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Chair

Mr. John Cannis

Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs

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● (1005)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.)): I will now call this meeting to order.

With your permission, I'd like to deal as quickly as possible with the motion that was tabled the other day. Then we can move on to the regular business, if that is okay with everybody.

There was a motion tabled by the vice-chair, Mr. Rick Casson, on Tuesday, November 1, 2005, which states as follows:

> That the Committee schedule a meeting for the week of November 14 to examine and discuss the ongoing investigation into the use of Agent Orange and other defoliants on Canadian Forces bases.

Are there any comments?

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): The intent of this motion to deal with this issue is a good one, although I think we have to take into consideration the fact that we all got together and agreed to finish the job we're doing now. If we keep adding things on all the time, we will offset the time we can actually afford to complete this job. My concern is that time and a lot of the taxpayers' money will have gone into doing the study, and if we keep adding issues on issues on issues and taking away valuable committee time from our primary objective, which we all agreed to, then we will not finish our number one job that we were tasked to do.

The issue of Agent Orange, as you know, has been dealt with by the department and the people involved, but if the committee wants to look at this and examine it and bring up witnesses, that's fine. I would just submit that we ought to wait until we finish this job so that we can deal with any other issues the committee wants to do after we complete our primary task and our primary objective, which is the completion of this study.

The Chair: We will now go to Mr. Bachand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chairman, the Bloc Québécois will support this motion, because until now, the position of the Department of National Defence and of the Canadian Forces is difficult to defend.

The other day, Ms. Ellis presented her conclusions, which raised even more doubt in my mind. I have the impression that we have not yet seen the end of the surprises surrounding Agent Orange. I think it is important to take a day to get to the bottom of the issue. Similarly, we want to take a day to discuss submarines, as my NDP colleague suggested at the time. We had, indeed, foreseen the possibility of going back to the topic.

I do not want our time to be completely monopolized by the defence policy either. We can change tracks from time to time and resolve more specific problems.

I have spoken, and the audience has heard my remarks, but should this discussion not be taking place in camera, Mr. Chairman? I see that it is being broadcast.

[*English*]

The Chair: And I apologize. I did neglect to request if there was a wish to go in camera.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: I do not feel that it needs to be kept secret, I have no problem making these comments publicly.

[*English*]

The Chair: It's your decision, and again my apologies.

Mr. Bachand, continue your comments, sir. I didn't want to interrupt.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: I summarized my thoughts.

At specific times, we must be able to change tracks for a day or two to focus on problems like the HMCS Chicoutimi submarine, Agent Orange, or any other topic. That would be useful and intelligent.

I remind you, Mr. Chairman, I still have my doubts about how well the government will listen to the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs as far as the national defence policy goes. In fact, I have the impression that the government has already made up its mind. Nevertheless, I am prepared to continue working.

However, when exceptional events arise, like Agent Orange or the Chicoutimi submarine case, we need to stop for as long as it takes to examine these issues in greater detail, so that our time is not completely monopolized by the defence policy.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. O'Connor.

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

I agree with what Mr. Bachand has just said. I know we're reviewing defence policy and that's the mandate we have from Parliament, but the reality is that not one word of this document will ever change. It is what it is. The government has declared it as policy.

So we go through meeting after meeting, listening to witness after witness. It will be interesting. It illuminates our ideas of what's going on, but it actually doesn't do anything to change policy. So I think we should be dealing with issues that come up that have to be addressed in the here and now. Defence policy is fine, but Agent Orange or the *Chicoutimi* and other issues have to be dealt with in the here and now, and I support the idea of interjecting here and there these issues inside the consideration of the defence policy.

I don't know if we even have a timeline for defence policy. Has anybody given us a mandate? Do we have to review it by a certain date? I don't think so.

Anyway, that's my position.

● (1010)

The Chair: Mr. Blaikie.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I just want to indicate my support for the motion. I don't think the two things are mutually exclusive. Frankly, I think the possibility of us actually completing it is low to zero—the study or whatever it is.

In the meantime, we can do something useful and clear up some of the confusion that exists. I'm still getting messages from people about Agent Orange. They seem to be unclear about what the government is doing. I'm unclear about what the government is doing. It would be very useful, I think, to have somebody before us to explain exactly what's going on. The initial briefing we all had a long time ago...many things have happened and much has been revealed since then, and not all of it is perfectly clear. I think it would be very useful to pass this motion and then to at least have one session—perhaps two, whatever we decide as we go along, but have something on this.

The Chair: Are there any comments?

If I may just comment on the timeline, which was asked about earlier, I think in our planning session we had discussed, and in consultation with the researchers and the clerk, that given the schedule, given the witnesses we had requested, we were targeting early February to deliver a mid-term report. I believe that's the decision we came to. So I believe that answers one of the questions you put to me.

In addition to that, we will put the question for a vote in a minute.

I would just like to say that when I hear comments like the DPS is there and there's nothing we can do...I'd like to go back in history to why we all came here. Maybe at one time in our lives we stood outside this forum and said, oh, there's nothing we can do. Well, I have found, colleagues—and I say this sincerely—in the last 12 years or so that I've been here, that indeed, no matter what, even in a small, minute way, we can make a difference; we can make changes, as small as they may be or as large as they may be. I think the effort should be there.

I understand what Mr. O'Connor said. I respect what Mr. O'Connor said. There's probably some merit in what he's saying, but I believe that as elected representatives we have an obligation to our taxpayers, primarily, to show them that indeed we're doing our share and whatever we can do to alter, change, suggest, recommend whatever to this DPS.

I believe from what we've heard so far, especially on procurement—and I'm sure you'll all agree with me—that we are going to be in a position at some point in time to make our statement. Should this government decide to listen, that's a different story, but the facts will be known. People will know, and we'll be able to make our points clearly in the future.

Are there any closing comments?

Mr. Martin.

Hon. Keith Martin: I just wanted to say, Mr. Chairman, both to Mr. O'Connor and Monsieur Bachand, that I know it seems frustrating sometimes, and the DPS will not change as a document, but if you go back in history—and Mr. O'Connor knows this full well, being a former general—the quality of life study that the former defence committee did had a profound impact upon the lives of servicemen and servicewomen within our Canadian Forces. If we were to come to this committee every day and simply believe that what we were doing was a useless exercise that was going to go nowhere, then we may as well pack up and go home.

We are here to make a difference. We're using the taxpayers' money to make a difference. We're going to make a difference, and the degree of the difference we make is purely limited by our abilities and the time and effort we put into what we are trying to do for our Canadian Forces people.

While I want to make it very clear that I think looking at Agent Orange and looking at other issues, as Mr. Blaikie mentioned, is important, my concern is that we don't intervene and utilize valuable committee time, when time is limited, where it's going to affect our primary objective, which is to finish this study, complete the job, and do an excellent job that is going to serve our Canadian Forces.

● (1015)

The Chair: Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Just to clarify things, I am not saying the committee does totally useless work. I'm not claiming that. What I'm saying is that the defence policy isn't going to change. We're going to hear 30 or 40 witnesses, and it will illuminate us as individuals on all these different areas and specialties, and that's fine, but it isn't going to change the policy.

The example you gave about quality of life, which was a valuable exercise—there are probably other valuable exercises, and maybe the investigation of the submarines was a valuable exercise. These kinds of investigations or studies actually do make change because government does react to them. We're just going through this exercise to chew up time, week after week, on a defence policy that isn't going to be amended.

The Chair: Next I have Monsieur Perron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Chairman, at the risk of being accused of playing petty politics, I think that our committee, which is examining the new defence policies, has perhaps a better chance of being listened to, since we have a minority government.

As regards the motion, I think, as we say in Quebec, that we can walk and chew gum at the same time. So we should set aside some time and interrupt our policy study, in order to focus on important topics like Agent Orange or the submarines. Other subjects could be added too. I do not think that our mandate is so strict that we should restrict ourselves to the national defence policy.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): With the greatest of respect, the work this committee does, regardless of whether our review is finished in February or March, is really not going to change what the military is doing. They're moving forth with their transformation, but it will make a difference in the lives of the people who've been affected by Agent Orange, and on that basis, we should allow them the time.

The Chair: I fully agree with that comment, but more so, I really appreciate the way Mr. Perron placed it. He's absolutely right.

We talked about a timeline, and I'm glad Mr. O'Connor brought it up, because it gave me the opportunity to remind us all that this was a timeline that we all had agreed on, in consultation with the staff. So now I say to you that as we move forward on this motion, we have to be cognizant of that, that because we set a schedule in order to deliver a preliminary report, that was the timeframe. Add in important issues, as has been suggested through this motion, and we have to understand that this is going to derail us to a degree.

I believe we do have the opportunity, as Mr. Perron so rightfully stated. I think the key is that we are in a minority status, and if anything, that gives us the opportunity to influence. I think there have been examples most recently in that area.

With that I will close, unless there are other comments, and the question will be put.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: You mentioned to me yesterday, Mr. Casson—and I thank you for responding—in terms of witnesses, that I believe you were in the planning stages, if there are witnesses already, so that we can plan it out.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Yes, I think we've ordered the—

The Chair: They've been submitted?

Mr. Rick Casson: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

The other question I believe you had was the cost factor, which the staff was going to look into, as I recall. Has that been addressed as well?

Mr. Rick Casson: That's been addressed.

The Chair: Great. We'll leave that and we'll close this end of it.

● (1020)

Mr. Rick Casson: There's just one more issue that has to do with the committee. This room is obviously not big enough.

The Chair: I'm glad you said that. This morning we were notified of this, and I inquired immediately. The reason for the change in room is because we had asked to extend our sittings by an hour. That threw off the schedule in terms of available space, so they had to shift us over. I put in the request that we go back to our normal facilities.

Mr. Rick Casson: Thank you.

The Chair: Is there anything else before we move on?

Okay. We'll go into our regular routine. Let me first of all apologize to our guests for the delay, but it was something we had to address immediately.

Let me then just welcome our panel here to the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs as we move on to this review of defence policy.

With us today, colleagues, we have, from CARE Canada, Mr. John Watson, president and chief executive officer; from the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Mr. Gerry Barr, president and chief executive officer; and from the Canadian Red Cross, Mr. Tetsuo Itani, manager, emergency response unit.

Gentlemen, welcome. Thank you for your patience. As you heard earlier, we're dealing with time constraints. I ask that all three of you speak no more than 10 minutes. I don't know if there's an order. Should we start with CARE Canada, which is first on the list?

Afterwards, we'll go into a first round of seven minutes, questions and answers, a second round of five minutes, and then a third round of five minutes.

Mr. Watson, the floor is yours.

Mr. A. John Watson (President and Chief Executive Officer, CARE Canada): In terms of respecting your time, I want to read my presentation. I do have some pictures from the field that the committee might be interested in during the question period.

Thank you for inviting me here today.

Since the end of the cold war, and especially since 9/11, many commentators have observed that we live in a more dangerous and less predictable world than ever before. Regrettably, the international policy statement's diagnosis of the malady and prescription for how to deal with it are both woefully inadequate.

At the risk of oversimplification, I would summarize the international policy statement as follows. The statement posits that the foremost pathology facing the international community today is the emergence of substantial numbers of weak and failing states—states that do not protect their own people, states that generate large refugee flows, states that serve as safe havens for terrorists. In an era of weapons of mass destruction, these failing states pose a considerable threat to us all.

The solution offered by the statement is deployment of military-led interventions in the most extreme cases to stabilize weak and failing states to a point where political elections can be held and where citizens, once they recognize the benefits of democracy, can actively support their country's reconstitution as a functioning state. This renewed state would then enter the community of nations and respect the rules of international law. I believe this analysis is wrong on two main counts.

First, it overlooks the peculiar geopolitical circumstances that existed during the 50-year period of the cold war, unique circumstances that produced a bipolar world of more or less functioning and viable nation states everywhere. This geopolitical environment, however, constituted an anomaly that is unlikely to recur, and imposing military interventions on failed states can lead to long-term consequences that we have the inability to understand or foresee. Here I'm referring to a pattern in which military support given by the west to deal with an immediate problem comes back to haunt us with even more serious problems in the future. For example, consider the support given to Hamas by the Israelis to undercut the PLO, the support provided to Saddam by the United States during the Iran-Iraq war, or U.S. support for the mujahedeen to counter the Soviet Union following its invasion of Afghanistan. All of these interventions made sense in the short term, but they came back to pose even more serious problems in the long term.

As a result of hard-won experience, then, we should think twice about prescribing military intervention in failing states when we find ourselves suffering side-effects that are often more serious than the original disease.

Second, I believe that prescribing elections in failing states is highly overrated as a means to induce stability. Experience has shown us that economic rather than political democracy is often the top-of-mind concern of ordinary citizens in failed or failing states. The vast majority of these states have economies characterized by a market-dominating ethnic majority and a large informal sector in which the property rights of the poor are not recognized by state institutions. Holding elections in these circumstances is likely to increase instability, as a majority of voters remaining economically disenfranchised vote to confiscate the property of the economically dominant minority.

I want to move on to two images: the three-block war and the three-legged stool, which take us down to the micro level, if you like, of what's happening.

The international policy statement reads:

> The image that captures today's operational environment for the Canadian Forces is a "three-block-war." Increasingly, there is overlap in the tasks our personnel are asked to carry out at any one time. Our military could be engaged in combat against well-armed militia in one city block, stabilization operations in the next block, and humanitarian relief and reconstruction two blocks over.

There's much to be said for this image. It recognizes that the military culture formed in the cold war, when the prospect of nuclear warfare or tank battles on the plains of northern Europe was uppermost in the minds of military leaders, must change to cope with the more confusing context of failed states. The image represents a return to an earlier form of military practice found, for instance, in the *Small Wars Manual* produced by the United States Marine Corps in the 1930s. But to suggest this image encapsulates the meaning of a coordinated foreign policy for Canada is a mistake.

● (1025)

By all means, let us have a coordinated three-D approach, where defence, development, and diplomacy are all pulling in the same direction. But putting forward the PRT in Kandahar as an example of this approach is inappropriate and unbalanced.

I like to use the image of the three-legged stool to describe appropriately balanced humanitarian interventions in failed states. The legs represent the three players that must be involved in any effective intervention—the United Nations and its agencies; the armed forces; and professional humanitarian agencies. If all the legs are adequate, the intervention will be effective. If one leg is significantly weaker than the others, the intervention will teeter and collapse.

In terms of this country's allocations, the weak leg today is the Canadian humanitarian community. The appropriate role of these agencies is to concentrate on delivering effective, cost-efficient relief to ease the suffering of victims on the front lines of humanitarian disasters. We're exceptionally skilled at this work, not because we are do-gooders, but because we possess a degree of market discipline.

By definition, the UN agencies and military forces are monopolies. Not surprisingly, the chief management problem of these institutions is a constant struggle against bureaucratization and red tape. Also not surprisingly, the chief management problem for humanitarian agencies is coordinating the response of a wide variety of actors.

This variety, however, is not as wide as you would think. It includes the Red Cross, CARE, Médecins Sans Frontières, World Vision, Oxfam, Save the Children, and those other agencies that subscribe to a corporate culture that has evolved through efforts to help victims in conflicts, stretching back to the Crimean War. This culture is embodied in the principles of humanity, independence, neutrality, and impartiality, which all of these groups subscribe to. It is also embedded in international law.

I want to say a bit about the difference between humanitarianism and our hearts and minds. Regrettably, the current Canadian approach to interventions involving the military confuses the role of the military and humanitarian agencies. The military fulfills a crucial role, providing access through its lift capacity and security enforcement. It does a poor job, however, of providing humanitarian relief in terms of cost, appropriateness, and ability to function according to the humanitarian principles.

To not recognize these drawbacks is to confuse the hearts and minds element of an effective small wars strategy with professional humanitarianism. Operating under humanitarian principles is important, not only for ethical reasons, but also because these principles, based on the experience of professional humanitarian agencies, represent the best way of getting the job done.

If we look at the issue of security, the difference between humanitarianism and our hearts and minds approach becomes crystal clear. At CARE Canada, we take security very seriously, but security strategies run on a continuum, from protection to deterrence to acceptance.

The military's strategy for security of its personnel revolves around force protection, which sits at one end of the continuum. This concept of security is simply not feasible for a humanitarian operation with personnel scattered over a wide area and dependent on a large number of local staff to reach even larger numbers of disaster victims.

We depend, therefore, on a strategy of acceptance. By "acceptance", we mean we are transparent in our operations. We make a point of working with local authorities and communities to agree on guidelines for who gets assistance and who does not—in short, to determine who is most in need. It is not enough to do the right thing. We must be recognized by all parties in the conflict to be doing the right thing in a way that they understand and agree with.

If this approach is undertaken properly, local communities themselves enforce order at distribution points. If it is not undertaken properly, mob scenes at distribution points are commonplace, and aid goes to those who need it least—the strong and the powerful.

● (1030)

Effective humanitarian work revolves around identifying the neediest victims and getting scarce aid to them regardless of what their views on the conflict are. Hearts and minds work, on the other hand, has a different purpose: to win over people to one side of the conflict, to convince them that our people are the good guys, who will help them, as opposed to the bad guys, who are only interested in continuing their suffering.

I'm not suggesting that hearts and minds work is not important from a military perspective. I am pleading that it be recognized for what it is and not confused with humanitarian work, as it is in the international policy statement. To do so puts our staff at genuine and grave risk, and that is why no professional humanitarian agency will work closely with the military in the field. That is also why we do not favour the concept of the three-block war or view the PRT as a positive experiment.

At CARE Canada we realize that the international community faces a protracted struggle to overcome poverty, restore order, and reconstitute failed states, a struggle that will occupy us for decades. In every one of the world's conflict areas now, humanitarian agencies are at work well before the outside military is deployed, and well into the future they will continue their work long after military deployments have ended. At CARE Canada we know from practical experience that if done well, our work has the power to undercut conflict and help re-establish functioning state structures. The international policy statement does not adequately recognize this fact.

In summary, allow me to make three points.

First, I recognize that the military plays a critical role in resolving failed state crises. This role revolves around the provision of security, especially the training of a local army and police force and the provision of emergency lift capacity in cases where access is a primary impediment to relief. The military, however, should not be engaged in humanitarian work because the military undertakes this vital work in a costly and inappropriate fashion that confuses the winning of hearts and minds with humanitarianism and puts our humanitarian workers at risk.

Second, the Canadian humanitarian system badly needs reform There should be program funding for established Canadian humanitarian agencies as opposed to the present ad hoc crisis-by-crisis scramble. CIDA knows this approach makes sense and did process ad hoc proposals more quickly in the wake of the Pakistan earthquake than in past emergencies. However, CIDA has received proposals for the type of long-term program funding I am speaking about from at least three major humanitarian agencies. These proposals, as far as I can determine, are not moving forward within CIDA as quickly as they should.

Third, in addition to the government reform of the Canadian humanitarian system, Canadian humanitarian agencies must build on our current efforts to develop a unified fundraising and open evaluation process, a process that exists in many countries but is not yet established in Canada. This process would help assure donors, both institutional and the general public, that their money is being put to use in the most effective way. Together, these reforms would move the Canadian system well towards a truly integrated approach to humanitarian relief that is consistent with the three Ds outlined in the international policy statement.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

● (1035)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Watson.

We'll go to Mr. Barr.

Mr. Gerry Barr (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Council for International Cooperation): I want to thank the members here for the opportunity to meet with you and to talk a little bit about some of the dilemmas and challenges that are associated with humanitarian work in the context of whole-of-government approaches.

I'd like to start with a quote from a good colleague of ours, a fellow named Larry Minear, who is now at Tufts University. He's been around for a very long time and is a very substantial analyst. Here's his quote:

> The substantive subordination of humanitarian action to political strategies linked to the global "war on terror" and the use of aid as a tool for the foreign policy objectives of the remaining superpower and its allies does not bode well for principled humanitarianism.

So there's the cautionary note.

The key messages I'd like to convey today are these: humanitarian action must be independent from military action; the right of those affected by armed conflict and the protection of civilians must be paramount in international interventions in conflicts; and lastly, development funds must be used to support the world's poor and, to that end, in a way that supports their role as citizens and rights-holders.

Canadian aid programs need to be focused on ending global poverty. Donor governments, including Canada, are increasingly championing three-D or joined-up government approaches to conflict and post-conflict situations. The approach is rooted in the need for a more coordinated intervention across the entire government and reflects the complexity of modem conflict. Canada's three-D approach is being piloted in Haiti, in Sudan, and in Afghanistan, and other likely candidates might include the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While movement towards better coordination and coherence in foreign policy is welcome, in the current context the three-D approach raises questions. What are those questions? In particular there are concerns about the extent to which coordination and communication between the three Ds become integration and common objectives. In this regard the international policy statement plainly goes too far, proposing integration as the goal of three-D efforts rather than coordination.

What I'm going to do here today is try to support the principle of coordination and to defeat and block the notion of conflation. Integration represents a clear call for tighter linkages between political responses to crises and humanitarian and reconstruction responses. While it's true that better coordination could improve things, integrating the three Ds puts civilians at risk by blurring the lines between humanitarian and military and by conflating local people's self-determined development paths with hearts and minds operations.

The safety of humanitarian workers and the people they serve are contingent on a deal between humanitarians and warring parties. The humanitarian actors aim to mitigate suffering caused by conflict but do not aim to affect the course of conflict. When humanitarian workers are tied or are perceived to be tied to the political agenda of one side of a conflict, this deal is broken.

● (1040)

The Chair: Excuse me, but I've just been handed this document and it's only in English. Has it been passed around in French?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gerry Barr: We have copies of the summary of this presentation in French.

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci.

I'm just commenting. Sorry.

Mr. Gerry Barr: The association with political agendas can result from a closeness to our integration with military activity, whether it is in war-fighting, or in peacebuilding or peacemaking, or even in peacekeeping, and the result is less life-saving assistance to suffering populations. This is not about turf or academic distinctions; it's about the effectiveness of life-saving assistance to populations in need. Nothing really could be less academic.

On the development and peacebuilding side, the integration of the three Ds puts at risk the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of interventions. The role of development and peacebuilding projects is to support a positive social change according to the priorities of local populations. But when the development side is integrated—once again going back to this key phrase—with the military and foreign policy side, we end up putting Canada's plans and interests first, not the plans and interests of local populations.

Fifty years of aid delivery have taught us that the key to effective delivery of aid is local ownership—not Canada-driven processes for development, but local ownership. The government's three-D approach will be a focus for two new government mechanisms announced in the IPS, the stabilization and reconstruction task force, or START, and the global peace and security fund, which are designed to increase and coordinate our overall response to state fragility. In order to ensure that the three-D approach strengthens rather than weakens our effectiveness in intervening in violent conflicts, the government must make clear its intention and the means by which it will protect human rights and humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development principles in these new initiatives.

First, here are some human rights principles that should be key to the three-D approach.

Our principal responsibility as a state is to the fulfillment and protection and promotion of human rights, and these obligations, with their implications for the entirety of our international role, should guide our interventions in situations of violent conflict and weak governance. In addition, human rights monitoring should be a pillar of early warning and conflict analysis. In this regard, there is clearly a need for strong links between the START and the evolving human rights machinery at the United Nations.

In the realm of humanitarian principles, the principles of good humanitarian donorship, of which Canada has been one of the national progenitors, ought to inform both START and the government's overall approach to humanitarian actions. Specifically, this means that the distinction between humanitarian action and military and political action must be vigilantly maintained. Military roles in the delivery of humanitarian assistance ought to be exceptions. You need not just take my word on it. The Geneva conventions call for humanitarian assistance to be carried out by impartial humanitarian organizations. The humanitarian donorship principles I've just spoken about reiterate it, and the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in disaster relief make it utterly clear.

A second key principle in the humanitarian realm is funding according to need. Though the START will presumably focus Canadian peace and conflict resources in a small number of key countries, humanitarian funds have to be spent according to need. In practical terms, this means Canada is carrying out systematic needs assessments and allocating humanitarian resources based on the outcomes of those assessments. That is vital both within specific crises—deciding on water and sanitation versus shelter and that sort of thing—but also between different humanitarian crises themselves: deciding how much money to put into crisis X as opposed to crisis Y.

● (1045)

My final plug for you today is the maintenance of peacebuilding and development principles. First off, early warning systems and preventative action and capabilities must be better developed. Solid context analysis should drive action, and local change agents, civil society organizations, need to be thought of as playing central roles in determining strategies and implementing programs. And finally, our limited development dollars should be focused on conflict-sensitive poverty reduction.

I have one suggestion for the committee. In order to ensure open dialogue and assessment of the new three-D approaches, the government should create a mechanism for effective civil society engagement in the management of START and the GPSF in the form of an external advisory body composed of academics and NGOs that might, for example, meet quarterly to contribute to the discourse that informs both of these important new programs. So that will be my suggestion.

Once again, thanks very much for the chance to meet with you today and to talk about this important stuff.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barr.

We thank all of you for being here with us.

Before we go to Mr. Itani, I'm going to suspend for just a few minutes because there's a request for some equipment to be set up.

Could we do that as quickly as we possibly can?

● (1045)

(Pause)

● (1055)

The Chair: I'll bring the meeting back to order, colleagues.

I understand we still have technical problems.

Mr. Itani, do the best you can, sir, with what's available. I understand the equipment is not working.

Mr. Tetsuo Itani (Manager, Emergency Response Unit, Canadian Red Cross): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to begin by saying that I am a veteran of 37 years of military service, and regrettably I was expelled in 1993 due to discrimination. Discrimination is a terrible thing, particularly age discrimination.

My third career after leaving the military has principally been with the International Committee of the Red Cross, beginning with the land mines study that lead to the Ottawa mine ban treaty from 1996 to 1997, followed by a field assignment in Central Asia with the regional delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, notably in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—what I fondly refer to as five of the 11 “stans” of the region.

Two and a half years later I was reassigned in 2002 to the headquarters on the missing people project, and when that project came to an end, I was again recalled to the headquarters from 2003 to 2004, as an adviser on international humanitarian law and humanitarian diplomacy.

In February 2004, I returned to Canada, whereupon I joined the Canadian Red Cross as a volunteer, where I worked every day from February until December 26. The rest, as they say, is history. I am now a full-time staff member responsible for the emergency response unit of the Canadian Red Cross.

I would like to begin by saying that the impact of defence, diplomacy, and development on the Red Cross family is enormous. The Red Cross and the Red Crescent are the largest and oldest humanitarian network, encompassing hundreds of national societies, as well as 192 states party to the Geneva conventions.

In varying degrees, all agencies are affected when political military intervention imposes humanitarian tasks on a military force. This obliges us to work in an ever decreasing humanitarian space, all to the detriment of vulnerable populations.

National societies were created at the urging of Jean Henri Dunant. He was the founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross. In the first 10 years, after his urging in 1863, some 22 national societies were born. The International Committee of the Red Cross, the ICRC, has been serving the needs of humanity for the last 142 years. There are currently 182 national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and 192 signatories to the Geneva Convention, as I mentioned, one more than the total membership of the United Nations system.

Beginning from the first Geneva Convention that numbered 10 articles, today the four Geneva conventions and the two additional protocols number some 600 articles.

What's our mandate? Very simply, it's to save lives and protect human dignity, which means protecting prisoners of war, detainees, and others who are deprived of their freedom, as well as restoring family links.

Sometimes the act of restoring family links is a painful one. For example, a prisoner was released from the Iran-Iraq war that ended in 1988. Only in the last two years were we aware that Iranian authorities had held this prisoner, and we had no knowledge of this, so we did not visit him. He returned to Baghdad at age 45. He had not seen his wife for 20 years but wanted to reconnect with his wife, who had emigrated to the United States, in the meantime, and had remarried. How do you reconstitute two lives when you're faced with these challenges? This is an example of one of the plights that face millions of people around the world.

We also promote respect for international humanitarian law. Sometimes we are very successful, but often we are not.

We provide assistance in terms of life-saving medical intervention, medicine, water, food, clothing, and shelter, much of the activities as engaged in by my colleagues from CARE Canada and other very effective international non-government organizations.

We operate under the principles of impartiality, independence, and neutrality—neutral to the causes of war, neutral in our relations with belligerents, but far from neutral to human suffering.

● (1100)

For us, in the world of humanitarian assistance, one life lost is one too many and one life saved is not enough. These are real lives and these are real people

We need access. We need to be physically close to our beneficiaries, because only with that physical proximity and intimacy do we really understand what their needs are. It's not like sitting somewhere comfortably in Canada and sending assistance with no knowledge of what the priority needs are. We are on the ground sharing the privations and the dangers of our beneficiaries.

We operate in a transparent way. As you know, in a conflict, apart from the well-known adversaries, there is a quite sizable criminal element that makes its presence known in order to take advantage of the relative anarchy in conflict situations. Yes, we have to deal with them as well, but in a totally transparent way. In our day-to-day operations we are privy to information that would be useful from one party to another, so we take great pains to ensure that none of that information is disclosed to the advantage or disadvantage of one party or another.

Peace support operations under chapter 6 are probably the best that humanitarians can expect, because they provide for a secure and stable environment that allows us to reach our full potential in terms of humanitarian programs.

I would also like to say that not all humanitarian organizations are created equal. In any given situation there could be upwards of 200 humanitarian organizations in the field of conflict, with varying degrees of commitment, different mandates, and different competencies. Chapter 6 provides an opportunity and a major role for politicians, diplomats, the media, the United Nations system, civilian police, and others to prevent conflict or to help reconstitute failed states. In the meantime, it provides us in the humanitarian world with an opportunity to continue to look after the world, quite separate from the ongoing political process.

Under chapter 7, the military in conflict situations, where there are Canadian troops or others, is entitled by law to the same degree of protection as guerrilla groups, national liberation movements, and others. There is an obligation to respect treaty and customary international humanitarian law. IHL is not reciprocal, in that it does not depend on a similar behaviour by an adverse party to ensure obligation by both parties. Obligation is unilateral. Nor is it à la carte, whereby you select those items of international humanitarian law that you want to apply and ignore the rest.

From our perspective, clouding or obscuring the line between military and humanitarian intervention places our clients at grave risk and imposes severe limits on humanitarian action, such as access to beneficiaries. It also undermines the trust and confidence that belligerents have in aid workers. Belligerents as well as beneficiaries need to see a clear distinction between military and humanitarian organizations. This is also true for beneficiaries, lest they accept aid or protection from the wrong party. To couch military operations with a human security dimension as a humanitarian operation also adds to this confusion. I wish that term would not be used.

Humanitarians will intervene in all humanitarian emergencies, but it remains to be seen if the three-D policy will see the same. It's good to remember that humanitarian intervention, whether by civilians or the military, is not a substitute for political solution. A secure and stable environment is fundamental to meeting the needs of the vulnerable. Security for beneficiaries and humanitarians means better force protection.

● (1105)

A full warning of political military intervention enhances our security, and consistent with operational security, full warning of a political military intervention would permit humanitarians to make alternate arrangements, such as relocation of beneficiaries, withdrawal of non-essential staff, stockpiling of critical commodities, or delegation of more responsibilities to the local staff.

In general, we could support the three-D concept, with some qualifications. It's important to bear in mind that components of the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement are in the theatre of operations before, during, and after conflict. Any stigma that attaches to the Red Cross movement as the result of a three-D policy is a stigma that remains well after the troops have departed; it is a terribly legacy to live with.

Blurring the line between military and humanitarian puts the vulnerable at risk. That is the key point. Therefore, if the third D were to be implemented, we would prefer that it be done by impartial, neutral, independent agencies. Properly focused development by independent agencies will go a long way towards removing some of the causes of conflict.

Collectively, we in the humanitarian community are the voice of the voiceless vulnerable throughout the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Itani. I must say you were right on for time, and I'll begin with that before I go to the members.

Members, because of time constraints, the seven minutes allocated per member is for questions and answers. This will be the first time I will say I'm going to be strict with time so that we can move on. Given what's unfolded today, we're doing okay.

We will go to Mr. Casson first.

Mr. Rick Casson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much, gentlemen, for your presentations. We certainly appreciate what you do in times of need. As we see the world we live in today, I think that need is not going to go away.

All three of you mentioned the need for input from your organizations into the decision-making process. If we look back over the last couple of really big disasters in the world, I think that timing and direction, size, response, and all of these things were a matter of public concern.

Certainly I know when something happens around the world, our phones start ringing and people want to see action immediately. They want to know why we're not responding as a nation or why people aren't in there helping.

I think all three of you mentioned that guidelines have to be established. Mr. Watson, I think you indicated there should be some kind of external body from government that advises. I'd just like all three of you to expand on that to some degree, as to who that would be, what would make it workable, how that information would be fed back to government, and then what you'd like to see in terms of the reaction from government. Sometimes when things get fed back, they get fed back and that's all that happens; there's no follow up and there's no direction given.

So if you could, maybe just expand on that whole idea of guidelines and a body to create the parameters in which to respond.

The Chair: Mr. Itani, would you like to start, sir?

● (1110)

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Apart from providing advice on the crafting of policy, before a policy is adopted or is contemplated for adoption, we would like to know, because we in turn can provide additional feedback as to the unintended consequences of that policy on the ground. If policy-makers were to be aware of these consequences, perhaps that policy may not be adopted in the first place. There needs to be ongoing, continuous dialogue between policy-makers and the humanitarian community. What form this takes is immaterial. It could be a committee meeting such as this on a regular basis.

Whenever foreign policy with a humanitarian dimension is being contemplated, we ought to be included, because we have the expertise on the ground. We deal with the vulnerable on a day-to-day basis. We know their concerns, their fears, their hopes, and their wishes. That would help the government adopt a policy that is more reflective of the real needs of the vulnerable population it purports to serve.

The Chair: Mr. Casson, do you have a comment here?

Mr. Rick Casson: Perhaps Mr. Watson might intercede here.

Mr. A. John Watson: It's easy, and perhaps NGOs do it far too often and then blame other people for the difficulties they face. I would say that one of the main things that is missing in Canada is more cooperation between the humanitarian agencies in Canada. We do compete in the field to some extent, and I think that is why we are more efficient than government or military deployments.

As a result of the tsunami, we're working very hard now to argue for unified appeals when disasters take place. These have been very successful undertakings in other countries, like the U.K. in particular. From the private donor's point of view, if you give your money to a unified appeal, you have the commitment of all the agencies involved to use it best.

When an emergency takes place, there is a very short get-together by the participants, the main humanitarian agencies, to decide whether that particular catastrophe merits the calling of an appeal.

From a politician's point of view, I am quite sympathetic, because it seems to me that in every disaster we face, politicians are put in the awkward position of trying to stay up to the public in terms of their response. Sometimes their response is very positive, sometimes it isn't. Nobody knows exactly why these waves of sympathy are triggered.

Right now, they're basically in the firing line. If we had a unified appeal, people could go to the experts, the type of people Mr. Itani has indicated are on the front lines, and ask why they aren't calling a unified appeal for this or why they are calling a unified appeal for that.

The other thing that's very important is the idea of program funding. It's hard to believe, after so many decades of humanitarian work, that the only professional agency that receives what you would call program funding as preparedness funding is the Red Cross. Basically, when there is a quick-breaking emergency, all the others in the Canadian humanitarian field have to analyze what's happening in the field, come up with a plan, and submit a proposal to CIDA, and only weeks later do they get some reply on whether or not they're going to have the allocations to do the work.

There's no reason for that to continue. There should be program funding for the best humanitarian agencies. At least three of them—World Vision, MSF, and ourselves—have asked for it, but it's simply bogged down.

What this means is that for the initial period, we are dependent upon the support of very generous donors, like Jean Coutu, in Quebec, to get the crash teams out there to analyze the situation and to do the immediate response. There's no reason for that to be so.

The final thing I'd say is that as much as it is important to stay up with the public on crises like the tsunami, it is also important to remember that there are a lot of crises that we're involved with that never make it into the newspapers. We're running camps for Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad, but you never read about that. We're doing psychosocial counselling in Chechnya and Ingushetia, but you never read about that.

If we have a unified appeal, it then becomes much easier for the humanitarian agencies to educate the public, to say, for instance, that if you have a high-profile emergency, yes, we've declared it as an appeal, but we're setting aside 5% of the funds coming in for the emergencies that aren't noticed, and we will report on those too.

Finally, on the issue of transparency with the donor public and the evaluation of how we're doing, if we do a unified appeal, it becomes a third-party evaluation that applies to all the humanitarian interventions. That is good, number one, because the public has an apples-to-apples report on how the money was spent, and, quite frankly, one gets better from learning from one's mistakes. There is no shame in making a mistake in the way you're operating, and if there is a new, innovative way of doing things, it is important that best practices spread to other agencies.

● (1115)

I would say that unified appeal offers the best approach and best prospect for the type of body we're talking about.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Watson.

Mr. Bachand, please.

Mr. Claude Bachand: First of all, thank you for your presentation, because I like presentations that really shake me up.

Your comments this morning are very different from what the generals and senior officials are telling us. For me, this shake-up is also the cause of some despair that I would like you to appease.

When you say that development initiatives have been stopped, you are talking about the politicians and the armed forces, because the armed forces come under civilian authorities. However, when you talk about winning hearts and minds, you're talking about your group. You are also talking about common objectives that cannot be reconciled. That is very much the opposite of what I think.

What is the common objective in cases of conflict and failed states? Trying to help poor people to overcome these problems. Have you ever accompanied peacekeeping forces or stabilization forces? I went to Bosnia and to Erythria. It is not true that soldiers are unable to win over the hearts and minds of the people. I saw children in Bosnia and children in Erythria blowing our soldiers kisses. I saw soldiers stop their tanks and armoured vehicles to hand out chocolate to these children. They were surrounded by children. There was an important emotional relationship, not because the soldiers stopped, but because the soldiers recognized their small groups. The captain would have the vehicle stopped and would ask everyone to get out.

You will not convince me that you are the only ones able to win over hearts and minds. I cannot nor do I want to agree with you on that, that is not my dream.

In my dream, when a country needs assistance, soldiers must be sent in. Diplomats and economic development people must also be sent in, and you must be involved too.

You say that there is a dichotomy and that you cannot really be too close to us out of fear that it will not be well perceived. I want to remind you that some politicians and soldiers have good intentions. They want to solve problems and help people. If the common objective is helping people, then no one can be excluded. I would like some reassurance from you on that. I read in your presentation that separating politics from the humanitarian side is essential to the very survival of humanitarian assistance.

That is what it says in your brief, and all three of you said that international aid depends on an unequivocal separation between politics and humanitarianism.

What does that mean? Are you saying that we are a bunch of heartless people who are unable to show emotion?

I went to Bosnia and to Erythria with soldiers, and I set out to conquer hearts and minds, and I did. I did not say that my goal was to charm the women! That is not what I said. I am talking about winning over the hearts and minds of the children, the people.

Please reassure me, because I am very worried.

Thank you for having moved my heart, and not the earth.

● (1120)

[*English*]

The Chair: That was a very generous statement.

Mr. Watson.

[*Translation*]

Mr. A. John Watson: It would be terrible if humanitarian workers caused earthquakes. I must respond to that.

[*English*]

I would like to show some pictures from the field, so you get an idea of it. The point is not that hearts and minds work is not important for the military and they don't do it and don't receive a response; it is important, they do do it, and that's an appropriate thing to do for the military. But hearts and minds work is not humanitarian work.

If I show you how it translates in the field, I think I can give you some more positive examples of how the two operate. Here's an example of yours truly visiting a project we were doing in Bosnia.

The Chair: Are you that good-looking guy over there?

Mr. A. John Watson: Unfortunately, no. That's our country director in Bosnia, and this is one of the Canadian soldiers who was deployed.

He's at the same point we're at because this is an area of Bosnia that was cleared of Serbs. It's a Croat area. We have been working very hard to try to get Bosnia reintegrated. We tried a lot with house visits, but it didn't work. You could take someone back to see their house, but if they came from a Serb-dominated area and they were a Muslim, there was another Serb in their house already who had been moved out of a Muslim-dominated area. So nobody could move back. We're always looking at a way to get people to move back.

The reason Canadian troops are here is this is the president of Republika Srpska, which is the Serb entity in Bosnia. Now, what is he doing in a Croat-dominated area, an area that was cleared of Serbs? By the way, that's why the troops are with him; they're afraid there's going to be an attack against him, which would cause a major political crisis. It's quite an appropriate use of Canadian troops. He's here to open up this factory. This factory is a door and window factory. They're making stuff for the reconstruction of Bosnia.

What have we got to do with this factory? It's quite a big place. It employs hundreds of people. We decided to put a quick impact facility, an investment facility, into place after the war. It did two things. One is it got free enterprises started up quickly after the war. We put in 10% of the investment of these start-up enterprises, and there was only one requirement: that the workplace reflect the pre-ethnic makeup of the community where the company was. In this case, they had to hire something like 30 Serbs in a Croat area. As soon as we did that, the Serbs moved back. They moved back for jobs, and the community was reintegrated. The president from the Republika Srpska came to a Croat area to say we think this is a great thing. These are things the army can't do. They are doing the appropriate thing, which is making sure everything stays peaceful, while these communities are reknit.

Here's a bakery in this same area. What you don't see is one of the persons is a Croat who never moved, and the second person is a Serb. Again, we put 10% investment into this. The bakery doesn't mind having a mixed staff, because the Croat serves the Croats and the Serb serves the Serbs.

Again, in Afghanistan during the Taliban era, we stayed open. We stayed open by not taking sides. We stayed open by going through the gymnastics of separating our staff into a male office and a female office. You've heard the Taliban kicked every girl out of school in Afghanistan. We kept 20,000 girls in school during the Taliban regime by working with the communities and getting them to petition the government.

This is crucial work. In the aftermath of conflict, for instance, during the invasion of Afghanistan, we kept the municipal water supply running. Four hundred thousand people got their piped water, and another 300,000 got their water through trucks operated by CARE.

I would suggest to you that if you don't have this sort of thing going on—as you don't to the same extent in Iraq—you're going to have more problems on the military side.

● (1125)

The Chair: I know you're going to come back again.

Mr. A. John Watson: There is one thing I want to show you, which is extremely important. This is the widows program in Afghanistan. Because of higher death rates from war than any country in the world, there are enormous numbers of widows. Their husbands are war heroes. Because it's a conservative Muslim society, they can't get support.

The Canadian government supported a very good program right through the Taliban years, against the other donors, to give food to those widows. It was done because we listened, we stayed neutral, and we split our staff. We supported 50,000 people. We're still supporting them, but now it appears CIDA's going to end this program. Why? Because we're focusing all our efforts on the PRT in Kandahar.

This is the type of distribution you've got to do. It is a professional undertaking. You would no more hire the military to do this type of distribution than you would hire NGOs to run an armoured column.

The Chair: Mr. Barr, do you want to add something?

Mr. Gerry Barr: Oui.

Mr. A. John Watson: But here is the most important thing.

The Chair: Oh, okay.

Mr. A. John Watson: The person who runs the program is a Canadian. She's a tough manager, and she was kidnapped. When she was kidnapped, hundreds of those widows plastered Kabul with posters, went on TV, went on the radio, and put out feelers.

The kind of intelligence we had—and I know because the Canadian military came and talked to me about it—was far more advanced than what the military forces had about where she was, who was holding her, etc. But it's intelligence that we have to keep to ourselves or else we don't get it.

This is the way it translates in the field, and it can work. The role of the military is important, but, quite frankly, the military doing humanitarian work is a leftover from a time when we had low military budgets and we were looking for a cheap way to get the military some positive publicity. It should end.

The Chair: What happened to the manager?

Mr. A. John Watson: She was released.

The Chair: Mr. Barr, a quick comment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gerry Barr: The various players all have an important role, but their roles are different. They are specific, and we see can a relationship among the diplomats, the armed forces and humanitarian workers. It is important to say that coordination is fantastic, important, and essential. But integration is not desirable, because it creates instability and traps. We are here today to avoid falling into these traps.

[*English*]

The Chair: We will now go to Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Blaikie.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the witnesses for their presentations.

I find it quite challenging in a way. I certainly think that on the one hand people have encouraged the government to seek some kind of integration of development with their overall foreign policy, and yet when it comes in this particular form, it's still problematic, for some very good reasons that have been laid out for us.

I've got a couple of direct questions about something that hasn't actually been mentioned but is very much in the news, and of course that is the DART initiative, which is currently up and running as a result of recent events. Could you give us some comments on whether you see the current uses of the DART as an example of the kind of militarization of humanitarian aid that you're against, or is that a separate thing? I'd be interested in your comments on the DART. When we think of the military-humanitarian integration of those two things, I would think that would be the first thing that would come to mind for most Canadians. How we deal with that is probably not a bad place to start.

● (1130)

The Chair: Mr. Barr or Mr. Watson, who would like to start?

Mr. Watson.

Mr. A. John Watson: I want to make it clear that I've been a critic of the DART, and while the DART is deployed, I make a principle of not appearing in the press on the DART. I don't think it's appropriate.

In my opinion, the DART was put together in a time when the military budget was at ridiculously low levels, and it was put together as a way of spending little money and getting a lot of publicity impact. It's an idea whose time has come and gone, and it should be stood down.

There are two reasons for that. One is the confusion of the military and humanitarian work. The other...and you're all deputies. You have to be concerned with taxpayers' money. The services that are delivered by DART are hopelessly overpriced and inappropriate.

Here is our DART, on the water side. If you look at how DART approaches water, how we approach water, DART maintains a very sophisticated system in Petawawa on standby. It has to spend many millions of dollars flying that out to produce very pure water to a point in the middle of a disaster area.

The problem with that is that in disaster areas, often the access is the problem. If you take the tsunami, for instance, this bottle of sodium hypochlorite solution with simple instructions on it costs 37¢ to produce locally in Indonesia. In the context of Sumatra, this bottle makes 400 litres of potable water. But the most important thing about it is you have a choice: fly out 400 litres of bottled water or fly out this. In the immediate context, if this is a disaster, the real bottleneck is getting the stuff out. So we use these, and we use buckets that can fit into each other as opposed to jerry cans, because that's how you get them out on helicopters. You can produce as many litres of bottled water as you want with DART, but unless you have the lift capacity to get it out there, it's useless.

But look at the long term too. People start using this...first of all, they have to go through a little public health education. They have to participate in something having to do with their getting back to their regular life. They have to filter their water through a piece of cloth, and then they have to add this. That is very good for victims of disaster, not to be passive participants. The other thing is they see that their kids stop getting diarrhea when they use this. It's a 37¢ bottle.

I'm sure if you go back to the tsunami areas five years from now and go into a rural store, you will find a new product on the shelves, which is this. So it carries on after we leave.

The other thing with DART is there are very few disasters where you can't get local bottled water in-country. So does it make sense to fly in an installation from the other side of the world to essentially produce something at $4 a bottle when it is available for 40¢ or 50¢ a bottle locally? You're simply undercutting the market for some local firm; you're not really helping out in the long term.

So it's an entirely different approach to things.

Sure, it gets on the front page of the paper, and sure, the public understands that it's good for Canadian troops to do good things. But the really important function for the troops these days is to have a strong military to concentrate on the security side, to get some decent lift capacity. That's where we're really missing things with the military. And I think a change has been made; we're moving in the right direction.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: On the point before Mr. Barr's, you just referred to the whole notion of lift capacity. That was actually my second question, so perhaps the other two of you can take that into account. If I had got to a second question, I would have asked whether you thought it was a priority for the Canadian military, for a variety of reasons, some of which might be humanitarian, to have greater strategic lift capacity than they do now.

Anyway, go ahead.

● (1135)

Mr. A. John Watson: Here is what's useful. This is the tsunami. This picture is of a baseball field, a soccer field in the middle of Banda Aceh that had American helicopters flying out of it because the shore roads were washed out. That's the kind of thing that's very useful. This is the Australian military, which doesn't have as heavy capacity helicopters, but they were very important in getting personnel and safe water systems out.

This is the American military and the Malaysian military. Again, that's the sort of thing that's useful. This is the Indonesian military, which could run in landing craft to the shore.

And these are American helicopters flown by Pakistani pilots, shipping out winterized tents in the current crisis.

These are the sorts of things that are very useful and appropriate.

The Chair: Mr. Barr wanted to add something.

Mr. Gerry Barr: I just want to add very briefly that Dr. Watson has been on this subject of the DART on a few occasions in the past. It might be useful and important to say that for our part, at the council, we agree unambiguously with the position he's offered here today.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Itani, do you have something to add, sir?

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: There's no doubt that the military option, where the military is assigned a humanitarian task, is the most expensive way to go. It also raises a question of why they're doing it. Is it because of an absence of humanitarian agencies?

I have not been in an emergency where there's been a total absence of humanitarian agencies. But when there is such a case, combined with a surge requirement in the early days of an emergency, the military are remarkably versatile. They can do all the things that humanitarians can do—not as well, of course, because they're not trained, but they can be an interim measure pending the arrival of civilian agencies.

For the Red Cross family the DART is not an issue, because from our experience over the years, we know what commodities are required in the early days of an emergency. We have stockpiles we can draw on in various parts of the world, so a strategic airlift is not a particular concern to us. Having spent 25 years in Afghanistan, we've always kept a line on helicopters that are committed to us that can be easily transferred from one theatre to another. So it's not much of an issue with us.

It's the pre-planning. In order to do this we have to rely on ordinary people who demonstrate in an extraordinary way their generosity by giving us the resources to do that stockpiling and training, put the networks in place, and build local capacity.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will go to Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. It's really informative. I can tell you I was a prisoner of war myself. The Red Cross did some great work. Although I didn't get a visit, perhaps I was documented. But I'm well aware of yours.

In the recent situation in Pakistan, the first contribution that was made by friends and family went to the Red Cross, and later on to everybody else. I'm sure you do good work; there's no question about it.

But I disagree with the comments made about the DART. They're not about water. They're about medical, water, and engineering, and I appreciate the Red Cross saying they don't have a problem. The bottled water you have shown here does not work in every area, especially in the current situation. I'm familiar with every inch of the area in Pakistan where the earthquake has taken place because I come from there. This process will not work there in every area.

However, I have a broader question to ask you. Operational requirements for peacekeeping have evolved significantly since the Berlin wall came down in 1989, since the U.S.S.R. in 1991, and the intra-state conflicts that have erupted. They are more problematic than the conventional conflicts: Somalia, Rwanda, Yugoslavia, failed and failing states. Their governments are basically impotent. According to the UN reports, 3.6 million people have died.

The era of the blue beret is long gone. There are no demarcations; there are no no-man's lands. The military today is very crucial. It gives you protection; it gives protection to the local people. There is the three-block approach, the three-D approach.

Is there any way you can cooperate with the military, because neither the public sector, the civil society, nor the NGOs in isolation have the capacity to handle every emergency around the globe? So would there be any willingness, and is there any concrete advice or suggestion you can make to make that happen?

● (1140)

Mr. Gerry Barr: I'll take the first shot at this, just to say that absolutely, of course, we can and should cooperate with the military. The case here today is not a case against cooperation. Cooperation is important, and in some cases imperative, in order to be effective, but we have to be able to hold three or four thoughts in our mind at the same time. Cooperation does not mean and ought not to mean, and it is fatally dangerous for it to mean, integration. That's the really key point here.

The autonomy of NGO actors is not a notion that runs against the idea of cooperation. Mr. Itani has spoken very carefully about the value of cooperation, and he's right. We need the cooperation; we do not need and actually cannot have the integration. So the international policy statement has made a real mistake here. It's bad thinking.

The idea of integration is bad thinking; the idea of cooperation is absolutely key and important.

Perhaps I'll leave it there.

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: I'd like to begin by saying that the International Committee of the Red Cross was born on the battlefield; it was created for the military. By extension, national societies are also there to serve the military. Very rarely are we called upon to do that these days—happily so. But there must always be room for consultation and sometimes coordination, because in an emergency, in the absence of civilian agencies, the military can restore water, electricity, fire, police, or ambulance services. Or, in an emergency, particularly during the surge phase, it makes no sense to have military and humanitarian agencies congregate at a congested seaport or an airport, vying to use resources.

So there is an element of consultation and coordination, but not integration. It is vital, and it happens when the military and the humanitarian communities recognize the specific mandate of each organization and respect it. For humanitarians, the military presence means a secure and stable environment, which opens the door for us and opens up the humanitarian space we so jealously guard.

Mr. Wajid Khan: My interest was not integration; it was the idea of having an effective framework to achieve optimum collaboration between the military, civil powers, and the NGOs.

Having said that, I'd like to further elaborate on our recent experience in Pakistan. Without the military help we could not reach certain areas. All these helicopters, all these things are part of the military. The roads were blocked. The engineers were out there.

I have a lot of respect for the NGOs; that's why I'm here talking to you about this. But it's absolutely imperative in my mind that we have that framework, that we work separately but coordinate the effort.

Going back to DART, I have some pictures here of my own that you can see. They show CARE Canada getting water from the DART in the tsunami situation. This shows how collaboration and cooperation can work extremely effectively.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Are you finished, Mr. Khan, with your question, before we get to the panel? I know you were continuing.

Mr. Wajid Khan: I was going to continue, Mr. Chairman. Did Mr. Watson want to answer my first question?

Mr. A. John Watson: Look at the picture. These are winterized tents from our operation in Afghanistan that they're taking up to the mountains to the earthquake victims via a military helicopter. So there is a lot of cooperation.

My point is that the Canadian Armed Forces have had such a low budget for so long that, unlike other militaries, they cannot provide this type of essential service in the field.

You're quite right: the safe water systems are particularly appropriate for certain contexts. Those contexts are where there is an access problem to very far-flung areas, which is one of the problems in Pakistan. It was the problem in Sumatra.

The DART operation is perfect for the Indian reservation with the water problems in northern Ontario right now. But that's not the sort of context we face in the field, and I would submit to you that if DART is providing very good water—which we will use because it comes to us free in the field—then it should be set to the standards we're set to. Four dollars a litre for water is not, in my opinion, a good use of taxpayers' money.

The Chair: Mr. Khan.

● (1145)

Mr. Wajid Khan: We can argue on that for hours on end, and perhaps we should someday, you and I, one on one.

The other question I have is, how would you envision, if at all, the integration of the three-D diplomacy with the three-block war concept...or you don't want to go there?

Mr. Gerry Barr: For the record, one would envision it with horror. The idea of integration—we just ought to get rid of that term.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Let's say cooperation.

Mr. Gerry Barr: Let's by all means have collaboration and cooperation.

Mr. Khan, it's terrific you made that error because it actually represents the broad error in government policy. People do go sideways from cooperation and collaboration to integration. There is a strange phenomenon that works in whole-of-government approaches where it becomes a kind of survivor game between government files; one file after another is voted off the island and you end up with one driving file. You don't really get a whole-of-government approach; you get one interest dominating government policy in a particular area, and that ought not to be the case. It's very important as we go into whole-of-government approaches that we maintain the integrity of those things that are actually different and need to be considered differently in order to get an optimum result. It absolutely must happen.

It's a gift in a way to the discussion that you've used this phrase. I would say, let's just not have it. “Integration” had better leave the room here.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Okay.

The Chair: You have a comment, Mr. Tetsuo.

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: Yes, a comment.

Sometimes it is politically inconvenient to intervene in a humanitarian sense, but by ensuring the independence of humanitarians, we're going to intervene anyway outside of politics. You can't intervene in all cases, but we, the humanitarians, can.

The Chair: That concludes our first round, ladies and gentlemen.

We're going to go into our second round, and as you can see, enough flexibility in time has been provided and we will continue in that pattern.

We will go into the second round, with Mr. O'Connor first.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I've been listening to discussions today and they blur two scenarios. One is where there is a situation in a country where peacekeeping or peace enforcing is involved, and the other one is where you have natural disasters. These are two different scenarios, but they keep blurring back and forth.

Maybe not all of you, but at least two out of three of you have some objection to the blurring of the lines between the military in an alleged humanitarian role and the NGOs operating. Is your objection primarily when the problem is arising in a peacekeeping or peace enforcing role, or do you also object to the military basically getting involved in disasters?

Mr. Gerry Barr: Let me try to be quick, because there are others more deeply experienced than I am.

We don't object to the military becoming involved in disasters, but we do fundamentally object to the blurring of the roles. It's not just a practical dilemma—although it is a practical dilemma in circumstances where there's low-grade conflict and identification may carry a price with it for humanitarian actors, so there is a deeply practical element there—it is also unlawful. The Geneva conventions provide for humanitarian assistance to be delivered through independent humanitarian actors free of political direction—free of political direction. It is the only way in which we can hope for success in this work, particularly in areas of conflict.

However, it's plainly obvious that there are circumstances, particularly, obviously, unambiguously humanitarian circumstances, in which it's very useful to have a contributing, supporting, and important role for the military.

● (1150)

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: If I may move from a benign, permissive situation to a situation less benign and less permissive, it is a natural disaster that takes place in an area that has not been riven by conflict.

For sure, there is a role for the military, because the needs in the early days are enormous. And a beneficiary will accept assistance, regardless of its provenance.

The situation becomes a bit more complex when you're talking about a disaster that takes place in an area that has been or is in conflict. This means that the humanitarian space has narrowed, and it means that there has to be a clear distinction that the military intervention will be for a certain period, in certain areas, because after all, how can one deny assistance to people who may die without it?

The humanitarian space closes a bit more under chapter 6 of the UN in peace support operations. But just the same, the atmosphere is there throughout for consultation, sometimes coordination, sometimes cooperation. But in operations mounted under chapter 7, warfighting, the humanitarian space is very small. There the distinction is crucial for the benefit of the vulnerable population and for those who are engaged in humanitarian work.

The Chair: Mr. Watson.

Mr. A. John Watson: I want to be clear. Unlike a lot of NGOs over the years, because we work in these war zones, I have supported increases in the Canadian military budget. I think the military has been frightfully underfunded.

The reason I do that is there are crucial roles. We need the Canadian military to have lift capacity. We need the Canadian military to have things like amphibious landing capacity. We need the Canadian military to be good at fighting. We need the Canadian military to be good at doing things like running small arms disarmament programs, like training local police forces and local militaries. These are essential roles. I think getting involved in the DART is not an essential role, and it does have a downside for the humanitarian agencies, both in terms of cost and exposure.

I am not anti-military. There is a crucial role to be played. It's shameful that we've underfunded the military. We must continue to fund them at a decent level so they can get some of the equipment that the other militaries have that is useful in the context of a humanitarian disaster.

The Chair: We just heard the buzzer.

Before I go to Mr. Bagnell, I know we attempted earlier on to use the PowerPoint, at Mr. Itani's request. I understand the equipment is working now. Because he was very efficient with his timing, I will ask the committee members if it's okay with them that we go back to that for a very quick PowerPoint presentation. If not, we'll go right back to the members.

Committee members, any objections to that?

How long it is, sir, if I may ask? Any idea?

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: It's about nine minutes.

The Chair: Nine minutes.

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: I think we can move much more quickly now that....

The Chair: Let's move along.

Mr. Bagnell.

● (1155)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): My main question is going to be for the Red Cross, on something we haven't discussed at all today. I just want to put some of my biases on the table, since Mr. Bachand did.

One is that I think there is a lot of understanding that governance is very important. A lot of people believe today that in advance of all other problem-solving, you need that building block in place first.

I also have no problem with your sentiment that you should be separate from the military, and seen to be separate for protection, and I hope the humanitarian organizations continue to do as much as they can, so that there doesn't need to be any military intervention. You should be separate from the military—of course, with the cooperation you suggested—and get as much done as you can.

I also believe, though, that the Canadian government's objective is also to deal with the root causes of the conflicts, which include things like reducing poverty, eliminating religious intolerance, and increasing education—so there is a link—and that our humanitarian interest is our foreign policy. There is an important link, because our foreign policy is to protect human rights. It's to reduce poverty. It's to increase good governance and education, etc. I don't think we're neutral to the causes of war, because these things—poverty, religious intolerance—are partly the root causes of war. Those are some of the things we're supporting in our aid.

I also think it's almost a slanderous, unfounded, undocumented attack to suggest the DART is a publicity stunt. What's more important is that every Canadian who has contacted me has encouraged us to get the DART out in time. Until the people tell me otherwise, we will continue that. I agree with those who said it's in situations in which no one else can help. That's why the three-block war may be called something else. I don't care about the word "integration", but the concept is a great modernization of our function.

I've been to the PRT in Afghanistan, and I think it's tremendous that we're now serving people where lives would be lost, where girls would not be in school or food would not be delivered in those crisis situations in which no one else can help. Then they can get out of that line of work. That is a great advance.

My question for the Red Cross is this. I'm a big supporter, will continue to be, and will be referring people when they ask where they can donate in these emergencies. We have a great office in my riding in the Yukon, so I refer them both to the local office and the national office, and will continue to do so.

This is a very small technical clarification I need. I was going door to door recently in my riding, about three weeks ago, when a lady brought up something that had been on the news one day. I didn't hear it. It was about the Red Cross aid either not going to where it should, or going to administration, or going to long-term construction instead of.... I don't know what it was, but you must have had feedback on that particular newscast. I'm sure it was probably unfounded, but I just need to know that information so that I can pass it on to the particular person who raised it with me. I hope you know what I'm talking about, because I don't know the details.

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: Not at all. I do not know the issue at stake. Certainly when there are allegations of improper use, we take them seriously, and they're investigated, but I am not aware at all of the particular instance you referred to. I suspect it was solved at the local level.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Maybe you could get back to me, because it was in the national news.

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: I need more specific information as to what is alleged to have taken place.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: It was a couple of weeks ago on the national news, but let's not dwell on that now.

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: Yes, but you understand that I can't go around chasing rumours or having my staff chase rumours.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: I'm surprised, though, that it wouldn't have come to the attention of your organization if you're in the national news.

However, I have another question.

● (1200)

The Chair: The clerk will provide him with the information.

If you want to focus your questions on a personal matter, you're still taking up your time in doing that.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Barr, you've raised a very interesting concept that I'm quite interested in. It is an excellent idea. Maybe you can give us more details; you just glossed over it. That was the prevention, the early warning type of investigation to prevent some of these conflicts. Could you give me some more details on how that might work, what agency of Canada might do it, and how we might put it in place? It is an excellent idea, but I don't think you had time within your time limit to get into it in any more detail.

I'm sorry. As soon as you answer, I have to leave, because I'm supposed to be speaking in the House.

Mr. Gerry Barr: To recap very briefly—I won't take too much time with it—the principles we wanted to offer, which touched on peacebuilding and development, were, number one, the need for early warning systems and preventive action capabilities. As you know, this is the front end of the responsibility to protect, the chapter that comes before active engagement—a solid context analysis, a good detailed thorough-going context analysis. We need to build up our capacity to do that.

We need to take an approach to low-level conflict zones—to circumstances where there is instability—that takes into account the idea that local change agents, civil society organizations, will be an important part of the picture, both in peacebuilding and prevention as well as in reconstruction following conflict.

We need to focus, with respect to use of the aid money, pre-eminently on those things that go to poverty reduction in those circumstances. So those would be the groups of principles I'd offer.

I thought actually in your on-ramp to the question you were going to mention this idea of a consultative group for START and for the regional stability fund. It seems to me it would be enormously useful for these two important and brand-new initiatives, which in so many ways gather in these notions of whole-of-government approaches, to have an expert reference group to help feed the discourse that will be going on in there about the roles these two institutions will play. I would really encourage that idea if the committee sees fit to encourage it. I think that would be a great thing.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Thank you.

I'm sorry, I'm late to speak in the House.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Perron.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Mr. Chairman, I would like you not to count the few minutes I will speak before beginning my intervention, since I will be doing your job. After the meeting, could you give the clerk the official documents which were presented to the committee a little earlier, so he can get them translated and provide us with a copy in French?

That being said, I have five questions. I will ask them all one after the other, and the witnesses will be able to take five minutes each to answer them.

I personally endorse the position of the Bloc Québécois, which is that if the military is to participate in conflicts on the ground, it should only be done under the supervision of NATO and/or the UN.

Based on that premise, what decisional criteria would you take into account to justify participation in a mission?

There seems to be conflict amongst the NGOs. In order to avoid those conflicts and to improve your effectiveness on the ground, have you thought of placing yourselves under the same protection during a conflict?

Further, generally speaking, what is your relationship with the senior military command, and not only with the Canadian command? Do you think your relationship could influence decisions? In other words, do you think you can be part of the decision-making process of the military in a conflict?

As well, how do you protect your volunteers on the ground during a conflict? How could you improve their protection?

My last question could open a very long discussion. We are always expecting you to do more with less. Apart from DART, I would like you to tell me how you can do more with less.

● (1205)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Watson, Mr. Barr, Mr. Itani—anybody?

Mr. A. John Watson: On the issue of our relations, our cooperation, with the military, we do a lot of sessions with this. We talk to military people. In Kandahar, when PTR was in the planning stages, I gave a paper at the conference that was looking at how it could best be done. Also, I'm against the concept of a PTR. I gave my best advice in terms of how it could best be done in the field. We have relations with the military in terms of career stages. A lot of our security work is done by people who were formerly in the Canadian military intelligence who are now civilians, and we use them on contract. The last general secretary of CARE International was Guy Tousignant, a former Canadian general. So there is a lot of to-and-fro between them.

In terms of organization and cooperation, I think it's important to maintain a degree of competition in order to keep us efficient. The problem of competition between NGOs, in my opinion, doesn't so much happen in the field. When you're faced with a disaster, there is always a coordinating mechanism. Usually if it's a UN-sanctioned intervention, the UN plays the role of bringing the agencies together. I think the problem with cooperation is more serious in Canada. For every disaster that happens, you see 12 different ads from 12 different agencies. In my opinion, that is bad, and we're working to end that by establishing a unified appeal structure.

In terms of the security, I hope I made it clear. Canadian troops do not protect our people in the field directly. It's impossible in terms of the scattered nature of our operations and the extent to which we have to interface with local communities and the government. If they are seen to be an adjunct to the military, that puts us in great difficulties. We have been in Afghanistan continuously since the 1960s. We don't want to ruin our position in Afghanistan by being close to one side or the other of the military in one period and then find that our people are exposed.

If, for instance, Clementina Cantoni had been close to the military, I don't think she would have come out alive. But she wasn't. She was completely recognized as a humanitarian doing good work with those women. So our security depends on acceptance, not on forced protection or staff protection through military means.

The Chair: Mr. Itani.

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: The Red Cross family has had a long history of independence and passive protection, but this isn't to say there's no room for consultation. To give an example, earlier this year, a new memorandum of understanding was signed between the ICRC in Geneva and the Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers in Europe, including Allied Command Transformation, which is based in Norfolk, Virginia. This is for both parties to consult and, in our case, to help with the training and education of NATO troops, officers, various academic institutions, in terms of the role the ICRC plays in the field of battle and international humanitarian law.

In addition, at the headquarters in Geneva, there is a unit called the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue that deals at the political level with the international community at large, but specifically with what we call nations in transition or what you might euphemistically call emerging democracies of the world. In addition, there is a separate unit within Geneva that deals solely with relations, establishing them and maintaining them, with armed forces in various parts of the world, usually in about 35, 40 conflict-ridden areas of the world, and this is to enable us to maintain contact with them, so in an emergency we have the network to call on, to negotiate our way in to do our work. But at the same time, if the relationship has matured, it often provides us with the opportunity to strengthen the implementation of international humanitarian law in those countries.

Now, closer to home, the Canadian Red Cross has a memorandum of understanding with the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, a mutually supportive MOU, and currently in the works is a draft memorandum of understanding between the Canadian Red Cross and the Department of National Defence, where we hope to inject some real-life experiences in the training of troops destined for overseas duty, whether it's peacekeeping or for war—we don't make the distinction—under the umbrella of international humanitarian law.

So we do maintain very cordial relationships. To give you an example, nations are obliged under article 36 of the first protocol to have a mechanism in place before new weapons are introduced. The task was beyond the capability of the Department of National Defence and of Foreign Affairs Canada, and therefore the Canadian Red Cross took on that task to organize an international conference, so we would have a point of departure to craft a policy for National Defence. That process has gone very well, so National Defence is on the verge of publishing a policy in conformity with article 36 of the first protocol.

● (1210)

The Chair: Thank you for the response. That's more than the allotted time.

We will go to Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and if there's time left over, I'll be sharing it with Mr. O'Connor.

First of all, I would be remiss if we did not clarify the situation with chlorine versus the mechanics and the purity of the water that these water purification units.... The chlorine does not work on giardia, cryptosporidium, or typhoid, so we are not comparing apples to apples when we're looking at the two.

My question concerns the comment made with respect to the provincial reconstruction teams. Did I interpret the comments correctly in understanding that there is no role for the military in Kandahar with these provincial reconstruction teams?

Mr. A. John Watson: The PTR concept of the military doing the security work, the security enforcement work, the peacekeeping, and the humanitarian work together in a PTR, we're fundamentally against. It is important for the military to be deployed to do the security, to train local police forces, to do disarmament, etc., but when they get mixed up in humanitarian-like work and call it humanitarian-like work, then that exposes us, yes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

Mr. A. John Watson: As far as the water is concerned, I am not suggesting we have found a magic solution to all the world's water problems, but this approach is not something CARE invented. It was invented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, and it's the best practice for getting out to really out-of-the-way populations in need of pure water in an area where there is some surface water and there aren't such things as giardia and whatnot.

It's a cost issue.

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: I want to reinforce a point I made earlier, that military operations where human security is a dimension should not be referred to as humanitarian operations. Clearly it is not, and all it does is add to the confusion and obscuring of the line between military operations and humanitarian work.

The Chair: As Ms. Gallant indicated, the rest of the time will go to Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Yes, I have a quick question.

Earlier, I think Mr. Watson, or maybe Mr. Barr, made the case that they thought some of the major NGOs should be funded from the government, in some part. Apparently, I didn't know the Red Cross is funded from the government.

I guess I'm taking the opposite view right now: why should the government fund private organizations? The implication down the line is that when governments fund organizations, they eventually have a say in the organizations. No matter what anybody says, they start to manipulate the organizations.

Anyway, over to you.

● (1215)

Mr. Gerry Barr: I'll pass the mike on very quickly.

Timely and appropriate, is the answer to that. The reason why Canada should make set-asides, in effect, or provide assets in a core fashion that humanitarian organizations can use in a discretionary way in circumstances of natural disaster is so their hand will not be stayed by the absence of resources: so they can act quickly, in a timely fashion, and get right into play in an efficient way.

This should happen for the main emergency intervenors, not only in Canada—it's a terrifically progressive policy, if implemented—but it should also happen internationally with the principal emergency intervenors, who are challenged with exactly the same problem of having their interventions contingent on a funding review and reflection, which invariably follows the disaster.

In terms of autonomy, I think you raise important points. But the idea of states' collaboration with non-governmental actors, particularly in humanitarian circumstances, is a long and tested relationship. I think it's clear the autonomy of NGOs has survived in those circumstances. That's not to say there aren't some challenges; I agree with that.

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

We will go to Mr. Martin and then to Mr. Bachand, as we go into the third round.

We're still in the second round.

Hon. Keith Martin: Thank you, and my apologies. We had an emergency B.C. caucus meeting, so my apologies for not being here.

Thank you all for being here.

The Chair: Did you say PC?

Hon. Keith Martin: No, B.C. It's my lisp.

I'm even getting it from my own folks, but when the chair speaks, we listen.

Thank you all for being here today.

We're all gripped with the issues you've spoken about. But, of course, John, I have to take issue with some of the comments you mentioned.

There were a couple of things you said. You spoke earlier about the three legs: the UN, the armed forces, and the NGOs. While in an ideal world we wish the UN was there to do all it should be able to do, we know it isn't. I want to draw your attention to a specific example that I think illustrates the importance of the military in saving lives. I'll use the British example of what happened in Sierra Leone.

You know the conflict that occurred there. You know a quarter of a million people died. You know hundreds of thousands of others were mutilated in horrible ways. The British forces went in with 786 troops and stopped the killing. This was an example of the importance of military intervention to save lives. From what I've seen in my time, in the military's role, as we define the three-D capabilities, they are all absolutely essential.

When your people are on the ground, your people are at risk in some areas. Your people can't get to some areas, as, for example, in Pakistan right now. The forces can. I would submit to you the forces' ability to go there and save lives—whether it's through the use of force, whether it's the provision of potable water, or whether it's the opening of roads through the engineering capabilities our DART have—is an absolutely essential component—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Mr. Chairman, I have a point of order. In fact, we don't have any time to lose, since we have already discussed these issues around the table. So, it's all very well and good that Mr. Martin is here at the meeting, but he is wasting not only the time of our witnesses, but mine as well.

[*English*]

The Chair: I hear what you're saying, Monsieur Perron, and I respect it, but we all know the privileges members have in committee. They have the opportunity to just take all their time and make a statement, although I provide room for responses, and I will do that.

If I may, I'll use Mr. Bachand's presentation earlier. He wanted to make a statement and ask his questions, and that's his privilege. I can't take that away from him.

● (1220)

Mr. Claude Bachand: Is my first intervention on the record?

The Chair: I believe it is.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: In fact, these questions have already been raised, and they've been answered. So there's no point in asking them again.

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin: I trust, Mr. Chairman, that this is not taking away from my time.

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

Mr. Wajid Khan: I was just saying that I think we should continue with the questioning. We are wasting time. We're discussing among ourselves.

The Chair: Mr. Martin, you have the floor.

Hon. Keith Martin: I will just draw to your attention a couple of comments that were made, one by you, Gerry, and one by John.

Gerry, you said that humanitarian actors do not aim to change the course of conflict; they're just there to relieve suffering. I understand that, but do you not concede that the prevention of conflict, the halting of the conflict, is absolutely essential for us to ultimately relieve suffering? If you're simply trying to patch up the people on one end of the conflict and not trying to stop the people from being killed and maimed and raped and tortured on the other end, then all you will have is a continuum that can continue for a long time.

I would just again say to both of you, don't you think there's a role for the forces under certain circumstances to be able to save lives, to stop conflicts, to prevent conflicts from occurring, and to provide the life-saving relief for human suffering and care for the oppressed that you can't do under certain circumstances?

Mr. Gerry Barr: I would say there plainly is, and even more, there are circumstances in which the armed forces are obliged to do that, so clearly there is an important role to play.

The issue that is most biting, if I can put it that way, for us here today is not whether there is a role for the armed forces or not. I think it's unambiguously clear there is an important one and a useful one for the armed forces to play, depending on the circumstances that apply. But the critical issue I think most of us are trying to raise here today is the dangers associated with conflation of the role of armed forces and humanitarian actors, and particularly the challenges associated with political direction of humanitarian involvement and the challenges associated with the conflation of hearts and minds style of work together with development and reconstruction work, which needs to be more autonomously footed, if I can put it that way.

Hon. Keith Martin: Fundamental basics in terms of where we stand—

Mr. Gerry Barr: There is crossover. There is a porous terrain here. There's an intertidal zone, which is exactly why we need to—

The Chair: I have a point of order from Mr. Perron I have to take.

Monsieur Perron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Mr. Chairman, I would like to apologize to our witnesses, but they have already answered all these questions, and I have more important things to do. So I will leave.

Please excuse me, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Perron.

Mr. Gerry Barr: It's just to say in conclusion that it's exactly because there is this intertidal zone that it's very important to bring a lot of discretion and a lot of judgment to bear on the distinction between the roles.

The Chair: Mr. Watson, a quick response, as you heard the little buzzer go off.

Mr. A. John Watson: The Sierra Leone deployment is exactly an example of what I'm saying. It was a security deployment in a place where horrible things were happening, and they couldn't be stopped without force. I think that's entirely appropriate. That's why we were in favour of a security deployment in eastern Zaire after the Rwanda thing.

The problem I have is that I know very well that there are big changes going on in the military and there are things that we have to learn how to do better, like training local security forces, training local armies, etc. I think the military should be concentrating on that right now. It's a time when we're moving away from this cold war military document to a new, more confused world. It's going to be a hard slog to figure out how the military can be reconfigured to do those things better. We're grappling with it on the humanitarian side.

In the case of DART, it's not that I'm against the military, but I think it's the wrong thing for the military to be doing.

In terms of taxpayer dollars, to reply to Mr. O'Connor, when you get into these disasters, there is no way you can support the scale that has to be implemented only through private donations. In some famine situations, we've been required to spend $80 million a year to feed a million people over the year. No private donors are going to be able to support that kind of capacity.

I think if public funds are going into it, then as deputies in particular you have to make sure you're getting the biggest bang for the buck. On that side, you don't get it via the military. The military is not supposed to be delivering cheap services; it's a life and death institution.

I don't think cost is the problem when you're looking at lift capacity, armament, and that kind of thing. It is a problem when there are alternative ways to deliver the services in a more appropriate way at little cost and when there are ways that don't blur the crossover between the two roles.

● (1225)

The Chair: That concludes that.

We'll go to Mr. Bachand. He can use his time in any way he chooses. That's his prerogative.

Monsieur Bachand, you're in control now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chairman, I will begin by asking a question about health. A little earlier, Mr. Barr noted that I drank a bit of this liquid. So I would like to know whether my health is in danger as we speak.

Mr. A. John Watson:

That's not a good idea, because the water is chlorinated.

Mr. Claude Bachand: The water smells of bleach, doesn't it?

Mr. A. John Watson: Exactly.

Mr. Claude Bachand: I understood the difference between “cooperation” and “integration”. However, it seems to me that there should absolutely be an integrated plan. But an integrated plan does not necessarily mean integration. So when you get to an operational theatre and there are many people on the ground, it seems to me that everyone should sit down together and tell everyone else what each party intends to do, and each party should ask whether they can change anything. I hope this is how things work, especially amongst the senior officials.

Are NGOs in contact with Canada's senior military command, with the Department of Foreign Affairs, with diplomats, as well as with CIDA as far as development is concerned? I hope that the senior officials of NGOs based in Canada talk to each other, and especially in an operational theatre. I feel this is very important.

Can you tell us a little bit about your relationship with senior officials here in Canada and in a theatre of operations? We don't want to receive four different briefs from all of you. We want to know if you work together. In my view, it's very important for us to know this.

Mr. Gerry Barr: In fact, there is no problem if you're dealing with a “single table” plan, a unified framework. What you have to do is maintain the distinction between the various roles in order to stay efficient on the ground.

Perhaps John or Ted can answer the questions concerning the real elements on the ground.

[*English*]

Mr. A. John Watson: In the field there is cooperation. There is usually a UN-chaired group of all the humanitarian actors working in the field. There is usually a military liaison person with that group who may come from the military to talk about security issues where there are difficulties, so that humanitarian agencies can avoid those areas. And vice versa, if the humanitarian agencies have a problem with access because of conflict, the military can be made aware of it and take steps to deal with it.

● (1230)

Mr. Claude Bachand: How about Foreign Affairs and CIDA?

Mr. A. John Watson: We deal with Foreign Affairs and CIDA all the time. One of the reasons I'm talking to you is that we're having some trouble getting CIDA to understand that it is really important.

We get public money. Don't misunderstand me; they support our interventions in particular emergencies. The problem is there is no way to have a flexible and coherent approach to having a standby capacity if your public money comes in the form of six-month contracts for this emergency, that emergency, or the other emergency.

The Red Cross has a much more coherent approach to things, because they have some ongoing funding that supports the kind of work they do in international law, in stockpiling emergency materials, etc.

All we're saying is that this should be extended—not that more public money should be spent, but that it should be spent in a more coherent fashion.

The Chair: You still have some more time, another minute.

I think Mr. Itani wants to respond to your question.

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: We have a standing arrangement with Foreign Affairs and CIDA whereby we are on an alert network and keep each other informed of the emerging possible disasters in the world, so that at any given time a decision can be taken very quickly.

Going back to the tsunami on December 26, by that evening a decision had been made by Foreign Affairs Canada, CIDA, and the Canadian Red Cross that the commodities that had been identified by the Pakistan Red Cross as an urgent requirement would be sent—not in the quantities that were required, because of course our stock holdings are modest, but we had water purification tablets, collapsable jerry cans, and shelter material. A joint decision, again by Foreign Affairs and DND, allowed us to fill an Airbus and fly out two days later. That is a standing arrangement.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: In your opinion, could the 3D policy become the 3D and NGO policy? Would you be happy if that became the foreign affairs and defence policy? We would not add a D, because we are not saying that you are a D; you are with the NGOs.

Do you think that one day, within the group you are closest to, namely CIDA, there may be a division created to participate officially in the type of debate we're having today? Or would you rather keep your full and complete autonomy from government, the military and CIDA? Is this a crazy idea? Have you ever thought about it?

Mr. Gerry Barr: I will answer your question in English.

[*English*]

The three Ds idea is a very good one. It's very useful, and it's an important way of coming at questions. But it's very important that we don't have two capital *D*s and one lower case *d*. It's important that these legs of the stool Dr. Watson was speaking about be equally solid.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Would you add a fourth leg—your leg?

Mr. Gerry Barr: No, I think we are there, in the context of the development file, very fully.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Watson.

Mr. A. John Watson: I'll give you a very clear example of how Canada is not organized like other countries, and why, as Gerry says, the third D is a lower case *d*. If you look at how NGOs are funded by CIDA, the majority of the funds come through the Canadian partnership branch of CIDA. From its very beginning, the partnership branch excluded the funding of humanitarian activities. So there never has been the sort of support that organizations like CUSO and CECI and the universities get for doing long-term development work on the humanitarian side.

We run a very good operation out of Ottawa, but by far the largest portion of the funding we get to do it comes from outside Canada. We do not receive any core support from the Canadian government, despite the fact that we are a Canadian agency.

The Chair: Thank you.

That takes us to Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to be very brief.

I think Mr. Watson and I will agree to disagree, but on DART and the rest of the stuff, I have a lot of agreement with him in many areas.

Before I quit DART, I want to make a comment. DART has been providing medical services and clean water in Pakistan, as well as stabilizing local services and assisting in re-establishing the water distribution infrastructure in affected areas. They have, to date, provided over 620,000 litres of clean water and treated over 2,200 hundred patients.

Going back to you, sir, my main concern in what I see here is that there doesn't seem to be a whole lot of coordination, cooperation, or joint appeals within your organizations. As you just mentioned, Mr. Watson, there should be more joint appeals. Am I correct?

The NGOs like to use the military gifts, yet my impression is that they do not wish to sit around a table, either in pre-deployment or in theatre, with the military. Can you give me a specific example of this happening?

My specific question to all of you gentlemen is that one of the things that was identified as an emergency requirement in Pakistan was the medicine for anti-tetanus globulin injections. Has that requirement been met to some extent?

● (1235)

Mr. A. John Watson: Again, the issue with DART is not that they did not provide a lot of very clean water or useful clinical visits; the issue is cost. By the time you disaggregate the cost of DART, I would think as representatives of taxpayers one would be concerned about whether or not those types of services could be provided at a much lower cost. The answer is, undoubtedly, yes, they can.

There is a very real role for the military. I'll give you just one example. In the middle of the East Timor crisis, the roads were terrible. The country was destroyed. We had to get houses and wells rebuilt and refurbished on the other side of the island, and it was a major logistical hurdle. HMCS *Provider* was in the bay, so we hopped in a boat, went out and talked to the captain, and said, "Look, you have a few small landing craft. Can you not take the construction materials on board and offload them via landing craft at the beach at Suai?" It was done within 48 hours. That's the kind of stuff we need. We can't do that as NGOs.

The Chair: Do you have a point of order?

Hon. Keith Martin: No, there's a response from Mr. Itani to the question.

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: The Red Cross movement has a tested and tried process in place—to begin with, the establishment of a regional delegation of the federation in Islamabad, also the ICRC delegation in Islamabad, the ICRC delegation in New Delhi, and what commodities that are provided for what we call a mobilization table. The commodities on that table are identified by the Pakistani Red Crescent Society.

The national societies, all 182 of them, are called upon to contribute. Most choose to contribute money because it's easier to get commodities closer to the theatre than trucking them over long distances. In cases where there are medical supplies that are in short supply, yes, we use the traditional suppliers, but at the same time, we have access to the warehouses of the federation and the ICRC as well.

In terms of coordinating, the lead agency in the line of control would be the International Committee of the Red Cross, in consultation with both the Pakistan Red Crescent Society and the Indian Red Cross Society. Nothing is done unilaterally. No national society goes in without the express invitation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies of both countries.

Long before the first airplane comes in, it is a society that tells us what they want from us, and we are obliged by treaty, by charter, by statute, to respond in the best possible way.

Mr. Wajid Khan: The reason I ask that question is simply because I get phone calls from Pakistan on a daily basis saying that a lot of legs perhaps could have been saved, but due to the lack of anti-tetanus.... That's why I asked that specific question. But again, I didn't get an answer.

Are there any examples of you sitting at a table with your partners in the military before going into the theatre? Is there any planning done together at all?

And I want to make something very clear. I'm not doubting your work. I am just trying to see how we can optimize your effectiveness and maintain your independence at the same time.

● (1240)

Mr. Tetsuo Itani: The issue for us was accessibility, even with helicopters, to get to the injured in time. Four weeks have passed, and for some it is clearly too late. Limited resources, limited accessibility due to weather and terrain were all factors that kept us from reaching the most vulnerable on time.

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

Hon. Keith Martin: Dr. Watson, could CARE have accomplished what the DART has done in Pakistan with respect to its engineering activities, the medical activities, and the water purification—all of those?

Mr. A. John Watson: Absolutely not.

Hon. Keith Martin: And as a consequence of DART's activities in those areas, lives were saved.

Mr. A. John Watson: Absolutely.

Hon. Keith Martin: Therefore, doesn't it go back to your point... and I would just preface my comment by saying that the members of DART multi-task. As you know, they don't sit around and wait for deployment. They do many things, and their activities within the forces are many.

You said in your comments that the issue is cost. Do you know how much it's costing the Canadian public to send the DART into Pakistan?

Mr. A. John Watson: Do you want to ask all your questions and I'll reply to all of them?

Hon. Keith Martin: My second question is on the overhead of NGOs like CARE or UNICEF, for example. Do you know what the overhead costs are for CARE and for an organization like UNICEF?

Mr. A. John Watson: I'm at an unfair advantage here, because I know Mr. Martin has worked with MSF, yet he's a cabinet minister, so I think—

Hon. Keith Martin: I'm just in cabinet purgatory.

Mr. A. John Watson: You'd have to come after me on the DART.

But you know as well as I do, the issue is not CARE. The issue is professional humanitarian agencies versus humanitarian-style aid being delivered by the military.

I would be very pleased to get the all-in costs of DART for Pakistan from you when the exercise is over. It would be very useful.

In terms of the deployment in Sri Lanka, somebody had the all-in costs as disclosed, plus the type of feedback that Mr. Khan was giving us on the tremendous number of litres of clean water produced, etc. When you divided the two, it came down to something like $4 a bottle per litre of water, $10 a crossing for the bridge they built, and $800 for a clinical visit. You know from MSF that this is just not the kind of cost structure that an NGO would provide.

In terms of the CIDA comments on DART, there was a story last week about a memo prepared that indicated that in CIDA's view, the military delivery of these types of services costs at least ten times more than it does by the.... I'm not suggesting the military isn't appropriate and doesn't have a role. I am suggesting that in the deep dark days when the military budgets were cut, DART was put together, and it was put together to make the armed forces look good without having to spend money on the armed forces.

We're out of those days now, and we should rebalance the very difficult job the military has to do in terms of providing them with the kinds of training and infrastructure they need to face these complex emergencies. DART, in my opinion, is not their strong card as far as that's concerned.

Hon. Keith Martin: I'd really like to get my hands on the documents you mentioned, because a breakdown of those costs would be very interesting to see.

● (1245)

Mr. A. John Watson: If you get your hands on them, could you forward them to me?

Hon. Keith Martin: You listed some assessments that broke down the costs in Sri Lanka. That's completely different from—

Mr. A. John Watson: This is just a back-of-an-envelope assessment on the basis of the numbers that have come out of the government in terms of overall cost and the services provided.

When you say multi-tasking, multi-tasking often ends up—because DART is a huge undertaking involving 220 people—taking somebody who's out there and using him as a manual labourer. Why would you spend that kind of money—

Hon. Keith Martin: By multi-tasking I meant, Dr. Watson, that within the context of the forces, people do many different things. The cost I was referring to when you cited those costs for Sri Lanka, if it was the back-of-envelope cost...because it was completely out of line with the kinds of costs that I have seen, so we should talk about—

The Chair: That's the beauty of democracy: we can agree to disagree. We can exchange, utilize our time, ask questions, make statements.

Mr. Claude Bachand: And time waits for no man.

The Chair: Exactly.

But I do say, in conclusion, because I have no other requests for questions, I know my good friend Monsieur Perron is not here, but I do agree with what he said to a degree. We are here to hear your views and to ask you questions. But I also do believe that members on any committee, on this committee, do have the right also to express their views or their positions. Just as you come before this committee or any other committee as witnesses to influence us, if I may say, with your proposals, I believe the same prerogative exists on this side as well.

I believe there's been generosity extended to all in time, and there will continue to be. If there's any other information or data that you do wish to provide, please do so through the clerk.

So with that, I'd like to thank Mr. Itani, Mr. Barr, Mr. Watson—I started with my left, but it doesn't mean anything politically—for your time, for your input. Certainly we thank you very much. On behalf of the entire committee, thank you as we move forward on this review of ours.

Colleagues, you've been sent the list of what we've requested in terms of witnesses for coming meetings. It's in your offices. It's as we discussed and as we agreed, so please be cognizant of the timeframe, as we have addressed the motion today. Hopefully, in the next meeting that we have next Tuesday, we can take five minutes to get your comments on it.

With that, I will adjourn. Thank you again, gentlemen.

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