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Chair

Mr. James Bezan

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● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. We have a full day ahead of us.

We're at meeting number 11, continuing our study on readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces. Today we have as our witness General Walter Natynczyk, the Chief of the Defence Staff. And joining him is the Canadian Forces' chief warrant officer, Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Bob Cléroux.

Welcome, both of you.

General, I'll open the floor to you for your opening comments.

Gen Walter Natynczyk (Chief of the Defence Staff, Department of National Defence): Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

Good morning to everybody. I'd like to begin by saying thank you for providing me with this opportunity to appear before you, my first such opportunity since the opening of the current Parliament.

[*Translation*]

I'm really pleased to have a couple of hours to spend with you, especially as there are some new members on the committee.

Let me tell you, I look forward to your questions, and I am more than happy to make my team of senior officers available to you as well. I will always be ready and willing to provide this committee with whatever information and support that it requires to do its important work.

[*English*]

Let me also say how pleased I am that you've decided to focus an in-depth study on readiness. It's an ambitious decision, I know, on your part, but I know it will lead to some very valuable discussions and recommendations.

From my point of view, readiness is definitely the most complex, and probably the least well understood, pillar of the four supporting pillars described in the Canada First defence strategy, the other three pillars being personnel, equipment, and infrastructure.

I can't stress enough how important it is to maintain a balance across these four pillars. Invest too little or too much in any of them and the result will be a military that is out of balance and unable to conduct the missions the government expects of it.

Of the four, readiness can often seem the least tangible, the hardest to quantify. It's the hardest to measure, but it's where the rubber hits the road for the Canadian Forces in terms of preparing our people to achieve the missions the government asks of them. It's what lets us take our investments in personnel, equipment, and infrastructure, and turn them into results where and when they're needed.

As General Jon Vance laid out for you on Tuesday, we believe you would benefit from hearing from the three groups within the defence team over the course of your study: the force generators, those being the commanders of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the Canadian Army; the force employers, including the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command and Canada Command; and the senior leaders of the Defence team.

The generators are those who recruit, build, train, and maintain our forces. The force employers are the commanders who actually lead our sailors, soldiers, and airmen and airwomen to success in operations at home and abroad. The senior members of our integrated defence team represent the civilians and military personnel who work side by side to analyze the various options to find the right resource balance across the four pillars.

● (0850)

[*Translation*]

Each of these groups will approach the concept of readiness from their own perspective and with their own challenges.

No one player is more important or necessary than any other. Each plays an important role in getting the right person, with the right training, experience, equipment, team and support to the right location on time.

[*English*]

As for my own role here today, I aim to give you my perspective before you dive into each one of those respective areas of readiness. I want to talk about what readiness means to me as the person who actually delivers the effect on behalf of the Government of Canada, and how I think the Canadian Forces are doing in terms of overall readiness, particularly as we transition from a period of high operational tempo to a steadier state following the conclusion of our combat mission in Afghanistan this past summer.

Now, it's helpful to describe readiness using some of our recent operational experiences. Let me just reflect back over a year ago to January 2010. It was the January 12. I was flying back from Edmonton, where I was visiting soldiers who had been wounded in Afghanistan. I received a phone call indicating that an earthquake had just struck Haiti. The key infrastructure in Port-au-Prince was wiped out. The hospitals were destroyed or completely overrun with patients, and basic services such as electricity and clean water were offline. I spent the next few hours aboard the Challenger, but working with senior members of my staff and coordinating with the Minister of National Defence, our policy team, and other government departments, such that by early the next morning, at dawn, aircraft were up in the air at Trenton, after being loaded with emergency equipment and supplies, as well as highly trained personnel.

[*Translation*]

Canadians were among the first nations to arrive. Less than 24 hours after the earthquake had hit, we had search and rescue technicians, medics and firefighters on the ground in Haiti pulling people out of the rubble.

Within a few weeks we had deployed a 2,000 person disaster assistance joint task force.

[*English*]

Eventually, Operation HESTIA would comprise two ships, seven helicopters, infantry and logistics battalions, an engineers' squadron, a field hospital, and a 200-person disaster assistance response team.

Mr. Chair, the speed and scale of this response was a direct reflection of our investment in operational readiness. Our personnel, our leadership, and our equipment were up to the challenge. But it was our attention to readiness that put them in a posture to respond as quickly and effectively as they did, and allowed them to sustain these operations for two months until they returned to Canada.

It wasn't just the performance of our people in the operation itself but our focus beforehand on training, on the right equipment, on all the supply required, on maintenance of that equipment, and the regular cycling of our personnel through periods of high readiness to normal readiness and low readiness, in that cycle.

There's another example here at home. When Hurricane Igor struck eastern Newfoundland in September of last year, it washed out key roads and bridges, knocked out power across the province, and left residents isolated.

[*Translation*]

Once again, we were able to respond immediately, working in partnership with other federal departments and with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In all, we deployed over a thousand personnel from the army, navy and air force to help evacuate the injured; deliver food, water, fuel and medical supplies; re-establish power and transportation routes; and even rebuild a bridge in the community of Trouty.

[*English*]

What's particularly noteworthy on this one is that many of the folks on this operation were in the Primary Reserve Force. The reserve was front and centre—a reserve, where citizen soldiers who, with one phone call, dropped everything they were doing and were called into action. Their selflessness and dedication deserves admiration, both at home and abroad. But the fact that they had received their individual and collective training and that they could assemble and deploy immediately to deliver tangible and strategic effects in this kind of emergency was testament to their readiness.

Of course, we all remember this past spring how just a day after the UN Security Council authorized an arms embargo and a no-fly zone over Libya, we deployed six CF-18 fighter aircraft to the Mediterranean. Within days, those aircraft, pilots, and crew were able to join HMCS*Charlottetown*, which had itself deployed on exceptionally short notice earlier that month. But when the *Charlottetown* deployed, its crew thought it was going on a humanitarian mission to evacuate people. Indeed, we were putting it into a war zone. But that ship was ready because of the extraordinary training and preparation, indeed readiness, of that asset.

In the weeks and months that have followed, those assets, along with strategic airlift such as C-17s and C-130Js, and refuelling and surveillance aircraft such as the Aurora, conducted over 1,500 flight sorties and played a major role in an international effort to protect civilians, to enforce UN sanctions, and to ensure access of humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Chair, each of these examples demonstrates in a concrete way the value and meaning of readiness. The bottom line, Mr. Chair, is that readiness is the degree of preparedness and responsiveness of our forces that allows me to deploy them with little notice in response to government direction. It's the ability to get the right people, with the right skills and the right equipment, into the right place at the right time and to sustain that for as long as government requires.

● (0855)

[*Translation*]

That's certainly not something that just happens on its own.

You don't just achieve readiness by making good investments in personnel, equipment and infrastructure, although I can't overemphasize how important that is.

[*English*]

If you take the example of a soldier getting ready to deploy to Afghanistan, we have to ensure that we have the right person for the job, that we provide him or her with the best possible equipment, and that we base the person out of solid infrastructure. It takes literally thousands of hours of dedicated training, both by the soldiers and their leadership and instructors, to get them ready. It takes multiple phased exercises to build a team within their unit and to rehearse what they'll be doing. It takes a deliberate progression, through escalating levels of readiness, before they are prepared to head out the door and deliver real effects for Canada. All the while, it takes a specific, dedicated effort to evaluate and protect the physical and mental preparedness of each soldier, sailor, airman and airwoman, and their families, before and after the operation.

The individual's tour of stay in Afghanistan may last six to nine months, but the entire process of preparing them, supporting them, and bringing them to a state where they can begin the whole process again can take up to two years.

Mr. Chair, if you ask me how we're doing in maintaining our readiness, I'd say that we're doing the best we can with all the resources we have.

It's worth noting that of the six core missions set out for us by the government, we successfully carried out five simultaneously between January and March 2010. We conducted combat operations in Afghanistan. We supported the whole-of-government effort to provide security for the Vancouver Olympics. We responded, with 2,000 folks, to the earthquake in Haiti. We remained on guard and ready in the event of a terrorist event anywhere in Canada. And we conducted the regular patrols and search and rescue operations necessary to protect our national sovereignty. That's a level of performance we all take a lot of pride in.

Looking forward, however, we shouldn't expect that same level of operational readiness to simply be there whenever we need it. Readiness doesn't maintain itself: It is a perishable commodity, and it's expensive.

Maintaining the level of readiness required and expected of us by government will require a significant and sustained investment. It means repairing, refitting, and replacing some of our equipment, particularly the equipment that has experienced heavy wear and tear, such as all the kit coming back from Afghanistan.

[*Translation*]

It means rebuilding the health and strength of the units and personnel that were involved in these operations and investing in the necessary training to help our newer recruits fill gaps in key trades.

● (0900)

[*English*]

All the while, it means dealing with the rising cost of fuel, utilities, and other key inputs needed to maintain our readiness.

When I talk about readiness and where you start on readiness, we start with the missions that the Government of Canada has assigned us through the Canada First defence strategy, which lays out three key roles. First is excellence at home, with the defence of Canada and the sovereignty of Canada the priority. Second is being a strong, reliable partner with our United States allies, whether in terms of NORAD or other activities. Third is projecting leadership abroad. Those are the key levels of ambition as laid out in the Canada First defence strategy.

We then look at what forces are required for those tasks the government has given us. At home, in each of the major regions, we have a battalion—an immediate response unit—that's on eight hours' notice to move. It's a light battalion, so that they're ready to move out at any time, whether it's to put sandbags in Saint-Jean or Portage La Prairie—or, indeed, to be the first folks on the ground in an ice storm.

We also have people who are ready on high notice for search and rescue. On any given day, we have about three missions a day. This past weekend we were reminded of how dangerous it is, and our thoughts and prayers are with the family of Sergeant Janick Gilbert.

We also have ready-duty ships on each coast, which are ready, in eight hours, from notice to power-up, to move out. We have surveillance aircraft at high readiness, as well as fighter aircraft at high readiness, in support of NATO.

Offshore we also maintain a battalion at high readiness for any mission the Government of Canada gives us. We also have a company group to support the evacuation of Canadians in situations such as what we saw a few years ago in Lebanon.

Our investment in the Canadian Forces' readiness really focuses on those operations.

Mr. Chair, let me conclude by re-emphasizing the value of this committee's study in helping the civilian and military leaders of the defence team find the right balance across the four pillars to ensure that we remain ready to respond to the needs of government and the needs of Canadians in the months and years to come.

As I said earlier, I'm more than happy to appear before you and have members of my team appear before you, as well, to help inform your study.

Thank you very much.

I'm happy to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, General.

We'll go to our seven-minute rounds.

Mr. Christopherson, you have the floor.

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

General, it's good to see you again. Thank you for appearing.

It's the first chance that we've had to be at committee together since you were elevated to your current position, and I was handed mine.

Let me say at the outset, if I may, as we head into Veterans Week, that I want to underscore, on behalf of the official opposition, the importance that every Canadian places on the contribution that all of our personnel make. Every citizen, every neighbour that dons the Canadian uniform has the instant respect of every Canadian. While we will take the time to thrash out, battle, and disagree on what the missions should be in this crucible of our democracy, let there be no doubt anywhere that the entire House, I believe, stands united in the support, appreciation, and respect that we have for every single soldier that dons the Canadian uniform. And you, today, are the symbol of that. So thank you and everyone else.

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Thank you, sir.

Mr. David Christopherson: May I begin by commenting on your words on page 7. You mentioned how we're doing in maintaining our men. You said, "...I'd say we're doing the best we can with the resources we have." Obviously you're suggesting that it's a challenge. Later on you mentioned that "Readiness doesn't maintain itself. It's a perishable commodity—and it's expensive."

My question, General, is what are some of the challenges facing you as you move into a renewed sense of readiness? At the same time, there are internal reports from your own office suggesting that there could be some significant changes within the armed forces. Part of those might involve base closures or other significant changes.

I'm not trying to repeat question period here, trust me, but I am trying to get at how much of a challenge it is to deal with some of those overall structural changes within, at the same time that you're also trying to renew that sense of readiness. How much of a challenge does that create when the ground underneath you is somewhat shifting—or at least when there are plans to shift it—at the same time you also need to stay absolutely clear and focused on beefing up or maintaining our readiness?

● (0905)

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Sir, thank you for the question.

Again, in an ideal world, every piece of equipment would be brand new or on warranty. Every billet in all those ships, squadrons, and battalions would be filled with men and women with the right skill sets and the right experience, and they would never move; the equipment would never break; and all of the parts and all the ammunition would always be there. None of us lives in an ideal world. Some of our equipment is old. Some of our equipment is brand new. Whatever we do, we make the best use of and get the best value from every dollar the Canadian public gives us. As we look towards readiness, it is to ensure that high-readiness units have all of the assets they require for the types of missions that Canada will expect of them.

When the HMCS*Charlottetown* went out to the Mediterranean, we thought she was going on a humanitarian, non-combatant evacuation kind of mission in the Mediterranean. But, again, since we did not know the kind of mission she would take on, that ship was ready for war. We had to put the investments into that crew, into the equipment aboard that ship, into all of the spare parts and supplies and ammunition so that ship would be ready for that kind of fight. And, indeed, they were within kilometres of Misrata. They received artillery fire from shore and spotted for aircraft coming in. They were in the thick of it.

But while that ship was there at the high end of readiness—and as the commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, when he comes here, will explain to you—they have all of these other ships in the Halifax modernization program, which all remain in extended readiness as they are worked upon on both coasts. So what is that balance between the high readiness of the *Charlottetown*—and today it's HMCS*Vancouver* and the great sailors on the *Vancouver*—and all these other ships, like HMCS *Halifax*, that are back in port being worked on? Every one of the service chiefs, like the commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, is maintaining the right balance and working with their civilian counterparts so that we have those ships, squadrons, and battalions ready to go somewhere. At the other end of the spectrum, the equipment, such as that coming back from Afghanistan, is going right into depot maintenance, so that we can turn it around as quickly as we can and have it back on the shelf or back with those troops so they're ready to go out the door again.

To use a line from a book that was popular about 20 years, we pay ourselves first; that is, we always have to ensure that we can afford our priority, which for us is those high-readiness units, followed by the normal-readiness units and then extended-readiness units, so that we can achieve the missions the Government of Canada asks us to.

I know that through Budget 2010 and Budget 2011, there are going to be changes to our funding envelope. But in my view, it's again going back to always being able to afford your priority. As we go through the transition and the great work that was done on the transformation report, we're looking for savings so that we can afford the priority. Again, I've received great support from the minister and from government. And as I work with the Canadian Forces' chief warrant officer, who is sitting here beside me, my priorities are to ensure that we safeguard the force of today, so that those men and women who are in Kabul, in Afghanistan today doing the training mission have all the training they need to do the job out there. It is knowing that Master Corporal Greff had all the training he needed to do the job out there. It's about ensuring that whether they're deployed there or up in the High Arctic, as Sergeant Gilbert was, they have all the equipment and all the training they needed, and we did the best we could do to ensure their success on those missions.

Secondly, it's to ensure things for the force of tomorrow. That's where the Canada First defence strategy is so key. It lays out a blueprint to ensure that we are purchasing the right ships, the right aircraft, and the right vehicles for the sons and daughters of Canada tomorrow, so that they can go into harm's way and be successful.

Finally, it's to ensure the care of our men and women of the Canadian Forces, for the wounded, the ill, and injured, and for the families of the fallen. Those are my three foundational rocks, if you will, of the force, as we go through this transition and are looking at the overhead and where we can make savings such that those three bedrock pieces remain the foundation.

Thank you.

An hon. member: I found that inspiring.

The Chair: We'll keep on moving.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you, General.

The Chair: Mr. Chisu, you have the floor.

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

General, thank you very much for being here today and for your presentation.

Having served in the military as an engineer, I can tell you that not only are we in the best place in the world to live, but we also have one of the best prepared and balanced militaries in the world.

I also want to express, on this occasion, my deep sorrow for the passing of Corporal Greff. For me, this is personal. When I was in Afghanistan, I saw 24 soldiers pass away during my rotation. I understand very well how big this problem is for our nation.

My question for you relates to the Canada First defence strategy. The Canada first defence strategy says the CF should be able to perform six different missions at once. Do you have, at this point, sufficient military personnel and equipment to fulfill these missions, and is it possible to conduct them right now along with current ongoing operations?

● (0910)

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Thank you, sir, for your question.

Indeed, the key to our ability to do the six missions really does come from that balance, from making sure that we have a balance from the personnel, the equipment, the readiness, and the infrastructure standpoint. The answer to your question is yes, we do have the wherewithal to do the six missions simultaneously.

Keep in mind that the Canadian Forces in uniform numbers, in total, just below 100,000. Today, we're tracking in the order of 67,000 regular forces and about 25,000 reservists. Indeed, some of those are in training, but for the most part, they are a very strong, capable, trained, effective strength. How we have apportioned them, in terms of high readiness and normal readiness, allows us to react for those six missions.

As I mentioned in my text before, it was quite extraordinary that when we did our transformation back in 2005-06, we were getting the force ready for a period of time when, simultaneously, we'd be dealing with Afghanistan. At that time we did not have a full appreciation that it would be the kind of combat mission that it was. Having been the chief of transformation in 2005, we were setting up the organization to manage Afghanistan and manage the Olympics at the same time. The decisions were made and the new structure was put in place for February 1, 2006, as our troops were moving from Kabul down to Kandahar.

In the spring and summer of 2006, and especially that Labour Day weekend when Operation Medusa was fought, we realized that a stability operation had become a combat mission. We changed almost overnight, indeed over a few weeks and months, into a combat-capable force to be able to handle that mission.

At the same time, we were able to work with other government departments, especially the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, for the security of the Olympics. While we had 3,000 folks in Afghanistan, we mounted an operation of 4,500 men and women—air, land, sea, and special forces—in support of the RCMP and the organizers of the Vancouver Olympics.

We thought those would be the two major activities during that period of time, but we can never predict the future. In the midst of all of we had the terrible earthquake occur in Haiti. We have a disaster assistance relief team—it's about 200 folks—but we knew the devastation and loss of life was so cataclysmic that we needed to set up something more significant. We were prepared to send out a task force of 2,000 men and women. Again, I offer great credit to our search and rescue technicians, firefighters, and medics who were on the first aircraft and literally pulled people out of the rubble on the ground.

At the same time, while we did the Haiti mission, we ensured that we still maintained our sovereignty over Canada and that we were able to react to a terrorist event anywhere in Canada. All of that took this balance across all the lines. We also established priorities. One of the priorities that came out of the Canada First defence strategy was, Canada first, excellence at home. So where there's a question of a trade-off, Canada gets the nod.

Thank you.

● (0915)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: General, I understand that in 2010 we were planning for the “perfect storm”, according to the term used in our military.

I have another question for you. How do our allies match up to Canada in terms of operational readiness? Today, we are working in coalitions and with other forces. Have they adopted a similar approach to the Canada First defence strategy or something similar that we can match and work very well with them?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: I would say that each nation puts out a plan. The Americans call it a quadrennial defense review. Other nations put out a white paper. I think what we have in the Canada First defence strategy is not only an overarching plan in terms of a strategy, but also a bit more detail in the investment plan that allocates resources between those four pillars, which I've found very useful.

Also, it lays out the plan over 20 years. Everything we do in defence is long term. Our investment in any one of those four pillars is over the long term. I cannot go onto the street and hire a sergeant, hire a major, hire a colonel. If you want a sergeant with 10 years of experience, it takes 10 years. We have to make the investments over the long haul and that's where I think the Canada first Defence strategy has really been magic. Very few other countries have done that.

In terms of readiness, nations normally keep their readiness statistics and metric and measures secret. So in regard to benchmarking with other nations, I would say that you normally don't hear about something until something goes wrong. For us, while we are interested in others, we find that a lot of countries don't want to share.

I would say that one of our real strengths is our investment in people and training. Here I refer to rigour with which we put our people through training, the high standards that we hold people to, the opportunity for professional development and, indeed, the fact that we try to keep our people as long as we can. We have a low attrition rate so that we can capitalize on the long-term investment in these men and women. Because of that, I would say man for man and woman for woman, we are as good as, if not better, than many others around the world.

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr. McKay, you have the last seven-minute time slot.

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

Let me add my remarks to both Mr. Christopherson's and Mr. Chisu's. Without being repetitive, I would just say that I fully and heartily endorse both of their remarks. I too was in Greenwood the summer before, watching those SAR techs jump out of the back of the Hercs. I must admit I was very impressed with their training and readiness.

General Natynczyk, by 2000-01, a paper had been produced that argued in favour of the strategic and tactical need for the F-35s. We're now 10 years from that point where the government of the day was convinced that this was an important investment, an important investment in readiness. The program is arguably five years behind time, with delays—possibly understandable delays. It's now at the point where there's some real questioning going on whether this is a viable program.

Has the military updated that paper, and has it continued to make the argument for the need for the F-35s; and if so, how is that argument shaping out? Could you share that argument with us?

The Chair: General Natynczyk, would you answer briefly because we are here on the state of readiness, so I guess we'll be talking about—

Hon. John McKay: Well, there's nothing more relevant than the readiness of the F-35s.

The Chair: I'll leave it to you, General, how you wish to respond.

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Thanks very much.

I have not looked at the 2001 paper; I've seen the papers basically from 2005 and onward with regard to the next generation fighter capability, the replacement of the CF-18. I always remark that the kind of discourse, discussion, and debate that's going on now, we actually went through in the 1970s and early 1980s, as we procured the CF-18.

The real issue at hand is whether Canada needs a manned fighter between now and 2050. That's really what we're talking about, and from my view as the Chief of Defence Staff, we do need a manned fighter for the next few decades.

With regard to whether we should have a UAV, an unmanned aerial vehicle that could do the same thing, and go down that path and get an unmanned aerial vehicle to be the next generation fighter, someone said to me that the day we can all go down to the Ottawa airport and get on a commercial airliner that is a UAV and feel comfortable about from flying to A to B, then we're ready for it. Unless we're ready to get into an unmanned aerial airliner, we should invest in a manned fighter. As we look to everything out there right now, we need to be able to cover the sovereignty of Canada, because, like every other operation I've seen in my career, the future is unpredictable—totally unpredictable.

I can remember when I was the director of operations in 1999. My first day of work was the November 23, 1999. I had just returned home from Bosnia, and my predecessor gave me keys to the room and said, "Things should be quiet today. Don't worry about it." By the end of that day we were dropping bombs in Kosovo with our F-18 aircraft—again in support of both a UN and a NATO mandate.

With regard to this Libya mission that just occurred, this past January I was in Brussels at a NATO chiefs of defence conference, and we were meeting with all of our Mediterranean colleagues. The meeting, frankly, was pretty quiet because not much was happening in the Mediterranean.

● (0920)

Hon. John McKay: But arguably, the mix has changed. When the initial concept for purchasing these airplanes was taking place in 2000, the fantasy of doing unmanned aircraft was just that, a fantasy. Now it's a reality and, arguably, a lot of the reconnaissance missions at least could be accomplished—and I'm using this as an example rather than a fact—by unmanned aerial vehicles.

Is it still such a high urgency, a high priority, to purchase 65 manned—or personned—airplanes, given the significant change in technology but also the enormous way in which the conflict takes place? Who would have imagined that a lot of the successes in both Afghanistan and Libya have been accomplished with planes without have people in them?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Again, Mr. Chair, as your Chief of Defence Staff, in answer to your question, I would say the answer is yes. We do need to have the right mix of manned aerial aircraft, and the F-35, in my view, is the best of those aircrafts. At the same time, in the Canada First defence strategy, we have the justice program, which includes an unmanned aerial vehicle that would indeed complement...at home and abroad.

Hon. John McKay: Does that mean you could live with less than 65, then?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: The number of 65 is the minimal operational essential for the needs of Canada, both at home and abroad.

Hon. John McKay: If we look at the numbers the government has put forward, it becomes a function of numerators and denominators. With the escalating cost of the plane, the chance of your getting 65 airplanes is becoming exceedingly remote.

Gen Walter Natynczyk: From the information I have, this project not only has the cost of the acquisition and whatever infrastructure changes we have to make to it, but it also includes a 30% contingency. Again, when you're dealing with the kind of technological evolution of an aircraft of this nature, it is appropriate.

Indeed, it depends on when you buy the aircraft off the assembly line, which kind of determines the cost as well. From the information I have, one of the reasons that government over the years has upgraded our CF-18s is that they could last until 2017 to 2020. So we were buying the aircraft off the assembly line when the cost actually fit for us.

From my standpoint—and again, the commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force can get into more detail—65 is the minimal operational requirement for us. We need to have these aircrafts, both for the sovereignty of Canada and to meet our international obligations as set by the Government of Canada.

● (0925)

Hon. John McKay: Thank you.

The Chair: We're going to move on to our five-minute rounds, starting with Mr. Opitz.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): General, we're delighted to have you here today.

Mr. Chair, I've had the pleasure of serving under the general in the past as my contingent commander in Bosnia, and I'm delighted to have an opportunity to continue to work with you in the future, sir.

Sir, in talking about readiness, what are some of the metrics you use to define a ready force and how would you define those gaps? General Vance was in the other day. He talked about his role at the SJS and some of the contingency planning that he proposed to you. So within that construct of the SJS's role and the contingency plans that you may formulate because of a changing situation in Canada, how does that factor into the measurement of readiness, metrics, and anticipation of where Canada may be going, because I presume that these contingency plans would be reviewed on a regular basis, assuming the world events that would be affecting Canada at that time? Would that be correct?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Mr. Chair, I'd say first of all, Canada is a very lucky country because North America is almost like an island, in the sense that we have great neighbours to the south and there's no conventional military threat to Canada from any external player. In that regard, we are quite fortunate. That's why we have contingency forces that are ready for our sovereignty missions at home, which I just described earlier, whether these be the immediate response units, the ready-duty ships, the aircraft on alert in Bagotville and Cold Lake and, as mentioned, search and rescue, all of which are ready to go anywhere because, internationally, we never know what the future will bring.

It's been my experience—and I've been wearing this uniform for 37 years—that we've never been able to predict where the next conflict will be. None of us thought we'd be in Afghanistan or in Libya. I'm going to be welcoming the fighter pilots back to Bagotville tomorrow afternoon, when they're coming home. When I was visiting those guys in Trapani I was fascinated, because they had just finished visiting the Commonwealth cemetery. This was the

[*Translation*]

425 Squadron from Bagotville, the Alouettes.

[*English*]

The Alouettes de Bagotville were launching from bases in Tunisia, lining up on Mount Etna to drop bombs in Sicily 67 years before. Yet there they were, launching from Sicily today to drop bombs on North Africa and lining up on Mount Etna to come home. You can never predict the future. So indeed our mission is to make sure that we have those sailors, soldiers, airmen and women who are ready to go out the door, and how we do that is by ensuring that those units that have been identified for high readiness have all of the equipment in the best possible condition. They have the equipment first of all, and that equipment is well maintained with all the spare parts and all the ammunition—but they also have all the personnel with the right skill sets.

Not only that, when they deploy, they have replacements back home because stuff happens. Everyone has unique family circumstances and issues, so we need to have some depth. But then that team has gone through a very deliberate training and validation cycle so that the commander of the army, the navy, and the air force can tell me that the unit is good to go.

So the metrics that are being provided with regard to the maintenance of those assets.... And, indeed, each one of those assets is different whether it's a Cormorant helicopter doing search and rescue; or HMCS *Charlottetown* ; or as we have today, where the essence of the training mission in Kabul is third battalion PPCLI. That they are good to go out the door to achieve their missions is due to all of the equipment. And it's the personnel and their training, but also the validation that they're ready to go. We track all those units in normal readiness, and a normal readiness unit like the second battalion of the PPCLI slung sandbags on the Assiniboine River in Portage la Prairie. They were ready to go out the door with no notice, and the way they can do it is also in being able to send

[*Translation*]

the 3rd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment, in Haiti. It's the same situation there, we save lives.

[*English*]

So it's all about the metrics in terms of equipment availability, equipment maintenance, personnel availability, all the training, and then a certification and validation of the training they've completed.

I know some of you visited Wainwright recently and were able to see some of the training that was happening out there. Part of that was the validation of training for that entire brigade out of Petawawa.

● (0930)

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

Madame Moore, *s'il vous plaît.*

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General, thank you for being here.

My questions will deal mainly with the assessment of the armed forces' needs. For example, with reference to the new generation of fighter jets, the initial call for tenders went out in 1996. It was before Afghanistan, before September 11, 2001. A needs assessment was done at that time.

Since the process is taking 15 years, how do we know whether this call for tenders still matches the needs of the armed forces?

Since our needs evolve, how do we adjust this needs assessment?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: At present, the fact that there are not many fighter jets on the market is a challenge for us.

In my opinion, the modernization program met with a lot of success. We prepared this fighter jet for sovereignty operations and even for NATO support operations, like in Libya. The CF-18, our crews and pilots were ready for sovereignty missions and joint foreign operations with NATO.

The problem coming generations will have to deal with is that there are not many aircraft on the market. The fifth generation of fighter jets is really different as far as technology is concerned. There's been a real revolution in technologies, as a result of stealth aircraft technology.

To my mind, there are only a few good products on the market. There are F-22s, which are no longer being made, and F-35s. I feel that, to perform sovereignty operations undertaken by Canada, in the context of North American Aerospace Defence Command, with our partners in the United States and NATO operations, we really need the F-35s, which a lot of other countries want to buy.

As I mentioned earlier, it's very difficult to predict the future. But, if we had these revolutionary technologies, we would be ready. As I've already mentioned, there are conflicts in Kosovo and in Libya. We have no idea about future expeditionary operations. Even with the threats Canada will be faced with, we can't really say what future threats will be. It's essential to have a fighter jet with better technology for the next 30 or 40 years.

Ms. Christine Moore: What are the operational needs that absolutely require this technology?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: In view of the evolution of radars, it's essential to have a fighter jet with better technology in order to protect our aircraft and, above all, their crew.

The stealth aircraft, all the command, control and radar systems are included in the F-35 fighter jet.

This would be a good question to ask the Commander of the Canadian Air Force. In my opinion, the F-35 is the best product for meeting our sovereignty needs and for international operations.

● (0935)

Ms. Christine Moore: I have another question about the command.

The report mentioned that there were numerous duplications within the Canadian Forces, notably within Canada Command, the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command and the Canadian Operational Support Command. It was recommended that these bodies be brought together under a single command structure.

Do you think this is possible? Would it compromise operational readiness? Are there other consolidations to be made in Canadian Forces command, changes that wouldn't affect operational readiness but would avoid work being duplicated?

[*English*]

The Chair: I'll let you respond very briefly, General.

[*Translation*]

Gen Walter Natynczyk: I asked General Leslie to report on the efficiency of our command and control structure. I've received his report and right now we're working on planning with my team of commanders so that we can submit our recommendations to the department.

As I have already mentioned, our priority is first to maintain the current readiness of the forces and second to make sure, for the future, that the forces are modern and well prepared. We also want to take care of our soldiers, sailors and air force members.

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci.

Mr. Strahl, it's your turn.

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

General, it's good to see you again. I can't compete with Mr. Chisu or Mr. Opitz in terms of their personal experience, so I live vicariously through my cousin who is serving in Kabul right now. I can tell you that I take great pride and reassurance from the fact that he's been so well prepared for the mission he's been asked to do.

We hear about operational tempo, which is a new term for a civilian like me. Over the past 10 years you've been working at an unusually high operational tempo. Now that we are almost out of Afghanistan, is there going to be a necessary recovery period for the Canadian Forces? If so, how will that affect our readiness?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Thank you for the question.

Mr. Chair, I would just say that this is one aspect of the little anecdotes that people hear about in terms of fatigue and high operational tempo, and so on. I just want to assure you—and again, the Canadian Forces' chief can come in here and pile on—that when we visit units from coast to coast to coast, the sailors, soldiers, airmen and women have all joined or signed up because they want to go somewhere, and they want to want to make a contribution to Canada, a contribution here at home and a contribution internationally. When we go and give our little talks, the chief and I, and we hand out a couple of coins and we do a town hall. The first question, no matter where we go is, "Sir, where are we going to go next? We want to go somewhere, where is it going to be?" And even when we're welcoming those folks home—they're on their way home and they haven't seen their loved ones yet—their first line to us is, "Sir, where is the next mission? I just want to know."

I just want to say that it's not unique to this generation, but it's ever been thus. For every conflict to which this country has answered the call, Canadians have been coming through the doors saying, "We want to go somewhere."

I still remember talking to a soldier from PPCLI , who was on the back side of Whistler during the Olympics on a snow machine providing protection. His question to the chief and I was, "How do I get from here to Haiti? I want to go from here to Haiti right away. How do I do that?"

A year and a bit ago, the chief and I were in Valcartier *avec 5e Régiment du génie* talking to a sergeant who was a counter-improvised explosive device operator, basically a bomb disposal senior NCO. He was identified because he was going on his fourth tour, but he had manipulated the system. He had done everything he could to get onto that tour.

So I just want to say that operational tempo affects people differently, because all men and women who are in uniform have different backgrounds and different family circumstances. Those who are young and are not yet married want to go somewhere right away. Senior NCOs and some of the officers who have had multiple tours have different family circumstances, and you have to moderate that somewhat.

But also, every time we come up with an operation, we have to ensure that we have the right kinds of teams going out the door to do the business.

I also want to comment on the fact that, as we talk about the Afghanistan mission nearly done, at this moment in time I have almost 2,000 men and women in Afghanistan. I have north of 1,200 in Kandahar still doing the mission transition task force. There is a lot of risk in what they do, and I never want to underestimate that risk.

Similarly, we have 925 men and women in Kabul, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat, who are doing an essential mission, a priority mission in the training of the Afghan police and the Afghan army. As your cousin knows, it's a tough mission. As we just learned tragically this past weekend, it has high risk.

I just want to say that the men and women are doing a great job, whether it's at home.... And let me just say that I met a lot of search and rescue technicians on Saturday as we had the repatriation ceremony in Trenton for Sergeant Gilbert. They are all enthused about their mission, and they're courageous when they jump out the back of the aircraft into circumstances that one can only imagine, and at the same time they're saving lives.

But also, your cousin and all of those other folks in Kabul and in Trapani right now are defending Canada from 10,000 kilometres away. That's equally important. All of them want to be in uniform as volunteers to do the job for Canadians so that we can sleep well at night.

● (0940)

The Chair: Thank you.

Time has expired.

Mr. Kellway.

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

General, thank you for being here. It's a real pleasure to be able to talk to you directly today.

I heard in your conversation today your praise, in effect, for the Canada First defence strategy, and how it's been a useful blueprint for the forces. I wanted to look a little more closely at that. When I look at the three broad missions set out here, the two missions of excellence at home, and being a strong, reliable defence partner are ones that I think I get. They seem to be, in a sense, containable, understandable concepts.

The third one—projecting leadership abroad—strikes me as a bit problematic for the purpose of readiness, in the sense that in this document at least there seems to be very little definition. I heard you say that this is helpful as a blueprint, but I also heard you say how unpredictable things are. You said a number of times how one can't predict the future, that we don't know where we will be going, etc.

As a very simple question, in your discussions with the government, which inform policy, do you go through a process of drilling down a bit on what projecting leadership abroad actually means, or is it left very open?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Mr. Chair, thank you for the question.

I would say that in international operations, Canada has a significant commitment to NATO through that alliance and, indeed, to the United Nations as a founding nation of both organizations. But in international operations, again, government has a call in what we do internationally. In support of the United Nations, we have missions that are carried out throughout the world, and we don't talk about them enough. We still have people in Haiti today, we have people in the Congo, people in the various regions of the Sudan. We have people as part of a multinational force of trainers in Sierra Leone, and we have people in the Middle East with the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization, UNTSO, all wearing blue berets. So we have all of those missions.

Indeed, the Canada First defence strategy was produced while we were ramping up into Afghanistan. One of the key lessons of Afghanistan is that we have a level of self-reliance and that what we do is to ensure that we have a strategic effect for Canada. Again, I was with some here on tours in Bosnia. In Bosnia in 1994, I was on two tours, the first one a year long in 1994, and we had 2,200 men and women committed to Bosnia. We had one battalion in Bosnia itself, just west of Sarajevo, in the area of Visoko and Kiseljak.

● (0945)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: General, I don't mean to be rude, but we are all conscious of our time limitations when asking questions.

I get the fact that we've been all over and have multiple missions around the world. I guess my point is that that is the point: we have multiple missions around the world. With such a broad mission of projecting leadership abroad, how do we ensure readiness? What we've got here in this Canada First defence strategy is a $490-billion plan for the next 20 years that, if I understand the concept, ripples across all four pillars to make sure that we have balance, and on and on we go. So how does one contain this for the purpose of readiness?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: To answer the first question, let me say that when we go somewhere in a major operation, we put all of our men and women in a team such that we are projecting leadership into that operation, just like General Bouchard did in Naples in running the operation for NATO, and as we did in Afghanistan in having a great leader like General Vance commanding, or General Milner, and all the rest of those commanders, all of whom command a cohesive, coherent force of Canadians that is taking care of Canadians, just as we did in Haiti with General Laroche, as well. At the same time, in doing so, we've got a big Canadian flag in each place. There's a Canadian flag parked in Port au Prince, a big Canadian flag parked in Kandahar, and a big Canadian flag parked in Naples. In each place we have had a strategic effect because we have projected that leadership abroad, while at the same time having the coherence of Canadians taking care of Canadians in an operation.

At the same time, when you look at the Canada First defence strategy and the $490 billion included there, over half of that is for people. A significant slice of that is for infrastructure, including bases coast to coast. Another significant slice of that is the future, buying the right equipment for tomorrow, and it's also the readiness, which is all the ammunition, all the training, all the rations, so that the force is ready.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Norlock, it's your turn.

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

Thank you very much for coming today, General.

As the MP who is sort of responsible for Trenton, I once again want to offer my condolences on the loss of one our very valuable SAR tech officers. It's just terrible that Sergeant Gilbert will no longer be with us. We just toured CFB Trenton with Minister Fantino a couple of weeks ago, where we saw the SAR techs and were immensely proud of them. Of course, Trenton is where we repatriate all of our sons and daughters who are lost in the world, and we are very sensitive to those losses.

I would like to go back to one of the questions. We're talking about aircraft purchases. In 2005, I put my name forward to run for the Conservative Party because we had a plan for the Canadian armed forces. Part of that plan was for a strategic and tactical lift that no one else had on their books. We were talking about planning for the future in aircraft. You know, people were churning about this, because these planes are expensive; all planes are expensive. Anything to do with equipping our military is expensive, because we want the best for our sons and daughters who go overseas to do the dirty jobs we ask them to do—and it's not just overseas, but right here in our country.

When the world came to the aid of Sri Lanka, we had to shop around and wait until one of the Antonovs was ready to take our DART team over there. Compare that to Haiti, when we had the C-17s at Trenton and we were right there in 24 hours. So maybe the folks who get all wound up about what we need for the Canadian armed forces need to think about what we had before, what we have today, and the kinds of jobs we're able to do.

I'm sorry for the editorializing, but I have to admit that it winds me up. I apologize if I get a little excited, but having worn a uniform for 30 years, though not a military uniform, I know how important it is to equip the people you ask to do a job with the right kind of equipment, because then they can do a better job. They will feel better about the job they're doing and realize realizing that the people who pay the freight care enough about them to give them the best.

How would you rate the readiness levels of each environment—and here I'm talking about the army, the navy, and the air force? Is there a need for growth in the army, navy, and air force?

Then I have a few follow-up questions, but I doubt I'm going to get to them.

● (0950)

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Let me first say thank you for the editorial, because I indeed still remember that when we were trying to get our forces into Kosovo back in 1999, the country from whom we were trying to rent strategic airlift would not allow us to land the aircraft where we needed to land. That was a wake-up call to people that we actually needed to have grey tail military aircraft to carry us to far-off places. And similarly, we launched troops

[*Translation*]

in the case of the 3rd Battalion of the Royal 22nd Regiment, in

[*English*]

East Timor in 1999. Again, we were looking for wide-body aircraft while everybody else was looking for aircraft as well, so we couldn't get the aircraft until much later on.

But that is just to say that I agree with you. Everything's expensive, and we in the Canadian Forces, working with all of government, try to find the best value for Canadians, whether it be a helicopter or a transport aircraft like the C-130J. It was great being in Trenton and seeing all the brand new C-130Js on the ramp and the C-17 on the ramp. Indeed, we try to look for the best value for Canada overall.

In terms of the details of the readiness of the services, I'll just say that this information is secret. So I won't go into detail on this kind of thing. I'll just say that the air force is always at the highest level of readiness, because for an aircraft to be fully safe from a flight safety perspective, it has to be at 100%. Whether it be a commercial aircraft, or a C-17, C-130J, helicopter, or fighter, it's got to be at 100%. Everything's got to work right away, because of the tolerances demanded of that aircraft in pulling three, four, or five Gs in combat. So generally, from a flight safety perspective, the air force is always at the highest level of readiness.

The navy and the army are generally similar in their percentage of folks who are at high readiness. In the army, generally, there's a battalion that is ready to go internationally. Similarly, as a factor in overall percentage, the navy with its ready-duty ships is generally at the same kind of percentage.

The army, because so much of its assets are in people, really doesn't have low readiness. It has normal readiness, whereas the navy's key assets are its ships, and the people, obviously, but the people don't float on their own, but need a ship. So when a ship goes into long-term maintenance, it's into an extended lower readiness period. So the navy, unlike the army, has this low readiness or extended readiness. For example, if you look at the HMCS *Halifax*, it will be in refit for a year. Indeed, when the submarine HMCS *Victoria* was dry dock and shipyard workers were working on it, the refit took years. Again, we'd not had a lot of work done on submarines on the west coast.

So I would say the most ready force is traditionally always the air force because of the high readiness requirements of flight safety. The army and the navy are about similar; but the navy, because of its business, is so equipment-oriented with regard to its ships that it actually has a low readiness status, while the army does not.

Hopefully, that answers your question, sir.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Brahmi.

[*Translation*]

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

General Natynczyk, there's a lot of talk these days about abolishing positions on military bases, especially in my riding, Saint-Jean. I'm sure you can't reveal any secrets to us, but I'd like to know what the consequences of abolishing these positions would be on operational readiness and how this could throw our operational readiness off balance.

● (0955)

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Mr. Chair, as I've already mentioned, we have put a lot into transforming the Canadian Forces, in terms not only of efficiency and investments pertaining to members of the Canadian Forces, but also readiness and capital for the future. We are now doing studies on the structure of the regular force, the reserve force and even civil National Defence teams.

The primary goal of this work is to determine the indirect costs and efficiency of the organizational structure, ensure that we maintain the readiness level of all our battalions, units, ships and squadrons, in the case of our air force and also our training bases. As far as readiness is concerned, it is essential to ensure that our training centres, both individual and collective, are protected, and ensure that our members are properly trained in preparation for present and future operations. I don't know what the situation is in your riding, but I think priority is given to the efficiency of the organizational structure.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Right.

You've just talked about the reserve; this is an important aspect. Canadians realize that headquarters optimizes the resources you're given by the government. Still, if we talk about the reserve, there has to be a back and forth flow of dedicated resources between the reserve force and the regular force. That means, if we look at the past 10 years, that our engagement in Afghanistan must have had an impact on management of the reserve force, since the regular forces were out of the country.

How did our engagement affect our reserve force?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: When operations began in Kandahar, the number of full-time reservists was about 4,500. Last year, the number of full-time reservists was over 10,000. During this period of high-paced operations, we replaced a lot of members in the Canadian Forces who were at Wainwright for training, or in Afghanistan to take part in operations, or on a break after taking part in operations. We had to use all full-time reservists and even civilians, on all the bases and all our instruction centres.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Would you say, in the last 10 years, the reserve has been amputated because of deployments? Was that consistent?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: No, not at all. In the Canada First strategy, the goal was to promote the growth of the reserve forces. In the beginning the reserve force had about 22,000 or 23,000 members. I remember, I was vice chief at that time. The goal of the Canada First strategy is to have a reserve force of 30,000 soldiers. But it's a matter of balance between the part-time reserve and the full-time reserve. The aim for full-time reservists is training. However, during the high operations period, we used a lot of full-time reservists at headquarters and other centres, because the members of the regular force were deployed. Now the goal is to have the right balance between part-time reservists and full-time reservists.

● (1000)

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Right. Thank you, General.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This question I ask will be through you to our witnesses.

There's been quite a discussion with reference to the tempo, not only of our humanitarian and domestic missions but also of our deployments to Afghanistan and Libya.

As costs and funding certainly apply to readiness, I wonder if the Canadian forces are totally reimbursed for the additional costs of a mission, which may be over and above the normal operating costs for the military. For example, in Haiti, for the additional cost of having our troops go there and do what they did, were the Canadian forces fully reimbursed? And for the long-term mission in Afghanistan, from year to year, has the Canadian forces been reimbursed, or have you had to dig into your budget to take care of the shortfalls?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Thanks very much for the question.

Again, the operational tempo has been high and has been sustained. As I said before, our ability to do that is based upon the long-term investments that we've made.

With regard to the finance piece, I would ask the vice chief. He'll be coming here in the next little while. From my knowledge of the Haiti mission, when we went forward to the minister with a plan on January 13, 2010, we scoped out up using up to 2,000 folks. We thought the emergency phase would be up to two months, which would give sufficient time to the non-governmental organizations, the international organizations, and so on, to stand up. We thought it'd be up to about two months. We costed that out—and again, the department can probably provide that to you. My understanding is that the amount was fully reimbursed.

As for the Afghan mission, there are others who know the details of this. What I understand is that over time, a significant portion of the overall cost came as incremental funding. A portion of the funding was from within, and our department worked with the central agencies to negotiate that.

Again, I would defer to those who know more about this than I do.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Therefore, from the standpoint of readiness, that has not interfered with it.

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Indeed, for the Afghanistan mission we received significant funding to assist in bringing the forces up to the higher level of operational training required to go into theatre. So we received incremental money for the kinds of high-level, brigade-level training that people have witnessed at Wainwright, Alberta.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: One of the new programs implemented by the Canadian Forces is the MP familiarization program, and so this summer I had the opportunity to visit Trenton. One of the observations made was that with the C-17s were in such high demand, the pilots were really firing on all cylinders for a very long time, not only with the deployments and the humanitarian missions but also the training required to keep up their certifications.

My question comes back home to the base at Petawawa. We see those hangers going up, getting ready for the Chinooks. How do we know, in terms of readiness, that the pilots, the engineers, the technicians, and maintenance people will all be in place upon the arrival of the Chinooks?

Gen Walter Natynczyk: I think in both areas, both in Trenton and up in Petawawa, the best guy to ask is the commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force, André Deschamps, who has the details on this.

I just tip my hat to the air force for how they were able to manage the introduction of the C-17 and C-130J, and I anticipate the same kind of work with the CH-47 Foxtrot, the Chinook Foxtrots that are coming in. When you look to the success stories of the last little while, from the decision on the C-17 to when we were able to deliver it on mission, to my mind it was done in record time. From when we took delivery of the C-17, two weeks later the first C-17 was delivering humanitarian supplies to Jamaica in the aftermath of the successive hurricanes that hit Jamaica. From the introduction of that system to actually deploying it into an operation took two weeks. That was because we had worked very closely with the U.S. Air Force. We had taken a lot of our people and put them into the U.S. Air Force, having them fly C-17s for quite some time. When we received our C-17s, the U.S. Air Force provided back to us some of their pilots who had the right balance of experience.

Similarly, with the C-130J, it was literally within months that we had the first C-130J introduced and flying into Afghanistan, doing operational missions there.

Similarly, when the government decided to procure CH-47 Deltas —the Chinook helicopters that we had in Afghanistan, which are an older version of what we'll be seeing here in the next few years—the minister and I were able to fly on Boxing Day of that same year following the decision to purchase them in April. So it was literally within months, because we had made the investments in training pilots, putting them into U.S. Army installations and bringing them up to that operational capability in record time.

The Commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force is working very closely with the U.S., but also with the U.K. and Australia, so that we can get the pilots into their training systems—and here I would add that the ground crew, the maintainers, are also on the various courses—so that when the aircraft arrive, we can quickly bring these aircraft up to what we refer to as an initial operational capability and then to a full operational capability.

I'll just say that the investments this past while into the air force have been tremendous. As the commander of the RCAF reminds me, historically we've generally introduced only two new aircraft into the air force every decade. This decade he's receiving seven new aircraft types. So his transition into those seven new aircraft types, while concurrently maintaining a high operational tempo, is a challenge.

I am really proud of those men and women because they're doing a great job.

● (1005)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Alexander.

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

Thank you so much, General, and your chief, for your leadership on the issue of readiness and for being here today.

You referred to the missions of the past decade. Let's take it even back to Bosnia and how each one was unanticipated. We all understand that. It has always been the case since time immemorial.

General, if I may add, I think there's been another trend in the last decade. Not only are we going to places we hadn't necessarily anticipated going to, but we're being asked to perform even greater feats of leadership. If you compare, of course, Bosnia with the leadership we showed in Afghanistan because our allies were busy in other places, and the leadership that culminated this year with General Bouchard—an unprecedented level of leadership—I think these speak to the demand for a new kind of readiness, which you're obviously grasping but which is challenging.

One of the observations we all make, having been to Wainwright and having heard witnesses from your team testifying here, is that there is a tremendous versatility on the part of our forces. Even though they don't know where they're going, they want to go. They are ready for the unexpected, and that's very precious.

My first question is really about this. Knowing what capabilities you have, knowing what missions we're now performing, how do you manage the risks with regard to unexpected missions? How do you as the CDS and your command team try to be ready for what you almost certainly know you won't have planned for 100%? And how does that relate to ability to be ready in different parts of the world?

We've talked about basing requirements. We've had some of these in some countries that weren't entirely satisfactory in the end. We know we're innovating in that field and we know that we don't just have to take soldiers, but we also capabilities like ISR and in the cyber field. General Vance was very clear that these emerging capabilities are going to be critical in the missions of the future.

Tell us about managing the balance of risks in being ready for missions that aren't going to be served up to us five years in advance on a silver platter.

● (1010)

Gen Walter Natynczyk: I was just in Hawaii with the chief. We were meeting with 26 other chiefs of defence staff of the Asia-Pacific Rim countries, together with our colleagues from Australia and New Zealand. The message I received there—the same message I received in Brussels—was that everyone wants more of Canada. No matter where we put our men and women, people know the quality, the professionalism, the values, and the morals of those individuals. I'd say our secret weapon is a Canadian soldier, sailor, airman or airwoman, or special forces trooper with an open hand and a smile. They represent our culture, and they do an extraordinary job of it.

In respect of our versatility, the very character of Canada's forces us to be an expeditionary, highly professional force. If you can have a C-17 land in Alert or Resolute Bay, literally thousands of kilometres away from us; if you can have a C-130 land in Cape Dorset or Cambridge Bay, in small communities across the Arctic that are expeditionary distances away, with gravel runways that are very isolated, then let me tell you that landing at Jacmel Airport in Haiti on a 3,000-foot asphalt runway is easy.

We are challenged more by operating in our own domain than we are operating around the world. It is harder to sustain operations in our high Arctic than it is to sustain operations in Kandahar or Kabul. In the Arctic, it's what you bring. It creates an immediate self-sufficient culture. Seeing HMCS *Montreal* up in the high Arctic, and HMCS *Toronto* before that, and seeing our submarine, the *Corner Brook*, up in Iqaluit just a year ago, we know that being able to complete missions in the high Arctic enables us culturally and operationally and gives us a sense of versatility and agility.

Mr. Chris Alexander: I think that is the answer.

General, tell us about the contribution of leadership to readiness. We know from General Leslie's report that one of the options would be to consolidate some of the employer commands you have. Tell us what the impact would be on readiness.

Gen Walter Natynczyk: Again, I would reserve those kinds of things. We're still working inside the Canadian Forces and the department to go to the minister, and I would not want to share things here that I've not shared within the Canadian Forces, within the department, and with the minister.

As we look towards efficiencies, we will ensure that we are able to project leadership abroad. The fact is we have made investments. Charlie Bouchard, before been part of the Joint Force Command Naples, was deputy commander of NORAD. Before that he was our operational commander of all Canadian Air Forces back in Winnipeg. So we've made investments with him, as we've done with General Milner and General Vance, and so on.

The Chair: Everyone realizes we are being called by bells to vote. Standing Order 115(5) reads:Notwithstanding Standing Orders 108(1)(a) and 113(5), the Chair of a standing, special, legislative or joint committee shall suspend the meeting when the bells are sounded to call in the Members to recorded division, unless there is unanimous consent of the members of the committee to continue to sit.

Is there unanimous consent to sit?

I'm not seeing unanimous consent, so I am moved to suspend the meeting. But because of the time—it's a thirty-minute bell—and because this room will be occupied by the time we get back, I'm going to adjourn the meeting rather than suspend it. All members did have a chance to put a question to the Chief of the Defence Staff.

Walter Natynczyk, and Chief Robert Cléroux, it was great having you here today. We are going into Veterans Week, where we are going to honour and remember all of the sacrifices made by our brave men and women who have served us so well through the years as part of our proud military tradition that so many of us align ourselves with as Canadians. That is being continued today under your leadership and by the great people who serve us across this country and around the world in the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the Canadian army.

Thanks so much for your testimony and providing your input for our study on readiness. I hope that when we're done, you'll find value in the recommendations of the report that we table in the House.

The meeting is adjourned.

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