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Chair

Mr. James Bezan

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● (1135)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. We're going to continue on with our study on NATO's strategic concept and Canada's role in international defence cooperation, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2).

Joining us today is retired Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard. It's great having Charles here. Of course, we all know him from his many roles in the Canadian Air Force across Canada, but most recently, before his retirement, as the commander of NATO and Operation MOBILE.

With that, I will turn it over to the general to bring us his opening comments.

[*Translation*]

Lieutenant-General (Retired) Charles Bouchard (As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the privilege of being here today to assist you perhaps with a few measures that will help determine the road we can take to move forward.

As you can see, I have put away my uniform. I am now a civilian, and it is in that capacity that I will be speaking to you today.

[*English*]

I certainly do not represent the Canadian Forces or NATO. But the way I understand the mission—I still use military terms—that you've given me this morning is to tell you a little bit about my perspective, as you look at NATO, through the eyes of Libya, perhaps, and the aftermath of Libya and what we've learned from it. I will offer some comments as to Canada's approach to it and also its future.

Obviously NATO was built on article 5—an attack on one is an attack on all. I will argue that while some may be critical of NATO, it has been able to adapt in some ways, perhaps not at the speed we would like, but it's certainly been....

The nature of conflict itself has changed, from the Cold War, to genocide, to ethnic cleansing, to religious conflicts, to counter-terrorism, to democratic uprisings, which was my area.

We've gone as a military organization to win war, sometimes to search and destroy or neutralize the enemy, to protect civilians. Protection of civilians was totally different and a new mission for us, hence Libya. Therefore, our approach to Libya was a plan that emphasized legitimacy of its target, of our action. Constant and uppermost on our mind was protection of civilians, not only in the sense of today's activity, but also secondary and tertiary effects and nature. Shock and awe was not a strategy or a tactic for Libya, but rather finesse. That's how we went about it.

If we've learned anything, it is three major lessons, and these lessons, I believe, apply to NATO today, as we look at NATO today and in the future.

First is that process and doctrine are for the blind obedience of the fool and the guidance of the wise. We cannot let processes get the best of us. Sometimes, I believe that 28 nations coming together are driven way too much by that. But I offer that it will change.

Second is our ability to communicate and to understand each other's culture. While NATO is 28 nations with common objectives, it's also 28 or more different cultures that look at life much differently. If we learn to work through that, I believe we'll learn to adapt and change NATO as well.

The final one is agility of the mind, which is the most important part—agility of the mind—and what we do from a political perspective, from a strategic perspective, and an operational perspective.

NATO, from a commander's perspective.... I had the greatest chance, because I had the political will of 28 nations and four regional partners. Regardless of what was going on, I knew I had the support. We had the capability of some 18 nations out of the 28. It's fine with that, because the will was there—18 nations provided us with capabilities at various levels and scopes.

We've used the term “caveats” in the past. I stopped using that term publicly in dealing with NATO because it has a negative connotation. To me, it's about doing what you've been told to do with what you have, constantly reminding about what you need, but making the best of what you have and understanding that caveats are normal.... Actually, national intents and limitations are a normal fact of life.

Agility and flexibility were the keys to the NATO mission. Really, it was a reminder to all of us that a crisis such as Libya surely requires a comprehensive approach, and that applies at the political, at the strategic, and also at the operational level.

The comprehensive approach aspects include the political aspects of it, understanding national agendas: military—making the best of and understanding cultures and dealing with them; economics—understanding the impact of oil, gas, and trade with Libya; social and cultural aspects—we went through a campaign, school out and school back in, and we went through Ramadan, making sure this was not to become a religious issue but rather keeping it to the protection of civilians, and we worked extra hard on that.

● (1140)

Finally, with regard to infrastructure, this is what I meant by secondary and tertiary effects. We left all of the infrastructure standing—oil, gas, water, electricity, and road networks. Why? Because we worked to protect civilians, and to damage that infrastructure would affect them in the long term. That's also why this country is able to get back on its feet. It has a source of revenue.

What I've really just said is that NATO did its job. We were there to protect civilians and we did it to the best of our ability. Using the words of the Secretary General, I believe this was one of the most successful events and one of the most precise campaigns in NATO's history.

But I will be critical of one point. We, the collectivity, did not follow through with Libya. It's a lesson that we must truly understand. I don't think it's NATO's job, but Libya requires political assistance, judiciary review, a better understanding of internal and military security, electioneering, governance, and monetary management. Essentially, we need nation-building to continue. It's not NATO's job, but it's part of NATO's strategies: what next, and then who should do it?

Is this the African Union's job? Is this to be done by the Arab League, or the Friends of Libya, or is this truly in the UN seat?

Does Libya apply to the future? A lot of people have asked me if we can make this fit another environment. Let me offer you some thoughts. If we tried to apply Libya to other theatres, as it were, it would be difficult. We learned the hard way. We tried to adapt Libya to Afghanistan and to Bosnia and to Iraq, and it didn't work. We must adapt ourselves and change.

When we look at international conflict, what next and what then, I think we need to consider international legitimacy. We had it under the UN Security Council.

Who should be doing it? NATO. But given the economic status, if it's not NATO, then who? The geography of Libya itself, as compared to other places, is certainly an important part. On the regional support, the internal actors, Gadhafi had essentially two friends in the world, Mugabe and Chavez, but his power base was very limited. When we look at another place, who are the friends? Who are the actors?

Finally, once NATO is done, who takes control and who has control? I'm talking about both internally and externally. We've learned a great deal of lessons through all of this, or at least we've observed a great deal of them. Let me summarize some of them.

For NATO, it's a success. For Libya, it's the victory. I talked a little bit about Libya, and they still require assistance. We need to look at that in future conflict because it applies to Afghanistan, the Balkans, and Iraq in many ways. All of these, by the way, were areas I had to look at from my last job's perspective.

We have made some new allies. How do we approach these new allies? How do we expand NATO, without expanding it in the sense of PFP, the Partnership for Peace, or the Istanbul conference initiative, or the Med Dialogue? Not everybody wants to be part of NATO, but many want to be closer to them. By the way, the closer we get to everybody, the better we will be.

I think these are great lessons learned. We have more lessons learned on the intelligence-sharing issues, about networking ourselves in a sophisticated manner, having a deployable and interoperable force. I have many more lessons learned that I will not cover here, but I can expand on them, if you wish, Mr. Chair, as we go through.

NATO in the past was necessary. In today's terms, NATO has been crucial, and I believe NATO is essential to Canada in the future. It's greater than the military alliance. It provides us with an environment for dialogue, diplomacy.

More importantly, if not NATO, then what? Do we have a better option? We've been building on this over 50 years—60 years, in fact. NATO, though, will have to adapt to the change, and that's where we can play a role. I believe we, as Canadians, can play a big role there, but we must be partners. You cannot change from the outside. You've got to change it from the inside.

● (1145)

Also I would suggest that we may have to temper our expectations in some ways because our concept of change, of time to conduct the change, may be different in all those 28 nations, depending on the culture you're dealing with.

The strategic concept of NATO is sound, and I support it. Smart Defence, as has been talked about at the Chicago summit and enunciated clearly by the Secretary General, is idealistically good but pragmatically difficult to operationalize. It's about weighing, pooling, and sharing in common activities, much like AWACS, AGS, or the C-17 initiatives we have, against national sovereignty requirements and also industrial and economic benefits. We have to balance all this and find the right balance. It's also to make sure we'll have what we need when we need it; we will be there, and when others need our capability, we will be there.

I think pragmatically focusing on connected forces is important, in the sense that we're not there yet and we must continue. Believe it or not, even after 60 years together, we are still having problems communicating with one another, because national imperatives took over the grid of the alliance, or not necessarily the grid but at least the activities.

We also need to look in non-kinetic ways. I think we focus too much. There are three areas: we look at equipment; we look at the capabilities, the hardware; we look at the people, the greyware, we need. Canada can play a great role, but we also need to look at the non-kinetic aspect of it. Social media play a critical role in the authorizing and the awakening, and it's only the beginning. We need to look at this. We need to look at computer network operations to be able to gather intelligence, disseminate information, influence behaviour, and, if necessary, disable systems in a non-kinetic manner, which will enable the system to go back up again. If there's one thing we learned from the Balkans, it's if you break things, you're going to have to rebuild them.

I'm nearing the end of my comments, Mr. Chairman.

I'll just say that crisis response, as seen by NATO, is workable. This is not the NATO of 10 years ago or of last year. NATO has changed. First it needs political will that is translated into capabilities and capacities, but finally, we also need to look at sustainment and continue with our agility. From a military perspective, I see new structures and I see some removal of the duplication. We must not confuse redundancy and duplication, but we must wisely find the difference and apply it as best we can.

My advice to my past commander at SACEUR was let's make sure we build...not a peace establishment structure that needs a war establishment to be put together, but, much like we showed during Libya, create war fighter organizations that can get going right from day one. We had three weeks to get ready, one week to build a headquarters, and we got on with it. To put it in perspective, Bosnia took one year from the Security Council to boots on the ground. We can talk about boots on the ground, if you wish, or lack thereof. I certainly have a point on that, and I will address your point, Mr. Chairman, as you wish.

From a Canadian perspective—I'd like to bring this to a wrap—first, is the measure of Canada's provision of support to NATO. I was in Washington and was reminded that Canada's expenditure is around 1.4% of the GDP against a goal of 3%. In replying to my U. S. colleagues and politicians, I offered that quantity is a very poor judge of what the efforts are; rather there is quality and there's also the will. You can have all the quantity you want, but without a political will to use it and deploy it, or the quality given to you by Canada—and I'm not talking about me, I'm talking about the great members of the Canadian Forces. I'd also like to add the support I had from Foreign Affairs in the provision of political advice, this whole-of-government support that came to us.

● (1150)

These are great people. So let's measure Canada not only by numbers but by who we are and who we send. Our record speaks for itself.

I think Canada needs to look at having a deployable force, both politically and militarily, a relevant force, and more importantly a balanced force. Let's not build on the past. Let's build on the future. The future is about agility, about the capability to deal with what is not predictable. One thing I've learned is that the foreseeable future is not.

Therefore, we need to be ready for this. We need to be there for NATO, not only in providing for it but also in bringing this agility that Canadians, I will opine to you, can bring. We therefore need to be present. We need to be present with the right level of military-political presence.

Finally, if the science of war is about creating capability that can bring success through technology and communication, the art of war is making it work with what you have. This is what Canadians are good at.

Mr. Chairman, this completes my opening remarks. I stand ready to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, General. I appreciate your opening comments.

I should just point out that the first time I met General Bouchard, he was the commander for 1 Canadian Air Division in the Canadian NORAD region out of Winnipeg. I got to know him a bit there. He went on to be deputy commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command, deputy commander of the Allied Joint Force Command in Naples, and then, of course, we all know him as the commander for NATO's Unified Protector.

I want to remind committee members that even though General Bouchard is now a civilian, we're treating him as a public servant, since all his activities were done as a public servant. The rules in chapter 20 of O'Brien and Bosc apply. We can't compel him to disclose information on issues that he dealt with in a secret manner or dealt with in expending his duties. As well, the Security of Information Act of 2001 would apply for any top secret information he was privy to.

With that, Mr. Harris, you have the floor.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Of course, we treat all of our witnesses fairly gently in this committee—so far, at least.

Thank you, General Bouchard, for joining us, and thank you for your lengthy and successful career in the military. It's great that you're able to be here to share your knowledge and experience and perspective with us on this study that we're doing on Canada's participation in NATO and the new NATO concept.

I'll do this through the lens of Libya, of course. Your direct hands-on experience there was quite valuable to the mission and to the success of the mission, and it will be in helping us understand some of the issues.

Some say that the Libya mission was a success in dealing with the protection of civilians, but I don't know if it could be considered a model, or the model; it was a response to a particular crisis that arose fairly quickly. Although Mr. Gadhafi may not have had lots of friends when the time came, he very quickly turned into someone for whom the “responsibility to protect” doctrine became the mechanism by which the Security Council acted.

What concerns me here, in the Libya mission...and I don't know where it affected your activities. I remember a quote from you, which I used because it reflected my concerns. At certain points, certain nations—and certain leaders in certain nations, although I won't get into the detail—and certain foreign ministers were talking about how Gadhafi must go, and about regime change. This was all going on while you and the military were acting under another set of instructions.

I remember a quote from you—I'll paraphrase it and you'll fix it—where in effect you talked about your job: my job is not regime change, my job is based on Resolution 1973, and that's what I'm here to do.

In that context, were there any tensions in relation to that with respect to the military operations and what you were doing? I know this committee had briefings, I guess the summer before and last summer, concerning this, and I was concerned that even NATO itself had chosen different objectives than Resolution 1973 and that it may be interfering with the mission.

Can you give us a general comment on that? There were two things going on, obviously—the very specific 1973 resolution and what some of the nations were saying, and perhaps doing, while you were trying to do something else.

● (1155)

LGen Charles Bouchard: Thank you very much, Mr. Harris. I appreciate your question.

Let me be perfectly clear, because you've stated it, but I will restate it: my mission was not regime change. In fact, if you followed the tactics that we employed, if I'd had a regime change mandate I would have done it differently. I'm not going to go much further than that because of the classification of the aspects of it, but I can assure you of that.

In fact, Gadhafi had the choice. He could have stopped any time. If he had stopped in May or June or July and said, "That's it—I'm stopping violence", my mission would have come to an end.

In fact, we prepared a lot of these points as we went along, because what would be the criteria upon which we would have met the objectives that we were given? Those were: the cessation of hostilities; the movement of all equipment away, because we didn't want this to be a pause to rearm and reload, and in an observable manner, so that we could observe the situation; and finally, continuing the humanitarian assistance movement unimpeded. These were the three main ones, with subcategories, that we went with.

Except that the regime opted to fight until the last moment.

If I could, I'll opine on that a little bit, because it also had impacts. While he had very few friends, we also probably made our life difficult. I wish not to be critical, but if you make an international indictment of someone, you leave very few exit strategies for these individuals. These were choices, obviously, that other bodies made, and I respect those—I serve. But when we need to consider strategy, I think we need to consider what the exit is. Do we leave these folks an exit ramp or not? In this case, if there are no exit ramps, then not necessarily regime change.... But we will use the broadest interpretation, because what we were given was to use all available means to bring an end to the violence against the population, and we did that. I'm convinced that we stayed well within those limits; we never strayed outside that.

Therefore, if I summarize it, no, it was not regime change, but it certainly became that, because the regime opted to fight until the last moment. Second, we left them no strategy out of it, sir.

● (1200)

Mr. Jack Harris: Can I move to another topic? It's communication with the Security Council once the mission started. Throughout Resolution 1973 there are several references to reporting back to the Security Council, to working with Kofi Annan, to working closely with each other on the enforcement of the arms embargo, for example, and promptly providing written reports to the committee on what they're doing, and to the no-fly zone as well.

The no-fly zone, the protection of civilians, and the enforcement of the arms embargo all have references to reporting back and communicating with the Security Council or the Secretary-General. What mechanisms were established to do that? Did they work? Were you involved with them or was that someone else?

LGen Charles Bouchard: Obviously, the Security Council provided the international legitimacy through the 1970 and 1973 resolutions upon which NATO acted. NATO does not require a UN Security Council resolution to act, because it is an international body, but in this case, it did provide the underlying legitimacy. I can also tell you that many countries would not have joined were it not that the UN had provided that basis for it.

From there, the North Atlantic Council provided me with a series of tasks. You've enunciated three of them. They were mainly the embargo, both air and sea, and the protection of civilians.

The NAC provides you with what task you need to do. They provide the rules of engagement. These are nationally approved, but they dictate to me what my rules of engagement are. They also provide target sets, what I can and cannot touch. They don't tell you which ones; they just tell you types. I had the North Atlantic Council provide that to me through SACEUR, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe. So the chain of command goes North Atlantic Council, through the military structure, which is under the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Admiral Stavridis, and under him to the Joint Force Command, of which I was the deputy commander. Also created was a joint task force. That was my reporting chain.

I reported daily to my immediate commander. Weekly we provided an assessment up the chain, if you wish. Then monthly, a report went to the North Atlantic Council. But the relationship between the North Atlantic Council and the United Nations is a political strategic one that stays outside. I just fed them the information, but we provided it on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.

Let me add one more thing, if you will allow me, because it's also the way we do business that we need to assess. What we were working on were 90-day mandates. And 90-day mandates may cause a lot of issues with the population on the ground. They were terrified that we would walk out after 90 days. My point, sir, is this: how do we balance a fear of a long commitment with an assurance that we'll be there for as long as it takes?

That's all I have to say.

The Chair: Thank you.

The time has expired.

Madam Gallant, you have seven minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and through you to General Bouchard, I'd like to know what challenges you faced in terms of interoperability with the other members of NATO that were present in Operation Unified Protector?

LGen Charles Bouchard: There remain to this day some challenges in making sure that we can communicate and work together. They range from intelligence-sharing to having the right architecture, because interoperability is about sharing. It's about working together.

We had issues on the intelligence side of the house. How do we turn national information through five eyes—Canada, U.S., U.K., Australia, and New Zealand—to NATO secrets, to beyond that, because there were the Arab partners plus Sweden? How do we build that? That was the challenge. We created a diffusion centre, run by a Canadian, may I add, to do that, because we were in the best position. That's the first part.

The second part, of course, is that the big items are interoperable. The navy doesn't have a problem. The air forces themselves don't have a problem. Where we had probably the biggest issue was in two parts. One was the ability to transfer information through the NATO alliance national classified network, because they don't necessarily connect. You end up with many computers under your desk so that you can talk to.... Madam, I had five computers under my desk in NORAD, and that was just two countries. So you kind of work through that.

The last challenge, of course, is the cultural issue of how we work with each other and how we can communicate, because interoperability is not only hardware but greyware as well. That's probably the biggest challenge to me. You can overcome the technical issues through goodwill, understanding, and communication. To me, the essence of interoperability is understanding each other's culture, respecting it, trusting each other, and working through it.

● (1205)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What types of transformational changes at NATO do you believe would be helpful in terms of implementing lessons learned from Operation Unified Protector?

LGen Charles Bouchard: That's a very good question. I am keeping an eye on the chairman, who is going to probably wrap me up very quickly.

Transformational change is really—I'll finish with this—about agility and attitude. That's probably the biggest point. But from a government perspective, we need to really look at the agency's rationalization. I know we have done some. I think we went from 14 to a much reduced number. We need to look at it. I still believe there may be some duplication or areas where we can save on our approach to it.

Also, we don't see it as much in Canada, but I certainly observed it from living in Europe, where change in structure, for example, affects local areas. We have no NATO presence in Canada from a common perspective. Neither does France, for example. But in terms of the regional impact, a giant headquarters where €200 million are being spent will certainly impact on the local economy and the political approach to that. We need to work at this, but it starts with continued will. The building of capability and capacity is really about sharing together, but the transformational aspect of it remains. The problem is, how do we approach this issue? How do we approach this common defence, this pooling and sharing, and what does it really mean? Do we find a common goal and objective in there that we are all agreed to? It's a great concept, but now we're going to have to operationalize it. That's the transformational part.

Finally, from a NATO and military perspective, it's creating a war fighter organization. It's something we do not have to rebuild every time we go on operation, but something that stands every day to do it. We have that in NORAD. It exists; every day we're on standby. We can do it. NATO needs to have the same structure, in my opinion.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Do we still have time, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: You have time.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What improvements have been made to the Canadian Forces from the lessons learned in Operation MOBILE?

LGen Charles Bouchard: It's a very difficult question for me to answer. I will put it in perspective. I came back from Europe at the end of the mission in November. My last few months in the military were to talk to prestigious bodies like this one, and others, such as universities and the like. But I was not involved in the Canadian Forces changes. It would be inappropriate if I commented on something for which I don't have the full knowledge. It's not appropriate. But I know the lessons have been passed and that many of.... I'm one of the few who left the forces; many of them are still there. I know they will change the structure as necessary. Therefore, I won't go much further than that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Many of the commanders in Europe are double-hatted. They have the NATO command as well as the Euro command, the zone security. Did you encounter any challenges as a consequence of these commanders being double-hatted?

● (1210)

LGen Charles Bouchard: I was double-hatted in many ways as well. You rather get used to it. I think the challenge is to watch what's going on and see whether someone is sneaking national objectives or interests into the middle of what should be an international body based on the NATO mission. I understood that. It was clear. We just discussed it.

The point, to me, is that communication part. It's to talk to one another and understand what the national agendas are, to recommend what I can and cannot meet from an international perspective, and make it clear what is within the realm of my capabilities and what is within the realm of those national objectives or those double-hatted... whether it's the European Union or other points. It was clear to me, but it was clear because we worked hard to make it clear and to understand. My fear was that if we did not satisfy all of the objectives that were set...I didn't want a nation or two or three or five —it didn't matter—to go on national lines. It would have put the alliance itself in danger, through some members saying, if you want to do this, we're not members of this anymore. This was my centre of gravity, that in fact the most important point was the alliance itself.

Your point is very valid, Madam, in terms of understanding the other side and what the agendas are, making it clear what's within my realm and what isn't, and then working through it. I hope I have answered your question.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired right at seven minutes.

Mr. McKay.

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

It was possibly one of the most thoughtful and wise presentations I've heard in many years sitting here. I confess, I feel like I should take you out for a beer and pick your brain for the next three hours. In seven minutes, I'm afraid I'm not going to accomplish much, but the beer is open.

LGen Charles Bouchard: Thank you, sir. I'll take you up on that.

Hon. John McKay: I wanted to pick up on your comment about, if you will, not following through with Libya. You had to know 30 days, maybe as many as 60 days, prior to the formal end of the conflict, that it was going to end. So I'd be interested in the discussions taking place within NATO and with NATO about the post-conflict situation in Libya. You rightly say that only a political/judicial election governance issue...and you rightly say it's not NATO's job. To flip the question back, if not NATO's, then whose? I suppose the answer to that is, it's supposed to be the UN.

So I'd be interested in your reflections on that, because it does speak to winning the battle and losing the war. There is a real possibility that Libya degenerates into another failed state.

LGen Charles Bouchard: Thank you very much, Mr. McKay.

I read AlJazeera news every morning, just to see what's going on in Libya, because it's near and dear to my heart, having done what we've done. At the strategic level the question becomes, as you say, that 60 or 90 days before the end, we were already seeing some of the information, but we can only make recommendations because it's well above...it gets into the strategy, the will of nations, as to whom.

I'm not being critical of any organization in particular; it's just that, using a hockey analogy, someone has to be there to receive the pass. Our question was whom do we pass the puck to? We set perimeters. I spoke to Mr. Martin, the UN Secretary-General's representative for Libya, when he took over. I recommended some information, but because my mission was very restrictive—and rightly so, I had to stay within my mandate—once my mandate was accomplished, we passed on some of the points that I just enunciated to you. Then it became, as I said, at what level, and how do we do this?

More importantly, in my opinion, is not only what's happening there, but the next conflict is part of it. Once we figure out whether we are going or not, the next question automatically should be what we're going to do once we've solved this problem, and resolve that before we commit too much.

Perhaps we could focus more energy at that level.

● (1215)

Hon. John McKay: There's a lot of discussion about boots on the ground. Really, it's boots and it's shoes and it's sandals and it's bare feet on the ground. Was there any discussion about, in effect, organizing that so that Libya wouldn't degenerate into what is now arguably a chaotic state?

LGen Charles Bouchard: These are such interesting matters to me. First, the issue of boots on the ground...you're quite right. There were flip-flops and running shoes, and they belonged to many, but no NATO forces under my command. So that was the one point. There's an interesting strategy to that. Every day that went by, I would have liked to have had boots on the ground because I could have acted in one way, but not having boots on the ground made the exit strategy so much easier for us. At midnight, I said “stop”, and the ships turned around, the airplanes turned around, and we were done. We were disconnected.

The second part, more importantly, is a strategy that I think we need to look at. If the people on the ground can handle it, should we put our troops on the ground, or force the ownership on these people? If you put 150,000 troops in Libya, I suspect the Libyans would have stood back and said they would wait until NATO was done, and then they'd start doing it. As it was, we didn't give them that. The essence for us was, without telling them what to do, how did we make sure we enabled success, which for us was the protection of civilians. It stayed there. I was not the private air force or navy of the NTC, but essentially by stopping the violence it shaped the environment for them to continue. Again, the end state and the end game were the will of Gadhafi to start talking and stop hurting his people, which he opted to do differently.

Hon. John McKay: You raised the interesting point of an exit ramp for Gadhafi. I can argue this in several different ways and arrive at mutually contradictory answers.

In a conflict like that, I don't know what is the appropriate relationship between NATO and the person who is the cause of the conflict. Once the writ was dropped, if you will, Gadhafi was cooked. He was trapped. What is the mechanism for that conversation in terms of what the World Court in The Hague needs to do and what NATO needs to do?

LGen Charles Bouchard: I just want to make sure: I was not trying to be critical of the International Court of Justice—

Hon. John McKay: You're very careful. I'm not quite so careful.

LGen Charles Bouchard: But an action has a reaction. The reaction in this case was no exit strategy for the dictator who we were trying to convince to stop doing what he was doing. It took continued kinetic activities and non-kinetic activities to make him stop what he was doing.

The point is, how do we create an environment? I remember saying in the early days that our job was to create an environment where we could have dialogue and diplomacy take over, because that's the part that saves a lot of lives. That belongs in the political realm of the North Atlantic Council and the participating nations.

In my opinion, though, at the end of the day, it's about justice taking place and justice being seen to take place, but justice also taking place at the right time, with the prioritization of stopping violence against civilians—stopping people from dying—and then we'll sort out the legitimacy and then the judiciary thereafter. We could spend many hours and many beers on this one.

Hon. John McKay: I wish we could. The beer is on.

LGen Charles Bouchard: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you.

That's just at eight minutes. Moving on to Mr. Opitz, we are at five-minute rounds now.

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

Once again, General, thank you for everything you've done. You've brought great honour to this country, sir, through your actions in Libya, and we thank you for it.

Sir, I've been listening to all the things you've been talking about —fitting the war environment, the environment of what we're fighting and where. Obviously, in the things you're talking about and in what our soldiers have done in Libya, Afghanistan, Bosnia, and other theatres of war, diplomatic skills are clearly important. Even devolving down to the corporal and master corporal level—

LGen Charles Bouchard: I agree.

Mr. Ted Opitz: —we expect our troops on the ground to have those skills and to be able to manage and to address issues at the lowest level possible, which could have a particular national strategic impact if they get it wrong.

On the organization and synchronization of campaign planning, that smart defence you talked about as something that can be problematic in terms of what capabilities a country has and whether you can count on it at the time that you need it when you're concentrating force or whatever you happen to be doing at that time —and the greyware, where I think the Canadian Forces.... Sir, I don't know if you would agree with me on this, but throughout the seventies and eighties, of course.... When we were still fighting the Second World War, everything was a left- and right-flanking kind of scenario. We've come a long, long way since then, and I think that having nothing was actually something positive in the later nineties and in recent decades, because it taught our people to be extremely innovative and to deal with things they didn't have.

I would be interested in your thoughts on whether we should revise the principles of war to be a more national strategic principles of war kind of thing. That would include diplomatic skills. That would include the agility and the capability focus that you were talking about earlier, and in fact the exit strategy for someone like a Gadhafi before it gets to horrific consequences such that you can't allow this person to exit.

Could you comment, sir?

● (1220)

LGen Charles Bouchard: Thank you very much, sir. That is most appropriate.

I think the point, first of all, is that the Canadian Forces is very good at training its people towards that, but I also believe we need a clear understanding of what “comprehensive approach” means, to the broadest level.

I've seen a comprehensive approach in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Bosnia and the Balkans, and in Libya for sure. As a military theatre commander I had my lanes, but what's the linkage with the political entities? We worked that part, as I said before, from political, military, economic, social, cultural, infrastructure, and the like.

We need to continue to train, but also we need to advise—and this is a failure of the military sometimes—our political leaders who give us those directions on how to work it together.

The feedback I gave to SACEUR rarely was based on what my military activities were as much as what I required inside these constructive comprehensive approaches, because it's a mutual approach, and I often asked what, for example, was—and I'm leading to your last question, the last point—the strategy to deal with Gaddafi, because we were the strong arm of NATO, doing kinetic activities and non-kinetic influence activities. What were the diplomatic activities? Who was talking to him? I know President Zuma and the African Union tried their best. The Arab League was doing some work. But was this coordinated, and who was coordinating it at that level? Much of it was done bilaterally, whether it was the U.S. directly, or France, or the U.K., or even Canada. I know everybody was doing some work on that.

My perspective is that we continue to train. You've said it. We train strategic corporals. It's just amazing the way we've done it. Sir, my experience is that not all countries are doing that because not all cultures are doing that. This is what I will go back to: what we can bring to NATO in many ways is the skill, capabilities, and knowledge we have, and therefore it's important to remain because we bring value-added.

I will close my point, sir, by saying that during the operation I told the admiral, “You probably notice there are quite a few more Canadian uniforms floating around your headquarters.” In fact the Canadian flag was floating beside my headquarters, and it was at MOBILE. I had it set up next door. His answer was, “I'd like to see more of those a lot more often and a lot more in a permanent manner.”

We made a difference as Canadians, sir, we make a difference to NATO today, and we can make a difference to NATO in the future by continuing to do what we're doing and what we're good at.

The Chair: Thank you. The time has expired.

Madam Moore.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Bouchard, it is a great pleasure to speak with you.

I have two questions. The first concerns an article concerning the mission in Libya. That article is entitled, "NATO Sees Flaws in Air Campaign Against Qaddafi". The author writes as follows:

[*English*]

> “Nations did not effectively and efficiently share national intelligence and targeting information among allies and with partners,” the report said. “The inability to share information presented a major hindrance to nations deciding if a target could be engaged” based on information from another country.

[*Translation*]

I would like to know your opinion. What caused that lack of intelligence sharing, what are the consequences of these problems, and how can they be corrected during future operations?

You also said in your introductory remarks that, if you break things, you have to rebuild them. I would like to discuss that point a little.

I would like to draw a parallel with what I have seen, although it does not concern Canada. I am talking about what happened in Iraq. I was a military member at the time and that enormously affected me. When Hussein fell, we saw—at least in the media, because it may not have happened exactly like that on the ground—military members protecting the oil ministry while hospitals and schools were pillaged. Some people stole x-ray equipment. Ultimately, the country had to rebuild things that it could perhaps have protected.

I would like to know whether there was a specific action plan to provide rapid protection for civilian institutions in operations such as the one conducted in Libya. Did you have a plan? Did you know, as Gadhafi fell, how many military personnel you had to send to such and such a hospital, for example? Was there a specific plan of that kind? Did you know the civilian institutions that had to be protected? Is that something that is generally integrated, if I can put it that way, in missions in which several countries are involved? Do commanders have that vision, and do they immediately think of institutions that must be protected, to prevent them from being destroyed and so they are able to be operational as soon as possible?

LGen Charles Bouchard: Thank you, madam. Those are very good questions.

First, with regard to information sharing, the challenge is that NATO has no source of information as such. Information sharing within NATO is done this way: each of the nations provides information, as little or as much as it wishes.

There is information in the various countries, whether it be at the "NOFORN" level in the United States or the "confidential-defence" level in France; that may be the "reserved for" level, or another level. Imagine as well that this is a mission in which Arab countries are working with us for the first time and with other countries that are not members of NATO. This is a challenge because we have no existing architecture.

Information transmission is not just a technological issue, but especially a national policy and procedural issue. When we start an operation by saying that we are working together to find a solution, you have to share information.

I would say to you, madam, that my perspective is twofold. First, as a Canadian, I had the opportunity to serve in NATO and with the United States. Very early on in the conflict, I was pleased to earn the confidence of the other countries that gave me information. The problem was sharing that information. So I became the fusion centre. We created our own architecture, which was based on a principle that guided me in all circumstances. I said to myself that my centre of gravity was NATO and that, if I lost one of my forces, a single individual, a ship or an aircraft, because someone in that group knew something that he had not shared, it would be a major failure. We then established that as our basic principle: it was at that point that we shared the information, and we learned. It was at that point as well that I put a lot of pressure on the countries.

In future, we should create a policy in advance establishing that, if those countries got together to do that, information would have to be made available and shared as soon as possible. So there is a policy aspect and a procedural aspect. At the operational level, there has to be a good understanding and the emphasis has to be on the mission in order to carry it out. That was my first point, madam.

I also had all the information I needed for targeting purposes. That was a matter of information sharing.

What do you do in cases where information cannot be shared? In that case, you decide who will carry out the mission. That is how it was at the start, but, toward the end, everyone had the information since we had established an atmosphere conducive to information sharing. However, I never felt I lacked the information that I needed to perform tasks. I do not agree with the allegations, even though we could have done much better.

Second, with regard to construction and reconstruction, two-thirds of the targets in Libya were not attacked for that reason. Going back to targeting, it was done by teams, which perhaps was not easy for certain colleagues from another military culture. I had political, cultural and public affairs advisors for kinetic and non-kinetic options, for legal affairs, in addition to operations, but I was the person responsible. I ultimately made the decisions, but we all came together to discuss the issues.

In the case of many issues, I wondered what the impact of selecting a given target would be on civilian life, for example, if that target were a hospital, a communication centre or a refinery. I wondered how much time it would take to rebuild, hence the importance of showing good judgment. If I was not sure that an action would stop the violence against the population, we did not do it. We asked ourselves how much time it would take to rebuild. That is why you may have noticed that no refineries or hospitals were hit by NATO. Of course, some buildings that were used for wrongful purposes against civilians were affected, but we always asked ourselves whether we would be doing good or bad for the population.

● (1230)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Mr. Chisu, it's your turn.

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

Thank you very much, General Bouchard.

General Bouchard, the Libyan operation, Operation MOBILE, was unique in the way the air force was in the lead and there were no boots on the ground. Also, it was the first operation where the U.S. was in the background, and the U.K., France, and Canada—with some other countries—were in the lead.

Can you elaborate on the contribution of the 18 countries you mentioned, and the flexibility? How quick was the integration of these nations?

LGen Charles Bouchard: Thank you, sir.

There were no boots on the ground. Therefore, projection of power from air and sea became critical. A lot of people focused on the air participation because it's probably the most visible and the most dramatic. But I want to mention my colleagues from the navy, who spent a lot of time and did a lot of work, and, more importantly, kept the Port of Misrata open through mining and shelling. To be mindful, the last ship that was fired upon was during the Korean War. They showed great courage, sir, so if you'll allow me not to forget our naval capability and effort.... It was truly important.

The second part, though, is the team effort. I was in total disagreement with the term used by the U.S., which was “lead from the rear”, because it was not. My boss was U.S. His boss was U.S. There was a lot of activity on the international scene by the U.S. as well. They opted perhaps to even out the burden sharing from the military perspective. The U.S. provided capacity and capabilities that did not exist.

On an average day, I had over 30 air-refueler aircraft that were airborne. One of them was Canadian, and some British, but most of them came in from the U.S. They provided that air bridge, and we couldn't get there without it. That's the critical capacity and capability.

In terms of capability, there was also intelligence support, and I'll stop there. They provided a lot, but again the trick was not only to take what they could, but actually pull it all together and work it. In fact, that's what pool and share really is; it's NATO's future. It's not only about equipment, but intelligence and everything else. They played a key role.

From my perspective, on a weekly basis I spoke to my colleagues in Paris, in the U.K., and obviously I was talking to my colleagues through the U.S. and Canada as well. For me, there was continued dialogue on that. They didn't tell me what to do; I informed them of what I was doing. I wanted to make sure I was catching the national concerns that were going on to see how it affected the campaign, or whether the campaign should be affected by it. It was not because I was under orders from these countries, but more to make sure I didn't have a national action that would break the alliance.

The U.S. played a critical role. In the future I sense the message from the U.S. will be, “We won't go, but how much of this can the rest of Europe handle that we don't have to provide?” That's the rebalancing of the burden of sharing.

● (1235)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much.

Can you elaborate on the cyber-security and the space security, which continues to be a focal point for NATO? Probably somebody else was listening, and this is how the conflict in Libya was developed. I'm not saying who was listening, but everybody knows who was listening and who was following the operation, whether they were successful or not.

How will we be able to secure the eventual concerns around cyber-security and space security and that it will not be compromised?

LGen Charles Bouchard: I agree with you. A lot of people were listening to everything we did and everything we worked on. It's okay, because it's a double-edged sword. You can actually work this to your advantage if need be. We have to be mindful of that.

More importantly, also in the case of Libya, is that everything was done using iPhones, iPads, YouTube, Skype, e-mail, and Facebook. Your reconnaissance party would go with their iPhones and take pictures, and then report to their boss in Benghazi on Skype and post the video on YouTube. Facebook could provide directions to what the intent of the NTC was.

We need to get into this business as well. I had three people looking at this, Arabic speakers, and it was not enough because of the pool of information.

The problem is that we get into legal action as well, because you can disseminate information and share it. The problem in the cyber-world is that there are no borders, or, as we know, it's very difficult to have them. The server that may be providing you the service may well be outside that geographical area. From a military perspective, lines on the map matter. The problem, and you're an engineer, is that when you go in the cyber-world, there are no lines on the map; there's only the globe. How do we connect that part? We can act militarily, or in a cyber way, both offensively and defensively. But how do you control that to make sure that you don't spread the mission outside the realm in which you're supposed to operate without bringing somebody you don't want into the realm?

The last point is that I did not have the legal authority to conduct any of this stuff, and therefore we did not. We gathered the information we could. You gather it from everybody. But action we could not do, because I was not cleared to do this.

Yet I will opine, sir, that we need to look into that. You may be able to stop an action in cyberspace without any kinetic action. It makes the reconstruction Madame mentioned earlier much faster. We can make the influence much faster, and we can do it without putting anybody in jeopardy. It's an area we need to continue. But we also need time to understand how we deal with that part, sir. It's a very good question for which I can only offer some thoughts but no solution at this time.

The Chair: Thank you.

Time has expired. We'll go to Mr. Kellway.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and through you to General Bouchard, it's wonderful to have you with us today. It's been a very interesting conversation so far.

One of the pleasures of having you with us today is the fact that you are probably uniquely situated to comment on the doctrine of the right to protect. I don't imagine that there are too many other people who have had to take that doctrine and apply it in the context of military intervention.

I understand that the doctrine is largely one that talks about the prevention of genocide and governments failing to meet their commitment to protect their citizens.

My question to you is maybe more of a philosophical question, but it is one that, with you, would be informed by practical experiences. Is there value to the doctrine in the context of military intervention? Is it a sensible doctrine to hold on to?

There's a quote I found kind of amusing but very much to the point. I quote Simon Adams. He's the executive director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. His point is that although it's largely a preventive doctrine, “R2P is not regime change with mood lighting”. He's saying there is kind of a difference here.

There seems to be a kind of internal contradiction, or sort of a logical slipperiness, that takes you from R2P to regime change. I'm wondering whether you could comment for us today on how sensible this is in the context of military intervention.

● (1240)

LGen Charles Bouchard: Thank you, sir.

It's difficult to answer, but I will try to provide you with my views on it. There isn't a day that goes by without this conflict being in my mind at one point. In fact, I will take it to the ethical level as well.

If the mission is to protect the population from those who inflict violence, and I have to neutralize that, and it may involve endangering the population at the same time, how do I deal with that? Do I accept a smaller amount, five casualties, to protect a hospital with 2,000 people in it, and how do I come to grips with that? That's what commanders do. Those are the ethical and moral aspects.

I've given you a tactical or an operational example that we can extrapolate, if you wish, to the strategic level, as to the responsibility to protect vis-à-vis recognizing the national sovereignty of a nation and at what point does the international community say that's enough of that and we need to get involved. Hence, the need for legitimacy at the international level as a foundation to act.

I think that's the first part, because if we act from the military perspective, Libya is not a model for anywhere else. Libya was a model for Libya and that's it. The next time someone's going to have to look at the next point, the next problem, and figure out all those aspects that I hope I've offered to you for consideration, be it regional support, geography, who are the actors, and put it all together and say, what kind of strategy am I going to use in this problem?

But at one point we're going to have to have good people get involved when bad people cannot get the message. The weapon of choice should be diplomacy, it should be dialogue, and it should be creating an environment. Where that fails, to me, R2P, from my military perspective—and I'm talking only about myself—is about stopping the violence and then creating an environment where dialogue can take place.

My solution, which, by the way, would have been the most complex solution, would have been to stop sometime in May. If the regime had said, we're stopped, we're done, we're going to sit down and talk, that would have been a very political and interesting situation, because then my mission was ended. I would have been done. So it's a complex series.... Then what do we do after that? What would have been the next step? We went through and we discussed this a fair bit.

I think the responsibility to protect, to me, is just a term. From a military perspective, when your mission is to protect the population, how do you go about that? How do you connect your kinetic activity and your non-kinetic activity and your strategic political activities to mesh them together? I believe it becomes more important to have military and civilian consultation and coordination, because much of it will be done at that level.

I suspect I'm not being so naive as to say this is not happening with Afghanistan and others, but it certainly applies a great deal, because the aim is to stop the violence and to move on.

● (1245)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: You commented on the failure to offer an exit ramp to the regime. Does that then suggest, and given your view of what R2P means—

The Chair: Very quickly. The time has expired.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Does that suggest that NATO may be missing a certain capacity to implement that doctrine?

LGen Charles Bouchard: No, sir, I would not say it that way. And "failure" is probably a harsh word. Rather, I would say unintended consequences would be more appropriate, and to me, that's what it was. Something happened, a reaction to it was an unintended consequence, and we should consider that in the future as part of it. But one body cannot legislate or rule over the other body. So it's about coordination then, and communication, and how we synchronize activities.

I will leave it at that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Norlock.

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

I'm not going to beat around the bush about which country I'm referring to; I'll just come right out and say that this March, Russia called for an investigation into the Libyan effort.

I'm curious, General, about what your thoughts are on the current relationship between NATO and Russia and on what the future may hold for the relationship between NATO and Russia? If you want to extrapolate or expand that a little further, perhaps there is another nation or entity that may pose a similar challenge.

LGen Charles Bouchard: I'm well aware that Russia may not have shared the same approach or the same belief that I was operating on within minutes, but my order came from my chain of command, which included the North Atlantic Council, which are those NATO nations, including Canada. My directions came from that authority, and I made darned sure I stayed within the guidance I was given.

Let me state right from the start that while I was not confined by it, I was able to work to the maximum extent within the limits of the mandate that was given to me, and to this day I believe I stayed within that mandate because of the feedback I received and the communications we had.

We may have surprised Russia in the way we came about this. They may not have anticipated that course of action. So be it.

As far as Russia's relationship with NATO, it's one that needs to continue. It doesn't have to be an enemy. We have to cohabit. We have to share a part of the globe. How do we do that? NATO is a good balancing act and it can continue to bring them in.

There will always be points of friction. Georgia is a good example of that. Missile defence is another one, as we are well aware, and we have to work through this. A lot of this is bilaterally, but also collectively through our NATO effort. In the 1990s we saw a lot of effort with the Partnership for Peace initiatives and the dialogue that took place. I'm a believer that the more we talk to each other, the less chance we are going to have to revert to other less pleasant courses of action.

I will just close by saying that while Russia may not have appreciated the effort, Russia can help us in finding solutions. I firmly believe that Russia could help us greatly to deal with other issues in the Middle East. We could use their activity. In fact, the solution is through Moscow; it's not through NATO. Therefore, when do we act as NATO and when do we let others act? There is a chance for Russia and President Putin to show some international leadership to bring peace to other parts of the Middle East.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Are there any other entities that NATO may need to or should pay a little bit...or where it might be wise to expand their dialogue?

LGen Charles Bouchard: Absolutely, and it should be done at various levels.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Are there any specific entities?

LGen Charles Bouchard: From my perspective, because we worked out of Naples...we worked with the Partnership for Peace with some nations, especially in the Balkans. We worked the Mediterranean dialogue, talking to Egypt. We were talking to Libya in some ways before, and there is the Istanbul initiative, which includes some of the GCC countries.

The biggest point I kept offering to people was that we needed to look beyond those boxes, and let's agree to increase the dialogue with whoever wants to talk to us, and then define a relationship that asks what relationship we want with NATO. Is it one of cooperation? Is it a closer relationship, or is it just some exchange of information?

I certainly believe we should continue. The difficult part is to define that relationship and ask whether it is an acceptable relationship with all 28 nations. We can work through it, through diplomacy and dialogue. Certainly talking to Egypt and Tunisia while all this was going on was an important part of it, and the dialogue we set up to conduct the mission in Libya will serve, in my opinion, the greater good of the movement of illegal weapons, drugs, and migrants in the whole Mediterranean area to begin with. So we have set that in place.

When I left, I said they've created some dialogue with people they didn't talk to before, and they should continue. I certainly hope the wisdom will be to continue this dialogue.

● (1250)

The Chair: Thank you. Time has just expired.

M. Brahmi, pour cinq minutes, s'il vous plaît.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the general for being here.

I would like to go back to a conversation we previously had with Colonel Brian Irwin, who is Director of NATO Policy at the Department of National Defence. We discussed the question of Canada's withdrawal from two NATO programs, the AWACS and the UAVs. Since you were in a very good position to assess the effectiveness of those two programs as a result of your information-gathering and targeting in Libya, I would like you to give us your comments on the consequences that withdrawal could have or has already had. What are your personal observations?

LGen Charles Bouchard: I will start with the AWACS aircraft because I do not believe the allied land surveillance capability or the UAVs or reconnaissance aircraft are in the same category. We can continue that. I will make a few comments for you.

First of all, the AWACSs were very important. We have been there for many years, and their presence is really important. As Canadians, we had a presence in both quantitative and qualitative terms. It was in that respect that we exercised an influence. We could influence decisions by taking part in that program. I believe that was a worthwhile program.

However, because I was well aware of all considerations, I also understand why Canada made the choice it made. I can see both sides of the issue, but I emphasize that it is easier to influence a system from the inside than from the outside.

The second item concerns those common products and capabilities. That also requires common approval for their uses. How can we evaluate domestic needs and those of NATO? Imagine a small European country that does not have a lot of resources and can share certain things as a result of its geographical position. Let's take Albania and Croatia, for example. Do those countries need all that? Can they create a capability and share the capabilities of the other countries? That would be very sensible.

Our geography and distance, of course, give us a different aspect. That is why, in the case of reconnaissance aircraft, we wonder which is the best one. I am not convinced even today that the proposed choice is necessarily the best choice for Canada. Canada's decision was to say no. It asserts that it will develop its own capability and offer it when others need it. It must also take into account its capability to meet its needs in the far north and above its three oceans. There has to be a balance between the two, and that gets difficult. We have to make wise decisions, I am well aware of that.

On the one hand, we have to be present and to find the right level of presence if we want to have an influence. On the other hand, what do we do about the rest of our domestic needs? In the case of allied land surveillance capabilities, I lean more to the side of domestic needs that cannot necessarily be met by what meets communities' needs. With regard to the AWACS, my pendulum may perhaps swing to the other side, perhaps for a historic reason and because the systems are already in place.

I am giving you both sides because the problems are different. Is there something that needs to be found, a complementary arrangement that could help us? Medical care could be made a common component, if necessary. We could develop protocols, but that also requires a guarantee. I mentioned medical care, but it can be something else, information sharing, for example.

I think the most important thing is to create a political will and architecture. Once that architecture is created, we can develop it and move forward without too many problems. We can meet a community need or develop a community capability or national capability, adding it to the component, as necessary, at the appropriate time.

I hope that answers your question.

● (1255)

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: That's good.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: *Merci beaucoup*.

Mr. Strahl.

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

General, thank you for being here. Certainly one of the most memorable experiences of my so-far short career here was the celebration honouring your efforts and those of the sailors, air personnel, and soldiers who participated in Libya. It was an honour to be there in the Senate with you and your family for that ceremony.

But I hope you'll forgive me if I get away from Libya a bit. In your opening remarks, you talked a bit about smart defence. Everyone who has come before us on this study of NATO's strategic concept has had something to say about smart defence. I think it's like our previous study on readiness; everyone has a different definition of what smart defence is. But I was interested in your comment, if I'm paraphrasing it correctly, that smart defence is theoretically sound but very difficult to operationalize.

I'm hoping you can expand on that and give us your definition of smart defence and how that applies to NATO—perhaps Libya is a good example of where smart defence took place—and, perhaps more importantly, how it applies to the Canadian context.

LGen Charles Bouchard: It's a good question.

If you will allow me, I was in Sweden this past weekend for an air power conference. The Chief of Defence of Sweden put forth an interesting perspective.

He told me this: we share a weapons system—or a system, it's not important—between Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. We all have the same system. We have four training centres on the same level, and we're small countries. My recommendation would be to have one training centre, and everybody applauds that, because now we're removing duplication. We're pooling and sharing resources. The problem is that if I say anywhere but Stockholm as far as location, there'll be some issue on the national level as well.

So I'm not trying to be flippant, sir, but that's really the balance that we need to look at. When do national requirements and objectives trump smart defence? It works in Europe, especially with the smaller countries. I think probably a phased approach to that would be wise.

When I look at the smaller nations—Croatia, Bosnia, Albania, and to some extent some of these others—why not say that we don't need all of you to do the same thing? We need some specialists in the cyber world. We need some specialists in the social media. Without prejudicing your sovereign defence requirements, what is it you'd be better at than some of the other nations?

As to how we apply that to Canada, it's interesting. First of all, there's geography itself, our own geography, our distance from Europe. We have different requirements. We have the Arctic, which requires a different approach. We therefore have national requirements that we cannot jeopardize.

But then what is it we can bring to NATO, to the commonality of NATO? I think we can bring certain capabilities. Much of it is through the human aspect of it and the capabilities we have, but also continuing to share the burden in many ways.

So smart defence I think will be seen by small NATO nations differently from how we as Canadians will see it. It's normal, and it's applicable; the trick to all of this is to figure out how everybody else sees it, to understand why they're seeing it the way they're seeing it, and then to say, okay, fine; now that I know what your national interests are, how can we resolve that, and what can be then put towards smart defence? And I think that will be the art of bringing it and operationalizing it.

I know that what I'm saying is very hard to put in numbers and perspective, but I think the first step toward understanding the problem is to define it clearly, to figure out how the others do that, and then, after that, to find a solution. I think that's an important part.

The reason I say this is that my experience in Libya was to understand every nation around the table, to understand their culture, to understand why a Muslim nation was behaving the way they were during Ramadan. Once I understood that, I could understand. I could respect it, I could gain their confidence, and then, after that, achieve my objectives. I'm extrapolating that to the relationship in NATO and defining the problem; I think that's going to be an important part, sir.

● (1300)

The Chair: Thank you. Your time is up.

The last questioner is Mr. Alexander.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Thanks very much, Chair.

General Bouchard, I'd just like to reiterate what so many others have said, that for this government, for the Parliament of Canada, and for this committee, it was a matter of great pride for us to see you, a Canadian, commanding this mission so capably.

In light of everything you've said today, having heard this very stimulating discussion cover a lot of ground, I think we all understand much better now why it was a success: it was because of the approach you took and the painstaking efforts you made to knit together a lot of players into a team and to ensure the due diligence that is the *sine qua non* of any effort to protect civilians by using force. Our hats are very much off to you.

You mentioned that the idea would have been for the regime to stop killing its own people in May and for diplomacy to take over. We all agree with that. You also are very clear that Gadhafi's own decisions, his regime's behaviour, dictated otherwise. So it was not until October 20, I believe, that he was apprehended and killed shortly thereafter, through no fault of NATO's but certainly as a result of the dynamic on the ground.

You mentioned the question of exit strategies, how important that was, and the importance of political will. One of the successes of this mission is that the will to continue the mission held up on all sides throughout, to the end.

Could you give us your thought, because I think it will be instructive for the committee, on what would have happened if the NATO mission had stopped earlier? Say you had lost political will in late September—September 26, for example.

LGen Charles Bouchard: The 26th, yes—

Mr. Chris Alexander: Let's say the ships had gone home and the air power was no longer at your disposal. What would have happened in Libya?

LGen Charles Bouchard: I clearly understand your question, sir, and I will try to answer it even without speculating what would have happened if.... The reason it took the time it took is that.... Because I remember discussions sometime in May and June when the term "stalemate" kept being used, and I can you assure you, sir, there was no stalemate.

But what we had to understand is that the regime used this 90-day mandate as a campaign against NATO by saying, "Hey, guys, they may be gone in 90 days, and we're going to get back to you." I'm putting it to a very low level, but to put it in a better way, it's that these 90-day mandates created doubts in the minds of the Libyans. Therefore, the Libyans would not rise up until they were guaranteed that they could succeed. The guarantee of success required NATO's presence—to stop and to make sure that the regime could not inflict violence against them—and therefore that's why it took so long.

If you look at the history of how it developed, it was in one village after the other. It was not a massive uprising in many places. It started in the west and worked its way from Misrata towards Al-Khums and Zliten and the like. So it took a lot of time, but it built on that, obviously, and the momentum culminated in the fall of Tripoli. It took a while.

My point to you, sir, considering the other campaigns that have been taking place, is that I understand the fear and the concern of nations about being seen as getting themselves into a place where they won't be able to get out, where they will be for years.... On the other side, especially with no boots on the ground, where it's a matter of the confidence of the people that we won't walk on them, how do we balance the two to make sure we're not going to walk out on those guys, that we'll stay around?

Now, by September at a certain point, I had reached the point where I knew the regime forces were no longer capable of inflicting a massive offensive operation. That I knew, but the next level was, at which point? It became my own criteria to recommend cessation, to say that we had achieved the mission, which was, at which point is the regime no longer capable of inflicting...? But more importantly, at which point are the people on the ground capable of assuming responsibility for their own security? We've seen this in Afghanistan as well, sir. Mine was a less complex problem, but no less present, and that was to define these two points. I had defined one much earlier in the conflict, but the second was to wait and see when those guys could handle it.

Again, to go back to your point, it's to give them the confidence that we're not going to walk out on them halfway through, sir.

● (1305)

Mr. Chris Alexander: So what if we had walked out and the mandate had not been renewed in its final phase?

LGen Charles Bouchard: You're asking me to speculate, and that's very difficult for me.

I don't think it would have been the right thing. If we're going to commit to something, we've got to commit to it, sir, and we commit until the end or to an agreed point at which we stop, and that has to be well understood, and with 10 states that are clear.... I believe that's how it should be done. It's to clearly enunciate that. Other than that, it's difficult for me to answer, sir.

The Chair: With that, we've run out of time.

General Bouchard, thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to appear before our committee and help us with our study on NATO's strategic concept and our role in the world in international military cooperation.

Again, I want to reflect some of the great comments and the praise from around the table today. You served us with honour. You've brought pride to this country. Canada is proud of everything you have accomplished and of the way you led our young men and women in uniform.

Thank you so much. I want to wish you the best in your retirement. I know you'll probably have many different opportunities ahead of you. Make sure you find some time to spend with your family. I know as well that you probably want to get back to Chicoutimi in Quebec.

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

An hon. member: So moved.

The Chair: We're out of here.

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