HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on National Defence

NDDN • NUMBER 014 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

Chair

Mr. James Bezan

Standing Committee on National Defence

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. We're going to get going with meeting number 14 of the Standing Committee on National Defence. We're going to continue with our study, under Standing Order 108(2), on the readiness of the Canadian armed forces.

Joining us today is Lieutenant-General Peter Devlin, chief of the land staff, and joining him is Sergeant-Major Gino Moretti.

Welcome, both of you.

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

Lieutenant-General Peter J. Devlin (Chief of the Land Staff, Department of National Defence): Good morning.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, it gives me great pleasure to be with you this morning along with Chief Warrant Officer Gino Moretti, Sergeant-Major of the Canadian army. I would also like to thank General Natynczyk, the Chief of the Defence Staff, for giving me the opportunity to—in fact, my first opportunity—to talk to you about a subject that is very dear to my heart, as commander of the Canadian army, the readiness of our troops.

The Canadian army maintains a presence in over 250 Canadian communities. Close to 4,700 Canadian Rangers are on patrol in the North. Some 44,000 service personnel, of whom 50% are reservists, are integrated into the larger Canadian community. And roughly 5,700 civilian employees serve on the Canadian army team. These men and women are grouped into ten reserve brigades and three regular force brigades, and can also be found on bases and in schools and headquarters. Each one of these individuals helps ensure the operational readiness of the army, as well as contributing actively to the army's force generation effort; in addition, 35% of the army's strength is integrated into other commands and services.

[*English*]

Canada's military keeps watch on potential instabilities around the world that could require advice or rapid response on behalf of the government, but it never knows where its people or assets may be deployed or the nature or type of mission required. As a result, the primary duty of the army, as well as the entire military institutional structure, is to stand ready with a capacity to respond to any challenge in any part of the world where it might be ordered to go.

The army is a different army than it was 10 years ago. In the decade following the attacks on the World Trade Center, the entire world security situation has changed dramatically, and we have been compelled to keep up with it. The Canadian army must be nimble, highly trained, and immediately responsive to a menu of new and unanticipated challenges. It must be trained, equipped, and funded to operate in numerous theatres, often simultaneously: from snow in the Arctic to jungles in Africa, from a potential train derailment and evacuation in Port Hope to flooding on the Red River. It must be flexible enough that it can get fresh water using the disaster assistance response team, DART, to a tsunami-affected area in the South Pacific while at the same time delivering relief efforts to Haiti.

These tasks are not mutually exclusive but rather parts of a Canadian Forces skill and asset matrix for domestic and international deployment that changes as the situation and government priorities deem necessary.

Your current undertaking of conducting an in-depth study of readiness is timely to ensure that the Canadian Forces deliver on the six core missions enunciated within the Canada First defence strategy. I understand that the committee has received copies of the Canada First defence strategy, which includes an outline of the six core missions of the Canadian Forces.

With these missions in mind, I would say that we really have two major vistas that we must take into account on our watch.

At home, domestic and community responsiveness is where the CF stands ready to provide disaster relief in Canadian communities and search and rescue services for Canadians; patrol our land, maritime, and air space; protect our ocean trade routes; enforce sovereignty in our north; fight the war on terrorism; help defend Canada's computer networks; and assist with security at international events hosted by Canada.

And away, international and allied responsiveness is where the CF stands ready to provide disaster relief in other countries; participate in peacekeeping operations like those ongoing in the Middle East; field a specifically trained combat-ready armed force; provide the capabilities to enforce United Nations Security Council resolutions; work with our allies in NATO operations; participate in peace-building operations, which might require some armed intervention in world trouble spots; and contribute to international peace and security through missions like counter-piracy efforts off the coast of Africa.

Before commenting on readiness, I would like to emphasize a few central points about your army. We are centred on a soldier, a soldier who today possesses a warrior spirit—the confidence and skill that comes from fighting and is reinforced by respect from Canadians. Our soldiers live in units that provide them with core skills, assurance, and esprit de corps.The army equips the soldier, and our equipment programs, such as future land combat vehicles, deliver an important capability to Canada.

We operate in combined arms teams where we synchronize the complementary skills of these great Canadians and their gear to deliver effect on the battlefield. Also, I use the phrase that “Canada's army is the force of decisive action”, as there is nothing more decisive than committing boots on the ground.

Readiness, as you know, Mr. Chair, was defined by the CDS as the ability to get the right people with the right skill sets and the right equipment into the right place at the right time. It is a measure of the ability of an element of the Canadian Forces, in my case elements of the army, to undertake an approved task.

I'd like to refer you to my two handouts, “Army Field Force” and “Army Training Readiness”. One of the fundamentals of maintaining a combat-capable Canadian army resides in its institution. Field forces would not only be in jeopardy; they would not exist without the institution.

● (0850)

To depict the importance, I'd like to use a triangle. At the base we find the institution composed of 17 schools and training centres, like the Combat Training Centre in Gagetown, the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre in Wainwright, our 11 army bases, and various headquarters that all provide the leadership, the foundation training, and the support we need to prepare our troops and combined arms units being sent out to help Canadians at home or defend our values abroad.

At the middle of the triangle you find our units that form the field force working through a series of annual individual battle-task standards, individual skill sets, or new competencies such as learning to use new equipment, and participating in collective training events and exercises. This provides a field force with normal readiness and includes army formations and units, immediate response units, Arctic response company groups, and territorial battalion groups. These are army units ready to deploy to fight forest fires or assist with ice storms and floods.

For example, after Hurricane Igor hit eastern Newfoundland, it took only a few hours to have reserve and regular force army personnel there. This operation was supported by the institution, in this case the army base in Gagetown, New Brunswick, which maintained the 24-7 operations to sustain the deployed troops, and the Joint Task Force Atlantic headquarters, which provided essential command and control over the mission and linkage with the whole-of-government partners. A thousand people in uniform, mostly army, were helping fellow Canadians in dire need within 12 hours from the provincial request for assistance.

From the section to brigade or task force level, high readiness is acquired through rigorous training to a collective battle-task standard prior to being declared operationally ready. This results in an army highly capable of conducting decisive actions in carrying out missions across a broad spectrum of employment as a joint force and integrating the enablers from our sister services. Not all army units will reach the highest degree of operational readiness, only those that have been identified for a task or mission such as a rotation in Afghanistan or somewhere else where the Canadian government commits forces, such as the disaster assistance response team in Haiti, or the non-combatant extraction operation in Lebanon. These units or formations are at the apex of the triangle.

The army manages readiness through a 24-month cycle that we call a managed readiness plan. In this plan, units or formations that have been tasked or assigned for various missions—some ongoing, others as contingencies or commitments to NATO, all within the guidelines of the Canada First defence strategy six core missions—are trained and readied.

On a parallel, what we are currently doing in Afghanistan is helping the Afghan National Army build that triangle. We are helping them to build their institution, train their field force, and prepare those Afghan units for a higher state of readiness, ready to fight for their country.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, I would tell you this.

[*English*]

The first priority of a robust and well-equipped Canadian Forces is to protect Canadians and defend Canadian sovereignty at home and abroad. To do this we need the right institutional support to get the job done. The centrepiece of any successful future army capability is the soldier, possessing a warrior spirit and supported with modern, effective tools and equipment.

Mr. Chair, let me thank you for this great opportunity to contribute to this committee's study on readiness. Mr. Moretti and I stand proud to represent our soldiers who serve this country so well.

I'd like to just provide Mr. Moretti the opportunity to say a couple of words. Mr. Moretti is my command team partner, a master gunner with over 35 years of experience. I am honoured to be standing next to Mr. Moretti every single day, particularly when we are surrounded by great Canadian soldiers.

● (0855)

[*Translation*]

Sergeant Major Gino Moretti (Canadian Forces): Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, as a soldier, I would like to express my thanks for the honour you pay me in allowing me to be here and represent all those Canadians who served and continue to serve our country today. They represent our nation, wherever they are deployed, either internationally or nationally.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for those opening comments, gentlemen.

With that, we'll go to our first round.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Moore, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Thank you very much for being with us today.

In his 2011 Report on Transformation, Lieutenant-General Leslie suggested replacing the existing sector and command structure with two army commands. A first division would be made up of regular force members and would conduct operations outside the country, and a second division, made up of reservists, would carry out operations inside Canada. He also suggested creating a joint instruction and operational readiness organization for land operations in order to optimize commonalities.

I would like to know what you think of this suggestion. Do you think this would be a way to move forward and, if so, how?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you very much.

I think it's very important to point out that Lieutenant-General Leslie's report was designed to be

● (0900)

[*English*]

a list of options that the military needed to pay attention to and study.

[*Translation*]

I have a great deal of respect for Lieutenant-General Leslie and his ideas. But my vision is somewhat different in terms of a two-division structure.

[*English*]

We are a big country with regional uniqueness. We are a military, and an army in particular, that has a very rich integration of the regular and reserve forces that has been built over years, particularly over our period of time in Afghanistan in combat. I'm fiercely proud of the relationship that exists between the regular and the reserve. I think there is great strength in keeping them in the same formations, and there is risk in separating the regular and the reserve into two divisions.

In my view, there is greater strength for Canada, for the CF and for the army, in keeping our regional structure and keeping the regular and reserve forces

[*Translation*]

integrated, together, as part of a much stronger team.

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: I would just like to add one thing, if you don't mind. Under the current structure, there is a direct line of command all across the country, in the case of a national event. People always say that history repeats itself. But we must never forget that, before Canada established the Canadian Forces, there was one division per sector. Each group reported to a command in cases of emergency involving the Government of Canada.

Because of the way we are structured, carrying out the tasks assigned to us as soldiers is an efficient process, both in terms of communication and resources. I firmly believe that the system currently in place works very well.

Ms. Christine Moore: My second question relates to reservists.

In one plans and priorities report, it was suggested that the complement of class C reservists be gradually reduced. I would like to know what brought about that suggestion. Is the idea to reduce the number of class C reservists in order to increase the complement in classes B and A? If not, what is the purpose? Perhaps you could provide clarification in that regard.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Certainly.

There are three classes, A, B and C. I believe your question relates to class B.

Ms. Christine Moore: Yes, I had—

[*English*]

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Let me start with class C. The class C soldier is on an operational task, an operational deployment.

Class B is a full-time soldier operating here domestically, in Canada, in support of the institution. As an example, they would be tasked to an HQ, or they could be tasked at the Combat Training Centre to help deliver training.

Then there is the class A soldier, the part-time soldier—the vast majority. That's the centrepiece of our reserve army. Mr. Moretti and I are hugely proud of that reserve army, that class A reserve army.

The reductions are class B reductions. Class C is when you are tasked to represent Canada. I don't believe that is the issue; it's more tied to class B.

We have grown over the period of Afghanistan with class Bs to help staff all the work that has been associated with the conflict in Afghanistan, to assist with training because of our commitment there.

As we have moved out of the combat mission—we are now in the training mission in Afghanistan—and we look to manage within our means, there will be a reduction in some of the class B positions inside the Canadian Forces and inside the army.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: So, will these individuals go back into class A? How do you intend to reorient them? Will you encourage them to join the regular force? Or will you leave them in class A? What do you intend to do with these people?

[*English*]

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Perhaps I can use the example of

[*Translation*]

a reserve unit populated with class A soldiers.

● (0905)

[*English*]

There is a regular element that in the past supported our reserve units. Because of the conflict in Afghanistan, you might find that some of those reserve units are now populated with full-time class B soldiers to help that unit train and to coordinate with their brigades. We are now posting regular force soldiers into those reserve units to do the tasks that over the past several years have been done by class B soldiers.

Some of those class B soldiers might find employment in other opportunities inside the army or the CF, or they will revert to a part-time class A position inside their unit, and they would seek other additional employment outside the Canadian Forces or outside the army.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Your time is up. Thank you very much.

Ms. Gallant, please.

[*English*]

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

Through you to our witnesses, I would first of all thank you for coming, General Devlin. It's wonderful to see you again.

Since you left Base Petawawa as brigade commander, it's only been sporadically that we've had a chance to chat, but I have followed your career in the south, over to Iraq and then Afghanistan, and we're very proud of you. Even before then, you had a remarkable record in being awarded the commander-in-chief citation for opening the Sarajevo airport. We just had a member of our committee visit Sarajevo for a week through the NATO parliamentary association, so on her behalf, thank you very much for doing that.

About a month ago we were in Wainwright, and we observed the brigade-wide exercise there. I think the last time, if I recall correctly, that there was a brigade-wide exercise in Wainwright, you were in charge of the brigade. Is that correct?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: This is the first time in several years that there's been a brigade-level operation, brigade-level training. I think that's important. To train at that level provides Canada with a level of readiness and flexibility that Canada deserves.

Over the past many years we have focused on those elements that are readying to deploy to Afghanistan, so it was at the task force level, readying a battle group, a forward support group or a national support element, and the enablers, who would deploy to Afghanistan. As I know you all know, we've had about 3,000-ish in the Afghan theatre over the past almost decade.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Over approximately the past five years, there was talk about an operational pause for the army. To be quite frank, I've really never observed an operational pause. It seemed that it was sometimes less than a year when we had our troops returning home and then being deployed again. You can tell by the medals and the bars on their chests, some of them have been there three and four times, willingly and happily so, but from the standpoint of it being declared that we were having an operational pause, we didn't see it.

I guess it was about October 20, General Bowes was here at committee and he talked about “reloading” the army. Can you tell me, is this attempt to reload the same sort of thing as an operational pause? What exactly did he mean by that?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you very much. That's a great point.

It's a word that I use: your army reloaded, *rechargé*. We have been involved in the recovery of our people, our equipment, and our ideas from combat in Afghanistan, the reconstitution of the force, and the reorientation of the force. I bundle that whole bit up as “your army reloaded”.

It's really important, because we are an army that has great respect for the past, and great respect for the learning that has taken place, but we are an army that is looking forward to the future and the challenges of tomorrow. That's why the training that you and others saw in Wainwright is a different training package that we have undertaken over the past several years.

It is one of spirit, it is one of training, and it is one that is demanding of a level of readiness that Canada needs in order to be set and prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.

The vehicle front is where we are bringing back our vehicles, 1,000 of them, from Afghanistan. There are some that are going through a line in Edmonton, now that we'll have vehicles coming out of that line next year. So it will be, to be precise, the fall of 2012 where we would have, again, a battle group-type force equipped with their protection, their armoured vehicles, ready to represent Canada with that level of strength.

That's all I mean when I talk about the term “reloaded”.

● (0910)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I think I saw some of those vehicles headed back to Petawawa on Highway 17 on the way home last week.

Now, because we've just finished a conflict in which our soldiers were engaged in counter-insurgency, there is the notion that perhaps now our military should transition into just peacekeepers patrolling buffer zones. Is that what the army is being prepared for, and if not, why not?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you.

The army is undergoing individual and collective training to be able to respond to a full spectrum of conflict. As you and others saw in Wainwright—and, if you weren't able to, we would be honoured to host you, and provide you the opportunity to see our young soldiers being trained—being trained with a near-peer enemy, a very complex battlefield that has civilians on the battlefield, has criminal elements on the battlefield, has an insurgency on the battlefield, and is demanding of a well-trained, well-equipped, agile soldier who is able to deal with that full spectrum of conflict.

That's how we train. We believe, and we have seen, that soldiers trained to that level, particularly Canadian soldiers, are incredibly versatile, strong and resilient. They can move from combat through stability to peacekeeping with ease. Canada deserves and demands that level of training.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Moretti.

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: I might add, Mr. Chairman, that as we train our soldiers, it's a diverse and in-depth process in terms of the circumstances in which a young soldier will make a decision. He understands the commander's intent, and he understands why the Government of Canada has put him in that country, but that individual private knows the rules of engagement, and that's why he needs to be trained in Canada with a full spectrum of operation, so he'll make the right action at the right moment in time of need.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McKay, you have the floor.

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

I know, Mr. Chair, you take such enthusiasm in reviewing the many questions that I might ask from time to time. I've kind of noticed that. So I thought, just to be helpful, I'd bring you *The Power of Parliamentary Houses to send for Persons, Papers and Records* and direct your attention to page 65, in the event you wish to read it.

I'm just being helpful, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you. I'll take a look at it.

Hon. John McKay: Yes.

Thank you, Lieutenant-General.

There's an article in this morning's paper by Jack Granatstein, which may have direct bearing on your abilities, your readiness, if you will, as a Canadian army. The article is entitled “NATO is a shell of its former self”. It's quite a thorough review of Britain's reduced capabilities, certainly the Greek reduced capabilities, and Italy's reduced capabilities. The shoe has yet to drop with the U.S., but it's pretty obvious that there's going to be a substantially reduced capability in the U.S.

Then he gets to Canada, and he says:

> The $9 billion the federal government seems prepared to spend—even if almost no one except the defence minister really believes that figure—will skyrocket. If DND sticks to buying the F-35, therefore, other items will need to go. The big naval procurement plans, proudly announced a few weeks back, will certainly be slowed. So will the army's Close Combat Vehicle project, the refurbishment of the Light Armoured Vehicle fleet, and myriad other programs. Some informed sources have even suggested that the army's nine infantry battalions might be reduced to six.

That's a potentially significant hit on your readiness to do all the things the government has tasked to you to do.

I'd be interested in your thoughts as to how in effect you might defend the army's ability to project itself in all of the tasks you might be asked to do, and what you're trained to do, given the enormous constraints that pretty well all the armies around the world are under—and so also will be Canada.

● (0915)

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you, sir; great point, great question.

I'm fiercely proud of our army—50% regular, 50% reserve—an army that has three regular brigades, ten reserve brigades, and the battalions and regiments you talked about are the regular elements, the nine regular battalions that we have.

We have made adjustments. We continue to make adjustments in that those battalions are not all identical. We are moving so that three out of nine battalions will be light battalions, trained, equipped, and gifted at doing light infantry operations—

Hon. John McKay: Just for my own sake, because I'm not quite sure what that means, can you explain what a “light” battalion means?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Perhaps I could roll back a bit. There is the future land combat vehicle system, which is doing an upgrade to our LAV III. It's purchasing 100-ish close combat vehicles and 500 tactical armoured patrol vehicles.

The end state will see close combat vehicles in a regiment of our infantry. It will see our three infantry regiments, each with three battalions that will have one light and two mechanized. There is a mix. It's an asymmetric approach because of the number of vehicles we have, the respect for the complexity of the equipment, the sparing, the maintenance, and the infrastructure necessary to be able to support those fleets.

So I believe we have made adjustments respectful of the budget, respectful of the plan to purchase those three major fleets—LAV III, close combat vehicle, and tactical armoured patrol vehicles—and we provide the Canadian Forces with the flexibility it needs to be able to respond to anticipated tasks in the future.

Hon. John McKay: Given, if you will, the reality of government's desire to reduce the military budget, what is the difference between, if you will—this is a very poor phrase—the wish list and the reality list, in terms of the differences in those vehicles and also in terms of your personnel?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: I don't know what the.... So we would want more people, or more...?

Hon. John McKay: Presumably at one point or another the army submitted a set of specifications for going forward.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Sure.

Hon. John McKay: You're obviously adjusting, so what's the difference between what you initially asked for and what you're getting?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thanks, sir.

With each of those vehicle purchases, to use that as an example, there is a base number of vehicles, plus an option. We anticipate that we would not have that: that the government would not have the flexibility to exercise the options.

For instance, in the tactical and patrol vehicle buy, it's 500 and an option for another 100. We anticipate that we would probably not receive government authority to purchase the options that are built into each one of those vehicle purchases.

That's my response on the equipment side—

Hon. John McKay: In percentage terms, is it roughly true that with each buy you're basically down 20% or potentially down 20%?

● (0920)

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Sir, I wouldn't say that we are down. I would say that we said “this is what we need and this option provides additional flexibility for the army”. We have provided these. These buys go through, and of course the LAV upgrade contract was signed last month. Each of the contenders of the CCV, the close combat vehicle, and the tactical armoured patrol vehicle are undergoing testing at present, and we're hopeful that there will be a decision in the spring of 2012 for which vehicle best meets the needs of our country.

So there is a base we need and then there is an option that provides additional flexibility.

On the people side, we have made adjustments to harness the learning that is taking place in Afghanistan with what I call the enablers. Lessons that have been learned there, such as counter improvised explosive devices information, operations, civilian-military cooperation, and our cooperation and our learning with helicopters, are all things in which we have invested people out of the field force into a different part of the field force.

Hon. John McKay: Does that mean—

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired. I know it goes by fast when you're having fun.

We're going to go to our five-minute round.

Mr. Opitz, would you like to kick us off?

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

Thank you to our witnesses.

General and Army Sergeant-Major, it's delightful to have you here today.

Thank you so much, General. As a class B reservist myself in the past, in planning exercises I've seen you many times at Wainwright and at other places, planning and doing your job, and of course we've seen some of the deployments that you've been on.

You've served Canada brilliantly and with great honour, sir, as has the Army Sergeant-Major. I'd like to thank you both for your service.

For clarity on some of the questions that my honourable friend was asking, as a class B reservist backfilling a regular force position and doing some of those budgeting exercises, I know it would be true that I think what we're really talking about is a prioritization of what factors you have in terms of allocated resources and what you can buy. Would you then organize those things, in the course of action, based on certain sets of scenarios?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you, sir.

That's in fact what has happened, sir. The purchase of the future land combat vehicles was very much developed on the priorities of and with respect to the Canada First defence strategy.

Mr. Ted Opitz: That's great.

You talked about lessons learned in Afghanistan and in other missions. From Bosnia in the early 1990s to having progressed through a full-fledged combat mission and now into a training mission in Afghanistan, how are you, as the CLS, applying those lessons learned?

I'm going to also address the Army Sergeant-Major as well, because I'm interested in your perspective on how you're going to apply those lessons learned to developing senior NCOs and bringing up those troops, especially troops that have not had the opportunity because they're either young or not fully trained yet and have not been in Afghanistan to benefit from those lessons learned.

General, could you comment on that, please?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: I sure can, sir. Thank you very much; a great point.

I think Mr. Moretti and I are fiercely proud of the learning that has taken place over the past decade. I use the term "warrior spirit" because these soldiers are guys and gals who are confident, are skilled, and enjoy a great respect from Canadians. They have adjusted their training. We have helped adjust their training. We have institutionalized some of these enablers. I would use examples like our ability to operate with helicopters, so our air mobile capability is something that has developed over our period of time in Afghanistan. The respect for counter improvised explosive devices, the counter-IED task force that has been established, provides a great connection with our allies. In fact, Canada is hosting an international symposium in Quebec early next month on counter improvised explosive devices.

Our influence activities, both information operations and CIMIC, our very healthy respect for the need to be driven by intelligence and the analysis of the battlefield, our source handling, how we coordinate and synchronize a level of awareness of the battlefield that causes us to advance with deliberate purpose—all are things that have changed over our time in Afghanistan.

Some of these capabilities are institutionalized. Some of these are tied to how we train. We have a very strong lessons learned process. Every "roto" into Afghanistan has had a lessons learned team visit to be aware of the evolving tactics, techniques, and procedures, and changes in how the threat has evolved. That has been brought back to our training at the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre so that the troops going into battle next have that rich understanding of what is happening today.

I would also emphasize the fact that our awareness and our coordination with our whole-of-government partners has also grown tremendously over that period of time.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Moretti.

● (0925)

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: Thank you very much, sir.

[*Translation*]

I would like to make one very important point.

[*English*]

When we speak about warrior spirit, we also tell the soldiers how to be morally and ethically correct at any moment in time.

I had the opportunity to become an RCIS divisional sergeant-major in Afghanistan for one year, with 22 nations. As I saw the young Canadians on the battlefield, it was awesome, because I knew that if something was going to happen, we all reacted as one team in a firefight: the lessons learned were always given back to Canada to make sure that the next rotation was ready.

[*Translation*]

I had an opportunity to take part in deployments to the Netherlands, in a combat environment, as well as in Romania. We had problems. We lost some of their soldiers, because they were not as well prepared as Canadians.

[*English*]

They had not learned the lessons at that moment in time, and that cost lives. One of our systems.... As I said, we train to a platinum level, but we do train for the worse-case scenarios so when the soldier does go, he has learned the lessons before deploying so that we don't lose a Canadian life on the battlefield, sir.

Mr. Ted Opitz: On reserves specifically, it's one thing to maintain the battle readiness, the operating readiness of regular force soldiers, because obviously they're full-time and they're committed to the training cycle. But it's a little more difficult with reservists because when they do go, our class A—in particular, those who have served in Afghanistan—make up to, I think, anywhere between 22% and 25% of any given mission at times. Now these troops are back, skill fade is something that we have to be cognizant of.

What are the plans to try to maintain at least a basic level of readiness, especially with those soldiers who have come back from Afghanistan with combat skills in place?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you, sir. That's a great point and a question close to my heart.

I would first emphasize that funding for class A, our reserve army, is not threatened. It is protected. It is 37.5 days per year plus seven days of collective training, plus augmentation to regular force training events. It is protected because it's vital that our army, the Canadian Forces in Canada, has that level of training.

So we provide training. We provide collective training opportunities and we provide the bigger collective training opportunities where we need to keep those reserve soldiers at that level of training. In our equipment buys, there are fleets that will be kept at the area of level to provide access to the reserve soldiers who have not seen that over the past number of years, because the vehicles have been used in Afghanistan. I think that's also a vitally important part of reserve readiness.

The last point I would make would be one tied to these enablers. Because reserve soldiers are magical folks and some of those skill sets—CIMIC, influence activities—are things that could be a secondary task to a reserve unit, we are studying now how they could augment and provide a great strength to the challenges of tomorrow.

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr. Kellway, you have the floor.

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

Thank you, General and Sergeant-Major, for being here with us today.

You know, I'm struck, as our witnesses keep coming forward, the many well-decorated witnesses from our military forces...and they talk about the Canada First defence strategy. They talk about it very proudly and laud its existence. But it seems to me that it poses some very serious difficulties, frankly, for this issue of readiness. I come back to the role described in that strategy of projecting leadership abroad. It almost seems to contradict readiness.

I looked at your notes, General, this morning, which I appreciate very much. But you talk about the fact that we don't know exactly what the world is going to look like three to five years from now and that there is a menu of new and unanticipated challenges. Where we seem to end up is with a commitment that our military forces be all things to everybody and go anywhere, from the frozen north to the jungles in the south.

I don't know if there's a question there, but I'd like to know how we are to take seriously the notion of readiness when the military keeps coming to us saying that we need to be everything to everybody at any time.

Can you respond to that for me?

● (0930)

LGen Peter J. Devlin: I sure can.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Thank you.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you; great points.

The military's gift is one of being able to operate in chaos. In that chaotic environment, we try to bring normality to planning and responding. We also try to balance the resources provided with the skill sets we anticipate will be needed tomorrow.

In response to Mr. McKay's questions about structure, as we move forward we focus the skill sets needed, such as mountain warfare skills, parachuting, and desert warfare, in units. We focus on training these soldiers, believing that this provides us with exciting training as well as the flexibility to grow that skill set should Canada decide that an area, a troubled part of the world, is where they would like to commit Canadian soldiers.

I believe, sir, that it is an issue of balance. It is based on achieving a base level of readiness that then responds to and tops up training based on the theatre that has been identified by the Government of Canada. That triangle, that little bit at the top, the theatre mission-specific training, is the training that brings our forces to a level of readiness when Canada has committed troops to a particular theatre. And we become acutely aware of the threat, the cultural needs, the language, and so on so that we are able to respond to that theatre.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: I listened to your response to Mr. McKay, as well, on the procurement issues and the issue of dropping options on some of the procurement for the army. At some point, then, we talk about balance, and we talk about base levels. I'm wondering about excellence.

I read General Natynczyk's departmental directive in which he talked, under strategic objectives, about ensuring sustainable operational excellence. Is it the strategy of the army at this point, from a readiness perspective, to be establishing base levels and balance? Or should we be, and are we, identifying a role, or anticipating a role, for Canada and developing our forces for operational excellence in that role in a sustainable way, as per General Natynczyk's directive?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thanks, sir. That's a great point.

I believe that the Canadian Forces approach to readiness and preparedness is one that allows the military to achieve a level of training..... We have different levels of training inside the army, from individual soldier through section, platoon, company, company group, battalion, battalion group, and brigade levels one through seven. Without a mission, sir, we train to level five, which is a combat team, a company group. It's important at that level, because that is the very base level in which we synchronize the skill sets of the different arms of the combined arms team.

Maintaining that level of training allows Canada, allows the CF and the army, a level of flexibility to be able to grow beyond level five to higher levels of training in order to be able to respond where Canada sees fit.

In my view, the strength of Canada deserves a flexible military that achieves a base level of training, and that can respond to the uncertainties of tomorrow. I wonder about whether we put ourselves at risk if we train in only a particular field and only a particular area, because I believe that Canadian soldiers are versatile and can adjust swiftly.

● (0935)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Chisu, you have the floor.

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

General, I will just tell you that I am proud to have served in the Canadian Armed Forces. I know your achievements are excellent, and our soldiers are excellent soldiers, General.

A large component of readiness is ensuring interoperability between the members of the Canadian Forces and our allies in disaster relief, peacekeeping, and peace-making operations. For example, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan involved the cooperation of many international partners. What are some lessons learned by the army from working with these international allies? How important is this one for preparation of readiness with the rapidity of situations that are today in the world?

I can tell you one experience that I had, and I was proud of it. We had an operation in Bosnia between the British troops and the Hungarian troops. I was the Canadian responsible for engineering, as I was the engineering adviser to the commander. The deputy commander of the task force in Banja Luka told me: oh, you speak Hungarian, you are not anymore the engineer, you will be the liaison officer for conducting these operations; for various reasons, the interoperability of the communication systems is not working.

So I was proud that I was a Canadian doing this work. I am emphasizing this that is very important, because we are not acting in isolation today in the operation.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you very much, sir, that's a wonderful point.

Mr. Moretti and I have a reasonable amount of international experience. We believe that the next time Canada goes somewhere, they will go with international partners, as part of a coalition. I think Canadians are wonderfully gifted at working with other nations. A level of respect and understanding is second to none inside a Canadian heart.

What we have done over the past decade in Afghanistan is a coalition, a multinational effort. What we do as part of our UN operations is extremely multinational. Multinationality has great strengths. It brings different cultures and different approaches to a challenge. It brings different equipment. It brings different language skills. I believe that we collectively, as an international team, are much stronger as a result of soldiering alongside each other in training events, in symposiums, and on the battlefields of today, in anticipation of the challenges of tomorrow.

It's a very real point, sir, and I think it's one that Canada and the army pays significant respect to.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Moretti.

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: Just on that point also, sir, of one army, one mission, one team, as the commander of fifty-fifty...the regular and the reserve soldiers really represent Canada's diversity of culture. So when we do deploy internationally we're able to communicate, as you just stated, sir, quite well.

Thank you, sir.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: That's a great point.

If you were to visit some of our reserve units, particularly in our built-up areas, they are an incredibly diverse group of Canadian soldiers, fiercely proud to be wearing our flag on their shoulders. What they bring to the fights of today and tomorrow will be very special.

● (0940)

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

I am looking at the engineering side of the army, and I will ask you a question regarding how the army, and specifically the Canadian Forces IED disposal units, has implemented the lessons learned from Afghanistan in their training regime so they will be able to mitigate the threat that IEDs will pose in future missions. It seems to me that these are the next dangerous threats for operations in the Canadian Forces.

Perhaps you can elaborate on how they learned to conduct convoy operations and so on, and on the lessons learned from the experiences we have today in the armed forces.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you, sir.

The counter improvised explosive device threat is a threat that lives today and I'm sure will live tomorrow. We pay huge attention to that because it kills Canadians and it kills our allies. It kills those whom we work with, like the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police.

We, inside the army, have the lead for the Canadian Forces, and indeed for Canada. We have established a counter-IED task force. We liaise with our whole-of-government partners. A tremendous amount of learning has taken place on the counter-IED front, part of that, to go back to your last question, because of the amount of international cooperation that takes place in dealing with that threat.

We have established a counter-IED squadron as part of our engineering unit in Gagetown, and we insert counter-IED as part of every training event.

I would say, sir, as much as it is to have a capability to counter and to fight improvised explosive devices, it needs to be a vibrant part of our training to keep it alive in the heads of commanders that this threat exists, and that they need to plan and counter that threat in every operation they undertake.

I'd also say that this is a CF challenge, because it's not just something that takes place on the ground. If you look at improvised explosive devices, they can threaten airfields, they can threaten harbours, they can threaten maritime, air, and land operations. It's important that Canada invests in the understanding, the awareness, as well as the capability to be able to counter that threat.

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: In terms of counter-IED, sir, in Afghanistan the Canadian engineers on the task force were able to find more IEDs within Kandahar than any other nation. At the same time, we had the honour this summer to visit a Colombian army. They are also faced with counter-IED situations in a jungle environment. We were able to share some of the lessons learned together to grow our relationship with these two nations.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Brahmi, please.

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

I have a question for the General.

In early September, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of a company by the name of Rheinmetall Canada, which you are well acquainted with, I attended a demonstration of a persistent surveillance system using towers and balloons. I was very impressed by the effectiveness of this system. I would like to know whether you think this is a technology that the army could use in future.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you for your question.

You are talking about—

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: I'm talking about the persistent surveillance system.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Yes, right. We are now using that technology with towers and balloons in Afghanistan. It has incredible capabilities.

[*English*]

—day/night, dawn/dusk—to be able to identify the threat and to be able to synchronize a response. Balloons are a very valuable, precious enabler, one of those enablers that has been institutionalized inside the army because of the benefit that it brings to force protection, to looking after our camps, our airfields, our harbours of tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

There is no doubt in my mind that on our next deployment, we will have towers and balloons with the capability of responding to a threat.

● (0945)

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Thank you.

As regards the current generation of LAVs, you stated that this vehicle is at the heart of what the land forces do.

[*English*]

You said that you think we have the best in the world fighting that vehicle.

[*Translation*]

Given your extensive experience on the ground, I would like you to tell me what objective information you rely on to assert that the Canadian army is the best in the world when it comes to using that piece of tactical equipment. What other armies are you comparing yourself to?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you.

As I'm sure you know, I am incredibly proud of Canadian soldiers. The LAV III is a fantastic vehicle.

[*English*]

It provides a rare level of protection. It provides good firepower and good mobility. The upgraded LAV III will have more protection, a stronger drivetrain, and a standardized turret that provides soldiers with a level of awareness as well as firepower.

When I talked about the Canadian soldier being the best in the world at fighting the LAV, there are other variants of the LAV. The Americans have what they call a Stryker, which does not have a turret on it. I think the flexibility that comes with a turret is marvellous in terms of the optics that are part of that turret, as well as the firepower that comes from that cannon.

I think it provides protection. I think that how we manoeuvre it, how we exploit the goodness that comes from that LAV, is what sets Canadians and Canadian soldiers apart from others.

It is a combination of the Canadian variant of the LAV III and the skill of the Canadian soldier in being able to exploit the vehicle that, in my view, makes us the best in the world at fighting a very good piece of equipment.

The Chair: Mr. Moretti.

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: If I may, sir,

[*Translation*]

I would like to add one comment. The LAV, or light armoured vehicle, gives our soldiers confidence when they find themselves in a situation where they are unfamiliar with the environment, or when they don't know what is on the other side of the road or behind a building. When they have that confidence, they can carry out their task.

[*English*]

and overcome his fear, because it takes courage to overcome the fear at that moment in time, and when you hear the LAV shooting or the platform being used, that gives you the reassurance and the capability you need to accomplish the mission.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Thank you.

My last question relates to your philosophy. You stated at the outset that there is a difference between Lieutenant-General Leslie's philosophy and your own when it comes to separating the reserve force and the regular force. How do you explain that? Is it a question of generation? Has the doctrine changed recently?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: I am not sure I understood your question.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: You say that you don't share Lieutenant-General Leslie's opinion regarding the need to separate the reserve force and the regular force. On the contrary, you think the reserve force should remain fully integrated with the regular force.

Is that the result of a change in doctrine?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you for your question.

I would like to make two points quickly, if you don't mind.

I believe that Lieutenant-General Leslie's views and my own are quite similar. He said that this was an option

[*English*]

that warrants further study. I respect that view, but I think there are greater strengths in maintaining a regional structure that has the reserve and the regular integrated.

So I'm thankful for his thoughts. I think he presented them as thoughts that we needed to at least give study to, as an option, which we did.

I don't think there is a need to change our doctrine. I don't think that was part of what was offered by General Leslie. I think our doctrine is sound.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Strahl, it's your turn.

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

Thank you for being here today.

As we've studied readiness, our committee has heard about a number of risks related to readiness and the choices you face. There is the danger—and many armies have done this—of preparing for the last war rather than for the next one. There is also the danger of preparing for so many scenarios that we are in fact ready for none. I think there's another one, which we've identified today, and that is so narrowly focusing on a single capability that the army wouldn't be flexible enough to respond to a wide variety of threats.

How does the army balance those three threats and achieve levels of readiness that are in fact relevant to the real world?

● (0950)

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you very much, sir.

The army alongside the Canadian Forces spends a fair bit of energy scanning for the characteristics of the battlefields of tomorrow to be able to identify and challenge those types of characteristics. I think we have maintained a level of integration inside the Canadian Forces, with the army working with the air force in particular, and lesser so with the navy. It also provides a level of flexibility for tomorrow.

Having a contemporary training scenario that is respectful of the characteristics and challenges of tomorrow allows one to adapt in the environment we are in. We train to level five—so the combat team, the combined arms team. We grow it once the Government of Canada identifies a particular theatre, a particular response that Canada will deal with. I talk from a conflict point of view.

On our ability to respond to natural disasters, we are always at a high level of preparedness and readiness, whether that be for water purification, health care, or engineering services.

I think it's a matter of being respectful of the challenges and characteristics of the battlefields of tomorrow; working alongside our sister services; keeping a regular and a reserve element close and tight; and achieving a level of base training from which we can grow with time.

Mr. Mark Strahl: I wonder if you wouldn't mind expanding on that. When we were in Wainwright, some of us were able to observe the training. General Bowes remarked how it had changed, and that ten years ago there wouldn't have been that cooperation between the RCAF and the army in training.

Can you expand on how the interoperability between the forces has developed over the last number of years, and what effect that has had on the readiness of the army?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: That's an awesome point; a great point.

The army and the air force are closer than we have ever been, certainly since I have been in uniform. I think the real key is tied to respect in that there is a very healthy respect among soldiers and airmen and airwomen.

On the aviation front, having helicopters on the battlefield today—and I'm sure tomorrow—has grown in importance. We synchronize our training so that the air force has adjusted to our 24-month manage readiness plan. Our cycles are now synchronized. We harmonize the training events, as you saw in Wainwright, to get maximum goodness out of them.

So I think it is built on respect. There is the synchronization of training opportunities, and I think we have grown a lot over the past decade in particular, both the air force and the army.

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: If I may sir, from an NCO perspective, when allowed to work with the air force I have skydived static-line free-fall. I have rappelled from a helicopter and off a building. I have been on a naval ship. I've jumped into the ocean with the marine corps.

It allows soldiers to be enthused and excited about their training. We never know what environment we'll have to go into. It gives us confidence, and will consequently give to the next generation of soldiers some of the tasks and professionalism they need to grow.

We are working to get closer and closer. Everything is combined. This is a great nation. It's a big nation also. The more cooperation, the greater success we will have in the future.

● (0955)

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Could I emphasize one more point from a soldier's point of view?

As you jump on the back of an airframe today, as you jump on the back of a Chinook helicopter flown by Canadians, you'll probably see the regimental banner of the soldiers who are operating alongside our air force buds on the roof of that helicopter. They are unbelievably operationally focused at delivering the soldiers safely to their landing zone. If you jump in the back of a Herc or a C-17, there are guys and gals who are awesomely focused at their operational task, whether it be delivering gear or bringing gear back to Canada. You sense that as soon as you step on that platform.

That just reinforces Mr. Moretti's point. It's centred on respect. I think that is what's very much alive and vibrant today.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Caron, you have five minutes.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Lieutenant-General, Sergeant-Major, thank you for being with us today.

I am more interested in numbers. So, I would like to present some of the data we have been given and ask you to comment.

According to the 2010-2011 Report on Plans and Priorities for National Defence, in terms of readiness, the regular land force complement should increase from 17,400 to 18,200 between 2011 and 2013. That is an increase of about 800. Since we are withdrawing from Afghanistan, is that additional strength necessary?

How do you explain the fact that, even while the complement is increasing in size, funding will be 3.7% lower over the same period? So there will simultaneously be an increase in the land force complement, in terms of readiness, and lower base funding.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you.

Changes in strength always occur subsequent to recruitment and military personnel retiring from the forces.

[*English*]

We balance our strategic intake with an attrition rate.

[*Translation*]

At the present time, the rate is about 7%, I believe. However, in terms of the staff complement, we do have exact numbers.

[*English*]

So it's expected—we expect—that there will be differences in *effectifs* over time, going up and down, with some of those *effectifs* based on their physical or emotional health. When you talk about the availability of a unit and how many soldiers out of that unit of 1,000 who live

[*Translation*]

in Valcartier and could be deployed today, I would say it is normally about 15%.

[*English*]

are not deployable. Perhaps there's a family issue, a pregnancy, a broken leg, or something along those lines. So our numbers go up and down. That's what we expect the adjustments in the budget in 3.6....

[*Translation*]

You did say 3.6%, didn't you?

Mr. Guy Caron: Actually, it's 3.7%.

[*English*]

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Perfect.

So we deal with those adjustments, which affects how much time we have in the field and the level of training we achieve.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Let's talk about increased staff levels in terms of readiness. Given the current situation—a withdrawal from Afghanistan where a great many troops were on deployment—how can you justify planning for increased numbers of soldiers who will be ready for deployment?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Are you talking about—

Mr. Guy Caron: We are withdrawing from Afghanistan at this time, where we previously had deployed a lot of soldiers. At the same time, we are seeing an increase in the available land force complement in the coming years, in spite of that.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: I'm not sure I understand your question.

● (1000)

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: Allow me to take that question.

We are continually seeking to improve the effectiveness of our staff. However, it is also important to understand how the Canadian Forces are divided up. For example, 35% of our members provide additional support to the other commands, including the Canada Command, CENTCOM and COMSOCAN. Those members wear an army uniform, but serve under another command.

In order to maintain an effective organization, we have to constantly make adjustments based on requirements. Members in all of our units can carry out tasks assigned to them by their commander. That is why when Canada proceeds with a deployment, we have the option of using class C reservists in a proportion of 25%, as the gentleman mentioned. That guarantees us 100% operational readiness in cases involving the highest level of risk.

In Canada, we do in fact have the necessary efficiency to be able to ensure that each command can carry out all the tasks assigned to it here in Canada, 24/7, or any additional tasks that may arise in times of crisis.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: We want to keep the same staff level in the Canadian Forces, except in the reserve force, where we are trying to bring the complement up to 20,000 from its current level of 17,000.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Caron.

[*English*]

Mr. Norlock.

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

Through you, to the witnesses, thank you for coming this morning.

General, when I listen to some of the questions, it reminds me of a conversation I had with some folks at CFB Trenton just before we were elected. I can recall one of the people who worked there telling me that the base commander didn't have enough money in his budget for simple things, such as cutting the grass and things like that.

I think we're in a different time when people talk about cutting back. Of course, that's not strange to people like me, who worked for the Ontario government for years in a paramilitary way as a police officer. Certain governments said that if you went...or our directives were that if you went over 100 kilometres in a patrol vehicle, you had to explain why because of budgetary restraints. But if anybody wants to know what the difference is between budgets, we now have a base commander whose biggest challenge is to organize a huge investment in his base.

To give folks at home a scale of what's occurring, one of the hangars being constructed for the new C-17—which I don't believe the Canadian armed forces would have other than through the election of our government—has half the steel. That building, one of the largest of its kind in Canada and for sure in the Canadian armed forces, has—to give folks the scale and the size of the building—half the steel of the Eiffel Tower and half the concrete of the CN Tower. So that's some degree....

My question's going to focus on training, in particular training in Canada's north, because it is a priority for this government and, I believe, for the Canadian armed forces. I'm wondering how the army uses the training operations in the Arctic to prepare itself, not only for domestic purposes and missions, but for missions abroad. I really don't see on the horizon any conflicts or any need for Canada... outside of our own Arctic sovereignty, which is of paramount importance to our country. Could you comment on that?

Also, I have friends who are associated with the rangers. During the training exercises in the north, how do the regular armed forces and the rangers cooperate, and what's their level of cooperation during those exercises?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you very much, sir.

Perhaps I could deal with both of those questions at the same time.

There is a need to exercise presence and sovereignty, and to train, to achieve a level of readiness in our north. The army takes that very seriously. There are at least two significantly large exercises per year in the north, as well as Operation Nanook, which takes place in the summertime. Our winter training exercises normally take place in the February-March timeframe, involving approximately a thousand soldiers in each of those two venues, one oriented west and one oriented east, as well as those involved in Operation Nanook.

Every single time we go to the north, we liaise in advance with our ranger patrols—4,700 rangers, part of the army, part of the Canadian Forces. They are the link with the community, they are the link with the leadership, and they are the folks who have a tremendous understanding of the local terrain and the challenges in the community in which they live. We always work with them. We always coordinate with them, even prior to being deployed.

Part of being a soldier is working as part of a team. Whether you're working in the desert or in the Arctic, there are great benefits that come from training in one environment or the other, none the least of which are training, discipline, and understanding challenge. I think that all comes from operating in the north. It is an extremely demanding environment, one that demands a level of discipline and one that demands a level of respect for the environment and the communities in which we operate.

I think it's all done with Canadian army training focused on the north. It's one of having an understanding and respect for the north, for the locals, for our equipment, and for the need to train and participate in operations.

● (1005)

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: If I may, sir, just with the ranger perspective, we commanded a mission earlier, and Canada's diversity and our culture.... Going to the north, the ranger allows us to go into a certain community, over 110 communities up north. We could not just go in there and talk to the elders. By having the ranger act as the liaison and gain the trust, it allows the young soldier to understand the process of culture, a different environment. So when we take some of those soldiers to Afghanistan, they understand that there's a certain person who has a certain key role in that perspective.

In addition to the ranger, we also have the junior ranger, another program within the CF, which allows the youth of the northern region a better foundation of living for the future years, because they do own the next generation.

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired.

Chris, how are you doing?

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Very well.

The Chair: You have the floor.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to our witnesses, General and Sergeant-Major, for being here. It really is so important to our study to have you here. While I'm very sorry not to have been here for the first hour, I can see from your presentation that you've given us a couple of the major inputs that are going to be most useful for us by laying out exactly what constitutes readiness in the eyes of the army and how you're preparing for that.

Just by way of explanation, the Atlantic Council of Canada is having a conference with some of your colleagues over in the Pearson Building, so I was asked to make a presentation to them. I would much rather have been here from the start.

Peter, it's great to be with you. I think back to those days in Kabul when you were commanding the multinational brigade, and neither of us had any idea of just where that mission would be going in the years to come. So congratulations on the achievements then and everything you've done since then.

The same for you, Sergeant-Major Moretti. I know how important your role is in the army today.

I see from your introduction that you have covered a lot of ground, and I really want to just focus on one or two issues—not the prospect of a train wreck in Port Hope, which I'm sure has thoroughly alarmed Rick Norlock, whose riding includes Port Hope....

You just had one? Okay—and I know it was completely hypothetical, on your part.

But thinking of today's army, thinking of the challenges that we know you face, I want to ask about capabilities. How capable are we in the experience we've gained in Afghanistan, that we're trying to institutionalize in Gagetown, with regard to countering the threat of IEDs? I know you've touched on it. I know you know a lot about it. But it strikes me that wherever we go with boots on the ground, IEDs are going to be a part. Almost certainly, if it's more than peacekeeping, IEDs are going to be one of threats we face.

How do you feel we stand up compared to our past, also compared to our peers and allies?

● (1010)

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you.

We've already addressed, sir, just so you're aware, a bit of that issue. I would say that Canada stands in a position of strength. I believe it is tied to capabilities that have been institutionalized—whether they be the counter-IED task force, the counter-IED squadron as part of 4 ESR in Gagetown, or part of the ASIC, the all-source intelligence cells—in our approach to how aware we are of the battlefields and the challenges of tomorrow. I think it's tied to our relationship with our allies, and I did mention that we are hosting a counter-IED international symposium early next month in Quebec City.

So we have achieved what we need to achieve to be respectful of that threat, and again, we've had to make tough decisions to be able to balance capabilities with the resources that have been provided.

Mr. Chris Alexander: My final question, Mr. Chair, is the related issue of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. We could have a whole study just on that. Obviously, Canada's capabilities through the acquisition of new vehicles, UAVs, and so forth have evolved and improved.

Situate us with regard to our peers in that frame. What are some of the choices and opportunities that may be available to the army and Canadian Forces in that area that would have an impact on our readiness?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you very much; a great point.

You know, the army's strategy is called “advancing with purpose”, and it's a great title, in my somewhat biased view. We advance with purpose because of an understanding of the battlefield and the threat. It comes from a level of awareness that comes from UAVs. It comes from fighters that have a remarkable level of optics that provide detailed information on the threat and on the battlefield. It comes from balloons and towers. It comes from how we bring all those bits of information together. We assess it, and we advance with deliberate purpose.

I think as technology evolves, sir, the opportunities are tied to how we exploit space. It's how we can continue to grow our UAV capability. As I think you all know, it was leased over the period of time in Afghanistan. There is a project—one that I think the Canadian Forces needs to have to use UAVs—that is a few years out. Our challenge, like the challenge on the counter-IED front, is how we keep that level of awareness in the minds of commanders at all levels so that it's properly incorporated into training, so that when we do get those capabilities—or when we have access to those capabilities from our international partners—we are skilled at the use.

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired.

Before we move into the third round, I just have a few questions myself, General. You were talking about our LAVs and how important they are to our overall capabilities and readiness. It has been announced that we are doing upgrades to the LAV IIIs. How is that going to affect our deployment capabilities in the event we are called to go into action abroad again, with the timing of the retrofits that are taking place right now?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thanks, sir. I again would emphasize the fact that the LAV III is the centre of our mechanized portion of our army. It's a great vehicle because, as Mr. Moretti said, our soldiers have confidence in the LAV III.

The upgrade contract has been signed. There are vehicles in Edmonton right now that are entering that line. They will pop out at the end sometime next year. It is November 2012 where we would have a battle group, that battle group being from 5 Brigade

[*Translation*]

in Valcartier and will be ready for a

[*English*]

mechanized deployment.

● (1015)

The Chair: Okay, sir. Perfect.

I've actually had a chance to be in the LAV IIIs. In August I was out in Wainwright with reserves as they were on Maple Defender, I believe it was at that time. That 25-millimetre gun is accurate and can fire a great distance. I can see why it's such an intimidating factor having it on the LAVs.

I also had a chance to jump in with the Lord Strathcona Royal Canadians in a Leopard tank and fire the cannon on it and see how powerful those guns are. We are acquiring new Leopard tanks. When do they come into actual operation with the Canadian army?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: With regard to the Leopard 2 tanks, there are two variants—the A4 and the A6. They have different levels of protection on the front and sides, and different lengths of barrel. It's an incredibly powerful platform. It is also one with a great optics package on it that allows that definition of the battlefield. Some of those tanks were overhauled by Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan prior to their being shipped home.

This weekend Mr. Moretti and I returned from Afghanistan, where we were able to meet and speak to those soldiers who were part of the mission transition task force. They took the Leopard 2 tanks we had there and took them apart, fixed them, and rebuilt them. They are en route back to our units as we speak.

Saying that, sir, it'll be spring or summer next year before we have an operational capability with those tanks. They've centralized. Individual training has been conducted to be able to have some capability. It's one that will grow as we move forward in time.

The Chair: Both you and Sergeant-Major Moretti talk about how proud you are of our Canadian armed forces. Our soldiers are just incredible. I'm proud of all our Canadian soldiers, and airmen and airwomen, and all our sailors.

I'm also proud that my nephew has enrolled in the Canadian army and will be going to St. Jean in January. He's already done some of his preliminary training.

I'm curious when we talk about overall readiness, now that we're not out in the theatre anymore, is the retention of our soldiers and the recruitment of the next generation of soldiers going to be impacted in any way, shape, or form?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thanks, sir. That's a great point.

Conflict and war are great for recruiting, to be quite honest with you. The lineups at the recruiting centre are long when there is anticipation of representing Canada powerfully in conflict. I suspect the lines will not be as long in the years ahead.

It is an issue that Mr. Moretti and I pay particular attention to. It's one of the reasons we believe we need to provide exciting, demanding training for our soldiers, to reward them professionally, and to keep their level of training and readiness for tomorrow at the appropriate level.

It's a great point and one we are aware of, and certainly it's one of the things I think about looking to tomorrow.

The Chair: We'll go to our third round.

Madame Moore.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Thank you very much.

I would like to come back to what Mr. Kellway was saying about the fact that it is difficult to be all things to all people, all at the same time. I believe it is more important to ensure that we have people in Canada who are able to respond to every need, without it necessarily being the same people responding in each case.

Before I left the reserves, there had been changes. For example, with respect to armoured vehicles, it had been decided that Eastern Canada would specialize in reconnaissance operations and Western Canada would focus more on other kinds of operations, such as attacks.

I would like to know whether other similar divisions have been made, based on other combat arms or armoured vehicles, in order to rationalize operations and ensure that there is an ability to respond to all kinds of operations.

● (1020)

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you. That's a good question. You raise an important point.

You will note that, in every section of our army, adjustments have been made to attain the proper balance, with the view to securing a better response capability and greater operational readiness.

You used the example of the LdSH(RC) armoured regiments in Western Canada, with the Leopard 2 capability, as well as the RCD in Central Canada, and even the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment in Valcartier, which are armoured reconnaissance regiments. Furthermore, the Gagetown squadron, composed equally of members of the RCD and the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment, is tasked with maintaining the armoured capability and skill level in both regiments.

We have made those decisions.

[*English*]

to balance, to be respectful of budgets, and we have concentrated our tanks in western Canada where our best training areas are to exercise, at the collective level, with the armoured reconnaissance in central and eastern Canada.

[*Translation*]

The same applies to the counter-IED squadron which remains in Gagetown, along with three other combat engineering regiments.

[*English*]

We keep a level of awareness of counter-IED, but the skills, the route opening packages, exist only in Gagetown. Our challenge

[*Translation*]

tomorrow will be to retain the knowledge and skill level, while at the same time giving squadron troops an opportunity to train and keep their skills alive so that they can make use of them when they are on the battlefields.

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: By rebalancing our staff complement across Canada, we are able to offer young soldiers an exciting opportunity to move from one province to another or one brigade to another, in order to deepen their knowledge of their trade or their environment.

Ms. Christine Moore: Are you saying that dividing up operations among the regiments using the same combat arm has had a positive effect on the operational readiness of our regiments?

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: I would say it has, because soldiers are always looking for a challenge. For example, a young soldier who begins his reconnaissance training in Valcartier may ask to be transferred out west, to an armoured regiment in Edmonton, for example in order to improve his skill level, and the opposite is also true.

As the commander mentioned, the combat arms training centre of excellence in Gagetown gives young officers an opportunity to practice and have access to all the equipment they need for their development. They can share what they experienced in Afghanistan and during their training. It's important that they continue to be excited about the tasks they have to carry out.

Ms. Christine Moore: Will other plans relating to the division of tasks across the land force be developed in the coming months?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Yes, particularly as regards the close combat vehicles, or CCVs. Those vehicles are intended to be used with tanks. That will be implemented in western Canada.

[*English*]

It's a conscious decision that we have made in order to be effective and efficient in how we spend our precious resources. In the past we were a very symmetric army: 1 Brigade looked exactly like 5 Brigade, and 1st Battalion of the Van Doos

[*Translation*]

was exactly like the 1st Battalion of the RCR.

[*English*]

We are moving towards a bit more of an asymmetric approach to have flexibility for tomorrow, to be respectful of budgets, to be respectful of the gear that we are purchasing. It's a conscious decision.

● (1025)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before I start, I think it's appropriate that we recognize Mr. Alexander for his accomplishment last night. He was named rookie of the Parliament.

Voices: Hear, hear!

Hon. John McKay: Congratulations, Chris. I think a book, a baby, and a rookie of the year award is a pretty good year. Congratulations.

I wanted to talk to you, Lieutenant-General, about the issue that General Leslie raises about lapses. In his critique, he talks about the difficulties that the military in general, but the army specifically, has with respect to money that's allocated, budgeted, and then, for a whole variety of reasons having to do with, if you will, a supply or procurement chain, everybody has to sign off, etc., before something actually gets completed. Anecdotal conversations with senior people in the CF show that this lapsing business just drives them crazy, because they work hard to get those kinds of budgets.

I would be interested in your comments specifically on General Leslie's observations with respect to the number of people and entities that seem to have to sign off on procurement, but also this general observation that this lapsing is getting to be quite significant.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thanks, sir.

That is a very real challenge for the Canadian Forces and certainly for the army. I think there are two parts to that challenge. One is that processes are very demanding.

I think the ongoing studies, including General Leslie's transformation report, have forced us, positively, to look at those processes—some of those departmental, some of them Government of Canada—so that we can streamline and make them much more efficient than they are now with the accepting risk that comes with that.

The second point would be that having an annual budget as opposed to a multi-year budget is also a bit of a challenge. There is movement towards providing departments like DND, which have huge purchases amounting to billions of dollars that are not spent in a normal fiscal year, with the flexibility to move the resources because of production lines that are slowed, production lines that have other challenges, and the money that you had anticipated spending in a fiscal year will not actually be spent until the following year.

So I think it's a combination of processes that need to be streamlined as well as an acceptance of the uniqueness...perhaps of several departments, certainly from a DND point of view—one that needs a bit more understanding of an annual budget being a multi-year budget.

Hon. John McKay: That's an interesting observation, because certainly 12 months is a short period of time when you're talking about some procurements, but then you run into difficulties with Treasury Board. You run into difficulties with Public Works.

What's the state of the conversation at this point in terms of protecting that money so that the money that's allocated gets spent within a reasonable period of time of the budgetary cycle? Having worked in the Department of Finance for a while, I appreciate that these lapses drive everybody crazy.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: They certainly do, sir.

I'm not trying to duck things here, but I'm not the best guy to answer what the specifics are. The Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, "Mr. Moneybags", is the guy who—

Hon. John McKay: Is that "General" Moneybags, or...?

Voices: Oh, oh!

LGen Peter J. Devlin: He's an admiral, so it's "Admiral" Moneybags.

What I do know is that there is movement down that road, which is a really important road to be going down. I think it probably touches other government departments too, but certainly Defence, where we're talking huge amounts of money spent over multiple years.

It's a good road to go down. I think once we understand what the intent is, we are very good at spending what we're supposed to be spending over a period of time, sir.

● (1030)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Opitz.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We've talked about a lot of things so far, General, in terms of training, equipment, and the focus on how we're going to refocus our training in terms of levels one to seven. We've agreed that we're at level five right now until we know what the next mission is. But I want to talk about some other things.

You did mention, at the beginning of your presentation, the fighting spirit, the warrior spirit. I'd like to put on the record how Canadians' perception of their military, how Canadians' support of their military, augments serving members' morale and helps contribute to the warrior spirit.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you, sir. That is a huge point.

Our soldiers are filled with a rare level of confidence. It comes from having been in combat. It comes with a level of confidence over the skills that the armed forces in Canada provides to their soldiers. The Canadian Forces provides them with good kit.

It also is an absolutely phenomenal feeling to be in line at Tim Hortons here in Canada, to be walking down the street, to be on a bus, or to be at a train station or an airport, because we always travel in uniform; it is phenomenal the respect that Canadians have for the military. It makes us feel proud, and I think it makes soldiers march with that warrior spirit and that level of confidence.

It's a very special thing, sir.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Sergeant, would you like to comment?

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: The pride of soldiers is just like in this room: we're all Canadian citizens and we all take this great nation with pride. When a soldier puts on his uniform, he is proud to represent all of us. Regardless of where the government decides to send him, it's that heart.

Mr. Ted Opitz: I'm just going to ask one more question and then I'm going to share my last time with Mr. Alexander.

In terms of military education, we talked about teaching. There's a CLS directive on army ethos and ethics, but there are also more formalized programs, whether it's the AOC at “Foxhole U” or at Canadian Forces College, where at the upper level, the national securities program, we have allied officers—and some not allied—Canadian Forces members from all the elements, and of course senior-level executive civil servants on these courses.

Can you comment on the value of what we have done institutionally as the military and on the value that formalized military education provides to our soldiers?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you, sir.

Professional military education I think has developed significantly over the past decade-plus. In the army we do have the army operations course. We have a number of other courses that take place at the combat training centre. Very important in terms of values and ethics is how we incorporate them into collective training.

At the Canadian Forces College, where we have the joint command staff program as well as the national studies program, all of those are international. All of those have whole-of-government partners. It's very enriching for our members, our army folks and others, to be next to folks from other nations to be able to exchange thoughts, to be able to talk about the future. It's also enriching for our whole-of-government partners.

Both of those are vital for tomorrow, in my view. We also send folks on international studies programs, which are also richly important.

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: Just on that point, sir, I had the honour to represent Canada at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. When I deployed to Afghanistan in 2003, I was able to link up with my classmates in Bagram to get information to provide the commander the necessary information required to achieve the task. It brings that cohesiveness and cooperation internationally, regardless of the mission.

The Chair: Thank you.

Chris?

Mr. Chris Alexander: Very briefly—

The Chair: First, just so people know, I voted for you—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Alexander: You're embarrassing me, Chair.

General and Mr. Moretti, first, we are going to be honouring General Bouchard and the Canadian Forces commitment and achievement in Libya later this week. On behalf of the committee, I think we would like to transmit through you the committee's recognition of the fantastic, brilliant performance of the Canadian army in Afghanistan.

You're the first commander of the army to come before us since the end of the combat mission. We know the mission continues in a training mode, and we know the close-out mission continues, but please do transmit this committee's absolutely highest recognition of a brilliant performance.

My question is quick and double-barrelled. First, you have a roughly fifty-fifty regular and reserve force. How do you measure readiness for the reserves? Is it at all different? Secondly, you served in important command positions in the United States and in Canada, but also in Iraq and Afghanistan. From a personal perspective, what do you think the main lessons are, not just for our army but for armies from those two theatres, in terms of readiness? You've seen some units come in that were ready, with some very ready and some less so. What lessons have you brought to your current role from those two theatres?

● (1035)

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Thank you.

On readiness in the regulars and the reserves, we measure that based on people, equipment, and training. For people, how many people are a part, based on our establishment, and how many are fit or unfit? On the vehicle side, it's almost the same thing: do we have our established number of vehicles for that unit, and do they work or not? On readiness, what level of training have we accomplished?

I think we have to be careful not to over-complicate readiness, because it is really just the packaging of the people, the equipment, and the training at the appropriate level. That would need to be topped up once a theatre was identified to be able to have Canadians go in and represent our land.

We measure readiness for the reserves in exactly the same way. Where we do level five in the regular force, the reserve does level four, so one level down is tied to resourcing. Then we provide opportunities on regular collective training events to bring the reserves to a higher level of readiness. It's very similar, but slightly different.

In terms of what I have seen and I have learned internationally, Canadians—soldiers, sailors, and airmen and airwomen—are phenomenal. They are phenomenal first because they are Canadians. I think the values that are at the heart of a Canadian are what make them a very precious asset on any battlefield, whether they are on a ship, on a plane, or have boots on the ground.

I think where Canada's great strength has been...and I think we saw it mostly in Afghanistan, where it was Canadians who demonstrated a population-centric approach to counter-insurgency operations, where they had a level of respect for the locals and a level of respect for local governance, where they could work with allies and could work with international and non-government organizations to provide that level of protection to the population of Afghanistan that therefore had the Afghans saying no to the insurgency, as opposed to the military saying no to the insurgency.

When that happens, that's when the tide changes, and that's when the population sees a brighter future for tomorrow. That's when the military—the ANA—and the ANP grow in respect and in confidence, and so do we and so does the international community. I think it is very much tied to how we work with the local population and the local security forces in a very respectful way: that is Canada's strength, and that is the strength moving forward for all militaries, in my view.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

General, you talked about training and you talked about the different levels of training, and in your document you talked about normal readiness, high readiness. Would you be able to just provide the committee with a document that gives us a better description of what those training readiness levels are so that we can build that into our overall discussion as we go forward with the draft and have a report?

LGen Peter J. Devlin: So I should provide you with a summary of those levels?

The Chair: Yes, if you could, just so we have a better comprehension of what the different training levels are when you talk about level four, level five, and so on.

● (1040)

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Yes, sir. I would be happy to provide that to the committee.

The Chair: I would appreciate that.

I also want to reflect Mr. Alexander's comments. We are incredibly proud of the great job that the Canadian army has done in Afghanistan, especially as we're in transition to a training role. As we move out of combat, the forces were very successful despite difficult circumstances and losses. We are proud of each and every one of our soldiers who were on the ground helping the Afghan people and carrying out that mission. So congratulations.

LGen Peter J. Devlin: Sir, you will find Mr. Moretti and I on Thursday morning paying respect to the great mission that was accomplished in Libya. We're fiercely proud to be soldiers first, Canadian soldiers, with a level of warrior spirit that is remarkable and that places Canada in a position of strength moving forward. Well-equipped, confident, well-trained soldiers provide a level of flexibility for Canada and, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the decisive force for our nation.

Sgt Maj Gino Moretti: Mr. Chairman, soldiering is an affair of the heart. The soldier will go wherever he's needed and do whatever is asked of him. With the training and the resources he has and the leadership, the soldier is proud to represent this nation internationally and domestically, and to support also our first responders in any crisis needed, sir.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you for your comments and your contributions to our study into readiness. I hope when we're done with the report that you'll find some value in it as well as the value that we're going to provide to Parliament and to the Department of National Defence as well.

With that, I just wanted to make a couple comments based on what's happening on Thursday. Of course, we've all been asked to attend the ceremony in the Senate chamber at 9:45 a.m. to honour our air force and everyone that's been involved with General Bouchard in the Libyan operation. We will only have one hour of meeting in the morning.

We've changed it around a bit. We had a request come from the Kingdom of Norway for a meeting with us. We're going to have the State Secretary from the Norwegian Ministry of Defence, Roger Ingebrigtsen, as well as the Ambassador to Canada, Ms. Eikeland, who will be joining us for one hour to provide comments as it relates to readiness. I'm sure the comments will also roll into Arctic sovereignty and also our study into NATO and the North American alliance. So we'll be talking with them.

And just on the point that Mr. McKay raised earlier about page 65 out of our former colleague Derek Lee's book on committee procedures, that is true for most witnesses. However, as O'Brien and Bosc, as well as Marleau and Montpetit, have been quite clear in the past, as these are the real books of reference...and which Mr. Lee is referring to, if you guys want to take the time to read chapter 20, starting under "Testimony" on page 1067 and going right through to 1070, you'll see that there is special consideration given to employees of the Government of Canada when they appear before a committee. They have been excused from answering questions that are outside of their areas of responsibility or would put them into conflict with the department.

Hon. John McKay: I also commend to you Beauchesne's.

The Chair: They're all there for reference, but let's make sure we stick to the main rule book.

With that, I'll call for a motion to adjourn.

We're out of here.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: http://www.parl.gc.ca

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : http://www.parl.gc.ca