House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on National Defence

NDDN • NUMBER 022 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, June 17, 2010

Chair

The Honourable Maxime Bernier

Standing Committee on National Defence

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● (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC)): Good morning everyone and welcome to the 22nd meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence.

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

[*English*]

We have the pleasure of having with us,

[*Translation*]

as an individual, Lewis MacKenzie, Retired General.

You have the floor for 5 to 10 minutes. Following your presentation, the members of the committee will have some time to ask you a few questions.

[*English*]

Thank you very much. You have the floor.

[*Translation*]

MGen Lewis MacKenzie (General (Retired), As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to apologize, but I do not speak French very well.

[*English*]

Each time I went on a course, I was sent on another UN operation, and got away from Ottawa, which wasn't a bad thing.

As this is your last day before returning to your ridings, I actually thank you for being here. It wasn't like that when I went to school. During my time in uniform, I was sent here with government talking points, so it's nice to be able to express my personal opinion this morning without fearing a call from the CDS or the minister tomorrow morning.

Let me start by saying I think you have the cart before the horse. That is to say, what's the foreign policy that will dictate the employment of our military post-Afghanistan? Unfortunately, it's my observation that this is not unique to this committee. It's the usual way the defence policy is made in this country. If you research the subject, you will see that defence policy reviews have historically been done before foreign policy reviews, which is quite bizarre.

Presumably, the questions I was given about peace operations suggest those will be a priority for the Canadian Forces following Afghanistan. If the polls and the letters to the editors and the talk shows are to be believed, that would be in tune with the majority of public opinion. Mind you, that opinion ignores the fact that our self-proclaimed reputation as a peacekeeping nation is one of the great Canadian myths. To qualify as such, surely peacekeeping must have been a top foreign policy priority, and it never was. It was parked well behind sovereignty, defence of North America, and coalition or alliance obligations, with NATO being the alliance that demanded the most personnel and cash. During the Cold War, we had only modest numbers of troops deployed on peacekeeping operations, compared to our large, permanently stationed land and air forces on the central front in Europe. It seemed to me that successive governments endorsed a peacekeeping myth because it was cheap, and they could cut defence budgets while still maintaining some international profile.

We had massive deployments to peace operations only during the early 1990s, after the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. We had large missions in Bosnia, Croatia, Cyprus, the Golan, Cambodia, and Somalia. Three of them—Bosnia, Croatia, and Somalia, as well as a small mission in Rwanda—represented the end of peacekeeping missions as we knew them, all 13 of them from 1956 to 1990.

The difference, not noticed by the majority of the public, is that post-Cold War peacekeeping missions involve peace broken by factions, not countries. Factions don't have flags flying in front of the UN building in downtown Manhattan. They don't have delegations there. They don't give a damn for the UN, because the UN peacekeeping force operating under UN rules of engagement can't hurt them.

I say this as someone who others have described as the most experienced peacekeeper in the world, not because of the nine missions I served with, but because I served on UN duty in every rank from lieutenant to major-general, except for full colonel, and commanded a UN mission, not just the military component, in Central America, and established and commanded a subordinate mission in Sarajevo, where I reported directly to the United Nations, at least when they would answer the phone.

That brings up the capacity or lack thereof of the UN to direct and resource UN operations in which the use of deadly force is authorized. Eighteen years ago some of us said the UN was incapable of directing post-Cold War missions. While we were chastised—or in my case reprimanded—for saying so, we were heartened to hear the Under-Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping say exactly the same thing just a few years ago.

Subcontracting to a nation to run a mission on behalf of the UN can work, as it did with the U.S. in the lead in Somalia and under Australian leadership in East Timor.

I saw the grimaces and winces when I mentioned Somalia as a success story for the U.S. The U.S.-led assault in December 1992 was the most successful intervention in the history of the United Nations. The force, including Canadians, went to a knife fight with a gun and established security conditions that permitted the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. It was only when the UN took over six months later—and I was there observing the handover for CTV—that the leadership of the mission self-destructed, and the entire mission left with its tail between its legs. By the way, and for the record, the U.S. commander of that intervention force, General Johnston, was standing by to appear before the Somalia inquiry to state that the Canadian Airborne Regiment was the best unit he had in his 36,000-man force. Too bad it was shut down before he had a chance to appear.

● (1110)

Assuming that our future foreign policy will continue to offer up Canadian military contributions to coalition alliance operations, some with UN blessings, some without, we have to maintain a flexible, combat-capable military. We must never again subordinate our military to ridiculous UN rules of engagement dreamed up in downtown Manhattan.

No matter how benign the mission, we should be prepared for the worst-case scenario, not the best case, which always dictates UN thinking as it is the least expensive. Let me give you a few examples.

While commanding a mission in Sarajevo, it was important for me to defend the airport from heavy tanks that were within about 400 or 500 metres. I asked permission from the United Nations to bring the TOW Under Armour, tube-launched, optically controlled, wire-guided missile systems that we had introduced and placed on top of armoured personnel carriers from our Canadians who were serving in Croatia. The UN came back and told me I could bring the missile launchers down but not the missiles. I obviously ignored the order, disobeyed the order, and brought them anyway.

I asked for mortars. They said I could bring the mortars down from the Canadian contingent, but not high-explosive ammunition, only illumination, so, presumably, I could see the people who were attacking us at night. And I ignored that order.

The Danes, when they came in and said they were bringing Leopard tanks, the UN said no. The Dutch brought them anyway and fired a few rounds at people who were shooting at them and they never got shot at again in their six-month tour. And in the case of the Dutch going into Srebrenica with nothing but small arms, we all know what happened there.

I conclude with something I have championed for the past 50 years unsuccessfully. Of all the countries in the world that should maintain an amphibious expeditionary capability, it's Canada. We keep bragging about our three oceans.

A thousand soldiers on board a purpose-built ship, one on each coast, capable of deploying on short notice, unlike today... Such ships cost less than a destroyer or a frigate and require smaller crews. Don't be fooled; the joint support ship project currently in suspension does not address this requirement. There is no space on board the JSS for combat troops and their equipment.

Such a capability would be invaluable not just for intervention operations but—equally important—for humanitarian missions, like those experienced recently following natural disasters in Haiti and the Indian Ocean, not to forget the one we're standing by for on the west coast of our own country.

The U.S., U.K., Spain, Italy, Holland, Australia, France, and Russia can't all be wrong as they currently expand their amphibious forces. Unfortunately, we don't have that capability, period.

I would be happy to discuss this during the Q and A, and I encourage you to consider this valuable addition to our military capabilities during your deliberations.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, General.

I will give the floor to Mr. Wilfert for seven minutes.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And General MacKenzie, it's nice to see you again.

I certainly concur with your first statement that we should do foreign policy before we do defence. Obviously we have to know what our vital interests are in order to then have the appropriate capabilities to move forward.

You talked about peacekeeping and myth, and as you know, myths are often far more powerful than reality. This committee is obviously seized with, and we've actually tailored our whole study on, the premise that Canadian soldiers will be involved in international peace operations after 2011. Maybe we are prisoners of that myth, because we continue to think we're going to, in some kind of form, do peacekeeping.

I guess the question I have for you first of all is this. If you look at Afghanistan, some would argue it's a conflict that is characteristic of conflicts to come. In other words, it's both peace enforcement and an issue of trying to develop a peace. Afghanistan may be, then, the test, and the Canadian public doesn't understand, as it did not understand in Somalia, that there's traditional peacekeeping and then there's peacemaking.

Could you comment on that and where you see us going? Then I want to talk to you about a naval-centric armed forces.

● (1115)

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: It's the terminology that gets so abused. People have turned themselves inside out to try to describe what isn't chapter 6 peacekeeping operations—chapter 6 being characterized by three descriptions or criteria. One is that you're invited in by all sides to the conflict. Two, you're lightly armed for self-defence only. Three, you're impartial. Well, that sure as hell doesn't apply in Afghanistan.

In chapter 7 operations, the difference is that you can use deadly force to bring the situation under control. That is being applied, for example, in the Congo. The Americans will refuse, quite rightly in my estimation, to ever participate in a mission that's not chapter 7.

Afghanistan is counter-insurgency. It's war fighting. People who put a label of peace operations on it are misguided and they're confusing the glossary of terms that cover that particular operation. There is no peace. The defeat of an insurgency is when it no longer has an impact on your day-to-day life. It's like the situation in Spain or in Colombia, or wherever it's at least under control enough that it's no longer relevant to day-to-day operations.

I really recommend cleaning up the terminology. If somebody wants to call Afghanistan peace ops, I would strongly debate the wisdom of using that term.

I agree with you, though, sir, that's what we will probably be doing after Afghanistan, and we will be doing it in coalitions of the willing, whatever the title happens to be. That's what we have to be prepared for. Where we differ from the UN is that we don't go into these things prepared for the best-case scenario, because it never works out that way.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: What would be some of the lessons you would say we should learn, or have learned, from both the Balkans and Afghanistan?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: A key lesson for me is what I addressed at the tail end, and that is the ability to move units, homogeneous units, together to the theatre. An advance party is fine, but flying in bits here, landing the equipment there, trying to marry them up, bring them together, the whole idea is that... There's an old army expression: you never separate yourself from your rucksack and your snowshoes; when they're put on another vehicle, they will never end up where you are.

So that capability is staring us in the face with an amphibious expeditionary capability. Ninety-three percent of everything we've done in the last 50 years had a shoreline, or at least a place to unload and then move the stuff forward, as would be the case in Afghanistan.

Those lessons learned have been implemented brilliantly, I think, by the Canadian Forces, in that we didn't used to have an operations centre that controlled operations overseas and now we do. We have taken the lead, dragging, in some cases, Foreign Affairs, NGOs, etc., behind us to work together in sort of a relatively new concept—which really it isn't—of total integration of those people interested in the mission there and bringing them together in a common headquarters here in Ottawa and also in the field.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: If we assume that we will be involved in some form of future peace operations—and your answer may or may not be coloured by your own experience, and that's understandable—do you think the UN will have a significant role in peace operations or, given the new dynamics, would it be, say, NATO?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: Well, every time I got into trouble with the UN operation I always said to myself, “God, if only NATO was running this, I could do it right and I'd get the resources.” Now I discover NATO is a bigger debating society than the United Nations. In the United Nations there's just five that count, the permanent five. In NATO, what's the latest count?

So, no, NATO might not even survive the wash-up when this thing is over. There might be either tiers within NATO, and I mean various levels within NATO, of those that are willing—I call it the multiple choice alliance now. They get a mission and then one country will say, “I'll take that” or “I'll do a little bit of this.” Sorry, that's not the way it's supposed to work.

On the United Nations, after my misguided but accurate comment—don't phone the UN after five o'clock or on the weekend because there's nobody there to answer the phone—they established a situation room. But it's not an operations centre. When they staffed the situation room with officers from around the world, all the third world countries insisted that they be paid the $150 U.S. per day per diem, etc., and that wasn't happening because these were donations by countries like Canada of officers to serve there. So with this whole controversy they shut it down, and they don't have that officer support anymore in their headquarters. They're better, but they still cannot command and control at the operational level a mission in the field. Witness the Congo.

● (1120)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: The jury is still out, but the United Nations is still... You would still—

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: They've done great studies. The Brahimi study came up with all kinds of brilliant recommendations, and not one of them is practical in reality, unfortunately.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I have a slew of others, but I'll end there.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. I appreciate that.

[*Translation*]

I will give the floor to Mr. Bachand.

[*English*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thanks.

I'll be speaking in French, of course, General.

[*Translation*]

Let me just say that it is an honour to have you with us. Earlier, I had a look at your résumé. I believe that you are the only Canadian to have been awarded the Meritorious Service Cross twice. So, you are quite an accomplished individual.

I listened to your presentation carefully. You talked about subcontracting. You said that certain countries were able to run successful missions because the UN had concluded a subcontracting agreement with them. However, there is something different about Afghanistan. The UN apparently wants to subcontract to NATO. I assume that you have read about NATO's new strategic concept. I believe that the UN is in need of a major reform because it is currently unable to execute missions effectively. Owing to that fact, the UN has to conclude subcontracting agreements with countries or with NATO.

Do you believe that this is a sound course of action, one that provides some insight into the UN's future?

[*English*]

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: What's happened in Afghanistan proves the folly of a large and expanding alliance having no coherent strategy. By that I mean it is now mature or at least evolved to the point where the Americans are running the show. You've got to have somebody in charge. You can't have a committee in charge, and NATO is a big committee with a requirement for unanimity, not just in Brussels but all the way down the chain of command. All it takes is one country to put up its hand and say *nyet* or no and they have to go back and try to water down the direction.

NATO, hopefully, will regain an operational capability, based on all the studies that are being done, including internally within NATO now and one that Canada contributed through the Conference of Defence Associations Institute, and also the similar organization in Calgary; it might move in that direction. But if you're going to subcontract, in my estimation, you'd do it to a single country, because then it is in charge. It wouldn't have to establish a headquarters with representatives from 26 other countries, all of which have a little different way of doing things. Basically the litmus test is now. Even though NATO is on its back foot by the way it wasted the first number of years in Afghanistan, we'll now see whether the Americans can pull it out of the fire, but at least there's an American chain of command.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Could you explain to us how the rules of engagement are determined? When the UN offers a country or NATO a subcontracting agreement, is the rules of engagement issue...

Earlier, you said that you had wilfully disobeyed an order. I do not blame you for doing so, as bringing along missile launchers but not the missiles does not seem to be a good idea. Should the other side realize that you are bluffing, the situation could turn ugly.

When the UN concludes subcontracting agreements with NATO or a country, which side determines the rules of engagement? Having spoken to a number of military people about several theatres of peacekeeping operations, I got the impression that the difficult task of determining the rules of engagement is left to each of the nations participating in the theatre of operations. Another issue to consider is that of caveats.

Could you tell us a little bit about the rules of engagement, about who sets them? Does the participation of some 30 countries with different caveats not make commanding the mission extremely difficult?

● (1125)

[*English*]

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: You key onto a very important handicap.

I wrote the rules of engagement for the United Nations when I was in Central America commanding the mission there. It was so boring that I didn't have much else to do. The war was virtually over, and the Contras had been demobilized.

I recommended that the mission be shut down. That was not accepted because there was a large civilian component turning it into their career choice. Subsequently, when it was shut down, it just moved to El Salvador. It's UNOSAL.

It was easy to write them for chapter 6—you know, 30 rounds of ammunition, don't carry your weapon loaded, be neutral, be impartial. Very rarely were you getting shot at. It was normally some out-of-control young soldier who wanted to take on a UN observer or soldier.

Now it's much more complicated, and now countries refuse to let the central agency in New York establish the rules of engagement. Each nation's lawyers, military, and foreign policy people get together and write the rules of engagement, and quite frankly, rarely can they keep up, because the situation changes in the field dramatically. That's when commanders have to earn their pay and adjust them as required. Yes, it's a key issue.

Nobody, but nobody, issued rules of engagement in World War II. You were supposed to kill as many as you could, get them out of the way, and recapture the territory. Today it would be politically incorrect to establish or to issue a rule of engagement like that.

For soldiers it's very frustrating, and ever more shall be so, I imagine, because I don't think any nation will subordinate itself to UN rules of engagement or NATO rules of engagement again.

Mr. Claude Bachand: How about these caveats? Talk to us about these caveats. Is it a nightmare in the operational theatre to...?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: It is, but it's a result of democracy in action. When the Canadians moved south over the Christmas period of 2005 to Kandahar—I just happened to be there—from Kabul, the British and the Dutch were to arrive in Kandahar with them shortly thereafter, as were NATO headquarters. With minority governments and democracy in action, the British and the Dutch parliament equivalents debated for six months. Then they showed up, but that was democracy in action.

I could give you worse examples. I helped the Japanese prepare for their first overseas mission, and the Diet in Japan debated four months over whether they'd be allowed to take one machine gun or two. I mean, getting into that detail... But that's what happens these days.

It's a key issue. We must ensure that our troops have the most flexible—not specific—rules of engagement, depending on the situation.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Thank you, General.

Now I will give the floor to Mr. Harris.

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

You seem to think the United Nations peacekeeping role is not something Canada should be involved in, yet we are told by Canada's permanent representative to the UN that there are 15 peacekeeping missions under way involving 120,000 men and women from 116 countries and a contingent of 85,000 troops. Are you saying they're all wasting their time and that Canada shouldn't have anything to do with that?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: I'm saying they're not in a position to greatly influence the situation in most of the missions.

Let's use the Congo as an example. There are seven foreign armies and 11 factions currently fighting in the Congo. If we were to put a battle group in there of 1,200 or 1,400, they would be a mere drop in the bucket. It would take them days and days to go 10 or 15 kilometres during most of their movement requirements because of the lack of infrastructure.

The vast majority, to be terribly unkind but accurate... I've had soldiers from Nigeria, Pakistan, and Bangladesh under my command. The soldiers are excellent. Their countries have them there for $150 per month, per soldier, paid into their national coffers. They're a source of income for those countries. As a result their soldiers are grossly underpaid—and I've had experience with that with these soldiers. They turn to the black market, the female slave trade, prostitution, etc., all publicly announced and described in the open media. They are a commander's nightmare. At present in the Congo, with that very large force, they maybe have part of the capital under control. So that's the type of success story the UN describes.

You may go into an area where the factions want somebody to help them re-establish peace. A perfect example, and probably the best recent one, is Eritrea and Ethiopia. That was conventional chapter 6 peacekeeping. “We're tired of fighting. Please come in, interpose yourself between our two forces along a common border, and give us a chance to get some breathing space.”

So yes, we can participate in those missions. The question is, what will our influence be? Not only that, they won't request combat soldiers; they'll request logistics, communications, legal, etc. When we send those folks overseas, we can't train them back here, because you need your service battalions.

● (1130)

Mr. Jack Harris: I guess that's a question of how much you have in the way of resources.

Our ambassador to the UN also said that the UN has embarked on a process of reforming the field support system, aimed at enhancing rapid deployability and mission sustainment. This seems to be directed at some of the things you were concerned about in terms of operations and that sort of thing. There seems to be some response to the kinds of concerns you had.

There have been some changes within the UN structure, and Canada has been involved to some extent. The “responsibility to protect” doctrine is being developed. There's the New Horizon project through the UN. They are both indicative of changes that are being made and worked through.

Do you personally see Canada as potentially having a positive role to play in enhancing the UN's capability, whether it be in developing doctrine, our peacekeeping experience, or your experience in assisting with rules of engagement and reforming them so they are flexible and adaptable to the situation you find them in? Is there a role for Canada in being a strong player at the UN and contributing what we can to improve the situation?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: I personally don't see that, because the UN is the sum of its parts. I know that because it has been said over and over. The fact is that there are five permanent members on the Security Council that dictate the employment of resources within the United Nations. Those five members in 1945 were parked in that Security Council to make sure they didn't fight each other, not to make really brilliant, unanimous decisions. As you know, it has to be unanimous, even though recommendations have been made to have two vetos rather than one among the permanent five. That's the controlling agency. The funds then come from the General Assembly. The UN bureaucracy is always faced with the dilemma of receiving direction that it can then not resource.

The safe havens in Bosnia are a perfect example. When I was asked by the United States congressional committee, where I was appearing as a witness, “General MacKenzie, how many troops to defend the safe havens in Bosnia?” I said “125,000.” “Why so many?” “Well, like a stone in a quiet lake, the ripple effect represents artillery fire. You go out 30Ks, they'll move back 30Ks. You have to go out 30K more to shut down the artillery. You're pacifying the whole country.”

General Briquemont, who was one of my followers in Sarajevo, said “I agree with General MacKenzie; I'll try it with 70,000.” Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General, went in front of the Security Council and pleaded for 27,500. The Security Council approved 12,500, and six months later, 2,000 arrived. So they went back and rewrote the mandate to say that the UN would not defend the safe havens but that the UN, by their presence, would deter attacks on the safe havens, and the result was Srebrenica.

Who is responsible for Srebrenica? Way more than 50%, it was the UN. That hasn't changed. The UN administration is handcuffed by the lack of resources from donating nations, Canada included, and the neanderthal-like decision process among the permanent five members. It used to be that the permanent five members were precluded from conducting operations within the UN mandate. Only the Brits were the exception, with two sovereign bases in Cypress: Akrotiri and Dhekelia. But now they're getting involved in the operations, so they have even more concern and influence within the decision-making process and the Security Council as to where missions go.

● (1135)

Mr. Jack Harris: I was interested in your comments about the joint supply ships and the need for an amphibious expedition capability. You don't think C-17s can duplicate that effort you need. Why do you need the troops all together on a ship? Is this a “take your own kit with you” scenario, and the C-17s can't fulfill that role?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: The C-17s are unbelievably valuable. We need more of them. But you don't move a combat unit with heavy equipment by air. You move it by sea. You keep it together. You move your advance parties. You move a company of infantry. Trust me, it's immensely better than it was before. We can move things like the DART, etc.

One thing I didn't get into in my opening comments was that one of the lessons we've learned is that our units are way, way too small. Even if you reduce the number of units, build them up in size. We send over what we call battle groups. They're actually battalion groups. We send the battle groups to Afghanistan. It takes a year to get them ready, because no unit is big enough to go by itself. They need a company with 200 from another battalion. They need a large number of reservists—God bless them; we couldn't do it without them. They need all kinds of things to create a unit, and then it has to be organized.

You don't have a unit at that stage. You have to have a bunch of people with leadership. They have to get to know each other. They have to trust each other. They have to learn lessons from Afghanistan. That takes a year. Then you send them over in the field for six months. Then you bring them home, and a number of them will be recycled and will go back over fairly soon.

Units aren't big enough. You have 1,100 soldiers trained to live on a ship and prepared to deploy from each coast. It slows down the decision-making process in that building over there. Why? Because right now, when the Government of Canada decides to send troops somewhere, the CDS says, “Well, we have to charter a ship, and the cheapest one available is in the Indian Ocean, so it will be here in about three months. So I'll get our force there in about four months.”

After 9/11, when did we arrive? It was in March of the following year. We don't have strategic capability. We have C-17s that are absolutely essential for rapid deployment of the advanced group. To move a unit, it should be on a ship. Not only that, when the C-17 lands, it needs permission. It has to get clearance on foreign soil. When a ship arrives in international waters, it parks off the west coast of Africa or wherever. It can sit there until Parliament makes its decision that it's supposed to go in. Then they can say, “We'll be there in three hours”—not in four months.

The Chair: Thank you, General. The time is very short now.

We have Mr. Hawn for seven minutes.

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

Thanks, General MacKenzie, for being here to see us, as always.

Just before you answer my question, in regard to the use of the term “peace operations”, I'll speak for myself, but we wrestled with what we were going to call this study. Some wanted to call it the study of “peacekeeping” operations, and some of us said no, “peace operations”, meaning that everything the Canadian Forces does every day, wherever they are, is about peace. So that, for me personally, was the reason for having “peace operations” as a moniker. Besides, if we called it “war operations”, it probably wouldn't sell.

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: Yes. I went to the U.S. Army “War” College. We'd never get away with that in Canada.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: You talked about the UN subcontracting, and so on. The simple fact is, who would the UN turn to if they didn't turn to somebody to subcontract with, whether it's an organization such as NATO or individual countries? The other one you mentioned is that it's better to subcontract to a single country. I would suggest that there are a limited number of countries that could take on those kinds of missions—obviously the U.S., Canada, Britain, and a number of others, but that number is relatively small. They would wind up subcontracting, I think, to other willing partners. Would you not see that?

● (1140)

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: Yes. I'm referring to the command and control. For example, Australia has done more with less than we have, but they were subcontracted for East Timor, after the UN's disaster where its civilian staff were slaughtered as a result of insufficient security forces.

But I'm really talking about the chain of command, the command at the top. I appreciate that the U.K., for example, in Sierra Leone, took it upon itself to grab it from the UN and go in there with the SAS, sort the thing out, and then hand it back to the UN. So I'm talking about the command level at the top, because I don't have to tell you that when you bring 30 different people into an op centre and tell them to run the op centre and they're all from different countries, it takes a year to get the thing working.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: One of the big challenges we face in any of these things now in today's environment is that the soldiers in the field, in my view, are never the problem; it's the people back here. Whether it's media, politicians, citizens, or whoever—

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: The centre of gravity.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Yes, and maybe using Somalia as an example, Canadians are surprised to hear somebody say that our mission in Somalia was actually a success. There was one really bad "oh shucks", and that became the whole story, not the story of the whole mission.

Maybe using Somalia as an example, and maybe Afghanistan, what do we need to do better, to not control the public perception but to get the information out there so that people can make opinions based on the whole story, not just the filtered stories through the eyes of the media?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: It's a question that I'm sure a lot of people in this capital are wrestling with.

My first point is that it starts from the top. There is a requirement at the very top of the national leadership to explain to the public. I hate the term "grassroots", but I'm delighted with that grassroots movement along the Highway of Heroes. And it didn't mean much to us until other countries started doing documentaries on it and telling us how well we were doing it, and now the U.S. is copying, and the U.K. in some ways. Those were publicly generated responses, which are just great. It ignores the mission and focuses on the troops, which is great.

But as to how we do it, as a guy who spends some time with the media, I think if it leads, it leads. My greatest concern in Afghanistan is that when a soldier is killed, he dies in a field, he dies again at the ramp ceremony, he dies again at Trenton, he dies on the Highway of Heroes, and he dies when he's interred, and the only time we're permitted to see the leadership of the Canadian Forces is at those Stations of the Cross. Therefore, the public associates our leadership with death, and I think that's unfortunate.

I haven't answered your question, but I really think what's needed is a little more openness. You and I both know the best ambassadors for the media from the military are corporals and sergeants and young lieutenants and captains, and you don't hear from them a lot.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I agree 100%.

In terms of lessons, whether it's from Somalia or whether it's from Afghanistan currently, how do we translate that into the future of, say, the Afghanistan mission as a peace mission, or call it whatever you want? How do we go the next step forward in that particular peace operation?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: They're doing it very well. I'm really pleased with what I see in terms of the lessons learned when I visit. In my day, when we went to Cyprus, where I did three tours and had extended leave on most of them, you didn't even ask the previous unit for any advice. If you did ask for advice, you normally got it from a document that was written four years earlier by earlier rotations. That's how backward it was. Now they're turning around within hours.

On the lessons learned in Afghanistan, the folks in Kingston turn that thing around and it goes back as direction or advice, or whatever, almost immediately. They've done it extremely, extremely well.

As far as lessons learned on a more macro basis, I think the one I would emphasize is the size of the units. Nobody's ever going to ask for a 500-man battalion to go overseas and participate in one of these operations. There's always going to be somewhat of a balanced battle group, as they call it now, of around 1,000 or 1,100. When I was commissioned, battalions were 1,100 strong, and we have kept reducing and reducing them in size.

It's a tiny army. I'm just speaking of the army now, which is said to be just over 20,000, but it's not 20,000 deployable soldiers. I know people are tired of hearing me say this, but I repeat it over and over: if you march the army into Maple Leaf Gardens and order it to sit down, there will be empty seats. I'm an honourary chief of the Toronto Police Service, and we have 2,000 more cops in Toronto than we have infanteers in the Canadian army. The numbers are tiny —and they do magnificent work.

● (1145)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Given those tiny numbers, and again, sticking with Afghanistan a little bit, what's your view of what ought to happen next in terms of the future of the mission? I ask because the mission is obviously ongoing and there are questions about its continuation in some form or another, based on what I talked about with regard to public perception and the challenge of educating the public, and the realities of what's needed there.

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: Well, if nothing else, I might not be right, but at least I'm consistent in saying for the last three years that come 2011, we will not be in a position to leave the battle group there. We've ground the army into the ground, and we just don't have the numbers to maintain these fourth, fifth, and six rotations of a lot of people.

But we have a tremendous cadre of operationally astute leaders at every level, from the NCO level through the warrant level, from the officers to the commanding officers. So the training role just falls naturally. Considering they're short about 50% of all the trainers they need—NATO is in the thousands short of trainers—to satisfy the perception of the Canadian public that if the army is in Afghanistan it's under intense risk, I would say that a lot of us in here have wandered around the training area without flak jackets and helmets on. That is, it's the safest environment in Afghanistan, period, because what idiot would take on that particular well-located area?

So I hope and pray we will post a significant cadre of trainers—not Omleters, the operational mentoring and liaison teams, as that would get terribly controversial in the House, because they actually go out and do the high-tech stuff with the Afghan troops as they're fighting the Taliban. But individual training of privates and NCOs and officers, and collective training on how to fight together as a group of 30 or 100, or 600 in the case of a battalion—there's nobody in the world that would be better at it than we are.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, General.

I will give the floor to Mr. Wilfert. I think you're going to share your time.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Being a Liberal, I'm going to share my time with Mr. Trudeau.

Mr. Chairman, through you to General MacKenzie, if you go back to your first point about foreign policy and defence, very quickly, where do you see our national and strategic interests after 2011? And given the high tempo of the Canadian Forces, what would you suggest we be doing?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: It's a mug's game predicting the future, I must admit, but certainly, first of all, I think we should be looking west, significantly, into the Pacific area and Southeast Asia, etc. That's going to be of valuable economic benefit to us. We want to maintain a working relationship with the United States, and it's amazing how our very small contribution, in overall terms, to the American military makes a phenomenal amount of impact.

I lectured for 13 years, thanks to an invitation from Colin Powell to the joint flag officer war fighting course in Montgomery, Alabama, for their two and three star generals. When I mentioned the size of our force, there was a pregnant pause from the generals waiting for the punch line. They thought it was a joke. They said, "You are everywhere." I said, "Yes, but in fairly small numbers." They said, "Nevertheless, you're everywhere." They were complaining about the shortage of resources at 800,000.

When the government decides that we are going to participate in coalition operations, whether it's UN, NATO, or coalitions of the willing, which I like, because that means they're put together when there's a crisis, and they're all committed to resolving the crisis, we need the ability to respond with flexible forces. And that means navy, air force, army units that are large enough that they don't have to be put together as some sort of heterogeneous thing for a while before they become a fighting unit. If we have that, and we're close to having that right now, if we don't let it wither on the vine—we have a habit of letting our military wither on the vine after an operational commitment—we would continue to make a significant contribution.

As for the Middle East, I won't go there. It's just so, so potentially volatile that we stand by waiting for coalitions of the willing and deciding whether we're going to play or not.

● (1150)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Quickly, should this committee, in your view, be looking at Australia as a model, in terms of regional interest and that we're going to devote all our...in that area, rather than trying to be all over the place?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: I wasn't warned about that question, because the answer is yes, they've done very well, particularly on the amphibious side. They have ships on order.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you, General, for being here. I appreciate your words about the myth of peacekeeping. We tend to define ourselves that way when the reality is that Canada is strong in its reputation internationally because of our presence in the trenches of World War I and on the beaches of World War II, because we knew how to step up well beyond our nominal capacities.

Looking forward, the phrase "the best small army in the world", of course, resonates. We're going to have to make choices automatically about where we can go or what type of intervention we should be in, and the optimal, flexible, lethal, capable force of responding to some of the different challenges is essential.

On top of these three amphibious stations or forces that you see, what will we have to remove from what we do right now in order to create those? Because there's always give and take. If we were to focus on that, what would that mean we couldn't do and what would we have to remove from our arsenal, as it were, of capacities?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: That's a great question, in that we don't have to remove anything because the troops are already here. They're already inland somewhere. The cost of the assault ships is very reasonable, and we have a navy that can escort them, including, hopefully, submarines. The Americans, the Spaniards, the Italians, all lease with Maersk. Maersk is the largest container ship company in the world. It puts together a ship, including crew, if you want, who sign a waiver to go into an operational theatre. But they will configure the ship to carry your specific kit and your troops. The marines are also contracting from Maersk. However, there are assault ships and keels are being laid, which the Australians have ordered, and various variants from France and the U.S. The good news is the cost is less and the crew is less than for a destroyer or a frigate. We're in the process of planning to replace a number of our naval vessels. So we would enhance our capability within the same budget, within the same personnel ceilings, if that's the case.

That's the good news.

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

I will give the floor to Mr. Braid.

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

And thank you, General, for being here this morning and for your contributions.

General, if you were providing advice to the Government of Canada, what factors should the government consider in determining whether or not to participate in a peace operation?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: It's a great question, because there are criteria, and every country has them and the UN has them: identifiable end date, good chance of success, exit plan, criteria for success, in the national interest, etc. Every one of them is ignored, and they have been historically. They're never applied.

They are driven very much by the media that are covering that particular event. The absence of the media in Rwanda and the presence of the media in the Balkans are good examples of where the priorities were.

So I can certainly offer criteria. I just outlined some of them. But they will not be listened to.

With the UN, it's the same thing. In the Brahimi report that I mentioned, he said adequate budget, clear rules of engagement, well understood and implementable mandate—all that—and they're never applied. It's just an academic exercise.

I was blessed with the failure of that system, because when I needed some troops to come and secure the Sarajevo airport, we had 32 nations in that force and the only nation that responded to my telephone call within 12 hours to a request to borrow a battalion—and it had nothing to do with my being a Canadian—was Canada. It said, "Yes, sure; do you think it'll work, General MacKenzie?" That was the criterion. Thank God it did.

● (1155)

Mr. Peter Braid: Thank you.

In both questions and answers so far this morning we've had references to Canada's national interests. In your mind, what are our national or strategic interests in this context of peace operations?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: Well, in those parts of the world that are critical to us, the Middle East being one of them, it is increased stability. And obviously, not close behind, but running side by side, is non-proliferation, dealing with the nuclear threat and the potential spread. I'm not terribly concerned with terrorists coming up with a nuclear weapon, other than maybe a dirty bomb, but I am concerned about countries whose objective is to perhaps annihilate the rest of us and get a first-class ticket to heaven. That bothers me a little bit.

Mr. Peter Braid: General, your concerns, your reservations, with respect to the UN, are well-known. Today you've expressed some reservations about NATO as well. I'm just wondering what multilateral institution we turn to, then, to help. Even if peace operations are subcontracted, someone needs to coordinate and subcontract. So what multilateral organization is most capable of acting as a coordinator and a subcontractor? How does the process work?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: The potential is there that in following the wash-up in NATO, two things will happen. Either NATO will survive and have to change...

One of the Canadian recommendations is the simple introduction and implementation of a Canadian recommendation that unanimity can exist in Brussels at the very highest political level, unanimity deciding where we're going to go, what we're going to do. Then once you drop down below Brussels and you get into the field, the people who are carrying the majority of the weight make the decisions. It's just that simple change that would overhaul NATO's chain of command dramatically and make it much more efficient. It's simple to say but difficult to implement.

You can't have in Kandahar province a debate going on as to whether everybody there agrees with what the commander wants to do.

So that's one of the options: that NATO will actually pay attention to a lot of national input like ours, and in particular to the Madeleine Albright study that's taking a look at the restructuring of NATO, and will reform itself and hopefully stop expanding.

After the debacle in Georgia, can you imagine anybody trusting that NATO's going to come to their rescue, including Canada? They couldn't even get there. While they were fighting a relatively minor insurgency in Afghanistan, we were facing the Soviets coming into a country that could have been a NATO country and we were all going to go to attack Russia because of that? I mean, give me a break.

Or it fails. It disintegrates as a result of the European Union coming closer together and coming up with some force. But boy, do they have their problems, too. Germany, France, and the U.K. don't necessarily agree on how that should work. If that fails, then you'll recognize these names: the idea of a standing coalition of the willing—the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand—and funnily enough, a number of the new free satellite countries from the old Soviet Union that have really been pulling their weight in Afghanistan. So I can see something like that happening.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will give the floor to Mr. Bachand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bachand, you have five minutes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. MacKenzie you seem to think that a coalition of the willing would facilitate operations, somewhat like in the case of the Americans in Iraq.

Do you agree with the fact that international legitimacy can currently only come from the UN? If a coalition of the willing does not have the UN's endorsement, or stamp of approval, even if we do realize that the UN is somewhat out of step, are we still not running the risk of the coalition being rejected by international opinion?

● (1200)

[*English*]

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: I don't want to be flippant, but it doesn't matter. NATO decided, and I certainly didn't agree with it, to bomb a sovereign nation, Serbia-Kosovo, without United Nations approval. They went back and checked a resolution that had the air defending the European community military monitors there, and said that was the justification, which it wasn't. Just about every lawyer who looked at it said that wasn't the case. There was no outcry. There should have been an outcry—I was part of it—but there wasn't.

I don't think it matters much. The major powers of the world will decide what they're going to do. If they can get a UN resolution, as George Bush Sr. did for the first Iraq war, then good on them, but they would have done it anyway. They would have gone in anyway.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: So then, should we be calling into question the UN's usefulness? Do you share Mr. Hillier's opinion that the UN is a decaying body?

[*English*]

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: The ironic thing about the UN is that everything that's been added on since 1945—the UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, the World Health Organization...although you will recall Mayor Lastman in Toronto didn't know WHO. Who are those WHO people about the SARS crisis?

Anyway, all that to say they are brilliant. Sure, the human rights folks have some problems when Libya is the chair and such things, but overall those add-ons... God knows I've worked with UNICEF and UNHCR a lot; they're great and they do a lot of good work. It's the raison d'être for the UN, which was to save us from the scourge of a third world war, and they did, I guess. We didn't have one, thank God.

During the Cold War their capability to cope with situations in Cyprus and the Middle East, which were relatively benign, was perfectly okay. It's the post-Cold War period where we have factions around the world, internal factions, fighting away at each other.

Michael Ignatieff probably explains it better than anybody in his book *Blood and Belonging*. Once we removed the glue that held the two groups together—the Soviet Union and NATO, led by the U.S.—once that disappeared with the disappearance of the Soviet Union, all these ethnic, religious, territorial, and historic tensions just exploded. In Yugoslavia it was worse than anywhere else because it was both ethnicity and religion.

So the UN serves a very useful purpose. It's got serious problems when it comes to the security responsibilities it has, and that's because it's hamstrung by the permanent five. You probably know the ambassadors from Japan, India, and Brazil, three folks who I think have strong qualifications for permanent membership, went around the world for a year seeking support for them to become permanent members. The report, which was issued about a year and a half ago, said they found the challenge to be problematic but they promised to revisit the issue in 15 years. I've never heard of anything like that in my life—in 15 years.

Those permanent five have it locked up solid, because not only do they have the veto for security issues, it's a little-known fact that they have the veto for procedure within the Security Council, which means the membership. It just takes one of them to veto a new member, and they do every time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: This brings us to the issue of UN reform. The fact that a single country with permanent Security Council member status can exercise its right of veto and bring the process to a complete standstill seems like a matter that the UN should look into.

Do you think that it would be possible to reform the UN?

[*English*]

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: The Canadian-UN association made recommendations including that five or six years ago. It's well known. Any number of other nations have made similar recommendations, and you're absolutely right, it should reform, but the brick wall is the permanent five. That's the problem.

The Chair: Thank you very much, General.

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

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thank you, Chair. I'll share the time with my colleague, Mr. Payne.

Let me add my voice of welcome, General, it's good of you to spend part of your day with us and share your thoughts. I enjoyed your frankness in your early comments.

You mentioned the numbers of troops we need, and we're short. What do you see as the number in the air force, army, and navy? Combined with that question, what do you see as the equipment requirement? You mentioned we were short of equipment. How would you see us acquiring the enlistment of troops...and the equipment question?

● (1205)

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: I had to be a realist. When I took an early retirement a couple of years earlier, in 1993, we were around 85,000. We then had the famous decade of darkness in which we started buying people out.

In my perfect world, we'd probably be somewhere around 100,000—but I'll live with 85,000—and then the army would go to units that would be large enough to deploy with very modest augmentation. Our navy has a reputation way beyond its resources, because it's able to command and control foreign ships. And foreign militaries, including the U.S., trust it. So we have experienced commanders there. Our air force has a reputation for outstanding skills, and now we're in the position of having to cut back on flying hours and we are grounding aircraft, etc.

I guess, probably, my timing must have been brilliant, because I would say go back to the way things were when I left and what we were doing then with the numbers we had. We had a large component of air force and army in Europe, and those numbers were supposed to come back to us, and somewhere halfway over the Atlantic they vaporized, and all of a sudden—boom—we lost those positions, and the downgrading of the numbers in the military started.

I also know that all of you would want to have something in your backyard that the military needs, but the fact is it takes so long—like 10 years—in Canada to get from the blueprint to either driving it or flying or sailing it, and what the military needs is something off the shelf. Somehow we get compensation here in Canada for that, but we have to buy stuff off the shelf, which we showed we could do in Afghanistan with artillery pieces and vehicles, etc. We saw the need, and, bang, it was filled. If we had to turn to Canada to replace those, they'd be arriving 10 years from now.

So Public Works and DND have a real challenge. And I know there have been tons of studies, but if I could speed up the procurement issue with a magic wand, that would be one of my top priorities.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Okay.

Thanks, Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Payne.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Okay.

Thank you, General, for coming. It was nice to chat with you earlier on. Thank you again for your service to our country. It's an important role, I think, that a lot of people here are grateful for.

My colleagues asked some of the questions, but I would like to do a follow-up.

You did talk about the total number of full-time individuals in the Canadian Forces. What about reserves?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: The reserves will always be picked on when there's a shortage of money. They've been picked on for all of their existence pretty well. “Screwed around” might even be a better description. It just happened recently that, just to be dramatic about it, one busload of reservists going off to a course got a cellphone call saying they were to turn around and come home. The course was cancelled, just because there were inadequate funds to run that particular course.

In spite of all that, they continue to endure, and they are at a peak now in their operational capability. They have a large number of volunteers who fill very important positions. I had the pleasure of meeting with 30 reservists, all from Ontario infantry units, on one of my visits to Afghanistan, who are the convoy escort platoon. As you can imagine, that's the most dangerous job there. I asked for a show of hands for how many of them had been subjected to an IED attack. All the hands went up. What about two attacks? Most of the hands went up. What about three? Half the hands went up. When I got to seven, one hand went up, and the guy had burns to the side of his face. He had all his kit on. He was the one who had nailed a suicide bomber two days earlier, and the fireball had gone over the vehicle and burned his face. I asked him how many of these escorts he had done. He said, “Thirty-eight, sir, but if you wait about five minutes, it'll be thirty-nine.” They're just outstanding soldiers.

So their capability is great, but they're still not supported anywhere near enough with funding. By that I mean they need the actual vehicles they'll see when they go overseas. They need the weapons and all of the kit. But God bless them.

We're probably the only nation in the world that has a regular force larger than its reserve force.

● (1210)

Mr. LaVar Payne: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): *Merci beaucoup, monsieur le président.*

Thank you, General MacKenzie, for being here today, and for your ongoing support of your comrades in arms. We greatly appreciate you taking the time.

Sir, we've asked this question a number of times. What do you do in a situation like the DRC, where there's a mass humanitarian disaster? What would you propose in order to prevent that from happening? And in the context of what happened in Sierra Leone, when the Brits marched in there with 830 soldiers, when would that be an appropriate thing to do, by whom, and under what conditions?

Thank you.

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: Yes, the Congo is just... The trouble is that all those factions I mentioned, and nations, are fighting over something that's just below the surface of the earth: natural resources. That's the problem.

The solution for the international community to provide some level of security is that you're going to have to have some internal boundaries within the country and have people in an area where you can protect them if it's that bad. The trouble is that the UN would never do that, because it would have to fight its way in. There are so many areas where the diamonds and the gold and all the resources are that you'd end up going in there and being one of the other factions. There's no way, in a country the size of Quebec or Ontario or Europe, the UN could ever generate that number of troops.

It was different in Darfur. You and I communicated on this. With the situation in Darfur, I didn't see us going in and defeating the Khartoum government, but I did see us going in and protecting the women and children in the refugee camps and booting out the terror...or whoever they were; the ones who were the bad guys.

Also, in Chad, where not displaced persons but refugees were provided protection, that's something the UN could do.

Hon. Keith Martin: Perhaps I can ask a question on Canada's role in terms of utilizing regional or subregional forces. We still have ECOWAS, and the EU. Do you see that Canada could take a role in that?

You brought up an interesting point on the disconnect—which, I would argue, is in Afghanistan and many other places—between the military plan and often the runtish political plan that tends to be a laggard and come up behind, often inadequate and late.

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: I think in Canada we've come a long way—that's because we had a long way to come—by way of coordination between the agencies in this town when we're fighting a war overseas. It took a while, but it's certainly a heck of a lot better now.

With regard to utilizing regional forces, I have to say that worldwide the potential is there—I remember writing on it 20 years ago—for some of these regional forces. In Africa it's particularly challenging because of the tension between the countries that are contributing forces to that common chain of command. Funnily enough, some nation like Canada would have a lot to contribute by way of command and control, being seen as somewhat neutral and with a fairly decent international reputation, to give guidance.

As you know, we have about 35 or 37 officers right now in the Congo and in southern Sudan doing just that, being invaluable in the operations of organization headquarters.

Hon. Keith Martin: Is using sherpas dead, or is there a possibility of actually getting sherpas—using, say, Gurkhas, who are unemployed right now but are fine soldiers—as a standing high-readiness brigade, not only for military operations but also to insert in humanitarian situations?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: Yes, but those five members of the Security Council have to agree to do that. That's always the challenge, getting the authorization to launch that force and then to pay for it. Normally...

You know, two days after we arrived in UNPROFOR, we were told we had a 25% budget cut. We hadn't even received any money yet, but it was cut already.

So money is a problem, but I say the decision-making in the Security Council is an even bigger challenge. I mean, witness Darfur; my God, we've sat on our hands now for eight years.

Hon. Keith Martin: I'm wondering if you could actually hive off those that are "military ops" versus "humanitarian ops", and humanitarian ops could be authorized by the full complement of the Security Council. There would be no veto power, so two-thirds majority on the Security Council and no veto power applied to humanitarian ops versus military ops.

Would that...?

● (1215)

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: Yes; they'll play with the term like we're playing with "peace ops". You're absolutely right that it would be a way to sneak it through, perhaps, but then you'd have to find nations willing to contribute.

I've always been sort of critical of a standing UN army, a rapid-reaction army. It would never, ever work. Why? First of all, the Security Council would never let the Secretary-General have his or her own army. Secondly, they'd only be rapid once. They'd go into the mission there and there'd be nobody to replace them, so they'd hang in there.

It sounds good on paper, but it won't work.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Now I'll give the floor to Mrs. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and through you to our witness.

You mentioned the length of time it takes for procurement. From time to time with major purchases, this government has found it expedient to do some sole-source purchases.

From the soldier's standpoint, and taking into consideration interoperability with our allies, what difference does it make to the soldier in the field to have equipment that may have been procured through a sole-source process versus the other tendering processes?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: They couldn't care less when they actually talk about it, if they ever do. It's faster. Mind you, it should be faster. Then there are always claims against the process, which delay it once again. So I'm not sure in a foot race whether sole sourcing is actually faster. Sometimes it is; sometimes it's not. But it couldn't matter less, as long as the kit that is received is good kit. It doesn't have to be the best in the world. That's really slow.

But it's good kit, as has been witnessed with some of the purchases in Afghanistan. In fact we bought some that weren't working terribly well and they were replaced. I'm talking about some of wheeled vehicle fleet.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: There has been a suggestion that Canada should go back to having its own procurement process within the defence department. In your experience, would that speed up procurement?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: Well, I didn't set a Guinness record. I only did one year in Ottawa in my entire career and that was in the personnel world. I'm not an expert, but I do know when I was running the personnel world for officers in 1985, we had a phenomenal demand for personnel at the captain-major level to run these projects, to manage these projects. When we used to buy a tank, there was a colonel, a sergeant-major, and a corporal. Now you can fill a theatre with the number of people on the procurement team.

So yes, that would be desirable, but there's a personnel cost that comes with it. There's a whole bunch of folks who should be out kicking ass in the field who are going to be manning offices here in Ottawa.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Earlier you mentioned the Somalia mission, and there have been murmurings amongst the opposition as to perhaps revisiting that area of operation. Can you tell us why the Somalia inquiry was cut short and what the outcome might have been?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: Well, I think it's generally accepted that it was getting close to here, the Ottawa city limits. It was no longer looking at Somalia. It was looking at what happened in some of the buildings around here and over there, and therefore it was shut down. It had gone on for a long time, no doubt about it. But what was frustrating for me... I was even included in a setup when I was a witness. I started to talk about General Johnston, saying "best force there". General Zinni, who was world famous then, was saying the same thing about the Canadians. I was stopped—and I had been warned I would be—and they said, "General MacKenzie, that will be permitted in phase four of the Somalia inquiry, when we get to the good news at the end." We never got to the good news.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: If we could look at your entire military career and distill it to the single most important lesson learned, what would you like to convey to Canadians?

MGen Lewis MacKenzie: Boy oh boy, that's... I'd say large units, yes, adequately sized units in all three environments. Units bring along kit too, but adequately sized battalions and regiments, and squadrons in the air force, and ships at sea with their crews, adequately manned and equipped.

During my career, I've seen that go down. I'm pleased now to see it's getting a bit better in some areas, since I left.

● (1220)

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

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask a point of clarification, through you, to Ms. Gallant. Since I know it wasn't our party, which party suggested revisiting Somalia?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: It was during a discussion in this room.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Well, it wasn't us. I just want to put that on the record.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I don't recall, Mr. Wilfert.

The Chair: Okay. It was not the Liberal Party of Canada.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: We just want to put that on the record. I want you to know that.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, General.

[*English*]

Thank you very much for being with us this morning, and have a nice summer.

[*Translation*]

That concludes the 22nd meeting of the committee.

The meeting is adjourned.

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