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**Thursday, September 22, 2011**



**Chair**

**Mr. James Bezan**



## Standing Committee on National Defence

Thursday, September 22, 2011

•(0850)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)):** We have quorum. We're missing some members, but it is a quarter to nine, so we had better get rocking and rolling.

We are at meeting number three of the Standing Committee on National Defence. This morning we're going to have a briefing on the situation in Afghanistan. Joining us from the Department of National Defence we have Brigadier-General Craig King; Jill Sinclair, assistant deputy minister, policy; and, no stranger to the committee, Captain Geneviève Bernatchez, deputy judge advocate general for operations.

I welcome all of you.

General, I'll open it up to you for opening comments.

**Brigadier-General Craig King (Director General, Operations, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence):** Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide you with an update on our operations.

As the chair mentioned, I am Brigadier-General Craig King, director general of operations with the strategic joint staff at National Defence headquarters. You'll remember Ms. Jill Sinclair, our assistant deputy minister, policy, and Captain (Navy) Bernatchez, from the Office of the Judge Advocate General, from their appearances before you on Tuesday.

[Translation]

As you know, Operation Athena is Canada's participation in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, and Operation Attention is the name of the Canadian Forces' contribution to the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan.

Before you are seven slides providing a broad update on our Mission Termination Task Force for Operation Athena and on the Canadian contribution to the training mission in Afghanistan under Operation Attention.

I would like to walk you through this quick operational update, after which I would be pleased to answer your questions.

[English]

I refer you to slide 1. In accordance with the parliamentary motion of 2008, the Canadian Forces ceased combat operations in July 2011 and will complete the redeployment of personnel and equipment out of Kandahar by December 2011. Under the command of Brigadier-

General Chuck Lamarre, the mission transition task force is comprised of more than 1,300 personnel from all elements of the Canadian Forces, with the main task of conducting mission closure of Operation Athena in order to enable the Canadian Forces to transition to subsequent operations as directed by the Government of Canada.

The task force is executing its mission in three broad phases. Phase one was completed in July, with the thinning out or removal of non-essential equipment, the relief in place of our battle space by U. S. forces, and the consolidation of all Canadian Forces elements back to Kandahar airfield.

The mission transition task force is now executing the final phase of its operation in Afghanistan, focusing on actual mission close-out and redeployment. All activities are designed to ensure that our national objectives are being met as we transition out of Kandahar. The final phase, reconstitution, is being undertaken simultaneously back here in Canada under the leadership of the respective environmental commanders.

With respect to slide 2, we cannot underestimate the challenges faced by Brigadier-General Lamarre and his team; in recent reports, this effort has been described as moving a city halfway around the world. The mission transition task force is undoubtedly one of the largest logistical undertakings in the history of the Canadian Forces. As you can see by the numbers involved, our soldiers are writing a new page in the history of Canadian expeditionary operations.

With respect to the next slide, the general concept of operations is the leveraging of multiple staging areas and transportation nodes in order to efficiently repatriate equipment back to Canada while maintaining positive control over our operational equipment at all times. Our process has been greatly facilitated by our operational support hubs, which were located in Cyprus and, as of today, are starting up in Kuwait.

The basic concept and scheme here is that anything that is non-sensitive, such as generators and general stores, was passing through Pakistan to a sea terminal for shipment back to Canada by sea. A small number of CF assets have been flown back to Canada due to the sensitivity of the nature of that equipment—cryptographic equipment and that sort of thing—and the remainder of our CF assets, primarily vehicles and weapons, are being flown out to these intermediate staging terminals to be loaded on ships and repatriated back to Canada on a schedule that is being closely monitored.

Currently, Brigadier-General Lamarre is reporting that all lines of production and repatriation are progressing at or above the predicted level. I refer you to slide 4, where we show a conceptual graph representing our expected progress over time in the disposal of our infrastructure in Kandahar and the return of our equipment back to Canada. I apologize for the simplified version of this slide, but you can understand that actual numbers in such an open forum could give great insight to current and potential adversaries into the actual Canadian Force projection capabilities.

In view of what I have mentioned, I can report to you that we do not foresee any outstanding issues that will affect the mission transition task force's ability to meet the timelines established by the Government of Canada.

[Translation]

The next slide is about Operation Attention. As you know, on November 16, 2010, the Government of Canada announced a new role for the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan that would see our soldiers training, mentoring and building the professional competencies of the Afghan National Security Forces.

Under the current leadership of Major-General Michael Day, the new mission will see up to 950 soldiers deployed to a Kabul-centric training mission until March 2014.

The Canadian Contribution Training Mission—Afghanistan will assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in developing credible, effective and sustainable national security forces—both army and police.

[English]

I would just highlight that Canada is the second-largest contributor to the NATO training mission in Afghanistan, after the United States.

The focus of our efforts is on institutional capacity-building and the professionalization of the Afghan national security forces. By mentoring and developing Afghan trainers, Canada continues to play a vital role in assisting the Government of Afghanistan to achieve self-security by generating security forces that will be self-reliant in the near future.

With the current emphasis on helping the Afghan national security forces with institutional capacity-building, and with the need to create a professional military ethos to face an evolving threat, the provision of high-quality trainers is essential. Canada is stepping up to this task with a mix of professionalism and cultural understanding to support the Government of Afghanistan in developing the required capabilities to generate truly effective Afghan national security forces that will represent all Afghans in the execution of their duties.

As slide 6 indicates, Operation Attention is already providing training in up to 13 different locations, assisting roughly 24 different institutions. The current deployment schedule will see our operation reaching full capacity in numbers in early November, with troops deployed in three locations: Kabul, where the majority of our forces will be located; Mazar-e-Sharif in the north; and Herat in the west.

I would like to highlight two important elements of our institutional capacity-building at the Kabul military training centre and the consolidated fielding centre, also in Kabul.

The Kabul military training centre, or KMTC, is the primary training location for the Afghan National Army training command and the main force provider for Afghanistan's national defence. Canadian Colonel Mike Minor advises the Afghan commander of KMTC. The purpose of this institution is to provide Afghanistan with a skilled army capable of disarming illegal factions, fighting terrorism, and assuring security in Afghanistan. KMTC is run by officers and non-commissioned officers of the Afghan National Army, with advice and assistance provided by staff of the NATO training mission in Afghanistan. The actual training provided starts at the individual soldier level, with courses on weapons, first-aid, the law of armed conflict, and Afghan National Army values and ethos, up to and including courses for newly commissioned officers on leadership and planning. In terms of scale, there are some 13,000 students and staff at KMTC, following up to 40 courses for recruits up to senior NCOs and officers.

On the other hand, the Kabul-based consolidated fielding centre is a collective training facility where battalion-sized formed units of the Afghan National Army, known as kandaks, of roughly 600 soldiers, conduct training and testing designed to confirm their skills before they are assigned and moved to the Afghan National Army corps for service within Afghanistan as part of the operational field force. The centre is run by Afghan forces but is provided with the critical support and guidance of 400 NATO mentors and trainers under the command of Canadian Colonel Rory Radford.

By way of summary, I would point out from the last slide that we are on time and on target with our mission closure efforts. We are also ready to continue our commitment to the people of Afghanistan with our capacity-building efforts under Operation Attention, and I am pleased to highlight the fact that our soldiers are already making a significant impact on the overall effectiveness of the Afghan national security forces. That's been highlighted in theatre through public statements made by such figures as General Petraeus, when we announced our transition to the training mission.

● (0855)

[Translation]

I hope this brief outline has provided you with a sense of what your Canadian soldiers, sailors, and airmen and airwomen are currently accomplishing in Afghanistan. They are performing critical missions in a very difficult environment with professionalism and dedication. Canada has been publically praised by NATO, ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces for its contribution to this very demanding campaign. All Canadians can be proud of their men and women in uniform.

[English]

Thank you for your attention. We are ready to answer any questions you may have.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your opening comments, General.

With that, we're going to do our seven-minute rounds.

Mr. Harris, you're first.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, General, for your presentation this morning.

The former committee was given a briefing by General Natynczyk in October 2010, a couple of weeks before the government announced its intention to continue a mission in Afghanistan. But again, we were still assured, and I think you're assuring us now, that the combat troops would return and all combat action would cease. General Natynczyk told us that the combat troops would be leaving Afghanistan commencing at the end of June. Has that happened? Can you confirm that all the combat troops have actually returned and that the people who are there now are personnel engaged solely in the activities related to bringing the equipment back and making sure that whatever needs to be secured is secured? Are they the only personnel there now in Kandahar?

• (0900)

**BGen Craig King:** Yes, sir. Right now, the troops on the ground are dedicated to those two broad thrusts that I outlined: the mission transition task force and the NATO training mission.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Can you tell us how the close-down of Camp Mirage and the use of that facility has affected the activity both in terms of costs and logistics?

**BGen Craig King:** The close-down of Camp Mirage occurred almost a year ago. We responded very quickly as the Canadian Forces to that situation and found an alternate staging site in Germany to compensate for the loss of that facility. This was done very quickly through the outstanding work of a number of people and through work with our allies. Logistically, in terms of the close-out of Mirage and its impact on what we're doing, because of the reaction it made very little impact.

In terms of costs, the costs of closing out Mirage have been accounted for in the financial planning, and you'll appreciate that I'm an operator on this. That has all been accounted for and is being managed within the overall budget for what we need to do to get out of Afghanistan.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** That cost was estimated in various places as being in the range of \$300 million to \$400 million as a result of the shutdown of Camp Mirage. Is that a figure you can confirm?

**BGen Craig King:** I can't confirm that figure. We'd have to get back to you on that, sir.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Can you arrange to have that done, please?

**BGen Craig King:** Yes.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** One of the things that has come up in the close-down of activities in Kandahar is the use of the Chinook helicopters. The back story, of course, is that the Mulroney government sold the Chinooks that we had to the Netherlands, and then when we were moving into operations in 2006, there was a need to acquire them. We acquired six, I believe, from the Americans. What I hear now is that these helicopters are not being brought back to Canada or are going to be used but they actually have been...I don't know if "scrapped" is the word; there is a boneyard in Arizona somewhere with all kinds of planes. Is that where those helicopters are, and why is that?

**BGen Craig King:** Right now, one of the helicopters we're bringing out of theatre was leased from the U.S., so that's going back to the Americans. For the rest, we are actively engaged in looking for buyers for these Chinooks. They are being brought back in a condition and in a posture that will allow us to do exactly that. There's no intention that I'm aware of that these are going to be, as you described, scrapped. The idea is to find a buyer for these, because they are still viable.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** They're still usable. And by the way, I do recognize that they were extremely useful in Afghanistan, that they saved lives, because they avoided transport on roads subject to IEDs. So we're not criticizing the use of them. But it just seems that those are usable helicopters, and I believe we are in fact engaged in a Chinook program. There's no use for them in Canada—is that the stance DND is taking?

**BGen Craig King:** Well, I can just say that within the program of the Chinook helicopters we've used, the plan we're looking at is to divest ourselves of them. That program is being undertaken through the assistant deputy minister for materiel, and it's progressing.

With regard to other issues concerning the use of Chinooks and equipment and all that stuff, I would refer you to our folks who deal more precisely in that domain.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** In terms of the training mission announced in November and December of last year—and some of my colleagues will have other questions on that—it seems, first of all, that the decision was made late in the day, after we received assurances all last year that the military mission was over and that we were going to have every soldier back in Canada with the exception of a few to ensure the safety of our diplomats. How long was the timeline between that decision being made in November and December and the commencement of activity in Kandahar with respect to training?

We have a very general description of the kinds of things that are being done here. Perhaps Ms. Sinclair can help us out on this. In terms of the planning, I understand that initially there was a task force sent over to make inquiries as to what Canada might be doing. Are we in a situation in Kandahar where our troops are in fact safe, or are they subject to attacks? We've seen quite a lot of activity in the Kabul area recently. The Haqqani network has been stepping up its activities. What's the situation there?

• (0905)

**BGen Craig King:** Do you want to take the question on the decision, and I can speak to security?

**Ms. Jill Sinclair (Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy, Department of National Defence):** Thank you.

I actually can't give you those precise timelines, Mr. Harris. I'd have to track back and see. But you asked about how this overall transition happened. I think those who have been following the issue will know that training, capacity-building, and Afghan ownership of the issue have been very high on the agenda from the outset. Certainly as far back as at least 18 months or two years ago, President Karzai made it very clear that he was establishing timetables with international partners, including ISAF, to make sure there was a transition. In order for that transition to happen, to enable the Afghans to take on their security responsibilities, there was a need for trainers.

So it was in that context that Canada and all of the ISAF partners considered what they could do. Certainly, as the general has said, the combat mission very clearly has come to an end. We have finished that. But there was an enduring need to do capacity-building, and that's what was considered for an ongoing Canadian contribution on the military side.

**The Chair:** Mr. Harris's time has expired, General. Did you want to give a brief response?

**BGen Craig King:** With respect to security, sir, you made mention of the events in Kabul. Clearly that was a high-profile attack. We have never said that Kabul was a low-risk environment. Kabul remains high-risk. There is a determined enemy out there that is capable of mounting the kinds of things you saw.

We have taken every precaution to manage those risks for Canadian troops operating in that realm. Those risks are manageable, and the measures we have in place will make sure that our folks there are as safe as we can make them in an environment that is extremely violent.

With respect to Kandahar, sir, you asked the question about security there. Kandahar is a secure installation, absolutely. I spent nine months of my life there, and I will tell you that's the case. But it's still subject to attacks, indirect fire, and ground attacks, and that threat will continue. However, in terms of the risk to our Canadian troops, there is nothing there that has changed appreciably, and we continue to manage that, notwithstanding the posture we're in with the transition task force.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mrs. Gallant, you have the floor.

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

General, with respect to recruitment for the training mission, can you tell us what the rank of most of these officers is?

**BGen Craig King:** I'd have to get back to you on the specifics, but broad recruiting occurs in both the officer domain and the soldier domain, much as you see in most armies around. In terms of the actual numbers, I'd have to get back to you, ma'am.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Have there been any difficulties in finding enough of the leadership cadre to fill these positions?

**BGen Craig King:** I don't think it's a question of having difficulty finding.... It's interesting, dealing in the Afghan culture. I made reference to my own service in Afghanistan, and I can speak with some detail on this because my last job was in Regional Command South, the NATO headquarters, and my specific responsibility was for the systemic training and professionalization of the police and the army that were located in Kandahar and adjoining provinces.

Leader development is what we're about. What that means is they have to be identified as having the necessary qualities and they have to have the skills. One of the challenges we have is that we're dealing with a largely illiterate society that we're drawing our folks from. So we've learned in a very short period of time that we have to impart to that body of recruits things like literacy training. And you can imagine, at the same time that you're trying to develop an officer corps of soldiers, you're also having to address very basic and fundamental things that we in Canada perhaps would take for

granted because of the superlative education system we enjoy. This is part of the challenge.

If you're seeing a trend in terms of the overall structure and numbers, I wouldn't say it's identifying numbers. Part of it is training and developing them in that stream so that at the end we get the output we need and continue to grow.

• (0910)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Can you advise if the Canadian Forces members filling the training mission roles are regulars or reservists?

**BGen Craig King:** It's a combination of both regular and reserve in all locations, as far as I'm aware.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Okay.

Is there a limit to the number of tours our soldiers will be asked to do on this particular mission?

**BGen Craig King:** We certainly are very conscious of tour numbers and how tours are managed, and that is something that is managed very, very carefully by the chain of command. So we start to hit thresholds. Once a guy has had a couple of tours, or three tours, it's very, very carefully managed. And we always make sure there is a set period of time between deployments that the individual has back in Canada so that his personal operational tempo is not placing him at risk for continual exposure to that environment. But it's something that's very carefully managed.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** What are the current numbers of those serving with both the ANA and the ANP?

**BGen Craig King:** The overall number that we will eventually flow.... As I mentioned, we're sitting right now at just a little over 600 total trainers in theatre. We'll hit our total number, which will be just shy of about 950, by early November. The actual breakdown is heavily weighted right now to the ANA, with what I would say are the largest number of them being in places, as I mentioned, like the Kabul Military Training Centre and the Consolidated Fielding Centre. There is still a presence with the police, but it is dwarfed by that which we're making for the army.

So what we've said in terms of our overall posture and our structure is that we will remain agile, and over time and in concert with our allies and our Afghan partners—which is a very important aspect of this—if we see that the shift needs to be made there, we have the agility to make those kinds of adjustments to our structure and to what we are doing. But currently, as it stands right now, the vast majority of our trainers are allocated to the army.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** With respect to the numbers you gave us—the current numbers—have those numbers been an overall increase to what we had before our training mission began?

**BGen Craig King:** It's a fairly sizeable reduction in terms of our presence in Afghanistan from what we were maintaining before when we were responsible for a battle space in Kandahar Province.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** I mean the number of recruits in the ANA and ANP.

**BGen Craig King:** I want to be clear. You're asking about the number of recruits we're getting in the ANA compared to before?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Right.

**BGen Craig King:** We're seeing an increase. The Afghan National Army recruitment has gone up in accordance with the discussion on numbers that occurred at the Kabul conference last year. In the last year the army has grown substantially towards a target of 171,000 across the country. So yes, there is an increase that's occurred in the last year.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** You mentioned that you spent nine months of your life in Afghanistan. Over that time, have you observed a progression in the skill sets of the ANA and the ANP?

**BGen Craig King:** Absolutely. And I would say this, wouldn't I, because I was personally involved in this. But let me give you a sense of where we were just a couple of years ago and where we are now.

A couple of years ago 86% of the recruits coming in that you've mentioned were illiterate. Right now we've got mandatory literacy training going on in all the institutions they have to pass through.

We were having problems with pay and the quality of life, and that was having a negative impact on the attrition that was occurring. Now we have a living wage and pay incentives for them to operate. And we've taken a lot of measures to address their basic quality of life, in terms of where they're stationed, with infrastructure, access to programs such as leave, so that can be managed and reduce again the numbers of attrition.

We had a significant leader deficit before. By that, I would say that huge numbers of troops were being commanded by one individual, who is likely put in a position not for his professional ability but because of some political influence. So the leadership that was being exerted on the police particularly was extremely poor. Now we have a fivefold increase in the number of leader programs and output for leaders across the security forces.

What I'm telling you is the trend just in the last two years has been significant. We have made some real significant systemic institutional progress to get them to the point where they will be self-sufficient, all the time doing our very best to respect their way of doing business, their culture, and the desires for their leadership and the kinds of Afghan security forces they want to see.

• (0915)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. McKay.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, General King, Ms. Sinclair, and Madam Bernatchez.

You used the phrase that it's like moving a small city halfway around the world. I think I could add to that: "while they're shooting at you". I appreciate that it's a very difficult environment.

I don't know whether you read *The Globe and Mail* this morning, particularly the editorial. It's a sentiment expressed in *The Globe and Mail* with which I largely agree. One of the paragraphs says it was Mr. Karzai who put Mr. Rabbani in harm's way by giving him an extraordinarily dangerous mission. As you know, he's been assassinated. The person who's trying to negotiate the peace with the Taliban has been assassinated.

The president seems to be preparing for the day when NATO and ISAF have left, when the Afghan war will once again be a civil war, rather than a civil war with a huge international component.

You say in your presentation that you can report that you don't perceive any outstanding issues that will affect the mission transition task force's ability to meet the timelines. Isn't the assassination of critical figures in Karzai's government a pretty important aspect to whether in fact your mission succeeds? If in fact the leadership is being systematically destroyed by the Taliban, that seems to be a rather significant component of whether your mission will succeed.

Notwithstanding all of your good efforts to train the police and the military up to some level of capability, if the leadership is not there, if the core elements of the government have been destroyed, isn't that probably the most serious threat to the success of your mission?

**BGen Craig King:** I think what you've highlighted is an area of great concern. It's all about the leadership is another lesson that I learned in my time there. With strong, effective leadership great things are accomplished, particularly in that environment.

The assassination of former president Rabbani yesterday did a couple of things. First of all, it highlighted just how ruthless the Taliban are and the determined enemy that we continue to face there. And the fact that they targeted, as you say, the minister responsible for reconciliation and building peace and really having a vision for the future of the country that would reconcile very extreme elements speaks to their view of what they think the future of Afghanistan should be. Absolutely.

I was also sorry to hear that Minister Stanekzai was badly injured in the attack as well.

This is without a doubt an impact on the political landscape and the progress of reconciliation for the future. There's no doubt about that. Now, as to what kind of impact that environment has on our activities, specifically with the closeout, I think there will be, in the context of the effectiveness of government, perhaps an indirect impact. But the timelines we're working to right now are very short: we are out of there at the end of December. The impacts of the kind of thing you've referred to usually take some time before the tactical level effect you're drawing reference to can occur.

It's something we continue to monitor, absolutely. At this stage we think, with the timelines we're moving in, we're pretty good. But it's an area of concern, absolutely. We were all saddened when that event occurred earlier this week.

**Hon. John McKay:** When the enemy is systematically assassinating critical figures in the government, it effectively destabilizes the government. The bizarre possibility is that we may not be gone by the time this government is completely destabilized and chaos breaks loose.

Within my lifetime—not that of these young members over here—I remember the withdrawal from Vietnam, and it was chaos. So is there a plan B or a plan C to either accelerate the withdrawal or decelerate the withdrawal?

• (0920)

**BGen Craig King:** In response to that, I would say that I think we have to understand the nature of government in Afghanistan to draw the connections you're making. Certainly the potential is there. The events you've described are at the federal level, and there have been assassinations at local level, but the kind of support we require for the close-out that we're in now would be in a very localized area right now. That sort of effect you're talking about, the scenario you've painted, just is not seen at this time, but as I say, we continue to monitor it.

**Hon. John McKay:** Presumably if in fact you've planned the contingencies so that you're still going to maintain your timelines, there are still people left over. There's still some training going on. You're still going to have I think 950 people there—

**BGen Craig King:** Yes, sure.

**Hon. John McKay:** —and arguably this place is just going to degenerate into a well-armed civil war, with the irony in our case of having trained one side very well.

**BGen Craig King:** Right, absolutely. What I take from what you said is the absolute need for us to be invested fully the way we are. When we talk about Afghan values and ethos, we talk about the fact that we're not creating armed camps like we had in the immediate post-2001 environment. We're talking about an army just as you expect your army to act here: that it is an instrument of government and is not creating opportunities for warlords.

In order to preserve ourselves from exactly the situation or the scenario you've alluded to, it argues all the more why we should be involved where we are with the training of those security forces. Absolutely, the situation on the ground is closely monitored. I have a more optimistic view of the conditions than you do, perhaps, notwithstanding the unfortunate events of this last week. But as they relate to the mission transition task force in Kandahar, I think we're okay there.

In terms of Operation Attention and what we're doing around the various parts of Afghanistan in that mission, absolutely, we are very closely linked in watching the situation there and invested to be able to provide the support to the Government of Afghanistan as I've described.

**Hon. John McKay:** Am I done?

**The Chair:** Your time is up. I'm sorry.

We're going to go to a five-minute round now. Kicking it off is Mr. Norlock.

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

To the witnesses, thank you for being here this morning.

My first question is a sort of a two-part one, but both parts are very similar.

As we're replacing U.S. trainers, has there been any difficulty in taking over with regard to standardization of instruction methodology and the type of lesson plan? That's both from the Canadian perspective and your observation from the Afghani perspective.

Second, I'm pretty sure that we fall currently under the American chain of command. Have there been any difficulties coupled with that in the transition and the application of a Canadian approach to instruction, in particular to mentorship?

**BGen Craig King:** Thanks for the questions, both really good ones. I was going to ask if you're a trainer by background, because those are excellent questions that we get involved with as we look at institutional training.

**An hon. member:** He trains other MPs.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**BGen Craig King:** The standardization of training is not that much of an issue between the allies because we're doing it within the framework of NATO, where our doctrine, our training, and our concepts are very closely aligned. What we represent as Canadians in that is a vast amount of expertise in the training domain and a lot of experience with respect to combat.

I read an article some time ago where somebody was questioning whether we would have the same impact with the Afghans now that we're in a training role. Our credibility to do that job is who we are. We are the best trainers in the world, full stop. And it's also a function of what we have experienced. That is respected by our allies, and they look for the contributions that we make individually in that environment. I can tell you that it's definitely respected by the Afghans. They want our help; they look to our mentorship. I have to tell you, the Canadian aspect of what we do there is the respect we have for culture because of the diverse society from which we draw our people and the constant exposure we have in this great country. That is very much appreciated by the Afghans, absolutely.

But standardization, sir, is not a problem.

• (0925)

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** Very good. Thank you.

In slide number six you alluded to some of the types of training, and I'd like to go into this in more depth. By the way, my background is policing—30 years with the Ontario Provincial Police.

Aside from basic combat training, what other sorts of training and instruction are going on with the ANA, in particular the types of training? I think in the modern concepts, and I think you alluded to this in some of your other responses, there are other subjects, such as logistics and personal management, because these skills are often overlooked or not thought of by the general public. I think it would be good to note that.

**BGen Craig King:** Absolutely. Another excellent question.

As you can appreciate, an army is a diverse organism, so you have programs of instruction for everything from recruits to officers and senior officers even. So what I'll refer to is just a typical program of instruction that you would have, let's say, within the recruits.

He's brought in and there would be an emphasis on the basic skills that a soldier would require: his ability to operate his weapon or weapons that are within his organization; physical fitness and building a robust stamina to be able to withstand the conditions of combat and operations in their country; specific skills related to first aid and to be able to do basic communications; and on top of that, some very specific training aspects of their syllabus related to the law of armed conflict, human rights, and ethics, so that we can address the kinds of things we were discussing recently, such as how do we prevent creating warlords and all that other stuff. These are all things that go on.

The other thing, too, that's interesting within the institutions of the army and the police is the role of women. There is a tolerance aspect that is imparted. I think we have something in the neighbourhood of 1,400 women who are spread between the army and the police right now in the security forces. I can tell you that for a country like Afghanistan, that is not an insignificant accomplishment.

In terms of special skills, we are involved with communications schooling, in particular in Kabul, to give you a sense of some of the specialist training. We're doing medical training up in Mazar-e-Sharif. There's something in the neighbourhood of 11 branch schools that have been developed to provide specialist skills to the Afghans that go beyond the basic training I described for a recruit.

On top of that, we're talking about a further level of training and professional development for the leadership. The leadership is key; that is how we transition to the Afghans the running of their own security forces, so that they do it themselves and we're not there.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Madame Moore.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** In November 2010, the Government of Canada issued a backgrounder on the themes of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan for 2011-2014. The document stated that the Canadian mission will be centred on Kabul and will focus on four key areas.

One of those areas is the advancement of security, the rule of law and human rights, including through the provision of up to 950 trainers for Afghan security forces. I understand the role of the Canadian Forces in that area.

However, I am somewhat unsure about the three other areas: promoting regional diplomacy, contributing to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and investing in the future of Afghan children and youth through development programs in education and health.

I would like to know whether the Canadian Forces are playing an active role in those areas, or whether other organizations have been entrusted with that mandate.

• (0930)

**BGen Craig King:** Thank you very much, Madam.

If it's okay with you, I will answer in my mother tongue.

[*English*]

There is a whole-of-government effort for Afghanistan to address the issues you raised.

Ma'am, I don't want to deflect the issue, but I want to make sure that my area of expertise is properly represented. I would invite you to discuss with the Department of Foreign Affairs and CIDA the role that you've mentioned in those areas.

I can tell you from a Canadian Forces perspective that we are very much focused on the requirements that have been set for us by the Government of Canada. So the Canadian Forces, right now, are focused on transitioning out of Kandahar and providing training assistance to the Afghans through the NATO training mission.

The only thing that I would say, in terms of humanitarian assistance, is that as we're going through the mission transition task force, if we find there are items that are more economical to donate than move back to Canada, we have the mechanisms in place to be able to divest or apply those assets to agencies that look after humanitarian assistance on the ground, through umbrella organizations and Afghan NGOs. I would say that as a matter of focus, that is where the Canadian Forces are right now in those areas.

**The Chair:** We'll pause the time.

I agree with you, General King, in not wanting to talk outside your areas of expertise. I just want to draw the committee members' attention to O'Brien and Bosc, page 1068 and 1069, where it says:

...committees ordinarily accept the reasons that a public servant gives for declining to answer a specific question or series of questions which involve the giving of a legal opinion, which may be perceived as a conflict with the witness' responsibility to the Minister, which are outside of their own area of responsibility

—which I think is applicable here—

or which might affect business transactions.

Because we don't have DFAIT or CIDA here, I think we need to make sure that the questioning is targeted strictly to the operations of the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan.

With that, I'll turn back to you, Madam Moore.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore:** I just wanted to know whether the Canadian Forces play a role in those areas. The brigadier-general's answer has clarified that the Canadian Forces are really focusing their efforts on the first area I mentioned, the advancement of security, the rule of law and the training of Afghan security forces. That answers my question. I simply wanted to know whether the Canadian Forces play a role in the three other areas.

There's something else that worries me. Fighting is still raging in several other regions of Afghanistan. Should the fighting escalate considerably, could the current mission be reorganized to include the military component of Canada's mission again, if I may put it that way?

[*English*]

**BGen Craig King:** Thank you for your question, ma'am.

It's always dangerous to get into speculation, but clearly the whole reason we're there doing the training is that if there is a flare-up in a particular region or a wider conflagration, or however you want to term it, the Afghan national security forces will be fully capable of managing those matters on their own. That's the end state that we all want to get towards.

So in terms of our current transitioning, I can't see a requirement for revisiting the combat role. The Afghans are well capable of managing their affairs and they are getting better at doing that. So the answer is no.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Moore:** The Amnesty International Report 2010 states the following:

Women and girls continued to face widespread discrimination, domestic violence, and abduction and rape by armed individuals. They continued to be trafficked, traded in settlement of disputes and debts, and forced into marriages, including under-age marriages. In some instances women and girls were specifically targeted for attack by the Taliban [*sic*] and other armed groups.

Regarding the training of Afghan police and military forces, I want to know how the status of women in Afghanistan is being emphasized and how police officers are being trained to remedy this problem experienced by the women of that country, or to at least make some improvements to their situation.

• (0935)

[English]

**BGen Craig King:** I can't comment with any authority on the status of women and programs that address those very serious questions you've raised. I would say that the status of women is of great concern to us all, and I will say that as a matter of their government policy in Afghanistan they're taking great steps towards reinforcing the role of women and their place in Afghan society. I would say that is one area where there is great contrast to what the Taliban would wish to see with respect to the status of women. Whereas the education of girls has been promoted by the government, Taliban are completely against that kind of right being afforded to them.

I feel compelled to offer a comment there because of just being exposed to the society for as long as I was. I will tell you that it is an area where some significant strides have been made.

I'll return to my area of competence, which is on the training of Afghan security forces. It all starts with education and a recognition that in the case of the police, policing comprises all elements of society, male and female, and that in order to accord the respect we need to see within a society, gender representation in security forces is extremely important. I think the actual performance of the Afghan policewomen, who face considerable threat of assassination by doing this, speaks volumes to the fact that we've been able to, with our Afghan partners, integrate them into training regimes. So you're dealing with cultures of nations here, and anytime you're in that domain it's extremely difficult and it's a deliberate process. But I think through a combination of all those factors, there is an emerging good-news story for women in Afghanistan.

**The Chair:** Merci.

Mr. Chisu, you have the floor.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, General King, for your presentation. I understand very well the complexity of a transitional operation, as I was involved in Bosnia in closing down the Zgon and Black Bear. I know that you are in a difficult and a different situation there. Also, I was serving in Afghanistan in 2007. I was building the facilities that probably you are demolishing at this point.

I have a question for you. We are doing two operations at this point. We are doing the transitional operation, which is involving a seaport and an airport, of course, and I see from your slides that you have a seaport in Pakistan and another one I don't know where.

**BGen Craig King:** It started today in Kuwait, sir.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** Kuwait.

When you are doing operations of this kind, you need to repatriate the vehicles and materiel. So you have some personnel deployed in these seaports and the airports.

**BGen Craig King:** Right, absolutely.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** If you can describe—

**BGen Craig King:** But not in Pakistan, just to be absolutely....

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** Can you describe the operations and how this transition is working? Do you have any civilian personnel left in Kandahar, like CANCAP, or are they not there any more?

**BGen Craig King:** Right. Honestly, I'd have to get back to you on CANCAP and the civilians, on anything to do with that.

• (0940)

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** If you can get us information on this operation, how complex it is, and how it is overlapping with the training facility and the training operation...because there are concurrent operations going on at this point.

**BGen Craig King:** Right. In terms of the command and control in theatre, Major-General Mike Day maintains command over the entire affair. Brigadier-General Lamare is specifically focused on operations in Kandahar. And then the training mission is what it is in Kabul.

We should link up afterwards, because I did some time in Zgon as well. I'd be interested in your views. We could reminisce a little.

In terms of the structure of how we're bringing stuff back, we're moving things over ground lines through Pakistan to go down to Karachi at a port facility where they'll be loaded on vessels and come home.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** It could be dangerous.

**BGen Craig King:** It is, and it's one of the areas that we're carefully considering for two reasons. One is that there are always risks of banditry going through some of the back parts of that country. You'll also be aware of the flooding recently that's occurred there. Unfortunate as it is, for our purposes it hasn't affected our ability to transport what we had. And it's an area where there is risk, so we mitigate that risk by what we're sending on that route, and as I mentioned in the opening statement, the idea for Pakistan is to send anything that's not sensitive.

With respect to the support hubs that we've established, as I referred to, the staging terminals, the one in Kuwait has just been stood up. We have about 180 people there managing that. Aircraft fly in with vehicles and weapons, they get loaded on a ship, and away it goes back to Canada.

We just recently had one in Cyprus. We shut that one down, and literally today we stood up and started operating in Kuwait.

So in terms of broad structure, that's what we're looking at. And all of this, I have to emphasize, is done with a view to being as efficient as possible as we're moving this huge volume of stuff and getting the very best efficiencies to save money and bring it back home in a proper way so we can reuse it later.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** Thank you very much, General.

May I have another small question, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** Regarding the timing of repatriation of the vehicles, and we need to clean them to have them environmentally safe—

**BGen Craig King:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu:** —do you see any difficulties? For example, how are you transporting the LAVs or the tanks from the theatre to Kuwait?

**BGen Craig King:** The process we follow is a very rigorous one to make sure we're in compliance with all applicable regulations and standards imposed by those responsible agencies in government that regulate that. So there is a tremendous amount of effort to prepare the vehicles as they come through to make sure they're thoroughly inspected, they're thoroughly cleaned, and they have been prepared for reception back here in Canada. That was rehearsed with some shipments we made in the late spring, early summer. The guys on the ground there are well practised. There are probably some guys around from when you closed out Bosnia, so they know what they're doing, and I can assure you that we don't foresee any delays in that kind of process.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr. Kellway.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And to the witnesses, thank you for being here today.

My concern is that we've asked our soldiers and the taxpayers of this country to fund mission impossible, and there are a couple of reasons I'm worried about that. One is financial. It seems that most countries around the world spend somewhere between 1% and 4% on the extreme of GDP on military expenditures. It seems to be the case that in Afghanistan the kinds of military and security forces we're hoping to build there far exceed the ability of Afghanistan to support.

There was a recent report out of the U.S. Government Accountability Office that currently 90% of the Afghan military and security costs are being paid for by the U.S. and that Afghanistan itself simply won't be able to take over funding the military and security forces that we're attempting to build there. Is this something that's really financially sustainable?

● (0945)

**Ms. Jill Sinclair:** If you like, Mr. Chair, I'll start and then pass it to General King.

The funding of security forces, as you point out, is enormously expensive, and there's no question that the Afghan government is going to need the support of the international community for a long time to come. I don't have the numbers, but there's also no question that it is cheaper to assist the Afghans to do their own security than to keep deployed forces there. Here you've talked about the U.S. contribution to this effort, and to keep U.S. troops in Afghanistan doing that business, for example, it costs a lot more.

But in many other post-conflict situations around the world, we've seen this need for sustained engagement and for developing the security forces, because the worst thing you can do is to kind of stand them up and then leave them and not fund them. So issues of pension and making sure that you're bringing in recruits and they're getting a reasonable wage, and that you're dealing with issues of corruption and things like attrition, are absolutely essential. Those are the sorts of discussions that, again, you may want to raise with our DFAIT colleagues, I think, in more detail. But those are the discussions, let's say, in the Friends of Afghanistan and that go on in the UN context and with the Afghans themselves as they stand up their economy. It's going to be a long-term process.

I don't know if you have anything to add, General.

**BGen Craig King:** I don't. I think you've raised some very good points.

It's certainly a concern. All I can say from my perspective as a military officer is that your security forces are raised in response to the security situation you find yourselves in and the threat that exists to your state. This is why the peace process is important. We were discussing former president Rabbani's assassination. This is why that kind of thing is a blow. It has so many effects in the long term in terms of what it means, even for things like the structure of your security forces in the long term.

The only other thing I would offer is that Jill's absolutely right: in Afghanistan it's not just a security issue. It's the whole apparatus of government—how Afghanistan is raising revenues and what the decision processes are within the Afghan government as to how those funds are dispersed. It's all the sorts of things that you do as our political leadership. It's a big question that you've asked and it's something that is a concern—absolutely.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway:** Does it suggest, then, that we, Canada, will be there well beyond 2014? One of the fundamental reasons for going to Afghanistan as expressed by the government time and time again—and to the extent that it has support among the Canadian population—is around issues of building civil society in Afghanistan: humanitarian assistance, protection and human rights, and those sorts of things.

It seems that financially we've run into a very obvious conflict between building security and military forces in Afghanistan and the very objective of the mission, which was to build in Afghanistan a society that values human rights and protects women and children... those sorts of things. Can you comment on that?

**Ms. Jill Sinclair:** If I might, just to have a go at it, to be very clear at the outset, Canada's military contribution, which is now a training contribution only, is to 2014. That's very, very clear, and there's nothing beyond that envisaged. In terms of where the international community goes vis-à-vis Afghanistan, beyond that I can't speculate.

But for partnership going forward with Afghanistan as they stand up their governance functions, I think every political leader around the world has said that this isn't a transitory commitment. How it manifests itself will be different. One can only hope that by 2014, with a well-trained Afghan security force—we're at 300,000 now—and with all the changes going on, if they're able to be sustained, you'll have an Afghanistan that's in a bit of a different position with regard to what it needs from the international community.

But that's all very speculative, obviously, and you have to pit it against the day-to-day realities we all see. But the *trajet* I think is one that is showing success, even if it's difficult.

• (0950)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Opitz, it's your turn.

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

First of all, General, thank you for your briefing. That was an excellent briefing. You didn't have to apologize for being simple, because there are a lot of moving parts and I think we need to go by the numbers. I know that General Lamarre and General Day are two outstanding general officers who are going to bring Canada a lot of credit in what they're doing. In fact, I remember General Day as a young RSS captain back in the day. By the way, we all served in Zgon. I was on Operation Palladium. So we're all going to have a party.

I'm going to ask three questions in particular.

To my friend's question, this may help explain something. In the Canadian Forces, we teach the military ethos and we teach values. I presume that is something that is going to be taught to the troops in Afghanistan. So in terms of civil society, what benefit at the soldier level does teaching ethos and values have for the individual soldier and then in branching out within their own units and civil society?

**BGen Craig King:** First of all, you have in the Afghan National Army probably one of the very few unifying institutions in the whole country. Think of Afghanistan in comparison to our own country. What is the unifying thing? In Afghanistan the national army has that position. It's also one of the most respected organizations within the country. People tend to be—particularly in the south, in my experience—rather jaded about political process. There is a sense of disenfranchisement or whatever. But I will say that with respect to the army, there's universal support, which transcends ethnic lines, by the way.

So you bring a recruit into this environment, into a national institution. You give him an opportunity for a wage that he was not able to realize in his own community. You give him training. You give him literacy. And perhaps he takes his desire to end his time with the army and he goes back into civil society. What a tremendous asset that has now been built in terms of a citizen of

Afghanistan: to have a perspective of the nation as a nation, something that transcends those ethnic lines, and to have the skills of literacy as well when he goes back into civil society. That is a tremendous asset, and we have a hand in that with what we're doing, absolutely.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** I'd like to take a step back in terms of the structure of the training mission. I presume we're modelling it on the Canadian system with our training centres—Kingston and Canadian Forces College to some extent—and in terms of mentoring, because we do have four-ringer mentors, I believe, in Kabul. Is that correct?

**BGen Craig King:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** So maybe you could take a step back and describe how the Canadian system being built around the way we train our soldiers here overlies the training of Afghans.

**BGen Craig King:** Absolutely.

Broadly speaking, our training system is geared, as is the Afghan one, to producing the very best soldiers in all the breadth and depth of the competencies that we expect them to have. Those come in two forms: individual training and collective training.

Individually, we make sure that the individual has those skills, that he can march, shoot, and communicate. That is a very basic description of those sorts of things. If he's an engineer or if he's an artillery soldier or if he fights out of a tank, we make sure he is able to operate the systems that are at his command in the way that is necessary to achieve the effects we want on the battlefield. So that's the individual training system.

Our collective training system builds teams: everything from platoons to companies of 150 to battalions of 600 or more.

So the elements of the Canadian training system—which, by the way, was the foundation for the success we were able to achieve in Kandahar—very much mirror the training structure we have within the NATO training mission.

The KMTC, the Kabul Military Training Centre that I described, where Colonel Mike Minor is doing great work, you could equate to kind of a battle school environment or maybe some of the stuff being taught in Gagetown, New Brunswick. When you get to Colonel Rory Radford's consolidated fielding centre, you're talking about perhaps the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre out in Wainwright, Alberta, and those kinds of parallels.

The fact is that our guys are in there mentoring the trainers of the Afghan force with the view that they own that development long term, in both the individual realm and the collective realm.

• (0955)

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Absolutely. Thank you.

Captain Bernatchez, I know we have a distributed model out there, and obviously we have force protection soldiers around certain things. What are the rules of engagement, and what's left and right of ARC for our force protection services?

**BGen Craig King:** That's more of an operational question, and for reasons of operational security I will decline to respond to your question, with the greatest of respect, sir. We just do not discuss that in this forum.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** That's fair enough. Okay.

**The Chair:** Mr. Opitz, your time has expired.

[Translation]

Mr. Brahmi, go ahead.

**Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for the brigadier-general.

According to slide 7, there are a number of other training locations, where staff are provided with guidance and advice.

What other locations do the Canadian Forces use to conduct operations in Afghanistan?

[English]

**BGen Craig King:** Thank you for the question, sir.

They're still located within the three locations I described: Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif in the north, and Herat in the west.

To give you an idea, I just highlighted two of the main or biggest ones, the Kabul military training centre and the consolidated fielding centre. But to give you an idea of where else we are, in Kabul we're at the Afghan signal school; their medical academy; the Afghan National Civil Order Police, or ANCO, a special type of police that are employed, whose national headquarters we are at in Kabul; the Afghan border police headquarters; and we're providing assistance to ministerial advisers and other elements through the NATO training structure.

In Mazar-e Sharif, we're providing medical training at the regional military hospital there, which is a training centre. They have a series of regional training centres just like we do here in Canada. We're providing support there, and there is a police training centre up in Mazar-e-Sharif, where we have a presence as well. In Herat there is a regional military training centre, where we have a small contribution of about 16 folks.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tarik Brahmi:** Mr. Chair, I have another question for the brigadier-general.

Of all staff, over 800 strong, how many trainers actually train individuals?

[English]

**BGen Craig King:** I would say the ratio is quite favourable. I would honestly have to do an analysis and get back to you on what the actual breakdown is, but we can do that. But our presence there is not preponderantly doing desk jobs, or if those people are doing desk jobs, it's because they're mentoring an Afghan who has a desk job. So our people are preponderantly doing training at the front end.

[Translation]

**Mr. Tarik Brahmi:** As for the language problem, I would like to know what languages are predominantly used, aside from Pashto. I also want to know how many Canadian Forces members can speak Pashto. Also, if only a small number of them can speak one of the local languages, how likely is it that the Taliban will end up interpreting for them?

[English]

**BGen Craig King:** Thanks very much for the question. When you were asking it, I was trying to remember some of my experiences on the language issue back when I was in Afghanistan.

It's a very complex environment with respect to language, because you have major ethnic groups. You made mention of the Pashtuns. There is a unifying language that is used, which most if not all Afghans can speak. I'm just trying to remember what it is. It's not Pashto. Forgive me, but the name just escapes me right now.

The way we interact in the environment there is through interpreters. Interpreters are an invaluable resource. They are very, very carefully screened, and we find that we operate extremely well with them. Many times, a lot of the interpreters who I ran into actually had family connections back in Canada, or the United States, or wherever, which actually accounted for their linguistic ability. But they are carefully screened with a very rigorous process of checks to avoid the exact thing you described. I would extend that to the Afghan national security forces as well, where there is a very extensive program of identification and background checks before we accept these people into our training.

• (1000)

[Translation]

**Mr. Tarik Brahmi:** We know that drug trafficking is an important source of income for the Taliban. How does what the Canadian Forces pay those interpreters measure up against what they could make through drug trafficking?

[English]

**BGen Craig King:** What does a drug trafficker make in Afghanistan?

I would say that drugs are still a very serious social issue in Afghanistan. Clearly, though, if you deal in the drug environment, you're incurring all kinds of problems, not the least of which is that you're living outside the law. So for anybody who is minded with working within the law... Our responsibility, as we look at the Afghan security forces and the support as an institution, is to make sure that they can gain a wage that allows them to live, so that they avoid a situation where their only recourse is to become involved in the drug trade because there's no employment or what they're being paid from their employment is insufficient to allow them to live.

I think we've taken steps with the Afghan security forces to do that. Pay was haphazard before, so you would have the Afghan police setting up checkpoints and shaking down the local population. If that occurs, it is extremely rare now because the wages that we're able to impart to the police and to the army allow them to live a decent quality of life and to support their families. The average Afghan soldier sends his money to his family in some other part of the country, for example.

So it's a serious problem that you've described. It's something we're aware of, and it all relates to how we're setting up the system of pay to those involved with the security forces, translators included.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Time has expired.

Just to follow up on one of Mr. Brahm's questions, though, are there any Canadian Forces members who have the linguistic capabilities of functioning in the native tongue in Afghanistan?

**BGen Craig King:** I'd have to get back to you. Honestly, that's a level of detail I'd have to check into, sir.

**The Chair:** Mr. Strahl, you have the floor.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We just saw that there was a very high-profile, very coordinated attack on the U.S. embassy and NATO headquarters on September 13, with a tragic loss of life of Afghan personnel. Is this an indication that the level of violence has risen since we transitioned into a training role, or is it still the same level of danger that we've seen throughout?

**BGen Craig King:** That's a good question. The potential, because of the media profile of what happened on September 13, is that the impression could be given that all hell is breaking loose in Kabul. The fact of the matter is that the number of security incidents that have occurred in Kabul over time are on a steady decrease. What we saw last week was certainly a well-planned and determined effort by people who are prepared to die to do what they're doing.

I would just highlight that Kabul is a city of five million people. It's a developed urban environment. This is a very difficult environment in which to operate. The significant thing, from my perspective as a military officer, last week was the response that was furnished. It was Afghan-led. It took approximately 20 hours or so before the thing was cleaned up. But if you think about what happened in Mumbai a few years ago, by comparison, these things happen, and it took a matter of days for that event to be secured.

So the Afghan forces will do things their way, and in this case, certainly as we're observing this, we are seeing a lot of positive signs, notwithstanding the seriousness of what occurred. I assure you that the people on the ground are studying this very carefully and taking the necessary measures to pre-empt any future ones—not to say it won't happen, but this is something that is continually reviewed, continually studied, and we're very, very diligent in this area.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Are you able to tell us if there were any Canadian Forces or others directly threatened by that attack and any that directly responded to it?

**BGen Craig King:** There was a report that came in that one of our mobile convoys was engaged in some of the exchange of fire, but I would not want to go into any kind of detail on that. But yes, there were Canadian Forces personnel who were travelling who were implicated, yes.

•(1005)

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** As we continue on the training mission, we talked about the Afghan National Army being able to handle their own operations. When do we anticipate that they'll be able to handle their own training as well?

**BGen Craig King:** I think they're handling their own training now. It's a journey, so that process continues, and it's a question of perfecting over time how they manage that. It's only going to get better. As I was indicating earlier in response to one of the questions,

some of the positive signs that we're seeing already are certainly encouraging to us.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Ms. Sinclair, as Canada is transitioning from our combat role to a training mission, can you elaborate on the contributions of our NATO partners in that area as well? Are there others that have taken a similar approach to transitioning into a primarily training role? What assistance are our NATO partners providing, besides the U.S., in the training of the Afghan National Army?

**Ms. Jill Sinclair:** Thanks for the question.

We can certainly get you all the detailed numbers around the participation of NATO allies and ISAF partners in training. This is very much a shared responsibility. You've mentioned the United States and the United Kingdom in particular. As the general said, we're the second-largest contributor to the NATO training mission in Afghanistan. So Canada's contribution is a very significant one.

People are offering, including non-NATO partners who are associated with ISAF, all sorts of capacity-building efforts. So what you're finding is a little bit of support from non-traditional partners, like the Jordanians and others. The training mission, because it's a mission of giving the capability to the Afghans to make that transition that they themselves want to do in 2014, has commanded a lot of support. Those who are not able to actually do stuff on the ground in Afghanistan are offering financial support to the NATO training mission too. We could certainly give you some breakdown of that, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

Mr. Alexander, you are batting cleanup.

**Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC):** Thanks very much, Chair.

First, I'd like to commend the Canadian Forces for their performance at all stages of Operation Athena as it closes out. Athena is the goddess, if I'm correct, of wisdom, warfare, and intelligence, and I think they've displayed all of those qualities in the highest degree at every stage.

We're obviously all in mourning for former president Rabbani. Our Prime Minister expressed yesterday condolences and concern across Canada. President Rabbani was someone who contributed strongly to disarmament, to the first formation of a parliament in Afghanistan, and now to reconciliation.

Mr. Stanekzai, who you mentioned, Brigadier, was someone I and many others worked with very intensely over a decade—in my case, six years—in Afghanistan. To hear that he has been badly wounded is just awful.

But we do need to be careful about drawing conclusions about what we are heading towards this year, or in 2014. I certainly do not think it need be a civil war. On the contrary, as you have implied, if one looks at the nature of the continuing conflict and the roots of these sorts of attacks, the roots are not inside Afghanistan. We have to ask what will be the future of the reconciliation process in the wake of this attack, but it's not a defence question; it's a political question, which other committees will have the opportunity to take up, and I hope we as parliamentarians in another context.

My questions will focus on Operation Attention. First, could you clarify for us what roughly the Canadian share of the mission is? We know we're the second-biggest contributor, but what does that represent in terms of the overall numbers? Secondly, does Major-General Day have a position in the NATO training mission, apart from commanding the Canadian component?

• (1010)

**BGen Craig King:** I'll answer the second first, if I may. Absolutely, he's the deputy commander for the development of the army there, which is a very high position and a position of considerable authority and influence within the NATO training mission structure. General Day is a good friend of mine, and to have him in that position I think is great for Canada, for the Canadian Forces, and for Mike.

The other question, on the numbers, sir, I'll have to defer on that one. I just don't have that information readily at hand. You'd think I would, but for some reason I just don't have it. I'll have to get back to you, sir.

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** Okay, thank you.

This relates to a question posed by Mr. Strahl, but I think it would be of interest to all of us to know whether there are still gaps in the NATO training mission. Obviously we've filled in some serious capabilities. The last time I checked, there were still some missing pieces. Could you either identify them for us today or get back to us on that?

Also, your opening statement said that Operation Athena is our participation in ISAF and Operation Attention is the name of the contribution to the NATO training mission. My understanding is that the NATO training mission is under ISAF command. Is that not so?

**BGen Craig King:** Yes.

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** Right.

Do you have figures of the force levels today or recent figures for 2011 for the Afghan National Army and police?

**BGen Craig King:** I can say the Afghan National Police force is at 135,000 right now, and for 2011 we're tracking towards 171,000 members for the army.

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** Really?

**BGen Craig King:** Yes.

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** So that's not in the future but it's more or less today?

**BGen Craig King:** That's today.

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** Do you have any sense of casualty trends in the army or police this year versus in previous years? I know in

recent years there have been up to 1,000 police killed annually. Do you have any sense of trend lines?

**BGen Craig King:** We have just come out of another period of violence that occurred across the country. It's still a violent year in Afghanistan, although it's not as bad as 2010 was. Any loss of life in those is regrettable, but as far as the trends we're seeing go, that for casualties is downward.

I don't have the exact figures. I would just say that the police tend to be more at risk than the army does. They're in among the people. They tend to be more static. They're much more vulnerable, so their losses tend to be disproportionate to those of army. When I was there the rate was about five to one or greater.

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** If you have those figures for recent years, we'd be grateful to receive them.

Finally, could you say something about the process of certifying a *kandak* and the numbers that are getting those higher levels of certification, as well as about areas to which the lead for security has already been transferred to the Afghans and those areas slated for transfer this year and next year? How are we doing on that front?

**BGen Craig King:** What was the first part of your question?

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** It was on the certification of a *kandak*.

**BGen Craig King:** Right, it was on certification.

So you will have a unit that will be formed under its commander, say a *kandak* or a battalion, of about 600 members in all-up strength, organized into companies of about 150 and command and control and support. They will be formed and provided with a series of tactical training environments in which they will be closely assessed, on everything from the low-level skills that are displayed by the soldiers to the manoeuvre decisions in a particular context that are made by a particular commander.

Then they will organize a test exercise in which they will pit this force in a scenario and assess its capability in all the domains. There's a very elaborate process of assessing command and control and manoeuvre and proficiencies and all that kind of thing. Then a report will be made.

Once the *kandak* is certified as having the necessary people, having the required equipment, and having undergone the necessary training, then it will be confirmed as being good to go into the field force of the Afghan army. At that point it will be assigned to a parent brigade under a parent corps in a particular part of the country according to a very elaborate rollout program for units according to whatever direction the security forces have been given by the government on the security picture in the country.

So that kind of paints a picture of how that's done. The Afghans look after that with mentorship...and it's a comparative and collaborative process. The NATO training mission motto is "*shohna ba shohna*", which means "shoulder to shoulder", and that's the approach taken to confirm these institutions.

With regard to areas of transfer, under the program for transition to Afghan ownership, which was confirmed last year in Kabul, in July, Bamyán in central Afghanistan, formerly under a New Zealand lead, became the first province firmly established as a lead within the Afghan security forces. That process is ongoing and there will be a couple of other sites.

As you can appreciate, the process is complex. It is affected by factors, such as those we were discussing, in all aspects of the picture, not just security force availability and preparedness. This process is under continual review, as you will well appreciate. So we're waiting for the next tranches or slices of that rollout.

All I would say to you, sir, is that it has started, and we're on a path now.

•(1015)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I have a couple of quick questions, General.

When we were going through the rotations of all the personnel going through Kandahar, we had complete Canadian Forces bases that would almost empty right out as everybody transferred with their units and battle groups into theatre. Now everything has changed. How is the deployment working? Where are the military personnel coming from who are doing that training in Kabul and area? How is that impacting upon our training capabilities here in Canada with our own Canadian Forces members?

**BGen Craig King:** That's a really great question.

We have to make sure, just as with the previous question, how we balance the purse tempo, and that the Canadian Forces, despite the demands of the overseas missions, continue to be a viable force to address Government of Canada directed activities and requirements.

Right now, the mission overseas has been drawn largely from the western part of the country. That will rotate over time, just as we did on previous missions. I believe the next one up on the block is in Ontario, so Two Brigade, central area, will probably be up. Don't quote me on that, but I believe that's the trend we're on.

The training that's conducted is still done using the institutions that we have gained success in using and we will continue to exploit. Just as we talked about syllabus and all that, we are adjusting the training syllabus for those folks who are going over to the training mission to account for the things they are going to be doing. There is a lot of emphasis on the culture of what they're doing, there is a lot of emphasis on training, and there is a lot of emphasis on the nature of the security forces with which they will be dealing. I think the training system we have in place is very well adapted.

I will say this about the current mission. It is very leadership heavy because of the kinds of jobs we're doing. You'll find that our senior NCOs, our master warrant officers, or warrant officers, are implicated quite a bit. The same applies to the officers with the major and the lieutenant-colonel ranks. There are a lot of requirements there for operating within the NATO training mission structure and to pair up with our Afghan colleagues. That's something we're managing and we're managing well. We don't see any problems with force generation, as we term it, to provide the forces, that would be

any cause for concern, and what the Canadian Forces can do to respond to domestic or other international contingencies.

**The Chair:** Great.

We do have time for a third round.

Mr. Harris for five or six minutes.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you, Chair.

General, you were asked to describe a number of locations and a number of different activities in the Kabul area. Can you tell me how many different locations throughout Kabul are there Canadian soldiers engaged in training activities? Some of the types are listed in one of your slides, but can you tell me how many locations there are?

•(1020)

**BGen Craig King:** Precisely, sir, no. I'll get back to you. If you want a scale, it would probably be in the neighbourhood of about a dozen locations or so, or thereabouts. Please don't quote me, and we'll get back to you.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I would like to have some detail because we're a little short of that on some of the questions today.

The reason I ask is because we have 800 soldiers in Kabul itself. We're talking about eight, ten, a dozen, whatever, different locations where they're operating. We were told by the minister when this was discussed that we were talking about "behind the wire" operations. Is there a wire that we're behind? We have 800 people living in Kabul. Where are they living? How secure is their location? We've seen the attack on the embassy. I was in the U.S. embassy in Kabul. It's pretty well fortified, if not the best fortified location in Kabul, and it was clearly vulnerable to attack.

What I want to know is how does this "behind the wire" notion translate when we have up to a dozen locations in Kabul itself and 800 people in these different locations?

**BGen Craig King:** Thanks for the question. It's a good one.

As we're looking at our deployment, there are three big issues that determine whether a mission is viable from a Canadian Forces standpoint. First, can we protect ourselves? It's force protection. Second, can we have assured medical support to deal with casualties if we get them? Third, can we sustain ourselves and provide real life support and what not when we're deployed? Those are our absolute red cards and have to be satisfied.

After the announcement that we would be involved in the training mission, a series of reconnaissances was conducted to provide detail to the plan. We engaged very carefully with our allies on the ground. What we're doing is leveraging already existing infrastructure, which has force protection measures that are of a standard that allows the Chief of the Defence Staff to say that the risk to Canadian Forces is acceptable in this realm.

We're superimposing ourselves on bases, on secured locations, on fortified locations that already existed. All of the life support that you imply is also in place, so in the event that a Canadian soldier becomes a casualty because he is transiting through Kabul and may be subject to an attack—unfortunately, like the one that occurred to a good friend of mine in May 2010, Colonel Geoff Parker, who was killed in Kabul—there are measures in place to mitigate that risk so we're protected.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I understand how there should be a risk assessment going on, but if you're talking about 800 people in the dozen locations, obviously transport is involved on an ongoing daily basis to carry that out. Is there a base on which the 800 soldiers are living? Are we relying on ourselves or our own forces for force protection or are we relying on the Afghan National Army? You've talked about leveraging existing infrastructure. That's a nice euphemism for "we're relying on whatever's there".

Are we relying on the Afghan National Army, or do we have our own separate part of the 800 people who are in fact involved in force protection?

**BGen Craig King:** Thanks, sir.

There's no one in the training mission who's manning a gate or standing guard on a bit of infrastructure. In terms of our leveraging of existing infrastructure, it's more than I was perhaps indicating. We are working extremely closely with our allies. The force protection measures that exist in these locations are through an arrangement that has been made, if it's a camp that's run by the Americans, through the American system that's in place.

If we're moving, we move in protected vehicles that have been drawn from Kandahar and repositioned in Kabul so that our people have the greatest degree of protection when they're on the road. We move in convoys. We move with an awareness of who's out of the gate at any one time and who is back inside the gate. It's very carefully tracked.

We have arrangements in place with our allies on the ground that are distinct from the Afghan security apparatus, although we count on the residual security they provide. We have entered into arrangements with our allies on the ground to take even further measures to respond to incidents that occur so that our people have the greatest degree of force protection possible. You'll forgive me if I don't go into the details of any of those, but I can tell you that we work very closely with our allies so that we're as responsible as possible in attending to our requirements.

•(1025)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. McKay.

**Hon. John McKay:** Thank you again for your testimony here.

You're operating in a pretty rough neighbourhood and you're shipping a fair bit of fairly valuable equipment by land through Pakistan. It's hard to tell, at times, whether Pakistan is friend or foe. Sometimes they're both.

I can only imagine that the Government of Pakistan gets a little jumpy about a significant shipment of men and materiel, if you will, through its sovereign territory. Can you describe to us the

arrangement with the Government of Pakistan for both protection and protocols? Because notwithstanding that you're heavily armed and in a fairly vulnerable situation with a convoy, I would imagine that there are those entities that would wish very much to take a real shot at you.

**BGen Craig King:** Thank you for the question; it's a great one as well.

First I'd like to make sure we're absolutely clear: there are no Canadian Forces personnel that are going through Pakistan as part of the redeployment exercise. What we're doing to recover our assets that are going on the ground lines is to rely on contracted movers, who provide their own security to move our items through that part of Pakistan to get it to a sea terminal or the port facility in Karachi.

**Hon. John McKay:** Are they Canadian movers or are they Pakistani movers?

**BGen Craig King:** These would be locals, Afghan and Pakistani. It would be a locally arranged contract.

**Hon. John McKay:** Really?

**BGen Craig King:** Right.

In terms of our relationship with the Pakistan government, Canadian soldiers don't go where they're not invited, except where we have an international mandate to operate.

**Hon. John McKay:** Is the Pakistani government providing any protection?

**BGen Craig King:** This is all done through a contracted arrangement that is well established in terms of support. This is a well-established process that NATO has been using and what not. We're just leveraging the existing framework for that.

To comment on Pakistan government involvement, they would be aware of what we're doing, certainly, but beyond that I really can't comment.

**Hon. John McKay:** Possibly it's a reflection of my naivety, but I must admit some shock at shipping literally millions of dollars worth of very valuable equipment through semi if not absolutely hostile territory without the protection of our own people.

Presumably you have thought of other alternatives—shipping through India, or possibly shipping through Russia, or some other form. I assume that those options were foreclosed for whatever reason.

How confident do you think these contractors will be in getting this through?

**BGen Craig King:** On the face of things, sir, I can understand your discomfort. Let me try to dispel some of that discomfort if I can.

The first thing is we're not shipping anything very valuable through Pakistan. The things we are shipping through Pakistan, were they to be lost to banditry or whatever you're implying, the effect on the Canadian Forces and our future posture would be minimal. However, they are assets that we own, and we're responsible for bringing them back.

Secondly, as General Lamarre's mission has unfolded, we have tried, and have had some considerable success, in reducing the number of things we're sending on that route, recognizing the things you say, through better approaches to our divestments. We are forecasting right now that we're not going to ship nearly as many sea containers through Pakistan as we estimated at the start because we're getting better success in selling stuff and divesting ourselves of stuff.

I would say that we're very conscious in terms of potential contingencies. If we had to, because the situation in Pakistan became untenable and it did not make good sense to send our stuff through Pakistan, we do have fallback options and we could divert things to air movement or other means. It would be more expensive, but in the cost analysis of doing things, that is a potential option to us, that we would just send it out of Kandahar to our support hub in Kuwait.

These things have all been taken into account. The tremendous expertise that is assembled in Kandahar with our movers, with our logisticians, all the things that are at the command of General Lamarre right now to do this very detailed and huge-scale logistical effort are all tracking well right now. So we are able to mitigate the risk that is presented by Pakistan.

• (1030)

**The Chair:** Ms. Sinclair, you wanted to jump in on that?

**Ms. Jill Sinclair:** Just very quickly to stress again—and without getting into a debate around the many proclivities and dynamics within Pakistan, which is a very complex place—the very low value of material going through Pakistan. Other allies are also using the route through Pakistan much in the same way. As I say, there are many dynamics in Pakistan. It is also a very vibrant kind of entrepreneurial country. The fact that there are companies that are willing to take on this business and provide protection to the convoys is not surprising. But as the general said, we've looked at all of the contingencies here, and if it doesn't work for us, we'll look at other options.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Gallant.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, how many women have been recruited into the Afghan police?

**BGen Craig King:** I'd have to get a breakout number for you, ma'am. The total number I have is 1,400 between them both, so I'd have to get a subset of that for the police.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** And is this a relatively new phenomenon? If we go back to the Taliban's rule, were there women enrolled in the police force then?

**BGen Craig King:** I don't know, but under the Taliban rule, I would suspect.... I don't know, but my suspicion is that there were very few, if any.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** What precautions are being taken to prevent infiltration into the training phases?

**BGen Craig King:** It's an elaborate process that has many layers.

First of all, there is a lot of physical security, as we were discussing, to make sure that physical infiltration is not possible.

The other thing that's done is that when a recruit comes in, there is a very elaborate process of identification using the latest technology. We do the background checks to identify the village and the family—and the Afghans actually are pretty good at that kind of thing. If you go into a village, they know the family; they know whence they come. It's not like, say, North America, where brothers and sisters and families are scattered across the country. So when we say there's a check done, it's actually quite an effective means of establishing that a person is who he says he is.

Then their integration into the force is managed, so they are well established within their groups, let's say.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Now if we go back to the training and the progress being made by the ANP and the ANA, but sticking with the army for now, how close is it to becoming a fully functioning force? Is it conducting operations or missions on its own?

**BGen Craig King:** Absolutely. I would say that it varies across the country, because there are a lot of variables in this, but absolutely, the Afghans are taking the lead in their own operations. Absolutely, they're taking the lead in their own security and have been for a while.

It's a question of how far they are on that path of being able to do it in a way that achieves the effect, minimizes their casualties, and safeguards their place with the people. It is a very impressive thing to watch, but it's not monolithic; there are still areas that have to be addressed.

Where we contribute to that overall picture is that the training we impart promotes those skills. So it's not just the execution of missions but also how to plan for a mission. So when we're at one of those training centres, whether at the consolidated fielding centre or the military training centre in Kabul, we impart those skills with exactly that view in mind, that they're going to be able to take over their own responsibility in all its dimensions.

• (1035)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Including logistics and personnel management?

**BGen Craig King:** Absolutely. And some of the challenges there are greater, because when you talk about it being a largely illiterate society, one of the difficulties I found—and I was mostly involved with the police—was they had received vehicles that would break down and they didn't know how to do the requisitions to get the vehicles either repaired or replaced.

These are some of the basic challenges the guys are confronted with. How do you deal with that environment where the security forces have an illiterate component? How do you track weapons and uniforms that have been distributed?

Logistics is a real challenge, given the fact that you're dealing with a bunch of complexities. It stresses the fact that we're dealing with a recruitment base that is largely illiterate.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** In the Afghan National Army, are they all volunteers? There's no conscription there whatsoever?

**BGen Craig King:** Yes, it's a recruited force. That's right.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Is there a way to verify the ages of the recruits?

**BGen Craig King:** Yes, that's a really good point, and something that is taken very seriously because of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its protocol on child soldiers.

When I talked about the identification process, I can tell you from my experience that where something like age is in doubt, a doctor is retained to come in. A lot of times, someone won't know how old they are. A father might even say, "Here's my son. He's of the right age." That's said to keep them together when they go to a recruitment place; the age span of some of the recruits would impress you.

There are ways of ascertaining age with a reasonable degree of certainty, and where recruits' ages have been determined to be within the range of a child, their training is discontinued and they are sent back. Sometimes that puts a strain on the dynamic in that group, because in some cases you'll have two or three or four from a village who are coming up to join the army or the police.

**The Chair:** We're done with our questions.

There are a few questions that were asked of you, General, for which you didn't have the details, so you have some homework.

**BGen Craig King:** Yes, sir.

**The Chair:** If there is any need for clarification of what those requests are, contact the clerk and he'll go through the blues and get that detail for you so the department can respond.

I want to thank you for your testimony today. We are so very proud of our men and women who are serving in Afghanistan for the difficult task they have and the incredible job they have already done. I hope you share our appreciation of how they've been such great representatives of Canada in standing up for men, women, and children in Afghanistan who want to get away from that tyranny they've experienced in the past. Thanks so much.

With that, we're adjourned.

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