



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs

NDDN • NUMBER 049 • 1st SESSION • 38th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, September 29, 2005

—
Chair

Mr. John Cannis

All parliamentary publications are available on the
"Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire" at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs

Thursday, September 29, 2005

• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)): We have quorum. I'll call this meeting to order.

Before I introduce our guests and witnesses, I'd like to address one point from the previous meeting on the request to have the officials from the ministry brief us on Afghanistan. I've now been able to confirm that they're prepared to come on Tuesday next week.

With your approval, of course, I would suggest that instead of taking place from 11 to 1:30, the available time for the meeting on Tuesday is from 3:30 to 5:30. If you agree, we will change the time slot. The request has been responded to very positively. They're prepared to come before us. Does everyone agree to rearrange the meeting with the officials to next Tuesday from 3:30 to 5:30?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: I'd now like to open the meeting by welcoming our two guests to the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs.

Today we have Major-General Walter Natynczyk, chief of Canadian Forces transformation. Major-General, welcome.

We also have Major-General Andrew B. Leslie, director general, strategic planning. Major-General Leslie, welcome.

We look forward to hearing from you. I know the committee has been anxious to get going, so the floor is yours. I don't know who will speak first.

Major-General Walter Natynczyk (Chief, Canadian Forces Transformation, Department of National Defence): I'll start, Mr. Chairman.

Let me begin my brief comments by stating that I appreciate this opportunity to brief the committee on an overview of the work that we're doing with the Canadian Forces transformation team. As you can appreciate, this is a dynamic time as we begin a process that will fundamentally reshape the operational command and control structure of the Canadian Forces. This effort will more effectively prepare us for the challenges that lie ahead.

I'm leading a small team that will support the first steps of this transformation by creating new operational commands that will be central to a more relevant, responsive, and effective Canadian Forces. As an aside, the transformation team itself is a microcosm of the Canadian Forces, comprising regular, reserve, and civilian men

and women all working together to realize the vision articulated in the defence policy statement.

In terms of the Canadian Forces transformation, my team is currently implementing the second phase of the Chief of Defence Staff's four-stage process.

Phase one was the development of a unified Canadian Forces vision that supported the preparation of a defence policy statement. This phase also included the initiation and conduct of analysis directed along four very specific but far-reaching lines of operation, each assigned to a dedicated study team. This phase essentially ended with the presentation of the team's recommendations to the CDS and the subsequent briefing of these recommendations to all flag and general officers, as well as the deputy minister and a number of associate deputy ministers, in June.

Phase two is well under way. We will see the separation of strategic national and operational-level staffs, with the creation of a strategic joint staff and three separate operational commands. I will speak in detail to each of these initiatives in a few minutes.

The third phase will begin the initial process of realigning several of the supporting organizations and functions that are strategic and operational enablers. That is to say, they generate specific military capabilities that directly support the execution of Canadian Forces operations, while providing broader service delivery functions to the Canadian Forces as a whole. Currently, the responsibility for many of these critical functions is spread across the Canadian Forces and the department. Although much work remains to be done, the Chief of Defence Staff has directed that there will be a single integrated support structure, with one commander and supporting staff responsible for the provision of this support.

Finally, in phase four of this process, we will conduct the analysis and provide recommendations on the potential evolution of Canadian Forces force-generation design and execution. In simple terms, this analysis will consider subsequent models for the training and preparation of our men and women, our units, and our formations for the types of operations that have characterized our deployments over the past decade.

•(1110)

[*Translation*]

In considering the work of the transformation team, it is important to remember that we have a very specific mandate that focuses us on distinct, near-term tasks that directly support the implementation of the new CF command structure. Longer term initiatives are the responsibility of the Director General, Strategic Plans, MGen Andrew Leslie, and his team. This being said, we work very closely together to ensure that our activities are fully coordinated.

What is my mandate? In essence, it is to support the CF as it re-establishes the capability to execute strategic command and control. In simple terms, this means the creation of a dedicated strategic joint staff and three operational-level commands: Canada Command, the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command and the Special Operations Group. I would like to speak to each of these initiatives in turn.

[*English*]

The strategic joint staff will serve two functions. It will support the Chief of Defence Staff in his role as the principal military adviser to the Government of Canada by providing him timely and effective military analysis and decision support. For example, during a potential crisis, this staff might provide the Chief of Defence Staff with the analysis that supports a range of potential strategic options for the commitment of Canadian Forces—information of key importance to the government as it considers the role Canada might play in a given scenario. In addition, once the government has decided on the commitment of Canadian Forces, the strategic staff will enable the Chief of Defence Staff to plan, initiate, direct, synchronize, and control these operations. You might be surprised to learn that the Chief of Defence Staff has not had a dedicated staff to help him fulfill these two mandated responsibilities.

Perhaps the most significant initiative under way is the creation of Canada Command. Canada Command and its subordinate regional joint task force headquarters will be established to act effectively in the response to natural disasters, tragedies caused through human error, and attacks against Canada or the continental United States.

With the establishment of Canada Command, we will have a single Canadian Forces command devoted to the mission of providing for the security and defence of Canada and Canadians. This headquarters will work very closely with other government departments and will serve as a bridge to the United States military forces, ensuring, where necessary, and as directed by the Government of Canada, an effective and coordinated binational response to any crisis.

•(1115)

[*Translation*]

I would note that we have had an opportunity to validate this concept much sooner than we had anticipated. The deployment of elements of the Canadian Forces in response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina was a major and unforecast operation involving the commitment of very significant military, federal and civilian resources to assist the United States in recovery and reconstruction tasks. This operation was led by the first of our new regional headquarters, Joint Task Force — Atlantic, and we believe

that this mission justified our decision to accelerate the development of this new integrated command and control structure for Canada.

This being said, this deployment has also served to highlight some issues that must be addressed as we move forward. For this reason I have had two teams in Halifax over this past week examining in detail the various aspects of the mission. Next week, the Commander of Joint Task Force — Atlantic will share his experiences and insights at a conference here in Ottawa, with the key personnel who will form the next tranche of regional headquarters.

[*English*]

The Canadian Expeditionary Force Command will have responsibility for the command and control of all international operations. The commander of the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command will possess the capability to establish in-theatre national and operational-level command and support structures. The commander will ensure the effective employment of assigned Canadian maritime, land, air, and special forces towards the attainment of Canadian objectives, either independently or within a coalition framework. In addition, the commander of what we're calling CEFCOM will ensure that national command of all Canadian forces assigned to allied commanders is maintained throughout the duration of their employment. As we establish this new command, we will build upon the experience and skill of the current joint staff, and we anticipate a smooth transition, given our experience in the execution of our international operations.

The last initiative I wish to speak to is the creation of the Special Operations Group. Our operational experience has clearly indicated the great utility and value in having a highly skilled and capable special operations community that trains and operates as a single entity. The Special Operations Group will provide us with precisely that unique capability. The group will be responsible to the Chief of the Defence Staff for the timely and responsive generation of effective special force capabilities for domestic, regional, and international operations.

[*Translation*]

I have talked at length about the creation of new Canadian Force's commands. A fundamental aspect of this process will be the elimination or consolidation of many of the current headquarters as we transition into this new command and control model. Simply put, the CDs will brook no increase to the current numbers of Canadian Forces headquarters and staff personnel.

[*English*]

In closing, let me simply state that the pace of this transformation is swift. We are moving forward rapidly and deliberately to establish the irreversible momentum that is essential to change in the Canadian Forces. In so doing, we are focusing resources and effort on selected key areas to enhance the operational effectiveness of the Canadian Forces. We will not compromise support to ongoing operations through this activity. The focus is to establish the conditions in the Canadian Forces for the full attainment of the objectives set for us by the Government of Canada.

[Translation]

My comments have necessarily been brief but I will be happy to provide further detail in response to your questions. Thank you.

• (1120)

[English]

The Chair: Merci, General Natynczyk.

We'll go to General Leslie.

[Translation]

Major-General Andrew B. Leslie (Director General, Strategic Planning, Department of National Defence): Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I will be brief.

As Director General Strategic Planning, I work for the Vice-Chief of Defence Staff and also serve the Chief of Defence Staff and the Deputy Minister. My mission is to shape strategic direction for the Canadian Forces.

[English]

My staff is composed of civilians and military personnel, both regular and reserve, spanning about 15 different military and five civilian occupations. Two-thirds of my team have post-graduate degrees, and the division is extensively networked with all Canadian Forces and Department of National Defence level one organizations and externally with other government departments and allies.

[Translation]

We work to three future time horizons of approximately five, 15 and 30 years.

[English]

Our four major lines of operations are: developing strategy and aligning ends, ways, and means to an anticipated future requirement; synthesizing the concepts and capability requirements; trying to figure out where we spend our money and why; allocating the department's budget—capital, human resources, and of course dollars; and developing and supporting the department's management framework, including the production of reports such as the reports on plans and priorities, the departmental performance report, and the annual Chief of the Defence Staff report to Parliament.

[Translation]

We are currently very focused on producing the Defence Capability Plan, which will lay out the plan for achieving the goals set out in the Defence Policy Statement. Our real challenge is managing the affordability of the current force and operations, while at the same time deciding on the right capabilities needed for the future force structure.

We will be delighted to answer your questions. Thank you very much.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, General Leslie.

We'll go to questions.

Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, gentlemen. It's good to see you both.

I think my question is for General Natynczyk, but if I'm wrong General Leslie can answer. I have a little diagram here of a simple command structure. How does this command structure affect the chiefs of the three environments? Can I have a sense of how many subordinate commands there are below these boxes, like Canada Command?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: As I mentioned, we are working in a four-phase process. Phase two, which we're in right now, started in June with the receipt of all the recommendations. It will end on February 1, when we'll create these new operational headquarters.

On February 1, when we create these new operational headquarters, the environmental chiefs of staff—that is, the current commanders of the army, navy, and the air force, or the maritime forces, the air forces, and the land forces—will retain command of all their subordinate formations and soldiers. Their mission will be for the training and preparation of all those soldiers. We group all their functions into the term “force generation”—that is, receiving raw soldiers, basic trained young officers; giving them all the individual training; giving them the equipment; and training them at the basic levels, in terms of the section, platoon, company, and so on, until you get the bigger organizations.

The employment for operations will be moved to these new headquarters that will become effective on February 1. So within a Canadian or continental domain, Canada Command will employ these forces in operations. In an international context, the Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command will employ these forces abroad. Indeed, the Special Operations Forces will train and prepare their forces, and be employed by either the Canada Command or the Expeditionary Forces Command. On an exceptional basis, based upon the situation, they will control their own operations.

To answer your question, the environmental chiefs of staff will maintain command of their forces for the purpose of force generation, but the employment function that is currently conducted by the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, General Dumais—and I'm aware that he presented in front of this board earlier this year—will move to dedicated commanders with dedicated staffs, depending on where the operation is to be conducted.

• (1125)

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: I'll sort of chase the first question.

I know you're still musing about what Canada Command will finally look like. I don't mean the actual headquarters, but the subordinate headquarters. I guess my worry is that we're going to end up with more headquarters than we had before. I know that Canada Command is going to have some kind of regional organization below it. On a recent visit I made to Air Command, they suggested they couldn't fit in a regional command. If I start listening to everybody's musings there are going to be eleven commands out there. So I'd like you to give me some idea of what's below this box.

MGen Walter Natynczyk: I'm sorry for not answering that second part of your question the first time around.

The recommendations that came out of the study teams in the spring indicated that there should be six regional commands: the Atlantic, Québec, Ontario, the prairies, the Pacific, and the north. You'll be aware that in some of these regions there are already land, sea, and air headquarters. In the case of Halifax, they're all in the same building.

We're now going to go through an exercise of fusion of these entities. Where are the economies, and how do we enhance effectiveness? At the end of the day, the number of people employed in headquarters, from the operational through the strategic, should be no more than there are currently, and depending on how we retool this, fewer than today. So there are six regional headquarters.

On the air component, the 1 Canadian Air Division has its headquarters in Winnipeg. Because of the dispersion of the various air assets—the squadrons and the air wings—throughout Canada, you cannot use a conformist approach by saying everything in the Atlantic belongs to the Atlantic, because if they have a requirement for transport aircraft, it may have to come from Trenton. Because of the requirement, maritime aircraft from one coast may have to come from another coast. As a result, the control of the air assets will be centralized in the 1 Canadian Air Division, acting as a coordinating agency within the Canada Command construct. So if Canada Command requires air assets—aircraft, Hercules, helicopters, whatever—they will have control of all of those air assets for the purpose of operations within the Canadian context.

The Chair: Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Thank you.

Could you give me a better explanation of what the strategic joint staff is, as opposed to the current organization of NDHQ?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Currently the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff has a very small staff that is dedicated full-time to operations and planning. Indeed there's a very small planning staff at the national level. The planning and operations staff report through the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff to the Chief of Defence Staff. We'll create a strategic joint staff with a two star, who will be the director of staff, and three purpose-built cells: an operational cell, a planning cell, and a requirements cell. Of this organization, 90% are full-time and not shared elsewhere, but about 10% are specialists, who by the nature of their function or discipline have to link back through to other agencies in the department—let's say from a policy perspective, from a legal perspective, perhaps from an engineering perspective—so they bring skill sets to this team.

We're working on a number for staff that is less than 70 currently, but again this concept is still evolving today. This director of staff, with dedicated operations, plans, and requirements cells, will report directly to the Chief of Defence Staff in developing the plans and considering the options for consideration by the chief and his recommendations to the Government of Canada.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. O'Connor.

We'll go to Monsieur Bachand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I want to welcome the two generals. My first question is for MGen Natynczyk.

Were you second in command in Iraq?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Yes, I was.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Earlier, I was somewhat surprised by something you said. You appeared to imply that everyone involved in the New Orleans mission would be briefed next week on how the operations unfolded. I was under the impression that Canada Command was supposed to restrict its operations to Canadian soil.

Why was the Expeditionary Force Command, that is the second group, not deployed? Was it because this group was not yet mission-ready?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Are you referring to Canada Command?

Mr. Claude Bachand: No. I understand that Canada Command is being set up. However, Canada Command is supposed to be deployed on missions on Canadian soil. Yet, you stated that the Joint Task Force — Atlantic was deployed to New Orleans.

Why was the Expeditionary Force Command not deployed to New Orleans?

[*English*]

MGen Walter Natynczyk: The Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command is only now creating their capability. Major-General Michel Gauthier was announced as the commander of Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command only two or three weeks ago. So we're just putting together now that capability for the planning and execution of international operations. Until we have headquarters that are not only formed together but properly trained and validated, they'll not assume responsibility for this operational mission.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Earlier, you listed the six regional Canada Command headquarters. It seems to be a given that Canada Command — Atlantic — will be headquartered in Halifax, in light of existing infrastructures.

Can you give us an idea at this time of where the other five regional commands will be headquartered? For instance, can you give us an idea of where facilities will be located in Quebec?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Now then, in Quebec's case, the Land Force Quebec is headquartered in Montreal. Next week, as I mentioned in my submission, we will be meeting with all land, maritime and air force commanders to review all of the recommendations put forward in reports and by study groups in the spring and to focus on a comprehensive plan for command and control operations.

However, it's true that the headquarters are in Montreal. However, I'm not saying that the decision is immutable.

Mr. Claude Bachand: So then, if I want Regional Command Quebec to be headquartered in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, I'd better get moving on this.

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Headquarters are currently in Montreal, but we need to take a look at this situation.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Do you feel that it's important for regional commands to be based in major urban centres such as Montreal, Quebec City or Halifax?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: As we noted previously in the case of the structure of the land force headquarters, it's important to be located near a political, urban centre.

Mr. Claude Bachand: My next question has more to do with the future transformation of the forces. I don't know if you've read Mr. Granatstein's study. I haven't yet, but I did receive a copy of it this morning. Mr. Granatstein is an eminent military expert, as you know. He points to a major cleavage between Canada's regular and reserve forces. He even maintains that in the event of a natural disaster or major terrorist attack, calling up the reserves would take a considerable amount of time.

What role will the reserves be expected to play within the various new commands? While they be affiliated with them?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: As in the past, they will play a vital role in the protection and defence of this country, on both the domestic and international fronts. Canada's regular and reserve forces operated very successfully during the Saguenay and Winnipeg floods as well as during the ice storm in Ontario.

• (1135)

Mr. Claude Bachand: Quebec was also affected by the ice storm. I believe your colleague was in Saint-Jean at the time.

MGen Walter Natynczyk: We shared in this adventure. We lived through this experience together in Saint-Jean. I worked here in Ottawa and in Kemptville with 250 reservists from Sudbury who had been assigned to my team. The reserves play a vital role today and will continue to play a vital role in the future. However, with the establishment of Canada Command, we will have strong regional operations with planning capability. Right now, we have a small group handling domestic operations under the command of the Vice-Chief of Defence Staff. Under Canada Command, a commander will be responsible for planning and overseeing operations within a specific region of Canada.

Mr. Claude Bachand: I have one last question. The unelected Minister of Defence Colin Kenny called this morning for budget increase of between \$25 billion and \$35 billion. At this time, the budgetary statement calls for an increase of approximately \$13 billion over five years. Command officials have told me that it's fortunate things are moving ahead slowly at the beginning because they would not be able to spend this money. The unelected Minister of Defence appears to be implying that this is merely a pretext, that in reality you could spend not just the \$13 billion over five years, but an additional \$25 billion to \$35 billion as well.

Can you tell me where the department stands on the use of these funds? I know things have started off well. The minister was on hand to announce that \$750 million was being invested in the MMEV in my riding. Is it in fact true that you would be unable to spend any large amount of money because it takes time to make spending plans and arrangements?

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: Thank you, Sir.

I'd like to say two things in response to your question. First let me clarify something. Canada Command has regional responsibility in Canada and in the United States. That explains why the Canada

Command team is heading up the operations in response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Could you clarify something for me, MGen Leslie? Are you saying that Canada Command will lead operations not only in Canada, but in the United States as well?

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: That is correct.

Mr. Claude Bachand: It won't be leading operations throughout North America. If an incident occurs in Mexico, the expeditionary forces will be deployed. Isn't that right?

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: Yes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Therefore, you're placing a great deal of importance on interoperability with the US. I understand.

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: Secondly, the Major General and I worked together during the ice storm. We set up a regional emergency centre in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and worked together a great deal. However, we were dealing with an emergency. It's not necessarily a good thing when a regional emergency centre is set up in your region, because it means a disaster has occurred. However, I don't believe that there are plans afoot to relocate the Quebec command headquarters.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We want to work like our military, efficiently and effectively, on our timing. We'll go to Mr. Blaikie.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to General Natynczyk and General Leslie for being here this morning.

I'll begin by saying I think probably the most welcome thing here is, simply put, the CDS will brook no increase to the current numbers of personnel at Canadian Forces headquarters. I think most people will be glad to hear that, because there is a perception out there that things are a bit top-heavy, and anything that would add to this would obviously be a problem.

Second, by way of comment, it seems to me that when you talk about an integrated command or Canada Command, CANCOM, in a way it sounds like something that most Canadians would have thought we had already. So it's interesting, the language of it sounds somewhat obvious and yet there's quite clearly a major restructuring of the command structure in order to get that.

But having said that, I wonder, to what extent is this related to the demands of interoperability? And I have no quarrel at the moment with the command structure; it sounds like you people have thought it out quite thoroughly. To what extent does this mirror command structures for instance in the American armed forces, or does it have anything to do with it at all?

● (1140)

MGen Walter Natynczyk: First of all, I would say that through this transition of going from the current situation to a fused headquarters.... Before all those headquarters existed out there, and their terms of reference were clearly delineated. In a Halifax context, the maritime headquarters took everything that was from the shoreline out, the army headquarters took everything from the shoreline in, and what happened high in the sky the air force took care of. In that regard, we are fusing things together so they have one commander from the outset who is responsible for all of it and can plan for it.

That context will ensure that from a capability standpoint we're making the right demands upon our requirements people for capabilities that bridge between the various services, whether it be the communications, whether it be the various assets and so on, to enhance this integration. And "integration", that word is key, because it suggests a permanence of unity. So we'll move down that road.

The U.S. armed forces have significant experience with this. I can speak to it from experience on operations and General Leslie has the same experience from an Afghanistan context, where because of their structure and the fact that offshore they have these joint commanders who put requirements on the developers for those capabilities that fuse together the various services....

Hon. Bill Blaikie: With respect to the Canadian Expeditionary Force component—and I see a mirroring of the language of World War I there, "the Canadian Expeditionary Force"—I'm wondering, as you're setting this up, because it's in the process of being set up, what thought is being given to the rules, if you like, for the Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command. What kinds of commands are going to be given to Canadian soldiers who are in coalition with other forces?

In particular, I'm thinking of something that may again become a controversy. It was a controversy at the beginning in Afghanistan, and it may develop again in Kandahar if Canadian expeditionary forces, for instance, are taking prisoners. Is there going to be kind of a laid out protocol or ethos or whatever you want to call it for how the Canadian expeditionary force operates, when it takes prisoners, who it turns them over to?

There's a lot of concern about international law, both over what we know is going on and what is alleged to be going on, that if we're simply handing over prisoners—in this case, to the Americans in Afghanistan.... There's a lot of controversy anyway about Guantanamo Bay and about what happened in Abu Ghraib and places like that. It seems to me that there's going to be a debate developing within Canada again about what Canadians do in that situation. Do we actually hold our own prisoners when we take people prisoner? Certainly in World War II I'm assuming that when we captured prisoners, we kept them for the duration. We didn't turn them over to somebody else.

In the formation of the Canadian expeditionary forces, is some thought being given to this so that at some point members of Parliament and the Canadian public could say, okay, here's how we're going to operate when we get into these certain kinds of situations, here are the rules?

● (1145)

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Most of the question, sir, is beyond my terms of reference with regard to transformation and putting the structure together.

What I can say is that within our current construct for operations abroad, the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff has very clear protocols in terms of engaging, both within the department and across the government, legal advice with regard to how we do operations. The Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command will build upon those protocols based upon Canadian law, but I would ask that we refer much of your question back to the department, sir, for an answer.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: If you could do that and have one forthcoming, I think the committee probably would be interested.

My third question follows along from what my colleague from the Bloc asked. How will this affect the ongoing and sometimes controversial restructuring of the reserves—or will it? I have a particular interest in that: having been in the reserves at one point, I kind of keep in touch with people there. I just wonder whether this has any implications for the reserve restructuring or whether it's sort of neutral with respect to that.

MGen Walter Natynczyk: I would say it will have some impact. That is to say, the employment of the reserves in a Canadian command context or an expeditionary forces command context will only be reinforced.

But now what we'll have in a Canadian command context is a commander dedicated to operations in Canada, who, through his own planning staff, will identify what the requirements are for forces and for capabilities in a Canadian context, identify which of those capabilities could be done from a regular force context, and then look to the reserves. Because of the dispersion of the reserves throughout Canada, the commander and his staff will also identify what capabilities should be resident within the reserve context so that it can respond to an incident in Canada.

At this point in time we're not at the point in terms of the study to say definitively what the impact will be, other than to recognize the fact that the commander of Canada Command will now have dedicated ability to say that he wants certain capabilities with reserves in certain locales—and that's the question: how do we do that?

Hon. Bill Blaikie: You've talked about the whole concept of "force generation", I think it was called, part of which would be recruitment. Do you see this restructuring as having any...? Again, is it neutral, or will it change how you recruit or what you say when you're recruiting? Do you see it as having any impact on recruiting? Because that's obviously been a difficulty, both at the reserve and regular levels. I certainly have received a lot of complaints over the last number of years about just how hard it is, even after you find somebody, to get them in. So is work being done on that in terms of force generation in the restructuring plan?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: I can say that the Chief of the Defence Staff has indicated to the assistant deputy minister for human resources his intent to ensure that we enhance our ability to recruit. We are working together from a transformation team perspective with the staff of the ADM of HR to figure out what is the right structure to ensure responsiveness with regard to recruiting. But again, to go into any more detail, I would have to refer to the department.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Blaikie.

We'll go to Mr. Bagnell.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Thank you, and thank you for coming.

I'm going to take a little bit of a different tack and not look at the reorganization itself, but at the effects of it on a couple of existing—or what I perceived to be were existing—problems in the military. I'll outline the problems and then just say how the new structure might affect those. The two are the north and purchasing.

In relation to the north, which I don't think is a problem now, but originally or historically there was quite a while when there was little attention paid to it—at least from my perspective, given that my constituency is in the north.... You know, we have no boats that can go in or under the ice, etc. In the last couple of years, though, there has been major activity; it's been wonderful. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, and the senior military people are all on side, I think. So the problem is solved somewhat by the personalities at the moment. But let's say that all of those people were to leave. Would the new structure—and you just have people come in who are neutral—enhance the attention to the north? For instance, historically, there were four troops in my area and zero in Nunavut, until I complained, and then there was one, whereas next door in Alaska there are 60,000 troops. There are more Canadian troops in Alaska, actually, than there are in the three territories.

These are the types of issues that I have. I'm wondering if the new structure might facilitate attention to the north.

• (1150)

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Certainly the commander of Canada Command has just provided his concept of operations to Colonel Couturier, the current commander of Canadian Forces northern area. After we have created the Joint Task Force Atlantic, the next area in terms of priority for the creation of a joint task force is indeed the north. Currently, Colonel Couturier is working with the commander-designate of Canada Command in formulating the plan for the north, in terms of their concepts of operations, infrastructure requirements, and personnel. The commander and staff from Canadian Forces northern area will be participating in a conference that we will be holding here in Ottawa next week, along with all the other land, air, and maritime staffs, in working through the issues in terms of the concept of operations and the protocols for the use of our capabilities across Canada.

So at this point in time, it would be premature to say here's what the plan is going to be. I would just say that Canada Command has already embarked upon this planning process to identify the requirements with the commanders and, in this case, specifically the commander in Yellowknife.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Excellent. Thank you very much. I'm really happy to hear that, and I'm assuming that the plan will also be looking at what has been lobbied for strongly—having at least one of our search and rescue planes north of 60, for a lot of reasons.

The second question is basically on purchasing. As you know, this committee had a study on this before I was a member. With technology changing so fast, under the historical systems, by the time we get something, it's obsolete. So I'm wondering how the new system might deal with that.

My last question is just a minor one for Major-General Leslie, and is slightly off topic. As you know, I visited you in Afghanistan. First of all, I want to commend you for your tremendous job there; I love the way you operate and I think you deserve all sorts of recognition, which I think you got, for a tremendous job. The committee was thinking of travelling to Kandahar, and one senior military official I talked to informally at a reception suggested that a group such as ours might be a target. The reason I'm asking this is that I felt exactly that. As you know, ten minutes before we arrived, you discovered that a rocket attack was aimed at us. So having been on the ground in Afghanistan, and knowing that Kabul is the peaceful part, I wonder if you have a suggestion or comments on the committee going to Kandahar.

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: Yes, sir.

First, I'd like to remind all of us that the attack that was aimed at you wasn't personal.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: Let me get back to that issue, and if I may I'll try to answer the procurement cycle issue.

I agree with you: it is taking us—the collective “us”—far too long to go from concept development to the introduction of new pieces of equipment. I'm relatively new on the job, but my readings tell me it's anywhere from 14 to 16 years on average for complicated pieces of military equipment. That is far too long, and it's probably not in the best interests of Canada's security and defence requirements. So how do we do it better, faster, smarter?

Within DND, on average, my readings tell me it's taken a minimum of four years to go from a good idea to actually being able to articulate, in terms of documentation, something we call “the requirement”. So we're going to work and we are working really hard right now to cut that down to the absolute minimum time possible. I submit that the Chief of Defence Staff and the new command team are engaged in that process personally, to ensure that this four-year block on average is reduced to the absolute minimum.

But we also need your help and the help of a whole bunch of other good people across Ottawa to help us reduce the overall acquisition times. You're right: by the time that good idea starts, from some of the really smart young men and women out there who come up with the good ideas based on their operational experience, if 14 to 15 years have gone by, you're out of the technological cycle. You're arguably already a generation-and-a-half behind. I think you'll agree that our soldiers and sailors and air crew deserve better equipment than that which was conceived 15 years ago.

Do I have a solution right now? No. Are a whole bunch of smart people working on it, because we all recognize the importance? Yes. I know that the ADM Materiel has appeared before this committee before, and he will be doing so again in the future, and I know the Chief of Defence Staff as well is personally seized of this issue.

With regard to Kandahar, the larger the group, the more attraction exists for unpleasant people to do unpleasant things to you. Having said that, there are economies of scale when you go in a large, well-protected group. Kandahar is a dangerous place. You've heard the minister and the Chief of Defence Staff talk about it several times. I'm not going to repeat any of their good words.

I would listen very carefully to what the chain of command tells you when you make your recommendation or your request to go to visit your soldiers in Kandahar. I would urge you to go. I think it is a marvellous opportunity, and I think the more people like you can come out to see what we really do, not only abroad, but also at home in Canada, the better. I'm sure the Chief of Defence Staff would be delighted to answer the queries you have, and he's the guy who will give you the definitive answer.

• (1155)

The Chair: Great.

We'll go to Mr. Casson.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, gentlemen.

I want to get back to the bit about the timelines you're looking at.

The Chair: I just want to remind Rick it's a second phase of five minutes.

Mr. Rick Casson: Okay. I'm always brief, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: You are indeed, sir.

Mr. Rick Casson: For the timelines, you use terms like "near-term" and "long-term". I'd like to know what these mean in years.

Then there's also the fact we just talked about, that it takes 12 to 14 years to get a piece of equipment. This reorganization or transformation is going to take new ideas, new equipment, new facilities, so if you factor in the fact that it takes that long to get something accomplished or get a piece of equipment, I would imagine that some of the good ideas General O'Connor came up with when he was still in the forces have yet to be implemented, because he's only been out for 11 or 12 years. I'm not sure that's going to happen.

So there's a meld. You have new dollars that we're talking about that are coming in; you have what you're trying to do presently. General Leslie, you mentioned that—trying to do what you're doing now while you're transforming, and while equipping and manning and all of that comes into it.

So how is it going to work, when it's so complicated at the moment? There have to be some steps by which you're going to simplify the procurement thing to a great degree. You have to simplify, and I guess that's where you're going with all of this in the end, but in the progression of doing it, what is the first step down the road to this transformation?

It would seem that if it's so cumbersome right now.... This is a hugely complex thing you're trying to do here: to operate what you have, respond to issues, as you've done just recently in a good job on going down to the gulf—all of these things unforeseen, as circumstances that have come up. What is a realistic timeline to be able to say that this structure you are proposing, this transformation, is going to be up, running, and doing the deal?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: We'll answer that in two parts. I'll deal with the near- and long-term question, and then my colleague will take on procurement.

We've split out our responsibilities, in the sense that I have the near term, which we work on a two-year horizon. Based on that, my focus is actually the command and control structures and the enablers that make those structures work. As I mentioned early in the text, we're going to create these three operational commands and the chief of defence staff...to ensure that they have ownership of their force employment responsibilities by February 1, 2006. That's why we're moving very swiftly. We also anticipate a significant investment and commitment in Afghanistan in 2006 in terms of our forces abroad; we want to ensure we have the capability to provide for effective command and control for that operation.

The timelines are very ambitious. The staffs are working very hard. They are embracing these concepts and moving out very quickly.

I'll ask my colleague to take on the second piece.

• (1200)

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: There are three key ideas, sir. The first is to fix the force. We had, and still in certain cases have, serious shortfalls in our equipment rusting out, and in units we have holes that have to be filled by good folk. In part that is being addressed by the the 3,000 reservists and the 5,000 regulars we're trying to bring in. That's the grow portion.

So we go from fix to grow, and then, of course, to transform, but as you've already pointed out, we have to do bits of this all at once, because we still have the remit from you to provide defence capabilities to help secure Canada's interests both at home and abroad. It is complicated.

In terms of resources, the immediate priority has been to fix what General Natynczyk and his team still have the remit to set in place: the command and control architectures to allow the head—the top of the body—to figure out what we want to do and where we're going to go, not only over the short term, but also in the middle and long terms.

In my view, the current 2005 budget is a downpayment on transformation. It's a good one, but it's a downpayment on those capabilities that we will determine, we think, over the next couple of months and, indeed, years—the sorts of assets Canada needs to ensure its defence interests are met. Of course, that will be submitted to the Government of Canada, and they will make their choices.

On the 3,000 to 5,000 issue, if I may build on that earlier question, there's no doubt we have to do our recruiting better, faster, and smarter. The average ratio of people who walk in the door interested in joining the Canadian Forces to people who walk out the other end as trained soldiers, sailors, or air crew is about six to one, so to grow by 5,000 regulars—or, indeed, by 5,000 plus 3,000, because they currently go through the same recruiting cycle—you need about 48,000 people to walk through the door, on top of the 20,000 or so people who need to walk through our doors to replace attrition. That's a complicated problem to solve.

Mr. Rick Casson: Those are the kinds of numbers given to us by an academic who was here some time ago. You have to start with those kinds of numbers to filter down and get the troops you need.

I just have a hard time getting my head around what you're trying to do, I suppose. You have had that at the same time.

Now that you've been into this for a short period of time, do you feel the two-year near term is still attainable?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Very much. As I indicated, there's staff; the commanders are in place now, and the staffs are forming together. Keep in mind there's a lot of experience and knowledge out there. There are a lot of people who have been doing this business, this question of where we place the people. Often I say to folks that it doesn't matter what I do in terms of organization and structure, because it's all about people—people with the experience, people with the skill sets, people with the relationships to make this stuff work.

It's all the better when we put in a commander and a dedicated staff to move us from the ad hoc, pickup-team approach to operations—both at home and abroad—that we've experienced in the past to a deliberate, cohesive, coherent team approach with a dedicated commander and staff who get on with business before a crisis and are prepared for it. We're transitioning from an ad hoc approach to a deliberate approach.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Rota.

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Thank you.

The defence policy statement indicated that the transformation will require Canadian Forces to improve coordination with other government departments and to improve the interoperability with allied forces, particularly those of the United States. What departments do you see as crucial? How do you see this developing and coming forth in the future? We already seem to have a pretty good relationship with the U.S. forces. How do you see that improving because of Canada Command?

• (1205)

MGen Walter Natynczyk: The significant enhancement will be the creation of these commanders and staffs with a dedicated focus on a domestic and continental front, and on an international front. Therefore, in dealing with the other government departments, this will significantly enhance relationship-building from a domestic standpoint with the traditional partners in the Department of the Solicitor General, but also in dealing with customs, and then in going all the way down into the provinces and into the municipalities. This relationship-building is not only at the federal level, it's also at the provincial level and at the municipal level, where those regional joint

task forces are out there doing the same kind of thing with provincial and municipal authorities. The building is happening at all three levels: at the national, at the provincial, and at a regional or a municipal level. By having this coherent, cohesive headquarters with permanent staff building relationships across the departments we'll see significant enhancements.

Likewise with Canada Command, the U.S. Northern Command has been created to focus, from a United States perspective, on their domestic and continental defence. Now we actually have created a headquarters that stands side by side in terms of the binational defence issues of North America.

Mr. Anthony Rota: Go ahead.

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: In the past security, as you know, was viewed often as a purely military affair. We would line up against the opposing forces and do whatever it was we did. I think it's well known that security now is a much more complex amalgam of demographics—cultural, economic, political—many, many variables. If we are to do what we're supposed to do, which is to assist Canadians in providing them security, we have to reach out across every government department and work more closely with them, keeping in mind, in the final analysis, that we are the people who do unpleasant things, and there's no one else who really does what we do.

Mr. Anthony Rota: I really like what I'm hearing, because one of the issues I harp on often is that we don't have enough military presence within our society, so we don't see them. When it's time to cut at a government level it's easy to cut the military because they're out of sight and out of mind with most Canadians.

What you're saying with the national, regional, and municipal levels, do you see bringing back smaller bases, as opposed to what we see now, a concentration of units in large bases? Do you see smaller regional bases, where a presence in smaller communities is a strong issue with the military?

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: Sir, the reserve portion of the armed forces has as one of their critical remits the footprint in the community. Obviously, so do the regulars, but the reserves are in most significant Canadian communities. The idea of having many more small bases—

Mr. Anthony Rota: Specialized bases are what I'm looking at.

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: I will offer a personal opinion. First of all, I would point out that any decision to close or open bases is very much the purview of the Government of Canada, but I'd like to provide you with some information. We have a regular force now of around 62,000, growing to 65,000. Of course, you're all aware of the great folks in the reserves and their numbers. We have close to 30,000 buildings that the Canadian Forces is currently the owner of. Each one of those buildings, in many locations, costs money to maintain and run. We should be thinking about focus and rationalizing infrastructure as we move ahead to try to get the best defence dollar to produce the best defence capability to protect Canadians. And 30,000 buildings is an extraordinarily large number. Now, some of them are big and some of them are small, but that's a large number.

The Chair: We will go to Monsieur Perron.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As I'm listening to you, I'm getting the feeling that you're shuffling the deck in order to deal a new hand. I applaud your noble intentions. However, there is one card missing in your deck, and that is the humanitarian card. At no time have you spoken directly about your soldiers.

Where does a soldier, sailor or air force member fit in with your plans? What say do they have? I'm talking here about rank-and-file CF members, not high-ranking officials.

● (1210)

MGen Walter Natynczyk: One of the challenges presented by this process is being able to communicate all of the changes and transformations. I'm responsible for all CF communications. I've issued a progress report on the transformation initiative. It takes a month to inform soldiers, infantrymen and air force members of the efforts under way. The aim of the transformations is to enhance efficiency throughout the Canadian forces. I hope that all regular CF members, reservists and all civilians will be leading players on our final team.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: I agree with you but to my mind, communication implies discussion. You voice your opinion and I voice mine. That is the essence of communication. That's how I communicate with my spouse. It doesn't always work out well, but I do make the effort nonetheless.

Do communications with subordinates only flow one way? Is there no feedback?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Yesterday, I met with all master warrant officers, with the vice-chiefs and chief warrant officers group, and informed them that the best ideas come from subordinates. For that reason, I'm letting everyone in on our efforts to transform the forces. We're experiencing some problems right now and down the road, we'll have a good team, with everyone on board. Vice-chiefs and master warrant officers are very pleased when I include them in the discussions. At the same time, I share information with a view to making the system work better for them.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: You may think I'm a bit crazy, but how do you feel about the possibility of rank-and-file soldiers becoming unionized?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: We have the best leaders and the best soldiers in the world. They are exemplary.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: But they could be unionized.

MGen Walter Natynczyk: We have the best soldiers and leaders in the world. They share their experience and knowledge of our profession.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Have you ever thought about unionizing them, that is giving them a common voice with which to discuss matters with you? Communication is a difficult process, a seemingly unilateral one.

MGen Walter Natynczyk: That's a political issue.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: These members need to be given the tools to negotiate and communicate with you.

MGen Walter Natynczyk: That's truly a political matter for the department to address.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: There's another card missing from your desk, the "Services" card. What help is available to soldiers who, upon their return from the Gulf War or Afghanistan, experience emotional problems? They are in a bind because they aren't considered veterans. What's being done to help them and what will your new organization do to increase the assistance available to these soldiers and their families?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: I'm in charge of the transformation and I am...

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: I'm not talking about the transformation, but rather about the help available to our veterans.

● (1215)

MGen Walter Natynczyk: As I indicated, some restructuring of human resources services is under way. One component of their improvement plan focusses on the standard of living of our soldiers. It's also a technical matter and I'm planning to review the department's structure.

[English]

The Chair: Merci, Monsieur Perron.

We have to go on to Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Merci, Monsieur le président.

General Natynczyk, General Leslie, thank you very much for being here today and for all your hard work for Canada.

I have a couple of questions.

In a domestic disaster, the command and control network and power grid will go down flat. The communications network will potentially be flattened. What do you need in order to ensure that your communications networks are up and running and that you're able to respond and communicate with first responders in a domestic emergency?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Our experience during the ice storm in eastern Canada was a good experience where we had electricity down. What we have, from a Canadian Forces capability perspective, is redundant systems, whether those are at a strategic level—and we have redundancy at the strategic level in preparing for missions, say, of a NORAD nature to ensure that we have backups to backups—or at the tactical level within the various formations that are on the ground. So we have backups to backups.

The advent of Canada Command allows us now to ensure a commonality and connectivity between all the services, so we'll have.... And this process is just starting—

Hon. Keith Martin: It is just starting. You'd be referring to the communications network you have with the first responders—police and fire—because they'll be the first to respond to a disaster, and second responders or forces will...

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Again, the connectivity at a municipal level, because of course the civil authorities are the first responders and we are the force of last resort, but it goes from first responder to last resort with a phone call, so we have to be ready. We have the military, and often it is the case that it is reservists in the communities who have connections with those first responders—the police officers and the firemen and so on—going up to regional headquarters that currently are established from an air, land, and sea perspective. Those we will fuse together to enhance the communications across the board—sharing of information—and similarly, at a national level, so we will have redundancy at all those levels and connectivity with our civilian counterparts.

Hon. Keith Martin: If the phone lines are down, in the case of a disaster, will there be alternative methods of communication such as a dedicated radio frequency, for example?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Or HF radio—high frequency radio—at a very high frequency, and digital communications that depend on different band widths and so on.

Hon. Keith Martin: My second question is for General Leslie. You referred to the one-in-six ratio: six people in the door, one out the other door. In your experience, are there ways in which we can actually improve upon that so we might get two out of six? We have the quality person at the other end. We're not lowering the standards, but are there structural changes that need to be employed so that we get more going out the front door?

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: In a perfect world, sir, I suppose the answer would obviously be yes. Having said that, there are certain things we in the Canadian Forces do well. The young men and women who join our organization, after they go through the initial phases of training—when they go overseas, or are in an ice storm or a flood—they are extraordinarily good at what they do, and that is a certain measure of their quality.

If you're asking me if I would rather have us maintain the quality line and accept some shortfalls or some delays or some adverse ratios between the numbers that go in and come out, I'd much rather stick with the quality.

Hon. Keith Martin: I probably didn't word my question correctly. It happens in this job.

What I was referring to, General Leslie, is... The standard remains the same. We keep the same high standard we have now, but what I'm really trying to bore down into is whether there are structural changes we can employ so we don't dissuade people from going through the whole process from start to finish, so you don't lose those high-quality candidates you want to get at the end. It is not to change the standard, but are there elements in the process of getting an employee, whether it's the medical or security checks, that are acting as disincentives?

• (1220)

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: Yes, sir, there are, undoubtedly.

I'm the first to admit that I'm not an expert in this. The ADM-HR is. He and his team are working on some of these issues. But I've heard anecdotally, as I suspect many of you have, of smart young people showing up at the recruiting centres and then being told to go off and wait three, six, nine, or twelve months, or even worse, after they join.

They go through the recruiting centre, they then join the regular or reserve forces, and they have to wait, in certain cases, hopefully not many, up to a year longer than that to get on their initial phase of training. Talk about demotivating. So, yes, there's work we have to do to address this. What the specifics are, I don't know.

The Chair: I have to cut you off, sir, as we're incredibly effective and efficient.

Ms. Hinton, do you have any questions?

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): I am going to decline and pass my time on to my colleague Cheryl Gallant, but I do have one comment, just a suggestion.

I would think that if we wanted to be more successful with the recruiting, we would—I agree with you—train them faster, and more importantly, treat them better when they come back as veterans.

The Chair: We'll go to Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, and welcome to both generals.

Would you please provide this committee with an organizational chart showing how the new Canada Command is going to be outlined?

Also, how does JTF-2 fit into your special operations group? Is it your special operations group, or is it the operational element?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: In regard to the first question, whatever structure we provide you for Canada Command is in draft, because it is evolving. As I mentioned earlier, we're just getting together next week with all the various headquarters, working with the recommendations that the study teams have provided, and then going through the realities and practicalities of creating these regional headquarters. So we can provide you with that information, but it will evolve.

The second piece is that the special operations group will be a formation headquarters—that is to say, larger than a single unit—but Joint Task Force 2 will be one of the subordinate units within that operations group, and we're working through all the other pieces of the special operations group to ensure that we move again from an ad hoc system to a deliberate, cohesive team approach.

For instance, aviation support, helicopter support to the JTF, is on an ad hoc basis. That is to say, they train together, but the relationship of command and control is not clean and concise before something occurs. Depending on their operation, they're given certain assets. What we're doing now is formalizing those numbers of helicopter crews that could be dedicated up front to a special operations group and other capabilities. But we're working through that process now.

Right now, in regard to the special operations group, the only organization we know of is JTF-2, and we're working through the other boxes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Could you briefly explain exactly what the chain of command is currently for JTF-2? Their commander reports to whom?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Their commander reports to the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, to the Chief of the Defence Staff.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: So the Chief of the Defence Staff, then, at all times is aware of the operations that this unit is on.

MGen Walter Natynczyk: Correct.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

As the military transforms itself, the equipment requirements will also change. Firstly, with respect to the Cormorant helicopters, the air force is forcing itself to cannibalize three of the Cormorants to keep the other ones flying, because of the shortage of parts. For central Canada, the Great Lakes, they're taking three Cormorants out and substituting the Griffins, which are not really suited for search and rescue. In fact, I guess they've even painted them yellow so when they crash they're easier to find.

I understand that within six months you're supposed to have the Cormorants back. My first concern is of course with the people of the military and the people who support the military, the civilian employees. With respect to search and rescue, what assurances can you give us that the pilots of these Griffins won't suffer the same fate as the two pilots who were substituting in a Griffin on a search-and-rescue operation off the coast of Labrador?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: I'm going to have to refer the question to the department, because within the transformation context I'm really working on the command and control of regional and national headquarters. This specific issue with regard the Cormorant helicopters, and so on, is one that would be addressed by, currently, the Chief of the Air Staff as well, from a search-and-rescue standpoint, and the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff.

•(1225)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Would you be able to tell me then how the civilian employees who currently service the Cormorants at Base Trenton will be kept employed until the new Cormorants come?

MGen Walter Natynczyk: I'm not working on those portfolios.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

You have another aspect of equipment, which perhaps Major-General Leslie would be able to provide some information about, and that is the Striker vehicle that will be replacing the Leopard tank. I know there have been a number of concerns with these vehicles, namely how they're going to stand up to rocket-propelled grenades.

There has been great concern. I'm wondering what we've done to beef them up before they're provided to our soldiers. There's also concern about the poor armour, entire vulnerability to these RPGs, the wheel wells being extremely vulnerable to small arms, the cannon being too big for the chassis, and of course the whole vehicle itself being unable to be transported long distances in a Hercules.

So with the whole transformation in mind and these problems that we've known about for some time, would you tell me how we're going about addressing them for the safety of the troops?

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: If I may, ma'am, I'll start, but General Natynczyk has actually seen them in action, so perhaps he could add.

There are three general principles for any military vehicle involved in tactical scenarios: firepower, mobility, and protection. The protection issue is one that drives us all these days. I myself have not seen a Striker. I have not seen it in action. I do know we have a project team that is working on the definition of the actual solution. I do know they're periodically down in the States—watching, supervising, or investigating what's going on. But as to the specific details of what it can withstand and what it can't withstand, I'm afraid you have me at a disadvantage. I have read and heard, anecdotally, that it is vulnerable to RPGs. I've also seen shots on the TV, from places like Baghdad, where the Americans are doing some work with putting on strapping and additional armour, which increases the weight of the vehicle.

Security is really important to us, obviously, and we want to make sure that when we send our soldiers overseas, they have the best security we can give them, keeping in mind it's a dangerous business we're in. RPGs are thoroughly unpleasant, especially when they are shot at you. I've been through those circumstances, so I, along with a whole bunch of others, am going to watch these and other issues involving security really closely.

As to the specifics of the platform, like I say, I haven't seen it, so maybe I'll ask Walt if he can comment.

MGen Walter Natynczyk: This is beyond my current terms of responsibility, but I came home from Baghdad, in January, after a year-long exchange tour with the U.S. military and I saw the Striker in action throughout Iraq. From a U.S. military perspective, the Striker worked very effectively in circumstances throughout Iraq. At the same time, no vehicle is completely invulnerable to attack, whether it be by RPGs...because the enemy that we face in the current turbulent world is an enemy who learns and is very cunning and is able to adapt and use different techniques in order to be successful in attacks against us. So every vehicle is vulnerable, whether that be a simple jeep or a full main battle tank. That was the experience in Iraq.

From the perspective of the corps commander, the person I worked for in operations across Iraq, the Striker—and that term is the U.S. vehicle Striker—was found to be very useful. It had its strengths and it had its weaknesses, as do all the other vehicles in the dynamic and lethal environment we see in those kinds of circumstances.

The Chair: I'd like to ask a question or two. But before I do that, and as the committee closes, I'd like to request that members, at the next meeting we're going to have, would come back to the issue of our visit to the north, seeing it was mentioned today. We had left it as something we were going to discuss and then confirm. So put that on your agenda.

Gentlemen, before I thank you for coming here, the disadvantage the chair has is he has to wait and hopefully have some time, and we've moved along very nicely. And permit me, if I may, to ask a couple of questions.

General Natynczyk, in your presentation, on page 9, you mentioned the Special Operations Group and what they will be doing in terms of training a highly skilled and capable special operations community, which is a necessity in order to respond to our regional and international operations, and domestic, etc. Before there was this group that is now to be set up, how were we addressing those needs? What was being done? Could you comment on that?

And, General Leslie, I have a question for you, because I was very intrigued by the comments you just made a minute ago on procurement funds. You indicated that you will need years to determine, if I understood correctly, what the needs will be in terms of equipment. Is that what you were referring to? And if you were referring to that, you're in the process now, as you transform our military, of identifying the needs, so would you not agree with me... You made a very good point when you said that by the time we get going, this generation of equipment comes out, and by the time we bring it home, it's really phased out, etc. How do other nations...? They have procurement policies. Obviously when a piece of equipment is introduced, it's not available immediately. I'm inclined to believe that they too must have a cumbersome system, a bureaucratic system, before the RFPs go out and equipment is delivered. I'd ask you, what is their timeframe compared to ours? Do we know?

And I'll close with this. In terms of procurement, you said we need the help of the politicians. I agree with you. I think most members agree with you. Certainly I believe that this committee agrees with you. But in terms of the procurement process as is being discussed and we're hearing, what is your view, if you can express your view? The procurement process of course identified the needs from your side, because only you people know what you actually need. At least I can say that and support it. But do you not agree that there has to be some communication, if you will, cooperation through the political process, the minister, for example, etc., in an expeditious way to bring results, not a long, drawn-out process of let's debate this, let's debate that, etc.? If I could get some comments on that, I'd appreciate it.

●(1230)

MGen Walter Natynczyk: I'll start off then, sir, with regard to the Special Operations Group. The functions for the special and unique capabilities is being done by a group of highly skilled individuals within the Joint Task Force 2, and I believe that you have significant knowledge with regard to that organization. We've learned a lot of lessons from the operation that we've embarked on and completed over the past few years, and now what we're doing is leveraging those lessons in terms of what enhancements could be achieved within a more formalized special operations group over and above Joint Task Force 2. The work for that is ongoing right now, and the commander who's been appointed in this regard has only been stood up in the last several weeks. So he's putting his team together and assessing where we have to go with regard to special operations and working to the Chief of Defence Staff in this regard.

The Chair: General Leslie, any comments?

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: Sir, in the past—but hopefully not in the future—it took up to four years for the Department of National Defence to be able to articulate coherently the requirement, and we are working right now to knock that down to a much shorter timeframe. When I say we are working, we're not writing briefing notes to each other about how we're going to cut down the timeframe to produce the requirement. There are a bunch of senior folks with input from the soldiers who are meeting to say this is what we need, this is how we think we should articulate the requirement, and let's now go out and do it. So I'm pretty confident that process, that four-year block, is going to be compressed down to just a matter of months. It's now up to all of us to work with all the other good folk across this town and elsewhere to make sure that their portion of the various processes and their interests are reduced as well, so that we do get the capability we need as quickly as possible, because by the time we think we need it, we need it now, and waiting 14 to 15 years is obviously not necessarily in the best interests of our soldiers who have to operate this stuff.

On the procurement process, I stand by the contention that we need your help to try to get through this thing.

In terms of the big complicated pieces of equipment, I would just offer some thoughts, a personal opinion. When it makes sense to do so, of course, we'd all like to build it in Canada, but when it does not necessarily make sense to do so, then perhaps we should be looking at the bigger picture and figuring out... We know that we're going to buy some big complicated pieces of equipment, but if we're not buying them in large numbers for whatever reason, because we don't need those large numbers, then obviously it implies that we're going to go to certain select organizations, manufacturers, and say we'd like some of those.

The cost of supporting equipment is usually twice, if not higher than twice, the actual costs of the capital acquisition. So for all the folks out there who were paying attention to this issue, they can make real money by supporting this stuff. Where the stuff is actually bought, of course, is very much a decision by the Government of Canada. But from my lowly perspective, in terms of assisting others to manage the budget lines, I suspect we'd get a lot of bang for the buck if we all think through how we're going to procure equipment better, faster, smarter than arguably we've done in the past.

• (1235)

The Chair: In your view, then, what you're saying is part of this restructuring is a new process or new methodology in terms of procurement. Is that what we can sense from what you're saying? You're working on that side yourselves.

MGen Andrew B. Leslie: Yes, sir. Keep in mind, sir, we own one small portion of the overall procurement activity and all the people who are interested in helping us procure. Our ownership of this issue is one small slice of the overall pie.

The Chair: I want to thank you, and on behalf of the entire committee here, I want to thank you for your time here, General Natynczyk and General Leslie. You've certainly provided us with a wonderful presentation and excellent responses, I can say that. Thank you for your input as we commence our study—as we continue our study; we've already commenced it. So thank you very much for being here. Certainly I can say with a smile around the table, every member looks forward to providing whatever support they can. Thank you for being here today.

We'll adjourn.

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

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

**Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le réseau électronique « Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire » à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.