HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on National Defence

NDDN • NUMBER 048 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Monday, February 23, 2015

Chair

The Honourable Peter Kent

Standing Committee on National Defence

Monday, February 23, 2015

● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC)): Good afternoon, colleagues.

We are here, as you know, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) for our continuing study of the defence of North America.

We have two witnesses with us this afternoon: from the Department of National Defence, Major-General Christopher Coates, Deputy Commander (Continental) Canadian Joint Operations Command, and Brigadier-General G.D. Loos, Commander, Joint Task Force North.

Gentlemen, welcome this afternoon.

Major-General Coates, would you like to begin the opening remarks?

MGen Christopher Coates (Deputy Commander (Continental), Canadian Joint Operations Command, Department of National Defence): Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, it's a pleasure to be here. I am accompanied today by Brigadier-General Gregory Loos, Commander of Joint Task Force North, headquartered in Yellowknife.

[*English*]

I'm here to talk about the Canadian Armed Forces role in continental disaster relief operations.

It's well appreciated that disasters of both natural and man-made origin are a persistent challenge to countries and governments around the world. The effects of these calamities are widespread, most notably the human toll on every individual affected. With almost no warning, lives and homes can be lost in the blink of an eye with periods of recovery lingering from weeks to months or even years as in the case of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. As recent memory shows, hurricanes, floods, and forest fires are but a few of the most common natural disasters our country faces on a yearly basis.

Our provincial and territorial partners have well-tuned, capable means at their disposal to mitigate and respond to the effects of disasters at any location throughout our country. Periodically, however, the effects of a particular disaster can become so great they overwhelm the capabilities of our civilian authorities.

[*Translation*]

That's where the Canadian Armed Forces can come into play. As part of the Canada First Defence Strategy, the Canadian Armed Forces are prepared to provide critical assistance in support of civilian authorities during a crisis in Canada, whenever and wherever required.

[*English*]

While we are not the lead when it comes to disaster relief, we can rapidly surge resources and unique capabilities at critical moments to complement and enhance the resources of our civilian partners.

At all times we are in continuous liaison with Public Safety, the lead for federal emergency response, as well as with provincial and territorial authorities and other federal partners. This liaison is a critical piece of our joint planning apparatus with Public Safety and our civilian partners, which is intended to allow us maximum forewarning of an impending request for assistance to the Canadian Armed Forces. Even before such a request is made, our regional joint task force commanders and staff actively collaborate with our civilian counterparts. This ensures civil decision-makers have realistic expectations of CAF capabilities, limitations, and deployment times.

During this whole-of-government planning process, a key factor in deploying the Canadian Armed Forces is the ability of civilian authorities to manage the situation without our support. This is an important determination to make, as any support provided to civilian authorities by the Canadian Armed Forces is always one of last resort.

[*Translation*]

When it becomes clear that the situation may overwhelm the capacity of civilian authorities to respond to the crisis, and usually in response to a formal request for assistance, the Minister of National Defence can direct the Canadian Armed Forces to provide support to complement and enhance provincial and local efforts already under way.

● (1535)

[*English*]

This is facilitated through Operation LENTUS, the Canadian Armed Forces contingency plan for the provision of humanitarian and disaster relief support to provincial and territorial authorities during a major disaster. Under Operation LENTUS, the Canadian Armed Forces' intent is to have strategic effects in the affected location within 24 hours of receiving a request for assistance.

There are instances, however, when particular disasters such as floods and forest fires can occur without sufficient forewarning to engage in the normal whole-of-government planning cycle. In such cases our regional joint task force commanders can initiate an immediate military response if they determine this is needed to save lives, alleviate suffering, and protect critical infrastructure. Known as a regional rapid response operation, this critical fail-safe in our response capability does not have to wait for a formal request for assistance. Among the many capable and unique resources and assets we can bring to bear from across our force generators are engineering, health services, force protection, transport, aviation, and logistics, among others. Once in location, our personnel work collaboratively with civilian authorities to assist in organizing the joint response to the crisis at hand, including effective command and control of the response.

As we saw during the intense flooding in Manitoba in 2014, this support equated to 500 Canadian Armed Forces members working alongside provincial authorities and volunteers in tasks as simple but important as sandbag production, which was key to protecting property in affected areas.

Four CH-146 helicopters out of Edmonton were also employed in this operation as well as a CP-140 aircraft for information, surveillance, and reconnaissance of the situation.

We also saw the provision of Canadian Armed Forces disaster response to flooding on three other occasions in 2014. Between May 7 and 8, the Canadian Armed Forces, the Canadian Rangers, two CC-130 Hercules, and five Griffon aircraft successfully evacuated 90 people from Kashechewan and Fort Albany in northern Ontario. Between May 10 and 12, 730 people were successfully evacuated from Kashechewan by military resources, and between May 17 and 20, Canadian Rangers and two Hercules aircraft extracted 165 residents of the Attawapiskat First Nation.

[*Translation*]

These are just several recent examples where the unique capabilities of the Canadian Armed Forces were successfully utilized during relief operations to extract Canadians out of harm's way.

So far, I've focused on domestic disaster response operations. I'll now briefly touch on our continental capability.

[*English*]

Since 2008, Canada and the United States have maintained an important bilateral framework for the provision of military support of one nation to support the military of the other nation, either during or in anticipation of a civil emergency, known as the CANUS civil assistance plan. This plan allows for scalable deployment of military personnel and assets from one nation to the other to respond to a myriad of crises and events such as flooding, earthquakes, forest fires, and even the effects of a terrorist attack. This is just another way we can save lives, mitigate human suffering, and reduce damage to property.

Already, this plan has been successfully activated on two occasions.

During USNORTHCOM's response to Hurricane Gustav in August 2008, Canada provided a CC-177 Globemaster aircraft to help evacuate medical patients from the southern United States, and two Hercules aircraft for humanitarian assistance efforts.

In 2010, when Canada hosted the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, USNORTHCOM was proactively prepared to provide support for liaison teams and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear response forces should the unthinkable have occurred.

[*Translation*]

The men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces remain dedicated to the safety and welfare of their fellow citizens and bringing relief to our communities, wherever the need may arise. I believe Brigadier-General Loos has a few remarks he would like to make, after which I will be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

General Loos, please may we have your opening remarks?

[*Translation*]

BGen G.D. Loos (Commander, Joint Task Force (North), Department of National Defence): Thank you.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, I thank you for the invitation to join you today.

Joint Task Force North, or JTFN, encompasses a vast region, including over 4 million square kilometres, about the size of western Europe, and including over 75% of Canada's coastline.

[*English*]

Our role in JTFN is to prepare for and conduct operations in the north. These may be defence of sovereignty operations or they may be safety and security operations in the service of other government departments, based on their requests for assistance.

In terms of our organizational assets to accomplish this role, we have several units based primarily in Yellowknife. We have JTFN headquarters and its area support unit with the mandate to maintain situational awareness for the region and to have the capacity to plan, coordinate, command, execute, and sustain operations. As well as maintaining a small liaison presence in both Whitehorse and Iqaluit, our region also possesses NORAD infrastructure such as the north warning system and CFS Alert.

[*Translation*]

Additionally, there is 440 Transport Squadron, generating its four Twin Otter aircraft to provide vital tactical air transport support for many northern mission profiles.

There is a Canadian army reserve unit, C Company of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, that is based there as well.

● (1540)

[*English*]

Finally, 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group headquarters commands its 60 patrols from Yellowknife. These patrols, including some 1,850 rangers, based in 60 of the 74 communities found in the JTFN area of responsibility, are our eyes and ears throughout the region, and mentor and guide southern-based military elements when they come north to train or operate.

1 CRPG headquarters also administers the Junior Canadian Rangers patrols in 41 communities.

To be ready for our assigned role and missions, we monitor our region, plan and execute operations to train and improve our capabilities, and foster great working relationships with a number of northern partners.

Regional situational awareness is accomplished via a number of means: our Canadian Rangers, using a number of military systems; by carrying out specific air and maritime surveillance and presence missions; and by sharing information with partners from other military units, allied military formations, and other government departments.

To improve our readiness and foster partnerships with all regional, federal, territorial, and aboriginal and first nations stakeholders—and amongst other goals—we routinely plan and execute four main operations a year, primary of which are Nanook and NUNALIVUT.

[*Translation*]

Of course, there are many challenges to operating in our Canadian north. Mother Nature challenges us with great geographical distances to cover and monitor and with many different types of challenging terrain in which to operate.

[*English*]

An evolving climate is raising new concerns for many communities in the region, which in some cases may translate into future issues requiring military disaster assistance response. Similarly, human activity in the region is increasing, which may also lead to high tempo for military responses to certain scenarios.

For these potential challenges, our deliberately planned operations permit us to better prepare for them by anticipating them, exercising through those scenarios, and learning valuable lessons along the way.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for the opportunity to share our approach to military operations and readiness for Canada's north.

I would be pleased to attempt to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

[*Witness speaks in native language*]

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, General.

We'll proceed now to our first round of questioning in seven-minute segments, beginning with Mr. Norlock, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, through you to the witnesses, thank you for attending today.

Major-General Coates, can you speak to the level of readiness of the integrated command and control system of CJOC and its ability to respond to emergency situations in short notice?

MGen Christopher Coates: I would say that the command and control system is always turned on—if that's an analogy that makes sense. We're always operating and we're always ready. The Canadian Joint Operations Command manages our response through the Canadian Forces integrated command centre, called the CFICC, which is always on duty, 24/7, and 365 days a year. They're linked in on a continual basis with our regional operations centres in each of the six joint task force regions and are permanently connected to the other partners, such as the Transport Canada operations centre; the government operations centre, Public Safety; and RCMP centre.

I would suggest that the command and control apparatus is at the highest level of readiness at all times. The response forces, of course, are at graduated levels of readiness after that, sir.

● (1545)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

I also understand that it was under your command of 1 Wing Kingston that the Chinook helicopter was re-established.

Can you comment on the improvements to the new CH-147F model, and its contribution to the Canadian Forces, other government departments, law enforcement agencies, and other civil authorities?

MGen Christopher Coates: I think the air force would be a better witness to this, but I did have an opportunity to fly the new Chinook very recently.

Having started flying helicopters more than 25 years ago, this new aircraft is night and day in terms of what it will afford in terms of a capability for Canadians, the Canadian Forces, and all those—certainly in the disaster response sense—that we would aid.

Interestingly, the aircraft can self-deploy to anywhere in our country, with an incredible range of more than 1,000 kilometres. Using fuel that already exists at major centres, it can reach up north very, very quickly. Unfortunately, the aircraft is not at full operational capability yet. We've not employed it yet in a disaster response operation, although it was on standby for one of the ones I mentioned earlier, the flooding in northern Ontario last year. We did have them on standby just in case, but they weren't even at what we would call initial operational capability at that time.

I think the promise that they offer to us will be transformational. It will allow commanders to function by compressing time and distance in ways that we've not been able to do before.

I don't know if that's too generic for you, sir.

Mr. Rick Norlock: It's not too generic; it's actually very good.

I'm very interested in the range of the aircraft: 1,000 kilometres. You mentioned that it's not quite fully deployable. Is that because there is additional equipment that's being installed in it, etc.? What's the issue?

MGen Christopher Coates: It's because the capability itself as a system is not yet ready, sir.

Some of the experienced aircrew who we would want to deploy, if we deployed a detachment of two or three aircraft, are being used to train the other aircrew. The maintenance capability is not yet completely up to speed. It takes some time to develop that and get all of the parts and supplies and all of that worked out. In the air force we'd be in a better position to respond, but that's my understanding of why we're not quite at full operational capability yet.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

Also, can you expand on the level of coordination and communication between CJOC commanders and allied militaries, and how this contributes to the defence of North America?

MGen Christopher Coates: Sir, our principle partner in the defence of North America is the United States. We maintain a very active relationship with the other two commands that are involved in the defence of North America, those being NORAD and USNORTHCOM. The structure that we use is called the tri-command. We meet twice a year, with the staffs continually engaged between the three commands to work through matters of mutual interest. We share our contingency plans together, we exercise together, and we meet frequently as leadership.

I represented my commander at Admiral Gortney's—the new commander of NORAD and USNORTHCOM—recent commanders' session down in Colorado Springs. That's just an indication, a reflection, of the degree of closeness that we maintain through the tri-command with both NORAD and USNORTHCOM. I think we share our perception of threats; we share our understanding of what each of our capabilities are. Through our exercising together, we learn how to optimize our responses and maximize our capabilities.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

General Loos, can you explain how the JTFN collaborates with regional partners through the Arctic security working group and their meetings, and how these meetings address the many challenges and opportunities associated with operating in Canada's north?

● (1550)

BGen G.D. Loos: We meet twice a year. It's meant to be a forum where we bring together regional, federal, territorial, and key municipal emergency measures organizations, essentially any main stakeholder that has an interest in Arctic—we say Arctic security, but realistically it really is a spectrum from safety through security, and actually on the defence side, we're not often preoccupied with defence issues. It's mainly safety and security.

It's co-chaired by Public Safety, by the regional rep who's based in Yellowknife. What we attempt to do, aside from providing a forum for us to come together and share our respective challenges and our capability developments and evolutions, is make relationships. We normally try to set a topic for each of our engagements that will help float everyone's boat in terms of awareness and knowledge of a specific risk area or a problem area. We understand each other's mandates better, what resources are available to throw at any potential future response or crisis, and mostly it's about having pre-crisis relationships among all the main players before something comes along.

I think you can find that a number of times we'll raise topic areas that point to issues. We then try to hammer through those in operations that follow as scenarios.

The Chair: Thank you, General.

That's time, Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Harris, please, for seven minutes.

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

Thank you, both generals, for coming here today.

We had some guests last week, General Woiden and Colonel Moritsugu, telling us that you guys would answer all the hard questions. Maybe I'll get to them shortly.

First of all, General Coates, you have six commands under you, and JTFN is one of them. Could you list the other five?

MGen Christopher Coates: If I get this wrong, I probably am fired.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jack Harris: Sorry; I can follow up with other another question, no worries.

MGen Christopher Coates: Joint Task Force Pacific is headquartered in Victoria, Joint Task Force West in Edmonton, Joint Task Force Central in Toronto,

[*Translation*]

Joint Task Force East in Montreal, and

[*English*]

Joint Task Force Atlantic is in Halifax.

Mr. Jack Harris: So they're geographical task forces.

MGen Christopher Coates: They are geographical, yes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Are you also responsible for search and rescue? Is there a separate commander for search and rescue? Is that something that's under your command as well? If so, who's in charge?

MGen Christopher Coates: My boss is the operational commander for search and rescue in Canada. On his behalf, I lead that. We have three search and rescue regions in Canada.

Mr. Jack Harris: I understand that part, but I just want to know who's in charge. Is it you or is it him?

MGen Christopher Coates: It's my boss.

Mr. Jack Harris: But there's no commander, at the commander level, who's in charge of all search and rescue operations from an operational perspective.

MGen Christopher Coates: Yes. General Vance, my boss, is the operational commander for search and rescue.

Mr. Jack Harris: But that's not his main job, obviously.

MGen Christopher Coates: It's a job that's assigned to him. It's one of his main jobs. He has several.

It's just like the search and rescue region commanders in that two of them are also joint task force commanders. They have that responsibility as well. The commander of Joint Task Force Pacific is also the commander of search and rescue region Victoria. The commander of search and rescue region Halifax is also the commander of Joint Task Force Atlantic. We say they have different hats.

So General Vance has the SAR hat for the nation and he also has the operational hat for the nation, sir.

Mr. Jack Harris: But they don't report to you for search and rescue, they report to General Vance.

MGen Christopher Coates: They report through me, sir.

Mr. Jack Harris: Through you: okay. I just wanted to get that straight to understand it a little better.

I'm going to jump around a little, because I have questions here and there.

General Loos, just looking at your experience here, you recently came from the command of cyber-defence. I wonder if you—either of you—could comment on the Canadian priorities in terms of cyber-defence, both in the north and generally speaking. Are we looking at cyber-defence as it affects primarily military assets? Where else would you go beyond that in terms of the capability of what the priorities are for cyber-defence in Canada?

● (1555)

BGen G.D. Loos: Let me answer that in a couple of ways. One, in my last post I was the director general for cyberspace. It was a force development position. Part of what I was doing was analysis and research on what the demands were, what the requirements are, and what the changes in threats and risks are, and to try to put forward some ideas on force structure and developments for where we should go in terms of building our cyber-forces in the future.

It's certainly not part of my current mandate. That area evolves, as you can appreciate, very, very quickly, so if I were to give definitive answers now along that line, my information would likely be out of date from when I last worked on it. I certainly wasn't commanding our efforts. We have capabilities today. We need more. I think we have plans to invest in more. It's recognized that we have to defend our systems. That's a requirement wherever you're based—here, in the north, or overseas.

I don't have the latest developments on what will be in the program going forward, but I know that we are looking at what we need and investing in it.

Mr. Jack Harris: So you can't share any conclusions with us, is what you're saying.

BGen G.D. Loos: I could share some, but whatever I would share is already out of date. I honestly don't know the latest plan moving forward.

Mr. Jack Harris: Well, thank you, sir. You'll forgive me if I say it's not very helpful, but thank you for your answer.

General Loos, or perhaps General Coates, we did have questions about the use of the Ranger force in the north. I appreciate that we did have a witness specifically on that. One question I had was that it seems the Rangers are there, in a sense being available for on-call, for being eyes and ears even when they're not being paid or employed, but it seems there aren't any regular patrols. I asked whether there would be a weekly or a biweekly or monthly patrol where they would actually go out on the land and be those eyes and ears and do a surveillance patrol on a regular basis as part of the surveillance and domain awareness in the Arctic.

That doesn't seem to be the case. Why is that?

BGen G.D. Loos: We patrol for a number of reasons, and there's not necessarily a revisit rate that drives what we're doing with respect to patrolling.

Essentially—and I know you have heard this before—our Rangers do act as our eyes and ears whether they are wearing their red hoodie or not. They are members of the communities. When you take a community-security view of the north instead of worrying about four million square kilometres of territory all the time, you worry about what's going on around those communities and within range of those Ranger patrols.

When they are out on the land hunting and fishing, if they see something odd, they report it back. That's what we expect of them. That's part of the bargain when we sign them up, and they understand and actually thrive in that role. They understand they are performing an exceptional service for their country whether they are actually on paid duty or not.

In terms of regular patrols, there are regular patrols. An annual plan is worked up and executed, but it doesn't have a weekly or monthly basis. It draws on a number of factors including the rhythms of those communities with regard to their normal hunting periods and so on. It's about having presence. It's about having regular patrols, but those are not necessarily on a weekly or monthly basis.

The Chair: That's time, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Williamson, go ahead, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Gentlemen, it's nice to have you here today.

General Coates, the disaster assistance response team, DART, has made significant contributions to the international community. An example that really stands out, I think, was our rapid response in the early hours after the Haiti earthquake a number of years ago. Of course last year as well the DART was deployed in the Philippines.

I think Canadians are well aware of its work abroad, but are there examples of it being deployed domestically in the recent or not-so-recent past?

● (1600)

MGen Christopher Coates: Sir, I'm not aware of examples of the DART being deployed domestically. It's within its plan, a plan we call Operation Renaissance, that it can be deployed domestically. We find that we can often respond just as quickly if not more quickly with other resources that may be nearby.

The elements of the DART are on an about one-day notice to move, or about two-day notice to be up and running. We maintain elements of our immediate reaction units that are dispersed across the country at a higher level of readiness than that.

The DART affords great capabilities. Up until now we have just never needed to deploy it domestically.

Mr. John Williamson: In my district last year there were a number of power outages. I represent CFB Gagetown, and there were calls by some to bring in the military, but in fact we found that civilian authorities really had the situation well in hand. Given the numbers as well, I think the DART's able to go in and pinpoint work with others as well.

Sir, the DART is often deployed to provide assistance to people in some very desperate and difficult situations. Can you explain to us some of the types of equipment it uses and the services it provides in these difficult zones?

MGen Christopher Coates: The DART has about five functional areas. The first would be its medical element. It provides primary medical care, triage, and some limited evacuation capability, ambulance capability.

It's a small detachment of about 45 or so medical people. That doesn't take you very far. It can be very focused, but it's limited.

Then there's an engineering capability involving about 60 people. It provides for basic construction—horizontal and vertical—as well as some route clearance, engineering assessment, and water purification. Route clearance was the big function in the Philippines.

We have an aviation capability for mobility that can also deploy as well as a CIMIC capability so the coordination of support, specially trained individuals who are good at assisting and prioritizing and matching needs to resources in disaster zones.

I don't know if I got up to the five. I think there are five.

In addition there's a support element that keeps the DART functioning, another group of people who keep the DART going.

That's more or less, those are the capabilities that make up the DART.

Mr. John Williamson: For medical people, did you say four or five, or up to 45?

MGen Christopher Coates: It's about 45.

Mr. John Williamson: About 45, good.

And of course—disclosure—my wife is on the DART team, Lieutenant-Commander Williamson. They're under an exercise right now.

How often do such exercises occur? And any heads-up for the next one, so the dog will get fed next time?

MGen Christopher Coates: I'm certain we can find a way to give you a heads-up. The current exercise, I believe, is the one you're referring to, in Jamaica. I don't know if she was part of the team that deployed there or just watched the others go to Jamaica. A really good exercise from the reports that I've received back on it.

About on an annual basis, we try to either work the disaster response team or our non-combatant evacuation operation. It may depend on the years and what's going on, which of those will occur.

Mr. John Williamson: And I suppose much would depend....The DART on average gets deployed, is it three or four years, on average?

MGen Christopher Coates: Approximately.

Mr. John Williamson: I suspect part of that would be, if there hasn't been a deployment, you might do more training in years where there's not the heavy....

MGen Christopher Coates: Right. It also depends on what I would call the battle rhythm of its parent headquarters, the 1st Canadian Division headquarters in Kingston. So that too will be factored in.

Mr. John Williamson: I suppose, to bring this back to the defence of North America, in the broad scheme of things, the DART would play, if any, a small role in filling in but there really isn't a domestic focus of this team.

MGen Christopher Coates: There isn't, but we've not had—knock on wood—a really catastrophic kind of disaster that would.... If one were to imagine an earthquake in Vancouver scenario, for example, that would see the DART deployed.

Mr. John Williamson: General Loos, could you expand on the level of coordination between the detachments and units of JTFN, and other domestic security authority agencies in carrying out operations, particularly in the north?

For example, could you expand on the links and coordination with the RCMP, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, other government agencies, and perhaps the coast guard?

● (1605)

BGen G.D. Loos: Certainly, we have a lot of interaction with all of these partners. Our main partners in most activities end up being the three RCMP divisions in each territory. They have presence in many of the communities where we have presence. There's a lot of sharing of information and challenges. Sometimes we help each other out with transport. Certainly, they're part of our Arctic security working group as well.

With the coast guard, there are connections with search and rescue, but as well, they, the RCMP, Fisheries, and others regularly come to Operation Nanook where we ramp up whole-of-government scenarios specifically to understand roles, responsibilities, and organizational structures, and how we would come together as a team, and to learn lessons and figure things out.

We also have Operation Nunakput, run every summer, where with Fisheries, part of coast guard, and the RCMP we do coordinated patrolling from Great Slave Lake all the way up the Mackenzie to the Beaufort.

Again, that's another opportunity to have presence, to build partnerships, to learn lessons as we go, and to share our approach to those responsibilities.

Mr. John Williamson: My district borders the state of Maine in the United States. In the last year or two there was an operation with Canadian and American personnel, military as well as coast guard.

Would that have fallen under your supervision, do you know?

BGen G.D. Loos: I don't believe so, no.

The Chair: Ms. Murray, for seven minutes.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Thank you.

I'm going to ask about two different things. One of them is how the defence budget cuts and the delays in capital replacement are affecting your responsibilities. The other is to find out more about the issue of readiness for a potential disaster, particularly on the Pacific coast. I'm a Vancouverite and I'm always interested in the risks and the preparedness for that.

With the first question, I'm sure you're aware of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute's recent report from last week. It's highly critical of our situation with respect to budget cuts and national defence. Capital spending has dropped to 13% of budget where normal was always 20%. Their analysis suggests that the funding is, on an inflation-adjusted basis, down to 2007 levels, so it's far below what was promised in the defence strategy. In fact some $32 billion is being pulled out of the defence strategy from the promised trajectory. I just want to put on record their quote here:

> The reality is that we are entering a period of continued decline, diminished CAF capabilities and capacities, less training and lower output, with consequently reduced influence on the world stage and weakened contribution—

—and this is the part that is specifically relevant to our discussion —

> to our own security, domestic and international.

How do you deal with these budget reductions, some of which are transparent and you can plan for, but some of which are backdoor cuts like lapsing and freezes and so on? What's the process for taking an unplanned budget reduction that might affect supplies, training, or maintenance and making sure that you can focus it where you are the most effective, and cut out things that are not as necessary? What's your process?

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I just want to remind Ms. Murray and the committee that on page 1068 in O'Brien and Bosc in chapter 20 on committees, when witnesses are appearing who are departmental individuals, they aren't compelled to answer questions that might be outside of their operational expertise.

The Chair: Thank you Mr. Bezan.

Generals, answer as you see fit, please.

● (1610)

MGen Christopher Coates: Thank you very much.

From a departmental perspective, we're the Canadian Joint Operations Command and we're provided with assets and resources and capabilities by the army, the navy, and the air force primarily, and sometimes other parts of National Defence like the chief of military personnel, who can provide us with healthcare specialists, for example—our doctors and nurses. Then we use those resources to satisfy the operational requirements.

From a continental perspective—and that's the one that I can talk about—I have not been witness to the effects of any reduction in capabilities over the two years that I've been in the job. Our ability to meet all of our readiness requirements—whether they're in search and rescue or the domestic forces that are in readiness, the immediate reaction units of which I spoke, our ready duty ships, or the aircrafts that are standing by on the coasts in order to respond to surveillance requirements—we monitor that on a daily basis. Outside of an occasional once or twice perhaps every six months where an aircraft has a servicing problem, which doesn't strike me as that abnormal, we're always green every morning. So we've been able to meet our requirements.

Ms. Joyce Murray: In essence you're a supplier to the other forces and they provide you with—

MGen Christopher Coates: They're a supplier to us, ma'am.

Ms. Joyce Murray: They're a supplier to you. Okay. They're protecting their budget of what they're supplying to you, apparently —

MGen Christopher Coates: In a sense our focus is on Canada First. So if there are effects, we're not feeling them at Canada First. We've been able to maintain our temple of exercises and our interaction with our counterparts, be they the U.S. or others we interact with in various exercises.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Thank you. That's really good information, so the cuts are falling somewhere else and we'll have to figure out where that is.

Secondly, with the tectonic plates we know there is predicted to be a massive earthquake and a potentially big tsunami. Sometime every 200 years this occurs, and I think the last one was some 40 or 50 years ago, so it could happen and we need to be prepared.

Can you just walk us through when there is warning? Should there be a major event, how would you support the provincial and local emergency network? Just walk us through who is going to get the call, who does that person communicate with, and where this is taking place. Let us suppose it's somewhere that an earthquake, fire, or tsunami might affect a dense urban area. How would that work?

MGen Christopher Coates: It would be really challenging. In the worst case it would be really challenging, so it's a great question.

I mentioned earlier that we have six regional joint task forces and there is one headquartered in Victoria, Joint Task Force Pacific. Our rear-admiral, who is the commander of Joint Task Force Pacific, maintains very close contact with his provincial emergency measures counterparts. They hold frequent exercises. They usually do it in September or October after some personnel changes have taken place. They did another one again this year where they actually went through what the response would be.

I mentioned earlier that we have Operation LENTUS, which is our disaster response operation. There is a subset to that which deals with response to a Vancouver, west coast earthquake.

If a problem occurred, would I hear about it from Rear-Admiral Truelove, who would give me the call to say that we had just had a really bad earthquake and that we were responding? Or would he be cut off? Would we hear about it on the news? We don't know, but we've put measures in place that would account for that. It could be that he would hear about it from his emergency measures counterparts who are the lead at the provincial and federal level. If he were able to respond, then it would be under him that we would flow resources and assets into the province in order to respond and assist our provincial and municipal counterparts.

We have a plan that if he were unable to communicate with us, the commander in Edmonton, Joint Task Force West, would assume that function for us. We do practice that, and if he were cut off, Edmonton takes over and we start to flow in the forces through that direction.

● (1615)

The Chair: Thank you. That is your time, Ms. Murray. An interesting area of questioning but we allowed a few extra seconds.

This is the beginning of the five-minute round.

Ms. Gallant, please.

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

I just want to clarify. I'm not sure where cuts are coming from in the previous speaker's questioning because aside from less spending because we're not full bore in Afghanistan, when I look at the figures we're actually double what we were just after that decade of darkness back in 2000. I just want to make sure that people listening or reading the transcript at home realize there is some misinformation that's being planted here.

General Coates, it's great to see you again, and again, thank you for the work and leadership you put into re-rolling Helicopter Squadron 427.

My question has to do with Operation Nanook. Back in August 2011 an exercise turned into a real-life situation, and some things went well, some things could perhaps have gone better.

Would you please share with the committee the lessons learned from that particular exercise?

MGen Christopher Coates: I don't have at hand the particular lessons learned from that exercise. I'll search—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Generally speaking.... We don't have to have it point by point through the debriefing, but what was learned during that?

MGen Christopher Coates: We would be glad to come back to the committee with the lessons learned out of that. I'm afraid I don't have them at hand.

Certainly we go through that process every time. It was associated with Operation Nanook . They're available, I'm sure. I would perhaps be venturing if I said something.

BGen G.D. Loos: We do have a lessons learned process for every operation or exercise we undertake so that would be available.

We were very lucky to be in that area on exercise at that time. So the response was quite quick and lives were saved. I know that.

I know as well that in a broader sense both Operation Nanook and Operation NUNALIVUT are specifically scheduled each year to be at a time of year when we have more activity and when there are potentially more dangers and risk for more search and rescue activity when we've got winter and summer adventurers. The fact that we choose those periods of time to bring our forces north to practise means they are closer and at hand when certain things come up. We were very fortuitous in this case but in other instances it's part of our plan to be up north operating and in the area in case some overly adventurous folks bite off more than they can chew and we get called in to assist.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: In the far north, especially during joint operations naturally there are challenges. I'm interested in knowing what your energy challenges are, specifically electricity. Do you have ready access to whatever you need? If so, how is it provided?

MGen Christopher Coates: If I can I'll start and then I'll pass it over to General Loos as the commander on location.

If I were to summarize the challenges in the north from an operational perspective, logistics would be one of them because of the nature of the north. We treat it very much like an expeditionary operation. If my counterparts are planning for an operation in Africa or the Middle East we generally try to arrive self-sufficient, at least initially. For all of our operations up north that's the approach we apply.

If we have equipment that requires an awful lot of electricity or electrical support then we make sure we arrive with the necessary generators and the fuel, etc.

I am interested, and we are working with Defence Research and Development Canada to examine alternate sources of energy that might be applicable in the north. Some of our allies are doing that, and we're looking at that with them.

Maybe General Loos could add something.

BGen G.D. Loos: I can just add very quickly to that. Certainly to reinforce that point, if it's about mission continuity as it applies to electricity, we always plan on bringing it with us. There are many communities, and most are served by diesel in remote areas. Some have hydroelectricity but we always have to plan to bring it with us. We have to plan to bring our fuel along with us as well if it is something deliberately planned, or if it is in a crisis response that becomes part of our planning process for logistical resupply.

We attempt insofar as is possible not to deplete community resources. They get their annual resupply, and we don't want to use all their diesel fuel filling our planes or things like that, so we take it with us.

As far as our permanent installations go we are on provided power in Yellowknife, Whitehorse, and Iqaluit for our detachments. They all have backup power so we have our own generators should the local power go out.

● (1620)

The Chair: Thank you, General.

That's your time, Ms. Gallant.

Madame Michaud, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to start by thanking the witnesses for their presentations.

Most of my questions are for Brigadier-General Loos.

In your presentation, you said you had identified new threats due to climate change—for example, the melting Arctic ice—and the high level of human activity in the region.

Could you tell us more about these new threats you have identified and how you are preparing to address them? Are you working with Environment Canada or other similar organizations?

BGen G.D. Loos: Yes, but if you will allow me, I will answer in English.

Ms. Élaine Michaud: No problem.

BGen G.D. Loos: That way, my comments and answers will be clearer.

[*English*]

In terms of risks and threats, there are evolutions in the climate. That's changing a number of things. Whether you're travelling in the summer via maritime means or travelling in the winter, as the weather patterns are changing, it affects almost everything you do. In terms of the impacts on the individuals in the communities, whereas before we might have relied on community knowledge for when the ice was good and we could go out and travel on it, they don't know as well as they used to what it's going to be like. That may show up in terms of incidents, or it may show up in terms of restricting certain activities or patrols that we ordinarily would have done.

We're also seeing increased activity. I would say it's on a linear progression as opposed to geometric. We're not seeing great numbers of additional cruise ships, but there are more, and there are bigger ones coming. There is more activity, with more adventurers going up in winter and summer, which we try to keep track of through open source information just so we're aware of what's going on and how we can respond.

How do we get better at that? We try to circle those areas. We discuss them at our Arctic security working group with all of our partners to see if we're seeing the same increases in risk and if we have the same appreciation that it may be a problem for one or more departments.

Then, where and when we can, we try to introduce those ideas into our scenarios for things such as Operation Nanook. We'll go out and simulate a cruise ship grounding down the bay in Frobisher Bay, and we'll all go through our respective parts to practise how we would call in for federal help: what the steps are, what the procedures are, who would integrate into whose team, and how that would play out. It really is quite an excellent collaborative approach.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you very much.

I would like you to tell us more about how you work with local communities. You touched on this. You rely on their knowledge of the climate and the land, but aside from the Rangers, how do you work with local communities in the Arctic?

[*English*]

BGen G.D. Loos: I would say it is limited. Certainly, I make it a point to visit with the mayors, the hamlet councils, and the senior administrative officers in every community when I do happen to visit if I'm there on operations, on exercises, or visiting Ranger patrols. It's an attempt to have some contact. I would say that we have more connection with those communities through Rangers and also through our partners. We work closely with the RCMP. Through those lines at least we have communications.

Beyond that, in Whitehorse, Yellowknife, and Iqaluit, I would say that there's a more robust relationship with many different organizations, because that's where a number of regional organizations are based. Obviously, most of the population in the north is concentrated in those three bigger cities.

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have about 60 seconds left.

Ms. Élaine Michaud: We know that there have been a number of delays in the delivery of the Arctic offshore patrol ships. We are told that Irving can supply six ships, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer says it can deliver only three or four.

Do you feel that three or four ships would be enough to conduct your operations in the north and meet our needs? Would these ships have the technical capability to meet our needs in the north?

[*English*]

BGen G.D. Loos: From my perspective, I think that in capability terms I'm looking forward to that capability when it's delivered. From where I sit, I'm not an expert in maritime operations who can tell you that I need three, four, or seven patrol ships. What I do know is that we have a certain window where you're able to ply the waters up north today. That may change in the future.

I think we're going to have an excellent capability once it's delivered, and certainly for me, it's not based on the number of ships. It's about having a capability that's available to respond to different requirements.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Élaine Michaud: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Chisu, please. You have five minutes.

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

Thank you very much, Generals, for your presentation and testimony.

General Loos, in your "Commander's Intent", you state your commitment to strengthening the Joint Task Force North's "infrastructure and organization to better ensure its operational relevance", especially when the north warning system is reaching the end of its operational life. In practical terms, what does this entail?

BGen G.D. Loos: I'll separate your question into two parts, if I may: my operational intent, and then the other part with respect to the north warning system.

The north warning system is part of NORAD's suite of equipment. I'm certainly not in a position to comment on the future evolution of its capability development, improvement, or recapitalization. Lieutenant-General Parent down in NORAD would best answer that question.

From my perspective, I take a bigger view of infrastructure. It's about the facilities I have for my units that are based in the north. It's about the infrastructure, in terms of communications, that I need to command and control, either permanent installations or forces as they are deployed out on the land. We have an emerging concept whereby we establish northern operational hubs as launching pads. We bring forces from the south strategically and move them out tactically from a number of different locations in the north.

When I say "infrastructure," that could be a standing contract for a certain amount of support or services based on that concept. We use some of the infrastructure we have. We have contracts in place. We bring forces and ready kit from the south. By "infrastructure" I mean all of that, such that we are better positioned to launch, command, and control operations.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: In your opinion, is there a new arms buildup under way in the Arctic, as some analysts are maintaining? If so, what does it mean for Canada and the United States? I'm just putting that in the context of reinforcing Russia's ambitions in the Arctic, starting on January 1 of this year.

MGen Christopher Coates: Maybe General Loos will have something to add.

From a Canadian joint operations perspective, we are monitoring all threats to North America. At this time, we do not consider that the Russian activities along their northern slope constitute a military threat that we need to address.

We are not complacent about that, nor are we naive about that. We continue to monitor this closely, but we do not consider that to date to be a military threat.

General Parent would be another good person to pose that question to, with respect to the air activity that occurs, but certainly the activity we're watching on the Arctic archipelago of Russia, which, perhaps, you're characterizing as an arms buildup, does not constitute a threat to continental defence.

● (1630)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: General Beare, the former commander of the Canadian Joint Operations Command, stated in 2014 that, "under the direction of both Chiefs of Defence, Canada and the U.S. initiated a strategic review to analyze and examine the threats and ensure that NORAD remains informed, ready, and above all, capable of responding."

Has this strategic review been completed? If so, what are the implications for your operations in the north?

MGen Christopher Coates: Sir, I believe the strategic review has been completed. I believe they have provided a report to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense in the U.S., and our Chief of the Defence Staff. That hasn't made its way out as an impact yet to Joint Operations Command. I believe that Lieutenant-General Parent, as deputy commander of NORAD, would be a really good person to ask that question of, as he was central in the production of the report.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: I was just asking you if the chain of command came down with something for you.

MGen Christopher Coates: Nothing has impacted us yet, although we look with anticipation at the focus on the north that we believe is in the report, and things like the north warning system and what the future of it will be. We look forward to that.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much.

The Chair: That's time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brahmi, you have five minutes.

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

Major-General Coates, your explanation is rather difficult to follow. You said in your remarks that armed forces commanders and staff work actively with their civilian counterparts. You then said that the Canadian Armed Forces always provide support to civilian authorities as a last resort.

Has that situation changed recently?

What I observed after the floods in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and the surrounding area in 2011 does not quite fit with the explanation you gave. In fact, it does not fit at all. When you say you are in continuous liaison with civilian authorities, was that line of communication put in place after 2011 or recently? Specifically, was it put in place as part of Operation Lentus in Calgary in 2013?

MGen Christopher Coates: I can't comment on what happened in Saint-Jean because I was not in this position then. However, the provincial liaison officers were in place long before then, so that is not new. The fact that we respond as a last resort is not new either.

For example, this year in Winnipeg, I was in direct contact with public safety officials for several days to ensure that they were responding, not us. I know they explored every possible avenue for civilian and volunteer assistance before using our services.

Calgary was not a planned operation like Operation Lentus in Winnipeg this year. Calgary is an example of a rapid response operation. The commander in Edmonton made the decision to take action because he felt the situation posed a risk to public safety. The resources of the Canadian Armed Forces were needed to address the situation.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: I remember that in 2011, the then Minister of Public Safety, Vic Toews, said that removing or moving sandbags was not something that the military should be doing. Is it also your opinion that the Canadian Forces should not be helping civilians move sandbags?

MGen Christopher Coates: I believe that the Canadian Armed Forces could be called on to do anything the government asks. I therefore cannot say that the Canadian Forces should or should not be performing such tasks. In fact, the Canadian Armed Forces were needed to provide support to civilian authorities as a last resort. That means that all other options had been considered previously.

● (1635)

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: In a letter to Quebec minister Robert Dutil, the Minister of Public Safety wrote, “I have discussed this with Minister MacKay and we agree that removing sandbags is not an appropriate role for the Canadian Forces.”

MGen Christopher Coates: I'm not very familiar with that case, but I believe that it is justified when sandbags have to be laid quickly because of flooding. However, arrangements could be made with civilian companies or volunteers to remove the sandbags, even though that can take days, weeks or months. I think that civilian authorities have options other than turning to the Canadian Armed Forces to remove them.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: In your presentation, you said that in the event of flooding, Regional Joint Task Force commanders could initiate an immediate military response. In that case, this could be done without a request from Ottawa, couldn't it?

MGen Christopher Coates: That's right.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: A regional commander could decide to bring in the Canadian Forces to help people in the event of flooding?

MGen Christopher Coates: Absolutely. That is what happened in Calgary, in fact.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Unfortunately, that is not what happened in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. It's sad, but maybe we are not in the right province.

MGen Christopher Coates: As I said, I did not take part in that operation, so I can't comment on it.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brahmi.

[*English*]

Mr. Bezan, please, for five minutes.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Loos and General Coates, it's great seeing both of you again. Thank you for participating in our study.

General Loos, in your opening comments you were talking about the NORAD infrastructure in the north that is the responsibility of Joint Task Force North. We've had some witnesses here who have talked about the north warning system. It is getting near the end of life expectancy.

Are there any plans in the works on how we move forward with that signal system? Do you feel that the current location is right, and that the technology is the right technology for today's security threats that we face in Arctic?

BGen G.D. Loos: Sir, I'm going to have to beg off that question and delegate up, if it's possible. I will clarify that we have that infrastructure in the north. I will make use of it when I'm able to. For my operations, I can make use of NORAD's infrastructure, but I do not own or control it. We now have all of our infrastructure in the north under our assistant deputy minister for infrastructure and the environment, so we have a centralized control of infrastructure.

The primary user is NORAD for that, and for our forward operating locations and installations that go along with that. There are four of those. I make use of those because they're there. Infrastructure is limited, and they can be launching points for other operations.

In terms of the north warning system itself and the future, I'm not on the inside track of any of that analysis or discussion, so I don't think I can really add any value there.

Mr. James Bezan: General Coates, is there anything you want to add to that at all?

MGen Christopher Coates: Sir, I'd just suggest that it would be a great question for Lieutenant-General Parent when he appears before the committee.

Mr. James Bezan: Okay.

Now, General Coates, you made a comment almost a year ago in an article talking about the tri-command. You've got NORAD, you have NORTHCOM, and you have CJOC. They're all under.... They're triple-hatted, you might as well say, commanders and Americans.

You talked about the upcoming threats. We have, as a committee, been looking at things like cyber-security, but you've also brought in this issue of defence against chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear agents. I'm assuming that you're not talking about intercontinental ballistic missiles with this. You're talking about other threat factors, and I was wondering if you would expand upon that.

MGen Christopher Coates: Within the scope of the tri-command, we have about six working groups focused on areas of mutual interest. Communications would be one, for example. Our activities hemispherically, our partnering activities with Mexico, for example, could be another one.

One of the working groups is focused on chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear response. There are a couple of reasons for it. The United States has a very well developed, highly developed, system in place. Ours is less so on the military side. But in Canada, the primary response to a CBRN incident is under Public Safety. Along those lines, with Beyond the Border there is a nexus for CBRN as well. CJOC sits on a committee with Public Safety on CBRN. It's part of ensuring that, as a whole of government, our two nations, each nation, can respond most appropriately.

I don't think that there's anything magical about what we're doing. We're just looking at the resources and capabilities on both sides of the border to try to maximize what we can each do.

What do I see the threats are? The vector is probably not in ICBM, but we've done fairly robust analysis of where we think threats could come from. The most likely threat in Canada is what we would call a TIM, a toxic industrial material. We think that an accidental exposure is the most likely threat that could affect Canadians domestically in a CBRN sense.

How ready is Public Safety? Well, it would be good to ask them. We are preparing ourselves to be ready to assist them, if needed, where we think they might require assistance. We've looked at the scale of the various threats. We've looked at what we think should be and could be our response. We've talked under the tri-command with our American counterparts to learn any lessons they've got, to see if there are any holes in each of our capabilities.

● (1640)

The Chair: Thank you. That's time, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. Williamson for five minutes, please.

Mr. John Williamson: Thank you.

I'm curious to know what CJOC's immediate response was here and abroad in response to the October 22 attack on the Hill. Obviously law enforcement here was very active. I'd be curious to know your operational tempo, what the response was, and if there's been an assessment of that in terms of how a future attack on Canadian soil might be dealt with by your organization.

MGen Christopher Coates: Responding to the attack was a matter for law enforcement. Assessing the threat is something that we do. We were actually reassessing our threat posture to the events of Saint-Jean on October 20. We were doing that on October 22 when the unfortunate events here in Ottawa occurred. The process continued, and we continued assessing the threat, and then adjusted our force protection posture, we called it after that. We've done that periodically since that time and continue to do so.

We're also undertaking a full-scale review of our force protection procedures and what I'll call the doctrine that goes with it. Our previous directives predated the kind of threat that we see today out on the street, so we're going through a process right now. It should bear fruit for us in the next few weeks, couple of months, where we'll be internally having a different method to assess and respond to the threats organizationally.

That was what we did domestically. In your question you asked what we did outside Canada. We did the same thing. What we found was that most of our missions outside the country were already in a pretty advanced force protection posture. Many of them are in locations where the threat is pretty high already, so not much adjustment was required external to Canada.

Mr. John Williamson: We all know that the two soldiers who were killed were targeted because of their uniforms. It could happen again. Can you assure the committee that everything is being done to ensure our men and women are protected? They are a visible sign of everything we stand for as a nation. To this day it still hits home; people refer to both Vincent and Cirillo and the sacrifice they made for this country. I think Canadians want to know that their well-being is being looked after as much as possible when they're on the home front, on home soil.

● (1645)

MGen Christopher Coates: Sir, it would be disingenuous for me to say that we can ensure one hundred per cent security. What I can assure you is that we are in extremely tight coordination with those Canadian agencies that provide intelligence to us, that are the first line of defence in Canada for understanding what the threat is. We are very conscientious about threats today. We always were, but are more so now. There's a threat response, a real one, going on out in Comox right now as a matter of fact, because of the heightened level of awareness that people have to potential threats.

What I can assure you is that if there's a threat or even the generality of a threat identified, we are certainly in a great position to take every measure possible to ensure the safety and security of our troops.

Mr. John Williamson: Thank you.

Just on a broader question—and this is a big question, given the number of personnel—how would you describe the morale of the men and women who serve here in the country? They obviously understand the risk. Is there a change in the thinking now, or are people just saddling up and getting ready? What's the feeling, in terms of when you're talking with your men and women, your colleagues, about what we're seeing around the world and how it struck home here recently?

MGen Christopher Coates: The first thing is that we all shared in the grief of the events of October, all of us in uniform. But then everyone seemed galvanized after that to get the uniform back on and to represent Canada, and to protect Canada and Canadians the best we can. I doubt that anything good could be said to come out of those events, but certainly, the strength of Canadians and the strength of men and women in uniform was apparent after that, and it still is.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Harris, five minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

General Coates, I'm going to follow up on the question of my colleague, Mr. Brahmi, about Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. I'm interested in how the decision-making goes down. You described a scenario where Admiral Truelove would independently make a decision, even if he didn't know what was going on—you, or I guess anybody else—and you also described the JTFW commander's decision to move in Calgary. Yet we have a situation described by Mr. Brahmi of the public safety minister and defence minister talking about deployment of troops.

How does this decision-making work, not only on this level, but with the Canada-U.S.? Are there pre-arranged protocols where you're called upon by USNORTHCOM, which says, "We need you", and you just go? Or does there have to be authority given by someone else? And that's in both domestic cases and in the Canada-U.S. arrangement.

MGen Christopher Coates: It's a really big question and I'll try to compact an answer into the time available.

The process consists of two parts for responding domestically. There's either a planned response and it receives approval at a high level, potentially from the minister, down to the direction of the CDS to respond. What happened in Calgary was that the commander in Edmonton saw the situation developing, was in close contact with his provincial counterparts, who work on the north side of Edmonton, actually, was aware of what was going on, and started to move his troops down.

He called us and we were aware of what was going on, but it was on his authority. We didn't wait for a request from the Alberta minister of public safety across to the federal Minister of Public Safety, and down. It was apparent that wasn't going to be needed in that case.

If he was responding to an earthquake scenario, Rear-Admiral Truelove...we would expect all commanders, whether they're at the base level, the formation level, or nationally, to take those actions necessary to respond to Canadians in immediate distress. It's under that philosophy that he would respond to an earthquake scenario.

I can only imagine....If there was a structure remaining, if we were able to communicate very quickly after the earthquake, there would be national oversight of what was going on. We would be thankful for whatever initial steps he took, but then we would superimpose a national structure on that, a little bit like what happened with the floods in Calgary as well.

I can come back to that, if you'd like, but I'll quickly answer your question about international.

What exists under the Canada-United States civil assistance plan, CANUS-CAP, is a framework plan, and really just says to NORTHCOM and CJOC the factors that need to be considered, the command and control that would be put it place. It allows us to start having an initial conversation if, for example, in the case of Katrina—I wasn't around, but I can imagine if we had to do that again today—NORTHCOM would say to me or one of my officers, "We could use a couple of your Hercules".

That request would go up to our minister and we would say, "They requested a couple of Hercules from us". The same request would probably go over on the political side. Then we would get directed to provide; we would not respond unilaterally in that case. CANUS-CAP just provides the framework.

● (1650)

Mr. Jack Harris: There's no pre-arranged authorization?

MGen Christopher Coates: No. None. Zero.

In the case of Vancouver 2010, that was a bit pre-arranged. We understood what the threat was going to be and there were some of these advanced CBRN capabilities that the U.S. had. They were, I'll say, pre-positioned on their side of the border, so that if an event had occurred, we had pre-scripted and worked out some arrangements where their response could be required.

There was some pre-arrangement there, but it was all authorized. It wasn't just military commanders acting on their own accord. It was acting within a scenario that had been pre-authorized.

Mr. Jack Harris: I guess what you're saying—if I'm reading between the lines on Saint-Jean—is that once the initial response is taken, at higher and political levels, there can be other decisions made.

Is that the situation?

MGen Christopher Coates: I'm sorry. I'm not really familiar with Saint-Jean, but in general, yes.

Mr. Jack Harris: I'm not asking you about that specific situation, but I'm saying that once the initial is done, there can be other decisions made by some other people more senior that yourself.

MGen Christopher Coates: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Jack Harris: Is it true what I'm reading here that your plans and priorities 2014-15 state that the army reserve will intentionally take the land forces lead in domestic operations with support from regular forces required?

Does that deal only with disaster relief or in general?

MGen Christopher Coates: I'm not familiar with....With that comment, I'd require more than 15 seconds to—

Mr. Jack Harris: It's not a comment, though, it's a quote. It's a quote from your plans and priorities for 2014-15.

Anyway, I'll have to ask you later.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan, for five minutes.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you. I am going to ask one question and then Mr. Chisu is going to take the rest of my time.

We've had a lot of witnesses here talk about the use of UAVs or drones. I know that the Canadian Armed Forces made use of them in theatre, but has CJOC looked at making use of them as a domestic surveillance asset, especially dealing with the broad expanses of the north?

MGen Christopher Coates: We at CJOC provide a demand signal, so we say that this is the amount of surveillance we're looking for in various areas of the country, including the north. Then it's up to the force generators to satisfy that. For example, the demand signal we sent today is being satisfied by satellites and CP-140 aircraft, as well as contracted support that we share with other government departments under Transport Canada.

Under a project that I'm the operational sponsor of, there were some unmanned aerial vehicle trials that occurred in the north last year, so we are interested in that. The scenario last year was a search and rescue-based scenario using an unmanned helicopter. We are interested in this, but CJOC, per se, doesn't conduct experiments like that.

The Chair: Mr. Chisu.

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

General Coates, you mentioned the cooperation between the United States and Canada regarding the military framework for provision of military support from one nation to the other in the case of civilian emergencies. You were mentioning in this context the Vancouver Olympics. In Toronto this summer they will have the Pan American and the Parapan American Games with the participation of 10,000 people from 41 nations.

Is there anything similar to what was going on in Vancouver for the winter Olympics going on or taking shape in this moment? Because I'm just thinking that in 2010 there was a different situational awareness and now there is a different threat and we know how it is developing. Now this event is taking place in the largest city in Canada with a great concentration of population, civilians and so on, much larger than in Vancouver.

● (1655)

MGen Christopher Coates: It's a very good question, sir.

Our regional joint task force commander, who is based in Joint Task Force Central Toronto, and his staff are linked in very closely with the games' organizing committee. He has representatives who work with the integrated security unit that's I believe under OPP jurisdiction.

At this time we do not have a demand signal from the province or from the games to provide support other than ceremonial support. We remain in very close contact with them. I'm in contact with my counterparts in other federal departments to make sure that we're all appropriately prepared if that were to change.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: For my next question I'm just going back a little bit to the DART. When you were speaking about the DART and how it's deployable in one day or in 48 hours, do you have any reserve components in the DART? Or is it only led by the regular forces?

MGen Christopher Coates: No, it's regular force at this time, sir.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: This additional question is about the training of the DART. I'm not speaking about the necessary military training and deployment and chain of command but the trades training, for example, how to be a carpenter and so on, plumbers, operators, Loki operators, because in my deployment in Afghanistan I had problems in the direct deployment with these trades.

MGen Christopher Coates: Sir, I'm not in a position to comment on their training other than to say that I'm aware that out of the Philippines deployment, for example, there were no post-operative points that identified *les lacunes*in the training. There were a lot of post-op points that came out that are being actioned, but none with respect to the training that I'm aware of.

I'm sure we could provide you with an answer. I'm not an expert though to address that.

Greg, do you have any familiarity with that?

BGen G.D. Loos: No. I'm not sure if your question is about the training or about the availability of certain trades and the relative numbers?

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: The training of the trades. For example, I have had the problem that navy electricians were not able to bend the conduit.

The Chair: We've reached time.

Thank you, Mr. Chisu.

Mr. McKay.

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

I enjoyed this discussion. It's interesting.

I wanted to ask a question about threat assessment and how you arrive at threat assessment.

Recently I was listening to a *Freakonomics* program, and they had brought on four experts on terrorism. And the question was, if you were invited to President Obama's recent meeting, which I think our public safety minister went to, what advice would you give the President on threat assessment? And they talked about the efficiency of terrorism, that you get a lot of bang for the buck, for want of a better of term, and the inverse, which is that we pour a lot of resources into coping with the threat of terrorism with sometimes questionable results in the end, and so it's a reverse.

Interestingly, they made the same comment that you made, which is toxic chemicals or the spread of toxic chemicals is probably the most significant terrorist threat. Their argument was it's really more good luck than good management and maybe just the stupidity of terrorists to not realize that this is actually the most significant threat to a large population.

Mr. Chisu's talking about the Pan Am Games where there will be a large gathering of people and so a smart terrorist wanting to do really serious damage would use an event such as that and would use chemicals rather than other forms of terror.

I just would be interested in your thoughts on whether that is in fact an appropriate threat analysis, that it is, if you will, the chief of your worries.

● (1700)

MGen Christopher Coates: Toxic industrial materials are certainly the most probable threat in a CBRN portfolio that we would face, I believe, in Canada. It's the most probable.

To be more general in a response to your question, sir, CJOC isn't responsible per se for threat assessments. It is the chief of defence intelligence who does that and analyzes all of the information and offers a threat assessment, or the civilian counterparts would also do that.

It is my sense that our military threat assessments have largely been based on the previous generations of threats, which were characterized by intentions and capabilities. Given the unpredictable nature of the current situation and the adversary, the factor of vulnerability is an interesting one from an operational perspective. It's not only considering from the adversary's perspective, their capability and intent, but perhaps from our perspective considering vulnerability and somehow rolling that in. I don't know that we've taken that to the level where it's useful yet.

Hon. John McKay: It's an interesting proposition because the old axiom is that we're already well prepared to fight the last war, and this is a whole new dimension.

There's a lot of conversation right now about Bill C-51 and all of that terrorist thing. Would Bill C-51 have any impact on your daily business, in effect, because part of the strength of it is more interoperable coordination among the various assessments—

The Chair: Briefly, Mr. McKay, please.

Hon. John McKay: Do you think that you're moving more towards that ability to generate assessments in a timely fashion?

MGen Christopher Coates: Sir, I only have a cursory knowledge of Bill C-51—

Hon. John McKay: So do the rest of us.

MGen Christopher Coates: —and it's my sense that it would be the chief of defence intelligence who would be the recipient of any benefits that would come from that. I understand there may also be an operational element to Bill C-51 and maybe that would have an effect on us as we work with our other government department partners in addressing certain scenarios. But I'm not at the point where I could answer better than that.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Major General Coates and Brigadier-General Loos.

Thank you for your time with us this afternoon and the contribution that your testimony has made to our study of the defence of North America.

We will suspend, colleagues, while the room is cleared and then resume for committee business.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]