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Chair

Mr. James Bezan

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● (0850)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. Sorry for my tardiness. I was in a meeting where there was a heated debate. Anyway, we got her done.

We're going to continue with our study on readiness, and have invited back to the committee Major-General Jonathan Vance.

General, I'll open the floor to you so you can make your opening comments.

MGen Jonathan Vance (Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence): Thank you, sir.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you and to provide you with this briefing on the Canadian Forces' readiness.

[*Translation*]

As you know, I am Major-General Jonathan Vance, Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff.

On behalf of the senior leadership at National Defence, let me start by saying that we very much welcome your interest in and study of Canadian Forces Readiness. Although often misunderstood, readiness is an issue of the utmost importance for the Canadian Forces. It is at the very heart of how we design the force and prepare and deploy the men and women of the Canadian Forces.

Before you are eight slides providing a broad view of the Canadian Forces Readiness. I would like to walk you through this quick briefing, after which I would be pleased to answer your questions.

[*English*]

I'll turn to slide 1, an organizational chart of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces. As you know, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces are a unique and complex organization. They are controlled and managed by an integrated headquarters, in which the military and civilian personnel work hand in hand to ensure that the men and women who serve Canada do so with the best resources and training available.

Readiness is a cross-cutting issue that implicates all levels of command in the Canadian Forces, as well as many of our civilian counterparts in the Department of National Defence. I am aware that as part of your study you have already expressed an interest in meeting with the Commander Canada Command, Commander of the Expeditionary Forces Command, and the Commander of the Canadian Army. I know on Thursday you will hear from my boss, the Chief of the Defence Staff, who will be able to provide you with his views on Canadian Forces readiness. I am certain that all of these appearances will be very useful to your study.

To complement those appearances and ensure that you are provided with a complete picture of Canadian Forces readiness, we respectfully suggest that you may also wish to consider hearing from the Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the Commander of Canadian Operational Support Command, or their representatives. Finally, the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, Vice-Admiral Bruce Donaldson, is prepared to appear at the end of this process to respond to any lingering questions you may have and to put CF readiness into context against overall resource management and force development.

I'd just make a point on that first slide. The boxes that are highlighted show those who are appearing and who we suggest appear. I don't want to presume all of them will appear.

Turning now to slide 2, in advance of your hearings, I thought it might be helpful to outline how each of the potential witnesses relates to Canadian Forces readiness. You will find the list of their duties and their pictures on slide 2.

First of course is the Chief of the Defence Staff, who is ultimately responsible for the command and control of the Canadian Forces and, therefore, CF readiness overall.

Second, Lieutenant-General Semianiw, Commander Canada Command, is the commander of all domestic operations and those operations that would encompass Canada, the United States, and Mexico. In the context of readiness, he is what we call a force employer. That is an operational level commander who deploys forces to domestic and continental missions.

Likewise, Lieutenant-General Beare, Commander of CEFCOM, Expeditionary Forces Command, is a force employer for global operations such as in Afghanistan and Libya.

Moving on to what we call force generators, those people who actually own the forces, Lieutenant-General Devlin is the Commander of the Canadian Army. It is his job to provide the combat-ready troops and equipment that can then be handed off to an operational commander and deployed on either domestic or international operations by the force employers.

Turning to slide 3, in the same vein, Lieutenant General Andre Deschamps and Vice-Admiral Paul Maddison, commanders of the Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Canadian Navy respectively, provide the combat-ready sailors, air personnel, ships, and planes that can be effectively deployed and employed by force employers.

I should highlight that an important part of readiness is the ability to sustain operations, the logistics if you will. You may be hearing, if you so wish, from Major-General Mark McQuillan, the Commander of Canadian Operational Support Command, whose organization actually both generates forces and employs them.

Finally, the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, Vice-Admiral Bruce Donaldson, is responsible to the deputy minister and the Chief of the Defence Staff on corporate matters. He is uniquely situated to speak to you about how Canadian Forces readiness is managed in terms of resources, force structure, and force development.

Turning to slide 4, now we really get to crux of the matter: what readiness actually is. I make the point here that readiness covers a very wide waterfront and needs to be explained, because there are many interpretations of what it accounts for. In broad strokes, readiness is the ability of a military force to execute a particular mission or task in a timely fashion and over the time required to accomplish the mission. There's the timely aspect and there's also an endurance aspect.

● (0855)

Of course, this ability is influenced by many factors. We consider readiness to be at the intersection of strategic and policy considerations with intelligence, resources, and training.

Turning to slide 5, you'll see some specific aspects of readiness. First, there is tactical readiness, in preparing individuals with the necessary training and equipment to fulfill the required task, and bringing those individuals together to train collectively within their service, the army, the navy, or the air force.

Second, there is operational-level readiness, where these services or elements thereof are brought together into a joint environment consisting of multiple services and multiple types of operations, and taught to work together to achieve a specific mission.

Of course, these two ultimately come together to produce strategic readiness, that is, the ability of the military as a whole to respond to government direction and priorities.

Slide 6 is a short vignette that describes the road to high readiness. First, the individual must be trained to perform his or her specific role or task. Second, collective training brings individuals together in cohesive units within the services. Third, as just mentioned, these single-service formations, or elements of them, are brought together for joint training. As you can see from the slide, this means bringing together the army, the navy, the air force, and other joint enablers, such as cyber and space task forces, under one command for a singular purpose.

At the end of the collective and joint training at all levels, the commander responsible for any given unit declares it to be operationally ready for employment.

Finally, on slide 7 you will see how the Canadian Forces moves from force generation to force employment in a particular mission, for example, in Operation Mobile in Libya. First there are certain inputs that are the responsibility of the force generators. For example, the chief of military personnel provides trained recruits. The ADM of materiel, on the civilian side of DND, provides the ships. The ADM of information management and communications systems, or ADMIM, provides the technology. And the Royal Canadian Navy puts them all together to train the crew and produce a ship that is ready for duty—and there are, of course, many other aspects to this. Then the force employer, such as CEFCOM, deploys these assets and provides the ship with national command and direction. It should be noted that force generators also produce those enablers, such as communications, cooks, medical, engineers, logistics, and so on, which allow a joint force to conduct operations across the full spectrum of conflict.

With that, *Monsieur le président*, I'll be happy to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, General. We appreciate those opening comments and the slides.

We're going to start off with our seven-minute round.

Mademoiselle Moore, s'il vous plaît.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): The Canadian Forces can be asked to respond to a multitude of operations. Given how many there are, we cannot be fully prepared.

I would like to know within what time frame, to what level or under what limitations the Canadian Forces are considered ready. What response time is considered satisfactory for these different operations?

If you do not fully understand my question, you may ask me for clarification.

● (0900)

MGen Jonathan Vance: I fully understood it, but given its technical nature, I will respond in English.

[*English*]

That is a superb question. It really speaks to the heart of exactly what readiness is. So thank you for the question.

What we do, how much we do of it, and for how long we would do it, and for how many missions we would be prepared to do it at any one point in time are driven by a number of things. First of all, there is broad government policy. What is it that they would have the Canadian Forces be ready to do? What is the broad spectrum that we must be ready to do? Should we be ready quickly, or should there be a period of what we would understand to be a period of development before we launch into something significant?

Therefore, this touches on the very structure of the Canadian Forces. What is it that we are structured to do? From that structure, we determine how quickly some parts of it would be ready to operate and how long it would take other parts of it to be ready to function over a sustained period of time. The best way to do this is to give you an example.

Search and rescue is something that we have a government mandate to accomplish. It is done under very prescribed set of notices to move. We must be able to respond quickly because of the very nature of the task. We have a force structure that allows us to maintain ready search and rescue response capability across the country in partnership with other government departments.

On the other hand, we must be prepared to sustain a major war, and we can take Afghanistan as an example. We maintain the ability to deploy a battle group on fairly short notice—within 60 days—to a place like Afghanistan and go acquit itself well there, with all of the enablers around it. If we wished to maintain that commitment over a period of years, as we did in Afghanistan, we would need a number of battle groups to allow for the appropriate rotation of those battle groups. With the Canadian Forces' policy of trying not to redeploy soldiers within 24 months—and you can do the math here—you would determine the size of force structure that you would want.

At the same time, there is a resource-management equation. We could estimate ourselves into having armed forces that were massive given all the potential calls upon them. Of course, the country is willing to pay for armed forces of a certain size. That size can fluctuate over time, but generally speaking, we are the size that we can be given the resources.

So you put those two together, and through policy input and the reality of the resources available to you and the nature of the task you have before you, across the spectrum of conflict, from war through to domestic response, and you then determine the best possible force posture to be in to accomplish for Canadians what is intended.

At this point in time, I would suggest to you that the Canadian Forces are well balanced to respond across the lines of operation in the Canada First defence strategy. There are six broad mission sets, from domestic operations through to international engagements, such as Afghanistan—which is a more robust conflict. We have forces attributed to all of them at varying degrees of readiness to go to achieve that task. And certainly for those things that we need to be prepared to respond to very quickly, such as domestic crises, we are prepared.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: I would like to know in how many operations it is possible to simultaneously participate without compromising our readiness and ability to respond to needs within Canada.

MGen Jonathan Vance: That is also an excellent question.

[*English*]

It depends on the size of the commitment overseas.

Perhaps I can put it to you in terms of something that we've already had an example of. We were in Afghanistan continuously for over five years, in Kandahar, with a small brigade of some 3,200. At the same time, we were able to mount a 2,000-person task force in Haiti. At the same time, we had forces apportioned and preparing for and executing at the Olympics. Again, they numbered over 2,000. Those were challenging times for the forces. They certainly stretched our capabilities.

While all that was going on, we maintained our search and rescue posture and maintained the ability to respond to Canadians in crisis anywhere in the country, from the north all the way across the board.

If I may, the challenge with the question of how many operations we can do overseas with the force structure we have is that we need a definition of what the operation is. What is the context? Is it full-out war fighting? How big do you wish to be there?

We can go almost continuously, as we've seen in Afghanistan, at the size we were. If we were to be bigger in Afghanistan—in other words, if we wanted to deploy a full brigade and additional resources—then the chances are that we would not have the force generation ratio behind that to be able to rotate it continuously without changing some factors. One of those factors is how long you would stay.

You saw the U.S. Army having to go from 12-month deployments at the height of the Iraq and Afghan wars, with an army the size they had, to 15-month deployments. As you do the math and you figure it out—that is, as you bring soldiers home and give them a period of rest, retrain them together, and then send them back over for the rest of the time in theatre—at some point you will see that your armed forces aren't big enough to do that within the factors set. One of these factors is the time you would have any individual soldier stay there.

So it is a great question. It speaks to the force structure what we have to conduct operations, how best to poise ourselves, and where we make our investments.

I would just add one point here that I think is useful. There is a tendency to look specifically at the large pieces of the Canadian Forces: the battalions, the ships, the aircraft. Becoming increasingly important, however, as warfare becomes more complex and more challenging, are the enablers that allow forces to operate effectively.

Take the command and control and communications capacity. You cannot work in an alliance or coalition effort now without having very sophisticated capacity and technical ability for command and control. You cannot manage the kind of firepower that was just employed in Libya without having extremely good access to remote ISR, the ability to see, the ability to use the network of satellites to protect yourself in a cyber domain and to provide yourself with the intelligence you need, and so on.

So it all comes together. In fact, some of those enablers, certainly in the Canadian Forces, are the ones that are of relatively low density and need constant investment to ensure that the larger, brawnier pieces, if you will, are able to function effectively. There's no point in putting a battalion somewhere or a ship somewhere if it doesn't have the intelligence architecture around it so that it can operate smartly, with precision and so on.

● (0905)

The Chair: Thank you, General.

Ms. Gallant, you have the floor.

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

Now, our foreign affairs policy and Parliament ultimately decide if and where we deploy, but the military must be monitoring the hot spots across the world. What do you see as potential deployments that we may be faced with participating in?

MGen Jonathan Vance: At this time, it would be challenging for me to describe anything that would be a potential deployment. We certainly monitor worldwide where we think we would have to increase our level of interest and start to do planning for our own asset visibility. What happens if this happens or that happens, or this and that happen together? Can we sustain it logistically, and do we have the command-and-control apparatus in place to do it?

I'll give you a real-world example. Here we are in Libya. Suppose our deployment there had gone on to the end of the mandate that we had there until December, and at the same time there was a requirement to evacuate Canadians elsewhere in the region, because of the influence of government forces and revolutionary forces. Would we be poised to prosecute one operation and at the same time assign additional forces to the evacuation of Canadians, or would we have to deploy additional forces to do that? This speaks to the heart of readiness.

We have a ship deployed in the Mediterranean Sea. She was operating under Operation Mobile for Libya. Would we have another ship available back home to deploy to do something else in the region, or would we have had to reassign that ship from one operation to another? I don't have the answer for you, because all of the factors were not complete. That's one of the things my staff and I do. In the joint staff, we ask “what if” continuously. So when the call does come, we have a considered response, not just something off the cuff.

Ships and aircraft are one thing. The logistics—command and control capacity, working with our allies, finding a place to bed down, and so on—and the science of warfare take a great deal of effort. We want to be well poised at all times to be able to respond.

● (0910)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What capabilities that we may need do we not currently have?

MGen Jonathan Vance: We have all the capability sets that we need right now, but some are mature and some are embryonic. Over time our cyber capacity will need to increase, commensurate with the rest of the world's cyber capacity. We need the ability to protect ourselves in cyberspace from malignant actors.

Canada has a good cyber capacity. But this is one area that we will have to continue to develop and invest in to ensure that, as a cyber threat becomes more prevalent—which we assume it will—we will be able to respond appropriately. I wouldn't say we're lacking in this area, but the future doesn't look particularly bright when it comes to cyber threats, and we want to make certain that we stay up with them.

Our capacity to use ISR, or what are referred to as drones, has helped us in Afghanistan. They tremendously aid our ability to reconnoitre and, ultimately, to engage. It's about having another set of eyes in the sky, on a target or on another area of interest. Drones can be used across the spectrum of conflict, or for domestic support purposes. Do you want to go out there and look for a lost hunter? These drones add to the inventory or arsenal of things that can help you.

We are entering into an era where Canada has expressed an interest in purchasing and acquiring this ISR capacity. It adds to our capability set in many different ways. It increases our intelligence-gathering capacity. It increases our ability to direct firepower. It also demands of us that we have networks able to manage that wide band of information that comes at you through satellite linkages. The effect behind the front lines is often as significant or more so than the effect on the front lines, when it comes to these sorts of capabilities.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: From the standpoint of cyber security, how do you differentiate what homeland security or public security people should be doing as opposed to what would be done with respect to cyber security militarily?

MGen Jonathan Vance: Clearly, National Defence is not in the lead for almost every aspect of cyber security. We maintain networks, our own secure networks, and we have a stewardship responsibility to ensure that those networks are not permeable or attacked by those who would like to do so. Inside National Defence, we have the ability to protect ourselves against cyber attack.

The broader cyber defence of the nation is largely one that rests with other government departments. We play our part by ensuring that the Canadian Forces remain able to function in a cyber-degraded environment. We do not have the lead in any way, shape, or form in the cyber defence of the nation as a whole. But because we are one of many players in the defence of the nation, we have to protect ourselves in cyberspace so that we can maintain our posture.

● (0915)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Can the linkages between our public security, the people who do have responsibility for frontline defence in cyber security, and National Defence be seamlessly in place?

MGen Jonathan Vance: Absolutely.

The Chair: Thanks. The time has expired.

Mr. McKay, can you wrap up the seven-minute round?

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

Chair, you might be interested in knowing that our witness this morning, Major-General Jonathan Vance, will receive a 2011 Vimy Award from the Conference of Defence Associations for outstanding service to the defence and security of Canada. I wonder whether it would be appropriate, Chair, that you offer our congratulations to our witness on this award.

I think it is a very distinguished award, and I certainly think congratulations would be in order.

The Chair: Definitely. On behalf of the committee, congratulations on such a prestigious award, for your service to the country and being recognized by your peers for the great work that you're doing.

[*Applause*]

The Chair: I'll start your time now.

Hon. John McKay: General Vance, I want to carry on the conversation that we were having privately, if you will, earlier this morning. The military forces are becoming more and more dependent on training and intelligence. They are trying to recruit the best and the brightest. I was on a ship this summer, and the captain of the ship was talking about his need to get trades people, particular in the highly skilled trades, computer people, and people of that nature.

I wanted to get you to talk about the issue of recruitment and retention of the best and brightest in the military colleges, while simultaneously maintaining, if you will, the military culture. I generally characterize the military culture as a pretty straight-line culture. You wear a lot of gold there. It's a pretty command-driven structure. There are organizational charts and all of that sort of stuff. Yet we want to get into the military colleges, at the highest level, the future officers. These would be people who are extraordinarily bright, who think in ways that are not linear, shall we say, and who may see two or three or four solutions to the same problem. Yet you're asking these people to, if you will, wedge themselves into linear command structure.

Looking at the issue in terms of readiness, and also in terms of where we're going for the next five or ten years, how can you expect a lot of these kids who come to RMC in first, second, and third year—the best and the brightest, with the highest grades in their classes—to be jammed into a command structure that at times requires, if you will, repetitive and useless tasks that have no apparent utility?

MGen Jonathan Vance: Do you have an example of those...?

Hon. John McKay: I have actually, but I'll leave that off.

MGen Jonathan Vance: Thank you for the question.

I don't agree with your premise that there is a tension between the best and brightest and the nature of military duty. I would also add in regard to your description of the best and brightest that they are not just those coming from RMC. Our troops from across the nation, who are joining as young soldiers, airmen, and women, are also among the best and the brightest and certainly acquit themselves as such in allied fora. We see that. So we have good raw material.

The fact is that you asked a great question and, of course, it's one of the enduring challenges, how to ensure that someone maintains critical thinking skills while at the same time operating within an environment that by necessity has some doctrinaire aspects to it. The simple answer is that it's an ongoing challenge and that we recognize the importance of having critical thinkers at all levels, while ensuring that critical thinking doesn't allow something to become so chaotic that you don't get the job done.

What caused you to ask the question we see every day when trying to inspire people to think, giving them the confidence and the tools to think, but at the same time constraining their actions appropriately to ensure that the mission is accomplished. It is a hierarchy and as you move up the hierarchy, you don't necessarily become any smarter than anybody else, but you do have experience and have the ability to place in context for your junior leaders the situations that you put them into.

So with the incredible investment in education versus straight training and those sorts of drills, you will see that there's a very good balance in the Canadian Forces between that straight education and straight training. We have a good balance there.

In conducting operations, these are not routine and mundane but demand critical thinking, such as in warfare in general.... In Afghanistan, you just didn't go there and start executing. You had to think. You had to devise strategies and campaigns that took account of an incredibly wide set of factors that all mitigated to success or failure, depending on how you took advantage of them.

In ensuring readiness, we invest in critical thinking at all levels. We encourage a mission command environment where we adequately identify the task and the context that you're in and let you use your imagination and experience to the best effect in that environment. But there are some things that you don't give on, such as the rules of engagement. No matter how much of an outside the box thinker you are, the Chief of the Defence Staff sets the rules of engagement for very clear reasons. Your weapons and equipment can be used in one way for many purposes, but that's how your weapon is to operate. Don't try to think too far outside the box on that, and so on. And caring for people, and on it goes....

There's an appropriate balance, as there is in any profession between critical thinking and abiding by the rules that allow you to be effective.

● (0920)

Hon. John McKay: You reframed the question quite well, I think, and I'm not disagreeing with you.

What concerns me, and it's really a low-level concern, is that the military is a hierarchical organization by definition and its reaction time to trends in thinking is almost constrained by the hierarchical nature of the institution. Yet you're being asked to do tasks, as you rightly point out, in Afghanistan and other places that require some very creative thinking as to how to do them. I don't even argue with your point on the rules of engagement and things of nature. I absolutely agree with you.

When you get to both officer class and enlisted folks, what concerns me is how that thinking, that encouragement to be creative, is working with the attention to routine and almost mindless stuff that seems at times to occupy way too much time.

● (0925)

The Chair: Mr. McKay, your time has expired.

General Vance, could you provide a very short response?

MGen Jonathan Vance: That's the second time you've referred to a mindless task or a task that would dull the senses. I guess, I don't know which ones you mean.

The short answer is that we guard against that by continuing to invest in training, putting people in realistic scenarios that cause them.....

You were with General Bowes, who would never be one to say there is one answer to any situation. There is no one solution; there are many solutions to a problem. So giving the soldier the opportunity to practise and an opportunity for education outside of the strict training regime are things that directly affect our readiness to be able to function as a force.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Opitz.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General, I'm going to take off from that line, because I think military education in critical thinking deserves some definition.

First of all, General, in my experience having worked for you in the past at LFCA, I've never felt particularly constrained by any ideas that I had, and I was always encouraged to step up and share.

There are lots of ways we institutionalize this in the forces, for example, at the Canadian Forces College. We also send members abroad to other war colleges to work jointly or with other military partners around the world. There is war-gaming and rock drills, and things like that. I've thrown a bunch of ideas out there, though not necessarily in order.

In terms of the continuous Canadian Forces education system, could you first of all discuss a bit about some of the courses at CFC and their role in developing critical thinking and planning through scenarios?

MGen Jonathan Vance: Thanks for the question.

Before I begin, Mr. Chair, I would like to add to the list of people we would respectfully recommend speak to your committee. There is the chief of military personnel, who manages the officer professional development and NCM professional development system. Through him investments are made in the institution, including via such places as the Canadian Forces College, our recruit school in Saint-Jean, and so on.

I would answer your question by saying that the study of warfare, like the study of so many other large human enterprises, is vast and demanding. The more we do it, the more we understand that it demands thinkers, as well as those who can take that thought and execute it appropriately. At some point you have to do something; you can only stay academic for so long. At some point, you pull the trigger.

To build an armed forces that is trying to achieve best practices in comparison with its allies, you ask what the norms are, what its country demands of it, and what are the raw materials you start with in terms of the personnel and equipment and training. All of that is something that the armed forces leadership, and some of the people I've described to you already, do every day.

The courses that we demand of future leaders—and the more senior they get, the more challenging the courses—are intended to reinforce the idea of using the tools at their disposal correctly and wisely from a technical perspective, at the same time as being able to recognize that even the best possible technical solution may be wrong for the context he or she is in. History is replete with people fighting the last war: if you had done the best cavalry charge ever, it wouldn't matter if the other guys had machine guns.

We try, with great vigour, to avoid being in that kind of a situation. We try to be innovative and to stay up with the times. We would never want to be accused, as an institution, of placing our soldiers in a situation where they were ill-prepared, or being led in the wrong way for the context at hand. We invest a great deal in our leadership, at all levels, to ensure they do it correctly.

● (0930)

Mr. Ted Opitz: I would agree that some of the most ingenious people that we have in this country are Canadian soldiers. They come up with tremendous ideas and solutions on the ground.

General, in your present job, can you describe the processes you follow when you initiate a planning session? When you're given a task—task A for argument's sake—how do you initiate that planning and who are the other stakeholders you bring in to work on that?

MGen Jonathan Vance: Thank you for the question.

It's a complex process, in which there are parts, including just inside the fence, and there are others that include wider government. Generally speaking, in response to a crisis—and Haiti would be a good example here—there is an immediate connection made among the senior levels of the Canadian Forces, specifically the Chief of the Defence Staff, the minister, the deputy minister, the Privy Council, and oftentimes the Prime Minister's Office or the Prime Minister himself.

We want to act quickly and robustly to great effect, and Haiti was an example where all of those people I mentioned were involved, along with Foreign Affairs, and the consular services that had existed in Haiti. They all came together very quickly. There's an organization in Foreign Affairs called START. They're intimately involved in this sort of thing. It is made expressly clear that we are to respond, act, and create positive effects for the people.

When it comes into the department, in straight military planning, often looking at it from the perspective of all the services, it's the job of my staff and, ultimately, me to recommend to the CDS a course of action; how we might achieve that course of action; and what that course of action will cost, in terms of both straight-up resources and taking resources away from other tasks that could be ongoing. We provide the chief advice, and then provide him with the instruments with which he can order that—written rules of engagement, and so on.

The role of my staff is to try to support the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Canadian Forces in the department through all of the interlocutors to arrive at a conclusion of what we're going to do, write the orders to actually get it done, and then maintain it.

For something more deliberate, it's the same thing but only at a slower pace. Often there's consultation with Foreign Affairs and the centre of government on what we wish to do, how long we wish to stay, and so on. Once we have a decision—usually determined as a result of a minister writing a letter or getting a response—we then take it into pure military planning and put the assets together.

The Chair: Thank you. Your time expired two minutes ago.

MGen Jonathan Vance: I'm sorry. I'll try to answer more quickly. Ask easier questions.

The Chair: Mr. Kellway.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, General Vance, for coming today.

My particular interest in your presentation revolves around what you described in the text as strategic or strategic/policy readiness. I understand that there are certain operations of a.... I don't know if I'm using the right language. I knew I had to learn French when I got this job, but I didn't know there was a whole other language I'd have to learn from this committee.

But there are certain postures that we have to maintain in a steady state over time. They don't change much, I presume, like search and rescue, and Canadians in crisis.

The notion of strategic readiness, I presume, is an evolving concept. In other words, what we're getting ready for in strategic terms evolves over time. I wonder if you could confirm that's the case. Can you tell me a little more about the kinds of discussions and interactions there are between the Canadian Forces and government policy to establish that strategic readiness?

Does that make sense?

● (0935)

MGen Jonathan Vance: It absolutely does. It is a great question, and speaks to the heart of readiness *en général*.

To answer your question specifically on what we are getting ready for, if one thinks that readiness has a time component to it, like the speed of response, then we stay ready on short notice for those things that are highly likely to occur. The requirement to respond, in search and rescue for example, is on very short notice. Then there are those who are prepared to respond to international crises, such as Haiti, who don't need a lot of work-up training for the purposes of defence and self-defence. But you're still exporting those forces very quickly in support. The DART is a very good example of a high-readiness unit that can go off and support individuals in crisis around the world and sustain itself for a period of time. So that's where time comes into play.

Then we've got forces on a notice to move, for something that might take a little longer to materialize, but still may be important. This means being able to get involved in a place where Canada has strategic interests, or where Canadian values are at stake—Libya is a case in point. We had air assets and sea assets ready to respond; we didn't know they were going to go to Libya, but simply to that type of crisis.

And so the pat answer would be that we're ready for anything. But, of course, that really doesn't describe it all. We are ready with a timeline associated with these forces, for things that are most likely to happen but we're not 100% sure when they're going to happen. We have a timeframe within which the government would like to be responsive. But then there is the broader policy direction—in this case, contained in the Canada First defence strategy—where Canada also wishes to be able to demonstrate leadership in significant enterprises and events. In this case, we saw Lieutenant-General Bouchard—a product of the Canadian Forces education and training system, a product of his service, a product of a joint capacity—in a position to lead internationally.

Where it gets a bit more challenging to understand is when you look at broader capabilities. How big of a war would we get into? How long would we stay there for? These are questions for government policy that really result in investments in the Canadian Forces, into which size.... And “size” means endurance, because you can't put it all overseas at once; you have to be able to rotate it out. I suppose you could put it all overseas at once, but it would be a one-shot deal, and you'd be there until the job was done—and the world doesn't really work that way any more.

So it's a great question; it opens up a broad avenue of things to discuss, and I hope I've at least tried to answer it.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Well, yes.

One of the things that strikes me, in listening to you and reading through the slides, is the issue of equipment and procurement. The procurement timelines seem very lengthy, depending on what exactly you're ordering. When we get into ships and fighter jets and these sorts of things, it seems to me that we're talking in the realm of decades or many years. That's why I'm interested in the issue of the time horizon for this kind of readiness planning.

If you know that a fighter jet's going to take 10 years to procure, who's thinking out 10 years? And what is that conversation like? What's the world going to be like in 10 years? Where are we going in 10 years?

I note that we've decided to purchase a stealth jet, an attack fighter that supports battle groups with its bombing capabilities. Presumably this is thought about somewhere in this readiness concept. Someone's thinking that we need to be ready for something that uses that kind of equipment. Can you comment on that?

● (0940)

The Chair: Your time has expired, so just make it a very short response. I know it's a big question, but....

MGen Jonathan Vance: I will answer.

I think that is a perfect question, should you have the Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff before you, because he ultimately is the one who presides over force development, force management, and the resources looking to the future.

The short answer is, being ready for the future is a constant challenge. Not only do you have to be ready for the future when those fighters or those ships come into being, but they also have a lifespan of 20 to 25 years, so a great deal of effort is put into getting the starting point right. In other words, starting the process so you get the piece of equipment at the right time when either the world is changing or your own equipment is rusting out. But it also has to have some endurance beyond that; hence, the decisions that you know about already, in terms of what it is that we need. So there is an ongoing, incredibly important process that informs us as to procurement—when, what type, for how long—and which does take into account what we see the future of conflict being.

I would recommend that you chat with the vice-chief about that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Chisu, you have the floor.

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

General, I understand that your mandate is to provide the CDS with advice that enables the planning, initiation, direction, synchronization, and control of operations at the strategic level. From the organizational chart that you presented to us, can you tell the committee what your relationship is with the three different environmental chiefs? I didn't see any kind of relationship, or command relationship, nor what kind of relationship you have with the commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, the commander of the Canadian Army, or the commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force. And in this context, how do you coordinate with all of these chiefs and other colleagues in the command structure of the CF to ensure the readiness of the Canadian Forces?

That's my first question.

MGen Jonathan Vance: Thank you.

The relationship is a consultative one. They are in no way responsible to me. I'm a staff officer for the Chief of the Defence Staff.

The process that we follow for the purposes of readiness is to ensure that, on an annual basis, the Chief of the Defence Staff directs those who provide forces, and directs what forces are to be ready for what reason. And most of the time, that's an enduring equation. It doesn't change a great deal, but there are provisions for it to change, that is, we need to be ready to do search and rescue, to be ready to go offshore with a modest-sized organization like the DART or to reinforce support elsewhere, and to be ready over a longer horizon and be able to go do something like in Afghanistan.

I make certain before the chief signs that direction that the appropriate staff work and research is done to ensure that it's all within the art of the possible and, ultimately, I produce the documents for him to sign.

In terms of crisis response, again, we consult amongst those service chiefs and their staffs to ensure that our picture of what we think is ready is indeed ready at that level, and to give warning and seek advice as we start to put together plans. And ultimately, my primary relationship with them is through the Chief of the Defence Staff, because they are the principal advisors to the Chief of the Defence Staff on their respective services.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: General, how has your office or responsibilities evolved from 2006, when this directorate was established?

MGen Jonathan Vance: That is a great question. In 2004-05 when the first challenge of the transformation of the Canadian Forces occurred and we adopted the command structure of Expeditionary Force Command, Canada Command, Operational Support Command, and Special Operations Command, the CDS developed the ability to exercise or give command and control to those commanders. And so small staff, called the strategic joint staff, was created.

It has evolved from a staff that at one time was seen to cover the entire waterfront of functions, to one that is really focused on operations. So it has actually become a little bit more focused. My job principally is to manage an intelligence-to-deduction-to-assignment-of-forces equation that can be recommended to the CDS to say, here's what we think needs to happen, or here's a recommendation to you, or based on his own survey of the world—which happens more often than not—to have a look at this and to ask what can we do, are we ready, tell me a little bit more about that? I also get input, external to Defence, as to where we think there are some concerns.

The strategic joint staff works as an operations staff of the Chief of Defence Staff.

● (0945)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: I have another question, General. Have you recommended or initiated any model to measure the overall readiness of the Canadian Forces? Maybe this is a little bit of an aside, but the deployment time when you are going on an operation or the so-called rotations are every six or seven months for the troops. Is any thought being given to extending that timing, because this costs money? There is a lot of money involved in rotating the troops. Is there any thought given to increasing the rotation time? I understand that there were some measures taken in that direction, but maybe you could elaborate on that.

MGen Jonathan Vance: Certainly. This is again an ideal question for any one of the service chiefs. Looking at the human component in regard to having six months versus a longer rotation, there are many factors that come into play, including the families, the endurance of soldiers on operations, and whether it is the type of operation that demands high-intensity for a short period of time or one where a soldier has the endurance to last longer.

All of these factors come to bear as we make decisions about the future. A rotation policy is set. It's a policy and is extant unless it gets changed. The army has just recently gone to an eight-month cycle, which gives the army a bit more endurance, given the force size that it has. So over the course of two years, you save a task force. It wasn't necessarily done for cost-saving reasons, though there's always a resource management equation. It is actually done to make certain that with those low-density enablers that we have—intelligence and so on, who are smaller sized in the Canadian Forces—we can actually extend them longer, reconstitute them, and redeploy.

So we do measure. We do measure readiness constantly. I report quarterly to the chief on readiness and trends, and also to give the chief a view of what we have available to us and what its status is.

The Chair: Thank you. It was brought to my attention, General, that in your slides, in the French definitions, the definition for "strategic" is missing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: There is a section with definitions. In the English version, readiness is divided into three elements: *Tactical*, *Operational* and *Strategic*. However, in the French version, only tactical and operational readiness are mentioned. I would like to get the missing page.

An hon. member: My apologies.

Ms. Christine Moore: No problem.

[*English*]

The Chair: If you could provide that information later, I'd appreciate it.

We'll continue on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brahmi, you have the floor.

● (0950)

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Major-General for his explanations.

I have here a document from the American army entitled *Army Logistic Readiness and Sustainability*. It is a fairly detailed document, 139 pages long, that examines all the aspects related to the readiness of the American army. Do the Canadian Forces have a similar document?

MGen Jonathan Vance: Yes, we have documents for each function of the Canadian Forces. We also have documents for the tactical group, aircraft group, etc. Yes, we undertake planning and we have documents attesting to our readiness and the process that led to that readiness.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: How often are these documents updated and published?

[*English*]

MGen Jonathan Vance: It varies. We don't have a cycle of readiness across the forces, in terms of document preparation, and I don't think the U.S. Army does either. We have an annual process that allocates resources and demands that those who receive those resources report on their ability to use those resources. So broadly speaking, it's an annual process whereby resources are turned into outputs and are reported on.

Specifically, I think the army works logistics preparation through that annual process. You could certainly ask the command of the army if there is any documentation he can produce on cyclical army logistics. I don't know of any specific documentation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Are these classified or declassified documents? I am referring to explanatory documents on the availability and readiness of the Canadian Forces.

[*English*]

MGen Jonathan Vance: Some documents are classified.

As for the broad, non-classified documentation, I'm unsure of the classification of the report on plans and priorities that reports to Parliament on what has occurred with the funds assigned to the CF, in terms of their achieving the forces' mandate—which covers as well the preparation of forces.

We do have classified documentation that describes the specific state of readiness, or any challenges to achieving that readiness, of various aspects of the armed forces.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: We are also talking about a concept, meaning that of the operational readiness of equipment. We are talking in particular about 90% or 75% of aircraft. How do the Canadian Forces compare in this regard?

[*English*]

MGen Jonathan Vance: In terms of availability?

[*Translation*]

Are you talking about the readiness of the forces?

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: I am talking about the operational readiness of equipment.

MGen Jonathan Vance: I understand.

[*English*]

The short answer to the question is that I don't know.

[*Translation*]

I have not done any comparative analyses with allied countries in this regard.

[*English*]

I would say, just anecdotally, that we do pretty well. For example, we were able to maintain our Chinook aircraft in Afghanistan at an incredibly high rate of availability for use, compared to the industry norms for that type and age of aircraft. I would suggest that it is probably similar across the equipment that we use, but I am not certain how it stacks up internationally.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Are statistics collected systematically, after the fact, on the use made of each piece of equipment, meaning the operational readiness of a piece of equipment over a certain period of time?

● (0955)

MGen Jonathan Vance: Yes, of course.

We have our Assistant Deputy Minister of Materiel, Mr. Dan Ross. There is a Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff who always analyzes the availability and readiness or our equipment. There are statistics describing our level of operational readiness, the ratings and everything related to equipment.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Is this classified information?

MGen Jonathan Vance: I don't know.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MGen Jonathan Vance: I imagine that part of the information is classified, but I am not certain.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Norlock, it's your turn.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and through you to the witness, thank you for coming this morning.

I want to talk about your duties as director of the strategic joint staff. You're charged with the responsibility of coordinating with our allies and international partners in training exercises and operations.

Can you give us some examples of international considerations that come to play when determining CF readiness?

MGen Jonathan Vance: Certainly. Thank you for the question.

I can give you an example in the case of training. It is becoming increasingly important that we exercise our forces within coalition or alliance constructs to ensure that we have the degree of understanding about how our allies and coalitions work, how all the parts come together, and how the technology binds it and brings things together. Something as simple as being able to pass a live, streaming image from one part of a coalition to another becomes increasingly important if you're concerned about precision, if you're concerned about intelligence gathering, if timeliness is of importance, and so on.

One of the things I do to support the CDS—and I'm not alone in this—is in helping design the Canadian participation in international exercises, where we bring together army, navy, air force, and other enablers on international exercises, either of our making or of international bodies' making, or other countries' making. We participate in that and ultimately manage the lessons-learned process that accrues as a result, which then could affect the way we operate or some of the equipment we have, and the decision-making about that. It might be something as simple as a software upgrade, through to needing to look at something completely different. So exercising is experiential.

We all collaborate—my staff, the assistant deputy minister of policy, and others—internationally in terms of mounting responses to crises. That's a given. There's lots of deconfliction that occurs both in terms of mission and scope refinement as we approach any mission.

In terms of readiness, we really do rely on the experiential pillar and exercises, and feedback from other nations as to what they've learned. We have a great insight right now into how our allies in Afghanistan functioned and what they learned in operations at Kandahar and Helmand, and so on. We try to incorporate those to the best of our ability.

We operate internationally—and it's not just my staff's responsibility. For example, I head to Washington later this month to participate with seven nations on a Multinational Interoperability Council, which is sort of a NATO-minus group that consists of seven nations interested in sharing information about how we can operate better together. That proved invaluable as we mounted operations into Libya, because these same nations were represented.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

Since we are involved with NATO in particular—but, of course, we also have the United Nations and other organizations that we belong to—are there certain international standards? Every nation has preparedness. Is there a general standard that we should maintain or do maintain, and are we meeting those standards?

● (1000)

MGen Jonathan Vance: I'm not aware of an international standard of readiness or preparedness that obliges nations to be ready. Absolutely, within NATO and other alliances Canada has signed up to, NATO being the principal one, there are expectations in terms of the readiness of forces, and we meet those expectations. Those are for chapter-5 operations that would involved defence of yourself or others that are under direct attack. Each nation is allowed to determine what it will do, as you say, but there is an attempt to set some standards or some targets to achieve in terms of the standards. I don't know if that's at all helpful to you.

We do what we think we need to do, so our policy is not governed by an alliance demand upon us. But we certainly would try to maintain participation within all of the standardization working groups that go on—be they for equipment, materiel, or otherwise—and also for the cumulative effect of that. In other words, are you ready to be able to respond? NORAD is a great case in point. NORAD would demand that we have aircraft able to respond to incursions into Canadian airspace. That is prescriptive, but it's because the government has agreed to that policy and has in fact made the policy.

The Chair: Thank you. The time has expired.

You mentioned the seven nations conference that you're going to. Which countries are part of that?

MGen Jonathan Vance: In the Multinational Interoperability Council there's Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Australia, France, Germany, and Italy.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Christopherson, you have the floor.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair.

General, thank you very much for appearing today.

I have a couple of apologies. The first one is for being in and out of the meeting during your presentation. I do apologize for that. I'm sure you can appreciate that with the NDP A-team running for leadership, the B-team gets handed everything, so I'm juggling a lot of things. I do apologize for that. Also, I'm going to ask a question and it may have been asked when I was out of the room, so if that's the case, I apologize in advance.

Having said all that, I'm also going to preamble my question with this. I'm so new to this file that I'm not even sure of the right way to ask this question, so it could be completely discombobulated. I'm just going to put it out there as best I can, General, and please do with it what you will.

In terms of readiness, I want to ask a couple of things. One, I'm just curious; oftentimes we hear references to the American military forces and how many fronts they're able to sustain at one time. So with that kind of concept in mind, I know you always have to start with where you are, but if you were starting with a blank page.... Or actually how do you do it in terms of standing here? How do you calculate how far you can stretch, knowing that you have to keep certain things in reserve for different matters that could happen? How do you approach it from a readiness point of view in terms of how many things you can react to?

My second question is this—and you can see why I preambled about not knowing the right language. How much of a challenge is there to maintaining readiness, when at the same time parallel to that, you're either ramping up or ramping down a significant part of our armed forces—that is, Afghanistan?

Those are my questions, General, and again thank you for being here.

MGen Jonathan Vance: Thank you for the question, sir.

In part, we've covered the first one earlier, but I can certainly summarize.

How many things can we react to? It depends how big the thing is, and it depends on how long you want to keep reacting to the thing. I'm not being facetious; this is exactly how I would describe it to you. The U.S., under President Kennedy, had a policy of being able to fight two and a half wars. In that policy definition, a war was described as a front, or of a certain size, a NATO, a South-East Asia, and a little bit of something else. That was *de rigueur* in those days. It's a little more challenging now to do that, and most governments that I know of, including the United States, don't describe their capacity that way any more.

We have a very similar approach to that of all of our allies in terms of describing what our force structure is designed to do and, given the government policy of the day, what we would put in the shop window to be very quick off the mark; and what would be a little bit slower but, certainly, more deliberate, and how long we will sustain it. The simple fact is that we have short-notice response across Canada for search and rescue. We have short-notice response for disaster assistance around the world. We have short-notice response locally to Canadians suffering crises, floods, and so on. Then we have a slightly longer response, but still quite quick, to do something like evacuate Canadians from a threatened land. Then we have an even longer response, because it takes a bit more preparation and some specific training, to go to a place like Afghanistan.

That's getting out the door. Then there's how long you would wish to stay, and what your endurance is. You don't start your force-structuring work on a blank sheet of paper every year. We have an extant force and this force has largely been built on over the years—and sometimes not—to really achieve a significant contribution somewhere in the world, to answer your question directly. That could involve army, navy, and air force, as we did in Afghanistan—although the naval component was missing. But we could have added a naval component. In fact, it was out there but not joined up in the same area.

So we can do something big and sustained, and something more modestly sized, and a little smaller but not sustained. That's kind of how we think. The example would be our being in Afghanistan, and then Haiti comes along, and then we could still do the Olympics. You prevail upon your troops when your operational tempo—you've heard that term—is so high that you don't get a lot of time at home before you're back out the door again. We manage that very carefully, both for the sake of our families and the sake of the soldiers' ability to function.

The high water mark recently, I would say, was Afghanistan happening; the support to Canadians across the country that's still in place, including search and rescue and disaster response; Haiti; and the Olympics.

Did I answer both your questions with those examples?

● (1005)

Mr. David Christopherson: That was very good, General, and I appreciate your indulgence in repeating it.

The only other one was the challenge of maintaining this readiness at the same time you're ramping up and ramping down. But you may have covered that in some way.

MGen Jonathan Vance: In ramping up, you're expending forces, but not actually committing those forces that are ready. In ramping down, you're going to fold those forces back into a ready posture, that is, you are getting ready to go somewhere, being prepared as it were or, indeed, reassigning those forces somewhere else.

In this case, because it is a good example, there's the repatriation of equipment from Afghanistan. It's very, very important that we bring it back, reconstitute it and fix it up, since it has been battered over a number of years, and then put it back with the troops ready to go again somewhere, should that happen. That's a several hundred million dollar effort that ensures that we come out, refit, and get ready to go.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Warkentin, you have the floor.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): I will pass on that and turn it back to the parliamentary secretary.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Alexander.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thanks so much to our witnesses.

I'm very glad that Mr. McKay mentioned the honour that you'll be receiving later this year, General. It's very well deserved, but we also want to make sure that the committee understands the extent of NATO's success—now very much led by the U.S.—in mounting a counter-insurgency operation inside Afghanistan, where it has been successful. In that country, much of our success owes to your work in leading our task force twice, and in bringing together in a combined or joint way original thinking, strategic thinking, and a variety of resources. I don't think that is fully recognized yet, either here in this narrower circle or across the country. You have our continuing admiration for having shown that leadership there and for having carried it forward in all the directions you've been describing this morning. Thank you for being with us.

I wanted to ask you a couple of questions to build on some of your answers so far, and the first one is the simplest one. From your perspective in strategic joint staff looking at readiness, looking at this schema of what it takes to achieve readiness—which can obviously be measured in all kinds of different ways—where do we stand today compared with a decade ago in the Canadian Forces? How ready are we?

I know there is not a hard and fast indicator, a website to measure these things where you can go, but what is your professional judgment on that score?

● (1010)

MGen Jonathan Vance: Thanks for the question.

I would say that overall, it's pretty clear that we're considerably more ready now than we would have been a decade ago, for a variety of reasons, not the least of which has been the investment in our capacity to deploy. The C-17s have made a marked difference in our perceived and actual state of readiness, because you can be very ready, but it doesn't really count if you can't get there in the first place. So there's a readiness continuum allowing you to actually land on the ground and do something. Again, you can stay academic for only so long; eventually you have to do something.

At the same time, I would say that we have an experiential pillar now that didn't exist 10 years ago. We've been in Afghanistan for 10 years. We understand the nature of war from the perspective of how we function among allies, what we need to bring to the table, what we need to receive from allies to be able to function effectively. As I alluded to in a example before, you can be extremely ready with a cavalry force, but if it's a machine gun war, it doesn't really matter.

We've had 10 years of intellectual growth and experience with our allies, using cutting-edge capacity technologies, with everything from our ability to use intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance assets through to biometrics and everything else. We have a much better understanding, and now some experience in delivering, maintaining, and leading forces into combat. That crucible has increased our overall appreciation of what we need to be ready for. Until you go through those experiences, there are some things that you might miss.

Ten years ago, I dare say, our understanding of what it meant to be ready for casualties, family care, long-term care of wounded.... While these are things that were once perhaps extremely well-known in this country, some things do lapse. Now we have a tremendous understanding of it. So given our experience, investment, and continued education as a result of our work with allies, I'd say that we're in a far better position than we were 10 years ago.

There are many things one can and must do, if one wants to maintain a state of readiness, because there are components to it. High readiness is often identified with those things that are quick off the mark. Major confrontations don't generally happen quickly or off the mark. Usually for things that are going to happen very quickly, we have something in the shop window ready to go. For something like the situation in Haiti, an earthquake, or a disaster somewhere, we have the forces that can contribute to that. Having something that's a bit more substantial for a situation like that in Afghanistan takes a bit more time to evolve—and if we don't have it, we've demonstrated, I think, that we can build it.

When we started in Afghanistan, we didn't have tanks. We needed tanks. We got tanks. We didn't have the operational mentor and liaison teams. We built those. Warfare is its own generator of new thinking and demands for readiness.

I know I'm being a little bit long-winded here, but I just want to put a little bit of a plug in for the concept of whole of government. Before Afghanistan, the Canadian Forces largely, but not exclusively, functioned pretty much in a silo. “Go do your military task” was more or less how UN missions were set up.

Counter insurgencies and the nature of conflict in Afghanistan—and, we believe, the nature of conflict in the future—demand that you have an element of readiness if you will and, certainly, an element of relationship building within government that will allow for a joined-up response from the whole of government. We have developed that in spades over the past 10 years, in that there's a deep appreciation among Foreign Affairs, CIDA, the Department of National Defence, CSE, and everybody else that contributes of what they bring to the table. I think there have been some really good lessons learned about how we would do that again.

● (1015)

Mr. Chris Alexander: Thank you.

One of the key roles of your staff is to develop strategic contingencies. These obviously have an impact on the thinking across the armed forces, under the direction of the CDS, in terms of readiness and the kind of readiness we are pursuing.

Give us a sense of how the strategic contingencies you're developing have evolved, without necessarily getting into a laundry list of specifics. We have lessons learned from Libya, Afghanistan, Haiti, and domestic operations. We have new capabilities and new investments that are coming on stream. But we also have new principles and new areas of interest or preoccupation politically, but also in regard to our allies in the world. We have a responsibility to protect. We have a continuing terrorism challenge. We have had momentous events occurring throughout the Middle East. We have a whole series of peacekeeping operations in Africa, some of which are succeeding and some not. We have a lot of instability in broader South Asia.

Tell us what sort of contingencies you're preparing for now and how those have evolved in recent years?

MGen Jonathan Vance: Broadly speaking, the contingencies we work on fall under the category of protecting Canadians. Should there need to be an evacuation of Canadians, as we've seen before out of Lebanon, and if Foreign Affairs turned to the Canadian Forces and asked for support, we need to be ready. We need to make certain that we have asset visibility. We need to be ready to adopt a posture that allows for a reasonable response.

I said “reasonable”, but there's a question mark behind that term. We want to achieve strategic effect as quickly as possible. We maintain ready-duty ships so that if we need to go somewhere to help evacuate Canadians, we can go as quickly as possible. The calculus, the decision-making, then goes through a variety of iterations. Do you maintain a ready-duty ship in Canada, or do you maintain a ready-duty ship closer to where you think it might be needed?

These are questions for decision at a variety of levels in government. Nonetheless, my staff goes through the options analysis, always wanting to give the government options. If you are concerned about a nation in the Maghreb or in the MENA region, or if you need to determine how the Canadians on the ground should respond, then we would have some options available to government. Our job is always to provide some options. From a broad contingency perspective, that's really what we do.

We must also be certain that we maintain the capacity—and here it's a bit of a forcing function—to reinvest in the broader training and readiness of the forces. It might not be as high, but it is readiness in some detail. We need to be able to prosecute operations that we think could happen in the future. So there's the vice-chief's side of the house in force development.

Your premise is absolutely correct: we are constantly trying to work through strategic contingencies.

The Chair: Your time has expired.

We'll go to a third round.

Madame Moore, s'il vous plaît.

● (1020)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Thank you, Major-General Vance.

With regard to the operational and strategic levels, I am having a little difficulty understanding what evaluation tools you are using. Are there evaluation tables and grids? How do you determine whether the objectives have been achieved?

For example, if I tell you that the Canadian government is going to give you an additional $10 million to increase the capacity and the readiness of a unit by 15%, how will you be able to tell me in two years whether that goal has been achieved?

I see general criteria, but I am finding it difficult to know what specific assessment methods the Armed Forces are using to define their readiness.

MGen Jonathan Vance: Yes, thank you for the question.

[*English*]

We have a variety of tools that we use to determine whether or not we've achieved a readiness objective. They appear inside the service chiefs'....

I think you will be speaking as committee with the commander of the army. If you speak to the navy and the air force, they will be able to describe to you in great detail the link between resources and the production of a ready asset, and the reporting of that to the Canadian Forces—which ultimately rolls up, and which I look at and examine. That is done on an annual, cyclical basis.

Now there are exceptions. When a major fleet modernization is needed, such as with the Halifax-class ships right now, a service commander alerts the Chief of Defence Staff, perhaps through me, that there is some sort of impact on readiness. I'll do my best to answer it, but that's a great question for the service chiefs. They all have slightly different tools, because they are different services, to describe and assess their state of readiness. The air force would use a tool set to describe and assess their readiness versus the army, which would be quite different. But there are tool sets.

On the ultimate arbiter or determination of whether we are ready, it gets rolled up and reported to the CDS, and my staff matches that, as do others, against what we're supposed to be ready for.

You asked, “If we took $10 million or added a percentage into it, how would we know that we were better?” That's a good question. We would first have to accept that money, with an understanding of what it was to be invested in. Is it a one-time amount of money, or is it added to your baseline? What is the policy of the government that you're trying to achieve? It would have to be defined. Once it were defined, we would build a plan that included measures of effectiveness, and would report back on it.

So all of that happens. I know it was a theoretical question: if you put more money in, do you get more readiness? The answer is yes, if readiness were your plan. If you put more money in, would you get better wounded support? You would, if that were your plan. It depends on where you want to put the money. It depends on what the plan is.

We can show on an annual basis that money in equals readiness across the board, and in all of the other things we do. We can show that, and we do annually to Parliament.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: You have time for a brief question.

Ms. Christine Moore: You were asked in how many international operations Canada was able to participate. Conversely, what would be the minimum number of soldiers we would need to keep in Canada to fulfil our mandates? Has that been determined?

Are you able to tell us the threshold below which we would be compromising security in Canada?

MGen Jonathan Vance: That is a good question.

The land forces are divided into four regions, each with an immediate response unit within an infantry battalion. We also have our search and rescue capacity and other national support elements. Is that a threshold or a standard? I don't know.

We have the mandate to maintain immediate and rapid response capability, within a battalion in each region of Canada, as well as search and rescue capability. We can also do more during an emergency or a crisis with other individuals available within the Canadian Forces.

We maintain an equilibrium with four groups, one in each region.

There are also watch-keeping facilities on each coast to help the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Fisheries and Oceans Canada fulfil their mandate.

● (1025)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you again, General Vance.

General Leslie was pretty critical of the procurement process of the military—ignoring the big end or high end stuff for the time being. As I recollect his report, it was to the effect that too many people had to sign off at too many decision points and, how should we say, with unnecessary delays and unnecessary costs.

Do you have an observation with respect to his observations?

MGen Jonathan Vance: I can honestly tell you, Mr. Chair, that this falls well outside of my lane. I would have an observation, but it doesn't count and so probably shouldn't be stated.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

MGen Jonathan Vance: The fact is, from my perspective as the operations guy for the CDS, one of the forces' employers, the forces have been available for what the chief needs to do with them in support of government, and historically have been available to him.

I'm not trying to avoid the question. Quite simply, I've had other jobs where I have been intimately involved. Process is process. I can tell you that the results of that process largely have been responsive enough to achieve what the Canadian Forces needed when it was urgently required.

I really, honestly believe, sir, that the assistant deputy minister of materiel, or the service chiefs, could give you a better view on this.

It is a long process. There is no question about it. I think everybody is interested in making that process more responsive and better, cutting the number of steps that one has to take yet still achieve prudent spending and oversight. There is no question about it that we want that.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you for that. Only politicians I thought dodged questions like that. We'll leave it at that.

MGen Jonathan Vance: That was not dodging. I was just giving the answer.

Hon. John McKay: No, you're fair.

In regard to the definition of success, we have watched missions have evolving definitions of success. In Libya, for example, it was an R2P, which seemed to migrate to regime change, arguably. Then years ago in Afghanistan, it was to eliminate bin Laden, and it migrated to something else, then something else, then something else again. It puts a tremendous strain on the military to achieve success.

When the government tasks the military to do something, how is the definition of success negotiated so that it's within your capabilities and is reasonable?

MGen Jonathan Vance: That's a perfect question.

I would say it's an ongoing process in cases where the situation evolves. Afghanistan is a great case in point. The start point was counter-terrorism operations to eliminate the threat—the Taliban—from government, which happened extremely well. The follow-on operation over time was to extend Afghan governance so that it was competent in its own right. That's really what the operation was. There were various strategies used to achieve that, ultimately the best being a counter-insurgency strategy. But the job was to help Afghans extend their governance capacity across sectors such that, once it were extended, it would be successfully serving their population and thereby, by its very nature, eclipse the fuel that causes insurgencies to mount.

That evolved, and I think one thing one must keep in mind is that there are a lot of starting points to conflict, but they don't always stay there. I know you are aware of this, but the forces at play, be they against you or with you, change. In Afghanistan, they changed a lot. An insurgency blossomed because there wasn't enough extant capacity in Afghan governance that was credible enough, that could extend far enough, to squelch the start of an insurgency. The flames were fanned, and it grew.

In the military, we go through all sorts of potential scenarios—this could happen, that could happen.... We are doing it now with Libya. Libya could go in a whole bunch of different ways. We try to understand what could happen, given certain factors at play. I think our interaction with, as you say, government is frank and open. The CDS ultimately is the one who provides military advice to government. That really is the answer to your question. There are all sorts of supporters, but ultimately it comes down to the Chief of Defence Staff saying, this is what we can do, this is what that would look like, this is the kind of success it may or may not bring, and here are the risks.

I wouldn't characterize it as a negotiation, sir. I would characterize it as a pretty frank and honest exchange. We don't necessarily say, at the beginning of a conflict, if this happened, what about this? We don't work that way. We evolve, and government either has us evolve or does not have us evolve—and then we would leave or would do something completely different, which is rather what we've seen in Afghanistan. The counter-insurgency strategy had reached a certain point—we knew it would—and the U.S. surge had been effective. Kandahar was relatively quiet compared with years past, I can tell you. It was a good time to start to invest in the institutions that supported governance in Afghanistan.

Sometimes this happens as a result of forethought, predetermined actions, all sorts of thinking, and sometimes you are just trying to do the right thing when another right thing to do appears before you. It's not always fore-ordained.

● (1030)

The Chair: Ms. Gallant. You're batting cleanup here.

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

If we go back to your slide on the contributors to readiness, I notice that everything—the page, the diagram—is pretty symmetrical.

MGen Jonathan Vance: It's the limit of my PowerPoint skills.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: All right. In terms of reality, we're just coming out of Afghanistan, and still have a bit of a training mission there; the associate minister of National Defence announced that we're going to have a major refurbishment of our land vehicles; and we have equipment that still needs to be received.

What I'm wondering is where our shortfalls are in this scenario. We have resources. Do we have everything we need to go through what we've just gone through? Do we need more resources in terms of intelligence? Training appears to be well on the go. We just visited Wainwright and saw the brigade-wide exercise there. And there's strategic policy. But I'm most concerned about the resources: your equipment, and the people with the training and the capabilities in the right ranks to be able to lead our troops in harm's way.

● (1035)

MGen Jonathan Vance: Thank you for the question.

I'm not in a position, by virtue of the job I'm in, to really look at or understand any shortfalls. There are no shortfalls in my world, because we frame operations such that we can do them. I'm dealing with the here and now.

The vice chief would be able to describe where we would need to invest more so that we have the force we want in the future—a little more of this, a little less of that. He's in a better position because the design of the force, the force development process that goes into it, comes up with a model of how we want to be, where we want to invest. Then you invest in the delta.

Again, I don't mean to sound facetious. I handle the forces from zero to three years; that's the horizon I work within. From where I sit, I don't have what I would classically call shortfalls. We need to make certain that we continue to invest—and so this is not about a shortfall, but about an area to invest in, and I've mentioned our cyber capacity before. We want to make sure our networks are secure no matter what happens in the future. And we want to make certain that we increase our ability to use our own or others' ISR capacity. We want to make certain that our intelligence networks remain intact with our allies, to inform us well of what's going on around the world. Some of this demands investment in people, equipment, and training and education.

I don't go to work thinking that I have a major shortfall, that we have a big problem. It would be disingenuous to say that it would be great to have more of this. We have it. If it needs to be moved through readiness and be invested in so as to be immediately available when it's asked for, that's actually a professional responsibility of mine. It's not a hole; it's my job.

I try to ensure that I contribute to the work that goes on to determine what needs to be invested in so that it's ready at the right time. Do we continue to produce army battalions so that they're ready? Do we continue to have ready-duty ships? Do we continue to have ready aircraft? Do we need to tweak that? That's what I do, and at this point in time I'm not seeing any gap in our ability to respond to what we're being asked to respond to. I guess that's key.

If someone were asking me to do something I weren't ready for, I might have a different answer, but so far that has not been the case.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: So, when you're playing your set of simultaneous what-if scenarios, basically you work with what you have at hand. You don't see anything that we're short of at the moment that would prevent our doing something that is necessary to do?

MGen Jonathan Vance: That's correct. We need to invest in our ability to manage intelligence, ISR, and continue to invest in training so that we can use that information once we get it—all of what we call our command and control, communications, computers. C4ISR is the big term; it's the means whereby we bring it all together to provide visibility to commanders and soldiers at all levels, using wide-band capacity to share information. This is a big area that we need to invest in. It's not a shortfall now; but if we don't invest in it, it's going to be a shortfall. So we are investing in it.

Again, it's not really my part ship, in terms of readiness. I manage readiness for the CDS with the forces that exist. The vice chief sits on top of the process and makes certain that investments occur in a timely way so that CDS and the ops staff have at their disposal the forces that the world demands at that time, that conflict demands at that time.

So far, I think we're quite good at that, if I may say so.

The Chair: I only have one question, and it's really for clarification. When you were answering one of the previous questions, you talked about our NATO expectations in terms of readiness. I believe you said that it's under chapter 5 of the agreement. What exactly...?

MGen Jonathan Vance: It's in terms of our response, for collective defence.

● (1040)

The Chair: So what is Canada's obligation under NATO in terms of readiness? What's the ongoing expectation in case something comes out of the blue and NATO is asked to intervene?

MGen Jonathan Vance: As far as I understand there are no forced structure expectations. NATO would not expect force X to be available anywhere, but I'm going to have to check on that. It does not affect my day greatly, so I'm probably going to need to take that one on notice.

The Chair: Mr. Alexander, on that point....

Mr. Chris Alexander: Just to clarify this, I think what was meant was article 5 of our North Atlantic Treaty, which is the obligation of one ally to come to the aid of the others if they are attacked on their territory.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Chris Alexander: It's only been invoked once, after 9/11....

MGen Jonathan Vance: Right. I got “article” and “chapter” confused between the UN and NATO.

At this point in time we don't manage the forces based on having.... The Canada First defence strategy does not have an earmarked unit to be able to respond to a NATO request. We do not do that. But there are expectations that allies would contribute—sometimes it's discrete capability, people, or resources—to NATO capacity. There's an expectation, because we're in an alliance and signed up for the alliance, that we would respond. But I think I said it doesn't come chapter and verse in terms of what you must to have to do that, but by agreement as part of an alliance. So you can opt in or opt out. That's the nature of it.

The Chair: Just to follow up on the earlier point of information that Mr. McKay's shared with the committee, I would like to form that into a motion, which I believe was already carried, based on everybody's round of applause. The motion would read:That the Committee congratulate MGen. Jonathan Vance for the 2011 Vimy Award he will receive from the Conference of Defence Associations Institute on Friday, November 18, 2011, for outstanding service to the defence and security of Canada.

The Chair: Agreed?

An hon. member: Agreed.

Mr. Chair: Again, congratulations. Well done for your great service to the country and your strategic thinking that you have to do in running all components of our armed services to make sure that we are ready. I appreciate your comments and your candour with the committee today, which are going to help us immensely in our study.

With that I'll have a motion to adjourn.

An hon. member: I so move.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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