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Chair

Mr. James Bezan

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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...hammer that gavel.

The Chair: Oh, I love to hammer, you know that. I'm a good old farm boy and I can swing the hammer.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Good morning, everyone.

I want to welcome to the committee from the Kingdom of Norway some very prestigious visitors who want to join us and participate in our discussions on readiness as well as make some comments about NATO and other things happening around the world—Arctic issues, for example.

We're going to welcome to the table the Secretary of State to the Ministry of Defence, Roger Ingebrigtsen. Joining him is Her Excellency, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway, Else Berit Eikeland. Also joining us is Rear Admiral Trond Grytting, who is the Defence Attaché, and Rear Admiral Arne Røksund, who is head of the Department of Defence Policy and Long-Term Planning.

Welcome, all of you, to the table.

First of all, on behalf of the committee I wish to extend our condolences for the tragedy that occurred on July 22 in Norway. Canadians here really expressed their sympathies during July for such a terrible event that occurred. Just let everyone know back in Norway that our prayers and best wishes are with you.

With that, Mr. Ingebrigtsen, if you would like to begin with your opening comments, we'd appreciate it.

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen (Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Norway): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I am very impressed with the way you said the Norwegian last names. It's not easy to speak Norwegian as well as you did now. I guess the reason is that Mr. Roald Amundsen was here a hundred years ago, and you must really be inspired by him to speak such good Norwegian. Thank you very much.

Also thank you very much for your condolences after July 22. As you all know, a single perpetrator attacked Norway and in all our hearts. He started in the afternoon with big explosions in the city of Oslo, the government buildings, the High Court, different ministries,

and after that he attacked Utoya, a summer camp for the Labour Party youth in Norway. He killed 69 young politicians, people who just wanted to make a better world.

He tried to create hate in Norway, but the opposite happened. Norway that day told all the world and all the terrorists in the world that they couldn't beat us, that we were staying together. The answer to terrorists is more democracy, but also more security. After July 22, the Norwegian government had a debate on how to bring the police and the defence sector closer together. The police are still going to run operations like this when there is an attack by terrorists, but we need to use more military efforts because terror in the future will use the tools of war, and therefore the answer needs to be more of the defence sector helping the police. But it's very important for us that the police should run a situation like this and not use military efforts without the police.

Secondly, thank you very much for your support. You should know that as a state secretary I was really involved in this situation because my stepdaughter was in Utoya. She was shot four times. We thought we would lose her, but she lived, and she's recovering now. All the phone calls and all that the Canadian people did that day and the next day were very important for not just me, but all Norwegian society. It's a reminder that the world is big but we need to stay together. When things happen in Canada we will support you, as you supported us that day. So thank you very much for your support.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for receiving me here today. I'm not sure exactly which way I should go. Should I start in Norway, Canada, Afghanistan, or Chicago? I think I will try to use five minutes to walk through some important issues for Norway.

I will start with the very hardest issue at home in Norway, which is very close to what you are talking about, the F-35. I've been in Dallas-Fort Worth and Hartford with Pratt and Whitney and in Washington talking about F-35s for the last three days. The plan is to procure approximately 52 air fighters. We have already ordered four F-35s for training. They are going to be located in the United States their whole lifetime. The first F-35 in Norway will arrive in 2018. That is the biggest investment Norway has ever made, and there's a huge debate at home in Norway. Is it correct to do something like this?

I always tell the young politicians in Norway that our grandfathers and fathers took a very important and brave decision in Norway in 1975 and 1979. Norway wasn't so rich at that time, but they found a place in the budget to procure 74 F-16 fighters 40 years ago. These fighters have been very important to Norway for two generations. The lifetime for these fighters is close to the end. We need new air fighters.

Number one, the F-35 is definitely the best candidate. We evaluated three different candidates, and the F-35 was number one in all areas. It's the best fighter in the world; 66 of them have been produced, they are flying, they are landing, they are working.

• (0855)

Normally the debate in Norway is, number one, can you trust all the partners, especially the United States? I want to say that my government is strongly committed to the F-35. We also know that after the F-16 procurement, we can't make a plan one year and be sure that the plan will be followed for the next 10 years. To create a fifth-generation air fighter is one of the most complicated things you can do in the world today, and there will be problems, new numbers, new figures, new statistics, next month or next year.

Our plan is to go to Parliament in March and state to Parliament that we want to make the whole decision in one pocket, to do it in one white paper, and we invite Parliament to do the whole investment now, and the procurement can start in 2018. Do I not see problems? Yes, I see a lot of problems. But the worst thing that could happen to Norway, a nation with a sea area seven times bigger than the territory, and the biggest problem, would be lack of air fighters six, seven years from now. So that is what we are going to solve.

If I had to say something negative, it would be to our good neighbours and colleagues in the United States. When the super committee failed, it sent a signal that did not give us the necessary trust and comfort. We need to see a United States even more strongly committed to the plan with a realistic budget. We are going to have a very close dialogue with the United States in the next two or three months, before we make our decision, but believe me, we are going to procure these F-35s, and I really hope that your nation will do the same. I think that Norway and Canada will cooperate very closely in the future with regard to the high north, and having the same type of equipment will make that job easier. I think we also need to be very close partners relative to this single procurement.

I hear some noise in Canada. We have exactly the same noise at home in Norway. But you have to stay on it. It's our job to give the next generation the same kind of security as my grandfather offered me and my generation at home in Norway.

So that's the F-35. It's not easy. It can't be easy to do things like this, but it's necessary. Someone has to do the job for the next generation, like you have to in Canada, and my colleagues and I do at home in Norway.

I have a few words about the high north. You know that Roald Amundsen started his expedition to the south pole a hundred years ago here in Canada. He learned the high north here in Canada—what to wear, how to use dogs, how to live in an extreme climate like that.

I think we should do more, like Roald Amundsen, to combine things in Norway and Canada, to train more together, to visit headquarters more. You should have your politicians in Parliament meet more Norwegian politicians. You're very welcome to Norway any time. I just invited Minister MacKay to Oslo in March or April. I hope he can come. We're also planning to do something together here next summer.

A Norwegian frigate is coming to Halifax, and we want to show that Norway wants to cooperate. I know that personnel from your army—your navy—is serving on board our frigates, nowadays, to learn things from the Norwegian perspective. We want to bring soldiers to your country and do exactly the same.

So my message on the high north is that, number one, we should do more together. Number two concerns Russia and NATO.

Some think there's a big difference in the message from Norway and Canada related to NATO. Should NATO take part in the high north policy? Well, NATO has been a partner in the high north policy on the Norwegian side since 1948. Without NATO, people in Norway don't feel a necessary comfort for the future. We are not able to build enough deterrents in Norway alone. We do the best we can—F-35s, submarines, perhaps the most modernized navy in Europe today—but that's not enough to have the necessary deterrence.

• (0900)

Therefore, we need the alliance and article 5, but we also need the feeling—mentally—that NATO is a partner in the high north. That doesn't mean that NATO needs to sail an exercise every day, but we need to know that they know what is happening up there. If something should happen in the future, NATO needs the knowledge to support Norway.

It's very important for me to underline today, colleagues, that we don't want a NATO exercise every day in the high north, but we need NATO to be aware and understand the situation, and support Canada or Norway if we need that support one day. I really hope that Norway and Canada can deal with these issues and not make them a problem but bridge each other's different positions.

Russia is no enemy. We have a good relationship with Russia. They are coming to Norway and exercising with the Norwegian army. But if you are going to understand Russia, you need to understand Russian history. We have been dealing with Russia for 100 years, but we have also been close to attack from Russia. During the Cold War there were Russian tanks on the Norwegian border. We were ready for war every day for 40 years.

Nowadays we see a positive development in Russia, but we also see Russia investing heavily in their army. They are going to increase their budget by 60% next year. They are investing in an Arctic brigade, more navy, and more fifth-generation air fighters for the future. So Russia is not just sitting there relaxing. Russia is preparing to have a strong role in the high north in the future. We need to do the same. We want to do the same with you and other NATO nations.

Finally, I have a few words related to international operations. I'm really impressed to see what Canada has done in the last ten years. You are much bigger than Norway, but you're not the biggest nation in the world. What you have been doing and offering in Afghanistan.... It's a brave country; I know that you have had great losses. You lost a soldier just one month ago. It's a heartbreaking story.

I want you to know that people in Norway really know what you are doing in Afghanistan. I also know your strategy to slowly leave Afghanistan. I feel that the Norwegian and Canadian approach is the best approach: leave slowly in a coordinated way; in together, out together. Our plan is to reduce slowly in 2012 and more in 2013. In the future, no Norwegian soldiers will be taking part in combat action in Afghanistan. But Norwegian soldiers could be good teachers and teach the Afghanistan National Army and police how to create and build a good society in Afghanistan. That is what we are going to offer: no more Norwegian war in Afghanistan, but support for the Afghanistan people in building their own army and police.

Finally, Libya is also a great success for Canada and Norway. We took part in this action because we saw, at the end of the day, that if Canadian and Norwegian politicians didn't do anything, Mr. Gadhafi would attack his own citizens. He would hurt women, children, and the people in Libya. NATO took a position and was able to react. It was first of all a success in Libya, but it was also a success for NATO. What we did in Libya together was important for so many people in Libya, for the region. But we also showed the world that NATO is relevant. NATO can offer security and build deterrence.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I'm prepared to give answers if you have any questions or comments. You have my team here: Mr. Grytting in Washington, the ambassador; and Admiral Arne Røksund, from Norway.

Thank you.

● (0905)

The Chair: Thank you very much. We appreciate those opening comments and your words of thanks, encouragement, and future cooperation.

We'll try to get in as many rounds as we can before we adjourn. We are expected over in the Senate shortly after 9:45.

So I will open it up. I will be judicious with time. If you want to share your time and give all your other colleagues a chance to speak, I encourage you to do that as well.

Mr. Kellway, you have the floor.

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

Through you to our guests today, I'm honoured by your presence. Thank you for coming.

I should start by congratulating Chris, in particular, but really the whole Conservative side. We had a hockey game last night: NDP with our Liberal friends versus the Conservatives.

With all respect to our guests, it felt a bit like Canada versus Norway on ice.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Matthew Kellway: And we were the Norwegians last night.

In any case, I will start by commenting on the F-35s. I appreciate your comments on the F-35s. I hope you'll appreciate that the circumstances in Norway and the debate in Norway are in a context that is different from the one here in Canada. For the past couple of decades we in Canada have not had a defence white paper in which to frame and provide context for these discussions. We haven't had a proper procurement process, so there's been no statement of requirements that might flow from a white paper. We don't even have any sense coming from the government of what the appropriate number of planes might be for the defence of Canada, much less any clear definition of what their purpose would be. And there's been no tendering process for the contract.

I think I heard you talk about the experience that Norway has had in comparing the different options for fighter jets. We've had none of that in Canada. That, I think, is a critical context to set for the debate we're having in Canada. Of course, within that context, we hear much the same. You are still confronting many of the same issues in your own internal debates about whether it's the right thing to do, about what is happening with, essentially, the security of the development of these planes, and, in light of the American budget situation and so on and so forth, whether we are ever going to see them.

Ultimately, I hope you'll appreciate that these are different countries and our requirements are bound to be the same. You referenced your sea territory versus land territory. As a Canadian for all my life, I'm still astounded by the vastness of my own country. It takes 24 hours from where we are here to drive just across one province, and I can get down to the southern tip of the United States in the same amount of time by car. This is an incredibly vast land, and so our requirements are bound to be different from yours.

In any case, if I could take us back to the study that we are currently doing here, I read with great interest, and frankly admiration, your "Norwegian Defence Facts and Figures 2011". It's a document we were provided by our analysts last night. What struck me was the consistent reference to a multilateral approach to defence, and you commented on these things this morning.

I was wondering if you could share with us how multilateralism assists with your concept of readiness and ensures your defence forces are ready.

● (0910)

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: Is your question related to how Norway deals internationally?

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Yes. We in this committee are talking about how we make our Canadian Forces ready for the defence of this country. Your defence concept very much involves multi-lateralism. How, in that context, do you ensure readiness of your defence?

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: I understand.

Number one, 20 years ago the number of brigades in Norway was 13. Today it's one. But this single brigade, I would say, is better for the need today than the 13 were. We had 15 different bases for our navy. Today we have one and a half. We had double the frigates, submarines, and air fighters. Today it's half.

This transformation was 10 to 15 years ago, and that's the main reason why today we are able to react very quickly. We have a smaller but much better defence sector today. That's number one.

Number two is NATO. When we are exercising with people like you, the United States, Spain, we learn a whole lot. We learn to communicate. We learn to speak English. We learn how to handle different kinds of equipment. We are a common power in NATO, able to react very quickly.

Let me underline the main reason in these documents, and what we are going to state in March next year, about why we still have a defence sector in Norway in deep peace. It's not international operations. The reason is deterrence at home in Norway.

Secondly, we want to take part in the UN and NATO operations in solidarity with the world, but I want to underline that when we are acting abroad, we are also building deterrence at home in Norway. People can see that our F-16s do the job. Our allies can see it, but also those who are not our allies can see it.

The answer is that it's a 20-year tough political job with very tough decisions. Before I was appointed Secretary of State in the Ministry of Defence, I was fighting the government because a submarine base had been shut down in my hometown where I'm elected from, in Tromsø in the high north. It was a bad decision for Tromsø, but it was a very good decision for Norway. With fewer bases there is more time to sail on the sea.

• (0915)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and through you to our guests today.

Your comments on NATO being crucial to security in the high north were very much appreciated. Here in Canada, even on the heels of our success in Libya, there are people who question the relevance of NATO. Given that the economic crisis spreading through Europe and in the United States will inevitably result in the financial constraints in terms of NATO contributions, how do we ensure that NATO remains strong, relevant, and ready, just as we want our local forces to be?

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: It is a very good question. You can answer it in different ways, but for Norway there is one single answer. Norway has to be relevant for the 28 partners, the members. It's important for Norway to take part in the operations in Libya, but

if NATO is not exercising in the 28 countries, helping us to secure a close area, NATO will lose relevance. So we have a strong voice, and we will also have this voice in the Chicago meeting half a year from now that NATO needs to be exercising in, close to each other's country. We want to bring NATO closer to Norway—not every day, as I said earlier, but enough so that people in Norway feel that NATO is relevant.

To see Canadian soldiers in Norway, that's important for people in Norway. We feel solidarity with Canada. We know that if our security is at risk one day, we will have Canada; we will have all the NATO nations. That will also come to your country, with our frigates and other troops, so that people in Canada can feel exactly the same.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Go ahead, Ted.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Okay.

Sir, in regard to the F-35, can you provide us with a little more reasoning on why you think a fifth-generation fighter is something that you need? You also talked about deterrence and the deterrence capability, and the F-16s that you have now are 40 years old.

Why is it important to have a fifth-generation fighter? And in that regard, why is it important for Canada and Norway to have a fifth-generation fighter in terms of the interoperability both of our air forces and, in particular, in operations over the Arctic?

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: I will let my admiral help answer that, but let me just start by adding two important issues.

Number one is that if we are planning for a world where no one in the next generation can put our security at risk, we shouldn't procure F-35s. We should build hospitals and schools. But those who are our potential enemies in the future are procuring fifth-generation air fighters. Could Europe, Canada, and United States sit in parliament and see that all nations in other parts of the world are making capacities that we can't meet? We don't have a relevant answer. That's number one.

Number two is that the different parts of the F-35 are especially good in the high north.

Arne Røksund is one of the guys in Norway who's really involved in this project. He will be leaving office, I'm afraid, just two days from now. He will be even more important for Canada, because he will be the highest-ranking civil servant in the fisheries ministry—but he's still my man.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Rear-Admiral Arne Røksund (Head of the Department, Defence Policy and Long-Term Planning, Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Norway): We did a down-select comparing the French Rafale, the Eurofighter, the Swedish JAS Gripen, and the F-35. On all of the criteria, the F-35 came out as the best. As the state secretary said when it comes to fifth-generation, we see that the nations with the ambition and the money build fifth-generation. That's what China does. That's what Russia does.

One of the biggest threats to fighters is the new surface-to-air missiles. They have an enormous capacity. That is also why the sensor capability of the F-35 is essential, as is the stealth capacity. In all of the operational tests we've done, the F-35 comes out as the best. When we invest, the procurement costs will be approximately \$10 billion U.S.

Go for the best. As the state secretary said, we're planning for the next 40 years, so why buy an old Chevrolet when you can buy the newest?

• (0920)

Mr. Ted Opitz: That's a great analogy.

Can you comment briefly on why a common platform such as an F-35 for Canada and Norway is important in terms of our interoperability?

Adm Arne Røksund: It will have a sensor system for what is called network-centric warfare and will be able to communicate. They will all have the same sensors. They can exchange data and so on. That's what's important. I think we saw that in Libya, too. Although you are flying the F-18s and we are flying the F-16s, we saw that common training and exercises and a lot of the same electronic equipment helped us. We saw that nations that hadn't trained with us and had very different airplanes had problems in terms of interoperability.

From our perspective, we are very satisfied that Canada is procuring F-35s.

Mr. Ted Opitz: I'm going pass my last moment on to Mr. Chisu.

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

Thank you very much for your presence here. I appreciate it very much.

As you may or may not know, Canadians are very proud of the way that Canadian soldiers conducted themselves in Afghanistan and of the role that members of the Canadian Forces played in carrying out this mission. I was also in Afghanistan, so I know that for us it is very important.

What role did Norway play in the overall mission in Afghanistan, and what were some of the lessons learned by the Norwegian army and the government from the mission in Afghanistan? We have had casualties. We are the nation with the third-highest number of casualties with 158. I understand that you had casualties in Afghanistan as well. If I'm not mistaken, you had 10. It was a sacrifice of lives, and there were IEDs. With all of the nations participating in Afghanistan, there were some lessons learned.

Could you elaborate on the lessons learned by your country from Afghanistan?

The Chair: Please make it as short an answer as possible.

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: Yes.

Thank you for the question, and also congratulations on serving for your country in Afghanistan.

There are a lot of practical lessons learned. For example, Norwegian soldiers who been in Afghanistan are better soldiers

when they come back to Norway. That is building deterrence also in Norway.

The one and most important lesson learned from Afghanistan is a political issue. When you are sending young people to war, you must, as a politician, if you are sitting in Parliament or government, tell your people very clearly why you are doing this. I think in the first days it was quite clear in Norway, but it was watered down after some years. We tried to find all kinds of reasons for being there.

Why did Norway go to Afghanistan? It was close to an article 5 operation. It was the attack on the United States. The United States, one of our very close allies, asked for help to fight terrorism in Afghanistan. That's the reason. September 11, 2001—that's the reason we are in Afghanistan. We want to fight terror in all parts of the world, including in Afghanistan.

The problem is that politicians, the media, and people started to talk of other reasons for being in Afghanistan. It's a poor country—that's a good reason. It's a regional problem—that's also a good reason. It's ethnic conflict—another reason. There is just one main reason—article 5, supporting a nation that is attacked—and the world united together to try to do something in Afghanistan. That's the most important lesson learned, and that's the reason we communicated heavily before we started the Libya operation. We didn't want to do the same kind of failure again.

• (0925)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. McKay, you have the floor.

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

Thank you, guests, for being here.

To my great surprise, I live on the same street as the embassy. I hadn't realized it before. I walk past the Norwegian embassy each and every day on my way to work here.

As I lined up in the long line to sign the book of condolences, I remembered the television coverage of the terrorist incident. What struck me so forcefully was the dignity and the wisdom of the King and Queen and your Prime Minister. They spoke with wisdom, thoughtfulness, and hope. I thought it was an expression of leadership such as we seldom see in the world. That was my clear recollection of that event. On behalf of my party, please accept our formal condolences.

Minister, you've raised a smorgasbord—for want of a better term—of topics here. I have a limited amount of time, so I just want to get your comments on two topics.

The first concerns the white paper that Norway is going to put forward to its Parliament, presumably in the early part of the new year. I think that's actually a very good idea, and it's something I'd recommend to this government because this procurement process is nigh on to 10 years and the world is a very changed entity. I think it's time to refresh all the arguments because right now we're getting into he-said-she-said arguments—technical arguments, procurement arguments, industrial benefits arguments, and things of that nature, with more heat than light. So I like the idea of that happening, and, like Mr. Kellway, I would adopt that as a proposal to the government.

I did pick up on the fact that you've just recently returned from Texas and you've seen what you've seen. But you did make a comment about the super committee and the failure of the super committee to come to grips with financial reality.

It's our view that the decision about the F-35 is not going to be made here, and it's not likely going to be made in Norway, and it's not going to be made in Britain. It's going to be made in the United States, in Washington, and it may not even be made by Congress. More likely it's going to be made by the bankers for the United States because of their extraordinary deficit situation.

Can you share with us some observations you may have made with respect to that?

The second question I have has to do with NATO. I appreciate, probably just because of your coming here, the significance of NATO to you, which is possibly lost on us because we are in NATO. Your history with Russia, particularly, makes you acutely aware. I know a bit about the Baltic countries, and I have a feeling for what they think about the presence of their Russian neighbours, so I imagine that feeling transfers.

It must be of some concern to you to watch the disintegration of the European Union...not that "disintegration" is the right word, but certainly the stresses and strains of the European Union and particularly the NATO partners, and particularly their ability to carry the financial load that NATO needs to have carried.

I'd be interested in your comments on both subject areas, because that must be uniquely worrisome for NATO.

• (0930)

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to give a short answer. I know the time is running out.

Let me start with NATO. Yes, of course, it's a problem that nearly all European countries are cutting their defence budgets. That's a problem. Norway is one of the few who are able to increase the budget. On the other hand, this has happened before. This is not a new situation that some countries are reducing their efforts in the defence sector.

For me, the answer is easy: we have to cooperate even more. Bilaterally, we need to bring Canada more to Norway, and Norway wants to come closer to Canada. We need to cooperate even closer than European countries. Also, the United States is cutting its budget. The answer is not that we should leave NATO, forget NATO. No; it's more NATO. The lower the budget, the more NATO. That's in a way the main answer to that question.

Finally, I want to be very clear on the F-35s. Norway needs F-35s, and in my opinion—I shouldn't advise your government and you as politicians—I think you also need F-35s. But the country in the world that most of all needs F-35s is not Norway or Canada; it's the United States of America. What you see is its plan to switch from six, seven, eight different fighters to one fighter. That would give a lower long-term cost to their defence sector. But first of all, analyze the United States and its security policy in the future: Canada is no problem; Europe isn't the problem; not Russia; but the Pacific. The Pacific and Asia are in American mindsets; that is the biggest security risk.

Without a capacity like this, the United States will not feel safe for the future. So I don't think it's American banks or super committees. I think the Pentagon and the presidents, whether Democrat or Republican, will force this decision through all places, and the United States for sure is going to procure F-35s.

So the question is not if; the question is how many. And that affects Norway. Therefore, we have very close relations with them, and we want that transparency and to see what the United States is going to do in the next year.

The Chair: Thank you very much. The time has expired.

In light of the time we have left, I'm going to do two more four-minute rounds, rather than five-minute, and we'll be very judicious on that time.

We'll start off with Mr. Strahl.

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

It's good of you to be here.

You mentioned there's been a lot of noise on the F-35s in your country. Certainly we hear it in our question period from time to time, and we appreciate your cutting through that. We had Secretary Panetta in Halifax certainly stating his support for the F-35, and yourself, and our country. It's good to hear that directly from you.

You mentioned that there's already testing under way in the United States on the F-35, but when do you expect your pilots to be in the plane, or are they already taking part in the training?

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: Our pilots will be in the F-35s in 2016, in the fighter. They are following the program very closely.

I asked my people there, our pilots, "Are we doing the right thing? What do you feel about the F-35s? Do you miss the F-16s when you are cooperating with Lockheed Martin and all the partners in Texas?" The answer from my pilots is that this is the best air fighter they ever have seen. All the test results so far are even better than they thought three years ago, when Norway down-selected the F-35s.

Maybe other persons will say something else, but the pilots from Norway are very clear: this is the best thing that could happen to the Norwegian air force in the future.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Go ahead, Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you, and my thanks to the minister and the ambassador for being here.

I was very privileged on another parliamentary committee, public safety and national security, to visit your country, looking at the state of your prisons and the issues you were dealing with. I was not totally surprised but I was pleased to learn that you had visited here, and about 60% of your programs were adopted from Canada. And we learned some things, and I think we'll be doing the same.

With respect to aircraft, Canadian Forces Base Trenton is in my riding and I have the privilege of seeing the new C-17s and taking delivery of the new Hercules. One of the things that I was told by our military folks, our air force folks, was that what we're doing when we purchase these aircraft is making sure that they are equipped in the same way that the rest of our NATO allies are equipped, because it's more cost-effective. There's nothing that aircraft manufacturers like more than when you customize your aircraft, because then they soak you when you need to get them fixed.

So that's what we intend to do, right across the board; it makes only too much sense that we would buy the same fighter aircraft. That was started by a previous government, even though they're sometimes reluctant to admit that.

Also, thank you for investing in the world's third-largest oil deposit. I know it has caused some consternation in your country, but let's face it, North Sea oil is running out and you need to make those investments. That's what made your country as affluent as it is, as we know, and that's what's keeping our country afloat—natural resources.

I want to talk about the north and your relationship with Russia. I would like you to talk a little bit about the Arctic Council and more about how we are interrelated as northern neighbours. When, let's say, some ecological or natural disaster occurs, how do you see that council cooperating?

• (0935)

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: Number one, I feel like I'm home in Norway when I'm looking at you now. There is an opposition in Norway too, so this gives me really a good home feeling. We have exactly the same thing in Norway, where the opposition was the last government, and asks the government what it's doing right now; it's just quite funny to see.

I want to give the floor to Mr. Trond Grytting. He has been serving as one of our leaders in our headquarters at home in Norway. He is practical, and very close to the cooperation in the high north.

Please, Trond, can you give some comments to the question from Mr. Norlock?

Rear-Admiral Trond Grytting (Defence Attaché, Royal Norwegian Embassy): Yes, thank you.

We are focused on the high north, our presence there, cooperation with Russia, modernizing our navy and our military, and also introducing into our navy the new naval strike missile, the most advanced missile probably on the market today. We're purchasing a hundred of those missiles. They will be tested next year. We're also introducing the joint strike missile for the F-35.

So there's total modernization with much presence. Our coast guard is very active in the high north and has good cooperation with Russia. We have a long tradition over many years manifesting

sovereign rights and sovereignty. The richest fisheries probably in the world are in the Barents Sea today. The whole thematics in terms of cooperation with regard to the development of the oil industry, the fisheries industry, and military activity in a common area, so to speak—the discourse is huge.

The Chair: We're going to finish off with Madame Moore.

[*Translation*]

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

I want to start by saying that I heard your message that you really want to work with other countries and launch exercises in the high north. Several members of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association are here today, and I think you chose the right venue for your message. Their chair is even here, so the message has been delivered.

I want to discuss the F-35 aircraft. You said your budget was realistic. What is your budget for procuring the F-35s?

[*English*]

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: It's about \$10 billion U.S. That's for 51 or 52 air fighters. That's \$10 billion today, but I'm sure there could be another answer in just a few months, when we know more about what's happening in the United States. I'm sure that they are going to put some of their procurement to right...not cuts in the program. It's 2,400 fighters. I think that the United States is going to procure 2,400 fighters, but they are going to procure them more slowly, and this will definitely affect the price for Norway. But the answer to your question is \$10 billion U.S. for 51 fighters.

• (0940)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Is that with or without maintenance? How many years does the maintenance plan cover? Is it 20 or 30 years?

[*English*]

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: You are talking about the lifetime cost.

RADM Arne Røksund: It is included in the initial logistics support. The life cycle costs will be, I think, about—this is not public yet, so I have to be careful—\$40 billion U.S. over 30 years. So that's life cycle costs over 30 years, all included.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: For maintenance.

So the \$10 billion is simply to purchase the aircraft themselves.

[*English*]

RADM Arne Røksund: That is for the planes, initial logistics included, repair kits, and so on, for the first few years.

I should answer in French, but it's not my forte.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: No, that's fine.

I also have a question about the aircraft's communication system and problems in the Arctic. Three weeks ago, Stein Erik Nodeland, who heads up the combat aircraft program at Norway's Ministry of Defence, said that no solution had yet been found.

So I would like to know which solutions you are considering in terms of operating a communication system in the Arctic and approximately what it will cost to make the system operational.

[English]

RAdm Arne Røksund: If I understand you correctly, you're asking about communication north of the Arctic Circle with the F-35. First of all, we're operating our F-16s north of the Arctic Circle today with the same communication system that you will have in the F-35. That is unproblematic; it works.

What we do is send the communication, if you're operating in the far north, from one F-16 to another. We use this kind of system. As you know, the F-35 program, as one of its ambitions, is to have a system that can operate permanently and independently north of the Arctic Circle.

It will come at some time, but for the moment we will be using the same system as for the F-16. It works in the areas where we fly, and it's the far north.

I know that the F-18 of Canada has another system, which is a Canadian solution, but we have a system that works. It is kind of an artificial debate, I would say. We sail in the Arctic and we fly in the Arctic, and we have no communication problems that we cannot solve.

There are no fantastic solutions anywhere. You have to make compromises, but it works.

The Chair: Secretary Ingebrigtsen, I have a quick question for you, with Norway being a fellow member of the Arctic Council.

There's been a lot of discussion at the Arctic Council on everything from climate change to dealing with the wildlife, indigenous peoples, communities of the north, development in the north. How about discussions at the Arctic Council on defence of the north and, as you've already talked about, more cooperation at a multilateral level for the High Arctic? Do you feel the council should be discussing defence issues?

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: Yes, definitely. Today the Arctic Council is, first of all, a question of foreign policy, but I think they should bring defence policy, defence issues, into the Arctic Council. Definitely, that's one of my main topics.

We should bring also security policy and defence policy into the Arctic Council—and I hope that you can do exactly the same and cooperate with your colleagues back home in Norway.

The Chair: With that, I appreciate you taking time out of your schedule to appear today. I really enjoyed your presentation and the discussion.

Thank you for being such a great ally to Canada and part of the NATO partnership, for the contributions that you've made in Libya and Afghanistan in helping those who can't help themselves. Pass on our best to the Norwegian kingdom's armed forces.

I know you'll be joining us in the Senate for the ceremony right now.

Mr. Roger Ingebrigtsen: Thank you.

The Chair: With that, I'll take a motion to adjourn.

We're out of here. The meeting is adjourned.

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