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**Chair**

**Mr. Rick Casson**

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• (0850)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC)):** I call the meeting to order.

Welcome, everyone, this morning. We have two parts to our meeting. From 8:50 to 9:30 we have General Howard with our regular briefing, and then I will take a short recess after his presentation and we have General Henault here today answering our request. We appreciate that.

To start, we'll do it in the usual fashion. We'll open it up for General Howard to make his presentation and then we'll have a quick round of questions, one from each party. I hope, sir, you can enlighten us on the recent developments. The floor is yours.

**Brigadier-General A.J. Howard (Director General, Operations, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence):** Mr. Chairman, honourable members of Parliament, good morning.

I'm here to provide you with a short update of Canadian Forces operations in Afghanistan. My presentation will aim to update you primarily on security issues from the last several weeks, and I'm prepared following my presentation to provide any clarification on the issues presented, if I can.

As you asked me last time I was here before the committee, I intend to provide you with some additional information on the reconstruction efforts. I have provided the clerk with a CD that has a number of photos on a lot of the work that has been done, and you could see the clerk if you want a pictorial representation of some of the Canadian reconstruction efforts.

Understanding that I'll be followed by General Henault, chairman of the NATO military committee, who will provide you with information from a higher NATO level, let me jump right to regional command south, where the main effort over the last several weeks has continued to be the provision of security in the region in setting conditions for further development, particularly in Kandahar City and the Kandahar Afghan development zone, which are very important, not only to Afghans but to Canadians. That's the area we operate in.

Overall, the Taliban have encountered difficulties in mounting significant operations in the south. They continue to resort to bullying and in some cases injuring or killing local Afghans, and they indiscriminately use land mines, improvised explosive devices, and rocket-propelled grenades against Afghan national security forces.

The job of ISAF in the southern region has been focused on protecting Afghans and those trying to help them by attempting to disrupt Taliban actions, seizing their weapons, and the like. The arrival of milder spring weather and the end of the poppy harvest has not resulted in a dramatic increase in Taliban activity, and this is a good sign down in the southern region, especially if I compare it to the situation we found ourselves in last year, or even the years before that. I see a considerable reduction.

In Helmand province, the U.K.-led successful operations in the vicinity of Sangin, which I briefed you on last time during Operation Achilles—which you'll recall was aimed at, in part, creating the necessary conditions to help the international community improve the Kajaki Dam—have come to a conclusion. Security presence operations by the U.K. and Afghan national security forces continue in and around the Kajaki Dam to permit its refurbishment.

As you will have heard, yesterday a Chinook helicopter crashed in this area. A Canadian Forces member, Master Corporal Priede, was on this aircraft. I can confirm that Master Corporal Priede did die. However, the details of the incident are pretty sketchy at this point. It will take a thorough investigation to determine what happened, and that will occur over the days and weeks ahead.

At this point, my thoughts are very much with the family of Master Corporal Priede. He's a hero for what he's accomplished in helping do his bit in ISAF and helping local Afghans.

The Canadian artillery support that was provided to Task Force Helmand during Operation Achilles is now complete, and those guns, a pair of howitzers, have returned to Kandahar province.

Task Force Helmand now has switched its main focus to the provision of security to the provincial capital and the Afghan development zone of Lashkar Gah and the area south of Highway 1 to provide security and allow reconstruction and development projects to continue.

In Oruzgan and Zabul provinces, the focus hasn't changed much since I've briefed you over the months. It continues to be focused on the provincial centres of Tarin Kowt and Zabul, where ISAF looks to enhance Afghan development zones and to maintain security along Highway 1.

Task Force Kandahar, based primarily on the Canadian Joint Task Force Afghanistan, remains focused on security, reconstruction, and development in the Panjwai-Zhari area of operations since I was last here—really, no change to that.

●(0855)

The green oval on the left-hand side of the chart before you points to the Zhari-Panjwai area, where the bulk of our battle group effort has been focused. Our aim in this region is quite simple—to ensure security.

The positive trends that I briefed you on during my last appearance continue, as we see more families. Some 30,000 people have actually returned to this area over the last several months, and the numbers continue to grow. Also, the positive economic revival, albeit slow, is indeed evident through this region.

Our commitment to the Afghans in this region is very strong. Hundreds of Afghan and Canadian soldiers are involved in a variety of activities that include security of key routes, such as Route Summit, and the patrols that aim to protect and shield local Afghans from Taliban activities. For example, you will have seen the media reporting on Operation Hoover. This one-day operation was part of the ongoing effort to support local Afghans in securing the Zhari-Panjwai region. The operation supported Afghan National Army efforts to discover Taliban elements in the region and to seize their weapons. Operation Hoover involved hundreds of Afghan national security forces, and this is a very positive trend. The number of Afghans involved in their own security in this region now number in the hundreds. This is remarkable and is a positive trend.

While engagements with the insurgents were actually limited during this operation, Afghan national security forces and the Joint Task Force Afghanistan achieved the aim of demonstrating freedom of movement and disrupting any Taliban attempts to consolidate in the region. However, and unfortunately, in the course of that operation Corporal Matthew McCully, a member of the Joint Task Force Afghanistan operational mentor and liaison team, affectionately known by the troops as the OMLT, was killed. All of us in the CF pour out our sympathy to Corporal McCully's family. Our soldiers are putting their lives on the line every day to help Afghans to achieve a better future. We can all be proud of their selfless accomplishments and we are humbled by their sacrifices.

Let me now turn to the green oval on the right-hand side of the slide, down towards the bottom. The battle group reconnaissance squadron has deployed out of the Zhari-Panjwai area and to forward operating base, Spin Buldak. Spin Buldak is a town right on the Afghan-Pakistan border. From there, the squadron has been defining patterns of life in the Spin Buldak district, determining the effectiveness and disposition of Afghan national security forces and locating Taliban lines of communication. This operation has been part of the effort to improve border security and to facilitate the expansion of the Kandahar Afghan development zone. Significant progress has been made in developing an understanding of this region, and I would anticipate that they will be there for many weeks to come.

Confidence-building does not end at the Afghan border, and I'd like to highlight another important ISAF Canadian initiative in this regard. Brigadier General Grant and Brigadier General Niazi—

General Niazi is the commander of the Pakistan military's northern sector—co-chaired the fifth border flag meeting in Chaman, Pakistan, on May 9. The border flag meetings are an ISAF initiative conducted at various Afghan and Pakistani border locations. They were created as a means to bring together Pakistani and Afghan military officers from the border areas to discuss regional issues of mutual concern, with the coordination of ISAF.

●(0900)

[*Translation*]

This was the first meeting coordinated by the JTF, the Joint Task Force in Afghanistan, and the second chaired by Brigadier-General Grant. This meeting brings together important security officers from both sides of the Afghan and Pakistani borders. There has been significant progress made in the setting up of radio communications between the two frontiers to help defuse inflammatory situations and to coordinate operations in the border areas.

Brigadier-General Niazi has noted that this border flag meeting was an opportunity to make new friends and he congratulated the JTF for its activities in Afghanistan, which he said contributed to the security of Pakistan. Brigadier-General Grant emphasized the fact that security issues should be worked on together and that mutually acceptable solutions should be decided upon by both sides of the border.

[*English*]

Cross-border communications have long been strained in this region. Continued bilateral discussions are a significant accomplishment. Regardless of how modest they might outwardly appear, this is good Canadian action, as I see it, the ability to sit down and negotiate. This is a great initiative that obviously will continue.

In its role as a facilitator, ISAF can support a process to develop and sustain this essential dialogue at a regional level. The next meeting will occur later this summer.

Turning now to reconstruction, let me provide a little more information than I usually do on this important activity. As I mentioned, I've provided the clerk with a CD that has many more examples of the photos of our reconstruction efforts. You can review the CD at your leisure.

Canada has provided significant assistance to agriculture, irrigation, and rural development in Kandahar province. For example, over 10 kilometres of canals have been built and 14 kilometres of drainage systems repaired. While that might not sound like much, when you're living in a desert, each inch counts.

In addition, over 1,000 wells have been dug and 800 hand pumps provided. Four large water reservoirs are now in operation, and many kilometres of water supply networks have been established in the province.

[Translation]

The United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan began a clearance operation in the Panjwayi district. NATO financed the project to the tune of \$3.8 million. It will involve up to 300 mine clearers and 100 security guards coming from 4 different contractors.

The nine-month project will clear almost 300 hectares in the Panjwayi and Zhari districts. There will be regular coordination between the service and the JTF in Afghanistan throughout the operation. Brigadier-General Grant, the JTF (Afghanistan) commander, signed a letter of agreement detailing the support activities for the action centre, including the delivery of an operation intended to establish conditions for the arrival of other international and non-governmental organizations in the region.

● (0905)

[English]

The real effect of Joint Task Force Afghanistan development efforts is starting to bear fruit. The national solidarity program, paid largely by Canada, in the Kandahar province has been initiated in the majority of districts. Created by the Government of Afghanistan, the NSP gives rural Afghans a voice in their country's development through the election of community leaders to community development councils, or CDCs. The program supports the CDCs to lead their communities through processes to identify, plan, manage, and monitor their own development projects.

As I've described to you before, it's not Canadians who need to be out in front doing this development but the local Afghans themselves. Our PRT is working overtime across government to create these development councils. As a result, communities are empowered to make decisions and control resources during all stages of the project cycle. The PRT facilitates the creation of CDCs in local communities and development efforts with local elders, through the *shura*.

There are now 500 registered community development councils across the province that are linking into project funds available through the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. International money comes in at the top and will funnel through this ministry. Certainly in Kandahar province there's a fair degree of activity.

Another positive sign is the active involvement of the Kandahar governor in this process; it doesn't point to an improvement in the governance. Now, while he lacks the bureaucracy to back him up, he does his work on the end of a cellphone with local elders. He would be much better off if he had a large bureaucracy under him, but that will come in time. He is—and Afghans do see progress—working toward solutions to improve their lives.

[Translation]

Finally, facilitating the growth and independence of Afghan national security forces through education, the provision of equipment, the building or outfitting of police stations and check-points with vehicles is a key component of the Canadian Forces' efforts in the Kandahar province. We were involved in the facilitation of the construction and outfitting of the above-mentioned police stations and some 15 temporary and permanent check-points with vehicles in the province.

● (0910)

[English]

I've only been able to cover a few elements of the reconstruction. The CD shows many more. I'd be happy to provide additional information, if required by the committee.

On the next slide, I'll just focus a little bit more on the last several weeks of the PRT, which has aimed its main effort in the Zhari District. Not only are we conducting operations there to reassure the local Afghans that we're going to stay and to bring their security forces to bear, but it's also where the PRT works to help with development to facilitate a little bit of reconstruction, and where we really want the international community to come and give us a hand.

The slide depicts a number of the activities that have been accomplished or undertaken. And while I don't have the time to address them all, let me give you a couple of examples.

The provincial director of education held an event to commemorate teachers in Kandahar province. The PRT assisted with the provision of radios—to add to those the director has already received—as part of a plan to connect all of the director's teachers to some form of media, no matter how far away they reside from densely populated urban areas.

The teachers' day took place on May 24. It consisted of a ceremony, including speeches by the director of education and the governor of Kandahar. There were songs by student choirs, a presentation of awards and a luncheon, things we take for granted back here.

The soldiers and the civilians who work within the PRT facilitate many, many activities like that, but it is one that was accomplished on May 24.

[Translation]

Another example is the 20 trucks for the newly identified Afghan national police, which arrived at the regional education centre and are awaiting distribution. They are to be distributed in Kandahar province to replace the existing vehicles or to increase their number.

Moreover, counsellors from the civilian police facilitated the issue of summer uniforms for the Afghan national police at provincial headquarters, to be sent to substations or check-points in the province. A computer system was provided to the technical directors by the counsellors of the civilian police, to help them with the distribution and inventory of the uniforms.

[English]

Finally, on May 15 the provincial reconstruction team and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission played host to a meeting on human rights with Kandahar's Afghan national security forces and other security and justice sector leadership. The workshop was a constructive first step in what appears will be an ongoing dialogue between the security forces and the AIHRC. At the conclusion of the meeting, participants signed a short declaration outlining their commitment to human rights and the rule of law, with particular focus on individuals in custody, under investigation, and undergoing trial. Again, it's a small step, but I think a very positive one as we try to help focus Afghans on their own judicial and security reform.

On the next slide you will see that the strategic advisory team continues to busy itself with many important initiatives. Again, I could spend a considerable amount of time talking about all these initiatives, but I'll limit this to just two.

[Translation]

The independent commission on administrative reform and the public service is the main agency in Afghanistan for the reform process of the public administration in general. The United Nations supports the establishment of a national framework for the education and development of Afghani officials. Within the commission, the SAT, the Strategic Advisory Team, assisted with the submission of four evaluation reports on the reconstruction service and Afghan development for World Bank projects. The SAT provided assistance in many areas, but served mainly to provide assistance for the written English.

[English]

Again, they are small steps, but it is assistance that Afghans need to help them do planning and formalize some of their key activities.

On the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, the SAT is involved in two major initiatives. The first is to advertise for the hiring of a project implementation unit that will provide the ministry with a badly needed engineering department to move a backlog of rehabilitation projects forward, while performing capacity-building to hand over this responsibility to the ministry within three years.

The second initiative is a contract for out-of-country training that the ministry firefighting students will undergo. This internationally compliant training is crucial for airport firefighting if the ministry is to meet its international civil requirements and take the task from ISAF. These milestones could have lasting impact on the civil aviation sector in Afghanistan. So the SAT continues to assist the bureaucracy in drawing up strategic plans. It is tremendously important to open airheads. It's not simply a Canadian activity; it's country-wide. To see this sort of activity going on is a good measure.

I don't want to be over the top again and dispel some of the challenges, but certainly you see the activities your SAT is up to.

Until May the Canadian Forces observer, mentoring, and liaison team, or OMLT, was responsible for the mentorship of one Afghan National Army battalion, or Kandak, as it's referred to, within the Kandahar province.

I remember when I first came to the committee we were talking about dozens, then there were a couple of hundred, and now we're talking about hundreds of ANA. It started as a very small step forward in Kandahar province. There was almost no Afghan National Army when we first arrived. We saw that build up to one Afghan National Army battalion that our troops were involved with. In fact, Corporal McCully was working with this Afghan battalion when he was killed.

As the Afghan National Army continues to expand, so too will its presence in Kandahar province. On May 15, Canadian Forces assumed mentorship for the Afghan National Army brigade headquarters responsible for the Kandahar province from the U.S. embedded training team. This was a significant milestone, since it represented a continuing trend toward Afghans assuming responsibility for their own security in the south. We anticipate in the months ahead that two additional Kandaks will deploy to Kandahar province, along with combat support and combat service support elements.

● (0915)

[Translation]

The addition of this capacity to the Afghan National Army will complete the capability of setting up the Afghan National Army so that they can sustain two operational kandaks and a brigade headquarters—

[English]

**The Chair:** There is a technical difficulty with the interpretation.

Okay, it's corrected. Proceed.

**BGen A. J. Howard:** I will start again.

[Translation]

The addition of this ANA capability will complete the force generation requirement of the Afghan National Army to sustain two operational kandaks and a brigade headquarters on a full-time basis within the Kandahar province. This will considerably improve the Afghan army forces in the province and will also provide Afghanistan with the opportunity to significantly improve the development and security capability of the army.

[English]

We are moving from a very scattered ANA presence to a sophisticated, enduring capability. Most of us in uniform are quite excited by what we're seeing here. This is a serious step forward on the security front.

Afghans themselves, senior leaders, have recognized the importance of bringing more Afghan security forces to the Kandahar province. As the numbers increase we will see more of them in the Kandahar province, and this, with additional security, bodes well, and helps beef up our ability to support Afghans and increases development in the full range of activities that we're conducting. It will be a priority for us, for the Canadian Forces who are in the Kandahar province, to work with this brigade and the emerging Kandaks as they come along.

Finally, on May 7 the acquisition of new vehicle-based systems for detecting, investigating, and disposing of explosive threats such as improvised explosive devices and mines was announced. Buried IEDs have become a weapon of choice against the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan.

These new vehicle systems will give commanders highly effective tools that they can use to find and neutralize those IEDs that pose a threat to our soldiers. They will not only improve protection for the soldiers and vehicles using the cleared routes, they will also provide high levels of protection to the clearing crews themselves. This is not only helping our soldiers, it will help local Afghans as well, who tend to be the ones who also get hurt or maimed when IEDs go off. These systems will complement the outstanding service of the RG-31 Nyala armoured infantry patrol vehicle.

The expedient route opening capability, EROC, systems will conduct mounted searches for buried improvised explosive devices using three types of highly specialized vehicles: the Husky, the Buffalo, and the Cougar. The systems will be acquired through the United States military. Use in operations has proven highly successful, and we have worked with the U.S. with these systems in theatre. Canada intends to obtain 16 of these vehicles, including six Husky, five Buffalo, and five of the Cougar vehicles.

The Husky provides the detection capability with a land mine overpass capability with a mounted full-width metal detector, enabling the detection of targets located in the roadbed or along the verges—along the side of the road. Once a target has been detected, the Buffalo will use its extended arm and a remote control camera to physically expose the potential target for verification and identification. The Cougar will transport the explosive ordnance disposal operators, and their vast array of tools, including explosive ordnance disposal robots to dispose of the IED.

Mr. Chairman and honourable members, that concludes my update.

● (0920)

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

We have time for a very quick round of questions.

We'll start with Mr. Coderre.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We have just received an article from the Canadian Press talking about the Chinook. According to the latest reports, it may have been a rocket-propelled grenade that blew it up. I do not want to ask you if that is the case. However, when can we expect to have a final report on yesterday's explosion of the Chinook?

First of all, our thoughts are with Master-Corporal Priede's family. I hope that in light of what we saw yesterday with the Dinning family, this time, instead of playing the blame game and passing the buck, we will make sure that the Priede family does not have to experience the same thing as the Dinning family. To go through mourning is already very painful. We should take that into consideration.

[*English*]

General Howard, maybe you should answer those two questions, and I'll have a series of very short ones afterwards.

**BGen A. J. Howard:** The investigation into the Chinook helicopter has already commenced. It is a very difficult endeavour to determine what happened. We must get on the ground, and I would anticipate that in the weeks and months ahead there will certainly be a preliminary report that we will use internally, as fast as we can, to understand what happened.

I'm not an expert in these areas, but typically we try to learn as much as we can right up front. If there needs to be a change in our procedures, we'll do that immediately, even with imprecise information.

But we will follow it all the way through, and certainly at the NATO level, that will occur. This will not be a Canadian investigation, but we will have tremendous interest, because one of our soldiers was involved.

I would also like to pass along my sentiments to the families of Canadian Forces soldiers who are injured or die in theatre. They deserve our admiration. As a Canadian Forces member, I was certainly seized yesterday with the minister and the CDS and their commitment to get to the bottom of these issues for the families.

The CDS laid out that we are a learning organization; we're not perfect. I agree that we want to be perfect in this particular case.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Anyway, the case was clear. I hope you take notes of that, and at every level the chain of command will respect those families, who deserve our respect.

I have a series of questions.

First, in the Kandahar area, what is the status of the civilians who have been killed through operations?

Second, have we taken some prisoners? How many Taliban have been killed in those operations?

**BGen A. J. Howard:** Those specific levels of detail, the numbers, I don't have at my fingertips. I could certainly take that on notice and commit to report back to you, but I don't have the specific numbers on hand.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Okay.

Mr. Chair, my colleague has a short question.

● (0925)

**The Chair:** You have one minute and a bit.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my family, I'd like to express my condolences to the Priede family.

I have one quick question, General Howard. In your presentation you talked about land mines, rocket-propelled weapons, if I can quote you, used on the Afghan people. Why would you say that these are being used on the Afghan people, when we have data that these weapons are also being used to kill military staff, not just Canadians but others too? Can you elaborate why you said against Afghan people? Is it just Afghan people who are dying?

**BGen A. J. Howard:** No. The Taliban are indiscriminate in their use of these weapons.

If we were to track IEDs, for example, more local Afghans than ISAF soldiers are killed, maimed, and wounded by these weapons. Typically, if an IED is exploded within a city centre, many local Afghans are hurt.

Secondly, I would say that occasionally as the Taliban seek to ambush ISAF forces, for example, they withdraw into local Afghan communities, enticing us to engage them within those population bases.

So yes, I don't mean just local Afghans; they are caught up in this well.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Cannis.

Mr. Bachand, five minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to have a quick answer to my question. This morning, you made a presentation that lasted at least 15 to 20 minutes and I did not hear a single word about anything going badly in Afghanistan.

Is there anything that's going badly in Afghanistan, or is everything going well?

[*English*]

**BGen A. J. Howard:** Certainly. As I've mentioned to you several times, the challenges in Afghanistan are immense. I try to bring to the committee some positive light on what is going on there. The first tragedy is that Afghans and Canadian Forces soldiers lose their lives and are maimed.

Without doubt, there are many areas where we have taken tentative steps, both on the governance reconstruction and on the military side.

When I look at the way that country was five years ago, the way it was a year ago, I see some positive trends. That's what I've tried to portray here. But I don't wish to leave you with the idea, which you are pointing me towards, that all is rosy. We do have our challenges.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Over the last five years, we have often criticized the government for not doing enough reconstruction or development. As is the case for some of my colleagues, I am just coming back from a NATO meeting. There is another point of friction that seems to be developing: civilian losses. NATO told us that 90% of civilian losses are caused by air attacks.

I would like to hear your comments on that. For example, who decides that aviation must intervene? We are also aware that the army, when taking action, can try to avoid civilian losses. However, it is difficult for a fighter-bomber to discriminate when he is carrying out an aerial attack.

Is there any coordination between the Enduring Freedom operation and NATO forces? The Enduring Freedom operation is still self-sufficient. Who decides to carry out an aerial bombing? Do

the commanders of Enduring Freedom notify NATO, for example, when they carry out a bombing?

I would like you to confirm for me that the civilian losses are catastrophic. That is the new bone of contention and it risks turning the Afghan people against us. After having fired upon a village and caused dozens of deaths, we are not so popular in that village anymore.

Can you tell me as much as possible in the time that I have left, please?

[*English*]

**BGen A. J. Howard:** I think your question is very important, and as a military officer I can say it weighs on us all heavily as we conduct operations to ensure the safety and security of Afghans. I might suggest that from a NATO perspective you ask General Henault, as he comes forward, to address that issue.

Certainly from a Canadian perspective and our feedback to NATO, none of us want to see this occur. One of the difficulties we have, as I've explained, is when the Taliban decide to engage Canadian Forces, engage any of the coalition forces, and then embed themselves around civilians, extreme caution has to be used.

I cannot address the air force issues. Canadian Forces don't have fighter aircraft in the region. But I know that our land forces have actually broken off engagements in the Zhari-Panjwai area for that exact reason.

• (0930)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** When a Canadian commander arrives in the village and sees that it is impossible for the ground forces to advance, does he call the air force for support? Who decides if the air force will intervene? Is it a commander on the ground? Who decides if they will proceed or not? Is it the headquarters' commanding officer who gives the authorization to use aircraft?

Would you like me to ask that question of Gen. Henault as well?

[*English*]

**BGen A. J. Howard:** No. I would simply say that is done at multiple levels. We're looking for a clear level. Certainly the senior commanders will have established what the protocols are, but it is the people on the ground who need to make the call. They need to decide whether that area is safe to go into. It is an issue NATO is seized with, and I know General Henault can address this issue with more specificity.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

Ms. Black, five minutes.

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Thanks again for being with us and for your presentation.

In your presentation you talked about Canadians providing police vehicles. It brought to mind the State Department report that came out last year indicating that over 50% of the vehicles that were provided to the Afghan police disappeared. So as a comment, I hope there's some kind of system keeping track of those vehicles so they don't disappear to wherever the ones from the Americans disappeared.



When you were here in March, you talked about surface-to-air missiles. That was something Canadians were concerned about, or ISAF was concerned about. They were starting to see the potential of those being used by the Taliban. The reports I'm seeing from the media on the Chinook helicopter going down yesterday seem to indicate there's some concern that it came down from a surface-to-air missile. When we talked before, we talked about the situation in Pakistan, the open arms sales in bazaars, the ability to buy almost any kind of weapon without any discretion. Now we're hearing that perhaps arms are coming in from Iran.

I want to know what you know about that, what Canadians know about that, and what might be taking place to try to stop other countries from supplying these kinds of weapons into Afghanistan.

**BGen A. J. Howard:** Again, I think this is an excellent question. I can only go so far in an open forum. I think we are very concerned on this issue of arms flowing into Afghanistan.

We certainly have a lot of focus on Pakistan. I mentioned in my briefing some of the border meetings, us trying to deploy along the border to better define what's going on around Spin Buldak and the like. So I think it's going to be more engagement with the team in ISAF and Afghanistan, at a NATO level, to engage others—Iran, Pakistan—to ensure whether there is or is not a flow of arms.

I can't say much here in an open forum, but we are seized with it. I can tell you that for sure.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** And from Iran as well?

**BGen A. J. Howard:** You've seen open press reporting on concern with Iranian weapons. We do need to watch that closely. We do want to give Afghans a chance here to stand up as a country, and the flow of foreign arms into the country is not going to be helpful in that regard. I really can't go much further on the specifics of that.

• (0935)

**Ms. Dawn Black:** When you were here last, it was in the middle of the detainee scandal, if I can call it that, in the House of Commons. You said that the CDS and others were meeting on that issue and you weren't in a position to address it, really. But I wonder if you could tell us, with this new agreement in place, which I believe is a stronger agreement, whether the Canadian Forces are now involved in any way in monitoring.

Is it under the Department of Foreign Affairs to do detainee monitoring? Is there a system in place? Is monitoring happening at this point of detainees who have been apprehended by Canadian Forces and turned over to Afghan authorities?

**BGen A. J. Howard:** Certainly over the last several weeks a fair degree of work has gone into the policy regarding post-transfer of detainees, and there are senior officials who have been intimately involved. You'll know that on May 3 an enhanced arrangement for the transfer was signed between our ambassador and the Afghan minister of defence, essentially within that arrangement making clear to the Afghans our expectations that we be informed of any abuse and our explicit expectations in this regard.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** And monitoring?

**BGen A. J. Howard:** The details, though, of that activity I think are best addressed by the senior officials who put that together, and I would encourage the committee to bring those individuals back. I'm

not an expert on the post-transfer piece. Certainly Canadian Forces are not going to be involved in the monitoring of it. We have ensured that our protocols internally treat the detainees to the required standard of the Third Geneva Convention. Essentially, we want detainees treated as we would expect our soldiers to be treated in similar circumstances, but I think that for the post-transfer piece you need to get the right folks over here to talk about that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

To wind up, we'll go over to the government. Mr. Del Mastro.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to preface my comments by relaying to you, sir, the pride that I have as a result of the incredible distinction with which our Canadian Forces are serving Canada, and I want to extend to you that my riding is very proud of the Canadian Forces.

We hear a lot about the challenges in Afghanistan. These are highlighted every single day on the news. What we don't hear a lot about are the items that you presented today. You talked about building 10 kilometres of canals, 14 kilometres of drainage, more than 1,000 wells dug, many kilometres of water supply established, roads opened, schools opened, meetings between Pakistani and Afghan authorities to build security in the region. These are very, very significant events that are occurring in Afghanistan.

Is it frustrating that we don't seem to be able to get this over the top, that we're not able to get this out to the broader public, that it's just not as well understood as perhaps it should be?

**BGen A. J. Howard:** I think it's not for me to comment on how folks might necessarily look at the mission. Canadians can be proud of what their Canadian Forces are accomplishing there, each and every soldier—and that's the strength of it: those individual soldiers who are working their buns off, if I can use that term, each and every day to help local Afghans.

The problem is that they're small steps. Certainly within the vast majority of the country there are great strides being made forward, and the situation is stable. If we can bring that stability down to the south.... It's quite a challenge, and it will take time. I think it's the measured steps and the time it will take that are perhaps frustrating for the soldiers who see it each and every day. They know how long it's going to take, but I think they're a bit frustrated sometimes with others' perceptions that it could be done quicker. It is all progressing in the right manner.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** It always is very heartening to me when we see the soldiers interviewed on the base and see the extent to which they believe in what they're doing and how proud they are of their service. I feel it that much more incumbent upon me to support their efforts.

You were talking about EROC, the "expedient route opening capability". You mentioned three different vehicles: the Buffalo, the Cougar, the Husky—16 vehicles in total. These vehicles are going to really improve the safety not only of our soldiers but of Afghans. Could you comment a little bit more on that?

● (0940)

**BGen A. J. Howard:** There is no foolproof device you can use against IEDs, and I'm not suggesting that these vehicles will completely eliminate the threat. But where we use them, this will allow the soldiers to deal with IEDs, which they might detect earlier on.

Typically these are around population centres and will support and help local Afghans who are on the ground. They are a visible and tangible device—vehicles—so that the troops understand the support they're getting. In the rest of the world, if you were to ask the Canadian Forces to go to other theatres of operation on different continents, these vehicles would also be very useful, because there's copycatting going on all over the place with these IEDs.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** When do you expect to have delivery of them? Do you know?

**BGen A. J. Howard:** I am not exactly sure, but since it is a relatively off-the-shelf buy, I think they will come in relatively rapidly. I don't have the exact dates. I could get that information and submit it to the committee.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** In your opinion, is the government fully supporting the requests of the defence staff for their requirements for equipment in theatre right now?

**BGen A. J. Howard:** I think that over the length of the mission since we have been in Afghanistan, since 2001, the support we've received from Canadians and the governments has been first-rate, to give the soldiers what they need on the ground. When I was in Kabul, I know the things that were going on there. As a military officer, I hadn't seen the support that was given. To establish a firm camp for the soldiers, a protected one, was outstanding.

I think Canada as a country has gotten behind its troops to support them.

**The Chair:** Thank you once again for being here to bring us up to date.

We're a little bit behind. I'm going to ask for a quick change. We'll suspend the meeting for one minute while our next presenter comes forward.

● \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

●

**The Chair:** We'll call the meeting back to order, please.

We'd like to welcome to the committee General Henault, who is the chairman of the NATO Military Committee.

Sir, it's good to see you again. We appreciate your accepting our invitation to appear.

I'll let you introduce those with you today. As usual, we'll give you some time for a presentation, and then we'll open it up for questions from the committee. I'm sure you witnessed during the previous presentation that there are some very important questions that we'd like answers to. We're glad you're here to do this.

The floor is yours.

● (0945)

[*Translation*]

**Gen Raymond Henault (Chairman, Military Committee, North Atlantic Treaty Organization):** Thank you very much for the warm welcome and thank you very much to the committee for having invited me to make a presentation today and to present NATO's perspective.

With me today is Lieutenant-Colonel Anthony White, a member of my staff in Brussels.

[*English*]

Tony will be here this morning to give me a hand if there are any additional comments or follow-up questions you might need to have answered in writing.

With that, good morning. It certainly is a pleasure to be before this committee this morning and to have been invited to attend here, as the chairman of the NATO Military Committee, in a much different capacity from what I have appeared before this committee in the past.

Sincerely, I have had the opportunity to interact with many of the members of the NATO parliamentary group over the last couple of years. Again, I welcome this opportunity to be back in Canada and to address this group, specifically, and to follow on with many of the discussions we've had in the NATO forum.

[*Translation*]

I do this with the full awareness of your familiarity with NATO objectives and priorities, and given, in particular, the clear focus that you have had on operations in Afghanistan over the last while.

[*English*]

I will be talking about Afghanistan a little bit later, but I will preface a little bit of that with what we're doing from a NATO perspective overall.

As most, if not all, of you will be aware, I serve as the chairman of the NATO Military Committee, having been elected to that position by a majority vote of the 26 chiefs of defence of NATO in November 2004 and also with the full support of the government of Canada.

I came into my term on June 16, 2005, so that was nearly two years ago. What I have as a responsibility, primarily, is to speak on behalf of all 26 NATO chiefs of defence and also to chair the weekly NATO Military Committee meetings, which are a very important component of the decision-making process in Brussels. They are aimed at building and generating consensus-based military advice that we must provide to the council for the decisions it undertakes on behalf of all the nations, and obviously, on behalf of the alliance itself. I also serve in that capacity, but as the senior military advisor to the council and as the top officer in NATO.

Thankfully, and with a very sincere look at what the alliance does overall, I have had the opportunity to travel to a number of different locations since I've become the NATO chairman. I've been primarily to NATO nations, but also to partner nations and to many of our contact countries. I've also travelled, of course, many times, to our operational theatres, whether it's Afghanistan, Kosovo, or Iraq, visiting, most recently, Operation Active Endeavour, the ships involved in our counter-terrorist maritime operation in the Mediterranean.

Operation Active Endeavour, I would remind you, is the only Article 5 operation underway in NATO at the moment. It's a compendium of ships, primarily made up of vessels from the standing NATO Maritime Group, which, quite notably, has just integrated a Ukrainian vessel into the force. It's only the second non-NATO nation that's contributed to this operation, the first having been Russia, last fall.

As a result of all that, I have had the great privilege of seeing firsthand what your men and women and also what the men and women of the alliance and its partners do in operations. And I ensure that their voices are heard back at the level I represent at NATO headquarters. I often travel with the North Atlantic Council, as well. So in that respect, I hear it from that perspective and ensure that we know what the issues and problems are out there. And hopefully we can provide our best possible support to them in what they're endeavouring to do on behalf of your nation, but also on behalf of the alliance.

While, as I mentioned at the very outset, I will talk about Afghanistan—it is our number one operational priority—I would like to at least note a few things we're doing in other areas of endeavour.

Let me perhaps just put a little bit of context around the work NATO does.

[*Translation*]

We currently have 50,500 soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen from NATO and partner nations involved in a variety of operations on continents that are frequently far away, and also on three continents and on the Mediterranean. Apart from the military operation in Afghanistan, we have a renowned force, made up of some 16,000 soldiers, airmen, airwomen and sailors in an operation in Kosovo, which is a very important mission, particularly at this stage, which involves talks on Kosovo's long-term status.

● (0950)

[*English*]

We also have a training mission in Iraq, which is helping to support the professionalization of some 600 Iraqi members—students, military officers, and non-commissioned members—on an annual basis.

We have a support mission to the African Union. It's a very modest one, a small one, but it has nonetheless airlifted some 8,000 troops into Sudan on behalf of or in support of the African Union. We've done some capacity building for them as well and helped them with the professionalization of their forces, how to do lessons learned and a number of other important things. But again, it's at a very modest level and at the request of the UN and the country itself.

We also conduct the operations in the Mediterranean that I talked to you about. This is an enduring mission, but one which has paid off quite significantly, in my view, in reducing the illegal trafficking of arms, illegal immigration, smuggling of people and arms, and a number of things that we have been able to curtail in terms of counter-terrorist operations in the Mediterranean context.

All these operations—and it does spread our forces, collectively, in quite a sizeable region of operations—draw upon limited national forces. Each country has a finite limit to what it can provide, but nonetheless it involves all those NATO, partner, and contact nations. And when I talk about contact nations I refer specifically to the nations that are supporting us in a number of regions, including Australia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and others that we are talking to in the margins of that as well.

Many of the nations I just talked about, especially NATO and the partner nations, are not only providing troops to operations in NATO, but they're also providing troops elsewhere, whether it's in support of the European Union or whether it's in support of other UN operations or coalition operations, in a number of places.

All that being said, it's really to point out to you that the ability of those nations to commit forces or capability to NATO, and most importantly to sustain those commitments, is very much commissioned by their responsibilities elsewhere, including in their own nations, and we need to consider it in that context.

[*Translation*]

Another factor that is also driving the Alliance is the need to maintain NATO's operational effectiveness in the face of continuing change and transformation. You have no doubt had discussions on this with the Canadian Forces.

[*English*]

NATO is thus undergoing this very important process of transformation across the spectrum, which is really aiming to ensure that our forces, and the command and control mechanisms that provide the oversight for them, are capable of responding with a much more far-reaching capability than we had before and a much more flexible one than we had during the Cold War—but also one that needs to adapt to the many changes we're seeing around the world. This is not the NATO of our fathers or grandfathers; this is a very different NATO. In fact, overall, what's happened is that NATO's competitive environment, for the lack of a better term, has changed quite significantly.

An important and very visible way in which NATO has adapted to those changes is not only in the defence reform that goes on across the spectrum of NATO and partner nations, but also in the creation of the NATO response force, which I know you've heard about. It's made up of some 20,000 to 25,000 air, land, sea, and marine corps capabilities, ready to move on very short notice—a very high-readiness force that can actually be deployed within five to thirty days of notice to undertake an operation.

I can get into more detail later on, if you'd like, but we certainly have seen its ability to do that, even before it achieved full operational capability, at the Riga summit last November, with the support that was provided to Pakistan, for example, and in the validation exercise that was done last year in Cape Verde, just off the west coast of Africa.

So, overall, what nations are looking to do is to improve the overall capability of their forces and their ability to interoperate with NATO, though adaptable logistics; interoperable command and control systems, which are crucial; language capability; and additional lift, whether it's airlift or sealift; and other things too numerous to mention.

At the same time, the political-military relationship has to evolve in order to ensure that nations are actually able to respond to that very short notice requirement for deployments, if required, and be able to be flexible enough to adjust to this changing environment we're in—one that in many cases requires some very short-term decision-making.

So all of that provides a backdrop to what we're doing in Afghanistan, which I'd now like to touch on a little bit more in depth.

General Howard gave you a very good overview of what's going on in the region you are most interested in, the southern region. Of course that is where much of the current insurgency has been focused, but believe me, there is insurgency throughout Afghanistan. So it's important that you understand the extent of what we're trying to do there, not only from a military point of view, but also from a civilian point of view, or with a comprehensive approach or perspective, if you like.

Just a short time ago, six years or so ago, Afghanistan was a very different place. It had no notion of the rule of law. It had very ambiguous diplomatic or political relations with a small number of countries, two or three at the most, and it was very much an uncontrolled environment in which terrorism could, quite frankly, thrive. And it was a launching ground, if you like, for terrorist attacks and the ones that we saw on September 11.

There were other elements of that as well. Girls could not go to school. Women were prevented from exercising fundamental human rights—not only women, but also men in many cases were restricted from doing many of the things we enjoy. It was, for all intents and purposes, what we would consider an ungoverned space. And there is still some ungoverned space in Afghanistan.

This was the premise on which the most basic human freedoms were inhibited—by the Taliban primarily. And of course I've mentioned to you the breeding ground that it became for international terrorism, something we all have a distinct interest in assuring does not occur again.

• (0955)

[Translation]

Our approach to the resulting operations in Afghanistan has been measured, deliberate and progressive. You are well aware of this, because you have been following events in Afghanistan since the very start. In fact, there is no doubt amongst the 26 nations of the

Alliance and its partners that the Afghanistan mission is NATO's absolute operational priority.

[English]

And we have no option but to prevail; this is a very important evolution of the alliance and what it represents.

In that context, though, I can assure you that the alliance is very united in its purpose. I had the opportunity to sit in at the heads of state and government dinner in Riga in November; there was no doubt about the commitment of all the heads of state to NATO and what it represents, and a very emphatic commitment on their part to ensure that what needs to be done will be done on the part of every nation.

Progressively, over time, the capability and equipment shortfalls and the national caveats—which I know you're familiar with—have challenged the effectiveness and also the flexibility of our military mission. But they are being addressed. Again, I can touch on that if you wish.

We've also recognized the need for the international community to collaborate with military forces to find the solutions for Afghanistan. And while the military component remains the essential element of providing security in Afghanistan, and stability as an essential ingredient of success, we are continually seeking ways to harmonize that component with the crucial reconstruction and development effort.

In essence, there is a full recognition that success in Afghanistan cannot be achieved through military means alone—and that's perfectly crystal clear to us at NATO, I can assure you.

Mr. Chairman, are we going to be cut short, with the bells?

**The Chair:** I'm not sure. You just proceed. We'll be informed.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Okay, thank you.

All that being said, I do believe it is worth considering for a moment where nations have come since we started the overall operation in Afghanistan. There is now a democratically elected government, and many of you have met some of those members of government. It's established within a relatively secure and stable environment, if you consider what it used to be. There are numerous reconstruction and development projects underway, providing very good hope for the Afghan people. There are more than 17,000 projects across Afghanistan, which is not insignificant.

Eighty-three percent of the population now have access to military facilities, compared with 2004, when it was much lower, at around nine percent. The GDP growth for this year is estimated at a very significant level at 12% to 14%. Over 4,000 kilometres of roads have been completed. The same number of medical clinics have been established. Over seven million children are in school, and I could go on and on. These are only a few examples of the progress that has been made in Afghanistan since we started our mission collectively.

Having visited there on many occasions, I would say to you that the people are feeling the benefits of the international presence, and they're feeling the positive benefits, although there are some negatives as well. All that being said, the successes that we deliver are somewhat fragile. They are fragile because the opposing militant forces, I like to call them—and that includes not only the Taliban but drug lords, criminal elements, a number of extremist groups, if you like, freedom fighters and so on—would prefer a return to that lawless environment they used to be able to operate in, and in which, as you well know, they could intimidate, they could kill people, and force people to support a wide range of their illicit activities.

• (1000)

[Translation]

Nonetheless, the opposing militant forces have discovered, through bitter experience, that they can defeat neither NATO nor SAF by conventional means. Even so, they not only remain a threat to our mission, they also threaten Afghanistan and its prospects for the future.

[English]

So I can say from a NATO perspective that we are achieving some success in Afghanistan. I sincerely believe that.

The momentum that we gained this spring, much different from what we saw last fall, by the way, with additional forces and commitment to engage these opposing militant forces, has demonstrated not only to NATO nations but also to the Afghan people themselves that they do have a better chance of prospering. This is important, from our perspective. They have a much better chance of prospering with NATO than they do with the Taliban. I think that's well recognized now.

We are seeing, in fact, local Afghans actually rejecting extremist elements and running, for lack of a better term, insurgents out of their towns and communities. And we're seeing the opposing militant forces very significantly adjust the way in which they try to oppose us, and this in direct response to those operational successes, Canada having been at the centre of one of those very significant successes last fall.

What we are doing, combined with the reconstruction and development people—and I come back to this because it's an important element of what we believe—is making Afghanistan and their way of life very different and improving it overall. From our perspective, what's important is not only having an image or a perception of improvement, but also that there is actual and tangible improvement to the Afghans on the ground. That really is an important part of winning hearts and minds.

[Translation]

In November 2006, we made a number of commitments at Riga. Following those commitments, which were made by all the heads of state mentioned above, our troop levels in Afghanistan have increased by more than 7,000 soldiers. Though there is still some room for improvement, the caveats—or restrictions—imposed on operational troops have been reduced.

[English]

Overall, then, that has meant that we've increased the numbers in Afghanistan to somewhere around 37,000 troops—I know you're familiar with these numbers, but just to reiterate them—from 37 different countries, and that is compared to what Afghanistan and the mission represented, which was about 5,000 troops in Kabul, when we started this engagement in Afghanistan. So it's quite an evolution. If you add the 11,000 or so members of the coalition who are operating in Afghanistan still, that takes the numbers up very, very close to the 50,000 I've talked to you about.

All of this has improved our operational capabilities. I will nonetheless be the first to say, because I've said this in many fora, especially at ministerial and heads of state levels, that we still have shortfalls in the statement of requirements, the combined joint statement of requirements that we continually seek to fill. Most of those are critical enablers, whether it's medical evacuation or in-theatre lift or communications surveillance and so on. They're being slowly but surely filled, and every contribution that NATO nations or partner nations make, however small, is always very much welcomed. But we keep reinforcing the need to fill it all, and we also reinforce the need to reduce those caveats.

To maintain this momentum, though, we do need to continue building our own and also Afghan capabilities. I haven't talked about that much, but the Afghans themselves are improving in capability and they're fearless fighters. They're also very, very committed to establishing and maintaining that security and stability in their own country and ultimately taking it over themselves. They really are very, very sincere about this, everyone I've talked to, especially their minister of defence and their president.

In my view, all the nations that are militarily engaged in Afghanistan are contributing to success in their own way. They all have specific mandates, but they're all operating under the same operations plan and under the same overall objective. As a consequence, NATO continually asks its members and partners, whoever they may be, to contribute more where they can, and I will continue to do that as well.

That being said, especially with the caveats, it's very clear to us that there are some national caveats that have to be there. It's a law, and that does constrain some freedoms to some degree, but what's most important to us is that there be few or no restrictions on the movement of troops, the geographic flexibility applied to troops in Afghanistan.

On an equally important front, perhaps, the alliance continues to stress the civilian and military cooperation aspects of what we do and the fact that this is crucial—I firmly believe this—to overall success and our ultimate exit strategy. The essence of that cooperation, you heard about it this morning, is embedded in the provincial reconstruction teams and what they do. There are 25 across the entire surface of Afghanistan at the moment. They're doing a number of things to improve how they do business. We have workshops on lessons learned and a number of best practices being applied, coordination being done in Afghanistan of PRTs, not wanting to suggest for a second that there's one-size-fits-all in this respect, but nonetheless trying to harmonize our efforts so that they're more effective overall.

This underscores even more emphatically the need for civilian and military cooperation. We, the military, especially from the NATO context, don't want to control the PRTs or the civilian international community, but we certainly want to be able to harmonize our efforts or at least coordinate our efforts with them, and that's an important dimension of what we're trying to do in a comprehensive approach point of view. You would probably call it more "all of government". We call it comprehensive approach in the NATO forum. That brings together all the elements, military, political, social, economic, and so on, to bring to bear what we need to do in that theatre.

In short, the reconstruction and development in Afghanistan must be seen as a seamless progression and it must be seen as the ultimate requirement to ensure that the Afghans can, at the end of what we do here, become self-sufficient in the long term.

[*Translation*]

Over the past few months, the Alliance has also improved direct support to the Afghan army in a number of ways, particularly through the deployment of operational mentoring and liaison teams, which Gen. Howard mentioned earlier.

●(1005)

Those teams are extremely important in training the Afghan army and improving its capacity to deploy and operate with NATO forces in the operational theatre.

[*English*]

The chiefs of defence got together just a few weeks ago, looked at Afghanistan, and at what our commitments are there, and they agreed with me that one of our critical requirements in Afghanistan is to sustain and enhance what we're doing, from an operational, mentoring, and liaison point of view. The training and equipment of the Afghan army—and, arguably, the same goes for the Afghan national police, the Afghan border guards, and so on—is a critical element for us at the moment, and very much a part of what we are currently trying to do, in terms of keeping this positive momentum going.

As that continues, more of these "omelettes", as they're very affectionately called—I'm not that favourable to that term, but nonetheless that's what most people use—will be required.

At the moment, we have a requirement for 46 of these omelettes, to give you an indication. Twenty of them have been filled by NATO. The other 26 are currently being filled by the coalition, and they're called "embedded training teams". I was very gratified, as the Afghan battalions stood up and needed the assistance, to see what Canada was going to be doing, in terms of a regional approach to provide these liaison teams, in a brigade sense, if you like, to enhance what these OMLTs are doing.

These OMLTs, as we embed them or as we generate them, then off-load those embedded training teams that the Americans have applied to this. Those embedded training teams take on the training of the Afghan national police, which is equally important, and that is ultimately part of the force multiplier that we need in Afghanistan.

In the end, we will need somewhere in the neighbourhood of a hundred of these operational mentoring and liaison teams to actually support the professionalization and ultimate independent approach to

the Afghan national army, and everything that represents. So these are important, and important to our overall exit strategy, which certainly we need to take conscious consideration of.

Again, I'll just mention the comprehensive approach, because it is a very important element of what we do. It's the glue, from our perspective, that holds together all the lines of activity that we have on the international front in Afghanistan. If we're divided on this approach, on the comprehensive approach and what it means to harmonizing our efforts, I'm convinced that we will have trouble and we will have some difficulty in achieving the overall success that we need to achieve.

●(1010)

[*Translation*]

Regional actors are equally critical to the success of our efforts. Pakistan, for example—and you know what Pakistan now represents—has shown immense willingness, particularly lately, to support our operations.

[*English*]

I visited Pakistan again just a few weeks ago. I have been discussing with them the importance of the border controls, especially. Pakistan views, the same as we would view, that a stable, democratic Afghanistan is just as important to them as it is to the nations supporting this mission because it is a direct neighbour of theirs, and stability in their region is what they want, ultimately.

In that respect, Pakistan has deployed some 80,000 troops along the border with Afghanistan. And if you factor in the fact that they have to rotate those troops, just as we rotate troops, you need a three-to-one ratio, which means they've committed somewhere in the neighbourhood of a quarter of a million troops to support the Afghan border activity. They've established some 1,000 border posts along the border, as compared to perhaps 100 on the part of Afghanistan.

They have also participated with us in what we call the Tripartite Commission, which is made up of Afghans, the Afghan chief of defence, primarily; the International Security Assistance Force through its commander; and also the Pakistani commander.

All of that has been a feature of our cooperation in the region, and it has enabled us to do some very good coordination along that border, not the least of which has been engaging where we need to, ensuring that we can curtail insurgent activity across the border together when it's needed. They also participate in a joint operation centre in Kabul. They are very capable officers. I'm very aware of what they do, all of that being a better coordination of our efforts across the border.

And finally, much of the publicity that surrounds the events in Afghanistan is reported as solely the purview of NATO, and consequently ISAF. This is the impression that is no doubt the result of a number of things, especially when you note that most of the activity that we see reported is front-line activity, and not the other activity that comes with it.

But NATO is not alone in Afghanistan, and I know you know this only too well. I've seen what James Appathurai and Chris Alexander and others have said to you, and I know the CDS will have said this to you as well. There are a number of very important actors there, not the least of which is the U.S. coalition, the United Nations, the G-8, the European Union, the World Bank, and soon we will have a European Union police training mission in Afghanistan, which will help us to do all the things I've just talked to you about.

So there are a number of difficult issues we still need to face, but all of this, with a comprehensive approach, will allow us, in my view, to prevail in the long term.

I have one last set of points before I open it up to your comments, and just a couple of moments to address the issue of detainees, because I know it is an important part of your discussion here in Canada and especially in Parliament.

I would note for you that there is no NATO-wide policy on detainees; however, it was directed through the operations plan, which is approved. It's recommended by the military committee but approved by the North Atlantic Council.

Commander ISAF, through the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, was directed to develop a set of guidelines and procedures governing the manner in which detainees were to be handled. It provides a very clear guidance. I have seen the guidance. It has been exposed to the North Atlantic Council. They're satisfied with it. All of it gives very clear guidance on the way in which individuals are to be handled.

Again, you've heard the terms on the criteria. We normally have to hand them over within 96 hours of the original detention or arrest. At the end of that period the individual must be released or handed over to Afghan authorities. And these are sovereign authorities; they handle their own internal security matters. However, there is a but: NATO has provided explicit instructions that no individual is to be handed over to any authority if it's believed that the individual is likely to be harmed or injured, abused in any way, following the handover.

In sum, we have directed and instructed our forces on the ground to exercise extreme diligence when arresting or detaining individuals, first of all; and we've also given them explicit instructions on how to handle them subsequently.

We call it a standing operating procedure, or an SOP. It's an SOP that is a sub-set of that operations plan I talked to you about. It has held us in good stead so far. And it is supplemented by a number of bilateral agreements between nations and the Afghan government in the same way that the Canadian government has done this.

●(1015)

This is what we encourage, and certainly we acknowledge Canada's attention in this context from a NATO perspective.

[Translation]

To conclude my remarks, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate that the route we are taking to deliver peace and independent government in Afghanistan requires far more than military force. Our mission is an overall mission, which will ensure long-term success.

[English]

What is critically important from our point of view are the positive actions on the part of the rest of the international community, and a number of things are going on. I looked at some numbers a few days ago and noted some \$26 billion has been applied to Afghanistan since the UN mandate was established in 2001 and the thousands of troops you are very familiar with. The military forces of NATO with their civilian counterparts are creating better conditions in Afghanistan, which will, in our view, deliver lasting peace.

Everyone is doing their part, in my perspective. Some nations are very small. I can tell you those small nations all feel just as committed to Afghanistan and would like to have larger contributions if they had them to provide, but sometimes can't. NATO views that no contribution is too small. Anyone who wishes to help we are very pleased with.

We'll continue to use what has been contributed by nations, including Canada, in the most effective way, but we need more resources to achieve the task overall, and I talked about that earlier. We continue to articulate those requirements, and the Supreme Allied Commander, General Craddock, has done that very recently in pointing out very clearly what some of the shortfalls still are.

Afghanistan is certainly a fragile country, and those of you who have been there will know that. Although it has its own government, it still has a number of tribal, rural, and other cultures that underpin it. The change there, and General Howard talked about this, will not occur overnight, and we're very conscious of that. It's going to take time and it can't be rushed. The last thing we want to do is come out of Afghanistan too soon and find ourselves back in there in the way that we had to go in there in the first instance.

For that reason, it's the belief of NATO, and my own personal belief, that it's simply too early to allow forces to come out and certainly to allow the forces we're opposing, and those we have now managed to control in a very significant way, to re-establish what was a very brutal and also oppressive hold on the people of Afghanistan. We expect to be there for a while yet and until the job is done.

In closing, I would say, as a Canadian NATO officer, that I'm very proud of the fact I can show this Canadian flag every day in the North Atlantic Council and on several visits to a number of different nations. Canada has played a very pivotal role in this process, a very important role, and is highly respected by the nations.

Again, I refer to the Riga summit and the dinner I attended with all the heads of state. Canada was spotlighted during that dinner. Many of the heads of state complimented the Prime Minister for the courage, the commitment, and also the sacrifices that Canadians were making to make this mission what it is and to do what has to be done.

Those are the contributions Canadians are making there with unfortunate losses, which we always regret. We recognize those losses every time they occur, either at the military committee or at the North Atlantic Council level. We know the Canadians have made some very courageous contributions, military and civilian—it's not just military. People put their lives on the line every day to do the job that's being done there.

Canada is making a difference, and that's the message I want to leave with you. It is making a positive difference and it's a nation that's seen at the leading edge of leadership and capability in Afghanistan.

The final word I would say, nonetheless, is that all the allies are contributing, and it's a very complex mission, but one that ultimately we will prevail in. From my perspective, I continue to be encouraged every time I go there and see the improvements that occur step-by-step. They are not huge improvements. It will never be downtown Nepean or downtown Ottawa, but that's not what we're trying to achieve. We're trying to achieve a stable environment they can thrive in, and I think we will, in the long term.

• (1020)

[Translation]

Thank you. It has been a pleasure to be given this opportunity to be here today.

Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to answer any questions committee members may have. Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

On a point of order, go ahead.

**Mr. John Cannis:** If I may, Mr. Chairman, it's not every day we have such a distinguished guest and that we give him all the flexibility, because he's got a lot to say. Mr. Chairman, for the benefit of men and women, especially those who have lost their lives, for all Canadians who are paying this bill, I would ask you to consider that we extend this session at least for 15 or 20 minutes so every person has an opportunity to ask a question. It's not every day, I stress, that we have General Henault here.

**The Chair:** We'll look into the possibility of doing that, depending on the scheduling of the room.

We'll get started on our first seven-minute round. Thank you for that, John.

Mr. Coderre.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Henault, not only are you the pride of Saint Jean-Baptiste, but you are the pride of all Canadians. We are very proud to have you in our midst. However, I know that you have come not only as a Canadian, but also as the chairman of the military committee of NATO. I have some questions for you in that regard.

You are very proud of the current Prime Minister. In my opinion, I think that we can also be proud of the contribution made by previous prime ministers beginning with 2001 including Prime Minister Chrétien's contribution in Kabul and Prime Minister Martin's contribution in Kandahar. I think that the people in the official opposition had to support this mission, as they did when they were in power.

However, we know that this is an international mission and not a Canadian mission. Let me clearly state our position. We, in the official opposition, believe in rotation. We think that beginning with

February 2009, Canadian troops should undergo rotation. We could eventually hand the torch over to another country.

Withdrawing from Afghanistan is out of the question because we have a role to play regarding diplomacy and development. In that sense, we think that rotation is necessary. The Prime Minister can make two opposite statements and paint himself into a corner by saying that he is ready to stay, but as far as we are concerned, we want to tell you exactly what we think. Therefore, you can get ready because between May 31 and February 2009, many things could be done.

Today, I want to raise three specific issues. First, let me talk about [English]

those national caveats. I believe there's an issue of coordination and consistency among those in the alliance regarding the operation.

I'd like to talk about the civilian casualties and the detainees. Since our time is counted, I also want to make sure that everybody has their time.

We're talking a lot about national caveats. How many national caveats exist right now? Please give a short answer.

[Translation]

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Thank you very much, Mr. Coderre.

I do not know the precise number by heart, but I know that last November, about 100 restrictions were applied to troop movement. The current number is about 50. The substantial reduction of restrictions allowed us to do many useful things for the forces, especially for their operations.

The reduction is still going on. As we systematically deploy our forces and as we deal with restrictions, every time the opportunity arises, we ask other countries to review their restrictions and to reduce or eliminate them wherever their national legislation allows them to do so.

• (1025)

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** We, as Liberals, believe in the three "D's". If we want to succeed in winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, we must make sure that we do not apply an à la carte formula by going from defence to development and then to diplomacy. We must work consistently within the Alliance and make sure that each party can do its work.

Other countries are already thinking of withdrawing. Nicolas Sarkozy, for instance, announced that debate was going on in France regarding the special unit and the 1,100 soldiers. If there is an 8 o'clock curfew, and the Canadians who are able and proud, get shot at during the night, there is a problem. We have to consider such factors if we want things to work.

Moreover, the Europeans are in a complicated situation. Canada, as a good boy scout, is doing exceptional work in supporting the mission and the troops. However, the NATO countries—and you go to Brussels more often than I do—will have to be more active in the front lines, for things to work.



What is the current state of negotiations with the European countries? The Dutch Parliament is already negotiating an extension of their mission. What is the situation in Europe?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Thank you, Mr. Coderre.

Naturally, it is up to each country to decide how much it wants to continue contributing to the mission, whether they are making a smaller contribution or a large contribution as is the case for Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and so forth. These issues are constantly being debated. In our case, we know very clearly that countries must assess their capacity to contribute to the effort and that the time has come for us to do that. We have been looking into the issue of deploying a force for some time now. I am raising this again because this is the context in which we are receiving offers from other countries, both initial offers and offers to deploy and rotate troops. We must try to evaluate their long-term intentions and our own alternatives, while keeping in mind the fact that NATO has quite a long history of long-term missions. Take the example of the Bosnia mission, that lasted for a decade and during which NATO, with all its elements, was able to rotate troops, and so forth.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** General, excuse me for interrupting you, but I am allowed very little time. I know that you understand that rotation is in order for international missions.

Let me put two brief questions to you. If we want things to work, if we want to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, we must deal with the problem of civilian casualties. Currently, there is a serious problem with civilian mortality, and I would like you to tell us about it—because just now, we passed the puck to you, it stopped with you, and now you can no longer pass it on—i.e., the way in which NATO views the civilian issue. Unfortunately, people have been killed.

Secondly and this is my last question with regard to detainees, you mentioned guidelines. I can understand that you have guidelines, but after speaking about this to the Norwegians, I know that we need no guidelines, what we need is a treaty with NATO and with the Afghan government to ensure consistency and coordination in the handling of detainees. What do you have to say about this?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** With regard to the civilians—  
[English]

**The Chair:** The time's up. We have to keep close time limits here. But if there are any questions brought to you that we don't have enough time for, I'd ask that you supply that information in writing to us.

Mr. Bachand is next, for seven minutes.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** If we don't get to the last two questions, we'll make sure you get answers in writing.

**The Chair:** We will have time for a second round.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would also like to welcome the general. It is not the first time he has appeared before us, but perhaps his first time as military leader of NATO. I think his presence here is very important and will allow us to learn a bit more.

A few delegates, some members and myself recently attended a NATO meeting in Madeira. As you know, that is where the parliamentary assembly took place. Several issues were raised. I, personally, was particularly interested in some.

I'll start with the importance of cardinal points. That is what I started with over there. There is no place on earth where cardinal points are more important than in Afghanistan, because there is a major difference between the north and the south. I wanted to check with you the possibility of rotations, not necessarily as of 2009. There is a price to be paid for Canadians in the south. Moreover, there is joint funding within NATO. It's been discussed for a long time, but it hasn't yet been done. And God knows that a theatre like southern Afghanistan is far more expensive for a country like Canada than what has been established in the north, for instance in Fayzabad, where I went with NATO and where essentially patrols can use Jeeps. The cost is therefore very different between military presence in the north and in the south, and there is also the human cost in terms of lost human lives which is very, very different. I know the Germans lost three soldiers recently, but we have lost 56 and I consider the cost to be very high. How can we and through which forum may we ask for a fairer sharing of the burden and for action to be taken in this regard? How was the first selection of soldiers done? Why did the Germans go to the north and we the south? Would it be feasible to better share this burden by 2009?

●(1030)

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Thank you, Mr. Bachand.

You did indeed notice that there are four regions in Afghanistan, aside from Kabul, the south, the north, the west and the east, which have experienced security situations that have varied from time to time. As you know, we undertook the mission in Afghanistan in Kabul. The counter-clockwise rotation in Afghanistan started in the north and went to the west.

We first started in the north towards the end of 2003, early 2004; in the west in 2005; in the south in 2006, etc. We spent more time in the north than in the west to establish security. These regions are not the heartland of the Taliban, which is the south. There is greater security and stability in the north and west due to what we are planning, in other words, securing the situation to promote development and reconstruction. We want to do exactly the same thing in the south. It will take us a little longer because of extremist activity which we have to deal with. Eventually, I think the country will establish its own stability.

Is one region of the country more at risk than another? We noted that when we deploy the necessary forces to establish security in the south or the east, the extremists move, in the west or in the north. So we have to deal with threats in all areas. And the threats we are dealing with are the most serious or the most significant, at the moment, because of the use of devices referred to as improvised explosive devices. Suicide bombs could be triggered anywhere. In the south, last year, there was a concentration of Taliban launching strikes against NATO. They saw that it wasn't going to work. Is one country more vulnerable than another? For the time being, probably not. There are a host of events which could occur in any part of Afghanistan. You cannot forget that the countries that have a military presence in the north or the west want to maintain security in their respective theatres. That is one of the reasons why they're reluctant to move their troops elsewhere.

Finally, I would say that heads of state have recognized that following the events of last October, with Operation Medusa, all countries had to be ready or able to support others in need. That is in the past, I think. Now, we have to focus on the future, and all countries have committed to doing that, if necessary.

I don't like to compare loss of life because first of all it is always regrettable and second it could occur anywhere. Almost all countries have lost citizens in Afghanistan.

• (1035)

[English]

I don't want to go on too long, but I think it is important to note that on the different security situation, primarily the north and west are more secure. We will establish that in the south and the east in due course, and that will make a big difference.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** General, it is rare for me not to agree with you, but if I were a head of state, I would prefer to have my troops in the north rather than in the south. Of course it is always possible for attacks to surface elsewhere, but everyone knows that the Taliban stronghold is in the south and that is not an easy area to be in.

Earlier on, I asked Gen. Howard a question, and as my colleague said, he sent you the puck. I would like to follow up on that. It would seem that this is a new contentious issue: I am referring to the way in which we can convince the hearts and minds of Afghans of our good will. It would seem, from what we're hearing, that there is more reconstruction and development occurring. However, in terms of civil losses, they are starting to hurt. I am a member of the Defence and Security Commission of the NATO Parliamentary Association, and this subject will be addressed in the report of the general rapporteur. You heard my questions earlier on and I would like you to explain to us who decides that there will not be a surgical hit, that the air force will not intervene. I would like you to clarify this point. It seems to me to be an important issue and it could lead to less civilian support.

[English]

**The Chair:** Once again, hopefully we'll have time to clarify that later. We must move on.

Ms. Black, seven minutes.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** Thank you very much.

Thank you, General Henault, for coming to the defence committee and making your presentation.

Both my colleagues on the committee have talked about civilian deaths. I know that the Karzai government and also the Afghan Senate have been very concerned about this. They have made statements and had votes in the Senate, I believe, about asking NATO to take this under advisement.

I want to ask how NATO is dealing with that. How will the air strikes be handled to try to prevent civilian deaths? Along with that question, many of us at this committee have asked a number of people how Operation Enduring Freedom works alongside NATO. Are the Americans who are outside of NATO and Operation Enduring Freedom also doing air strikes?

You mentioned, and our own Minister of National Defence has mentioned, that this conflict will not be solved only by military means. I think everybody understands that and agrees with that. I wonder what other means you consider to be useful. Does that include negotiations? By negotiating, I mean specifically with different factions in Afghanistan, and negotiations that are more than an offer of amnesty.

The third part of my question is to deal with the flow of illegal arms into counter-insurgency hands in Afghanistan. I'm very concerned about this, and I'm sure that NATO must be looking at this issue. I believe you said there were 80,000 Pakistani troops on the border. I find that quite disheartening. If there are 80,000 border guards or Pakistani military officials there who are meant to prevent the counter-insurgents from going back and forth across the border, I would presume it's meant to prevent the flow of illegal arms coming into Afghanistan. I find that figure disheartening, not encouraging. We know that the insurgents are coming back and forth and that illegal arms are coming in, not only from Pakistan; there are reports that these kinds of arms are coming in from Iran.

Yesterday, when the Chinook helicopter went down, the reports in the press seemed to indicate this was by a surface-to-air missile. I find that very alarming when another seven NATO personnel, one Canadian, were killed in that attack.

That's the start of my questions. I hope I get time for more, but I want to give you some opportunity to respond.

• (1040)

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Thank you, Ms. Black. I'll do my best here.

From a civilian death point of view, NATO is very focused on that. It's an object of continuous discussion at the military committee, and more specifically at the council level. Every effort is made to try to reduce the impact of that, to reduce civilian deaths.

The use of force, especially in built-up areas, is something that the commanders on the ground, right up to the Supreme Allied Commander, want to use judiciously, to protect forces and the mission they're trying to do but also to minimize the impact on loss of life of innocent civilians. Every possible thing is done, including warning people when operations are going to be undertaken and stopping operations when it's obvious that the Taliban or whichever opposing militant force is using human shields or trying to infiltrate built-up areas.

In fact, there was an incident just a few days ago. An embedded journalist in the Canadian contingent was witness to the commander stopping fire against insurgents when they became enmeshed, if you like, with the civilian population.

So things are taken into consideration in that context. We give very clear guidance to our commanders to minimize collateral damage at all possible costs. When you get into a combat situation, you have to make some very quick decisions on the ground, and sometimes those decisions will result in unfortunate collateral damage. We do that not wittingly, not by any stretch of the imagination, but with every intention of trying to limit that to the greatest extent possible.

In terms of air strikes—

**Ms. Dawn Black:** And OEF.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** OEF, yes. Operation Enduring Freedom, or the U.S.-led coalition activities, coordinate very closely with the International Security Assistance Force. When we established the operations plan currently in force—operations plan 10302—there was a very distinct command and control relationship established between OEF and ISAF.

Now, the coalition is doing counterterrorist operations. They are hunting Taliban and al-Qaeda. ISAF is not. But their activities are coordinated, through Commander ISAF, in a dual-headed relationship with what we call the deputy commander of security, the American head of the special operations forces in Afghanistan.

All of their activities are coordinated with NATO, or at least they're aware of them. The Operation Enduring Freedom forces can come to the assistance of ISAF, if required, in extremist situations. I might add that we don't do it the other way around. We don't do counterterrorist operations; we do anti-terrorist or force protection operations in terms of the Taliban.

The air strikes, though, are called in through a very well-established air strike request system. It goes from the commander on the ground to the air support operations centre to what we call the deputy commander air, an officer in the staff of Commander ISAF in Kabul. Those requirements are vetted. It may not always be air strikes; it may be artillery, for example. Those decisions are made through a very well-established set of criteria.

If the air strikes are required, the requests for support go through the combined air operations centre in Qatar, which then assigns the mission based on what aircraft are available, the requirements of the mission, and so on.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** Could you address the illegal arms issue as well? I think my time's going to run out soon.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Okay.

We are certainly conscious of illegal arms. I would remind you that the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is 2,500 kilometres long. It's a very tough and treacherous border, almost impossible to delineate. The flow of contraband, which has been going on for centuries, is in some cases going to continue. That's why we need more and more capability to disrupt that.

This is something the Pakistanis have discussed directly with us—better surveillance capability, night vision devices, border controls, and so on.

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

We'll now move over to the government side. Mr. Hawn, seven minutes.

• (1045)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Welcome, General Henault and Colonel White. It's good to see you again.

Just before I move on to questions, I want to clarify, for the edification of Ms. Black and others, something that's been mentioned a couple of times. An RPG is not a SAM but in effect a large bullet—quite different.

General Henault, I'd like to ask a number of questions. I'd appreciate the customary military brevity, if we could.

During your entire time as Chief of the Defence Staff, was there ever a detainee transfer agreement in place?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** We had very clear knowledge of the rules that were established, or at least the guidance provided by NATO. There was, I remember, very clear direction or guidance to our staff to hand over in very much the same manner that we do now, which is 96 hours maximum, and under the types of conditions we see now, but not the type of very well-coordinated detainee agreement that the government has now established and that is much more comprehensive. This has been a feature of bilateral negotiations between countries and Afghanistan as we've gotten into the much more volatile operations we see now in the south and the east, but particularly in the south.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Thank you for that.

You talked about, and everybody knows, that Canada has gained respect and admiration in the international community. We talk about consequences of the mission. I want to talk about the consequences of failure.

I want to get your thoughts on the consequences of failure of the mission in Afghanistan to Canada if Canada is deemed to be the cause of that failure because of a decreased commitment, and also the consequences of failure to NATO and the future of NATO. The consequences of failure to Afghanistan itself are obviously catastrophic, but I want to get your thoughts on the consequences of failure to Canada if we're seen to be the cause of that failure, and the consequences of failure to NATO as an alliance.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Because this mission is a very broad-reaching one, with 37 nations involved, I think no single nation would be the cause of failure of this mission, understanding that some nations have a larger commitment than others because they're capable of providing more. Canada is among those that have provided a much larger commitment than others, but again with a force that has been expeditionary for decades and is quite capable of doing the operations that we now see in Afghanistan, something many forces have patterned their deployments on. We find from a NATO perspective that there are many forces, if they're going to partner with a nation in Afghanistan where they have a smaller capability, that will always seek out nations like Canada to partner with because they know how beneficial that would be to their own ability to make a difference, but also knowing that Canada is very capable from an operational and an overall mission point of view.

What I would say from the consequences point of view is that this would be extremely damaging for NATO and for the international community if we were to fail in Afghanistan. This is the first expeditionary operation for NATO in the post-Cold War timeframe—expeditionary in the sense that it's well outside the traditional Euro-Atlantic area, not looking at Bosnia or Kosovo in the same light in terms of expeditionary—and this really defines what NATO is all about in terms of not trying to be a global NATO, not by any stretch, but rather, trying to be a NATO with global partners and trying to project security and stability much further away than it had in the past, especially with comprehensive political guidance, having identified that as close in being out to 5,000 kilometres from the Euro-Atlantic area, and far out being about 15,000 kilometres.

So if we were to fail, we would damage our credibility in an almost irretrievable way, in my view. Hence the importance of all nations recognizing that and continuing to commit to the long-term success of the mission.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** And Canada is clearly a critical part of success in the mission, or failure, if it were to come to that.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Canada has been in the post-9/11 equation right from the beginning. I remember, in the first post-9/11 period, dispatching a ship that was in the standing naval maritime group north, if you like, the Standing Naval Force Atlantic, to the North Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf to support those operations as quickly as possible.

So this has been our mandate. Canada has always taken on the tough missions and it has always prevailed as well. We look back to World War I and World War II, Korea, and now Afghanistan, and all of those missions have had Canada at a very central position in both execution and also measures of success. So, yes, Canada is a very important cog in the wheel.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** I want to talk a little bit about contingency planning. Some people jump to a conclusion that if the military or an organization has a contingency plan to do A, B, C, or D, you're obviously planning to do that.

As you well know, the military has contingency plans on the shelf for many, many eventualities. Can you comment on the importance of contingency planning to the military or any organization that doesn't plan to fail?

• (1050)

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Well, contingency planning is part of our lifeblood. We have operational planners. We have defence planners. We have planners at all levels, whether it's at NATO headquarters, Brussels, or within the Supreme Allied Commander's staff in Mons, or down at the Joint Force Command in Brunssum, indeed, down to the Commander ISAF level in Afghanistan.

In all cases, we do prudent military planning, and we're always looking ahead. We're always looking ahead a significant distance in that very context, in not only the missions in Afghanistan, but also the mission in Kosovo, and the NATO response force, Operation Active Endeavour. We have recognized the criticality of having long-term force-generation processes.

That's a new feature, if you like, of NATO planning, which looks at how we can share the burden and adjust the contributions of different nations over a longer period, using a long-term force-generation process that identifies nations' ability to contribute at different times during the cycle of a mission, and then doing the burden sharing that's required to make sure that all can contribute, or get the regeneration time they need over time.

For Afghanistan specifically, I have spoken to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Craddock, as well as to the Secretary General about the need for us to start looking a much further distance ahead, looking at what's going to happen, not only in 2008 and 2009, when, as many nations have indicated, their parliaments will ultimately have to make decisions as to whether or not they remain, and looking at how we can now sustain this mission in the longer term.

Again, going back to the fact that we have had a history of long-term sustainment in Kosovo and in Bosnia—and even Operation Active Endeavour has been in place for more than six years now—we can do it. We have the capacity, but the planning is crucial to success.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Thank you, Mr. Hawn.

That ends our first round. We're going to a five-minute round. Before we do that, though, committee, I know we started late. We had an hour and a half slotted for the General, and we started a tad late.

General, I don't know what your time schedule is. I know we all have commitments, but if we were able to go to about 10 after or 15 after, would you be all right with that?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Mr. Chairman, I'm at your disposal.

**The Chair:** Very good. We'll get as deep into our questioning, then, as we can.

We'll start with Mr. Cannis, for five minutes.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In the short five minutes, General, I'm going to try to pop some questions for quick responses.

Let me begin by saying that in your 40-year distinguished career in the military, I truly came to appreciate you and respect you even more when you were CDS in Canada, in the way you approached your assignment and in the way you stood so firmly for our men and women. But I was even more proud when you and the other many Canadians who competed and won high-level positions welcomed us in Brussels. Let me just put that on the record.

General Henault, during your presentation you used certain words that I think were very important, that Canadians who are following this committee and who will be seeing it and reviewing it will begin to understand, because when we ask the tough questions, sir, you know very well from your past experiences that it has nothing to do with our lack of support. If anything, we ask the tough questions for the support that we provide for our men and women.

We've been told by the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence every time we ask important questions about the mission, using the George Bush line, that "we're not going to cut and run".

It's not a matter of cutting and running, because supposedly the Taliban and the insurgents will get the message that we're leaving, and they're going to sit back, and they will come out of their caves after we leave. And you know very well that is not the case, because you said, if I may quote you, "we expect to be there for a while".

So in essence, if we reverse it, they know that NATO and 37 nations are going to be there for a while. It's not just a Canadian mission. So that argument, I believe you will agree, has been defused.

You also said, sir, that planners are a part of our "lifeblood", and then you also used another word, if I may quote you, "NATO planning".

I was in Slovenia during the NATO conference. Your brochures continuously talk about planning. They talk about the membership action plan, the ten countries that wished to join, and by 2004 the seven that had joined. They talk about the mission in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. They talk about the NATO-Ukraine action plan. They go on to talk about planning.

The first question I want to ask you, sir, is this. NATO does long-term planning. You've just said so. Are you not in the process now, knowing very well that the Canadian extension is going to end by 2009, of starting planning today as to who will take on that rotation after Canadian service?

•(1055)

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Thank you for that.

Let me note one thing: I certainly acknowledge the work this committee does. I know how important your work as a committee or your predecessors' and obviously those in the future have been to the Canadian Forces in that context. Especially I remember back to the quality of life requirements and everything that happened to make the Canadian Forces a much more capable force in the longer term. I know how important your influence is on Parliament, and I thank you for that.

I've also had the opportunity to interact with a number of defence committees in many different nations, including Hungary, the Czech

Republic, and France. I interacted with their senate there and in fact I even interacted with the chairman of the Duma Defence Committee. All of those committees are trying to achieve the same things as you are, which is a better and more capable force and protecting and obviously recognizing the contributions, but also the requirements—

**Mr. John Cannis:** You know that Canadian missions are over in 2009. Are you planning today, or are you not planning today, who is going to assume that role after the Canadians have finished their mission?

I am just pressed for time, sir.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Yes, we are looking at how we can do the burden-sharing in the—

**Mr. John Cannis:** No—are you planning to replace the Canadian contingent today, sir?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** We're planning for a transition in Afghanistan, where there are many nations that are going to adjust—

**Mr. John Cannis:** Sir, I apologize. We know the Canadian mission ends in 2009. Are you planning today who is going to take over, as there was a plan for the Canadians to go in before the Canadians did go in?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** We are looking ahead to see who might take on that mantle if Canadians do withdraw. That's part of our planning process. We are looking at a number of issues—

**Mr. John Cannis:** Do you agree that the Canadians, before they commit, should clear the caveats so that Canadian men's and women's lives are not endangered? Do you agree more caveats have to be lifted?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** I always encourage, and so does the Secretary General, that nations lift as many caveats as possible.

**Mr. John Cannis:** If NATO doesn't have the power to dictate, sir, then NATO is weakening itself, and these new nations that are becoming partners are just going to join the club without preparing to share the burden. That's the way Canadians are seeing it today. I'm just giving you the message from the constituency.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** I must beg to differ, because I know many of the new NATO nations that I have met.... I meet with them regularly. I was recently in Latvia, for example. They have no caveats on their troops in Afghanistan. It's a small nation, but it has no caveats. Albania, which is not a NATO nation but nonetheless a partnership for peace nation, has deployed forces with no caveats on it. So they are all there to do what they can. Poland is probably one of the more prominent new NATO nations that you would have referred to. Poland has just completed a deployment of about 1,200 troops into the eastern region, which is a difficult region of Afghanistan, and they have no caveats on their troops.

So each nation makes its own call in that respect, and we continually encourage them to do just what you said to minimize those caveats.

**The Chair:** Very good. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Mr. Cannis.

We're going to go to Ms. Gallant, and then over to Mr. Bouchard.

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

General Henault, thank you for clarifying, first of all, that NATO does not dictate to its member countries what they must or must not do.

Further to the caveats, I understand the majority of our deaths incurred have been the result of the improvised explosive devices, the IEDs. How does the existence or absence of caveats impact on the prevention of IED casualties?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** You're quite correct that the majority of losses of life in Afghanistan have occurred through suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices, although there have been many deaths from combat action. In fact, the most recent, regrettably—Canada's loss, with many others—was with the Chinook being downed yesterday.

The IED threat is one that is very real. It is one we are very focused on. Allied Command Transformation, with which you may be very familiar, which is the transatlantic arm of NATO, if you like, and ensures the continued recognition of the transatlantic link, is now doing some significant work to provide education, counter-IED capability, training for troops, both before they deploy and while they're in theatre, and the development of devices, whatever those may be, to block remote control IED activation or any of those kinds of things.

This is probably one of the more difficult things we've had to face, because IEDs are relatively easy—I don't want to say that in the wrong way. They can be procured and developed by almost anyone. They are very cowardly and they attack our troops anywhere.

• (1100)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Does the absence or existence of caveats have any impact on whether or not we suffer a loss of life as a result of IEDs? Do they prevent...?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** I find it hard to find a direct connection between caveats and loss of life with IEDs. What the caveats restrict is the movement of troops—in many cases, to support other troops or hold ground after those troops have taken a particular location.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Thank you.

Commenting earlier this spring about the 2006 Riga conference, you said that while in the southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan there exists a much fiercer resistance than expected, NATO forces have momentum. Has any progress been made on that front? Do we still have the momentum?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Yes. My view is that what had always been termed the spring offensive didn't materialize, on the part of the opposing militant forces.

Indeed, what happened was that because of very good decision-making in theatre, and very good establishment of capability and disposition of troops, and having shown Canada at the very front of that last October, NATO showed it could not be dealt with by the Taliban in a conventional way. It became clear that instead of the opposing militant forces preventing us from securing and stabilizing

the area, and doing reconstruction and development, they had turned around.

So from my perspective, we've completely changed the complexion of operations in Afghanistan. The Taliban, or any opposing militant forces, are now forced to use the small hit-and-run tactics, improvised explosive devices, or suicide bombers to prevent us from doing what we have committed to do, from an international community point of view.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Sometimes insurgents are using Pakistan as a safe haven, and they pose a lethal threat to both our military forces and the civilian population of Afghanistan, particularly in Kandahar and the surrounding provinces.

What strategy does NATO have to curb the movement of Taliban elements from Pakistan across the border into Afghanistan?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** A tremendous amount of intelligence activity goes on, because this is very much intelligence-driven. What primarily is being done to curb that cross-border activity is the Tripartite Commission, which I referred to at the very outset of my presentation. The commission is chaired by the commander of the International Security Assistance Force, with the attendance or the participation of the Afghans, normally the chief of defence, and the Pakistanis, in order to cooperate along the border.

That Tripartite Commission is primarily designed for border security and to coordinate actions that will prevent the cross-border movement, which you just referred to, of people, of arms, or insurgents.

The Pakistanis have recognized that the Quetta area, for example, and those border regions, have insurgents who are infiltrating Afghanistan. They have committed to helping us prevent that.

Indeed, I have seen operations on the border where insurgent activity was detected, attempting to go into Afghanistan from Pakistan. Those insurgent movements were prevented by a combined ISAF, Afghan national security forces, and Pakistani intervention. So it is helping and working.

What they need is more surveillance and technology capability to control that border more effectively, especially at night.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Thanks, Ms. Gallant.

We're going over to Mr. Bouchard, and then back to the government.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General, for being with us.

In your presentation you mentioned that the Afghan had to take matters into their own hands and become operational or functional.

How do you perceive the interest or motivation Afghans have in military or police organizations? Would you say this interest is low, medium or high?

•(1105)

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Mr. Bouchard, do you want to know how motivated the Afghan forces are?

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Yes.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** I met with people in the Afghan forces at all levels, and they have an increased interest in establishing their operational capability. I interacted with the chief of defence on several occasions and with the Minister of Defence in Afghanistan. In all cases, they are absolutely and totally committed to developing their forces and the operational capability. To do so, they need a great deal of help, training, equipment and professional training. Over the last three years the Afghan military went from being practically non-existent to a force 30,000 strong. This number should rise to 70,000 under the aegis of the United States, the responsible G8 nation.

I constantly keep abreast of reports on Afghan operational capability. They are very competent during operations. Not only are people motivated, but they are absolutely committed to doing everything they can. Many of them lose their lives, like NATO forces, and I can confirm this for you.

Commanding officers tell us that Afghans who head operations, specifically those where they have to deal with opponents, do everything they can. What they are missing now is mobility, helicopters, aircraft and professional training. In my opinion you can't deny the fact that they want to become able, as soon as possible, to defend their country and ensure its long-term success. That is also true for police officers and border guards.

I should point out that the Afghan army's training and level of professionalism is advancing well. But, because police forces are probably two or three years behind the army, there is still a great deal of work to be done, with the support of the European Union mission which will be deployed in a few months.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** I have a brief final question. Afghanistan is an important theatre for NATO. Would negotiations with the Taliban possibly be considered by NATO, instead of a military approach? Currently, it can be said that we have a military approach. Perhaps we could find out what the Taliban's needs are and negotiate peace or something which would ensure that it would not strictly be a military operation.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** If negotiations are to take place, they should be carried out by the Government of Afghanistan and not the international community. We, at NATO, have no intention of negotiating with terrorists, because that is not part of our mandate. We'll have to wait and see to what extent the Afghan government can negotiate with extremist citizens, or others, in this context.

We, at NATO have no intention whatsoever of negotiating with the Taliban.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Thank you very much, sir.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bouchard.

On a point of order, Ms. Black, go ahead.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** This is just to correct Mr. Hawn, who said I was incorrect.

I have General Howard's testimony from March 22 on weapons, and what he said was:

We've also seen, and the British have seen, new weapons being introduced. Surface-to-air missiles are a key concern right now, as are other nasty sorts of weapons.

So I'd just like to correct that comment.

**The Chair:** Ms. Black, that might be a little bit of debate.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** That's another issue. An RPG is not a SAM.

**The Chair:** Hold it, that wasn't a point of order. I'm sorry.

Who do we have here? Mr. Hiebert.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, General Henault, for being here this morning.

General, my question has to do with the importance of acquisition of strategic and tactical airlift, and medium- and heavy-lift helicopters to NATO missions. As you probably are aware, Canada is in the process of rebuilding our military after many years of neglect, and there's been some suggestion that we're purchasing this equipment only for this mission in Afghanistan. The reality is, we're purchasing it for a longer-term perspective than that. I thought it would be interesting to get your perspective on what kinds of contributions this equipment can make, even in the short term, to a mission like the one we're experiencing in Afghanistan.

•(1110)

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Thank you for that question, because that falls very clearly into what NATO's very sincere objectives are in terms of transformation, and that is adapting all the forces of NATO, and its partners, for that matter, to the current and evolving challenges of this security situation.

NATO is going through a process of transformation that is very much focused on expeditionary capability, and that expeditionary capability can't really be satisfied without sealift and airlift, and in many cases airlift is crucial to the initial portions or the initial elements of an operation or deployment.

We certainly encourage all nations, quite frankly, to do what they can to increase their own capability for strategic airlift or sealift and for their own sustainment in theatre, whether it's heavy helicopters or mobility at large, if you like—whether it's fixed-wing or rotary-wing mobility in a theatre.

So without singling out Canada, I could say that what Canada is doing in terms of enhancing these capabilities is certainly entirely and exactly in line with what NATO's long-term objectives are in terms of supporting its expeditionary mandate, if you like, on an international and an operational front. So I'm very encouraged by what I see in that respect.

Whenever I talk to any of the nations that I visit, I always compliment them on the fact that they're improving their deployability, interoperability, and flexibility through initiatives of this nature.

As you may well know, there are many nations that are unable, for whatever reason, to do some of the things or make some of the investments that a nation like Canada might be able to make. In that context, they'll join multinational efforts in that respect. They'll join multinational airlift solutions, multinational sealift solutions, and so on. That, again, contributes to the overall capability of NATO as a whole, and I feel all of that is beneficial and will help NATO do its job in the long term.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert:** Great. Thank you.

You commented during your testimony about the importance of providing security before rebalancing to diplomacy and development can occur. You made reference to the fact that this has occurred in the north and parts of the west, that they're now benefiting from the long-term investment of security in those regions, and that the south, where we're currently most heavily invested, is the next area requiring greater security.

I was hoping that you could explain for Canadians the importance of providing security and how it's absolutely necessary for the other development steps to occur. Please elaborate.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** Well, thank you.

What I would say, looking at Afghanistan over the last several months now, especially since the fall of last year, when we expanded operations into the southern part of Afghanistan, and then into the east, is that the security situation in the south and east is indeed improving. We're seeing more reconstruction and development in the south and in the east. We're seeing more projects that are benefiting Afghans. We're seeing the construction more and more of the ring road, for example. Some of the road construction in the south is part of a new operation called Operation Nawruz, which means "New Year", which is focused on improving those communication capabilities that allow people to have alternative livelihoods and get their crops to market, things of that nature—legal crops to market, I'd specify. All of that is part and parcel of the improvements in Afghanistan. In the west, Iran is participating or contributing to road-building, for example. So there are many examples of how things are improving across the spectrum.

My own personal view is that as we continue to see these things happening—not the least of which is in the Canadian area, with Helmand province and Kandahar province, which I know you're very familiar with, having seen the maps on a routine basis.... We're now seeing another operation called Operation Achilles, for example, which is primarily for reconstruction and development, underpinned by a security situation that allows for that reconstruction and development and will allow for the renewal or enhancement of the Kajaki Dam, which will provide electricity for the surrounding area, an area that has had little or no electricity for years, if not decades. All of this will contribute to economic development and so on and so forth.

Stability and security are essential to reconstruction and development, but enduring development can't occur without security. So they go hand in hand.

• (1115)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'm sure Mr. Thibault will say we saved the best to the last. He's the only one at the table who hasn't had an opportunity to question, so he gets that now, and it will bring us to the end of our time.

Go ahead, sir, for five minutes.

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, General Henault, for being present. It's an honour to have a Canadian in your position, bringing the experience and knowledge of Canada to that position.

It's a matter of great pride to see what our Canadian fighting women and men have done in Afghanistan. I've been a supporter of the mission from the beginning, when as a cabinet minister I accompanied you in Halifax to launch the naval operations on that deployment, as well as our commitment to Afghanistan. And I supported the extension in Kandahar.

I understand that we're going to be there a long time. I understand that as part of NATO we de-stabilized a country, one that wasn't very stable, but if we leave now it would be a disaster. I understand that NATO has a commitment to Afghanistan and we Canadians have a commitment to NATO. But there's a limit to what you can ask of our fighting men and women, and I think to be in a high-risk combat area for one rotation each is enough. It is the responsibility of the Government of Canada to advise a person in your position as to when we need the replacement, in due course, so that this can be done. I understand that we'll have to keep a commitment in Afghanistan—I'd be supportive of that, a military commitment in some form—but I hope we wouldn't always be in the highest-risk area.

I'll leave the politics aside, because I know that's not your role, but I want to bring you back to something that was touched on by Brigadier General Howard and that you also commented on. It is the question of building the capacity of the people of Afghanistan to run their own affairs. I understand that will take time, and I'm pleased to see the advances that we're making on the military side in Afghanistan and that the European Union is going to be moving on the policing side. I hope that centres like the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre are invited to play a role.

What kind of a situation do we face in Afghanistan, a country that, as you said, was an ungoverned space? It goes from quasi-modern governments in cities to tribal spaces and tribal governments. What kind of command-and-control structure do we have for that burgeoning military and burgeoning police force so that it is democratically operated?

**Gen Raymond Henault:** That's a very good question. You're right, there are many things that are improving. We see an increase in the GDP, for example, and all the things I mentioned at the outset—an elected parliament, for example, with a third or a quarter of that parliament being female, and so on. There are many things that are helping in this context. We see that the GDP growth is up 12% to 14% this year. All of this is a positive move, if you like, in the context of what Afghanistan is doing.



**Hon. Robert Thibault:** I may have phrased my question poorly. I want some assurance that the police and military won't be an arm of one element of government, that they will be at the service of the public, as they are in Canada.

**Gen Raymond Henault:** That is a very important element, which I'm certainly prepared to talk to you about a little bit. That is in the context of the command and control of that organization. The Afghan army is patterning its command-and-control capability very much on western army structures, if you like. They have a chief of defence. They have a deputy chief of defence. They have a minister who actually oversees all of that. So they are using what we would consider to be democratic processes to govern the command and control or the direction and policy development of their military. So it's all there. It's burgeoning. They have the chief, his deputy chief, division commanders, brigade commanders, and so on, battalion commanders. It goes through the entire process, all of which we have to keep at least thinking about in the context, as well, of ethnic groups and they have to de-conflict that. That's the same in Iraq, by the way, with all of the ethnic populations that they have. But that is under the minister of defence. So the military is governed in the democratic way that we know, in that same way.

Under the ministry of the interior, they have their border police and so on. They have the Afghan national police, also under the ministry of the interior. They have judicial processes that are now very much in need of assistance as well, in terms of developing their

police training, their judicial systems, their judges, and so on, their police capability at large, detention facilities, on and on. But they're all done in ways that we would recognize as democratic ways, even though they have the tribal links that come with them.

I'm encouraged by what I see, quite frankly, and that's all being assisted by the UN, the international community that's there, the strategic advisory team that Canada has provided, which is providing some excellent advice to the Afghans in terms of reforming and modernizing its military and so on. So the international community, Canada being very much in the lead on that with the strategic advisory team, is very much a part of what I think will be a success story for Afghanistan in the long term.

• (1120)

**Hon. Robert Thibault:** I have one more question.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, sir. We're long overdue.

General, thank you very much for being here today.

I noted in your bio that you're closing in on 40 years of service in the military. Congratulations on that. Certainly congratulations on the position you presently hold. Canadians are proud of you. They respect the work you've done over these last 40 years and that you continue to do.

The meeting is adjourned.

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