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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome.

This is meeting number 44 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, Tuesday, June 5, 2012.

Today we are having a briefing on Canada's counter-terrorism strategy.

Appearing in our first hour is the Honourable Vic Toews, Minister of Public Safety and National Security. We want to thank him for coming back today. It seems as though it was just our last meeting when he was here—and it was—to discuss the estimates. Two meetings in a row he has appeared. We very much appreciate that.

He is accompanied by the appropriate officials from the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Mr. Michael MacDonald, director general of the national security operations directorate; and also Mr. John Davies, director general of national security policy.

I remind all members that the minister's timetable allows him to be here for the first hour, and also that the directors general will continue to testify in our second hour.

We want to thank you again. We would prefer basically the same format as what we've had in the past, and we look forward to your comments, Mr. Minister, and then to a round or two of questioning.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Members, as you know, I'm always pleased to appear before this committee, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to *Building Resilience Against Terrorism: Canada's Counter-Terrorism Strategy*.

As you've indicated, I'm joined here by two officials who will have much of the detail, should I not be familiar with certain very technical aspects of any questions that may be put.

Mr. Chair, Canada has been unwavering in its commitment to protect Canadians and to support global efforts to counter terrorism. I've said on many occasions that the most fundamental job of any government is to provide for the safety and the security of its citizens. Canada's counter-terrorism strategy underscores just how fundamental this responsibility is and how seriously our government takes it. I'm proud that this strategy sets out a clear approach for addressing terrorism, with a special focus on building community

resilience. It also confirms that our government will take all reasonable measures to address real and persistent threats, and Canadians expect no less.

I imagine that most committee members are aware of the strategy, which was released earlier this year and is available to all Canadians through the Public Safety website. As such, I will only briefly go through the strategy itself and then will take some time to highlight its key areas of focus and the way forward.

The counter-terrorism strategy will help prioritize the government's counter-terrorism efforts and promote an open discussion with Canadians on the threats we face. It also highlights the importance of cooperation with Canada's international partners, all levels of government, security intelligence and law enforcement agencies, industry stakeholders, and special interest groups. In other words, it sets out how the government as a whole is currently working to prevent, detect, deny, and respond to the threat of terrorism.

First and foremost, the strategy focuses on prevention, because preventing terrorist ideologies from taking hold of vulnerable individuals is the best scenario.

The second element is to detect terrorism by identifying terrorists and their supporters and the capabilities and nature of their plans. The timely identification of terrorist threats is critical to preventing terrorist attacks, and that is why we have committed in the Air India inquiry action plan to working with our security intelligence and law enforcement agencies to identify more effective ways to share information.

The third element of the strategy is to deny terrorists the means and opportunities to pursue their illegal activities by mitigating vulnerabilities and intervening in terrorist planning, thereby making Canada and Canadian interests a more difficult target for would-be terrorists. To that end, this government has introduced amendments to the Criminal Code that would assist law enforcement in investigating terrorism offences by reinstating investigative hearings and recognizance with conditions.

To deny terrorists the ability to threaten Canada or our allies, we are also introducing new provisions that would make it a criminal offence to leave Canada or attempt to leave Canada for the purpose of committing a terrorist offence. To complement these measures, we are also responding to the needs of victims of terrorism through legislation that allows them to sue perpetrators and supporters of terrorism.

A final element is to respond to terrorist attacks in a proportionate, rapid, and organized manner to ensure a quick return to ordinary life and to reduce the impact and severity of terrorist activity.

Underpinning these four elements are two important themes: resilience and partnerships. I would like to touch on these two themes in turn, beginning with resilience.

In the context of Canada's counter-terrorism efforts, resilience is an important concept to understand for several reasons. First, it speaks to the power of individuals, communities, and society to reject and challenge the factors that pull thought and action in the direction of violent extremism. Secondly, resilience is key to minimizing the negative psycho-social effects of a terrorist attack. In other words, it is important that society's reaction to an event not exacerbate the crisis. Finally, it speaks to the ability of individuals and communities to draw strength from the principles that bind our society.

● (1535)

In making the concept of resilience a cornerstone of Canada's counter-terrorism strategy, one of our overarching goals is to mitigate the potential polarizing impact that violent extremist ideologies, or indeed terrorist attacks, can have on Canadian society.

The other key theme is that of building and strengthening our partnerships both domestically and internationally. The success of our overall strategy depends on strong partnerships, which is why it calls on local governments, community leaders, academics, and citizens to be part of the national effort.

To this end, we are actively working with our security intelligence agencies and law enforcement partners in the provinces and territories, the private sector, non-government organizations, civil society, and community organizations. The RCMP-led integrated national security enforcement teams based in major cities across Canada are one example of how federal, provincial, and municipal law enforcement partners and security intelligence agencies work in collaboration to investigate criminal threats to our national security.

At the local level, we also continue to reach out to a range of diverse communities through initiatives such as the Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security, led jointly by Public Safety and the Department of Justice. Through this initiative we can engage communities in frank discussions that help to build trust and work towards a common vision for society that is resilient to terrorism in all of its forms. In fact, I will be meeting with community leaders in southern Ontario in just a few days to have a dialogue about a range of national security issues.

Mr. Chair, I think it's important to note that Canada's various counter-terrorism initiatives and activities have existed for some time. What this strategy does for the first time is set out in a coherent and unified format how these activities contribute to the government's strategy for countering terrorism. It brings together all the elements of the current approach in a way that can promote deeper engagement with Canadians. Our goal in sharing information about terrorist threats is not to instill fear in Canadians, but rather to build awareness. We recognize that there is still much to learn about countering and preventing terrorism in the Canadian context. More than ever, it is important for governments to collaborate and share

information with experts in other fields, from other nations, and from the private and academic sectors.

To this end, as committee members may know, the Prime Minister and I launched the five-year, \$10-million Kanishka project last year to fund Canadian research on all aspects of countering and preventing terrorism. The goal of the project is to create a vibrant network of scholars across the country that will inform more effective policies for countering terrorism.

Research topics for the first round of funding will cover themes such as ideological extremism and violence, perception and emotion, collective dynamics and resilience, and organizational effectiveness. With investments like these, it is inevitable that our collective knowledge will be advanced and that our understanding of how to tackle these issues will evolve. I had the pleasure of announcing the first round of funding, worth \$1.1 million, which helped build Canada's knowledge and understanding of this complex issue.

Mr. Chair, let me finish with a few words on implementing the counter-terrorism strategy, especially as it relates to the prevention elements.

Our prevention elements will initially be focused upon the following areas: advancing our understanding of how and why violent extremist ideologies resonate with particular individuals, working to understand what tools can help communities deal with these issues, harnessing existing programming and partnerships to help contribute to prevention objectives, and developing reliable indicators to measure outcomes and evaluate the effectiveness of our programs.

As I said earlier, our government believes we can build a society that is resilient against terrorism in all of its forms by talking to Canadians about the security threats we face as a country and by collaborating with our partners to build knowledge and capacity. The counter-terrorism strategy underscores Canada's commitment to taking all reasonable measures to address terrorism in its many forms.

On that note, Mr. Chair, I would like to conclude by thanking all of you again for your time. I look forward to answering any questions that members of the committee may have.

● (1540)

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

We will now move into our first round of questioning.

We will move to Ms. Hoepfner, please, for seven minutes.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Once again I want to thank you, Minister, for being here. It was just at our last meeting that you were here as well, and we really appreciate your making yourself available, as well as your officials who are here today.

I want to begin, Minister, by talking about the strategy as a whole in terms of it being something new. I think you would agree there's no previous government that has taken this approach to countering terrorism. Could you comment on why our government chose to have a very direct and focused strategy as opposed to maybe other governments not recognizing that there was a need? Maybe it's with the change in our world.

Could you comment on the fact that our government has taken this approach? I would say it's a relatively new approach for any government.

Hon. Vic Toews: Thank you, Ms. Hoepfner. I appreciate the question.

Our understanding of terrorism, of course, has evolved in the last ten or so years, especially in the aftermath of the attacks on the twin towers. That certainly opened up a whole range of possibilities that terrorism experts and security agencies simply did not think about. We had to respond as a country very quickly. I know that the prior government did pass some legislation, legislation that we have reintroduced after it sunsetted, because we felt it was necessary to keep that legislation. There were various programs that the former government brought in.

What we've tried to do is to prioritize the government's counter-terrorism efforts and promote an open discussion with Canadians on the type of threats we face. What we're trying to do is to engage all elements of society and bring them together in a coordinated fashion. We've learned from such inquiries as the Air India inquiry about the importance, for example, of sharing information. While that inquiry spoke primarily of domestic sharing of information, it did touch on the international sharing of information. That has become a very important aspect, especially when you're dealing with terrorism. You cannot simply keep information inside Canada and share it with domestic law enforcement and security agencies and believe that you're protecting people effectively. You have to share the information that you have, in the same way that we count on our allies providing us with information to better protect Canadians.

That, in fact, leads to issues and concerns that we need to address—for example, the issue of the privacy rules that govern the use of information. For instance, when we share information with another country, how do we ensure that the information is being used appropriately and will not be used for improper interrogation techniques? What kind of limits can we build into the agreements that we have in our international partnerships?

So this is really a coordination of all of the efforts that have already been done, as well as an improvement of these efforts gained as a result of the knowledge we have acquired along the way. The Kanishka project is fundamental to providing an academic base to our understanding of terrorism, which police agencies, security agencies, judges, and lawyers can all utilize in moving forward on this very difficult issue.

• (1545)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Thank you.

I know you talked about the four pillars of the strategy: prevent, detect, deny, and respond.

I had the privilege in February of meeting with a cross-cultural round table, with individuals who represent a variety of communities and groups. What they bring to this discussion is so important—their frankness, a connection with the community, and their grassroots level knowledge of what's going on in each of their communities.

I know you've met with them and are going to meet with them again. Can you talk a little bit about the prevention part of the strategy in meeting with community leaders and really having the knowledge of what's going on in communities? Things are changing so quickly and the radicalization of people, which leads to violence, can happen so quickly.

Can you talk about engaging community groups, like in the cross-cultural round table?

Hon. Vic Toews: Thank you. Indeed I can.

I think you've hit upon a very important issue, and that is the issue of community involvement when it comes to dealing with the threat of terrorism. I can frankly state that there is no way that we will be successful against terrorist groups unless we engage the communities from which these individuals may, in fact, come, or from which they are receiving some comfort or aid. We need to engage these communities in a productive discussion and include them in the actions that we are taking.

This is an approach that is used right around the world in effectively dealing with terrorist individuals and preventing terrorists from appearing in your midst. I think one of the most disconcerting developments for Canadians is to actually see homegrown terrorism, not simply extremists but terrorist individuals coming out of communities that have had a home in Canada for a long time. Canadians are also disconcerted that Canadian-born individuals would involve themselves in radical politics that lead to violence.

Many of the communities recognize this. By cooperating with the authorities, these communities have been very supportive of our government's efforts in trying to stop terrorist activities. I know that in one particular case a very large community approached the government and indicated that they were concerned about the involvement of their young men in jihad and wanted help from the Canadian government in how to address this. So the cross-cultural round table and, indeed, direct discussions with community organizations are fundamental to stopping the development of homegrown terrorism, and also to thwarting terrorists from overseas who would use these communities, to which they may have an ethnic or cultural affinity, as a base for terrorist activities.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Hoepfner.

We'll now move to Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Garrison, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the minister for coming back. I welcome him back. I trust we won't be seeing him every week, due to his schedule, but he has been very kind to us with his time in the last two weeks.

As the official opposition, I think you'll see us welcoming the strategy as a concept and the principles on which it is based. We may have some differences about how the strategy is articulated and carried out, but we do think it's a good idea to turn our attention to a comprehensive strategy like this. We would also argue that it's important to have a strategy that is both effective and adequately funded, and we may have some questions about that as we go along today.

I was glad to hear you call for partnerships and for reaching out to communities. I do think there's one thing that is missing from the strategy, and that's the importance of maintaining public confidence in the activities of the government in this area. I'm going to ask a little bit about that in just a second.

I can't resist saying one thing, and that is that this strategy contrasts with a lot of the other strategies put forward in the justice area by focusing on prevention and prosecution. In that respect, it seems a lot closer to what we on the opposition side have been arguing for in some of the other areas of justice, instead of focusing on heavy penalties at the other end. I couldn't resist saying that this looks more like a strategy with emphasis that we might have given it. So I want to start with principles, and one in particular. Your strategy says principles matter, and notes the following: They affirm Canada's democratic values. They provide a clear articulation of how Canada conducts its work. They explain to others around the world what Canada stands for....

The strategy then goes on to list the six fundamental principles, and the third of those is adherence to rule of law. So today I want to ask the minister about his directive from last December to CSIS, allowing the use of information derived from torture. In the report of the UN Committee on Torture released on June 1, the respected international experts from that committee expressed what they called serious concern about this directive violating article 15 of the convention against torture, to which Canada is a signatory.

So I would ask the minister how he squares his directive on torture with the third principle of his anti-terrorism strategy, which is adherence to rule of law.

• (1550)

Hon. Vic Toews: Thank you for those comments.

I appreciate that at least we're working on the basis of the same principles. It's not unusual that we would be working on the basis of the same principles. These principles are well recognized around the world as being the principles upon which you mount an effective anti-terrorism strategy.

In respect of the use of information that may have been obtained from questionable sources by the Canadian government, and by CSIS in particular, there are various levels of how that information is used. I can indicate that while the government certainly condemns the use of torture—we do not endorse torture in any way, shape, or form—when our agencies receive information that may indicate that Canadian lives are at stake, it would be negligent of me not to utilize that information or for the agency not to utilize that information.

It's very difficult to sit in a chair in an office in Ottawa and try to examine where information comes from and how it may have been

obtained. If it impacts upon the security of Canadians, that information has to be used.

I'm not aware of any government that would say, "We've come across a situation that indicates that hundreds of our citizens may be killed as a result of the information we've received. There are questions about the source of it, but because of the source, we are not going to use the information and, therefore, we will let hundreds of our citizens perish". I don't believe that there's a responsible government in the world that would say that they would not use that information. I, for one, will use all information that comes to our attention that, in fact, indicates that Canadian lives are at risk.

Mr. Randall Garrison: With respect, Mr. Minister, there are, of course, indications that information that derives from torture is quite often unreliable. You could, in fact, if you rely on that information, make as large an error as if you ignored that information.

I want to go back to the question of adherence to the rule of law. In the strategy and in its appendix on the legal framework, there's no mention of Canada's international obligations anywhere in the strategy or in that framework. In terms of adherence to rule of law, would you include adherence to our international conventions under international law?

• (1555)

Hon. Vic Toews: We will certainly respect the rule of law and will respect human rights. Those are fundamental to our country and to our counter-terrorism strategies. We will certainly take those into account whenever we do something. It's very important that we do that.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I find it curious that the international legal obligations aren't included in that framework. You've not mentioned them in your response to me just now.

Hon. Vic Toews: The rule of law has many different aspects. There are aspects of the rule of law that are local, domestic, and international. Those are all weighed by security officials when they carry out their activities.

Mr. Garrison, if you're suggesting for one moment that if I knew that a UN convention had been breached, but I had information that suggested that Canadian lives were at stake, I would sit and do nothing with that information, you're mistaken. I will act every time in the protection of Canadian lives—every time.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much.

The Chair: We'll move back to the government.

We have Mr. Norlock, please, for seven minutes.

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

Through you to the witness, thank you, Minister and officials, for attending the meeting today.

Would the minister expand a little further on the sorts of investments our government has made in relation to national security and the reasons we're making them? You mentioned the Kanishka project. I think there are others that could be expanded on. I know that Mr. Garrison related the acceptance of that in that it is consultative and collaborative.

Could you expand on some of the investments? They could be investments in making sure that our agencies work together. They could be investments in how we work with other nations.

Hon. Vic Toews: I think I can answer that very broadly, to give the committee a general understanding of what we are making investments in, and the officials, Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Davies, can add some of the numbers around that.

I did mention the Kanishka project that came right out of the Air India inquiry, of \$10 million over five years for this type of targeted research. This is something that has gone on since 2001, so it's not partisan in that sense. I think it's a recognition...in the same way that Mr. Garrison mentioned, that he could support the general principles. I think that even the prior government, while they didn't necessarily have—and here I don't want to use the word coherent, because I don't want to say that their policy was incoherent—a unified strategy, given the developmental stage it was in. But since 2001, the Government in Canada has taken action to address terrorist threats through legislative changes, through targeted programming, through criminal investigations, and other similar initiatives. For example, we've created several entities that have a role in countering terrorism, such as the Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre, the RCMP-led integrated national security enforcement teams, and the Government Operations Centre, and the Financial Transaction Reports Analysis Centre. So it's a multi-faceted approach.

We've also listed a number of terrorist organizations under the Criminal Code, and that is an ongoing process. We've also introduced the Combating Terrorism Act to re-enact the investigative hearings and the recognizance with conditions provisions under the Criminal Code to help law enforcement investigate terrorist activity. So we've taken many of these initiatives with investments we've made and put them into this unified policy that finds its expression in the document we filed.

In terms of some of the money involved, perhaps Mr. Davies would have something to say.

Mr. John Davies (Director General, National Security Policy, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Sure.

Simply to round that out a bit, there's the \$10 million over five years for the Kanishka project that the minister has mentioned. We think it's a very important project. There's not much research in the area of countering violent extremism. This \$10 million is the envy of all of our allies, who don't have much of any resources for this and are really looking to us to lead, not only in Canada but also globally, to help improve the knowledge base in this area. One investment in particular is with Canadian universities, creating a network across the country to help build up knowledge in this area.

A couple of other major announcements, certainly in the context of tight fiscal constraints these days, was an announcement by the Prime Minister recently of \$367 million over five years for the global partnership program, which was originally a G-8 investment to help secure weapons of mass destruction facilities abroad. It started in the former Soviet Union, and the scope has since been expanded to a major counter-proliferation effort abroad and capacity building by Canada.

A third investment a little more recently was the Prime Minister's announcement of \$110 million over three years, I believe, for the Afghan national security forces that will help build their capacity in the years to come.

As the minister said, really, the main investments have been knowledge-based support from staff across the Public Safety portfolio on building new policy initiatives with the U.S., the Beyond the Border initiative, for example, and the action plan with its 16 commitments, all of which are policy initiatives. So there are major policy investments, going forward.

• (1600)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

I wonder if you could talk about what kind of monitoring the government has put into its efforts for reporting to Canadians on the strategy's progress, including an annual report to Canadians on the evolving threat environment, which I think was mentioned. I wonder if you could tell the committee the parameters for this annual report, and maybe expand on it somewhat.

Mr. John Davies: Yes, there is a commitment. You'll notice that pages 7 to 9 of the policy run through this year's threat assessment, with an all-of-government approach of sorts, articulating the threat to Canadians. There's a commitment to update that assessment each year. We're working with the security intelligence community to frame the next iteration of that, so that the assessment will complement other kinds of reporting that you see. The director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service also puts out his annual report from his perspective on national security priorities for Canada.

I think there's a general commitment recognizing that the strategy, which is new, is an evergreen document. There are things that we'll probably want to pick up in the days to come, and I'm sure there's a commitment to report to Canadians on that.

Mr. Rick Norlock: You said it was evergreen, so the parameters for the annual report have not been fully....

Mr. John Davies: We're just working with the community to define both the threat assessment and then how the four pillars will be enacted and implemented through an action plan through each of those four pillars.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

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

We'll now move to Mr. Scarpaleggia, please.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Welcome, Minister.

I just want to refer to page 17 of the strategy, where it says that Canada will also be involved in “increasing interaction with non-traditional partners Canada has less history in dealing with.” What do you mean by that, more or less?

Hon. Vic Toews: Traditionally, we have been a part of the so-called Five Eyes: the Australians, the New Zealanders, the Americans, the British, and us. Those have been our traditional partners. What we've come to realize is that the threat of terrorism impacts upon other countries that we do not necessarily have close security relations with. In fact, some of the trips I've had abroad deal with building up those types of relationships with other countries so that we can enter into security agreements with these individuals.

As I indicated, those types of agreements, although very important, also raise new issues. How do we share information with these individuals? They may not all have the same type of democracy we have, for example. They may not have the same adherence to the rule of law that Canadians have. So with each country then, we have to look at them and ask: how do we share information appropriately with this type of an ally?

• (1605)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You seemed to mention before that these agreements with these new, non-traditional partners for the sharing of information will have to respect the privacy rights of Canadians and so on. Who's going to determine which independent government agency or organization is going to determine whether these agreements are in the interests of protecting Canadians' privacy, or are not unreasonable in terms of what they contain? Is it the Privacy Commissioner of Canada?

Hon. Vic Toews: Well, in fact, it is, to a great extent, the Privacy Commissioner in Canada who informs us about some of the steps we should be taking on the agreements that we are making.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Surely you know, Minister, that a lot is going to be put on the shoulders of the Privacy Commissioner. She will supposedly be required to scrutinize the measures that you've introduced under Bill C-30. Now she'll have to vet agreements with non-traditional partners, yet her budget has been cut. So how is she going to get all of this work done?

Hon. Vic Toews: Well, I haven't had that discussion with her. Every time my department has engaged the Privacy Commissioner, she has been very proactive in wanting to involve that office in the analysis. Right now that office is involved in the Beyond the Border initiative that we have with the Americans, which the Prime Minister and the President signed.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes, that's another thing she has to deal with. That's a third thing, so she really needs more resources.

Hon. Vic Toews: There are many more than three things that she has to deal with.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: No, no, it's the three new things on top of everything else she's doing.

Hon. Vic Toews: However—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'd like to move on to another topic.

Obviously, you mentioned you don't want CSIS to be engaged in illegal activities. You obviously don't want to be blindsided by shady behaviour on the part of CSIS. Therefore, you need to keep an eye on what the agency is doing, for the good of your own position and for the good of Canadians, which is why it is quite surprising that the government is getting rid of the position of Inspector General.

I believe there were over 20 people in that office who were dedicated to ensuring that CSIS followed the law and that you as a minister would not be blindsided. In fact, I think you appreciated the role that the Inspector General has played. If I'm not mistaken, you said at one point in 2010 the following:

The Inspector General performs an important review function that supports me in my role as Minister and ensures that CSIS is operating within the law and complying with current policies.

I think you need those resources. I'm just wondering why you weren't able to get the resources you needed or you weren't able to get cabinet approval to maintain a position that you have said was valuable to your work.

Hon. Vic Toews: In fact, the reorganization has done nothing to change my substantive ability to keep an eye on CSIS and, more importantly, not just my keeping an eye on CSIS through Public Safety. Remember, the Inspector General was not an independent office; it reported to CSIS. It was not an independent organization.

Public Safety can carry out much of the same function; plus, we have strengthened SIRC, the independent review agency, which can conduct the same types of functions the Inspector General carried out.

The only difference is that we've eliminated about \$800,000 annually in administrative costs. We have not diminished the capacity in any way to look at the substantive activities of CSIS and to ensure that they are co-operating.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But the Inspector General had very specific powers under sections 30 to 33 of the CSIS Act, which the department, in reviewing itself, would not have.

As a matter of fact, what's interesting about this budget—which is much, much more than a financial plan for Canada—is that it gives the department the ability to review the services-specific activities and provide the committee with a report on review, if it considers that a review by the service would be inappropriate.

The department doesn't have the same powers, as far as I can see, that the Inspector General had under sections 30 to 33 of the CSIS Act. I think it's a bit problematic that it's in a budget and that we seem to be weakening your ability to get the information you need.

Let me—

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Scarpaleggia. We're going to have to cut that off. You'll have to get an answer in the next round, because his time has expired.

Mr. Scott, for five minutes in the second round.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for coming in.

I wonder if I could ask just a few questions that I think require only short answers before asking one that goes to the heart of the rule of law question that you've brought up.

As my colleague Mr. Garrison referred to it, we do have the concluding observations of the recent Committee Against Torture, and a couple of the recommendations go directly to the heart of the rule of law principle in the resilience document. One effectively recommends, in very strong terms, that Messrs. Almaliki, Elmaati, and Nureddin be compensated in the same way, albeit not necessarily at the same level, as Mr. Arar. This is a specific case, but it very much goes to the heart of the question of security intelligence and what we do when it goes wrong.

So the quick question is, does your ministry, in tandem with any other ministries, have any intention of adhering to this recommendation?

Hon. Vic Toews: This is a matter before the courts. I won't get involved in that.

Mr. Craig Scott: The Arar commission report, which has long been lauded for its recommendations with respect to models of oversight of national security intelligence operations, is also referenced by the Committee Against Torture. I'm just wondering if there's any short way you can tell us whether that is still under consideration.

The O'Connor commission report referenced models of surveillance. Could you indicate whether you're moving entirely in a new direction, including strengthening SIRC? Could you give us information on that?

Hon. Vic Toews: In respect of SIRC and the whole issue of oversight, I want to emphasize that the elimination of the Inspector General in no way limits my ability to get information out of CSIS. If Public Safety can't get that, which is essentially acting on my behalf in the same way that the Inspector General did, I can request that SIRC do an investigation into that. So the oversight remains exactly the same and we save \$800,000 in administrative costs.

As a result of the Air India inquiry action plan, we will continue to preserve the effectiveness of the review mechanisms that are already in place, such as in SIRC, the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP, and the Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner.

So I think that we have the full ability to hold CSIS accountable, either through administrative directions of the Department of Public Safety or through a request to SIRC.

Mr. Craig Scott: Thank you very much.

So I understand that you have pretty much settled on the system you would like to have.

With respect to the rule of law, you did mention non-traditional partners being part of the security-sharing apparatus transnationally. Mr. Scarpaleggia brought that up as his core question.

We have experience. We've had almost 10 years of experience, for example, with Afghanistan. We know that CSIS was in the field. We also know that other intelligence agencies were there. I'm wondering whether or not there are any active studies going on about lessons learned with respect to CSIS or any other intelligence agencies that you have to be cognizant of with respect to intelligence acquisition in Afghanistan.

• (1615)

Hon. Vic Toews: I can't say that I've received a specific briefing on Afghanistan solely. I've certainly had briefings on many countries and our involvement, in the intelligence we have received from many countries, but I don't quite know what you're saying in terms of lessons learned. I can tell you that SIRC, CSIS, and Public Safety continue to learn on a daily basis and that I as the minister continue to learn on a daily basis.

I think the plan itself that we came up with is part of that learning experience. I like the word Mr. Davies used when he said that this is an "evergreen" document. We will continue to learn and we will continue to improve the strategy, but we think that the fundamentals of the strategy are correct in the four principles that we have identified. I'm pleased that the New Democrats are supportive of those four principles.

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

Thank you, Mr. Scott.

We'll now move back to the government, to Ms. Hoeppner and Mr. Aspin.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Thank you. I will be sharing my time with Mr. Aspin.

Mr. Toews, I want to thank you for your strong commitment, which you articulated very well, to keeping Canadians safe and to putting the priority of the safety of Canadians first.

We brought you here today to speak about our strategy to counter terrorism. There seems to be more of a focus on CSIS and oversight, which is important, but I think it's also important to note that CSIS does an excellent job for our country. I think we are a model throughout the world for the work we do. As much as oversight is obviously very important, it just seems quite interesting to me that the opposition would rather focus on possible suspicions of CSIS as opposed to our strategy.

So I'm going to bring us back to our strategy for countering terrorism. I want to ask you about the whole part of our strategy where we have terrorist listings.

I want to ask you—or your officials, if they would prefer to answer—about the ability of terrorist organizations, if they're not listed, to try to raise money within Canada. So it's not so much about direct radicalization, let's say, or violent acts in Canada, but about the way that possible terrorist organizations would try to use Canada to raise money, and how listing them can help stop that. This affects Canada as well as the rest of the world, protecting them from terrorism.

Hon. Vic Toews: Well, like ideology, I think that money is the lifeblood of terrorism. These organizations absolutely require money to carry out their evil intentions.

That's why the approach of the Government of Canada has been multi-faceted in terms of the reporting mechanisms and the agreements, for example, that we've signed with other countries, including with the Americans, in terms of the transfer of moneys that raise suspicions—even things like the \$10,000 limit in terms of deposits crossing borders. It's not simply organized crime that needs to move cash; it's also the terrorists.

The more disconcerting issue, of course, is the intimidation of communities here that may have an ethnic, a cultural, or a religious connection to these terrorist groups, and the fact that individuals are extorted to provide money. Again, this requires not necessarily new laws, because whatever form the extortion is in, it's illegal, whether it's done by a terrorist, by organized crime, or by an ordinary criminal. What we need especially in this context is the cooperation of the individuals from the communities where they are being extorted. The most effective means to fight terrorism, other than security agencies themselves, is community involvement in this respect.

I think Mr. MacDonald has some comments to add.

Mr. Michael MacDonald (Director General, National Security Operations Directorate, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): I'll be brief.

The efforts to combat terrorist financing are an extremely good example of both international and domestic efforts dovetailing together to achieve an objective. Coming out of 9/11, that's one of the main objectives that the international community had, where the United Nations Security Council began listing certain entities associated with al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and countries in their domestic legislation would implement those efforts to take those listed entities by the United Nations in a consolidated fashion and put it in action in domestic law.

Very briefly, listing achieves two primary objectives. One, as the minister has mentioned, is that it takes away the money, the ability to finance. In effort, we're denying, which is one of the pillars of the strategy, the terrorists' or terrorist groups' efforts to raise funds to do activities. But we're also addressing support. You'll note, in the Criminal Code listing, provisions that it's an offence to support a terrorist entity or to provide funds, for example, to a terrorist entity.

So you're taking a very consolidated international effort to a domestic effort and achieving two very effective purposes at the same time.

• (1620)

Ms. Candice Hooppner: Thank you very much.

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds.

Ms. Candice Hooppner: That's fine, Mr. Chair. Maybe we'll get a second round.

The Chair: All right. We'll come back.

Madame Doré Lefebvre, please, for five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Minister. It is very good of you to come back to the committee to testify.

My question is about the Security Intelligence Review Committee. I understand that you have a great deal of confidence in that committee, but I wonder why the position of chair is still vacant seven months after the resignation of the former chair. There were allegations of conflict of interest because of his links with international arms dealers.

But the committee has still been without a chair for seven months. Why has he not been replaced? Do you have any plans to do so?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: Yes, we do. It's a government decision that will be made by cabinet.

I agree with you that there should be a chairman there on a permanent basis. I'm very pleased with the acting chair at this time, but for the purposes of continuity and implementation of its own program, I think a permanent chair is always preferable.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Have you set a timeline? How long will it take for the committee to have a permanent chair?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: That's a decision that cabinet will make.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: We have been provided with a document on Canada's counter-terrorism strategy. I agree with a number of the points, especially the ones in the annexes. I agree, for example, about the importance of the Canada Border Services Agency in dealing with terrorism in Canada.

However, the recent budget shows \$143 million in cuts in border service officer positions. How are we going to manage to maintain or strengthen the service if the Canada Border Services Agency budget is slashed?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: Like other agencies, Public Safety and the agencies that report to government through Public Safety have all had to take a look at their programming to see what is the most effective utilization of their resources.

Let's remember, Public Safety has been one of the largest recipients of taxpayer dollars over the last number of years, especially since 2006. In fact, we have increased the number of border service officers by 26% since we came into office. It's a very, very significant increase.

Front-line border services are not being impacted detrimentally in any way. In fact the DRAP exercise, the deficit reduction action plan exercise, focused on what administrative savings we could make without cutting front-line services.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: So you can assure us that no front line border service officer positions will be eliminated.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: We will not compromise the effectiveness of the substantive efforts we have been making on the front line.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Okay.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews: There are always new ways to use resources. For example, one of the things we are doing as a result of the Beyond the Border initiative is looking at the border and asking how we can more effectively manage that border. My fear, of course, is that many small border crossings don't necessarily make economic sense. Yet they are the lifeblood of many of the smaller communities, both north and south of the border.

How do we work together with the Americans to keep those border crossings open? We are looking at that very strenuously and looking at issues of technology and shared services, including shared facilities. We already share facilities in some contexts. Not many people realize that between the Yukon and Alaska there is a shared physical facility, where the Americans and Canadians work together in the same office, so to speak. Little Gold Creek is the crossing, as I recall.

With technology and shared services reducing the costs of infrastructure, I believe we can maintain these border service officer positions as much as possible. We have had a 26% increase. My intention is not to decrease any of the front-line services. For example, I have said I want the dogs at the land border crossings maintained, because they are essentially drug dogs.

• (1625)

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

Thank you, Ms. Doré Lefebvre.

Now to Mr. Aspin, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for appearing again so soon.

I think this is a great initiative. I congratulate you on your solid leadership.

The opposition has criticized those who work to protect Canadians from the most severe threats, often at great personal risk to themselves. Could you please tell the committee how this strategy will continue to allow Canada to cooperate with our allies, to fight terrorism, and to protect Canadians in accordance with Canadian law?

Hon. Vic Toews: The Air India experience was truly a great learning experience—a horrible, horrible event, but out of that horrible event came the silver lining of how we can respond effectively to terrorism.

In a modern age, terrorism knows no domestic boundaries. It is internationally based, and sometimes individuals acting by themselves can suddenly spring up. But in the day of the Internet, it really doesn't matter where you are. You can become radicalized. You can participate in a criminal terrorist act. You can coordinate those attacks. What I see coming from the Air India inquiry, and the Arar inquiry and Commissioner Major—I think it was, though I sometimes loses track of commissions, but who nonetheless did an excellent job—is the emphasis on the sharing of information so that we can share with our allies and others who share our concerns about the threat of terrorism.

We share this information to thwart the activities of terrorists. It has been an extremely positive experience. I think at the same time we have stayed true to the rule of law, to our respect for human rights, because I don't believe that being strong on law and order in fighting terrorists is inconsistent with the rule of law and human rights. In fact, being tough on terrorists preserves the human rights we enjoy and the rule of law we enjoy. So I think information sharing is one of the most important aspects.

The second one is the sharing of resources. The Shiprider program that the Liberals introduced in 2005 on a pilot basis has worked extremely well. Canadians and Americans are on the same ship in the Great Lakes, and borders don't bother them because that ship can cross a border, across water, and as soon as the boat enters Canadian waters, a Canadian officer takes command. Similarly in American waters, it's the Americans who have charge. They have cross-training so that people behave appropriately in accordance with the specific laws in each country. That has worked very well, and it worked very well in the context of the Vancouver Olympics. Of course, that is why of we're bringing forward the legislation in respect of the Shiprider program. I think it's been a very effective program.

So it's about the sharing of information, the sharing of resources, and I think attacking a common terrorist threat.

• (1630)

Mr. Jay Aspin: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: We have one more minute. Maybe Mr. Rathgeber would fill that minute?

Hon. Vic Toews: I should clarify—

The Chair: Oh, maybe Minister Toews would like to fill that minute.

Hon. Vic Toews: It was Justice O'Connor who was in the Arar inquiry, and of course Justice Major in the Air India inquiry. I'm sorry about that.

The Chair: Mr. Rathgeber, do you have a question or do you want to wait until the next round?

I see the first hour for our minister is up. I know he committed for one hour. I believe Mr. Davies and Mr. MacDonald will stay.

We aren't going to suspend, but we will thank you for appearing and for the briefing and for answering the questions. We very much appreciate your presence here today, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Vic Toews: I want to thank the members on both sides of the committee for the very informative questions they asked and, hopefully, my testimony has provided some insight into where the government stands on these issues.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll continue with our meeting. There will be no break or suspension.

So we'll go over to Monsieur Rousseau.

[Translation]

You have five minutes.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I assume that you will be able to answer questions as efficiently as the minister.

We have some specific concerns about the statement on page 9 of the counter-terrorism strategy about environmentalists being domestic extremist groups. Last month, we also learned that a group of first nations in British Columbia was under RCMP surveillance because of its stated opposition to Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline project.

I have the nasty impression that the Counter-terrorism Strategy is being used by the current government to demonize groups with legitimate claims that represent no real threat to the security of Canadians. In politics, it is normal for pressure groups to directly oppose government or its policies. To stigmatize and demonize those groups is like muzzling—

[English]

The Chair: Just one moment.

On a point of order, Ms. Hoepfner.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: If I'm correct, and maybe you can provide clarity on this, when we have officials here their role is to provide direct information, not to comment on political matters or matters of policy.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: I will have a question.

[English]

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Could you make a ruling on this, Chair?

The Chair: Yes, I am aware of it. He did draw a reference to the actual strategy here on page 10.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Yes, it is in the document.

[English]

The Chair: I was listening to that, but it was in reference to something that was in the strategy we've been presented with.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: But it is still in the document.

[English]

The Chair: And again, that's right: Departmental officials are not expected to answer political questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: I understand that completely, no problem. But I was referring to the fact that, in politics, it is normal for governments to have opponents.

Can you explain why groups who are peacefully standing up for the environment and aboriginal groups who are standing up for their ancestral lands are considered threats to national security? Why are you devoting resources and staff to spy on what we consider to be inappropriate targets?

[English]

Mr. John Davies: Thank you for the question.

I first want to reiterate a point the minister has made a number of times, that the pursuit of lawful political activity or protest, whatever its character, is a fundamental right in Canada. I don't think anything in the strategy talks against that or suggests otherwise.

I think the strategy actually distinguishes between a legitimate activity and criminal activity. There's one reference to environmental activism, and I think it's prefaced by violence linked to this kind of activity. The reality is that there have been six attacks on natural gas pipelines in Canada in the last number of years, so it's a real threat.

The other point I made earlier is that each year we've undertaken to update the threat assessment. We'll look at that and whether that characterization needs to remain. But to go back to my message, there's nothing in the strategy here or nothing that anyone is trying to imply that would suggest that lawful activity or protests are not valid.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: In the light of what happened in Toronto a few days ago, the real threat to public safety, in our opinion, is street gangs. Are they always considered terrorist groups or a danger to society?

[English]

Mr. John Davies: No. I think they're considered criminal groups. If it were a federal issue the RCMP would be involved, but I imagine that's being dealt with by the Toronto police, but I can't comment on the issue.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. MacDonald.

Mr. Michael MacDonald: On top of what my colleague Mr. Davies has said, I think it is important to recognize that the Criminal Code is quite clear on the criminal offences relating to terrorism, including support and facilitation of terrorist activity, and on what constitutes a terrorist activity. Also, the international conventions and protocols of the United Nations, to which Canada ascribes, are quite clear on what activities constitute a terrorist activity. There's also the legal aspect in the criminal law that we also have to be mindful of.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Um...

[English]

The Chair: You have a little more time.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Okay.

Does the strategy mean a new approach to the fight against terrorism? With all the action plans, the command structure and the division of resources, how are you going to make sure that there is good collaboration and synergy between all departments, interest groups and provincial and federal police forces? How are you going to make sure that there will really be a clear and efficient exchange of information between the various groups?

[English]

Mr. John Davies: That's a good question. I think what you've hit upon is the work plan for the national security branch of Public Safety over the next year. Our job now is to shift to implementation.

What we're doing is that we're looking at each of the pillars. We're creating clear work plans around each of those. They're based on the principles, the partnership as you said, not just the portfolio of Public Safety and the entire security intelligence community, but also the provinces, the municipalities, the non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and so on to figure out how we want to move forward in each of those pillars, in terms of prioritizing legislative, policy, and program gaps, and so on. That will be a very important part of our work over the next year.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

[English]

The Chair: No, your time is up.

We'll now move back to the government side and to Mr. Rathgeber, please.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both officials for your attendance here this afternoon.

Following up on the question that Mr. Rousseau just asked with respect to information sharing and coordinated response, when I look at annex A of the document *Building Resilience Against Terrorism*, I see no fewer than 20 federal agencies listed with some sort of mandate with respect to counter-terrorism, everything from Border Services to the RCMP, CSIS, Health Canada, Finance, some 20 agencies.

How are they coordinated? How do they interact? Is there a lead agency and is there duplication of services or tasks somewhere, with all of those agencies providing some piece of the puzzle?

Mr. John Davies: I can start it from a policy perspective, and then Mr. MacDonald can talk from the operations side.

From the policy perspective, it depends on the issue. If we're talking about national security issues related to admissibility, that's kind of a different group. But it's a very similar group to the ones you see listed here, relative to countering violent extremism, for instance, when we're looking at extending the group beyond the traditional security intelligence community, to include departments like Canadian Heritage, Human Resources and Skills Development, and so on.

Public Safety takes a lead role in many of these issues, in many of the different ways of slicing national security, coordinating and leveraging expertise federally and working with the provinces and so on. The Privy Council Office also has a major role with the office of the National Security Advisor.

There are typically working groups, as you can imagine, with large numbers of people in the room, and they're fed upward through the director, director general, assistant deputy minister, and deputy minister levels. There are different committees, depending on what

the issue is, and that feeds into advice to cabinet. A lot of our time is spent coordinating with other departments and agencies, for sure.

• (1640)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Working groups work well in situations like this, but if there's a call for an immediate response, for instance, September 11, 2001, who's in charge? Who's the lead agency? Who's in charge of coordinating Canada's response?

Mr. Michael MacDonald: Moving from the prevention pillar, what you're asking about is our moving into the response.... That's a very good question. In fact, the government has the federal emergency response plan, which is the document that guides how the government will respond to an event affecting the national interest, and Public Safety, through the Government Operations Centre, is the key hub.

All departments and agencies have their own legislative mandates, and they perform their duties according to that legislative mandate. However, from the Prime Minister down, the federal emergency response plan is structured such that key decision-makers are brought together, usually at the assistant deputy minister, deputy minister, and then cabinet levels. They are fed information, decision briefs, and factual points of what is going on in a crisis situation. Ministers have their responsibilities, according to their mandate, to undertake their activities. But overall, Public Safety, through the Government Operations Centre, is the nodule, the hub, that takes that information and provides it up to cabinet and, ultimately, the Prime Minister, if necessary.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Does the Government Operations Centre run real-time drills?

Mr. Michael MacDonald: The Government Operations Centre runs constantly. It's 24/7 to begin with, but it constantly runs exercises and is part of exercises, running drills. For example, with regard to the air incident protocol, which is a protocol for the government to respond to air threats, they sometimes run up to two or three drills a week in just exercising—constantly exercising.

As most of us know, in policing, law enforcement, security intelligence, or a military environment, the key to a response is exercise.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have a minute.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: I want to change directions, to the old issue of cyber security and cyber threats. I briefly perused the document, but I didn't see that mentioned anywhere.

Is the prospect of cyber threats, where a worm or a virus could potentially shut down a power plant or somebody's air traffic control systems, identified in this document or elsewhere? Does Public Safety see cyber security as a real threat to our national security?

The Chair: Mr. MacDonald.

Mr. Michael MacDonald: Mr. Chair, the response to that question has to go back to what this strategy is about, and that is countering terrorism, and terrorism in all its forms and threat forms. Cyber security, as a thing in and of itself, is of great concern to Public Safety. In fact, Public Safety is charged with a cyber security strategy and being the critical incident response centre that responds to cyber issues. But it has to be threat-driven, in the sense that we have to have terrorists committing a threat using cyber security—not others doing it.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: That's what I was asking.

The Chair: Thank you. It's one of those topics that I think this committee is very interested in. It has come up, and yet we know so little about it. We would love to maybe hear more about that a little later on.

In the meantime, we'll move to Mr. Scott, please.

Mr. Craig Scott: I think I can oblige, as I'll ask a couple of questions precisely on that.

I think Mr. Rathgeber is correct. It seems to be little touched upon in the resilience strategy.

In the cyber infrastructure discussion, there's no mention of a bill that the ministry was obviously sponsoring at the same time it was preparing this report, and that's Bill C-30 on Internet surveillance. Now it's called the child predator something or other act, but in fact it covers all crimes and any criminal investigations where there's Internet data relevant to crimes. It's not only about child predators. That's one of the things we've learned in the whole episode.

I have a quick question. Because you're attempting to have a fairly integrated, holistic approach, is Bill C-30 integral to the counter-terrorism strategy set out in this document?

Mr. Michael MacDonald: The powers that are found in the current draft bill, Bill C-30, are one part of the critical puzzle of all efforts to combat terrorism, keeping in that strict interpretation, yes.

• (1645)

Mr. Craig Scott: Is there any reason, though, that it wasn't mentioned or there wasn't a stronger reference to cyber security issues in this document? Is it just that it's an early stage of...? I'm just thinking of the holistic interconnection of the....

Mr. John Davies: Yes, I believe there is a reference in the strategy to terrorists' interest in using, say, the Internet as a tool to facilitate attacks. I could be wrong, but as that threat is evolving quickly, it would be something we'd want to note in the next iteration of the threat assessment.

Certainly in the "prevent" pillar and the issue of countering violent extremism, I think a big issue is the use of the Internet and social media as a tool for recruitment, financing, and propaganda use. At least from the policy perspective we're working on, that is something we want to learn more about, and it will figure more prominently in the days ahead, for sure.

Mr. Craig Scott: That actually slides into the next point.

There is a reference on page 32 of the document to how, after 9/11, "stronger laws against hate crimes and hate propaganda" were part of the measures taken. Some of us are quite concerned that we're about to see Bill C-304 go through the House, a bill that actually

repeals the hate propaganda sections of the Canadian Human Rights Act. It deals with robocalls and Internet websites disseminating hatred.

In the report, white supremacy groups are listed as the kind of issue-based local terrorists that we might be concerned about or groups that might become terrorist. In the whole planning exercise, I wonder whether this bill, Bill C-304, ever came on the radar screen of Public Safety. It's a private member's bill, so it could well be the case that it didn't.

Mr. John Davies: First of all, there's a bit of a time lag between when these documents are written and when they're actually published. This was released in February, but a good part of it was written last summer and fall, so there's a—

Mr. Craig Scott: The bill was deposited a year ago, though.

You're not aware of it?

Mr. John Davies: No, I'm not.

Mr. Craig Scott: Okay. Thank you.

I have one other point, a matter of clarification.

Do I have a minute, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Craig Scott: Okay, thank you.

On page 9, the top left corner, there's this reference:

Some international terrorist groups have more explicit Canadian connections.... Although the civil war in Sri Lanka has ended, it is important that any surviving elements of the LTTE

—the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam—

are not allowed to rebuild in Canada.... In May 2010, for example...

—a named individual—

an LTTE fundraiser, was convicted of terrorist financing in Canada.

I want to point out that the crimes for which he was convicted in 2010 occurred in 2008, before the end of the war in 2009. Is there any particular reason that this very specific provision made its way into this document, naming a specified individual, a specific terrorist group, with respect to crimes that have nothing to do with the LTTE's resurging after the war? Is this any indication that we think the LTTE is reforming in Canada?

Mr. John Davies: I think we're going to have to get back to you on that. I imagine it was something to do with the LTTE's being a listed entity, so we'll have to.... You were looking for a good example here, so let me get back to you on that.

Mr. Craig Scott: All right.

The Chair: Mr. Scott, a very quick statement.

Mr. Craig Scott: Right.

One quick question, then.

The Chair: Just a statement.

Mr. Craig Scott: There's no statement, so I'll close.

The Chair: All right, Mr. Scott, you have 10 seconds left.

We'll go back to the government side again. Ms. Young, you have five minutes.

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): I want to thank you for being here today and for your answers.

Given all our experience—and this has been widely reported—are there some strategic drivers changing the terrorist threat in Canada domestically or internationally?

Mr. Michael MacDonald: I can start off, and maybe I'll turn to Mr. Davies.

I think you've hit on a very important point about the nature of terrorism itself and the terrorist threat. The whole objective of terrorists is to undertake their activities to achieve their objective. They constantly change. Every effort that a country or a coalition of countries undertakes is exactly what the terrorist entity themselves look for to change and adapt to. Their ultimate goal is to achieve whatever it is they're trying to achieve, and they'll use whatever means, barbaric or not, to achieve that. A suicide bomber is a great example of how barbaric it can be at times and how dedicated people are.

The strategic drivers ebb and flow through time, with how robust the group is, how well-financed it is, how well-armed it is, and where it is operating. Do they have safe havens to operate elsewhere? Frankly, the pressure that the international community may be putting on the group will also change its nature. Always anticipating that is the challenge back home for intelligence agencies and law enforcement agencies. Again, that speaks right to the “prevent” and “deny” pillars in the strategy.

• (1650)

Mr. John Davies: The main strategic driver noted in the strategy is globalization and just how quickly interconnections are being built across the globe, both through social media and technology from one perspective, but also in terms of financing networks. I think we would say this is a big aspect of it. Whether we're talking about procurement-led networks or financing procurements, these things are changing all the time, and it's up to us to keep up with those trends, whether they involve new techniques, new policies, or legislation, to make sure things are constantly up to date.

We were in the Senate yesterday on Bill S-9 on nuclear terrorism, and there was the same kind of discussion around counterproliferation as the one we're having around counterterrorism. There is a strong interest by certain groups to keep ahead of the curve, to expose weaknesses and so on.

Globalization and the rapidity with which individuals can connect to each other and share information and techniques and so on is a big challenge.

Ms. Wai Young: Given Canada's place in the world and, as you say, the rapid globalization of the world—and this is obviously a new document and a new initiative and seems to be quite comprehensive—are there any things from a policy or operations perspective that we need also need to be looking at 10 or 20 years down the road?

Mr. John Davies: That's a good question. I think the one thing we can say with certainty is that what we think of as the threat today will not be the threat 10 or 20 years from now. As policy-makers, I think

we're always of the view that nothing is static. Ten years ago, certainly perhaps pre-9/11, the way we looked at threats was a lot different from the way we do today. We assume that 10 years from now things will be very different, so the structure of the security and intelligence community and the architecture and the governance around it will perhaps also have to adapt as the threat evolves.

It's difficult going out 10 years. I think we tend to go out three to five years. Once you get past that, uncertainty dominates for sure.

Ms. Wai Young: We've seen that there are terrorist groups operating in Canada. We've certainly heard about them as well.

Can you give a few examples of these groups and how effective our work—and your work obviously—has been to counter and mitigate their impact?

Mr. Michael MacDonald: Very briefly, I think for example we talked about listing terrorist entities and about how freezing their assets in order to deny them funding is crucial. I don't have the exact number off the top of my head, but I think that somewhere close to a quarter of a million dollars is currently frozen in Canadian financial institutions. Those entities are all from the list that's created under the Criminal Code by the minister or from any other UN sanction lists explicitly for criminal.... We have some court cases in Canada to attack those and prosecute those who commit terrorist offences.

Canada is a target for terrorism. As John has mentioned, the threat environment changes, so the operation of certain terrorist groups also changes, meaning that their presence in or links to Canada may change over time. Again, it's the constant ebbing and flowing, the changing dimension, the idea that nothing is static in the environment.

I think those are two concrete examples.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacDonald.

We'll go to Mr. Scarpaleggia, please, for five minutes, and then back to—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you very much, Chair.

In a word, what is really different about this strategy that departs from a previous approach?

Obviously, we haven't been sitting idly by since 2001. There's been coordination. The idea that we suddenly discovered coordination would be wrong. Did we somehow wake up recently and say, “Well, you know, we haven't been doing this. We should be doing that?”

Really, what is different about this strategy? Is it just a consolidation of existing practice with some looking into the future and planning steps that need to be taken in the future? What really is the crux of this?

• (1655)

Mr. John Davies: That's a fair question. I think it's the first time an all-of-government view of the threats facing Canada and Canadians has been put in one place. It's also the first time that the core principles driving the security intelligence community have been put in one place, which I think is an important achievement. Perhaps when you read it you just take it for granted, but getting 12 to 15 members of the security intelligence community to put in one place the principles that we will abide by—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Basically, this really is a pulling together in Public Safety....

Mr. John Davies: It's a pulling together of approaches for the government, on behalf of the government.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes, on behalf of the government.

Mr. John Davies: Also, when you look at the conceptual framework, it's the first time we've put in one place organizing principles for ourselves as a way to help set priorities going forward.

In one sense, yes, it's pulling together things that have existed for some time. Certainly in the national security world, most Canadians aren't completely aware of all the laws and institutions that exist—and that was an important aspect—and what the threat is to them and also to our allies. Many of our allies have similar kinds of things. Theirs are not exactly like this strategy, but they are similar. It's a very important tool for us to have something like this that we can actually hand over and say....

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: How long has this consolidation, if you will, of government resources been going on? Is this plan the culmination of a five-year process or a 10-year process, beginning with 2001?

Mr. John Davies: What you have before you took about a year and a half to pull together. I don't know how you march backwards from there and say what was there and what wasn't. But it was, in terms of an effort, an all-government effort. It took about a year and a half to pull together.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Are you operating on a high level of—not abstraction, but of governance and coordination? Or are you really getting into the nitty-gritty of things, such as the protection of our water infrastructure, for example?

I was at a conference a year and a half ago. There was an expert from England who had secured, against the threat of terrorism or just simple mischief, all the water filtration plants in England. He had contracts in other countries. He told me point blank that they're just not there yet.

Are you aware of that aspect of things, as well? Are you also aware of airport security issues? In 2005 I had the opportunity to go to Israel with the Liberal Minister of Transport to investigate security in the transportation system—airports, ports, and buses.

Has that fed into this strategy? Has all that intelligence fed into this strategy? Are you dealing with those kinds of issues?

Mr. John Davies: Maybe I will start, and Mike can weigh in.

On critical infrastructure, such as water systems and so on, there is a plan, a critical infrastructure plan, for Canada. You're seeing only half of the national security branch from Public Safety. The other

components are cyber security and critical infrastructure. There's quite a detailed plan at the federal level for working with the provinces to protect critical infrastructure. There are also, in the Beyond the Border agreement, arrangements and agreements to work more with the U.S. on that issue.

On the issue of aviation security, Public Safety, my group in particular, leads the passenger protect program. We have a big role in this area of aviation security, obviously with the Department of Transport, which is more the front-line operator in managing security.

It's hard to write everything in one strategy. A lot of these specific things cascade down. We could talk afterwards.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Davies.

You'll have to get it into another question, Mr. MacDonald, somehow.

We'll move to Mr. Goguen, please, for five minutes.

• (1700)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The exchange of information between partners is one of the key elements of the strategy, nationally and internationally. I would like to go back to one of Mr. Rousseau's comments. He said that the aboriginal groups who were protesting peacefully were being targeted and he asked why so many resources were being devoted to that. You said that the target was not aboriginal groups but illegal activities.

As I recall, we had the October crisis in the 1970s. That was before CSIS was established. The target was not the people of Quebec, but the illegal activities of the FLQ. Subsequent to the October crisis, we had the three-volume MacDonald Commission report that looked into certain activities of the RCMP and into public safety. We found out that various government bodies were exchanging a huge amount of information with no regard for people's privacy. Then we had the CSIS Act that made some exchanges of information legal.

What steps are presently taken to facilitate the legitimate exchange of information between various government bodies? Let's start at the national level.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Goguen.

Mr. Davies.

[English]

Mr. John Davies: One aspect of exchanging information is day-to-day contact. There's a lot of discussion among the operators, the front line, to share information. In terms of, say, the relationship between the RCMP and the service, there are a lot of different, newer protocols to ensure they work well together, that they de-conflict on issues and activities. The RCMP leads are a big step forward with regard to integrated national enforcement teams.

One of the issues that was noted as a priority in the Air India action plan was the improvement of domestic information sharing among federal departments. The concern is that the ability to lawfully share information that is relevant to national security is mitigated through a patchwork of legislation, and so on, which creates a risk aversion to sharing. One of the issues the government is committed to look at in that action plan is how to improve that, to improve the culture of risk aversion to sharing, to manage decisions and talk to lawyers, to get to a bit more of a presumption of sharing, where everyone is comfortable with a lawful basis to share. So that's certainly something we want to do.

There's a commitment in the Beyond the Border action plan to work more with our U.S. counterparts on sharing information. The first step there is understanding each other's privacy regimes, the Constitution and the charter, in sharing and being clear on what is a lawful basis for the security agencies to share.

The Chair: You have two minutes left.

Mr. Robert Goguen: With regard to the exchange of international information, not every country has a program with the United States like NEXUS—and, of course, people do this voluntarily and they're trusted travellers. It goes without saying that we have much more control over what we do domestically than we do with the exchange of information with other countries. What mechanisms and safeguards are being put in place to make sure that the rights of our citizens are being respected and not taken advantage of in the information we exchange?

Mr. John Davies: What particular kind of information are you talking about? Would that be advance passenger information shared between airlines or, for example, are we talking about information that law enforcement agencies would share on certain targets and sources?

Mr. Robert Goguen: To be honest with you, I have no idea what type of material is exchanged. That's within your realm. I'm talking about material that would be particularly relevant to security issues, so you tell me what the safeguards would be.

Mr. John Davies: Again, it depends on what you're talking about. If you're talking about passenger information, there are treaties, for example—

Mr. Robert Goguen: That's the simple part.

Mr. John Davies: —being negotiated between Canada and the European Union to ensure the proper transfer of information, so that we are both bound legally to follow certain steps. These would be enacted through memorandums of understanding, and so on.

The same thing applies on the operational level. The RCMP, for example, would have a protocol, an MOU in place, with whatever security agency it works with in the U.S.

So there is a web of clear agreements. They're backed by either treaties or clear legislation in that regard.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move back to Mr. Garrison, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much.

I just want to provide a little bit of a preface here, based on the comment that Ms. Hoepfner made earlier. I'm going to be asking some questions that are not based on a suspicion of CSIS, but on the idea that we have to maintain public support for a national security strategy and our national security organizations. To do that we have to have strong oversight. We have to have respect for the rule of law and respect for rights; otherwise you will lose the cooperation of the public. So it's not a case of our saying that we are suspicious of all CSIS agents as somehow being evildoers who have to be bound and constrained, but the necessity of maintaining public support.

I have two questions, if I can get them both in here.

The minister made reference to bringing in new legislation about leaving Canada for the purpose of carrying out a terrorist act. Do you have any information you could share with us, first on the timeframe for that legislation? Secondly, it's of concern to many immigrant communities if their rights to travel outside the country are restricted, and there is already a bit of fear that they might somehow be racially profiled and have trouble leaving the country as a result of their membership in a group. Do you have any information you could share with us now on the provisions of that proposed legislation, or review mechanisms that might be in place under that regime?

Mr. John Davies: I believe that's under Bill S-7, which is updating the Anti-terrorism Act. There's a provision for travelling for the purpose of terrorism, which is clarifying the legal—

Mr. Randall Garrison: So that is the provision he was referring to.

Mr. John Davies: Yes.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I'm sorry, but I haven't read Bill S-7, to be quite honest. Is there a provision for review of decisions on restricting freedom to travel in that legislation?

Mr. John Davies: Allowing for judicial review of those decisions or...?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Well, short of judicial review, which is expensive and difficult for most people to mount.

Mr. John Davies: I believe Bill S-7.... Again, Justice leads on this file, but the idea around Bill S-7 is to make it illegal to knowingly participate in activities of a terrorist group for the purpose of enhancing the ability of a terrorist group to carry out an act of terrorism. So the idea of leaving Canada to go to a terrorist training camp...it will be made a very clear crime to do so.

I'm not sure how you would review that decision. It's part of the Criminal Code amendments.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Right. Okay. We're both in deeper water than we like to be in at this point, I think.

Mr. John Davies: Yes.

Mr. Randall Garrison: My second question is this. When you're talking about partnerships, the strategy refers to engaging with, what is, a whole lists of people, including foreign governments. So my question is about the "engaging with" part. Does "engaging with" mean simply exchanges of information, on which Mr. Goguen asked some very good questions? Or is it more than that? The minister used an example of the Shiprider program and joint enforcement programs.

My question is, what does "engaging with" really mean, and is there some kind of hierarchy of engagement with various different countries, because you often make reference to non-traditional partners?

Mr. John Davies: I think there's quite a continuum with that word and what it means. I think in some cases, such as with the U.S., it could be much more about working together on joint threat assessments, for example, and harmonizing around admissibility issues, and so on.

In the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, for example, which is a new forum of 30 different countries, the idea is to exchange information on best practices for countering violent extremism, those kinds of things. So it's a bit more of an information exchange. There are obviously lots of bilateral exchanges. The case of Israel was brought up for its having a very strong aviation security program—and, of course, we'd want to talk to them and learn from them.

So it really depends on the issue, from loose engagement to very strong, I would say.

Mr. Michael MacDonald: I think there's also an important distinction, or at least an important point to make, about information-sharing, which answers your question about the architecture in the international community.

Information-sharing does not always involve classified information. We share unclassified information, as I'm sure you're all aware, on a daily basis. There is also financial intelligence information and security intelligence information. There are criminal types of information, and then general unclassified information, of course.

The international community, if you look at it broadly, is organized in the security intelligence community itself largely by those who collect intelligence. So there are certain expert groups of our trusted allies, the Five Eyes as we typically call them, and they exchange information and share information of all kinds, per their legislative mandates. Then we also have other international bodies, some very formal, such as the G-8 and the G-20. In the G-20, looking at issues of national security or terrorism is a relatively new effort. We have the G-7, which looks at the financial aspects, but we also have new partners, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in Europe, the OECD. The OECD has approached my area to talk about national security issues in regard to foreign investments, for example, and they actually have a working group on terrorism, which is something new for us.

We also have some of the other bodies, such as the Financial Action Task Force, and the regional bodies that Canada is asked to join to help other countries and so on. It's a plethora, but there are structures.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Garrison. That was five minutes and twenty-seven seconds.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Ms. Hoepfner, please.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Thank you. I have a fairly brief question.

Mr. Davies, when the minister was here, I think Mr. Norlock asked him about the investments that our government has made, and I recall your commenting that other countries actually look at us with envy because of these investments and are looking to us for leadership.

Could you expand on that? As well, when we look at the strategy, have many other countries, in the G-8, for example, developed their own strategies?

Maybe Mr. MacDonald could comment on whether other countries have strategies, or are we also playing the leading role with the fact that we have a strategy? Could you talk a bit about our role on the world stage in countering terrorism?

Mr. John Davies: Sure. My reference to envy was certainly about Kanishka, the \$10 million for research on countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism in general. A number of countries commented to us that we are extremely lucky to have this resource. As Mr. MacDonald was saying, there's no shortage of global counter-terrorism groups out there now looking to fund and catalyze research in this area.

It's helped us play a leading role in a number of these groups. Particularly, one aspect is evaluation of programs linked to countering violent extremism. We hosted a seminar here early in February. In fact, at that seminar the minister launched the counter-terrorism strategy that other countries thought was very successful. We're now leading the second stage—and this is a group of 30 different countries.

No one else has money or resources to fund research in this area, but there's hardly any research on it, so it puts Canada in a very strong leadership position on this issue.

The second part of your question, I'm sorry, I missed.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: It was about the overall strategy, the fact that Canada has a strategy. Do other countries, for example in the G-8, have these kinds of strategies?

Mr. John Davies: Australia, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. have strategies. I think ours is probably more like Australia's and the United Kingdom's than the U.S.'s. The U.S.'s is similar but a little bit different. I believe the Netherlands has a similar kind of strategy. Beyond that, I'm not sure. I think they all reflect very similar principles. If you hold them up, they're all very similar in terms of the core principles of resilience, partnership, rule of law, terrorism as a crime, and so on. There are slightly different ways of organizing principles and so on and slightly different interpretations of the threat, but I think we've had a chance to brief all our allies, or at least most of our allies, on the contents of the strategy. They all thought very highly of it, certainly.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Were you able to consult at all with the provinces in developing this strategy? When you talk about information, I know a lot of the information-sharing you're talking about is international, but I would think part of the strategy is sharing information. Were the provinces or municipalities involved at all in the strategy?

Mr. John Davies: The Minister of Public Safety and, I believe, the Minister of Justice both convene a group of their counterparts at the provincial level. That's supported by a group at the deputy minister level. In both those forums we've had a chance to brief them on the counter-terrorism strategy as it was being written as well as the final product.

The challenge going forward is working more with the provinces on certain aspects of the strategy and what kinds of things we want to prioritize, given that their agenda, when they meet, is quite long. Countering violent extremism is an issue that we're quite keen to work on with the provinces, because that gets into issues of more provincial and municipal jurisdictions around front-line workers. It's very similar to countering gangs, working with new immigrant communities that could be isolated, and so on. There's an obvious very good fit there and an obvious need of their support to move this forward.

• (1715)

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Thank you very much. That's all I have.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Hoepfner.

Mr. Garrison, please.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to go back to the question of partnerships, having used my previous five minutes up completely.

When you talk about the various levels of engagement, I had some personal experience in my previous life working in Afghanistan and running into the NDS, the National Directorate of Security. I guess you could say this is an organization that, if you even look at the last couple of weeks, has had success in thwarting terrorist threats. At the same time, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission has condemned the NDS for its methods in doing so. It's really ignoring the rule of law and quite often using torture.

I have a question. When we talk about exchanging information, you can see the possible problems—and I think Mr. Goguen was talking about some of those for Canadian nationals who may be of Afghan origin—if you're exchanging information with an organiza-

tion like that. Where are the guarantees for protection of the rights of those Canadians?

Mr. John Davies: First of all, the ministerial direction around information-sharing is quite clear that information-sharing has to be lawful, domestically and internationally. That's the basis. Any decisions in terms of sharing information are also proportional to risk, in terms of the sign-offs and the scrutiny it takes, and that's embedded in the ministerial direction.

Another way of looking—

Mr. Randall Garrison: When you say risks, risks to whom? Risks to the threat of terrorism or risks to the individual's rights?

Mr. John Davies: Risk to the person being mistreated, for example. So it's proportional to that. The higher the risk, the higher the sign-offs and scrutiny that goes behind that decision.

Ministerial direction in this area and all areas is also overseen by the Security Intelligence Review Committee, and it is their prerogative to look at these kinds of issues and report to Parliament on them, and also to the minister. So both through ministerial direction and through the review capacity, that would be looked at there.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I have one last question. The minister referred to the reintroduction of investigative hearings and recognizance with conditions in that legislation we brought forward. Again, we haven't had a timeframe for that. When those provisions were previously in place, were we able to make effective use of either of those provisions in our counter-terrorism work?

Mr. Michael MacDonald: That is a very good question. It speaks to the tool kit or what we referred to after 9/11 with the Anti-terrorism Act, Bill C-36 at the time, which provided the security intelligence and law enforcement community with an appropriate tool kit that they could use should they needed to use it. Of course, it comes with the effective oversight and scrutiny to ensure that there are not abuses.

The government of the day considered those powers such that they had to have a five-year sunset clause, and we know what happened after that sunset clause.

I believe the investigative hearing was used in one aspect. The annual reports—and I was responsible as a young analyst for writing the yearly end reports for the use of those investigative powers—would go on, and that was part of the regular accounting or public reporting mechanism.

I think the point on that is that you have a tool kit and if the tool kit remains closed it's closed. When a threat of such magnitude happens and you have to open the tool kit and use the power, it is there to be used appropriately. That's the mentality that followed along with at least those two particular powers.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Would you say we're talking about a proportionate response if both of these very serious rights questions depart considerably from our previous legal traditions? Therefore, in my mind, you would have to have some very high risk threats before these could be used. The legislation did not contain any proportionality in the legislation. They are simply things that could be used.

Mr. Michael MacDonald: I understand the reintroduction did include some enhancements that were identified by the parliamentary committee which reviewed the Anti-terrorism Act on that. One of the logical arguments that follows is that the fact those powers were not extensively used, does show that the law enforcement and security intelligence community considered those to be quite serious and did not go out and “Go into the tool box” when they ought not to. It's one of the arguments that flows from that.

• (1720)

The Chair: Do we have any other questions on this side? Was there anyone else? I don't have anyone on the speakers list.

Ms. Hoepfner and Mr. Rathgeber.

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Go ahead, Brent.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: The fact is that the ability to detain and question a person suspected of terrorism is currently not in our law because the Anti-terrorism Act provisions expired and the last Parliament was unable to get them passed.

I'm reticent to ask you to make a policy pronouncement, but in the view of law enforcement as you understand it, is that a tool in the tool kit that's missing?

Mr. Michael MacDonald: You're right, I'm not about to make a policy statement on that. It's quite frankly not our prerogative as officials to make a statement on that. We provide the advice.

I would argue, on a personal level in my current capacity, that for the enhancement and the protection of the security of Canada consistent with the gravity of serious offences, a robust tool kit is the way to proceed.

I think I'll just leave it at that.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: I agree with that. To go back to the premise of Mr. Garrison's question, to use that type of extraordinary measure requires an extraordinary threat. Surely you will agree with me that the events of September 11, 2001 are just that type of extraordinary event. Do you agree with that?

Mr. Michael MacDonald: Yes, I would.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Hoepfner, did you want in on that round too?

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: Yes. I'm going to go in a different direction. I wonder if you could just talk a little bit more about the other government departments that have roles, because it's obviously not just Public Safety that's involved in carrying out the strategy. Can you just let us know which other departments would have roles in this strategy, and what they would be?

Mr. John Davies: Do you want me to list off the ones—

Ms. Candice Hoepfner: If you don't mind, yes.

Mr. John Davies: Okay. As you know, Public Safety is a portfolio, so the Canada Border Services Agency, the RCMP, and CSIS are all essential core parts of the security intelligence community. Outside of the portfolio, certainly the Privy Council Office has a strong coordinating role, but it also has an assessment capacity itself, which is part of counter-terrorism strategy. The Department of Defence and the Communications Security Establishment—CSEC—are also major components of the security intelli-

gence community, as are Immigration Canada and Transport Canada. It's hard to mention a department that is not somehow related to the security intelligence community. Normally we talk about 12 or 15 as having some kind of capacity in this, even though it may be small relative to the mandate of that department. For some it dominates; obviously, for CSIS, it is their mandate.

I'm not sure if I'm answering your question very well, but it is a big community. A lot of our time is spent getting them in one place, getting them on one page, and moving them in the right direction. It is very much geared toward partnership. People are generally on the same wavelength and want to go in the same direction. But as you can imagine, there are a lot of complexities to any policy initiative that we have.

The Chair: Mr. MacDonald, I think, had a bit of an answer as well.

Mr. Michael MacDonald: Very simply, oftentimes the easiest way to capture this is to compare it to an onion. The security intelligence community has layers, and departments and agencies are central to the core, or they find themselves on the outside. It also includes policy and operations. For example, you have core collectors of intelligence—CSIS, CSEC, and DFAIT for certain types of intelligence—and then you have the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Forces, and the Canada Border Services Agency.

Then you have consumers of intelligence, certain departments that will provide policy advice to their ministers, including Transport Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Agriculture Canada, and Natural Resources Canada.

Then you also have the assessors, who assess the intelligence. There are the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre, the Privy Council Office's Intelligence Assessment Secretariat, the intelligence assessment division. The Canadian Forces has a chief of defence intelligence.

The community is large, but there is a core—and I've listed them—of those who collect and analyze information, and the objective of a member of security intelligence is to advise government. That's the core CSIS mandate. The community is larger the more you go to the outside of the layers of the onion. It easily covers 20 departments and agencies.

• (1725)

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

I think I saw Monsieur Rousseau or Mr. Scott.

Go ahead, Mr. Scott.

Mr. Craig Scott: Do we have the full five minutes, because I'd like to share my time with Mr. Rousseau?

The Chair: You have till 5:30.

Mr. Craig Scott: Okay, good.

Could let me know at a minute and a half to two minutes—

The Chair: Okay, I can try. I have to leave enough time for the chair to conclude. Go very quickly then.

Mr. Craig Scott: I just want to return to Afghanistan, because the minister responded by saying that generally we take into account everything, that we're always reviewing and perfecting ourselves. I think we should not forget that the last 10 years has been an extraordinary period, and that Afghanistan probably has, at some level, flown under the radar screen of Canadians as not being as significant in our collective life as it actually has been.

I'd just be so much happier to know that, in all of this review, there has been a serious internal review about the nature of intelligence collaboration within Afghanistan, both between Canadian agencies—defence intelligence and CSIS for example—and between the Canadian agencies and Afghan agencies, to learn the kinds of lessons about both human rights dimensions and effective sharing, especially when armed conflict overlaps with counter-terrorism. Has there been a sophisticated study of the lessons learned in the 10 years that has fed into this process?

Mr. John Davies: I was just going to say that I imagine there are two layers to the answer. One is that there are very likely internal reviews that CSIS has done with regard to the experience in Afghanistan, given the complex environment there. I would need to check on how the Security Intelligence Review Committee have looked at this issue. They certainly have looked at it from the standpoint of the detainee issue and so on, but I'm not sure whether it has been done with particular respect to the lessons learned that you're interested in. I can undertake to look into that for you.

Mr. Craig Scott: Thank you for that.

Mr. MacDonald, have you anything to add?

Mr. Michael MacDonald: No.

Mr. Craig Scott: Good. I will pass the floor to Mr. Rousseau, because I'm aware of the time.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: You mentioned a kind of tool kit that will allow you to react in various situations. Have scenarios been worked out already? Have you also thought of training various police responders with emergency plans that will allow them to react in more and more situations? Have you thought about how all those people should eventually be trained?

Mr. Michael MacDonald: I will answer in English. Forgive me, but it will be easier for me to tell you exactly what I mean.

[English]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: That's no problem.

Mr. Michael MacDonald: That is a very good question, Chair.

In fact, Public Safety itself has a directorate or division dedicated exclusively to training, both from the standpoint of an emergency response to crises—ice, floods, fires, and so on—and from the national security standpoint. The department runs various levels of training, and their national level training often involves Canada-U.S. cross-border exercises once a year. We're part of Operation Nanook by the Canadian Forces and the military in the north every summer. There are other international training exercises for chemical, biological, radiological—CBR and E—events.

There are also lower-level responses. For example, there have been training exercises in Toronto for bomb threats in subways, or in Montreal there have been some. Then there is local-level training; fire departments and first responders receive that type of training.

The short answer is that training is integrated into the approach, because it goes to the federal emergency response plan, it goes to the government operations centre, and in fact it can go to the senior decision making at a national level.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Rousseau actually asked the question that I was going to ask, which is a good question.

This past weekend, for example, I was at a fundraiser in my constituency in rural Alberta, where an individual from a neighbouring community had received an award from the province for a strategy he had used in an emergency preparedness scenario. I was impressed that they were coordinating these types of competitions or this type of planning with the province, federal government, and municipal government, all of whom were involved.

I want to thank you for being here and for the very important work that you do. Although we Canadians realize that terrorism is a massive threat, there is a body of people working hard to protect the security of Canadians. We also expect transparency and accountability and all of those things.

And so we want to thank you for the work that you, the department, and all of those across the country do—first responders included—all who are involved in carrying out not only the strategic plan but also, obviously, the response, if an attack should ever happen. Thank you for coming to help us understand a little better the complexities of national security and terrorism, and for the work that you do.

The meeting is adjourned.

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