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Chair

Mr. James Bezan

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● (0850)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): I call this meeting to order. We're a couple of minutes behind.

We're going to continue with our study on readiness. Joining us today as a witness is Major-General Mark McQuillan, who is the commander of Canadian Operational Support.

General, if you could bring your opening comments, we'd appreciate it.

Major-General Mark McQuillan (Commander, Canadian Operational Support Command, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide you with a briefing on the Canadian Operational Support Command, in particular on the role pertaining to force readiness.

I'm Major-General Mark McQuillan, commander of Canadian Operational Support Command, or CANOSCOM.

CANOSCOM was first created and stood up in early 2006 as part of the first round of CF transformation. It has matured and, from my perspective, has provided outstanding support to Canadian Forces operations, domestic and international, over that timeframe.

[*Translation*]

What I would like to do is walk through a very short deck of slides, to provide some context of how CANOSCOM, and, more importantly, its superb professionals, enable operations.

What I hope to underscore are the force generation and force employment responsibilities executed by the command and speak to its overall readiness, flexibility and capabilities.

[*English*]

My first slide provides an overview of where CANOSCOM fits within our operational focus. Clearly it has both strategic influence and tactical effect. The CANOSCOM mission is to provide effective and efficient operational support to CF operations, be they domestic, continental, or expeditionary.

Operational support is the delivery of a specialized support function that is not unique to the special air, maritime, or land component commands but rather would be seen as providing joint or cross-service capabilities that have an enabling impact on CF operations. In many respects we act as a coordinating body, linking functional support policy and authorities at the national level to the provision of operational capability reaching down to the task force support organizations.

Our primary roles are to coordinate the generation of task-tailored operational support organizations for employment in theatre opening and activation, mission sustainment, and finally close-out. We support the operational commanders—Expeditionary Force Command, Canada Command, and Special Operations Forces Command—in the planning and preparation of operations, and we provide reach-back and coordinate the provision of national and strategic support as appropriate.

The second slide depicts one of the great advantages of CANOSCOM, which is that it groups a range of support activities under one commander. I'm responsible to force-generate specialists from across a variety of support disciplines. These include logistics—which encompasses materiel management—as well as movements, finance, and food services. Additionally, CANOSCOM provides a range of personal services such as those used in the capabilities and third-line decompression for troops returning from Afghanistan.

Military engineers are essential for the tasks assigned, and we have professional engineering advice and capability to coordinate force bed-down during theatre activation. We also have strategic and operational level communications and information services, which, among other things, establish communications and provide information technology in theatre while providing essential rear links to Canada.

We also coordinate and deliver health services in conjunction with the health services group.

Lastly, CANOSCOM provides military policing and close protection in conjunction with the Canadian Forces provost marshal. In short, we're a one-stop shop for the coordination and provision of general support for operations.

[*Translation*]

CANOSCOM has both force generation and force employment responsibilities. This third slide depicts some of the tasks associated with an international deployment.

In general terms, once a new mission or operation is being considered, CANOSCOM's role is to assist the supported command, normally Canada Command or Canadian Expeditionary Force Command to develop the overall mission support plan. We will assist with the planning for the activation of camps, coordinate and commence the movement of materiel into the theatre of operations. Additionally, in developing the overall support plan, we will participate in the creation of support arrangements which ultimately will be managed by the deployed force.

[*English*]

CANOSCOM will establish what we call the strategic lines of communication and take responsibility for the tasks associated with its execution. CANOSCOM will assist in the projection of the force into a theatre normally defined as a joint operating area and through coordination of the strategic lift, both air and surface, and assist in sustaining the force by ensuring the provision of an efficient operational supply chain.

CANOSCOM's readiness framework has been driven by the Canada First defence strategy and six core missions that fall out from that. CANOSCOM drives tasks and maintains a level of readiness and capability to support both planned events, such as the Canadian Forces support we provided to the winter Olympics, and unplanned events, such as our disaster response provided as a result of the earthquake that devastated Haiti in 2010.

The backbone of our material and distribution network is provided by the Canadian materiel support group, which manages the six ammunition and material depots across Canada. The deployable capabilities within CANOSCOM consist of the Joint Support Group that has expertise in movements, supply, and postal services; and the joint signals regiment, with deployable strategic and operational communications packages. As indicated earlier, CANOSCOM has engineering and security services that maintain a level of readiness to support CF operations.

It's also important to note the operational support provided by the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army, and the Royal Canadian Air Force and their organizational departments. For those general support capabilities required from the services, I'm responsible for helping define the training and equipment requirements and maintaining a level of readiness. To meet these requirements, the environmental chiefs' support is vital.

The next slide speaks to the command's capability development. The Canada First defence strategy states the intention of the Government of Canada to strengthen CF readiness to deploy and sustain operations once deployed.

CANOSCOM actively participates in our force development process by identifying requirements for operational support, both current and future. This process looks at future capability requirements influenced by operational lessons learned from CANOSCOM's extensive support of CF operations at home and around the globe since its inception.

We have established a program office that is mandated to address a number of operational support requirements. This slide portrays one specific operation support capability requirement where our analysis has resulted in identification for improved operational-level fuel handling capability. This issue is currently undergoing options analysis, including a benchmarking of the best fuel handling practices of close allies and NATO. This will result in the development of options and recommendations for future investment in leading-edge deployable fuel-handling equipment processes, including specific attention to be paid to the challenges associated with deploying and handling fuels in the Canadian Arctic.

The sixth slide highlights the fact that when deployed, specifically internationally, we normally do so in a coalition environment. As such we need to be mindful of other nations' capabilities and work together, where practical, to create a support solution that works effectively for those involved. Ultimately we're always striving to provide the best support at the least cost, in terms of both dollars and deployed personnel. We work with our allies in a number of fora to ensure that we have the best practices in place based on shared lessons learned in the conduct of operations.

We also leverage existing agreements specifically with NATO nations, and in particular with the U.S., where we can take advantage of their capabilities to provide a range of support on a cost-recovery basis. For example, we have entered into an acquisition cross-servicing arrangement with the U.S. in order to provide real-life support for the training mission in Afghanistan.

In addition to CF support capabilities and coalition support arrangements, we have had a degree of success in the past with the Canadian Forces contractor augmentation program, or CANCAP capability. These are DND contracts that were competed through PWGSC to provide augmentation to deployed logistical services, such as construction engineering, materiel management, and distribution. CANCAP services were extensively used in Afghanistan to help reduce the stress placed on various support trades. Between 2007 and 2011, for example, upwards of 300 civilians at any given time were working at the Kandahar airfield.

In short, when we design or improve a support concept we try to use a range of tools to ensure that the commander on the ground has an effective and flexible range of support capabilities to complete the scope of missions that he or she will be assigned.

Lastly, I'd like to speak briefly to a concept you're probably already aware of, and that is the operational support hub initiative. This hub concept speaks to the need for rapid-force projection and sustainment of a force, usually in a time-constrained environment. We have modelled deployment scenarios and mapped what we consider to be an effective concept that relies on the movement of CF capability by strategic air and sea lift, and then potentially transship to more tactical means of transport for onward movement to a specific mission or joint operating area.

● (0855)

The hub concept requires agreements with friendly governments that would agree to support temporary positioning and movement of CF personnel and equipment through the country. It is worthy of note that these nodes, when established on the strategic lines of communication, should not be seen as CF bases. They are hubs, to be activated when and if required, providing logistic support for transitioning elements.

The hub concept has a number of advantages in that it is flexible, responsive, and cost-effective when conducting sustained operations over a lengthy timeline.

The hub concept would also allow us to potentially embrace more fully the whole-of-government approach and enhance key relationships in a region.

Ladies and gentlemen, in summation, the Canadian Operational Support Command is an effective enabler for the conduct of CF operations. It has great people, military and civilian, with a demanding mission, but one I believe they have done exceptionally well.

Mr. Chair, I would be happy to respond to any questions at this time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, General, and thank you for your opening comments.

I noticed that when you mentioned on slide 2 that military engineers are essential to the tasks assigned in your department, Mr. Chisu puffed up a bit and grew about two or three inches.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): There'll be no living with him.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, we'll go to our seven-minute round.

Mr. Christopherson, can you lead off?

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

I would just advise my colleague not to worry. There's lots of competition for ego in this room, and I speak of myself to start with.

General, thank you very much for your presentation. Although I've been on Parliament Hill for a number of years now, I'm the newbie on this committee, so when you say things like, “You are likely already aware of...”, you're speaking to the majority of the committee but not to me. So it's very much one on one for me.

I'm very much interested in the operational support hub initiative that you mentioned in the latter part of your presentation. Particularly, you noted that if it's part of the strategic line of communication, it's not a base. Could you help me with a little more understanding on the strategic line of communication and exactly what that is? And again, provide a little further embellishment of the hub and how that differs from a base, since you made the point that we need to know that it's not one.

MGen Mark McQuillan: Sir, thank you for the question.

The amplification of the strategic line of communication, in simplistic terms, is essentially the sustainment route that we use to maintain and support a force. So it is primarily based on materiel movement, equipment movement, and personnel movement.

Of course, there are some enabling pieces on that strategic line of communication in addition to the sustainment piece, and I can come back to that.

Specifically with respect to what a hub is, it's probably best to use an example. For instance, when this concept was put forward I was given the authority to trial the hub. The reality of doing operations essentially necessitated that we do that. So I have what I call a hub in Spangdahlem, Germany. We have good cooperation with the Americans. We're on an American air force base but very much hosted by the German government. We had an agreement in principle to operate sustainment from that base.

As an example, while the Afghan mission was running, we're all aware we had a capability in Camp Mirage, but in addition a lot of our materiel sustainment came through this hub. The importance of the hub is that while we are doing sustainment operations, it is there. Today it is about four people, and it does transshipment—relatively small, very agile, but it saves money.

The simple principle is, depending on the priority of demand—i.e., how time-sensitive things need to get to the operational area—if I can use a ship, that's cheaper. And if I can use the ship, cross-load it, and move it across to an air head and then fly it in for that last leg, that is the more effective way. So that is an example of how an existing hub is being used, as we speak.

You can also add other activities to a hub. So when you are doing a relief in place, a rotation of troops every number of months, you will end up putting a team in place to provide augmentation to that capability. And then based on the levels of activity, you will ramp up to provide additional capability or capacity. When you have a battle group rotating through for about a six-week time period, it is a pretty intensive timeline to do that.

One other aspect of the strategic line of communication is that we will also put other activities on that strategic line of communication. I mentioned rotation of troops. For instance, I mentioned the term, “third location decompression”. In the troop rotation piece we see a need to ensure that we have an opportunity for troops rotating from a high-combat, high-stress environment coming back to the normalcy of a Canadian domestic environment to have a period of days to transition and decompress. But it's really seen as part of the redeployment process. We will stand up a capability on the strategic line of communication to assist in the mental health and education piece, a little bit of relaxation, and very much a decompression intent.

Sir, I hope that answers the question.

● (0900)

Mr. David Christopherson: Yes, it does. Thank you.

On this strategic line of communication vis-à-vis readiness, in your preparations where you're identifying potential areas, where you're looking at readiness and determining some of the likely things that you may be called upon to deal with, given what's going on currently in the world, do you automatically build in a strategic line of communication as part of that preparation? Without those supplies to keep the front lines going, you're limited in how long you can be effective. Do you do this immediately upon identifying where you're going and what the need is and then build that in?

I'm curious about the readiness, the strategic line of communication, when you're identifying potential hot spots that you may be called upon to respond to as part of the pre-planning. Do you think about where that strategic line of communication is and try to form some rough idea of it ahead of time, or can that happen only after you've identified the mission?

MGen Mark McQuillan: That's a great question. It allows me to talk a little more about hubs. In developing the concept of the hub, what we did at the front end was consider the dynamics of the world. When Canada asks a military force to go somewhere, whether it's for humanitarian assistance or for security operations, normally it means that you're going to go some distance, and that you're going to an area that is devastated in some way or other. So our planning assumption is not to expect to have much there. We do not want to put a strain on the local economy as we start to move into an operation.

Yes, we do need to plan, and that's in essence what the hub concept allows us to do. We have modelled strategic lines of communication against tactics. In a global context, by studying the geopolitical realities, we know that there are parts of the world where we might need to be prepared to respond, sometimes without any detailed direction from government. This allows a level of flexibility, so that if government decides that a military response is required, we're able to carry it through.

● (0905)

Mr. David Christopherson: In identifying those potential missions and the strategic line of communication, is this so crucial that if you don't have it in place you may not necessarily be able to respond the way the government of the day might like?

We can ask for anything, but you can only deliver what you can deliver. I thought it was interesting when you said you must not put demands on the local economy. I never thought of that. It never crossed my mind. That's assuming there's any kind of a going economy where you're headed anyway. I appreciate your mentioning that.

But anyway, coming back to your preparation, do you ever have to tell your political masters that you can't do it quite that way, because you're not able to sustain it, and if you're not able to sustain it, you don't want to start it? Or do you sometimes have to tell them that you can't go there quite as quickly as they'd like?

How relevant is this strategic line of communication to your ability to mount a response? Does it need to be there before you can go, or do you go no matter what and then figure out how you're going to get that strategic line of communication in place to support the mission?

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

General, please keep your response as short as possible.

MGen Mark McQuillan: In simple principles, we will go when and if required. Haiti is a good example. It wasn't an ideal place. It wasn't an ideal time, because of other CF operations. But we can and will respond.

The idea behind pre-planning a strategic line of communication is just increasing flexibility. It helps to be able to put agreements or contract arrangements in place with nations. My reality is that I usually need to have military provision of support, and I normally need to complement that with contracted support in a range of functions. So that flexibility is just good logistical pre-planning, and we attempt to do that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Opitz.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for being here today, General.

I can see why they say amateurs talk tactics and professionals talk logistics. What you're doing is a tremendously complex operation in coordination with many of our allies and some of the other dot-coms.

In an international mission such as the one in Afghanistan, how would you and CANOSCOM coordinate with our allied partners to ensure that all operational support requirements were met by our ISAF partners? You could also expand on how the hubs fit into this whole program.

MGen Mark McQuillan: Thanks for the question.

Afghanistan, as you can understand, is a challenging mission. I don't think we could pick any more demanding from a logistics perspective in terms of how you sustain a force that is in combat, or it was up until the summer and now we're transitioning to a training missing, so the sustainment of peace is real.

It does highlight the earlier question when you talked about how we coordinate with others. Very clearly, as we went into the Afghan mission—and getting back to the point that Afghanistan, in the 2001 moving forward timeframe, was very basic in terms of its capabilities from an industrial perspective. Therefore, when we go in, and we understand that, for us to have the effect that government wants, of course we have to be operational. In simple terms we need to ensure that the support to the soldiers is coordinated.

An example of what we ended up doing ISAF-partner specific is the fuel. Fuel is a huge commodity in a mission such as this. It's not resident in Afghanistan; we have to move it in. That ended up being—or it is today—a NATO-managed contract through headquarters that runs from one of the task forces, the ISAF task force headquarters, that manages the fuel delivery into ISAF. Millions of litres of fuel in a year are being consumed. That is an example of how, instead of all independent nations working independently to bring in their own fuel, which would have challenged each and every nation, working collectively to come together, to have a construct together for that, works. In addition you end up with contracted solutions. For instance, Kandahar, where the Canadians were employed...in the evolution of that support, you ended up actually giving a contracted solution for some of what we call real-life support, so the feeding, for instance, and some of the other basic services in and around the air field.

That combination of complex contracting, or coalition contracting, in line with agreements with other nations as you come together to solve problems is really important and essential in today's dynamic, and specifically in coalition ops.

● (0910)

Mr. Ted Opitz: How many of your members in CANOSCOM are serving in bases abroad? Could you comment on the role in those particular bases or hubs and what type of operational support is available to them?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Again, thanks for the question.

I should know exactly today how many I have deployed. I'm afraid I don't know the exact number.

I should clarify that Afghanistan, in the support concept, is the Expeditionary Force Command's mission. When we start to build an organizational structure, for instance—and we can talk a little bit later perhaps about the transition task force—the actual members of that come from force generation CF-wide. What we end up doing is essentially in the planning process we develop a table of organization equipment, we determine the tasks, and then we select leadership and/or the members to be able to support them.

To get back to your question, for instance, I would end up providing members of the joint signals regiment as part of the communications real link capabilities that we would deploy in support of the mission transition task force that is responsible to CEFCOM. I highlighted that in Spangdahlem we have people deployed there right now.

Presently I am running what is called an intermediate staging terminal for retrograde operations, where we fly material out, it lands in Kuwait presently, we clean it, then cross-load it onto ships, and send it back. We have about 160 people in the strategic line of communication, which is a task that is directly responsible to me in terms of the retrograde operations that are under way. A portion of those will be members of CANOSCOM and a portion of those.... I talked about leading into the services who force-generate people to go to that table of organization. That is also complimentary.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Can you comment on how many hubs we have, where they are, and perhaps what role they play in readiness? As you know, we've talked about readiness in this committee in the past. Can you just comment on it?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Hubs is a concept. In fact what we are running today.... I mentioned the Spangdahlem hub. That is a trial hub that we are running, a very minimal level of activity based on the level of sustainment required for Afghanistan, which is more focused on retrograde operations.

In the context of hub-like activities, Kuwait kindly agreed to support that. Since September we have been operating in Kuwait to provide a level of activity from there.

We happen to be operating in Cyprus right now. I would not call that a hub, but that is where we're doing cleared location decompression, so as we rotate troops out as part of the mission transition task force...to do that body of work back.

There are three active points based on activities that are in operation today that I would classify as hubs. The principal one is the one in Spangdahlem, and then very clearly Kuwait has graciously afforded us the opportunity for IST operations to use Kuwait at this point in time.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Are you solely responsible for setting up these areas? How do you coordinate with the other dot-coms?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Again, strategic line of communication, at this point, is a CANOSCOM responsibility. The requirements or the activities—again, I'm a supporting commander to CEFCOM, for instance, with the Afghan mission. As they conduct the retrograde of materiel, people, and equipment out of Afghanistan, I do the supporting plan. What happens in the joint operations area of Afghanistan is clearly for the mission transition task force, under General Chuck Lamarre, who responds to the commander of CEFCOM. Then, I support the commander of CEFCOM likewise by running the strategic line of communications, as indicated.

Mr. Ted Opitz: We have a lot of missions—Afghanistan, Haiti, Libya, other things have come up. How many missions can CANOSCOM realistically sustain at one time, do you think, if you had to?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Sir, that's an excellent question.

How active, how intense, how busy, how far, how complex, how difficult....

We have six mission sets that we all understand the government has given us that we will respond to. Fortunately, to this point, every time we have been tasked, we have been able to respond. I would say back when the Haiti earthquake happened, we were probably challenged because we had the Olympic security piece under way, we had a task force undergoing training in Fort Irwin, California.... We were, of course, focused on the mission given to us with respect to the Haiti support, and we were providing ongoing support to the Afghan mission. It worked.

Again, we are a force of 68,000, plus our reservists and our civilian defence team. There is only so much capacity. I guess the short answer is, we are capable enough to do what the government requires, and we've been able to respond. Part of our requirement, part of my assessment, is to tell the Chief of Defence Staff if I think I'm having a significant impediment in my ability to support the resources, based on the missions tasked. Fortunately, I've not had to have that discussion with the chief thus far.

● (0915)

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired.

Mr. McKay, for the last seven minutes.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Thank you, Major-General McQuillan.

For reasons best known to the Minister of Defence and to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, we had to move out of Camp Mirage. How much did that cost?

MGen Mark McQuillan: That's a simple question, sir. I don't know.

I do believe, though, that question has been put before, and I believe it's under notice for consideration, so it's probably not appropriate for me to comment on costs at this time, sir.

Hon. John McKay: It's kind of curious that you answer that you don't know, since you're the head of CANCOM. I would've thought that you would be in charge of the cost at least of that.

MGen Mark McQuillan: Sir, there were reduction costs, and, again, the government has indicated it will provide those.

Again, those correct costs will be provided to—

Hon. John McKay: Would it be your office that would provide the actual—

MGen Mark McQuillan: We would provide part of it, sir. At that time, Camp Mirage had been operating under the authority of CEFCOM. The air force was the primary force generator, and then we augmented that in terms of theatre activation. There were a number of different entities that would've been involved, or were involved, with respect to the closure of Camp Mirage.

I would've been part of the cost, in terms of maintaining and understanding the costs as we rotated that back, but not all the costs —

Hon. John McKay: Would that come out of your budget?

MGen Mark McQuillan: No, sir.

There's an operating budget that is maintained by CEFCOM for operations, and we would put—

Hon. John McKay: CEFCOM, sorry. I'm like—

MGen Mark McQuillan: I apologize, sir.

The Canadian Forces Expeditionary Force Command, now commanded by General Beare, is ultimately responsible for, and has been responsible for, deployed operations internationally. They are the ones who, when there is an operation, provide the input in terms of budget, and they are the ones, of course, who would—as I require to do things in support of the operation, I would be requesting authority for certain values of money to—

Hon. John McKay: You'd have a part of the picture, but not necessarily all of the picture.

MGen Mark McQuillan: That's correct, sir.

Hon. John McKay: In having part of the picture, presumably you would say, "This is our part of the cost," and the figures run between $90 million and $300 million, so it's a bit of a broad range in the public discourse.

If you're contributing to the costs, the cost that's attributable to your part of the operation, does that come out of your budget?

MGen Mark McQuillan: No, sir.

As I tried to indicate, and if I wasn't clear—

Hon. John McKay: There are so many acronyms floating around here, I'm getting kind of lost.

Does it then come out of the overall military budget?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Correct. There is an operating budget that is requested by the department for the cost of operations. That is the budget we would draw against.

Hon. John McKay: Therefore, is it logical to say that if the figure is $90 million or if it's $300 million, it's the military global budget of $19 billion or $20 billion that eats that cost?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): A point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Alexander on a point of order.

Mr. Chris Alexander: General McQuillan is here to brief us on operational readiness of the Canadian operational support capacity. Camp Mirage has nothing to do with that.

The Chair: I was going to intercede as well. If a witness is before committee—back to chapter 20, page 1068-1069—and it's outside their responsibility, and General McQuillan has said that this is an area outside of his responsibility, he's excused from having to answer those questions.

As well, Mr. McKay, we will have the supplementary estimates coming up, at which time I'm sure you'll have a chance to question the minister on that issue.

Hon. John McKay: Frankly, I can't think of anything that's more relevant, Chair and Parliamentary Secretary. These are questions that certainly the Major-General is familiar with because he's already contributing to them, both logistically and otherwise. It does affect readiness. If there's a drain on the military budget for $90 million to $300 million, that affects readiness. That's a significant sum of money.

I don't know why, frankly, you should be ruling in any way, other than that you let members ask whatever questions the members wish to ask. I don't think it's up to you, or anyone else, to determine the relevance of any questions that I or any other members ask.

● (0920)

The Chair: Mr. McKay, I never ruled on whether or not it was relevant. What I am saying is that based upon General McQuillan's response, it was not his area of responsibility. The rules are quite explicit that we can excuse witnesses from answering—

Hon. John McKay: But he's already conceded that it is partially his area of responsibility. All I'm trying to figure out is what is the part of the area of responsibility.

The Chair: As you can see, I'm—

Mr. Ted Opitz: On that point of order, Mr. Chair, the witness has clearly identified that it is beyond his scope to answer that question fully and completely. I think that's fair, and I think common sense also has to apply.

The Chair: I also said there is an undertaking within the department to answer that question in writing. When we get that, we'll have it.

Hon. John McKay: When was that undertaking given, if you could refresh my memory?

The Chair: I believe you asked that question at a previous meeting, and I believe one of the—

Hon. John McKay: Even I don't remember what questions I ask.

The Chair: General, please answer the questions you're comfortable with that are in your area of responsibility and that'll be fine.

You have four minutes left, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you for that guidance, Chair.

You had to move the operation out of Camp Mirage. Part of it went off to Cyprus for some of the troop decompression, for want of a better term, and the rest went off to Kuwait. Presumably, the setting up of the Kuwait operation, which was not necessarily anticipated, fell within your jurisdiction. What was involved in that, and what was the cost of it?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Thank you for the question. For clarification, I can perhaps put in sequence what we did.

At the time we were required to close Camp Mirage, we did so. Post that, of course, we had to continue conducting operations in support of the Afghan mission. I inferred that we had a hub in Spangdahlem that was there with a very modest capability. Initially, we ended up moving the bulk of the sustainment activity and a relief-in-place activity to Spangdahlem, and we operated there for a period of time. That took us up until approximately June of this past year.

Spangdahlem is a great host, a great operative, but there are a few limiting factors at Spangdahlem in terms of 24/7 operations at an airfield. We did transition the bulk of activities as we started retrograde operations from Afghanistan in and around the June timeframe of this past year, when we moved out to Cyprus. Cyprus is a great host and offered us the opportunity for retrograde operations to include third location decompression, to conduct operations there, and we did that for a period of three months.

Hon. John McKay: What does Kuwait, though, add to your difficulties when withdrawing from Afghanistan? On a map, it looks like it's further away. I don't know how to compare the Mirage facilities with the Kuwait facilities. What do you gain and what do you lose with the move?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Moving to Kuwait from Cyprus—we did that in September. It's close. The simple principle is the less time in the air, the better my costs are in terms of shipping, and the quicker I can get things onboard a sea vessel.

Hon. John McKay: So that I understand, is it your argument that Kuwait actually may save you some costs?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Correct.

Hon. John McKay: Do you have a figure as to what those costs might be?

MGen Mark McQuillan: The figure I have used, and I think the minister has, when I discussed it with him, was in the order of just above $20 million. But again, we're at the closure time. There is an awful lot more...because we won't finish that operation until February. To be very candid, that figure I gave was probably about six months old at the initial planning, before we did anything.

We will save just by moving from Cyprus to Kuwait. In shortening the distance for the air to sea, we will economize.

Hon. John McKay: Is that cost primarily in fuel savings?

MGen Mark McQuillan: That is fuel savings. I can put a lot more on a ship, and it's cheaper to rent a sea ship versus flying everything in terms of distance.

Hon. John McKay: It makes perfectly good sense.

The Chair: Thank you. The time has expired.

Moving on, we have Mr. Chisu for five minutes, please.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Thank you very much, General. I will keep my questions at the strategic level.

In your capacity as the commander of CANOSCOM, what role does your organization play in the planning and execution of missions in which the Canadian Forces are an active participant? Especially what are your relations with environmental commands, like the Royal Air Force, the army, and the Royal Navy?

● (0925)

MGen Mark McQuillan: Sir, thank you for that question. I believe this is one of the key pieces that I was trying to underscore. I think one of the advantages of Operational Support Command is that we end up being a very good planning coordination entity.

There are two primary commands that I end up supporting. When a mission is tasked or we're responding to an operation, the two primary commands I am supporting are normally Expeditionary Force Command, for international operations, and Canada Command, for domestic operations. We will assist them or we'll get into part of their planning cycle to understand the scope of operations and then complement their staff as we develop the support package.

Where we reach into the environmental level ones—of course, I would call army, navy, and air force primary force generators—they in essence have a lot of the functional capabilities, mostly based at the tactical level. Then we will essentially work with them as we try to fill...and then go back to that table of organization and equipment as we understand what functional capabilities we need in terms of what sizes of organizations with what skill sets. We will then reach back into those organizations to help build that overall structure that will end up being a task force that deploys.

It is a coordination function specifically, and logistics, as we build the overall concept. Again, the responsibility for that is the support command. Expeditionary Force or Canada Command drives that process. We complement that process and then we overlay the general support capabilities on whatever operation is under consideration.

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

What is the command relationship in theatre? For example, the CEFCOM probably needs some other equipment and so on. Are you part of this process, and how is this working in the theatre operations?

MGen Mark McQuillan: In terms of day-to-day operations, CEFCOM is responsible for the conduct of the operations to include support within what I would call a joint operating area. Where we have a mission or an operation happening, they will control all aspects of activity, both operations and support within that area of responsibility.

Where we end up working is on a day-to-day basis in support of the staff. What I end up providing to augment.... Again, I talked about sustainment. Once we help with the initial set-up we might provide capabilities such as additional contracting capability. We might provide bed-down capability in terms of expertise. We might provide supply expertise as we end up moving account structures around to support a main mission.

Once we get into the sustainment piece, we're very interactive on a daily basis, managing the flow based on demands that are coming from the system everywhere, from movement requirements to personnel requirements to material requirements. We work with the command staff, Expeditionary Force Command and/or Canada Command, to ensure we're enabling that task force commander who is working for those two commands.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: I have another question. You were speaking about the hubs. When you are closing down an operation you probably have an intermediary staging base to repatriate the equipment.

Can you elaborate, for example, on the closure of the base in Bosnia? Now we're in the closing stage of the base in Kandahar, so can you elaborate regarding how you are repatriating the equipment? Are there a lot of procedures in place to be able to repatriate equipment? It is probably a staging base for a limited period of time and probably part of the hub, correct?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Sir, thank you for that question.

In principle, since this past summer, when we ceased combat operations, Expeditionary Force Command's mission has been the retrograde of the transition operations. That has been the focal point of the present mission transition task force under General Lamarre. He went in and replaced the outgoing task force in July. He had an advance party in place in June.

Prior to June, of course, there was a lot of planning that went on. That's the planning that CANOSCOM would have done with CEFCOM. You talk about how things move with the determination. With that planning, essentially, we went through an understanding of being in the theatre for over ten years, plus there's a lot of material there. The first determination is, what is moving, what is the priority of moving, what does an operational commander need on the ground until when, and what time can we get access? In simple terms, what can you thin out and then what are the priorities for material that is going to move? Added to that is, based on the time and distance, what are the requirements in terms of salvage, disposal, and donation? All those aspects were taken into consideration in advance with enough detail that we were able to put out what we call a material infrastructure directive. This essentially provides enough detailed process so that as the mission transition task force got in place they had the guidelines in terms of how they would conduct business.

● (0930)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kellway, you have the floor.

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

Through you to the General, thank you for being with us today.

Like many of my colleagues, I'm kind of fascinated by the operational hub concept. General, could you play that out a bit for us? I appreciate your comments that it is at this point just a concept, but I presume that underlying it there is a plan or a desired state of affairs for this operational hub concept.

What will it look like when the concept is fully implemented?

MGen Mark McQuillan: In simple terms, the concept when fully implemented would allow you to have a global reach that would potentially, using a node or a series of nodes, be able to reach out to a part of the world and provide a continuous sustainment and essentially force projection and/or sustainment of CF personnel.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: I appreciate that nothing is really permanent in this world, but is it the concept that these hubs would at least be kind of long-term agreements with a host country?

MGen Mark McQuillan: In principle, yes. The whole idea of a hub is you want to set in place pre-arranged conditions for projection sustainment. You want to deal with host nations that are both friendly and encouraging, so if there is an operation to occur you already have the conditions set in place for everything from transitioning troops with weapons...and what the protocols and jurisdiction are. These would be as detailed as what are the standing offers or contract relationships we would want to have in place in advance.

That requires a level of engagement with a country that would allow us to establish both the protocols and the memorandum of understanding, so that as you reach down in detail, some of the logistical support arrangements you may need are prepared and in place. In concept, the principle would allow you to work with the host nation that has documents in place, and again, if you were to activate something then you would raise the level of activity at that location based on what you were physically supporting in an operational environment.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: The concept, fully implemented, allows for global reach. How many hubs does that look like to you?

MGen Mark McQuillan: In terms of numbers, based on the modelling of transportation, in the range of seven.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: In the range of seven.

When we talk about global reach, do we mean the full globe or are we focusing on key strategic regions around the world?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Again, the modelling was done taking into consideration the logistics imperative. In the geopolitical environment, and taking a look from an intelligence perspective or the realities of our world, where do a lot of natural disasters occur and where are politically very challenging parts of the world? Again, you can't do “what ifs” for an infinite number of options. What you want to do is be able to have an approach that allows you to respond to the majority of what you potentially will be engaged in.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Thank you.

On the very last page of your speaking notes, you talked about the concept of allowing us to “enhance key relations in a region”. Can you tell me what that means? I don't understand how the hub enhances key relations.

MGen Mark McQuillan: Again, my logistics perspective would be that as you start doing business, you start working on a more continual basis with people. You understand that you want to have a relationship, and then you can work it on a military-to-military basis. You then can potentially use that from a government perspective in terms of what the like-minded interests of nations are, as we start with a military-to-military sort of agreement and cooperation. Then, you could potentially use that in other areas. Again, that is something, of course, that the Government of Canada would consider as we put any specific proposals on the table.

● (0935)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: So you actually build alliances through the hub?

MGen Mark McQuillan: In my mind, it's just good relations. I find that when doing logistics-type business, it is always better once you start interacting with people, and you build that personal relationship in addition to the mechanics of building a framework agreement. It's just the reality of having an operating concept that perhaps you can ensure is workable. That, in and of itself, would require a level of interaction that will build relationships.

The Chair: Thank you. Time goes by fast when you're having fun.

Mr. Strahl, it's your turn.

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

Page 3 of your presentation indicates that CANOSCOM provides a range of personnel services for such capabilities as third-line decompression for troops returning from Afghanistan. Can you walk me through that process, please?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Okay. Again, thank you for that question.

Third-line decompression is just a phrase. I've had the good opportunity now to visit every troop rotation going through in my tenure as commander in the last two and a half years. This is something in my mind that's essential for us to do to ensure the better welfare of our people. It's essentially a small capability.

I'll use the example of Cyprus, where we operate now. We will essentially go and operate in a small resort area that allows a range of recreational activities, in addition to ensuring we have an education welfare piece. Troops who are redeploying from the mission will fly to this intermediate place. In this case it's Cyprus. We will then have an in-routine. In essence, they are allowed a period of days in which they are allowed to socialize and participate in recreation. Then they have to take part in some mandatory training. The intent is not to do diagnosis per se. The intent is an education process that is started as we start to do a work-up for operations. It is ensuring that the individual and the families, in the conduit of an operational deployment, have a series of opportunities to ensure that their welfare...and that our understanding and education to them is understood.

The intent of this four-day period is to allow them to decompress and start to change what I call their head space, in terms of where they were. They were in a high-combat, high-intensity environment. Your thought process and reaction are quite different compared to when you move back in and you walk down the streets of your hometown. It's seen as an essential time and space to do that. It also allows for peers to talk to one another. It allows them to understand that they are making that transition back, and to start to recalibrate themselves.

Again, we have found that it has been a very effective tool. Of course, we take sort of "after action" comments from those going through. The vast majority find it to be very beneficial. As enthusiastic they are or as much as they wish to get back to family as soon as possible, I would say the vast majority understand the importance of having that time in terms of decompressing and getting ready for that transition back to home.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Thank you.

As you may know, the committee was able to travel to Wainwright to participate in some scenarios and simulations, as well as a large training operation. Does CANOSCOM take part in these exercises, or do they have a similar process of going through those sorts of situations? Or do you basically learn on the fly?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Again, it goes back to where you deploy, and it was alluded to. It's a good question. If I end up providing people who are going to be part of a task force, they will undergo the training required for that task force to make sure that they're mission capable, both in terms of technical requirements and in terms of operational or combat requirements. What you saw in Wainwright was a group that would get together to essentially force-generate the capability to work at the task force level. To the extent to which I need to augment that task force with individuals, they will undergo that same level of training to ensure they have the appropriate skill sets.

In addition to that, again, a strategic line of communication, a Cyprus or a Germany, is not quite the same environment as an Afghanistan. We have readiness requirements we need to set for those environments also, and we will manage those training environments for deployments to those areas. Again, they are not as intense, clearly, as combat operational environments.

● (0940)

Mr. Mark Strahl: What you've described is largely international in scope. They are foreign operations, if you can put it that way. What is your role domestically? Do you have those, or do the bases themselves provide those operations?

MGen Mark McQuillan: I spoke just very briefly in my opening address.

I indicated that part of the backbone of what we have in the material system are depots. In fact, I operate, or I have a formation that operates, the material depots across Canada that feed into the bases and garrisons. But bases, garrisons, and wings are the purview and responsibility of the force generators: the army, the navy, and the air force. I do not have any direct impact or direct responsibility for what happens at those levels. That is clearly their responsibility in terms of how they conduct and provide support, and they are resourced to do that.

Where I get involved, again, is at the level back from that. I provide joint cross-service abilities. Material and distribution is a good example. I would run that on behalf of the Canadian Forces to support both domestic and/or international operations.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Moore, you have the floor.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): I would like to start by pointing out that, in 2002, this committee made the following recommendation in a report:

> That the Department of National Defence put in place a comprehensive system for determining the readiness of the Canadian Forces. This system should set clear and standardized measurements of operational readiness for the CF and its component units.

Could you tell me what measurement standards have you put in place at CANOSCOM to determine whether you are ready or not? If possible, could you provide us with concrete examples of the evaluation methods you use to determine your level of readiness?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Thank you very much for your question. For clarity's sake, I am going to answer in English, if you don't mind.

[*English*]

Ma'am, you talked about global systems and readiness. Very clearly, I am part of the overall Canadian Forces' readiness, based on my requirement to provide operational support capability to the Canadian Forces.

We have individual readiness standards in units. I alluded to some of the units we have specifically within the Operational Support Command. For instance, my Joint Signal Regiment has a level of readiness for deployability.

Very specifically, though, we also have high readiness. Disaster assistance, humanitarian relief, and assisting in non-combatant evacuation operations are the types of activities that require a higher level of response, based on CF operational mandates. I have a responsibility to provide capabilities to move out the door to support those activities in a stricter, more timely fashion.

Based on those timelines for response, we put an activity at a level of readiness, in terms of both training and deployability. Essentially we manage it at an individual and unit level. For the two I cited, for instance, there are actually specific capabilities, down to the number of people required to respond to those types of operations. I maintain readiness for what I'm responsible for in light of those high-readiness standards.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Okay. And how do you make sure you are up to date? How do you evaluate the standards to find out whether they are still appropriate, whether they should be adjusted or corrected?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Thank you again for your question. It is very easy for me. It is very important to use the chain of command to check the level of training.

[*English*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Please continue in English, if you prefer.

MGen Mark McQuillan: Okay.

In essence, the chain of command is the key. You're quite familiar, I think, with the way we maintain the chain of command at unit levels and with the responsibilities you provide as direction to a unit commanding officer.

As a formation commander, I have units, I have commanding officers, I have training opportunities. We will deploy capabilities, measure capabilities and responsiveness, and then essentially ensure and maintain that level of operational capability as required.

To give you an example, Joint Signal Regiment deployed to Petawawa in the last month. They will have established capability to see what their field training standards are, what their level of deployability is. At the same time, they measure back to me and tell me that they have a lot of their people and equipment deployed right now.

So I get a constant feedback measure as an operational commander to ensure that I know what levels and standards of capability we have in place, based on the responsiveness that I need. Again, in some functional areas—and this may not be as self-evident—I need to have contracting expertise that is ready to go and to deploy out the door. I need to rely on Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel) and procurement services in addition to military contract expertise to have people ready—and this is more a case of individual readiness—so that if there is a Haiti mission or if we are providing a search and rescue support to Jamaica, I'm able to augment that initial task force and get it out the door.

So I will maintain a certain level of capability, and that is a technical competency in addition to an individual fitness capability for deployments.

● (0945)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: If you see that something went wrong, that, for example, the response was not prompt enough, that something was not satisfactory based on the set standards, what mechanisms do you put in place to ensure that this error or situation is not going to happen again? How do you get back on track?

[*English*]

MGen Mark McQuillan: We talk about lessons learned and feedback loops. CANOSCOM works in a very dynamic environment. I've been in place for just over two years now. We have been constantly engaged in operations over that two-year period, so I get constant feedback about whether we are providing the right level of support for what we do. I'm not trying to be coy by any means, but very clearly, our ability to deploy and support operations is probably my best litmus test of whether we have the right capabilities and the right measures in place.

Then what I need to do, and you're highlighting that, is be attentive to lessons learned, from a technical perspective specifically, to allow us to ensure that if there are weaknesses in my training or in my competencies I can address those as we move forward.

Much of it ends up being technical. Whether I'm talking about materiel management or accounts structures or some other matter, I have a very knowledgeable team that works in Montreal and I have a supply unit there. They do all the theatre activation of supply accounts. I won't say they're a "one of", but it's a different type of activity in terms of how they conduct their business of support to deployed operations.

They have never been out of work. They are working day to day. It's almost like a business practice. You essentially take operational activities that are happening and address those, based on whether you see weaknesses, and if you do, you temper them.

But I would say it's incremental pieces. It's not huge things, cases in which I've had to go in and say "not good enough" and we have changed systematically our whole approach. I would say the operational tempo and the environment and responsiveness have allowed me to view capabilities on an ongoing basis and make sure that we are managing it to the best extent possible.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Mr. Norlock, you have the floor.

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

First of all, I'd like to talk about the Libyan operation and how it differed from other operations such as Afghanistan and the Olympics, in that solely two units or parts of the Canadian Armed Forces were used—air and naval—with no boots on the ground, as it were.

Did CANOSCOM play a part in that, and what part did you play, if any, in that operation?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Sir, thank you for the question.

You're quite right that in this operation two services primarily did the force generation, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Navy. What was different from Afghanistan, in simple terms.... The air force, of course, has a very specific characteristic that allows it to do things more rapidly: it's got aircraft. So its ability to get into a theatre, to have effect, to be in place quicker is just self-evident by its capability. Likewise, the navy has always had a readiness capability that allows it to deploy. Again, this is a CEFCOM activity, so it would be best if you talked to the commander of CEFCOM in terms of his views.

In my view, from a sustainment perspective, just back to what we did to assist, the reality—not challenges—of operating in Libya was that a lot of the air force basing was in Italy. There was goodness in that because it was a NATO nation. In fact, I had previously signed with Italy what we call a mutual logistic support arrangement, which means in essence that with NATO nations we can use—not barter—services and on a cost-recovery basis pay for those services. In fact, I ended up augmenting the task force going in, very much air-force-centric, based on the Italy piece, and just added capability to them as they put in place such things as the fuel agreements, contract agreements, and then the basing agreements and housing agreements and such. So that was probably primarily where I would have provided assistance at the front end.

And then, very clearly, there is the sustainment piece. So once the operation is up and running, for the most part, again focused more on the air force—ships tend to be very self-sufficient, except when they come alongside to refuel and replenish—it was the sustainment piece of the air force elements that became the focal point for that operation.

Again, it was very dynamic. One of the things I have learned is that the pre-existing agreement structure is—I won't say essential—very beneficial for being able to stand up and operate in a very complex and demanding environment. So even though it was a NATO nation, even though it was in Europe where we have worked on occasion, I'm sure it was very challenging for those on the ground.

But, again, I would suggest comments from the commander of CEFCOM would be more appropriate, in terms of views.

● (0950)

Mr. Rick Norlock: In answering a previous question, I think you alluded to part of the answer you're going to give me in the next question. We're dealing with readiness, and we sometimes get the impression.... My background is in policing. You're out doing your general patrol and at any second you could be bang in the middle of something pretty large. Would I be correct in assuming that the Canadian Forces is in a constant mode of training, etc., and capable or ready to address any kind of mission that may be required?

We've heard that you plan at any time for six different types of mission. You did allude to Haiti being one of those that really complicated things, but you were able to sustain that operation—by the way, very well in Canadians' eyes, especially those in my area. Northumberland—Quinte West has CFB Trenton, and of course a lot of the operation came out of there.

Does CANOSCOM have any forces in a high-readiness posture, ready to support a rapid response should a call come? In other words, are you ready to turn the key and get out there?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Again, I alluded to it in answer to another question. The short answer is yes. So for known types of operations, I cited two—non-combatant evacuation operations and disaster assistance and relief—and we have another one, major air disasters. Those are essentially plans that sit on the shelf and indicate a level of readiness and response. I couch that as high response, because the timelines for those are “move now”. In that sense, yes, CANOSCOM does maintain capabilities in certain functional areas that we would need to augment a task force moving out the door, so that we can be very responsive, in terms of time and space, to be able to act on that.

The other piece you alluded to, in terms of readiness—of course, you are going to have an opportunity with the service chiefs, and specifically the Royal Canadian Air Force, to talk about their force generation, because they are the force generation commands, and quite rightly so. Yes, one thing we do all the time, and need to, is to have a culture of training and education. That is just the reality for the Canadian Forces. I always like to say logistics is a little bit different. We train every day because we are executing every day.

Again, the high readiness piece in CANOSCOM I talked to, but I would suggest that the bulk of the rest of the operational support command units, formations, and technical capabilities maintain a level of response and readiness to be able to respond to the timelines of other types not as time-sensitive, perhaps, as the three I gave as examples.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brahmi, you have five minutes.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Chair, I am going to yield my time to Ms. Moore.

Ms. Christine Moore: Thank you.

In your opening remarks, you said that roughly 300 civilians worked at the Kandahar airfield. Those civilians, though used to working with military members, are still civilians. Could you tell me how you train and help them to adjust to a military role? What guidance do you give them so that they do not compromise the operations or operational readiness and so that they can function in a military environment that might be dangerous?

● (0955)

[*English*]

MGen Mark McQuillan: Madam, thank you for the question.

The CANCAP is a contract, and it essentially puts in terms and conditions in terms of the readiness and the requirements of the individuals. So in terms of the training and the requirements for those employees who would be deployed, it is up to the contractor to maintain a level of training that we will stipulate in that contract.

One thing I need to articulate is that we are very pragmatic in terms of when we would use that contract, and the environment under which.... Yes, Afghanistan is a dangerous place, but you note I stated that those contractors were used at Kandahar airfield. What we don't do is we do not put, in this case, contracted civilians in what we would consider adverse risk considerations. This is because—as you suggested in your initial comments—the training requirement would be high and the risk would be extreme. So that's the idea in general terms.

When they operate, they operate within the command and control structure of a support element that operates in the task force, and the terms and conditions of how they operate are laid out in the contractual arrangements, but discipline-wise, again, they are subject to the code of discipline of the military. They have to follow our rules, regulations, and operating procedures while employed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Are those civilians really used as a temporary solution to military staff shortages, while waiting to recruit and train more forces in this line of work? Or is this the direction the Canadian Forces want to take?

[*English*]

MGen Mark McQuillan: The key, I would say, is flexibility. What you want to have in a support continuum...you have military people with functional capabilities, you have contracted solution space, and an option in contracted solution space—what we have—is what we call the CANCAP, the civilians. Will we continue to use it? We will continue to maintain that contract. So in fact that contract presently, if I'm correct, takes us out to December 2012, and we're in the process right now of re-competing the framework of that contract. How we use that contract is essentially if we have a deployed operation, and—back to an earlier question—capacity, how much, when, and where. It allows us to maintain a level of capability that is essentially on the shelf, so that if we were in a scenario where the government had asked us to deploy to a number of missions at the same time, and we needed additional flexibility to augment existing support relationships, then this contract is a venue, or a tool, that we could use.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Do you intend at the moment to have other contracts like that, where civilians are used in other areas?

[*English*]

MGen Mark McQuillan: I will give you some context in terms of how we use it. The types of services that CANCAP actually provide right now are administration, supply, transportation, health, environment, equipment, food, communication, waste management, water supply. So we have put a range of functions into that contract. Again, what we essentially allow ourselves to do is...our first response, of course, is military. Our first response is environment dependent. What we would not do is use the contract if the environment was seen as so hostile that it was risk adverse for that contract to be used. Then what we do have is that range.

So there is a range of services, and we compete that contract with a range of services, with the view that if we need it, those are the traditional types of functions by which we could complement existing military capability.

● (1000)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Moving on, I have Madam Gallant.

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

General McQuillan, would you compare and contrast the former system prior to CANOSCOM standing up in 2006? How did it work before?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Prior to the dot-com establishment, we had the deputy chief of staff organization. I did not work in it, so I can't comment on how it conducted its business at that time. But when we stood up the transformation, or when transformation and the dot-coms were established, the first thing we were doing was separating strategic from the operational capability. We were focusing based on the span and scope of operations. It allowed CDS to focus operations on international, domestic, support, and special, all in one context. So that was the advantage of it.

Previously, you would have had some of those, what I call joint enablers in the army, navy, and air force. At the same time, within the DCDS, you would have had a matrix solution that would have brought together those functional aspects and then tried to bring together whatever that force component structure needed to be. What you did not have was a person or organization that spent most of the time focused on operational support to operations. You ended up with, as an example, ADM (Mat). You have a military capability there. In fact, the depots came from ADM (Mat) when CANOSCOM was formed. You would have had from the ADM, Infrastructure and Environment, military engineering advice and support. Those pieces now reside within my purview. I'm able to maintain an operational support process that allows me to apply military support resources more quickly and directly on an ongoing basis. So it's focused, and it is just the concentrated effort of capability.

I still have reach-back, so the policy authority with the ADM (Mat) still exists. I still need direction, support, and advice when we're doing certain things such as disposal, or working with contract authorities. But there's very much an enforcing function with CANOSCOM. We have the requisite expertise around the table to formulate a plan and put it together.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: So previously there were redundancies, because they were being done by the different arms of the Canadian Forces?

MGen Mark McQuillan: I wouldn't say redundancies. I would say that we're now more concentrated on bringing those joint enablers together.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: There was reference made in your testimony to cost savings. Do you have any idea of the amount of money saved on behalf of Canadians through the setting up of CANOSCOM?

MGen Mark McQuillan: I would not have an idea on that, sorry.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You just know that there have been cost savings.

MGen Mark McQuillan: There have been efficiencies and economies in how we do business, yes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: When CANOSCOM stood up, we were already in Afghanistan. Can you tell us about standing up that transition. In 2006 we have a different system in place. We're in the thick of Kandahar, and you're implementing this new system. Can you describe that?

MGen Mark McQuillan: At the time transition happened, I was south of the border, so I wasn't involved in the day-to-day activities. General Benjamin was the first commander of CANOSCOM, so he was in place when that happened. I can only give you a bit of an overview of how the transition happened.

I consisted in standing up a small cell that started to build capabilities. The first was Canadian Expeditionary Force Command, then Canada Command, and then Operational Support Command. You ended up pulling pieces primarily from DCDS group, but also from ADM (Mat), and then from some of the other ADMs. We pulled those matrix positions and then they were formed together. That was essentially the “walk and then run”, in terms of their capability.

So it was a transitional period at the front end, but I believe that a lot of their focus was on movements and sustainments. One of the first aspects they focused on was the coordination on the long lines of communication. The materiel management piece was probably one of the first focal points of that operation. Later on, there ended up being additional functional reviews and a concentrating of some capabilities within CANOSCOM to better manage resources in support of Canadian Expeditionary Force Command and Canada Command.

● (1005)

The Chair: Moving right along, Mr. Alexander, you're batting cleanup in the five-minute round.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to our witness.

We've heard from you about the deployment capabilities under your command. Can you give us a sense of the number of people who are under CANOSCOM's command?

MGen Mark McQuillan: There are about 1,800 personnel within the command. You then have the six depots that are essentially domestically based. The pieces that do the forward deployment include the Canadian Forces Joint Support Group in Kingston and the Canadian Forces Joint Signal Regiment. Then I have an engineering capability in Moncton. I also have close protection capability within the military police. On the medical side, the Chief of Military Personnel and the Canadian Forces Surgeon General operate and work there. The medical pieces we bring together are a coordination function I provide. The force generation comes from there.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Would we be correct in saying, on the basis of your testimony, that you are the only command in the Canadian Forces that is both a force generator and a force employer? From your slides and from what you said, it struck me that you had both roles, to some extent.

MGen Mark McQuillan: If the commander of Special Operations Forces Command were here, he'd say he was both a force generator and a force employer. So yes, those are probably the two formations that provide both. Very clearly, the services focus on force generation. The Expeditionary Force Command and the Canada Command focus on force employment almost specifically. These two smaller dot-coms have a dual role.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Does that place any particular pressure on you as far as readiness? The way forces are generated and trained is absolutely critical to ensure the readiness of individual units and the capabilities we need to have available for deployment. Obviously deployment has additional pressures associated with it, and some of them are quite acute.

How do you cope with those two roles from the perspective of readiness?

MGen Mark McQuillan: In simple terms I look at force generation as having capabilities ready to support operations, whether that is contracting expertise, engineering expertise, or supply expertise. It's almost a functional checklist, and that reverts to people and capabilities inherent in that.

That is not a challenge, whether I provide that leadership and/or expertise to provide support to a deploying task force in support of Expeditionary Force Command or I provide that capability for security at the Olympics in support of Canada Command. Managing that readiness piece is a constant refresh, as far as what we do.

The force employment aspect really refers to me using that capability inherent to my own command and control. We talked about things such as third-location decompression, where we do intermediate staging terminals on a line of communication. Another important one is the casualty support team. It's a very small eight-person team that sits in Landstuhl Medical Centre. It is employed by CANOSCOM, generated by the CMP and the health services people. Those are examples of employment.

So do I have the challenge of force generation and force employment? The short answer is no, because my force employment focus is really on the strategic line of communication, and that is separate from the focal point of Expeditionary or Canada Command, which is a named operation usually in a very specific piece of ground that we would call a joint operating area.

● (1010)

Mr. Chris Alexander: Are the army, navy, and air force commanders supported by you as well?

MGen Mark McQuillan: They have a lot of capability inherent to themselves. So when I talk about service capability, we all understand that a unit, a squadron, or a ship has what we call integral support. That belongs to the services. Likewise, if I were talking about a brigade, a wing, or a naval task group, all those capabilities and support capabilities exist within those services.

What I have are those pieces. When you step back from that, whether the army, navy, air force, or a combination of them are deployed, there are capabilities they will need to support that. I'm that cross-service joint enabler in terms of supporting operations.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Thank you.

My final question—

The Chair: Thank you. You had only five minutes. You'll have one more chance, Mr. Alexander.

We have time for a final round. We'll come back to Mr. Kellway.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Through you, Mr. Chair, General, the last time I was asking questions, we ended up talking about the implementation of the hub concept. You had indicated that, ideally, we would end up with seven hubs providing global reach. We heard your response to Ms. Gallant about cost issues, and I take it there are no dollar figures, but theoretically there are efficiencies and economies that have come from setting up CANOSCOM. I anticipate then that you are in something of a growth mode with this operational hub concept, as you reach out to set up seven of these around the world.

MGen Mark McQuillan: To clarify, in concept, these hubs could exist on paper only. I talked about the agreements that need to be in place with a host nation. Then you work into logistical support arrangements and then you work down to contracting arrangements. You could have a range of capability that existed on paper only and not require anything.

If a hub existed in a certain country and nothing was happening, you would probably just maintain that relationship by refreshing the paper with staff visits. Doing that is not very expensive. As named operations or as focus for the Government of Canada starts to work or be directed somewhere, that, of course, is where you would potentially use and start to occupy a hub, but I'd say they're very scalable.

As I referred in my earlier comments, Spangdahlem, for instance, today is four people. It's not very demanding in terms of people, but it's based on the levels of activity. At one point in time, Spangdahlem, Germany, was up in the range of 170, when we were doing a full range of sustainment, rotation, and third-location decompression all from that region. I highlight that to say that it is expandable, but it does not presuppose that there have to be people at those locations, once they are established. Our manning of those is very much in response to operational activities.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: So there may not be boots on the ground, so to speak, at these hubs.

Are there costs to these hubs, apart from human resources, in the types of arrangements that are being contemplated to set these up?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Again, I won't say hypothetically, but right now we are planning. I would say there are costs involved. You will get into things such as pre-establishing contracts in certain areas. That costs money to do. You do that because it is much better to have a pre-arranged contract in place for a range of services and to be able to activate those than it is to go in on very short notice, and then, based on the spot market or the demands of the local economy.... If they know there are things happening, the capitalist system is alive and well, and you tend to pay a little more if you do things in quick response time. I would say, writ large, there are actually economies to be had by doing this, because what you want to do is have preset conditions and an understanding of your flexibility and capabilities, and you'll be able to put a price tag on that.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: That sounds prudent. I have guys who come to my door offering me such deals all the time.

What kinds of contracts and services are you contemplating to set up a hub, and do you have any sense of what kinds of dollar figures? Are these being budgeted for looking forward? Does this concept, in fact, have a budget figure attached to it?

● (1015)

MGen Mark McQuillan: We're at the front end of actually confirming what that will look like in terms of dollars, to be honest, in terms of managing. What you're really talking about is what it would take to manage those. The operating concept is that once we have the agreements in place, then based on our level of ambition or need we would put resources to them. We tend to spend money in relation to named operations; so we don't tend to spend money if there's nothing happening in areas. I would add that caveat to it: to my mind, this is not a hugely expensive option to put in place.

Also implied is the concept that once we have the agreements piece in place, we can exercise it by potentially taking advantage of things that are already in place. For instance, if we had a hub in a part of the world, we could exercise that by having a ship visit, which happens on a normal yearly cyclical basis, based on what we do. Just having a ship come alongside and do a level of activity and potentially activating some contracts we would have in place is an example. There could be small-unit exchange or military-to-military engagements. We have a number of joint exercises that we run internationally. What I'm really suggesting or have suggested is that if the intent is to mature this, we have to take advantage of the resources that are already within the department and in use to make sure we benefit from activities already in place.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Kellway anticipated some of the questions I was interested in, and essentially it's the difference between a camp and a hub.

What would be the difference in the lease arrangements between a camp and a hub?

MGen Mark McQuillan: I'm not quite sure of the question.

Hon. John McKay: Presumably both entities, the hub and a camp, would require some lease arrangement with the entity that owns the property, whether it's a sovereign government or somebody or something else. I'm assuming when you're setting up a camp—and you correct me if I'm wrong—it's a far more permanent arrangement than a hub is.

MGen Mark McQuillan: What we do in a hub is something that we can ramp up or down or is scalable. There are some basics. I talked about force projection, and I talked about sustainment, so that implies there are some things we would be looking for. For instance, we need to confirm warehouse capabilities in a nation and at a location we are at. Then you can go into conversations such as—this is where you have good military-to-military relations. Sometimes you don't have to pay for anything, but you have an agreement in place that says, "If I come and I need to do something, this is the range and scope of what I would need; are you willing to support?" It could be as simple as mutual logistic support arrangements with a host nation's military that allows you to exercise or....

Hon. John McKay: So, in theory, could a hub just exist on paper, just as an arrangement between friendly militaries?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Yes, sir.

Hon. John McKay: That's helpful.

What about in terms of structures on a particular site? I'm assuming that at a hub the structures would tend to be much less permanent than, say, at a camp.

MGen Mark McQuillan: Correct. What you will need, based on the range and activities being forecast, will be some basic parameters you will try to put in place. I talked about warehouse space as an example. There would potentially be throughput for the military, so if I'm doing force projection, I'm bringing troops in, maybe overnighting them, maybe moving them on. There could be a requirement for feeding that you would have too, based on your troop size.

All of those fundamental logistics questions would need to be answered, and we would have to go through a process of evaluation of what you can get based on where you are, and dependent upon which country you are considering, there are various levels of capability that exist. My sense is you will end up with a complement of military and civilian and contract capabilities, in terms of what you went after.

Am I saying it is cost neutral? No, it is not cost neutral, but at the same time the intent is not to build a capability, to have something sitting there waiting. The key is to have a flexible arrangement that allows you, based on a named operation, to be able to start to use the arrangements you have in place, to start to build that capability.

Hon. John McKay: It's an essential idea to have, in effect—I was going to say a storage shed, but that's a little crude—someplace where there is already materiel that the CF could use and just be able to scale up from that basic....

● (1020)

MGen Mark McQuillan: I don't foresee at this time it being prepositioning of materiel, if that's what your question is implying. I see very clearly force projection sustainment. You will need warehouse space. If you're putting a force into a place, I'm going to bring materiel in. I'm going to then change it from that strategic lift to that tactical lift. I will go through the mechanics of what that looks like—so it's a seaport, air-head facilities, warehouse space. We will go through that assessment. If you're asking specifically if I need to go rent warehouse space today to have stuff prepositioned, the answer is no.

Hon. John McKay: What about…? We'll take Jamaica as an example. It's not likely we're going to be conducting a war in the Gulf of Mexico, but presumably you would anticipate some humanitarian intervention. Would you preposition materiel in Jamaica that you may not in some other potential theatre?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Jamaica is probably a good example, if we think back to the Haiti issue. In the Haiti earthquake—very tragic—we actually were able to use Jamaica as an air-head, so in fact the air force used it primarily for strategic lift and then they transshipped into tactical lift to move into Port-au-Prince. At the same time, I was using the Dominican Republic as a seaport because we didn't know the conditions in Port-au-Prince.

All that to say, you do have a flexible capability in that part of the region, and I would say disaster assistance, very clearly. Unfortunately, that part of the region every year has a hurricane watch. For us to be able to be prepared to respond to that part of the world, not unlike others, is very real. The government has shown a level of interest and need, so therefore I think it's prudent that we look at that part of the world also.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Last but not least, Mr. Alexander, you have the floor again.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Could I give my time to Mr. Opitz, please, Chair?

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Just on that point, General, so we're clear, these informal agreements between other militaries would be somewhat formalized through the memorandums of understanding, so it's clearly articulated who's using what, what resources, that kind of thing. Would that be fair to say?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Again, I don't want to over-complicate the legalese. When I use the term “MOU”, in my mind it refers to a government-to-government relationship that is short of a treaty, in terms of how you would be allowed to move people through and talk about some jurisdiction issues and such. When you talk about the levels of military support—I made mention of cross-servicing arrangements—that is more of a U.S. term. I also talk about mutual logistic support arrangements, and I mentioned that in the Italy context. We use that presently in a NATO context.

To the extent to which existing authorities exist in government, for us to enter into agreements, whether it's cross-servicing arrangements where authorities exist or whether it's mutual logistic support arrangements where authorities exist, then it is a tool that we will continue to use.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Perfect.

In terms of recruitment for CANOSCOM, so “loggies”, engineers, comms-types, how do you go about that? How do you generate your own troops?

MGen Mark McQuillan: I, personally, do not have to generate my own troops. The training system, of course...when you talk about loggies, as an example, they are actually owned by the joint community. So the Chief of Military Personnel is the functional authority for logistics. That capability will be generated. In terms of force flows and requirements, I add into that. If I see deficiencies in training of logisticians coming out, whether it be the enlisted ranks or the officers, I will provide input to the training system to identify those additional training requirements.

The piece that I really love is that CANOSCOM has been, in my humble opinion, a success story of great professionals doing great work, so I don't have any issues with respect to recruiting, in terms of getting people who want to come and join the organization. But, again, the actual recruit in the door, that is not something I have to spend time on personally.

Mr. Ted Opitz: On that point, then—and I ask you to answer briefly, because I want to share my time and give Mr. Chisu one more opportunity—in a *Maple Leaf* article, I think a couple of years ago, it described how CANOSCOM has helped our allies. It served as a model. So you had NATO come in, the UN. Approximately 25 different countries have come to observe CANOSCOM's operation and have looked at how they could apply that template, that battle rhythm, and all the other good stuff you do to their own armies.

Can you comment on how we helped our allies improve their logistical tail, so to speak?

● (1025)

MGen Mark McQuillan: Relationships, in my mind, are critical. Part of my responsibility, with strategic importance, is that I sit on a number of boards or forums that allow me to interact with the international. There's one in particular. We have a Quadrilateral Logistics Forum, which essentially is the United States, the U.K., Australia, and ourselves. We meet twice a year. It's exactly that: we share best practices, we share areas that we think we need to enhance in coalition operations, and we actually learn from each other.

But I do agree about joint operations and how CANOSCOM is seen. It is seen as a force multiplier from many international venues. Again, the U.K. has very much a joint focus, in terms of what it's doing. Australia, which is about our size, very clearly has a significant joint focus. Collectively, we agree that where we are today and what we have evolved towards is a combat multiplier in terms of the conduct of military operations. I do agree with you that the Canadian military is seen as not necessarily the frontrunner, but we are seen as one of the strong proponents of coalition operations and joint operations and provide some great lessons and feedback.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Thank you.

Go ahead.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much.

General, I have a very short question regarding the relations with other forces in theatre, from the logistics point of view, and on whether you have any interaction with Public Works for certain supports.

Why am I asking you this one? It's because, for example, we have a complicated situation in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is surrounded by so-called friendly countries, the friendly country of Iran, the Waziristan region on the east side. You probably have difficulties or complexities in repatriating, for example, sensitive military hardware. This is the context in which I am asking this question on cooperation with other forces.

MGen Mark McQuillan: It is a challenging environment in which to work. In simple terms, if you were to take an overlay of the map around Afghanistan, ISAF over the last number of years has made great advances in terms of expanding ground lines of communication in from the north by rail. A lot of those are bilateral arrangements—the U.S. with other countries, the U.K. with other countries—but it is inflow, as we speak. Clearly, we all understand that as we look to do mission transition, the collective nations are looking for opportunities for outflow, and again, there are significant nation-to-nation engagements that are happening.

I only say that the north, and you have alluded to it...and that part of the world can be very difficult. It's long in terms of negotiation. NATO, because it doesn't bring anything to the table per se on the collective voice of nations, has a bit of a challenge right now, as it is trying, for instance, to establish treaty-level agreements with various northern nations and provide an exit strategy for materiel and such. Therefore, the south ends up being the primary ground line. Again, Pakistan, from my perspective, has worked reasonably well. It has its challenges, but in terms of cost and in terms of our ability to do business, we have essentially established a framework that allows us to use ground lines of communication.

Likewise, the air force...and it's probably a good question for them. But where I get involved is watching the overflight approval process that ends up being very dynamic. Again, it is country-to-country approval, so you find for the most part that the Pakistan overflight route is probably the primary one that we use, and then once you get outside of that, another challenge exists.

All that is to say that we have maintained reasonable relationships with Pakistan, but we have to respect how they operate. For instance, in terms of ground lines, they do not allow foreign militaries to move through. Therefore, our support arrangement for movement of materiel has been a contracted support arrangement that we've had in place for years, and it's relatively effective. So the short answer is that while challenging, it is workable.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have a couple of questions for you, General.

When we're talking about readiness, and training is part of readiness, you're saying that because you have joint operations with so many of the personnel who are part of CANOSCOM.... In the past, exercises like Tropical Hammer were run. Are those types of exercises in your division still taking place, to maintain that level of readiness as we go through a quieter time now that operations are winding down in Afghanistan and operations in Libya have come to an end?

● (1030)

MGen Mark McQuillan: Tropical Hammer wasn't a very effective tool to essentially generate capability at the general operations support level. To be very candid, as I came in and took responsibility for the high road to readiness training that was undertaken primarily by the army, where it brought together the task force going in, that's where I focused the effort. So instead of doing an independent operation, we added the training requirements to that work-up to high readiness to try to benefit from that overall scheme and take advantage of that.

Moving forward, it's the great question of how you maintain that operational readiness. Again, I think it's really important that we start to move toward taking advantage of CF joint capabilities, whether it's JOINTEX or otherwise.

For instance, we have the division down in Kingston that we'll be supporting as a task force. We'll start to look at getting involved in that. I have a responsibility, for instance, to support the division as it takes on those training opportunities from a Joint Support Group and a Joint Signals Regiment and other complementary capabilities, because I will essentially take advantage of CF joint training opportunities to build and manage capabilities in that framework.

The Chair: At Wainwright this year, for both Exercise Maple Resolve and Exercise Maple Defender, the army and air force were both involved in joint operations and joint training, along with some of our allies. Was CANOSCOM involved in those training exercises?

MGen Mark McQuillan: Not directly in those. We would have had augmentation but not direct involvement in those.

The Chair: CANOSCOM is now five years old. It has been referred to as the crown jewel of the Canadian Armed Forces. It has also been a game changer, I would think, in our ability to deploy rapidly.

As we go forward...and now you're bringing forward the hub concept, and you're saying seven hubs is ideally where you're going, how many of those hubs have actually been set up now? You talked about Cyprus and you talked about Germany, but how many other hubs are in the process of being set up, and will we get to the seven hubs you hope to have?

MGen Mark McQuillan: In simple terms, we are at various stages of discussion and very much at the governmental level in terms of consideration. So we're moving. We've had great support inside the department thus far in terms of the minister. The concept will evolve. And then as we deal in certain regions, again, we will get the appropriate authorities to engage fully. In essence, we are engaging at various levels, but that's at the government level at this point.

The Chair: Good. Thank you.

General, I really appreciate your coming in and taking time out of your busy schedule to brief all of us here and to help us with our study on readiness. We're looking forward to getting near the end of this in the next month and being able to start working on a report, which hopefully will provide some input and direction to you and your colleagues. So thank you very much.

With that, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

An hon. member: So moved.

The Chair: We're out of here.

The meeting is adjourned.

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