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Mr. Rick Casson

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC)): I believe we have quorum to hear witnesses. We'll get started. The first item of business is to hear from the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Gordon O'Connor.

Minister, welcome. You have some people with you, Mr. Minister. Would you like to introduce them and explain their roles?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence): I have Vincent Rigby, acting assistant deputy minister of policy, and Rear Admiral Murphy, who is in charge of operations.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll hear the minister, who can be with us for approximately an hour. Hopefully, depending on the length of his comments, we can get through one round and then the second round as well. And we'll go through the list with the timing we've agreed as a committee, and the clerk will keep the speaking order. So if you're going to be speaking on behalf of your party, just let him know that. If you wish to split the time you have with someone else, please indicate that.

We'll turn it over to the minister. Go ahead, sir.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Members of the committee, it's a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss Canada's mission in Afghanistan. This mission is a priority for this government, and I value every opportunity I get to inform Canadians about why we are in Afghanistan, about what we need to maintain, and why we need to maintain a strong military contribution there.

To put it succinctly, Canada is in Afghanistan to ensure the security of Canadians. Afghanistan was once a failed state that harboured and supported the terrorists who perpetrated the attacks of September 11, 2001. Thousands of innocent people died in those attacks, including 24 Canadians.

In Canada we can't pretend to be immune from threats like terrorism, simply because we live far away from trouble spots such as Afghanistan. We need to address threats to our security before they reach our shores. Canada therefore has a responsibility to ensure that the extremists who would harm us and our allies can no longer find refuge in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

Canada has a responsibility to protect Canadians. Canada has a responsibility to act.

[English]

We're also in Afghanistan in support of our friends and allies in the G-8, NATO, and the United Nations, who all consider Afghanistan a priority. As a responsible member of the international community, Canada must share the burden and do its part in Afghanistan. That's why we are currently there, alongside more than 30 countries that are as dedicated as we are to helping the Afghan people.

As part of our commitment to Afghanistan, Canada signed the Afghanistan Compact, which clearly outlines how the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations, and the international community will work together over the next five years to ensure that the multilateral efforts in Afghanistan are successful. The compact also clearly identifies benchmarks against which to evaluate progress made in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

And third, Canada is in Afghanistan for the sake of the Afghan people. They have greatly suffered under the repressive regime of the Taliban and from decades of internal conflict, and they have explicitly asked us to be there. In line with Canada's tradition of helping those in need, we answered their call. That is why our mission in Afghanistan is not simply a military mission. It also involves diplomatic and development efforts.

[English]

In addition to our military contribution, we have established an embassy in Kabul to develop high-level ties between Canada and Afghanistan. Afghanistan has also become our largest recipient of bilateral aid. It is through this whole-of-government approach that we are helping Afghanistan become a secure and self-sufficient democratic state that will provide for the needs of its citizens, like any other country in the world.

So Canada is in Afghanistan to protect Canadians, to fulfill our international responsibilities, and to help the Afghan people. We have played a leading role in this mission, and together with our allies and partners we have achieved many positive results. But our job is not done.

As I said in the House during the debate on May 17, our military mission in Afghanistan will be successful when the country and its government are stabilized, when the terrorists and their local support networks are defeated and denied sanctuary, and when the Afghan security forces are well established and under the firm and legitimate control of the Government of Afghanistan.

It is because we are determined to accomplish these objectives that the government extended Canada's mission until February 2009.

[Translation]

This new two-year commitment will give the Afghan armed forces and the Afghan police the time they need to become operationally effective. It will ensure a smooth political transition in 2009 when the current mandate of Afghanistan's president ends. It's consistent with the timeline contained in the Afghanistan Compact. And it's what our allies expect and need from us.

[English]

Not only is it important that we maintain our commitment to Afghanistan, but it is also essential for us to maintain the right military capabilities to do the job. Our goals of security and reconstruction in Afghanistan are interdependent. Reconstruction cannot happen in an environment devoid of security, and a secure environment cannot be fostered without reconstruction efforts to help the local population build a stable future. Therefore, what Canada needs in Afghanistan is an integrated combat-capable Canadian Forces team that is composed of a provincial reconstruction team, an army task force and its supporting forces.

We need our personnel training the Afghan National Army in Kabul, as well as those who work at the coalition hospital at Kandahar airfield, and those who serve in ISAF headquarters. And we need the strategic advisory team that gives advice to President Karzai's government in Kabul.

• (1535)

[Translation]

We also need our military team to be able to function seamlessly within our "whole of government" approach. This means a team that can work closely with partners from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and others. It is also important to understand that the configuration of our military forces in Afghanistan is the minimum required for the safety of the men and women of the Canadian Forces themselves.

[English]

As we have all seen in recent months, southern Afghanistan, and the Kandahar region in particular, is a complex and dangerous environment where the dedicated provision of security for Canadian troops by Canadian troops is critical.

We would not have been able to meet this requirement by deploying a provincial reconstruction team alone without an army task force there to protect it. A smaller military commitment would also have let our allies down.

Through our command of the multinational brigade for Regional Command South, Canada is currently leading the transition for

Operation Enduring Freedom to the NATO-led, UN-mandated, International Security Assistance Force in the southern provinces of Afghanistan. When this expansion is complete, ISAF will be present in more than three-quarters of Afghanistan's territory. NATO and our allies are counting on our continued leadership during this transition period. It is particularly true of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, who have made troop commitments to Afghanistan for two and three years, respectively, on the understanding that we would be there alongside them with the full range of capabilities that we have today.

So for these reasons, extending our military commitment to Afghanistan until February 2009 was the right and responsible thing to do.

[Translation]

Between now and then, we will keep Canadians informed of the mission's progress. The government will report to Parliament on the results we have achieved. And then, at the appropriate time, the government will decide whether or not to continue the mission beyond 2009.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan are standing up for Canada's national interest. They are helping to protect Canadians from terrorism. They are fulfilling Canada's obligations to our allies. And they are helping the people of Afghanistan.

[English]

On May 17 the House of Commons recognized the importance of our commitment to Afghanistan and voted to extend it. With that support in hand, this government is more committed than ever to seeing our mission through.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I erred in my opening comments; the first round is ten minutes when a minister appears. And we will be keeping very close to that ten-minute limit.

Mr. Dosanjh, do you want to start with a question?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Thank you. I'll be sharing my time, not necessarily fifty-fifty, with one of my colleagues.

I'll be very brief, Minister. I would appreciate brief answers, but obviously as you see fit.

As you know, Liberal members have repeatedly asked the government what benchmarks it is using to evaluate the success and progress of the mission. According to the foreign affairs minister yesterday, the government is using the 40 benchmarks laid out in the Afghanistan Compact.

Is there any multilateral mechanism to evaluate the progress made towards achieving these benchmarks? If not, which mechanism is Canada using? And if Canada is not using any mechanism, why not?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I think what the foreign affairs minister was referring to is the benchmarks NATO will use to evaluate the mission. We have to look at this mission on different levels: what's going on in the whole country from NATO's point of view, and what's going on in our Kandahar district from our point of view. Essentially, I don't think all the benchmarks can be used in the Kandahar district, because the 40 benchmarks cover the whole country, and there are activities that may be going on elsewhere in the country that aren't going on in Kandahar.

But we promised, I think, at the last debate, and the Prime Minister committed, that at the end of each year—2006, 2007, 2008—we would go to Parliament with a report on the progress we are making in Afghanistan, so we're committed to doing that.

● (1540)

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: First of all, I would suggest to you that if we don't have a mechanism that we've developed to assess our progress towards benchmarks, the report will be incomplete.

However, I want to make sure that, as you said, the government will report to Parliament on the results achieved. A once-a-year report, in a mission so intense and so closely watched by Canadians, I don't believe is appropriate. Would you commit to this committee that you will come before the committee at least four times a year for the life of the mission to update the committee on a periodic basis, every three months, to ensure that we—and Canadians, therefore—are able to hear from you directly what's going on and what progress we're making?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: First of all, as the defence minister I'm aware of the other activities going on, but of course my primary interest is in defence and reporting the success in the defence area.

I'll take this as something to deal with. I don't know if three months is the appropriate time or not. I don't know whether in three months progress or the lack of progress can be registered. I certainly expect to be back to this committee on a regular basis, but today I couldn't commit to giving you an update every three months until I find out if it makes any practical sense.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Perhaps the committee can decide whether or not it makes sense to hear from you every three months.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: You can ask for me.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. McGuire, you're next.

Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Canadians have been asking quite often since the mandate was extended for two years in Afghanistan whether or not Canada is at war against a declared enemy—not in an anti-terrorist war, but an air-ground war against an enemy that has declared against Canada. Is there any way you can explain the situation we're actually in there as compared with other wars we have fought in the past?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Well, I don't categorize this as a war. We are there in Afghanistan to support the legitimate government and create a stable environment to reduce the activity of the various insurgent groups—and I believe there's more than one group in there that you have to deal with—to try to create some stability for that government and at the same time try to build up their army and their police force so that they can take over their own responsibilities and

that eventually, at the appropriate time, we can pull out and leave their country to themselves.

So the military has to conduct a range of activities, from giving medical aid to people to assisting people in construction to advising police on how to do their job and, as I said, training the army and the police forces. But we also have to make sure we deal with the insurgents, whoever they may be. We also try, in concert with the Afghan army and the Afghan police—in nearly every operation you see, there is always Afghan army around, or Afghan police.... We have to conduct operations where we engage them with firepower, or whatever we require to engage them. So it's a whole range that we're going through.

I don't consider this war. War to me would be.... Well, I can start going into what war would be. I just don't consider this as war.

Hon. Joe McGuire: How do you reconcile what happened in Kabul yesterday?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: It was a riot.

Hon. Joe McGuire: Getting rid of the Americans, Canadians, and so on.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I can only go on the news reports that I saw on TV, just the same as you saw. I don't have any inside information. As I understand it, an American convoy was rolling through Kabul and going at relatively high speed. I listened to the reporters saying that they're doing that because they don't want to slow down because they may get into difficulties. Apparently one of these vehicles hit a taxi and killed—I don't know if there's more than one—at least one individual, and a riot broke out. That's all I understand that happened there.

● (1545)

Hon. Joe McGuire: We don't have a report from our commanding officer.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: No, I don't.

The Chair: Okay we have three minutes left.

Ms. Sgro, you're next.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Minister, thank you for being here today.

Can you tell us whether the government has received any requests directly from NATO or the United States for additional troops? And are you aware of any requests going to other allied countries, or are you considering sending additional troops of your own volition?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I'm not aware of a request. Our plan at the moment is not to exceed the level we're in now. We're in about 2,300 to 2,400. At the moment we have the provincial reconstruction team. We also have people in Kabul and a few places around there. We also have the task force. For the next six months or so we have command of the integrated brigade in the south, which costs us two or three hundred people to have this command. We will be giving up command of that some time later this year and handing it over to the Dutch, at which time our numbers will go down two or three hundred, but we're slated to take over command again some time in 2007-08, at which time our numbers would go back to where they are again.

We're also looking at the possibility of bidding—in NATO you bid on positions—for the command of ISAF in 2008, when they will be completely in control of Afghanistan. And if we were to do that, that could cost us a hundred people. That's where it stands.

NATO has not asked us for any other contributions, so no increases or anything like that.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Has the United States asked us?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: No, they haven't.

The Chair: Mr. Khan, there are a couple of minutes.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you, Minister, and the panel for being here today. I have a couple of questions, but I'll make them very brief so you can get a chance to answer.

The Taliban is becoming more involved with the narcotics trade in the region of Afghanistan. Given the twin mission of ISAF, which is stabilization and counter-narcotics activities, will ISAF attempt to limit the opium trade activity in the south, and will this increase the exposure of Canadian forces to attack?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: If I can answer that as clearly as I can, the Canadian military as such is not involved in the counter-drug operations. In the south the heavy drug production is in the next province over, Helman province, along the Helman River. Primarily the Afghan army and the Afghan police deal with that, but at the NATO and the Afghanistan Compact level, my understanding is that the U.K. and a few other countries have taken on, as a task, to try to deal with the drug trade. We, as Canadians, because we have limited capabilities, are not involved in countering the drug trade, which is certainly a factor in destabilizing the country.

Mr. Wajid Khan: I think I have a little bit of time. The ARRC, the initiative of ISAF, moved to create greater synergy between ISAF and the OEF mission. Would you concur that this represents a major step change in the international commitment in Afghanistan?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: It was a major change for NATO to get into Afghanistan and commit to taking over responsibility for the security and also for the development of Afghanistan. As we transit from the Enduring Freedom American command to the NATO command, not much in a practical sense is going to change. We have a responsibility for the province of Kandahar and we will be trying to provide security in the province of Kandahar, along with trying to develop the local forces there, and our aid people and our diplomats will be trying to build governance and all the human sides of the society. As that comes in, it isn't going to change much for us. We'll be concentrated in Kandahar.

Now I can tell you that at this time the British forces are streaming into Helman. The British are pouring in there now and there will be about 3,000 there soon. That's going to cause a real problem for the insurgents in that area because up until now we've had to send forces out into the Helman province and other provinces. The British are pouring in there now and the Dutch now are going to accelerate. The Dutch are going to get their first 200 into a province just north of us. They realize that once they're in there, they're going to have to accelerate, so they're going to ask NATO for assistance to move their forces in quicker. That'll be a better situation for us, when the Dutch and the British are fully in place.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

We'll move on to the Bloc, for ten minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, we have been in Afghanistan for several years, and the mission will continue for another two years. Our troops are in Afghanistan to help democracy to take root. This mission appears to focus on rebuilding Afghanistan, and if I fully understood your presentation, our troops are involved in tactical operations, and that implies combat operations.

How can we ensure that the activities linked to rebuilding Afghanistan will not be sidelined by activities that are military in nature? The response to this crisis cannot and must not be limited to a military approach. It must focus primarily on democracy and rebuilding Afghanistan.

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I agree. I've said elsewhere that there is no military solution to Afghanistan. The military is merely there to provide as much security as they can so that the country itself can grow and prosper, and people can live some kind of a normal life.

So yes, we and our predecessors are going to carry on and try to emphasize more development effort and more assistance of governments, etc., but we have to conduct security operations so that the Taliban, the drug lords, and the criminal gangs don't take over the country. Right now the country, certainly in the Kandahar province, is in a delicate situation. I would think that we in the south, in the sector we're in, in both Helman and Kandahar provinces, have some of the most difficult challenges to provide security because the Taliban started in the city of Kandahar, where we're located. Their breeding ground came out of the city of Kandahar, so they're particularly strong there. That's why, as I say, we appreciate the arrival of the British and the Dutch, because together we represent a substantial force that can keep the Taliban suppressed.

Lately the Taliban in our area have been coming out in larger numbers to try to...well, recently they tried to attack the city of Kandahar. I assume they watch TV. I don't mind those tactics, because what they're doing is playing into our hands. If they concentrate against our military, then we can defeat them, and lately they've been concentrating against our military in our area. They've been taking very large casualties, and I don't know how long they can keep up the intensity of what they've been trying to do in the last two months.

We have to do this so that cities like Kandahar can grow, and so that people can have their farms, go to school, and so on.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Mr. Minister, you described the Taliban as the force we must fight and the one that is fighting us. There is obviously a security challenge there, as you mentioned.

I do not know if this opposition force has been assessed. I would like to know what kind of force our troops in Afghanistan are facing. How many men and weapons does it have? How is it organized? Have we studied the enemy that we are facing?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: As I said before, from my simple point of view, there are three different groups. There are criminal gangs, people who are just trying to rob people or convoys, etc., and normally the police can deal with that. We also have the drug lords who have large groups of what we'll call soldiers working for them, and they resist any threat to their drug sources. But the largest group are the Taliban.

They don't have any modern equipment. They have equipment that's left over from the Soviet occupation. That country went through a really sad time for 20 to 30 years. If you go there, you see it. The number of houses destroyed is just incredible. One of the consequences is that all over the country there were guns, artillery shells, and rifles. No matter how many we've cleaned up—NATO, the U.S., and the Afghan forces have been able to take piles and piles of old Soviet equipment out of that country—there's still enough for them to do their job.

When they make these roadside bombs, they are rather rudimentary. They take an artillery shell—usually a 155-millimetre artillery shell—attach a detonator to it and a wire, bury it in the road, and then they put a plank or something in the road with maybe a saw blade, so that when the vehicle goes over it, it makes contact and explodes. So they're not using sophisticated equipment. Most times their roadside bombs are not radio-controlled, although some of them are radio-controlled. That's the level they're at, which is not sophisticated.

• (1555)

The Chair: You have three minutes yet. Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Earlier, my colleague alluded to outcome measures. The day will come when we say mission accomplished, but to assess a mission, there must be criteria. When will we be able to say that we have accomplished our mission in Afghanistan? What criteria have you developed or are you in the process of preparing to determine whether this mission will have been a success, a limited success, or a failure?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: As I said, there are the higher-level criteria. In our own department, we are now also developing criteria for our local tasks. What we have now is a benchmark, which is February 2009. That is our commitment at this moment.

What we will be doing all along internally, in the government, is we will be measuring progress or lack of progress through this to help us make decisions as we move out towards 2009. Because at 2009, depending on what you are observing on the ground, you could increase your commitment, decrease your commitment, keep it

the same and stay there, or you could withdraw. You have these choices in February 2009. To make informed decisions we have to measure progress through that period and that's what we intend to do.

The Chair: Are you done? You have just a little bit of time left if you wish.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: I have finished.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Black.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Welcome, Minister. I appreciate you being here with us.

The goals you spoke about are laudable, and I think all Canadians would support those goals, but, as you know, we have some serious concerns about the mission itself in southern Afghanistan. I wonder if you could walk us through what happened in Azizi. You said earlier that we have command of southern Afghanistan. I would like to know specifically who made the order to do the bombing.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: You're talking about that recent incident—

Ms. Dawn Black: Azizi, yes, the civilian deaths.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: At the moment, as you know, we're under the American command. We'll be transiting, hopefully within a month or so, to NATO. That decision was not Canadian at all. There are two levels of command above General Fraser. There are six brigades under the American command, and General Fraser has one of the integrated NATO brigades. Above him there is a division level and then a corps level. And that decision was made at American corps and division.

General Fraser, to my knowledge, was merely informed that it was going on. His permission wasn't asked. It was an operation of the United States.

Ms. Dawn Black: I'm just thinking about Canadian Forces. We had the incident in which we lost four Canadian Forces people in friendly fire. It raises concerns around how these decisions are communicated and where our people are.

• (1600)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: There is a command system. As I just described, under the current command system you have the American corps, the division, and down into Brigadier General Fraser's brigade—and there are five other brigades.

They have a coordination system. They have a coordination system for air operations, for artillery—these sorts of things. They also have coordination of where their various forces are.

The challenge you have in friendly fire, so-called friendly fire.... By the way, historically there have always been unfortunate deaths in war caused by allies or your own forces. In many of these cases, the friendly-fire incidents occur at night, in the black, with forces coming together.

For instance, our investigation into one of our casualties to know whether it was friendly fire is still going on, but in that case an American outpost was under attack and in danger of being overrun. Our forces were sent in as part of the reserve ready to go in and protect them. I guess they were arriving in the middle of the night, at the same time that a firefight was going on; sometimes people fire when they're not sure what they're firing at, so this happens—but there is a coordination.

Ms. Dawn Black: I'm more concerned about the bombing.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: We weren't involved in the bombing, but we do call down fire. We've called down aircraft fire through our command system to the Americans. In fact, it's not only the Americans; NATO is moving in. NATO also has air resources, and sometimes we use NATO air resources. As we switch over to NATO in the next month or so, it will be the same arrangement.

Ms. Dawn Black: I've had a lot of interest and questions about the detainee transfer agreement with Afghanistan. Has NATO concluded a detainee transfer agreement with Afghanistan, and when will that agreement be made public? I would assume that it will be, if indeed there is an agreement with NATO, and that it would govern Canadian transfers once NATO assumes control through ISAF in the south.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I don't know that, ma'am. I'm going to have to ask Mr. Rigby.

Is there such a thing as a NATO agreement for detainees?

Mr. Vincent Rigby (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister (Policy), Department of National Defence): We're certainly working on that right now, Ms. Black, in a NATO context. Certainly Canada is very involved in Brussels in helping draft that document, but it's not finished yet. I'm not aware of exactly how.... One of the issues is how it will relate to the Canadian detainee arrangement and the other detainee arrangements that NATO allies have right now, so it's still a work in progress; we still have a little ways to go.

Ms. Dawn Black: Will it be made public?

Mr. Vincent Rigby: That I'm not aware of, at this point.

Ms. Dawn Black: The prisoner transfer agreement we currently have indicates that Canada and Afghanistan “will treat detainees in accordance with the standards set out in the Third Geneva Convention.” The Geneva Convention is a large agreement with different provisions, but because the Geneva Convention has two different sets of standards, it's not clear which one of those the arrangements pledge to uphold.

Here are the two options I've been thinking about and looking at. Are Canadian Forces engaged in “armed conflict not of an international character”—those words are used in article 3 of the Third Geneva Convention—or are Canadian Forces detaining persons who “having committed a belligerent act and having fallen into the hands of the enemy” may be prisoners of war? Those words are used in articles 5 of the Third Geneva Convention.

Essentially, are Canadian soldiers instructed to give minimal protections because this is not an international conflict, or do we give the full prisoner-of-war protections, such as preventing prisoners from being humiliated or being put as public curiosities and photographed?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: My understanding is the latter—that we maintain the highest standards.

I'll ask Mr. Rigby to confirm that.

Mr. Vincent Rigby: That's my understanding as well, but certainly we can get more comprehensive answers for you, and we'll talk to our lawyers in terms of all the specifics and the details with respect to the specific articles.

Ms. Dawn Black: I would really appreciate that.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: You may remember a recent incident in which ten Taliban were captured, and there was some dispute at the time over whether photos were shown. One can interpret why we did that or not, but I can tell you on the ground that what they were doing was because they were worried they would be in contravention of the Geneva Convention.

● (1605)

The Chair: You have two minutes left.

Ms. Dawn Black: Okay, I'll move on to another topic then.

I'm wondering what has happened to the election promise of three armed, heavy icebreakers for the Canadian Forces in the north.

The Chair: Mr. Minister, that's quite a ways from Afghanistan, but if you choose to—

Ms. Dawn Black: If you want to stay on the topic, that's fine.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I'll give a quick answer.

There is an article in the paper where somebody is speculating. Our commitments to the north are unchanged. But what I said is that I'll look at all options. I think I was quoted in Nova Scotia as saying I will look at all the options up to heavy armed icebreakers. So I'm willing to look at all the options. But nothing has changed; we're still committed. For me, the centrepiece of our defence policy is sovereignty in the north; I'm not giving up on that and I'm committed to doing it.

Ms. Dawn Black: General Hillier was quoted in news reports as saying that Canada would have to be in Afghanistan for at least ten years to get the job done. I wonder if you would comment on that sort of timetable.

In my community I have a reserve unit, and I know that some of the people there will be in the next rotation. So I'm also curious about how many reservists are currently serving in Afghanistan, and whether the expansion of the reserve forces by 5,000 means that there will be a large expansion of the number of reservists who will be sent to Afghanistan.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: With respect to how many years we're going to be in Afghanistan, from a military point of view, we are committed to February 2009. Before that date, based on our observations of whether we're succeeding or not—and I expect we will be succeeding—the government will make a subsequent decision on what it is going to do. As I said before, the choices are increase your force, decrease your force, maintain the same, or withdraw. So those decisions will be made out there.

People are speculating about 10, 15, or 20 years. That's just speculation. Right now, our military commitment—I can't speak for diplomacy or aid—is to February 2009.

With respect to the reserves, my understanding is that about 15% of the strength over there is reserves, and I think it will always be so wherever we go, because many of our reservists are excellent soldiers, sailors and airmen, and they volunteer to do full time for a while. We train them up to operational standards, the same standards as regular forces. As I said again in Aldershot last week, there is not a hill of beans between them, once you train them up to the same standard.

Yes, we're going to expand. Our plan is to expand the reserves by about 10,000. It doesn't mean that there will be more people in Afghanistan if we don't change the numbers, but the proportion will probably stay the same. But it means that out in the future, as we increase the regulars and the reserves, it's going to give us more capability to take on more ventures, if they come up.

The Chair: Thank you. That was just absolutely right on time. Good job.

Starting over here, Mr. Calkins, for ten minutes.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'll share my time. I don't think I'm going to take up the whole ten minutes.

Mr. Minister, thank you for being here today.

I had an opportunity during the break last week to participate in the Canadian Forces parliamentary program. I chose the air force program, and spent two nights and three days touring the NORAD headquarters, the air force headquarters, and 17 Wing and 4 Wing of the Canadian Armed Forces. I was very impressed with the level of expertise and professionalism that were shown to me. I slept a little bit better when I went home, knowing that our airspace is safe. I'm looking forward to hearing more good things as we increase our NORAD commitments into maritime operations and make sure that our shorelines are just as safe as our airspace is.

While I was impressed with the exercise, I'd also like to be sure that the training and equipment available to our troops in Afghanistan is up to par and the best possible equipment we can provide our soldiers. In the news, most Canadians are aware of the

G-Wagon, which is a fairly new piece of equipment that we have, and the LAV III, the light armoured vehicles. But it has been brought to my attention that the department has purchased the Nyala armoured patrol vehicles, and I believe they're now in use in Afghanistan.

I'll just ask a few quick questions dealing with that, and wait for your response. What are the differences in layman's terms between the Nyalas, the G-Wagon, and the LAV III?

• (1610)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: From which point of view?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: From an armour perspective. Are they troop transport vehicles? Are they attack vehicles? What can we expect to hear? I don't know anything about this Nyala.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: The LAV III, of course, is an eight-wheeled armoured personnel carrier, and for the threat in Afghanistan it's well armoured. The Taliban have fired a number of their small rockets at the LAVs to no effect. Once in a while some of our people get injured because they happen to be out of the turret and a piece of shrapnel hits them or something like that. Recently the Taliban fired four rounds at one of these LAVs to no effect. From an armour protection point of view and for the threat they're in, they're quite good.

They also have dealt quite well with mines, because the Taliban put these mines in the road. They're able to take a hit of multiple mines and basically our soldiers survive inside them. They may be shaken up, because the thing gets lifted, but usually wheels get blown off and things like that.

Recently the Taliban blew up a mine or mines around one of our LAVs and we had to abandon it because it caught on fire. There was fuel or ammo around and it caught on fire, so we destroyed it. The Taliban themselves didn't destroy it; it was a consequence of a fire.

With respect to the Nyala, the Nyala is a vehicle that was developed in South Africa. I'm trying to remember, but I think it has four wheels. It's very high off the ground and the bottom of it is wedged—armour plate in a wedge—so that when you have an explosion, it diffuses the force. It's built so that if it goes under an explosion, the wheels, the engine, etc. blow off. I've seen a picture of a Nyala after it went under a very heavy mine blast and the soldiers inside survived with minor injuries. The main vessel itself was untouched, but the wheels and the engine were blown off. They are quite effective against mines. They're also effective against small arms and things like that.

The G-Wagon in simple terms is a Mercedes jeep. It's a very good vehicle too for moving people around. They have limited armour protection. My understanding—and if I'm wrong here, Admiral, you tell me—is that in future we're going to limit nearly all the G-wagons to inside the camp to move supplies around and things like that. There may be an exception here and there of putting a few G-wagons out beyond the camp, but essentially our ground forces will be moving in either Nyalas or LAVs when they go out on missions because for the threat they're dealing with, they're pretty effective. You can't protect against everything. You can make an explosive big enough to move a tank, but right now these vehicles are very good for the forces.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you. That clarifies it and helps me with my next question.

Are the Nyalas in operation right now in Afghanistan? I know that as we acquire new equipment, the forces personnel have to go through training with that equipment. They have to be familiar with the equipment. If these are new pieces of equipment that we're acquiring, how much more can we expect? If they're not training with them here before they're being deployed over there, are there training operations going on in Afghanistan right now for this piece of equipment?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: My memory is that we ordered about 50 originally. There are about seven inside the training establishment in Canada; 43 have been committed to the Kandahar province. For a while we had 25, but I think the other 18 have arrived or are about to arrive. We've also ordered 25 more Nyalas, most of which will end up in Afghanistan. We could be getting to the point of 60 to 65 Nyalas there in addition to all our LAVs to make sure our forces get the maximum protection they can.

When it comes to spending money, I'll spend any amount of money to save the lives of our soldiers.

•(1615)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thanks.

You can move on to somebody else.

The Chair: Mr. Hawn, three minutes.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thanks, Minister, Admiral, and Mr. Rigby, for being here. I just have a couple of questions and then we'll come back on another round.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the rotations and the sustainability, and your view of our sustainability with our current forces, and how recruiting and training is going to be able to assist that.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: As I've said previously, we can maintain that level of commitment of 2,300 to 2,400 into the future. We have enough resources to rotate at the appropriate time, so we can maintain that commitment—and that's an army commitment, primarily.

The challenge is that if we had to take on another substantial commitment, there aren't enough soldiers around to sustain it. What we're trying to do is expand the armed forces. That's the real challenge, the Achilles heel, right now—to try to expand the armed forces. We have a problem expanding the armed forces because in the nineties there was an uncontrolled downsizing and we lost all those people who today would be senior NCOs—senior non-

commissioned officers—and middle grade officers who would be the heart of the training establishment. We're short of the kind of people we'd have as instructors and we're trying to work our way out of that.

Over time this will improve. As we produce more and more trained personnel, that will be increasing the size of the army, air force, and navy—but we're talking army at this moment—which will increase our capability then to take on more ventures. At the moment in the army we can take on one—we'll call it a major venture—like Afghanistan.

The navy is capable of taking on a task force. We can send three or four ships on some continuous basis on a commitment somewhere and we can also dispatch various parts of the air force, but the army is strained right now to take on a substantial commitment other than what they have.

The Chair: A minute and a half.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I'm not sure if you know the answer to this, but I'm curious about the ratio. We talk about combat operations in Afghanistan, which clearly there are, and all the democracy infrastructure, reconstruction efforts, and so on. Is there a ballpark number that says here's how much of our effort is toward combat operations and here's how much is towards what I'll call humanitarian operations?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I'm not aware of a ratio. I think in all countries they work with diplomacy and development. They may not call it that in the military. In our country the preceding government made a determination of what level of military effort and what level of development effort and diplomacy we were putting to it, and we're reviewing this all the time.

As I said, from the military point of view I think we're doing the right amount right now. I think our government is continuing to review—and I can't speak for other ministers—the level of effort they're doing in development and how they do development. You'd have to get the other ministers to explain that. I can only speak for the military.

The Chair: Okay, that concludes our first round.

Now, how this works is the official opposition, the government, the Bloc, the government, the opposition, and then we're going to be pretty close to being out of time here.

Mr. Dosanjh.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I understand that the bombing issue of Azizi was touched on earlier. What's the status of the inquiry by the coalition into that bombing last week? Has Canada asked to be part of that investigation? Have we been asked to be part of that investigation?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I'll have to turn to Mr. Rigby. Do you know that?

Mr. Vincent Rigby: I think Dan might be in a better position to answer.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Do you know the answer to that?

Rear Admiral Dan Murphy (Director of Staff - Strategic Joint Staff , Department of National Defence): I don't know the answer to that, Minister.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: What we can do, Mr. Dosanjh, is get you an answer to that. As I say, we weren't directly involved in it and I don't know if we would be involved in the investigation.

It is normal operating procedure in our military, and I believe also in the American military, to do after-action reviews to investigate when you have events like this occurring.

We'll get you the answer, but I think it will be shown later on that the American military probably have an investigation team in there right now.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: The reason I ask is that part of the operation here, part of the purpose in Afghanistan, is to win the hearts and minds, as we say, of the Afghans. What we witnessed yesterday in the Kabul riots is actually quite worrying, because although I understand there have been other riots in Kabul, this is the worst riot so far in Kabul.

I raise that for this reason. Could one construe, Minister, from what happened in Kabul as a result of that accident that we are losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the Afghans? Kabul is supposed to be an area where at least the government's writ runs. I ask that in all sincerity, because ultimately you cannot sustain a military operation if you're losing the population.

• (1620)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Well, as I said before, from my point of view, this is not a military operation. The actual purpose is to try to restore Afghanistan, and the military are there to provide security.

I can't speak in the global sense of what's going on in Kabul. The president came on TV, where I saw him just as you probably did. He asked for calm and was suggesting that some of the people involved in the riot were, whatever the term was, troublemakers. So I don't know what's behind it. There was legitimate outrage at the time when the local person was killed by the convoy. I don't know if the riot reflects any systemic problem there.

I can tell you about our own area, because I do get feedback. Our forces are very popular in the area they're in. The various little villages and the people around them appreciate our being there. I think it's our years and years of dealing in other countries and other cultures that we have, as it were, a lighter touch. We don't take polls there, but the reports I'm getting are that they appreciate the Canadians being there. I think in our area we are winning the hearts and minds, and that's of course what we're going to be concentrating on in Kandahar.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: I'll move on to another issue. I'm seeking some clarification with respect to your government's policy regarding the media ban, a policy that has now been changed, which I appreciate. In April, Minister, you had insisted that the media be banned from Trenton in order to be consistent, yet last week the Prime Minister said he had standing instructions to consult with the families of the fallen, and soon thereafter, of course, the statement reversing the policy was released.

Could you tell us if the Prime Minister had given those standing instructions, and if he had, why were they not followed?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: They in fact were followed. What I don't want to do is to publicly name or identify people. I can tell you that up to this point, we will carry on with this. My main purpose is to protect the privacy of the families, and if there's anyone in groups of families, or primary next of kin, who indicate they prefer not to have the press there, the press will not be there.

But we've clarified it a little bit more, so that if the primary next of kin want the press there, the press will be there. I'm just saying that I've got to watch what I say; I'm not going to bring people's names out into the public.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: No, I actually appreciate that—

The Chair: I'm sorry, but your time's up.

Ms. Gallant.

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

When our troops were in Kabul, the soldiers and even the civilian support staff were doing projects on their own during their off time, for example, Project Mercury Hope. Has the situation in Kandahar stabilized yet to the extent where soldiers in their off-duty hours are able to build schools and help out in the communities in that way?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I think you'd have to ask the admiral.

Admiral, do you know the answer to the question?

RAdm Dan Murphy: I don't know specifically, Ms. Gallant. I'd be happy to find out. To my knowledge, the troops stay within the Kandahar airfield when not on patrol. It's quite a large area in and of itself, and the reconstruction effort is being left to the expertise that resides in the PRT. But I'll undertake to find out.

• (1625)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: To just add to that, I think I've seen news reports of soldiers in the city of Kandahar, but in the main I think they're from the PRT. My belief is they're from the PRT and they're in Kandahar and of course they wander around Kandahar trying to help people. But as the admiral said, he'll try to find out if people from the base get involved.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

On one of the former rotations, we had reports of the drones crashing. Are we still using the drones, and are we experiencing any more success where they're used?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Yes. I might be corrected here, but my memory is that there are six of them there now. They initially had problems—I guess perhaps training problems and technical problems—which they seem to have overcome. They've been using them now on a very, very frequent basis. In fact, they've used them so much they have to bring most of them in now for some more thorough repair and maintenance. But now that they've been using them and finding out what their capabilities are, they've turned out to be pretty good drones.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I must compliment...the opportunity we had as parliamentarians to debate the extension of the mission in Afghanistan, something we didn't have as parliamentarians when the mission to deploy to Afghanistan first occurred.

You sat through the entire debate, listening to the valid concerns that were voiced on behalf of Canadians. Did you see anything or hear anything during that debate that would cause concern out of the perception that there was not public support for the mission in Afghanistan? Would there be any risk to our troops overseas about the perception that some Canadians don't support this mission?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: In everything in life there are at least two sides—there might be three sides—and there are legitimate positions on both sides. I think the key thing for the troops is the vote was successful, and in the military if you hit the target it doesn't matter whether you hit the bull's eye or just the edge, as long as you hit the target. From the military's point of view that was a hit, and they're content and quite happy to see the mission going to 2009.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The Chair: There is still a minute left. Does someone else wish to speak?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I have a question, Mr. Chair, and it goes to the spirit of the troops over there.

I've welcomed back most of the troops—the wounded who have come back to Edmonton—and I've certainly seen it. In your visits over there, what's your assessment, Minister, of the esprit de corps and fighting spirit of the folks?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: It's phenomenal, and I can tell you it's not only there. I've been visiting all the major bases here in Canada when Parliament's not in session. I'll talk about the army for the moment. The morale of the army is just fantastically high. In fact, the ones back here in Canada who are not lined up to go to Afghanistan want me to go and find them some action somewhere. I've told them, no, we're not going to find you any action. They're really pumped up. They're well trained and well equipped for the mission. With respect to those in Afghanistan, again, the enthusiasm was just fantastic. When I was visiting them there with the Prime Minister, how will I put it, we were just inspired by how good they are.

I've been out 12 years now, and I can tell you the standard of soldiers.... We may have trouble recruiting them, but when they're in, they're really good. The level of education, what they know, what they've been asked to do is just fantastic. If I switch to the air force and the navy, it's the same. As you just said, you visited an air base. Our military is tops in the world. Wherever they go, they're always respected for their professionalism.

I can't do any more than say that they're great.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

We're just right at 4:30. I'm afraid that in the rotation we've developed, the NDP doesn't come back up for quite a while, but if we finished five-minute rounds with the Bloc, then that would give a fairly fair division of our time.

Is that all right, Mr. Minister? Do you have five more minutes?

Mr. Bouchard, go ahead.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Mr. Minister, on November 15, 2005, you spoke in the House of Commons, and you asked a number of questions. One in particular attracted my attention. It was a question about an exit strategy in the event that the mission turned sour. As you are now the minister, I ask you the question. Is there an exit strategy and what is it, or, at the very least, under what circumstances should we consider withdrawing our troops from Afghanistan?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: We're committed to February 2009 and we certainly will see it through to February 2009. There's not any circumstance I can imagine that would divert us from that. All of NATO is committed to that period and beyond.

In 2009, or as we approach 2009, because somewhere in 2008 we have to make those decisions, as I said, based on our running assessment of what we're achieving over there, the government would decide whether to maintain a commitment at the current level, increase it, decrease it, or basically withdraw.

From my point of view, when we tell NATO we're going to be there until February 2009, that's like a contract. We've made a promise to a bunch of nations. For instance in our area, the British and the Dutch are there because we're there, and that's three nations with the Romanians working together in that area to try to bring security there. So we're there at least until February 2009. I don't have clairvoyance to know what's going on beyond 2009, but that's a decision point for us and it's a clear decision point.

The Chair: Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: I would now like to go on to the topic of anti-personnel mines. These mines are still preventing millions of farmers from working their land. Of course, there are children who play outside. Many deadly accidents occur, and every year, between 15,000 and 20,000 people are injured by these mines.

Have mines been used by our allies, and by which ones exactly?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I'm going to answer my part for Canada, and then I'll ask the admiral here if he knows what the allies are doing.

We are not using any mines at all. From the Canadian point of view, we're not using any mines at all. I have no idea if the Afghanis or other forces are.

Do you know of anybody using mines on our side?

RAdm Dan Murphy: I don't know of anyone using mines on our side.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: I didn't want to give you the wrong answer, but my impression is that nobody in NATO—the U.S. or anybody—is using mines; that would just add to the problem we have. The Soviets were in there for so many years sowing minefields that it would just add to the problems.

But I certainly can speak for Canada: not one, not from us.

The Chair: You have a minute left.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Mr. Minister, I want to start by thanking you for having answered all of my questions.

The terrorist forces appear to be supplied by various sources. You said that they are using outdated and rudimentary weapons. We see that the Taliban are hurting our mission, they are even somewhat successful, since some of our soldiers have unfortunately died.

What is Canada doing to control the sources that are supplying the terrorist forces? What means are being used to prevent them from being constantly supplied by one source or another?

•(1635)

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: It's part of a bigger problem than just Canada's. As I said, the Taliban and other bandit groups have access to all these old Soviet weapons, many of which have been accumulated and destroyed. But particularly in our area, the Pashtun tribe spreads across into Pakistan, and the Taliban, not exclusively but essentially, comes out of the Pashtun.

These tribal people move back and forth across the mountains. The Pakistan military has been trying to do the best they can. They have 80,000 soldiers in the mountains in the territories opposite Afghanistan trying to stop the flow back and forth. They haven't been totally successful; there is a flow back and forth.

In fact, sometimes when the activity increases in our area, it's because the Pakistanis have actually succeeded in closing the routes, and therefore the Taliban have to stay in. What they do in the winter time is move back into Pakistan to rest. One of our big challenges is to coordinate the efforts between Pakistan and Afghanistan to try to cut the flow of the Taliban and cut the flow of weapons. That's the bigger picture.

Because we as Canadians have a more limited responsibility, we don't get into that. That would be a larger NATO task.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate your time and your comments.

You made a commitment, you and the people who are with you, to fill us in on a couple of points you weren't able to. I would appreciate your getting that information to the clerk for distribution.

We'll take a five-minute recess while the minister leaves.

•(1645)

The Chair: Do we have a quorum? We do. Let's move forward.

We have a motion that's been brought to us. The mover is not at the meeting right at the moment. I understand from the clerk that this meets requirements to be dealt with at this meeting and we will deal with it.

Mr. Khan moves the motion and we've all had a copy of it circulated in both official languages. Is there any discussion on the motion?

Ms. Black.

Ms. Dawn Black: I appreciate the spirit of the motion. However, I have a little problem with some of the language, and that is, I don't believe that we were forced to debate and I would like to amend the motion to say that we had only six hours of debate before voting on the extension of the said mission.

The Chair: All right. Have we got that recorded?

Ms. Dawn Black: So it's "Whereas the House of Commons, with only six hours of debate, voted on the extension of said mission," and then just the way it was written before.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Dawn, would it make more sense just to delete from "whereas" up to "be it moved"? It starts "Whereas the House of Commons was" and so on up to "of only one hour". Just delete that whole part and then you've got, I think, the intent of your amendment.

Ms. Dawn Black: Sorry, you'd have to....

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: It would read like this: "Whereas the Standing Committee on National Defence is resolved to study Canada's mission in Afghanistan, be it moved that the minister be invited to appear..."

The Chair: The clerk has pointed out something interesting here, that the only part of the motion that is procedurally acceptable to the committee is the part that states "...that the Minister be invited to appear before the Committee at its next meeting on Thursday, June 1st, or as soon as possible prior to the upcoming NATO Defence Ministers' meeting."

Hon. Joe McGuire: We don't need a preamble.

The Chair: It's not really allowed, I understand, from *Beauchesne's* and other rulings previously.

Are you all right with that, Mr. Khan? You're the mover.

Ms. Dawn Black: Could you just read what he moves?

The Chair: Yes, everything, Ms. Black. The line that says "period of only one hour, be it moved". From there where it starts: "...that the Minister be invited to appear before the Committee at its next meeting on Thursday, June 1st, or as soon as possible prior to the upcoming NATO Defence Ministers' meeting."

•(1650)

Ms. Dawn Black: Okay, so it would just be, "that the minister be invited".

The Chair: Mr. Dosanjh, we're just working on your motion. It's been brought to our attention that the preamble and the conclusion are not acceptable in terms of procedural issues when presenting a motion to the committee. So we're going to take that out and make the motion.

Is there any further discussion on that?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: When is the meeting of the NATO defence ministers?

A voice: Next week.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Is it next week?

A voice: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The 7th, 8th, and 9th.

The Chair: Is there any other discussion?

Go ahead, Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I suggest it would be a little difficult to pin the Minister of National Defence down, or any other minister, on a timeframe that short and compel the minister to appear here.

That is subject to his availability; obviously that's understood.

The Chair: I understand it's an invitation and that we can't compel any member, minister, or senator to be here on a certain date, but the invitation to appear would be there.

Mrs. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Is there a theme that we would be having the minister on? We just asked some pretty exhaustive questions today.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: If I may, Mr. Chair, from my perspective, and I believe others may feel the same, I have not exhausted all of my questions. I had a list of about 15 questions related to Afghanistan. I'm sure others have questions.

I think it would be appropriate for the minister to be here. We were civil to him. I think it's important that we have a respectful debate, an

exchange of ideas and questions and answers. That's the only intent I have. I want to be able to exhaust the questions I have, if at all possible.

The Chair: The understanding would be that his appearance would be under the same motion as the one under which he just appeared. It would be under the same premise.

Does that answer your question?

Mr. Wajid Khan: The intent is to just have a better understanding; it's not anything different from what we've seen today.

The Chair: Is there any other discussion?

(Motion agreed to) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Okay, in order to carry on....

Go ahead, Ms. Black.

Ms. Dawn Black: Just on a point of clarification, if a motion is circulated and parts of it are out of order, would it not be a good idea for the committee clerk or someone else to let us know that ahead of time, instead of our fiddling around with it? If you're circulating it, perhaps you could let the person who's moved the motion know ahead of time if parts of it are out of order.

The Chair: That's a good point, and we'll take that under advisement.

Ms. Dawn Black: Thank you.

The Chair: I'm half torn on that, because if a member brings a motion forward and submits it, I'm not sure we should be messing with it before it comes here.

Ms. Dawn Black: Well, we could notify the member.

The Chair: All right, is there anything else to deal with before we go to our in camera session?

This session is suspended.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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