



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on National Defence

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

EVIDENCE

Thursday, May 27, 2010

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Chair

The Honourable Maxime Bernier

Standing Committee on National Defence

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• (1200)

[Translation]

The Chair (Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC)): Good afternoon and welcome to the 19th meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we will resume our study of the role of Canadian soldiers in international peace operations after 2011.

Before starting with our witnesses, I have a motion in front of me and I want the members to vote on it. It's a simple one:

[Translation]

That the Standing Committee on National Defence be authorized to purchase up to \$100 in gifts to be presented to hosts during its trip to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, and Iqaluit, Nunavut, from June 6 to 9, 2010.

[English]

Do we have agreement on that?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now we'll go to our witnesses.

We have with us, from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade,

[Translation]

Ms. Elissa Golberg, Director General, Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force Secretariat and Former Representative of Canada in Kandahar.

[English]

We also have two witnesses with us from New York.

[Translation]

The committee is also pleased to welcome John McNee, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations. Welcome, sir.

[English]

Also, by video conference we have

[Translation]

Colonel Simonds, Military Advisor, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations.

[English]

We will start with Madame Golberg.

After you, we will have John McNee, who will do his presentation. You have between five and seven minutes. It's the same for Mr. McNee.

The floor is yours.

[Translation]

Ms. Elissa Golberg (Director General, Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force Secretariat and Former Representative of Canada in Kandahar, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to make a few general remarks before turning the floor over to Ambassador McNee.

[English]

As you mentioned, I'm currently the director general of the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force at Foreign Affairs, or START, a bureau that among many other things is responsible for developing Canadian policy around conflict prevention, humanitarian affairs, peacekeeping, and peace building, as well as developing whole-of-government capacity to manage Canadian engagement in crises.

My staff and I have had the opportunity to observe and participate in a wide range of Canadian engagements that have become known as acutely fragile and conflict-affected circumstances, such as Afghanistan, Haiti, Sudan.

I want to focus on fragile and conflict-affected states because they're a defining feature of the current international context and the backdrop against which many of today's peace operations are taking place.

Some 30 states can be characterized as fragile, affecting approximately one billion people, with a cost to the international system of approximately \$270 billion per year.

These are the messiest, most challenging foreign policy contexts in which we can engage, and they require both humility as well as a long-term perspective, something that's not always obvious in our 24/7 universe. These countries are among the most exposed, both internally and externally, to shocks, and they're characterized by a complex cocktail of violence, criminality, and corruption, poverty, and vulnerability—dynamics that often spill over national borders, with regional and international implications.

Our engagement in such circumstances is therefore not just a statement of Canadian values, such as the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, but also a means of addressing our national interests.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

This is the reality facing Canada as we consider our engagement in international peace support operations after 2011.

And it is because of this complex dynamic that peace operations have therefore changed significantly over the past 15 years. Today, peace operations are multi-dimensional, and demand a variety of expertise beyond military actors, to include civilian expertise and capacity.

As other witnesses have already pointed out, today's peace operations are called upon to address not only the protection of civilians but also to provide security for locations, advance peace processes and implement peace agreements, encourage reconciliation and investigate human rights violations, monitor and respond to the illegal movement of arms and natural resources, disarm and demobilize former combatants, and so forth.

[*English*]

As peace operations have evolved, officials in Canada, and internationally, have been reflecting hard on key lessons from our experiences in Afghanistan, Haiti, Sudan, and elsewhere.

I thought today I would point to four in particular. The first is that to respond effectively to these challenges we must implement the sophisticated approach, recognizing the interplay between security, governance, and development. As such, we must think, plan, and act comprehensively.

Modern peace support operations, whether conducted under the auspices of the UN, NATO, or another body, are dynamic and multi-dimensional, requiring a coherent, coordinated, and complementary approach by international actors, partner countries, and host nations.

Second, we have learned that each engagement requires a tailored approach to specific regional, national, and local contexts that are respectful of the complexity and diversity at play. Needs vary, and so do the cast of characters and tools we're going to need to draw on as a result. This requires a selective, case-by-case application of capabilities.

Third, and related to this, we need to adopt an integrated approach to peace operations, which requires a strong civilian component in addition to the professional contribution the Canadian Forces can make. To be successful in this environment, the Canadian Forces and their civilian departments and agency colleagues must establish shared priorities, understand our respective capabilities, align our activities, and set benchmarks to measure and communicate our progress.

Fourth, we need appropriate departmental authorities, flexible human resource modalities, and integrated planning process capabilities. No single department or agency has all the tools needed to be effective in these environments, so we need to be joined up from the outset if we are going to achieve the desired effects on the

ground. These advances require us to adapt our policies, training, and activities in peace support operations, and this demands even more knowledge and sophistication from the military, police, and civilian personnel we're deploying.

[*Translation*]

Responding to these challenges and building on lessons from recent years, the Department of Foreign Affairs and our federal partners are making impressive strides in establishing a whole-of-government system for planning and managing our responses to international crises.

Our work in this respect is guided by the strategic direction of the whole-of-government Deputy Ministers' Committee on Conflict and Fragility. This has included the approval of a set of considerations to inform collective analyses of existing and emerging crises and to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of our efforts.

At the operational level, the Advisory Board of the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, which included directors general from nine government departments, meets regularly to establish whole-of-government priorities and to engage in stabilization and reconstruction planning, assess progress and foster information exchange among departments involved in international crisis response.

We also try to apply lessons learned in order to adapt to new international crises.

• (1210)

[*English*]

Mr. Chairman, related to this, my bureau, in cooperation with our colleagues and partners, is also developing a series of interdepartmental strategies and policies on tasks that are common to peace support operations, whether it's exit and entry strategy discussions, or security system reform, or stabilization that will provide guidance to personnel in Ottawa and the field.

We also work to assist the UN and regional organizations in their efforts to increase efficiency and effectiveness of international peacekeeping and peace-building operations by, among many other things, making key investments in areas such as mediation, as well as significant investments in training African and Latin American peacekeepers.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the important role that the Canadian Forces must continue to play internationally post-2011 shouldn't be determined in isolation but considered as part of the wider context of Canadian foreign policy priorities and the range of capabilities that are going to be required in modern peace operations.

The experience of the international community in places such as the Balkans, Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Haiti indicates that in addition to the deployment of military contingents, there is a critical need for the early, substantive, and sustained engagement of their civilian counterparts. These experts are focused on assisting the host country to build its capacity for security, governance, economic development, and the establishment of the rule of law through the transfer of knowledge and technology, mentoring, and training.

While the process of institutionalizing our lessons learned is still ongoing, START, together with our partners across government, is well positioned to advise the government on potential involvement in fragile and conflict-affected situations and to implement the decisions the Government of Canada directs us to take.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Goldberg.

[English]

Now I will give the floor to Mr. McNee from New York.

Mr. Ambassador, the floor is yours.

Mr. John McNee (Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations): *Merci bien, monsieur le président.* Thank you very much for inviting me to appear before the committee to address the United Nations dimensions of the committee's study.

The United Nations is, of course, the organization where the world meets, and its agenda encompasses all areas of human activity. Through consensus and diplomacy, the UN is the forum in which the problems faced by the international community are resolved. That's why the UN is so vital to achieving Canada's international objectives.

On a daily basis the organization examines, weighs the implications of, and endeavours to address the threats to international peace and security. These threats range from conflicts between states, as was the case in Georgia in the summer of 2008, to threats to international shipping from piracy, to challenges to peace and stability within states themselves. The latter threats more and more define today's international security environment.

In most cases the threats manifest themselves in the form of the lingering military forces of internal civil conflict, the rise of organized criminal activity bent on maintaining instability, and foreign armed groups using states as bases for operations against their homelands. As a result, maintaining peace is conducted in an environment in which stability itself is often acutely fragile. Moreover, in many cases the internal capacity of the conflict-affected state to provide for its own security is severely limited.

These circumstances have given rise to the increased complexity of UN peacekeeping missions today. Consequently, the notion of traditional peacekeeping that many of us have in mind—that is, a force interposed between previously warring parties conducting observation, monitoring, and reporting tasks—no longer really fits the current operational paradigm. While there certainly remain some UN peacekeeping missions where this is the case, such as the UN forces deployed in Cyprus and on the Golan Heights, these represent only a few of the current 15 UN peacekeeping operations.

In contrast, the contemporary multi-dimensional concept now requires engagement across a much broader spectrum of activities, including the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and often repatriation of former combatants; the active involvement in security sector reform; the protection of civilians, including women and children; and border security functions, all against a backdrop and in support of a political dynamic that seeks to advance a peace process.

The United Nation's "Peace Operations 2009 Year in Review" notes that UN peace operations have truly become a global endeavour, with 120,000 women and men from 116 countries serving under the blue UN flag in 15 missions. On the military side, approximately 85,000 contingent troops, experts on mission, and observers were deployed by the end of last year. Over 13,000 police officers now keep the peace and support the development of national policing capacities, and over 21,000 international, national, and volunteer civilians provide professional expertise to peace processes and administrative and logistics support to missions.

The demand for peacekeepers has unquestionably grown, but this has caused significant strains on the UN and on the international community as a whole. These strains are reflected in the ability of the UN to manage the mandates given them for peacekeeping operations, as well as in the slow pace with which necessary troops are generated. But we think the system is getting better: greater scrutiny is given to the circumstances before missions are undertaken; a closer examination of the link between resources and mandates is now being made; better guidance is being developed, both on the preparations expected of deploying troops and on how to accomplish key tasks; and, equally important, the UN has embarked on a process for reforming its field support system, aimed at enhancing rapid deployment and mission sustainment. These initiatives, coupled with many others, are all improving the UN's capacity to conduct peacekeeping operations.

The UN will normally operate where there is a peace to keep, and it is guided by three fundamental principles: the consent of the parties involved, the impartiality of the UN operation, and the use of force only in self-defence or in defence of the mandate.

● (1215)

The focus of missions can vary significantly, covering a broad spectrum of activities, from stabilization, as we have seen in the case of MINUSTAH in Haiti, to overseeing a comprehensive peace agreement as exists in South Sudan with UNMIS. Ultimately, guided by the specific circumstances on the ground, the objective is to transition from peacekeeping to a stabilized environment and then to one of peace-building.

[Translation]

I would note, Mr. Chair, that there is now a greater reliance upon and relationship with regional organizations to meet the growth in demand for peacekeeping forces. The UN/AU hybrid mission in Darfur is one telling example of the UN leveraging the capacity of the African states to meet force requirements. In the same vein, the African Union's mission in Somalia receives extensive direct field support from the UN to accomplish its goals.

Despite our extensive commitments in Afghanistan, Canada is an active participant in UN peacekeeping. Although our military commitments are limited to key mission staff and observers, our police contributions have grown. We are also heavily focused on developing the capacity of other countries to take on complex peacekeeping roles, through both training and equipping programs, most particularly with African and Latin American and Caribbean states. In addition, we are very involved in the UN's peacekeeping reform agenda. We of course continue to chair and play a key leadership role in the UN's Working Group of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. And, we cannot forget that out of an annual budget for peacekeeping operations of about \$8 billion, Canada pays over 3% of the total cost.

Lastly, it is important to note that the blue helmet no longer provides for the relative degree of immunity from attack that it once did. Military, police and civilian experts are now under continual threat from belligerents who seek to undermine the progress of peace processes. Casualties are more commonplace in the UN peacekeeping arena, as are hostage-taking incidents. This has required the UN to be more robust in its deployments, both in terms of the capabilities being fielded, as well as the training of the peacekeeping forces. Indeed, at the tactical level, there is a growing requirement for the use of force to protect the troops themselves or to protect civilians in immediate danger.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Colonel Simonds and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

• (1220)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ambassador.

Thank you for being here, Colonel Simonds.

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

[English]

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

I thank all of you for your presentations. These presentations are taking a bit of a different slant from some we've heard in the past.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, I know in my own mind what I believe the central tenets of Canadian foreign policy are, but very quickly, could you comment on what you believe our foreign policy tenet is in terms of what we represent around the world?

Ms. Golberg, Mr. McNee, Colonel?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: Ambassador McNee, maybe I'll take a kick and then you can follow.

I think in the first instance, Canada continues to advance the promotion of human rights, the rule of law, and democratic development in countries around the world, in addition to trying to ensure that we have a strong international rules-based system and strong governance institutions internationally that can help us to achieve our national interests and to project Canadian values.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you.

Does anyone else have a comment?

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Chairman, I think that's a very good summary. In addition, of course, the promotion of international peace and security is in the Canadian national interest and is one of Canada's long-standing goals. We have a strong commitment to international development and the partnerships that go with that, and that is, of course, extremely important too.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you very much.

That's exactly what I was thinking, but in the minds of Canadians, for maybe the last 10 years, we have veered away from what people perceive as Canada's role as peacekeepers, as the blue berets, etc., because of our work in Afghanistan, which is much more peacemaking or peace-building than peacekeeping.

There was a presentation made that suggested to us that the United Nations, if not broke, is on the way to being broke, and that with the many administrative inefficiencies at the UN and the lack of political will around the table, in fact very little has been accomplished by the UN in the last while. The difficulties they are having in the eastern Congo would be a clear example of that.

So the thesis put forth is why would Canada ever want to be party to such operations when in fact we have very little say to begin with? That was advanced around the table. I would like your quick comments on that, and then I'd like to do a follow-up with regard to what happened with the EU and with regard to Lebanon.

So through you, Mr. Chairman, perhaps, Ms. Golberg, you could start off, and then we'll do the same round.

Ms. Elissa Golberg: Perhaps I'll let Ambassador McNee speak to the UN in particular, and then I would like to come back and address the question you asked about whether or not we have in fact moved away from peacekeeping and peace-building.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Ambassador.

Mr. John McNee: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

I think to pick up your last point on whether or not we have much say or any say in these operations, first of all, in terms of the policy and the doctrine of UN peacekeeping, Canada has long played a very big role in shaping the fundamental doctrine, and we lead on that today. That is not in the public view, but I think it is an important contribution.

Secondly, in terms of the decision-making process, of course Canada is now a candidate for election to the UN Security Council for the period 2011-12. If we are successful, as I think we should be, then we will participate in the decision-making, including the setting of the mandate for any new peacekeeping operations and changes to the mandates of existing ones.

On the two other points, the administrative weaknesses and the lack of political will, I guess I would say two things. The UN is working in an increasingly volatile and difficult international environment. I alluded to the fact that traditional peacekeeping in which Canada participated for very many years was often more of a static thing, as, for example, in the Golan Heights today, or in Cyprus today, whereas the UN's ambitions—largely the ambitions of the Security Council—to try to find solutions to countries torn apart by internal conflicts, for instance, have meant that UN peacekeepers are faced with more complex challenges. The UN system is trying to cope with those, but we would not pretend that administratively it's perfect yet. It is by no means, but we're working hard, as Canada and the mission down here, to try to make it better.

As for political will, that's an extremely good question. Of course, in the Security Council it's critical to have both full political support from the countries that contribute the troops and the host country's agreement to a mission. The degree to which those conditions are there is not always 100%—and eastern Congo is a case in point—but I think the response should be a pretty hard-headed look at the circumstances and an effort to make things work better.

• (1225)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Ms. Golberg.

Ms. Elissa Golberg: I think the idea of our having somehow moved away is often overstated, and I think this is partly a challenge of communications. We're actively engaged in a variety of international peace and security efforts around the world. Everyone is quite aware of what we're doing in Afghanistan, but we've made significant investments in other countries. We're one of the most significant contributors to MINUSTAH, the UN mission in Haiti. Canada has been a significant contributor to the UN missions in Sudan, in Darfur, and in south Sudan.

Beyond what we contribute in terms of military peacekeepers, we deploy up to 200 police peacekeepers every year, internationally, to missions. We also deploy diplomatic and development experts. We have undertaken a whole series of investments in terms of peacekeeping doctrine. We've organized a whole series of round tables in New York over the last couple of years. We participated in the UN Peacebuilding Commission, and we were one of the countries that actually encouraged its development. My own organization works very hard on issues related to security sector reform and the rule of law. There is GPOP, the Global Peace Operations Program, through which Canada is actually making a very significant investment in African and Latin American peacekeeping capabilities. There are a whole bunch of things we're actually working on.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: With those comments, if I advance very quickly, the UN today is dependent on strong military powers.

Very quickly, Mr. Chairman, just to put it forth, and I'll probably get another round... With the United Nations interim force in Lebanon in 2006, the EU dictated what they needed and what they were prepared to do to go in and do it. In future UN missions, if we so partake, will Canada be able to write our own conditions for future missions to strengthen what we need to do to take those on?

I put that out there. I'll probably have to get the answer on the next round, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Yes, you are right.

[*Translation*]

We will now go to Ms. Faille, for seven minutes.

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair. My first question is for Ms. Golberg.

I listened closely to your opening remarks. I noticed that your written submission contains a reference to "women". However, you omitted the reference to the promotion of women in your oral remarks.

If there a reason for that?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: Basically, it comes down to times constraints. I know your committee has a busy schedule, and therefore I cut a number of things out of my presentation. It's not because I think women are any less important. In fact, my directorate is responsible for the promotion of women, peace and security.

• (1230)

Ms. Meili Faille: Can you tell us what you plan to do after 2011?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: You want to know what my personal plans are?

Ms. Meili Faille: No, I want to know what your directorate is planning on doing. What direction do you intend to take after 2011, after the mission to Afghanistan?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: At this juncture, I do not foresee any major changes in the directorate's strategy. We are responsible for a number of peacekeeping operations. We are involved in a number of polices issues and in planning peacekeeping programs.

Ms. Meili Faille: What are you currently working on?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: We're involved in missions in the Sudan, Haiti and Colombia, to name but a few...

Ms. Meili Faille: I'm talking about the mission to Afghanistan. You say that you have only one...

Ms. Elissa Golberg: I said that our mission to Afghanistan is very important, but that it's not the only country in which we are working.

Ms. Meili Faille: But what is the nature of your involvement there?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: I'm sorry.

We are working to strengthen police capabilities in Afghanistan, the correctional system and the legal system, among other things.

Ms. Meili Faille: And how exactly do these issues impact women? What kind of results are you seeing?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: That is a much broader issue that we could discuss further.

[English]

For instance, reinforcing the capacity of the police in Kandahar directly impacts on the security of women and children, likewise our efforts in enhancing the capacity of correctional officers in Sarposa Prison. There is a female component of the ward in Sarposa Prison where we have directed considerable energy at augmenting the living conditions of women in the prison.

In terms of systems of justice, we've tried to assess and determine women's access to justice within Kandahar and how overall we might improve access to justice more broadly, which has direct implications for women and children there.

[Translation]

Ms. Meili Faille: So then, you don't concern yourself with microeconomics either.

Ms. Elissa Golberg: No, that's CIDA's domain.

Ms. Meili Faille: Of course.

You work closely with CIDA, isn't that right?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: Yes, we certainly do.

Ms. Meili Faille: Earlier, you spoke highly of your efforts in Africa. Do you support the decision to cut CIDA's funding to francophone countries?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: That is a question that you should be putting to my CIDA colleagues, not to me. Regardless, I don't think that our commitment to Africa has diminished.

Ms. Meili Faille: Does this have an impact on your operations, in terms of diplomacy?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: No, not in terms of my directorate's operations.

Ms. Meili Faille: My next question is for Ambassador McNee, who is in New York.

First of all, good afternoon. You played host in New York to some NGOs from my riding at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. One of the agencies from my riding was singled out for its peacekeeping efforts. Therefore, speaking on their behalf, I want you to know that they enjoyed their visit to New York very much.

Since you are closer to the decision-making powers in New York and more attuned to what is going on between different states, no doubt you know that the Obama administration and Mr. Clinton made statements to the media and expressed the hope that Canada would extend its commitment beyond 2011.

Can you tell us more about this and gave us a status report, from a diplomatic perspective, on ongoing efforts?

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Chair, the government's policy, which reflects the resolution passed by the House of Commons, is very clear on Canada's commitment to Afghanistan. Our allies, including the Americans, have a very clear understanding of our policy. Afghanistan does, of course, present a challenge and an objective for all of our NATO partners, as well as for Australia, New Zealand and Japan in particular. It poses a challenge for all partners. However, in my view, Canada's position has been clearly understood up until now.

Ms. Meili Faille: Specifically, will Canada continue to deploy troops after 2011?

• (1235)

Mr. John McNee: I think the Prime Minister has been very clear about our military commitment to Afghanistan and about the fact that our troops will pull out next year. However, Canada is committed to helping with Afghanistan's development over the long term.

Ms. Meili Faille: My time is up. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Faille.

We will now go to Mr. Harris.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our guests for your presentations.

Ambassador, thank you for joining us from New York. I would like to have you here in person some time.

We've had witnesses here talking about Canada's role in the UN and UN peacekeeping. One of the themes was that despite the fact that we haven't been involved directly on the military side in peacekeeping, the United Nations was really looking to Canada for greater participation, involvement, and support because of our expertise and commitment. I'm wondering how that melds with your statement that we are playing a big role because of our doctrine, which sounds to me like a past role, although it may certainly continue.

In the context of Canada wanting to be a member of the Security Council, don't you think that some further commitment might be required from Canada to underscore our support for the UN in peacekeeping and peace-building operations? That seems to be a missing piece. I know we're active in Afghanistan, but that's a very different matter.

What is required for us to show a strong commitment to the UN way or to provide leadership? I think one of our witnesses the other day said that the UN needs leadership from a country like Canada in this field. Is that something that rings true with you?

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Harris, thank you for the question.

I think the makeup of UN peacekeeping forces has changed dramatically over the last 20 years. If we look at the chart showing the top 10 countries that contribute troops, there are no developed countries on that list anymore. They are largely South Asian and African countries, and generally speaking that's a good thing. These are countries with very accomplished and professional military forces, and they are often more truly acceptable and effective in third world environments where many, if not most, of the conflicts take place.

But that isn't to say the Canadian Forces can't make very important contributions to a mission—and I think they are more targeted and specialized contributions. I'm not talking about large numbers of infantry, but a small contribution from the Canadian Forces in communications and logistics, or the commander of a force—what the military calls an enabler—can have an outside impact.

Mr. Jack Harris: If I may interrupt for a second, the numbers actually seem pathetic when you look at the 88,000 troops and less than 60 are from Canada. I hear what you're saying, but that doesn't look like a significant commitment. If we're going to expect to play and be voted on to play a strong leadership role at the UN on the Security Council, shouldn't we be sending a signal that we intend to be more engaged?

For example, what's the size of our mission in the UN right now? How many people do you have working with you in the Canadian mission?

Mr. John McNee: I think we are a total of 45 at the mission, embracing Foreign Affairs, National Defence, CIDA, and the RCMP.

But to try to respond to your question, I think it isn't really necessary for us to make indications of future commitments. There is a great deal of respect for Canada's contributions to UN peacekeeping over a long period of time, including the work the Canadian soldiers are doing now and the important work Canadian police officers are doing in Haiti and elsewhere. I am quite relaxed on that score. I think our credentials are very strong. If we can fill a niche or supply a need, the United Nations will come to us because of the high quality of our people and their track record, as they canvass many other countries to see who can come to help.

• (1240)

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

To Ms. Golberg for a moment, you mentioned the role that Canada plays in promoting human rights and the rule of law, democratic development, etc. With regard to the kind of contribution that Canada makes—and I guess this is a broader question in terms of how Canada decides the priorities of countries—you mentioned Haiti and Sudan as examples outside of Afghanistan and the general work in building up a peacekeeping force.

Are we doing it on a one-off response basis or as a request from a country to provide assistance with policing, or is this something at a higher political level: we'll choose this because it's politically needed and necessary at a particular time? Or is there a plan that says we are going to concentrate on providing...? When you say there are 200 police officers per year available, are they only in Haiti and Afghanistan, or are we talking about a broader program that's available to countries upon request?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: There's a complex set of processes that are undertaken to determine our priorities in terms of which tools we pull out of the Canadian tool kit to allocate to which international crisis that requires the Canadian engagement. In terms of police, we determine our police deployments in a variety of ways. One is depending on requests from the UN. If there are particular UN missions where the UN is looking for specialized Canadian expertise, we have a process by which we discuss it interdepartmentally. It's a tripartite discussion that takes place between Foreign

Affairs, Public Safety, and the RCMP in order to determine whether there's a good fit in terms of the skills being sought in our deployments.

We also provide police in support of other international missions. EU missions, for instance, are areas we might provide police as well, in order to partner together in support of international efforts.

The priority setting is consistent with what our priorities would be more broadly in terms of foreign policy engagement. The Americas, for instance, have certainly been identified as a foreign policy area of focus. We do have a significant number of police officers as well as correctional officers deployed to the UN mission in Haiti, but it's not the only place we would deploy. It would depend on whether there is a strong international requirement for Canadian expertise and how it matches with our own interests and resources that are available.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

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

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

And thank you to our witnesses.

I'll start with the first question, and then I have to run out and I'll pass it to Mr. Braid.

My question is following up on Mr. Harris' suggestion that because we don't have masses of Canadian Forces on UN peacekeeping anymore that somehow we have shirked our duty. I believe that may reflect a misunderstanding about how UN missions have evolved and how Canadian participation has evolved.

I believe we're on 16 UN missions around the world right now. I would like a comment from Ambassador McNee, and maybe Ms. Golberg as well, about the evolution of Canadian participation. We've talked about whole of government. It's much more now than just the Canadian Forces; it is diplomats at CIDA, police... It's a whole bunch more than that. The Canadian Forces contribution will tend to be more specialized in the areas we can be strong enablers instead of simply infantry and boots on the ground.

Would you care to comment, Ambassador McNee, and then Ms. Golberg, please.

Mr. John McNee: I think you're dead right, Mr. Hawn, that's it a more complex picture than peacekeeping was 40 years ago maybe. It reflects the needs in these environments for why police, corrections officers, civilian experts of many sorts are required. Those are skills we have in Canada. They're respected internationally. We need to bring all those people to bear.

You have to look at the broader picture, as you say. At the same time, I think there's a very clear recognition in the international community that the Canadian Forces have a very major commitment in Afghanistan, that they are doing extremely important work there, and that there are only so many of them. That commitment is a major one of the government. I share your thinking on this.

Ms. Elissa Golberg: The only thing I would add is that our contributions to the UN are multi-faceted. They're financial and operational, but they're also policy- and innovation-related. We continue to make important and significant contributions, whether they're in relation to peacekeeping or mediation. We've been contributing quite significantly to the UN mediation support unit.

Just to underscore what Ambassador McNee was saying, we have seen this shift over the last 10 years in how these missions are undertaken. They require this multifaceted set of skills in order to grapple with the underlying causes of why these peace operations were deployed in the first place. Canada provides value, in addition to specialized Canadian Forces expertise, through our corrections officers, police officers, justice and rule of law experts, as well as other specific areas where we can bring particular added value to bear.

In peace negotiations, for instance, we have experience in how to mediate dealing with natural resources in a country. How do you make sure there's equity in distributing those kinds of assets? They will turn to Canada to provide that kind of expertise. That's an equally important contribution to these international efforts.

• (1245)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Braid.

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Ms. Golberg and Ambassador McNee, for being with us this afternoon.

Ms. Golberg, in your presentation you referred to the whole-of-government approach. As we know, this is a somewhat new approach. It's been successful thus far for Canada.

From your previous position as our representative for Canada in Kandahar, and more recently in Haiti, can you outline what lessons we've learned from the whole-of-government approach, and how we might apply and refine those lessons moving forward?

Ms. Elissa Golberg: That's a great question.

There are a couple of core things for me, based on my takeaways from my experience. First, whole of government is the new normal. It has to be the way we approach these kinds of international engagements. You can no longer have these siloed approaches, where individual departments might share information with each other, but they're not actually developing an integrated approach to priority setting, planning, and contextual analysis. We absolutely have to come to this, understanding that these things require an integrated response.

But whole of government is really hard. Some people overestimate how difficult it is to pursue whole-of-government approaches. It's not because they genuinely don't want to, but the way our systems are designed, they don't always encourage horizontal engagement. A lot of our systems are established for vertical engagement. So you really have to make sure you're changing the culture across departments to encourage that shared strategic vision: the application of agreed criteria for engagement in circumstances, for instance; flexible staffing and governance.

Procurement arrangements is another key takeaway, and the ability to rapidly have those capacities when we're in the field. There's comfort with delegation of authority to folks who are in the field so they can quickly respond to opportunities that arise, but also react to challenges and obstacles when we're faced with them.

We've been reflecting quite carefully within my bureau on some of these key takeaways. We are now trying to institutionalize some changes in our whole-of-government approach so that it doesn't depend on any individual who happens to be in a particular job. We're putting in place systems that encourage whole-of-government efforts. That's something I hope we can come back to in the future and elaborate on what we've been doing.

Mr. Peter Braid: Thank you very much.

Ambassador McNee, you mentioned in your presentation that the UN has a greater reliance on working in partnership with regional organizations around the world.

Could you elaborate on why that phenomenon has occurred and what the advantages and disadvantages are of the UN working in partnership with regional organizations?

Mr. John McNee: I would say that this trend has occurred for a couple of reasons. There is a recognition that the United Nations can't do everything and is not necessarily best placed to do everything; that regional organizations have a depth of understanding of situations on the ground—the African Union in Africa, for one—that can be extraordinarily valuable and can complement what the United Nations organization brings to a given situation.

I think we're evolving to a more partnership kind of approach, whereby the UN seeks to work with the strengths of regional organizations. I think that is a good trend that we applaud and encourage, because you can draw on the strengths of both the global organization—the UN—and the regional expertise of a regional organization.

• (1250)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. We still have 10 minutes, so we'll do a second round. I will give one and a half or two minutes to each member. That way it will be fair.

I will start with Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chair, I notice the clerk has three clocks. I think they're Pacific, mountain, and eastern. I'll take Pacific, so I'll get a little more time.

The Chair: Okay. You're wise.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I have two questions for you, and then we'll solicit some answers. Following up on my last comment, if Canada were to provide the UN missions with substantial military capability in the future, would the Canadian Forces, in your view, be able to secure their own conditions for the mission—in other words, their terms with regard to armaments, mission mandate, and rules of engagement? Would we have more clout given the international situation and the reluctance of many developed countries to be involved in peacekeeping?

Second, particularly for Asia, I hear a lot of comments about the Japanese and others being interested in being more engaged in the peacekeeping role, particularly because of the Japanese experience in the Golan. Could we maybe focus our efforts more on training at home, rather than on active missions abroad—or on a combination of both—but in fact on doing far more training, particularly for some countries that have traditionally not been involved in the peacekeeping operations in the past?

Through you, Mr. Chair, I open that up. With the four minutes I have left, I figure that would be helpful.

Mr. John McNee: Mr. Chair, I have been thinking about Mr. Wilfert's question. The decision-making for a UN peacekeeping operation rests with the Security Council, but not in isolation. Canada has encouraged the Security Council to consult with the troop contributors. If Canada were considering a major commitment to an operation, we would meet with the major contributors before decisions were made to get a sense from them of what was possible and what was desirable.

I think consulting the troop contributors is something the Security Council has recognized and is doing better at, but I would have to say that it falls short of enabling us to write our own conditions, unless we are going to be the only country to provide troops for a mission. That's not how things work, of course. It's always a partnership. I think it is a very important point that the major troop contributors should be consulted and their input should be factored into the decision-making.

The training question is another very good one. The Canadian Forces have done a lot of that—training military forces in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa, and have helped them be more effective. We are seeing that in Haiti, for instance, with some of the Latin American deployments there. We have the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, which is very active. I think in the long term, Canada and the Canadian Forces can make a hugely important contribution, which is to help others up their skills, capacities, and understanding of what peacekeeping takes.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you, Ambassador.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll give the floor to Mr. Boughen for two minutes.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me add my voice to those of my colleagues in welcoming the three of you. Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to be with us.

Ms. Golberg, you mentioned something, and I think the colonel and the ambassador alluded to it a little bit in some of their discussion on the questions. How do you see a mesh occurring between Canada and the allies when we talk about the whole-of-government approach? I know there may not be time to answer the whole question, but perhaps we could have a thumbnail sketch from the three of you as to how you see that happening, because that approach is definitely different from what we've seen in the past with warring nations, one fighting against the other.

Ms. Elissa Golberg: I would say that Canada was out front on the whole-of-government approach in many respects, but we're not the only ones pursuing it. Increasingly, more and more of our allies are adopting a similar approach, in part because we're all building on similar experiences.

I would say that my American, U.K., and Dutch colleagues, the Danes, the Germans, and the Swedes are all looking hard at how we can enhance this whole-of-government approach in international operations. A number of them have started to create, for instance, stabilization and reconstruction units like ours, specifically to try to put in place some of these more systematized approaches to whole-of-government efforts.

The UN has also been thinking hard about what we refer to as whole of government, which they obviously refer to more as whole of system. The UN has been advocating for what we call integrated approaches for a long time. So there's a lot of learning going back and forth between us as individual countries and also feeding up to the international system as well.

• (1255)

[Translation]

The Chair: I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Bouchard.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for joining us this morning. My first question is for Colonel Simonds.

The main focus of the military mission to Afghanistan is Kandahar province. I have often read in the newspapers that this is the most volatile region of the country and a region where our soldiers are most at risk of being attacked by the enemy or even of being killed.

How was it decided that Canada would occupy the Kandahar region instead of another area? Did Canada decide to go into this region on its own, or were our troops sent there by NATO? How did the decision come about?

Col C.G. Simonds (Military Advisor, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations, Department of National Defence): I believe the decision came about as a result of a collaborative effort at the time between the Government of Canada and our NATO allies.

Based on advice received from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and from the military—more specifically, from the Chief of the Defence Staff and from the Minister of National Defence—we in turn advised the Prime Minister. We consulted with our allies to arrive at a decision as to where Canadian Forces could make the greatest contribution to NATO's efforts.

Mr. Robert Bouchard: I have a quick question. Given that this is a very volatile region in which combat operations are difficult and where there is considerable adversity, could Canada have opted not to send troops into Kandahar province and chosen another region of Afghanistan instead?

The Chair: Thank you.

Please keep your response brief.

Col C.G. Simonds: I was not involved in the consultation process or in the discussion regarding the deployment of our troops. Therefore, I cannot answer your question, sir.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now go to Mr. Payne.

[*English*]

You have two minutes. You're the last member.

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

I thank the witnesses for coming in.

Colonel, how can Canada most effectively balance the safety of its men and women in the armed forces with the potential of injuring civilians and the possibility of instigating international political situations?

Have the rules of engagement changed somewhat since General Dallaire was there?

Col C.G. Simonds: I assume you're talking specifically about General Dallaire's deployment in Rwanda and the rules of engagement associated with that mission.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Yes.

● (1300)

Col C.G. Simonds: It truly depends on which article of the charter of the United Nations the forces are deployed under. There's always the right of self-defence, and the use of force has now expanded beyond what it was perhaps 20 years ago to include defence of the mandate.

But from a Canadian Forces perspective, we're not prepared, and we certainly have not been in Afghanistan, to sacrifice the local civilian population in the achievement of our goals. In fact, I'm personally aware that we have not engaged Taliban forces in Afghanistan because of the risk of that. Those same principles would apply in any deployment with the United Nations.

The Chair: That's it.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Chair, that's not quite fair. I noticed some of my colleagues managed to get in a second question. But I will sit with your ruling.

The Chair: I want to thank our witnesses. Thank you very much for being with us from New York, and thank you, Ms. Golberg.

This will end our 19th session of the *Comité permanent de la défense nationale*. *Merci à vous tous.*

Thank you very much, and have a nice day.

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