interest. What is our national interest as we go forward?

We have had peacekeeping operations as diverse as Cypress, to parts of Africa, in Haiti, etc. How do you see us looking at our national interest in terms of being able to utilize the forces in a more efficient manner, given the fact that you talked about—and I agree with you—the transformation issue? I do believe very strongly that this committee should be at the forefront, which is part of the reason I asked who this was circulated to. Obviously, those in government —that is, the ministers, etc.—really need to get a good grasp of what it is you're laying out here.

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: The document that is before you I thought in fact had just been circulated to everybody now. I was working on it just as the clerk called. I was putting the finishing touches to it. It's a publication, yet basically it's for the future.

My point is, the forces, whether they want it or not, are going through a philosophical, structural reconfiguration. That's a given. The appointment of a three-star chief of the army, which is unprecedented in the past 40 years, to head this transformation indicates in fact that the Canadian Forces themselves recognize that they need to go back to basics and somehow strike a balance between an army that has, for almost the previous 40 years, been employed, trained, and dedicated almost exclusively to peacekeeping missions, particularly after we left Germany in 1993 or so, to an army now in a full war, and the first time in our history.... I shouldn't say full war; it's a counter-insurgency type of mission. Our army has become, in many respects, Afghan-centric. We have bought tanks and airplanes, and we have a fighting capability that is, despite its very small numbers, quite significant and probably, pound for pound, man for man, among the best.

● (1115)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: So we don't want to lose that tempo.

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: We don't want to lose it, and we've acquired it at very high cost. We lost a sailor again over the past few hours.

We've acquired this fighting capability, an officer corps, a non-commissioned officer corps, that now is battle-tested, with many veterans. When we come back, I think the last thing we want to do, in response to anything except the most urgent emergency, is re-badge our soldiers and send them on peacekeeping missions.

Until we decide, we need to ask whether the armed forces we have, particularly its very heavy-laden headquarters structure, and the training and the equipment we have is what we need. In that ought to be, what do we do in the issue of national interest? I've raised a couple of issues, such as aboriginals being underrepresented, for instance. We also know that visible minorities are under-represented in the Canadian Forces, and we know the current recruiting and retention problems in the Canadian Forces will grow. We have to pause; we have to look at it and restructure.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: But all of this is in the context of what is going to be—and obviously the government will have to signal that —our key foreign policy objectives and what kind of armed forces do we need in order to achieve those objectives.

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: I think we need, first and foremost, to define what the mission of the forces is and what the role of the forces is. From my perspective, they're fundamentally of two types. First and foremost is the defence of Canada—air, sea, and land masses—and whatever this entails. We have to keep a residual forces capable to deploy, capable in fact to act singly or in concert with allies to do that.

Second is to continue to work within NATO and within the UN concerning our major approaches—air and sea and space even—because it is our foreign policy and also our tradition to work within alliances. Therefore, we must accept our share of international missions, whether something like Afghanistan or something unlike it, or truly United Nations peacekeeping missions. We do so because we are using the fighting ability and structures of armed forces. We don't tell them to serve in NATO and UN forces; we tell them first and foremost to respond to our national security requirements.

Part of that is to look at the national interest, which includes, and I specifically alluded to it, an ability to recruit and to train. At the moment, francophone officers are sparse. We have in fact a capability deficiency in there. I'm suggesting to you, if we were to reopen the college, we may be able to address this in part. That is part of the process—not in the short term but in the long term.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I certainly would concur with your last comment there about the college, but in terms of this transformation issue, it's difficult to deal with the transformation if you're not sure what the objectives are going to be. This, to me, means that we not only have to deal with the forces, but also look at the overall objectives of Canadian foreign policy and be able to mesh the two together, at the same time recognizing that you don't want to lose that operational tempo.

At the same time, the forces are going to go through a period of adjustment, and maybe we need to be consolidating where we are in the world. Maybe we need to have more of a focus. The Australians clearly decided to focus on one area of the world, and it made sense for them to do so. Maybe ours is hemispheric or in Asia or wherever, but we need to have a clear signal. Clearly we can't do this in a vacuum.

One of the items you pointed out that I thought was quite interesting was whether we will continue to emphasize operations through the United Nations, or will it be NATO? You put some points clearly on that.

Can you elaborate a little? Somalia was not peacekeeping, but peacemaking. Anybody who saw the equipment go over there knew it was peacemaking. I have constituents today who think it's peacekeeping in Afghanistan. Can you briefly talk about that?

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: Peacekeeping is on a continuum that goes from being a basic constabulary type of mission—and Cyprus would be a good case in point for most of the 40 years that we were there—to Somalia, a robust peace-enforcing, peacemaking type of mission. You could say that the early stage of our deployment in Afghanistan also had some colour of peacekeeping.

A well-trained, well-armed, well-led command and control force, a combat-capable force, can do the whole range of peacekeeping, peace-enforcing, and peacemaking missions. The aim of it, I think, stemmed from our national character. We've never had territorial ambitions, and we want, as a middle power, to try to use our forces as an extension of our diplomacy and of our internal policy to try to make peace whenever we can help.

Our missions and the deployment of forces that we ought to have, save and except for one general failure—I'm alluding to Rwanda—have been pretty well tempered. We deploy in sufficient numbers with a sufficient mission and within a respected mandate. I'm alluding to Bosnia. Nevertheless, we did make a significant difference in bringing peace and stability to these particular countries.

Did we have enough? Could we do enough? The answer to that is, “Never enough”, but prior to Afghanistan, we inherited almost a peacekeeping constabulary force in terms of our equipment, our training, and our philosophy. We had an entire generation, or two generations, of officers who did nothing else. That became even more accentuated after we withdrew from Germany in 1992.

I think that was wrong, because ultimately the type of soldier we are looking for to deploy and to enforce peace has to be combat-trained and combat-led as the first thing; otherwise, he's going to fail in his task.

● (1120)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you very much, and thank you for your patience, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Colonel Drapeau.

Go ahead, Mr. Bachand.

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

I'd like to thank our two witnesses for their excellent presentations. This is a very positive start to our discussions. I won't deny that we have discussed this issue at some length. Are we talking about peace making, or peace building? To my mind, peace building means building the peace, whereas peacekeeping refers to traditional peacekeeping missions.

Your presentations touched on many areas. Mr. Wilfert mentioned several of them: national interests and the importance of breaks, because our soldiers may be a little tired. I also appreciated that Mr. Wilfert expressed some regret over the demise of the Collège militaire royal du Canada. I think that history will show that this was a mistake. I see that the Liberal Party is somewhat inclined now to correct this grave injustice. So then, I view your comment in a very positive light. It is a very apropos topic for the committee chair.

Your submission mentions one thing that you haven't talked about yet, namely the importance of Parliament exercising some control. This is somewhat of a hot topic these days. Speaking of transformation, I'm wondering perhaps if it's high time to do a major cleanup, as we get ready to pull out of Afghanistan. I'm talking about a major cleanup. I don't think the Conservative Party took appropriate action when it came to power. Wouldn't you say it's time to rethink our foreign policy? We need a policy that would allow Canada to clearly state what it wants to do in the world and outline the national interests that it wants to defend. Once this foreign policy has been formulated, we can move on to formulating a defence policy, an important foreign policy component. What does the future hold for Canada's military? I think it's time we asked ourselves these questions. It's also time for an equipment acquisition plan. The Bloc Québécois has consistently supported this logical approach. The first step is to define our foreign policy, then move on to our defence policy, and finally, establish an equipment acquisition plan to meet our objectives.

Do you think the time has come to follow this course of action? You've touched on many areas, but if we could possibly accomplish these three steps in this order, I think we could achieve our objectives. I'd like to hear you views on this matter.

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: Mr. Bachand, theoretically, foreign and defence policies are interconnected, but in a linear way. I don't really believe that. Most of the time, countries respond to crises and to emergencies. Since the start of the 20th century in particular, Canada has sent troops into battle when the need arose. That's what Canada does. Initially, when our military members were deployed to Kabul, they did not have the proper uniforms or armoured vehicles. We did not have aircraft or tanks. Our forces were equipped on the fly. That's what happens more often than not. Countries do their best and mobilize on the fly.

Very rarely does a country return after a war has ended as the victor, with its head held high, with a clear sense of the lessons to be drawn from the conflict or with a relatively clear picture of the future. We know that the future will be equally dangerous. Afghanistan merely gave us a glimpse of what the future holds in store. Canada not only has an opportunity, but a duty, to prepare for the future, not just for the next Afghanistan, but perhaps even for the next 100 years, by increasing the size of its military, by structuring its forces and by equipping them. It may well take a year, two years or three years to get there. It has nothing to do with partisanship. Our common interest is our national security and we need the very best forces we can have. We already know that we are going to have some problems maintaining our current levels, because the recruitment process is difficult. There is much competition, either from the business world or from elsewhere. There are limits on what we will be able to buy in terms of equipment, because equipment is very expensive. It is no secret that our ships need to be replaced, as do our fighter aircraft. We need to pause and consider the situation before starting over again. This won't happen overnight, because we must constantly be on the alert. If an emergency is declared, or if some catastrophic event occurs, our forces will be deployed immediately with whatever resources are available. We need to take a bit of a break right now before sending our forces abroad on a new mission.

We need to pause and examine what you've talked about, namely the issue of equipment acquisitions, the structure of our forces, recruitment, training and the focus of our military. At this point in time, our army is a combat army, but that's not the case with our other components. All of these issues need to be reviewed and I sincerely believe, as someone who believes in democracy, that this committee is the forum in which political, diplomatic, military and other interests should first be debated.

● (1125)

Mr. Claude Bachand: I'd like to hear your thoughts on the subject, Dr. Lagassé.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: In theory, yes, the government should come out with a foreign policy before it announces its defence policy. That said, I would like to make two points.

First, a defence policy is not solely the by-product of a foreign policy. More importantly, it is also the reflection of a country's national security policy. We need to acknowledge that Canada's defence is just as important as its foreign policy objectives.

As I see it, we also need to acknowledge that foreign policy changes fairly quickly. The most important thing is to have a flexible military and to begin the acquisition process as quickly as possible. So then, theoretically, I agree with you, but I also think that the strategy already unveiled by the Conservative government is good enough for the time being to give us some indication of what we need to purchase and of whether we have the budget for it. This strategy has already been unveiled.

In theory, the nature of our military will not really change. It will remain flexible, and will continue to participate in combat operations, to defend Canada and to help defend the continent as well. From where I stand, the most important thing at this point in time is to support this strategy and the acquisition process.

As for your other question concerning Parliament's control, it is not the role of the members of the committee to control government policy. Your role is to advise the government. The government is responsible for setting out defence policies. When the committee is critical of a defence policy, it is not playing the role that it was assigned to play, namely to advise the government.

In my opinion, the only way to keep the government responsible and accountable for its policies is to give it the latitude to set out its policies. I appreciate that everyone is an advocate for democracy, but we must nevertheless acknowledge our parliamentary system. Your role is to advise, not to attempt to control the responsibilities of the executive.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Lagassé.

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Harris.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Monsieur Lagassé, there seems to be a bit of a disagreement here, with one suggestion that we be more proactive in terms of offering that advice or that we wait until government devises policy and then offer criticism. I think I like the idea of our having a bit more of a proactive approach, particularly when it comes to something like peacekeeping or peace operations, which is a bit more of a nation-defining activity than some of the other aspects of defence.

Colonel Drapeau, I was interested in your comments, and perhaps you'd elaborate on them a little bit. I can't consider myself any expert in counter-insurgency, but I do know from history that these types of operations demand an enormous number of personnel and have very limited success. Those who have studied counter-insurgency wars over the years give it a very low success rate. Is that the kind of operation that Canada can effectively engage in?

My own understanding is that we'd really only be bit players in somebody else's operation. Is that the kind of thing that Canada should devote major resources to—and I don't mean specialize in—or can we go in another direction in being combat-ready? And I agree, for the defence of Canada, we have to have a combat-ready force, but if we're going to specialize in terms of other aspects of our capability, would you look to counter-insurgency or would you look somewhere else?

● (1130)

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: To be blunt and short, I would certainly look somewhere else, and I would use the current experience in Afghanistan to make the point.

I think after we return home and we look at all the successes we have had—and I use the word “we” in the broadest sense possible. We, as a NATO alliance, have had some difficulties in trying to mobilize everybody to pay their fair share there. Canada certainly has, and has punched above its weight, as the saying goes. But in the final analysis, 100,000 troops total that we have deployed in Afghanistan is far short of the mark to make the counter-insurgency operation not only a success but an indubitable success.

So why would Canada, small forces that we have, want to undertake a risky, perilous activity again? And you have to ask whether or not this is in the national interest and what we are getting out of it when, on the continuum of war-making or war-fighting missions, that's only one of them. I don't think Canada has the armed forces, size-wise, or the appetite on the national basis to engage in another of this type of operation. If we do, I think we will want to make sure we come to battle with not most but all of our allies, so we pay our fair share, but no more than that.

So I'm not a fan of equipping or providing missions to our future forces for counter-insurgency operations. That would be at the bottom, not at the top, of my list of things to do.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

I was interested to see—while recognizing, of course, as we all do, that we have suffered enormous losses there—that we've also had successes from a combat point of view, and we're all very pleased to see that. You mentioned that we have battle-experienced troops now, and I was interested in your comments that this is very significant from the NCO point of view, the commanders on the ground who are leaving the forces, platoon commanders, etc.

I contrasted that in my mind with your comments about what you call the officer-heavy or the top-heavy situation that we have. You looked at ratios between Canada and the U.K. and the U.S. I don't know if they're necessarily the best comparisons. They have huge armies, and maybe there are economies of scale; I don't know.

If we're going to go forward with your suggestion about transformation, part of making the force more efficient, I would assume, would be to have perhaps fewer officers and a more directed force, maybe fewer people at NDHQ, or some other way of reconfiguring the forces. What do all these people do that doesn't need to be done, if that's a good way of putting it?

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: Mr. Harris, I would be hard-pressed to tell you how many studies have been done of that. In the time that I was in the military, I participated in at least three or four missions that tried to see a way to reduce the size of National Defence Headquarters, which used to consume something like 10,000 to 15,000 people, civilian and military, so it's a huge number.

In addition to that, since then we have now created various organizations once deployed in Afghanistan, and these, Canada Command, Canadian auxiliary commands, and some of the others, are drawing on officers and senior non-commissioned officers to staff these additional headquarters again.

My point is we have become very heavily laden at the top with headquarters, and this is drawing from troops that could be in combat units, in squadrons, and so on and so forth. The time has come again to look at that, and I don't think the Canadian Forces, given the stresses they have, the small size they have, the recruiting and retention problems they have, can continue to maintain National Defence at the size it is at the moment, in addition to all the new headquarters that were created four, five or six years ago—I forget. Some of it will have to be brought down to scale, and just in the transformation, it's one area that we ought to take a look at, as opposed to giving it a pass and accepting it as a *fait accompli*.

● (1135)

Mr. Jack Harris: One final question, and perhaps both of you can weigh in on this if you have a comment. Do you see a role for the Canadian military engaging in perhaps a third kind of activity in peace operations?

You've given the gamut from a constabulary role to the other end being heavy combat. Is there a role, in a military command, for a different approach offered by military people in terms of conflict resolution, the peace-building types of things, working actively with civil society, with conflicting groups, to bring people together and assist in some kind of reconciliation efforts in countries with military conflict, where you're there as soldiers, but you're also there to try to bring people together, as opposed to standing between them or fighting them off? Do you see that as a potential military role for our forces?

The Chair: Briefly.

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: The short answer is I don't know, because you're straddling the line between diplomacy and military. If there is a way to do it, why not? If anything can prevent the loss of one soldier, it's worth trying, but I don't know how you would incorporate that within the mandate of a fighting armed forces. If you can, be my guest.

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

Now I will give the floor to Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you both for being here.

First of all, I just want to say that the Canadian Forces, at least in the last couple of years, is exceeding its recruiting objectives, which does present a training challenge, and attrition has decreased.

Professor, you talked about the defence of Canada and aid to the civil power operations coming before deployments to do whatever. Is it not fair to say that aid to the civil power situations can come up very rapidly, and you may not be able to give precedence to that if you're already deployed somewhere?

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: I believe that's actually part of the problem. I believe that should the Canadian Forces be deployed after 2011 in a major international operation, and simultaneously a major internal crisis erupts, whether it be environmental consequence management or some other situation where a major Canadian Forces commitment was required instantaneously, and the Canadian Forces were not capable of responding to that in a manner that Canadians expected, the government would be very hard-pressed to explain why that is.

If we think of the military ultimately as an insurance policy, we have to recognize that we need a certain degree of force to be able to deal with any type of event that happens within Canada. Their number one priority should be retained in country to be able to deal with that.

I understand that this really may impede upon our international activism, our ability to deploy forces around the world and to engage in these types of operations, but if we take the policy for what it says, and if we take our commitment to the defence of Canada and Canadians and the peace of the country seriously, as our first priority, then we should retain a sufficient number of forces to be able to undertake those types of operations, regardless of where we are in the world.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I would suggest to you that obviously the Afghanistan operation has taken a lot of resources, but at the same time, we deployed 4,500 people to staff the Olympics. We deployed 2,000 people to Haiti. This is where the reserves come in, obviously. There's a large capacity to do that. It's an insurance policy, yes, but on the other side of that, where does the defence of Canada begin? It doesn't necessarily begin in Canada. It can begin, as it has historically, somewhere else in the world. The insurance policy is not just within our borders. The insurance policy is part of our obligation to the international community to be part of alliances, to be part of the group of countries doing the right thing, I would suggest.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: I would agree with you that a contribution for defence is important. On the other hand, again, stressing the point, what kind of answer would a government give to Canadians if a major crisis or a natural disaster...? We can imagine, for instance, just looking at what's happening off the gulf coast currently in the United States, that if the forces were not in a position to assist coastal communities in Canada in a sufficient manner, and the government's response was that we have international obligations elsewhere, that would not ring very well with Canadians. Simply put, one has to have the ability to respond to these crises, regardless of our foreign security commitments.

● (1140)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: What you're suggesting is that we never deploy around the world, because something big might happen at home. I don't think that's a realistic approach.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: No, that's not what I'm suggesting. What I'm suggesting is—

Mr. Laurie Hawn: It sounds like it.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: —that we realize that a certain level of our forces are required to be kept in Canada for these types of operations. If we take your government's “Canada First” policy seriously, and if that is going to be the real priority of this government, and if we are to take it at its word, then that should be what the policy actually enacts.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: “Canada First” doesn't necessarily mean just within Canada's borders, though.

I'd like to move on to something else. You talked about not going anywhere unless there was some kind of assurance of success. That's pretty tough to guarantee in anything like some of the operations we've been in. Even a place like Bosnia, which started as peacekeeping, with the blue berets, became quite a lot different. It's hard to have a crystal ball that says this is going to be the case.

Given that, there have been musings about our going to the Congo or Sudan. Where would you put a couple of potential deployments to those kinds of places on that “probability of success” ladder?

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: It wouldn't be very high. I would be very loath to deploy the forces without a significant commitment from the international community, and in particular from our larger allies, to those types of missions.

Getting back to this point, I think it's fair to say that we may not have had a crystal ball in 2005 when deciding to go to Kandahar. But I believe the historical records will show that this decision was made somewhat off the cuff and perhaps not with the best understanding of what mission success would entail and what it would look like. Simply wanting to contribute to foreign defence, wanting to have a role in the world, can sometimes get you into a great deal of trouble and into commitments you simply are not prepared to undertake over the long term. That is really the point I'm trying to raise. Our enthusiasm for playing a role in the world should not get ahead of our assessment of what we can actually contribute over the long term.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Yes, and that's a fair point. I think it's also fair to say that even during Korea and the Second World War, there were sizable groups of people in Canada who were dead set against those operations. So I don't think, whatever we do, we're going to have 100% of Canada behind us. There are always going to be people, and in significant numbers, who will probably object.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: I think you're skewing a little bit what I'm trying to get at here. To be frank, I'm not saying that we have to have 100% of the country behind a mission. What I'm simply arguing, on the last point, is that when it comes to national unity, we should not engage in missions that divide the country deeply, either along linguistic lines or regional lines. We should be aware of that fact when deploying, simply put.

Going back to the original point, when there's a major existential crisis, and the survival of the Canadian state or the international order is at stake, then of course a full commitment is to be expected. I don't believe one can necessarily make that same claim about the current operation we're engaged in.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: That's a fair point. Operations evolve, because the enemy has a vote in how they evolve. They don't evolve just because 3% of the forces over there, which is us, want them to evolve a certain way.

I'd like to get your comment on national interests. We mix national interests and values and all that kind of stuff in a little bit of a ball. Can you give us your thoughts on what national interests we should be emphasizing when we go to some place, wherever it is? Peace is an obvious one. That's in everybody's interest. Is it economic? Is it security, and where does security start? I suggest that it starts offshore, not in Canada. What's your view on how we define national interests and values?

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: I believe the two major national interests of Canada are our way of life both in terms of values and in terms of our economic prosperity. Can we show a direct link between many of the international operations we've engaged in, in the past, and those values and interests? Yes, we can. On the other hand, there are some of these other operations for which a direct link can't be shown.

In the future, certain operations that I believe we can show demonstrably do contribute to those interests would be first and foremost guarding sea lines of communication, which are vital for our trade and vital for our prosperity as a trading nation, and stability of major regions in which we have an interest, such as Europe, be it eastern or western; less so central Asia—I don't believe one can make a demonstrable link at this point between our major way of life and economic prosperity in that region—and the Pacific region in some areas. We can see that major instability in that area, particularly hostility between some of the greater powers in the region, would directly affect us, but we'd have to measure that at the same time against what we could actually contribute to resolving the situation.

A slight tangent to this would be to ask whether we need to also show a certain degree of camaraderie and a certain degree of solidarity with our major trading partner. Yes, we do. In certain cases it is important to show to the United States that we are a good ally and that we take their security seriously as well. That can often be a justification for contributing Canadian Forces; however, one needs to decide just how many of those forces we contribute and at what cost in order to show that we're a good ally. I'm not quite sure we've made that balance as effectively as we could in Afghanistan.

● (1145)

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Dosanjh.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): I just have one question. It's interesting that Colonel Drapeau talks about national interest, and you go on to actually somewhat define that national interest in your five or six points at the end, in a direct or indirect way.

I want some clarification. Particularly in points 3 and 4, are you suggesting at all that in Afghanistan we didn't look at those questions properly and went in?

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: Yes. I am suggesting that this is one lesson we can learn from Kandahar in particular; that we did not take full account of the regional dynamic when initially committing to Kandahar. We did not consider whether our largest partner in that mission was fully committed to the mission in 2005, given that it was also deployed to another major conflict in the region. We did not really analyze, prior to committing to Kandahar, whether our objectives, such as building the Afghan compact and so forth, were realizable, given our commitment. And we did commit to an open, long-term commitment in a sense, maybe not knowingly, but without recognizing or without negotiating with other NATO allies, prior to that deployment, whether there would be some kind of *relève*, as it were, after a certain period of time. We put ourselves at a great deal of risk and a great deal of cost.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I have just one more question, and then my colleague will take over.

In terms of national unity, that point is very important. Obviously, we have historical experiences with respect to the national unity question and war, but can you envisage a peace mission or an Afghanistan-like mission in which we might have the same kinds of divisions that we had historically?

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: I would propose that even a peacekeeping deployment to certain areas of the Middle East—namely, around Israel or Lebanon or any of these other countries, should that come up—might sow some significant divisions in our society about where our commitments lie, and particularly if we don't maintain strict neutrality, which has been something we've abandoned over a certain number of years. So I have serious misgivings about certain types of peace operations in that region of the world, for instance.

The Chair: You wanted to share? You still have two minutes.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): You talk about modernizing our forces. Whatever we do, they're going to have to be transformed into a new world of technology. In the American Revolution, the British soldiers marched down the street and guys shot them from the forest and they couldn't cope. It reminds me of what's happening to our troops in Afghanistan, where they're using a new type of warfare against us that has caused most of our deaths.

Do you see that we need to transform in that way to high-technology answers to the new types of tools that are being used against us?

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: I don't think Afghanistan was new warfare. The use of roadside bombs is about as old as the invention of explosive gunpowder. A roadside bomb is cheap, and it doesn't require a whole lot of skill to construct it, to plant it, and to reap the carnal benefits from it.

How to fight that, against a non-sophisticated enemy who doesn't show up—doesn't wear a uniform, operates in the dark, and doesn't engage in combat—again is as old as warfare and as old as counter-insurgency. I think we need to take and have taken steps, and more particularly in having more armoured vehicles and using some of our tactical deployment to try to learn a lesson from it, and we always do. But in the end, this is not warfare at its best. It's certainly not a classic military operation itself.

The forces, independent of the vast successes we have had and the hard lessons we have learned in Afghanistan, have to go forth from this time onward and not so much re-equip as reconfigure themselves. In some cases, this will require new equipment. It will require garaging some of the equipment. For instance, what are we going to do with the tanks we have acquired, once we're back in Canada? Before going to Afghanistan we went 50 years without having any tanks of any sort in Canada—we had them in Europe, not here. So there will be a restructuring required.

My point is that when we look at the restructuring, I wouldn't even know where to start. That's why I say we need to pause.

One of the issues we desperately need to look at is the great north. What are we going to do, and how are we going to have a military presence? When? What type of presence, and for what purpose in the north? I think it's accepted more and more, and I think the current government is making headway in that direction, that we need to do more.

Second, and I'll stop here, I think our militia has existed as a parallel force, not as a total force. We have used extensively the resources of the militia since our deployment in Afghanistan: somewhere between 15% to 20% of people in Afghanistan are reservists. That's fine; we used them for individual reinforcement. What do we do from this point onwards in order to ensure national security, in order to ensure a military presence across Canada in every province and territory? Is there a better way to use the money allocated to the militia, and is, in fact, the money allocated to them sufficient, and ought they to be equipped and trained the way they are now or the way they ought to be in the future?

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Colonel Drapeau.

Mr. Braid, you may go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much, gentlemen, both of you, for being here today.

If I heard both of you correctly, I think you suggested that our number one priority should be protecting Canada and protecting Canadian territory. To begin, I want to ask you, if you would, to outline what some of the potential threats to Canadian territory are that we need to be prepared for, moving forward.

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: First and foremost, Canada is a trading nation, and we depend on foreign trade. So to have open sea lanes is absolutely essential, first. Our territorial governance over the sea is important, and we have a vast expanse there; people are coming and fishing in our waters, polluting our waters. It's really essential that we have a presence and an ability to intercept. So I'd say these are first and foremost.

Second, given the ever-present threat of terrorism, our airspace also needs to be protected.

I would start with that. We are sharing a common border with the United States and we have a defence arrangement with the U.S., and our threat on the land base is not quite as severe.

But as I mentioned a moment ago, we will want to have a military presence in the north, if for nothing else, to ensure or to defend or to assert our sovereignty. I think to do so, those measures will be the essence of it.

The last point is that we need to have a force in being across Canada to be able to respond to natural disasters. I would answer your question by a rhetorical question to you: how are we going to respond tomorrow if there were a catastrophe, say, in B.C., when we have no forces deployed in that particular province? That's a concern to me.

Mr. Peter Braid: Thank you.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: I would reiterate these basic points: natural disasters and consequence management; critical infrastructure protection as well, which needs to be addressed far more effectively; cyber-security; and search and rescue, which is something that keeps getting delayed and delayed. It has now been delayed by two subsequent governments. This is unacceptable. If protecting Canadians is the first priority of the Canadian defence forces, then search and rescue capability should be at the top of our procurement list at this point.

Mr. Peter Braid: Thank you.

Mr. Drapeau, you mentioned the scourge of international terrorism as one of the threats to Canada and to Canadian territory. How do we deal with where terrorism emanates from internationally? How do you respond to that?

● (1155)

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: The short answer is that I don't know, because I don't know whether there is a "military solution" to it. I say instead that we'll probably have to go back to basics—we, together with our allies—to find whether there is not a better way to structure our national effort and international effort in concert. What I'm alluding to most certainly is that there appears to be some sort of hesitation as to the efficacy of our intelligence apparatus. That's where I would start, first and foremost.

We can spend an extraordinary amount of resources, automated and human resources and so on. Unless we get good, timely, effective intelligence and we can share some—and I'm not so sure that we do yet; I'm not so sure we have found the key, have found the formula for it. That's not a criticism; I'm just saying it's there. They are becoming more sophisticated and more dependent upon technology and better able to go across borders and to seep across sea and air lanes and so on. So intelligence is first and foremost. And not only the cooperation, but the meshing in of intelligence, the constabulary police, and the military may give rise to a new creation, a new formation, a new organization to deal with this. I don't think we're there yet.

Mr. Peter Braid: Mr. Drapeau, let me continue with you. You mentioned as well in your presentation that looking forward, beyond Afghanistan, you would not recommend a "peacekeeping only" or a pure peacekeeping role, because it would be dangerous. Could you elaborate a little bit on that and on why that is the case?

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: If I left you with that impression, then I misspoke. I would not support the deployment of a Canadian Forces element rapidly unless there were a real emergency, which I don't see over the horizon. That's first.

Second, what I would not do, because of the lesson we have learned at a very heavy price, is allow ourselves to return to a peacekeeping role or peacekeeping mentality or philosophy within the forces themselves. We have to maintain what we have acquired by way of combat experience and combat knowledge and combat maturity, making sure that we keep it on this particular level. In other words, if they can play in the NHL of combat—Afghanistan—they can meet any peacekeeping mission you can throw at them.

The reverse is not true. If we come down the scale of equipment, training, and expectation of our forces to become “good enough” for peacekeeping, if and when combat comes we are going to find them deficient. That is what we did when we first deployed in Afghanistan: as equipment we had the old Iltis. It was not so much weapons, but in some cases it was equipment that was not sufficiently armoured and so on, and our soldiers were untested in battle. I'm not suggesting we go to battle, but I'm suggesting that we up the level of intensity so that they'll be prepared to respond to the worst case....

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Faille is up next, since she is substituting for Mr. Paillé.

I believe you intend to share your time with Mr. Bachand.

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): That is correct.

I have a quick question, further to Colonel Drapeau's comments. I am a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and as such, I examine the Auditor General's reports. In fact, two reports are currently before our committee. One focuses on military acquisitions, while the other pertains to program evaluation.

In your submission, Colonel Drapeau, you stress the issue of governance, that is the need for DND to have some control over its budget and the acquisition of major weapons systems. When we questioned them about these matters, senior DND and PWGSC officials presented us with a list of concerns. We were quite surprised to hear them say that right now there are, unfortunately, no rules in place to determine what effectively constitutes an urgent acquisition. They said they were not in a position to make acquisitions quickly.

Unfortunately, an emergency situation now exists as a result of the following incidents: the deployment of soldiers who are improperly equipped, the mismanagement of the equipment sent to this theatre, inadequate inventories, and Leopard C1 and C2 tanks that are unable to transport needed military equipment to the theatre of operations.

I would like to hear your thoughts on military acquisitions. What role could we play in the process? In terms of control mechanisms, what kind of improvements could be made within the different departments? At present, DND has a special unit that works more closely with PWGSC. We know about the procedure that is being followed. However, in terms of core acquisitions, it is difficult to evaluate programs, to determine what the future holds and to make acquisitions on an urgent basis.

● (1200)

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: I'm not sure where to start, Ms. Faille, but let me just say this. When I was a logistics officers with the Canadian Forces, I gained some experience in the field of public acquisitions. Since then, I've noticed that the problem stems from the fact that there are too many controls and too many parties in control. We have two departments and each one has a responsibility and a strong desire to acquire the very best for our military. I have no doubts whatsoever about that. However, instead of working together, they operate in a more linear manner.

DND has a public acquisitions unit that is a very bureaucratic organization. Once it has done its work in minute detail, everything gets passed along to PWGSC which is an even more bureaucratic organization. Therefore, it can take 20 years to purchase a vessel and the cost can be prohibitive. When a new danger looms on the horizon and our military must respond to it, the Chief of Defence, the Prime Minister or the officials responsible for supplying our military in combat operations must take extraordinary measures. They say: we want it, and we want it now. The reality is that when it comes to public acquisitions processes, DND and PWGSC are incapable of responding.

What should we make of all of this? The process is likely far more costly. Over the years, we have probably added some layers to make the system run more smoothly and to prevent abuse, fraud or error. And what has that accomplished? We're in a fine mess.

I would recommend, quite simply, that we revert to the arrangement that we once had, that is that we give the Minister of National Defence, who is ultimately responsible for defending our country's security and for motivating our military to engage in combat, the needed tools—in this case, a public acquisitions agency or, as I call it, a supply agency. We already had that in the past. When I served in the Canadian Forces in 1960, we had an agency just like that. PWGSC could then oversee the purchase of office equipment and supplies that are not specifically military in nature.

I don't think I'm alone in calling for such an agency. In terms of configuring and reconfiguring our military, I would start with this step, that is with deciding what we are going to do.

The Chair: Thank you. You are out of time.

Mr. Boughen, for five minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thanks, Chair. I don't have a question. I'll pass to my colleague.

The Chair: Mr. Payne.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Boughen.

Welcome, gentlemen.

I was listening intently, Professor Lagassé, in terms of your third bullet about the expeditionary missions and capabilities and that Canada must avoid these kinds of situations, which certainly would be less likely to be successful. I believe that's an important point. I'm wondering if you could expand a little more on that, particularly around the issue of working with our allies, whether it be the UN, NATO....

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: First let me provide a little bit of context, and I'll be quick about this.

This is certainly not a new idea. In the United States, prior to 2001, they had something called the Weinberger doctrine, and it later became the Powell doctrine, which was that you had to go in with a certain amount of capability and a certain amount of size and you had to know what your objectives were before going in. I think that's a simple point that we, as the continual joiner and the smaller ally, need to take to heart as well, that unless our allies do go in knowing precisely what it is they are seeking to achieve, unless they're going in with a certain amount of capability and they know precisely what it is they want us to do and we know what we can contribute.... Then we have a recipe for success.

If, on the other hand, our larger allies are not sure of what they're hoping to achieve, if we do not have some clear indication from them that they're committed to the mission they have in mind, and if we are not quite sure where we fit into this equation except simply to take on an arduous task, then that is something we should avoid.

It is certainly not fanciful. We've seen it. We've lived it now for all on five years. One should never accept a mission simply because no other country wants that particular region of an unstable country. That's a bad reason to take on an operation, simply put. Now, we may feel that it's our obligation as an ally to do so. On the other hand, we end up holding the short end of the stick when nobody else really is inclined to replace us when it comes time.

● (1205)

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you.

Just in those terms, we've obviously read a lot regarding NATO and the lack of wanting to put other countries' military troops in harm's way. In your mind, is there some way we could encourage NATO as well as the other countries to pull their fair share, so to speak?

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: I'm not enthusiastic about that. Simply put, unless we know going into an operation that our ABCA allies—Americans, British, or Australians—are willing to put in a significant amount of force, then I think it's a mission that Canada should look at with a great deal of hesitation. I don't believe our German and French allies have demonstrated that they are willing to take risks and costs for arduous tasks. I would be loath to say that in the future the Canadian Forces should engage in operations alongside countries that have not demonstrated their willingness to take casualties or major risks in Afghanistan.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Okay.

How much time do I have left?

The Chair: One minute.

Mr. LaVar Payne: I'll make this really short then.

How do you see the current evolution of international humanitarian law affecting peace operations, or peacemaking or peacekeeping?

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: It is going to become extremely difficult to mount even these types of operations in the future, as we're seeing—and as you are all living—with the current detainee issue. The fact remains that the options Canada had going into Afghanistan and dealing with those detainees were very limited. You could either attempt to build your own prison, which would be very costly, which would be an easy target, and which we simply didn't have the resources to have. You could give those prisoners to the United States, which was already politically unacceptable in Canada, starting in 2002, or you could give them to the country that you are operating in, with their permission. That is also now, for a variety of reasons, becoming unacceptable—at least in the minds of certain critics.

Now, in the future we may be in a situation where the host country is clearly committed to human rights, is clearly committed to these types of norms that we can rely on to deal with prisoners and detainees. That may not be the case in every operation. We should be very careful and be aware going in that this may be the case and that we will have severe limitations on what we can do with prisoners. International humanitarian law also raises—and hopefully somebody else will bring this up in questions—precisely who we treat as a combatant and who is not. But I believe the current policy of treating everybody under the Geneva Convention is the right one.

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

We'll now give the floor to Mr. Bagnell for five minutes.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Thank you.

I actually only have one question that I'd like each of you to answer.

As you know, there's a major NGO initiative in Canada to create a department of peace. I'm sure you have been e-mailed on it. I wonder what your comments are on that concept. Could each of you reply?

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: I'm neither against it nor for it. I think that as a peace-loving people, our entire government is certainly a department of peace through its foreign policy and its national policies. As to whether or not we need to have such a thing, I'm for less government, not more government.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: I believe an agency would most likely be the better way to go, an agency that could really ensure entire government cooperation amongst CIDA, certain elements of the Canadian Forces, DFAIT, Public Safety, and the RCMP. It would be something I would be in favour of.

However, to have an entire ministry devoted to that task...it's unclear to me what its responsibilities would be and how it would be held accountable for the types of actions it would undertake.

An agency under the Department of Foreign Affairs would seem more appropriate, in my mind. It's what we have with START, the nascent idea we had for dealing with failed and fragile states. I could see elevating that particular element of the department.

● (1210)

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

I'll now give the floor to Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Through you to Dr. Lagassé, do you not think that pre-announcing a formal end date to an expeditionary deployment affords certain planning advantages to the belligerents?

The reason I ask is that you said in your opening statement that before Canada deploys its military, we should have a definite idea of the mission and know when we're coming back.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: If Canada deployed independently on major combat operations, I would accept the point. We, however, do not. Since the Second World War, we have always deployed as part of a larger coalition. We know the larger coalition is going to be led by, and the vast majority of the troops and the cost of the mission will be harboured by, one of our greater power allies, be it the United States, Britain, and so forth.

There's no suggestion that the entire alliance or the entire mission would declare an end date. It's simply to say that knowing the size of its forces and the limitations of its contribution, Canada should make clear to its larger allies how much we're willing to give and for what period of time, before we have to come back to pause and get our forces back for perhaps a later deployment.

I don't think it's beyond the realm of possibility. I don't think it would signal anything to an opponent more than our willingness to actually engage over the long haul. We're really trying to signal to our allies that we can deploy for a certain amount of time, but we also expect them to backfill for us while we're resting, recuperating, and getting ready for future deployments.

I accept the point that the entire mission shouldn't declare an end date. As for Canada's contribution, on the other hand, given that we are a secondary power within most of these operations, to my mind, it would be a prudent and wise decision and would allow our allies to prepare to replace us in a prudent and efficient manner.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You don't think that progress should be a contributing factor to the point at which Parliament collectively decides to end a deployment.

Would this still have applied, for example, in the situation of World War II? Canada had not been threatened at that time. Would it have been feasible or credible for Canada to go in at that stage and tell our allies that we only have so many soldiers, we want them to rest after *x* number of months of deployment, and this is when we're coming, ready or not, like it or not?

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: Well, first, Canada declared war on Germany on the 9th of September 1939. It's erroneous to say Canada wasn't threatened. Canada was directly threatened.

There's a second point that I believe is important to make. Parliament does not decide. It's a prerogative of the crown. You may advise the crown on when to deploy forces, but the decision to deploy troops remains with the crown and the executive. That needs to be clear.

Even when using the Second World War as an example, it was an Allied effort and there were certain missions where Canada clearly said we would not contribute. We were not a major player in the Pacific. It was an entirely legitimate point for us to make that we would not engage in that particular theatre of operations after Hong Kong. It's okay for an ally such as Canada to delineate what it will do and how it will contribute. We're going to see something very similar in future conflicts.

At no point has Canada declared that Afghanistan must end at a certain date. It is simply saying the Canadian contribution to the larger NATO mission must have limits. You otherwise open yourself up to a great deal of abuse on the part of your allies. They would simply assume you would be willing to bear an extraordinary amount of cost, because you haven't signaled that you're leaving or you have limitations. For a smaller power like Canada, it's entirely rational for it to declare that it can only do so much and it expects to be supported.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: My next question touches on what Laurie Hawn had referred to earlier with respect to national interest to Canadians and where we fight the battles. For example, the Afghan mission was not just fulfilling NATO obligations; the objective was to keep the fight at the source of the threat, and Canada was one of the named countries that retaliation would be sought after.

In your opinion, what should Canada's response be to an incident, should it have occurred in Canada, such as one that happened on the weekend in Times Square? Should we sit back and ruminate about it or wait until NATO comes to some kind of conclusion? Do we determine whether or not there's a greater threat, an immediate threat? What should we do, according to what your initial statements were, in light of a possible deployment?

● (1215)

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: Let us assume for a moment that we did not retain some kind of capability in Canada to deal with the threat and the bomb had actually exploded. My initial reaction would have been that we should have a sufficient number of soldiers to deal with the consequences of that attack. That would be my first point.

My second point is, from what we've understood thus far, one of the alleged perpetrators is of Pakistani origin or a Pakistani citizen, and I do not believe Canada would be in a position to undertake a regime change in Pakistan, or would want to do so, simply because a citizen of that country has mounted an attack on Canadian soil.

We would have to mount a coordinated, multi-faceted effort to improve our homeland security, to improve our civilian agency's capability of dealing with that threat initially, and perhaps if we could clearly identify through those channels of intelligence that this individual was trained in certain camps, we could mount limited operations against those camps or against certain other facilitators of that operation. It is something altogether different, though, to say that Canada should then commit to a large-scale, nation-transforming exercise in a certain part of the world that we know very little about.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Dr. Lagassé.

[*English*]

Now I will give the floor to Mr. Hawn for five minutes.

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

We've talked about the UN a little bit, but obviously, Professor Lagassé, when people think of peacekeeping, most people automatically think of the UN, the blue berets, and all that kind of stuff. We know, of course, how that is transitioned.

The UN is a wonderful concept that, in my personal view, has been pretty much an abject failure when it comes to dealing with situations around the world. Can you comment on the future of the UN in peace operations, sort of writ large?

They have no capacity in their own right to do anything. They're always going to have to do it through member nations. Can you comment on that?

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: UN missions, and UN peacekeeping operations in particular, work best when the belligerents have already come to some agreement that they're exhausted, that they need a third party to come in and intervene and simply act as a neutral party to separate them. Missions of that type, first-generation, interpositional missions where the combatants have already agreed to lay down their arms and arrive at some negotiation, can succeed.

The problem we have today is that those conflicts don't really seem to exist anymore. Most of the conflicts that were going to end of their own accord have ended. What we're left with are a number of conflicts that seem perpetual, in which case, the United Nations is really not in a position to provide very much support.

As the point you're making, the United Nations does not have the capacity to enforce peace. It does not have the capacity to create peace. It can encourage peace, it can facilitate peace, and Canada should only commit to UN operations that are of a first-generation nature—that is, where some peace has already been arrived at and we're simply there to facilitate negotiation.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Following on from that, because the UN has no capacity for calling on member states, if there's a non-classical blue beret operation such as Afghanistan, they can talk and they can pass resolutions, but they're going to have to turn to somebody like NATO if they want an instrument to do that.

Obviously, it's hard to say what's coming down the road, but with respect to the “responsibility to protect” doctrine, which the UN adopted—it was a Canadian initiative, and so on, and that's all great—how does that interact with traditional peacekeeping, and where do we go from here?

Where does the UN go from here? Do they have to accept the reality that two-thirds of their member states are dictatorships? Probably the way the UN has operated in the past hasn't worked, and where do they go from here? It impacts Canada, obviously.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: There are two points. Responsibility to protect and the UN charter are at loggerheads and are deeply in contradiction. That is a major point that needs to be taken into consideration and realized: responsibility to protect, which ultimately denies the full sovereignty of states if they abuse their citizens, and the charter, which has sovereignty as its pillar.

So let us be clear that responsibility to protect and the UN do not go well together. Responsibility to protect, if it is to be conducted, and if Canadian Forces are to be part of it, will be under the auspices of either an American-led or a NATO operation. We should be fully cognizant of that, that if we embrace responsibility to protect, we are embracing peace enforcement, chapter VII operations, under NATO or under the United States.

● (1220)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I'll ask this again. Where do you see the UN going on this, to resolve that conflict or just to accept it and say, actually, we really have no role to play?

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: The UN will attempt, as it always does, to balance very contradictory principles within its founding document and within its aspirations. We should perhaps continue to encourage that idea and encourage them to reconcile the idea, while on the other hand recognizing that the UN ultimately will not be the principal tool and first responsibility to protect.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: My last question relates to specifying end dates and so on for our own commitment, and you make some valid points. Is another consideration, though, the impact of that on other small allies, because we are all facing the same sort of thing? There is only one big ally in that operation, and obviously it is the Americans, and there are 39 or so other small allies. If a respected, credible, strongly contributing small ally like Canada puts a limit on it, does that start a bit of a domino effect with other folks?

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: It would start a good domino effect, where we would signal to other small allies that we will commit for a certain amount of time and that we would perhaps expect another small ally to come in for three years after us, and then three years later we can maybe replace them. It would put in place a mechanism whereby small allies would not necessarily feel that an initial commitment will get them stuck in a situation that nobody else is willing to replace them in. If all smaller allies make it very clear that they are involved in time-bounded operations and that they expect the alliance to find somebody else to replace them after a certain amount of time, it may actually encourage smaller allies to commit to very dangerous regions knowing that they have an out. The current problem we have is that the smaller allies are really not aware of or have no guarantee that another state will come in and relieve them when they are overstretched and overburdened.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I agree that is a possibility. The other side of that is also a possibility, where everybody just says “not me”. That is what we are fighting right now.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: Yes, but we have to, at the very least, try to set up these reputation effects. That's how the alliance works. The alliance has to work on some sense that everybody is doing their part, and if smaller states feel that they are being abused, such as some people in Canada would feel, then that simply encourages all smaller allies to never contribute anything without a firm end date or without some kind of guarantee.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Good point.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We won't have time to do a full third round, but I will give one minute to Messrs. Wilfert, Bachand, and Harris. We still have five minutes, so one minute to each member and—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: You don't have to comment. I listened to my colleague here, whom I seldom disagree with. I wanted to point out there was a study done by the human security centre in Vancouver. They looked at the reduction of conflicts, they looked at human rights violations in the world between 1990 and 2005, and there were a number of factors as to why they went down: decolonization, the conclusion of the Cold War, growth of democracies, etc. They said the United Nations played an impressive and decisive role during that period, and in fact their conclusion was that they maintained that the UN played a crucial role in opening the door to considerable progress in conflict prevention, which is one of the issues that we are talking about—peacekeeping and peace consolidation.

I just thought I would put that on the record, Mr. Chairman, because I think that is part of the discussion on where this committee will be going over the next while.

You don't have to respond, but it was within one minute.

The Chair: You are right.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bachand, for one minute.

Mr. Claude Bachand: I'll be quick, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Lagassé, I'd like you to clarify your position. Earlier, you stated that it was not the responsibility of committees to be overly critical of government decisions. I'm not sure if you have read Mr. Milliken's ruling on the documents issue, but it is clear that Parliament, and its committees, have fairly important roles to play.

In 30 seconds, would you clarify your position, which I find somewhat surprising.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: If you would like a more detailed answer, and if you are interested, I invite you to read my new IRPP study on this very subject that was published last month. It is entitled: *Accountability for National Defence: Ministerial Responsibility, Military Command and Parliamentary Oversight.*

However, to answer your question quickly, Parliament does indeed have a responsibility to review government decisions. However, in order for a government to be competent and fully responsible for its policies, it must be the one making the decisions.

The role of the committee is to advise the government. Simply put, your primary role is to review government decisions and to ensure that the government acts responsibly, not to make the decisions yourself.

● (1225)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Mr. Harris.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

First of all, I totally reject the assumptions about the United Nations that are inherent in Mr. Hawn's comments. They're not shared by me; I don't know about everybody else on the committee.

In fact, as of September 9, according to this paper, there were 83,853 UN peacekeeping troops—a record number—plus 12,000 police participating in a total of 15 operations around the world. The difference is that Canada wasn't involved, other than providing 55 personnel to those operations, about four and a half million dollars in 2010, and an average of $9 million a year over the previous six or seven years. So if Canada decided not to participate at all in the UN.... Perhaps we were burned in Rwanda and Somalia.

Do you share the retrograde views that there's no possibility of the UN doing anything in the world, other than supporting military dictatorships, and that it deserves to be ignored by sophisticated countries like Canada?

Col (Retired) Michel Drapeau: I'll go on record to say that I do support the UN, imperfect as it is. It's a good thing we have a league of nations such as the United Nations. It is doing yeoman's work on safety across the globe. It might not be not doing it as well as it could, but getting 100-odd member states to come together to focus on one specific point is not an easy task.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Dr. Lagassé?

[*English*]

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: Canada did not abandon the United Nations; western industrial nations with large-scale military capability, globally deployable, abandoned the United Nations. We are one among many that abandoned UN first-generation, second-generation peacekeeping as of 1995.

Can Canada contribute to renewed first-generation-style missions of peace consolidation or peacekeeping in a traditional sense, where belligerents agree to lay down their arms and negotiate? Yes.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Hawn, you have one minute.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I wasn't going to, but....

Obviously Canada supports the UN—and I personally do. We support the concept of the UN. We have problems with how the UN has executed its mission. Canada is still one of the major contributors to the UN in terms of financial support, and so on. We're probably the most reliable contributor in that regard. But we have significant difficulty with the way the UN has carried out its mission, and that's the reason for the questions. There have to be some changes here. The UN has to adapt to the reality that two-thirds of its members are not democracies—and how do you deal with that?

You can comment or not, but that was the point. It has not adapted well to the realities of the last 20 years.

Dr. Philippe Lagassé: I agree.

The Chair: Okay.

[*Translation*]

I want to thank our witnesses, Colonel Drapeau and Dr. Lagassé. For committee members, this was a highly productive meeting.

We will now suspend the sitting for four minutes, and then reconvene in camera.

Thank you.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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