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Chair

Mr. Pierre Lemieux

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• (1830)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC)): Good evening, colleagues. I'd like to begin our meeting.

First I'll let people know, people who might be watching on television, this is another televised meeting of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan, and it's televised in keeping with our desire to increase communication, both within Parliament and with Canadians across the country. This is our fourth meeting.

Tonight we're honoured to have with us Mr. Mulrone, who is the deputy minister responsible for the Afghanistan Task Force. He oversees interdepartmental coordination of all aspects of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan. Also, as a point of interest, Mr. Mulrone was the secretary to the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan, known as the Manley panel. Of course, we'll be having Mr. Manley and some of his panel members in front of our committee in one of our future meetings.

I believe Mr. Mulrone has a short presentation, an opening statement, to make. He was just in Afghanistan and he has brought back some slides he would like to show the committee. Then I'm planning two rounds of questioning—a seven-minute round and a five-minute round. At the conclusion of the meeting we'll have some committee business to conduct.

On that note, Mr. Mulrone, I turn the floor over to you.

Mr. David Mulrone (Deputy Minister, Afghanistan Task Force, Privy Council Office): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

I recently had the chance to appear before some of you on the committee on national defence to speak about the outcomes for Canada at the Bucharest summit of NATO and to talk about some of the challenges and opportunities we face looking ahead in Afghanistan. Today, I'd like to provide a brief update on things we've been doing over the course of the last month in the task force I head, and to talk about what we see as the way forward.

As you know, the government has responded to the Manley panel by creating a special cabinet committee on Afghanistan and a task force at the centre of government at PCO, and that's a task force I lead. The cabinet committee, which is chaired by Minister Emerson, is taking a hard look at the mission in Afghanistan with the intent of revising and strengthening our approach. In addition to supporting Minister Emerson and his committee, I've also been working with a subcommittee of deputy ministers from the key departments

concerned to ensure that our programming is harmonized in support of those key priorities.

[Translation]

The cabinet committee has made considerable efforts to establish the strategic priorities that will guide Canada's actions in Afghanistan until 2011.

Those priorities will serve as the basis of the Canadian program, the orientations of which will be extensively reviewed to help us achieve our objectives. Canada will be in a position to make a more targeted contribution to the development priorities established by Afghanistan.

[English]

What we're working on right now, in addition to setting the policy priorities and focusing on core programming, is to be sure we've got the right civilian footprint on the ground to achieve those objectives. We're currently working with the core civilian departments concerned to coordinate the next level of deployments of civilians to Kandahar, and I'll talk about that a little bit when I show you a few pictures from my recent trip. Right now, we have approximately 25 civilians with the provincial reconstruction team in Kandahar. We had an interdepartmental team out there last week to talk about how we can reshape that and build on it.

On the diplomatic front, we will continue to strengthen connections with our main partners in the south, with countries like the Netherlands, Australia, the U.K., and pursue a more robust strategy internationally that presses for greater coordination among international partners. That's largely what we were working on at Bucharest.

I was in Washington recently with representatives from lead departments to talk about the way forward, and I had the chance while I was in Afghanistan to visit Regional Command East, which is largely a U.S.-led effort, and to see the operation of the provincial reconstruction team at Helmand, which is run by the U.K. Just today, I met with a delegation from the French government, which is working on organizing next month's Paris conference on Afghanistan.

Finally, I've had a couple of very useful meetings—one in Ottawa and one in Kabul—with Mr. Kai Eide, who is the special representative of the Secretary General and who had a chance to appear before your committee.

Using our diplomatic channels in a careful and focused way will be critical in ensuring we have coordination and also critical in terms of communicating the directions Canada will be taking as we move forward.

[Translation]

The motion introduced in Parliament on March 13 also asked the government to inform the public more frequently and transparently about events taking place in Afghanistan. The task force is cooperating with the departments to develop a comparative analysis framework that will contain realistic objectives. That will make it possible not only to be accountable, but also to assess the areas where improvements could be made.

[English]

Afghanistan will require a significant amount of help from the international community to enable progress. That is, I believe, something we should always be conscious of. Afghanistan will be a developing country for some time to come and will have some of the challenges associated with that.

Our goal is to enable a transition to a point where Afghans, themselves, are capable of managing some of those same challenges. So the aim is really about moving Afghanistan along a continuum. The end state, if we look at other examples of post-conflict countries, can be a long time coming, but there does come a time, before that, when the government itself has the ability to meet the challenges it faces. We're seeing progress in that respect.

Before turning to just a quick report on my visit of last week, I'd just like to introduce some colleagues: Sanjeev Chowdhury is the director of operations in the secretariat; Rey Campbell, Owen Teo, and Marco Popic are also members of our new task force in PCO.

I was in Afghanistan last week with Kevin Lynch, the Clerk of the Privy Council, Mr. Rob Fonberg, who is the deputy minister of National Defence, and Sanjeev to do a number of things. One was that Kevin had visited Afghanistan a little over a year ago and wanted to get back, particularly to Kabul and Kandahar, to see progress. We also wanted to be sure we were touching base with key allies and taking soundings from various regions in Afghanistan as we plan the way forward. Finally, we wanted to meet with the interdepartmental team I had sent out ahead to plan for the next deployment of civilians. We did all those things in the course of last week.

We can go to the first slide. I apologize that it's a little hard to see. Turquoise Mountain is a project in Kabul that has been established by an English diplomat-soldier-NGO leader named Rory Stewart, who wrote a book about his walk across Afghanistan called *The Places In Between*.

Canada was the first country to come in behind Rory and support his project, which is essentially to develop an area of downtown Kabul. This had once been devoted to people who worked up in the palace on the hill. Over time it became completely decrepit, and in the years of chaos and war it actually got covered in about five feet of garbage.

Rory's view is that if the centre of your capital city is buried under five feet of garbage, it's really hard for people to believe there's a

future, there's hope for the country. So he set about really excavating it—it's almost a Pompeii-like operation—to bring it back to its original state. The project is also to provide opportunities to redevelop some traditional arts. He's got some schools there for young people and for artisans. Revitalizing the neighbourhood has also brought people back.

There's a Shia shrine just nearby. There are a couple of traditional sites: restaurants, bathhouses. So the effect is that you actually have more people walking freely in this part of Kabul than in almost any other part.

The next slide shows some of the things they're working on. You can't see it really well, but calligraphy is a big part of this, traditional carving from various parts of Afghanistan. Importantly, you have women and men who are working on the carvings. Although it's recreating traditional arts, I think their view is that a country can't move forward until it's connected with its past, and Afghanistan had lost that.

There's also an entrepreneurial dimension in that these things are sold. Rory has established connections with lots of outlets in North America and in Europe, and he has a website that's doing a thriving business.

We spent some time in the centre of Afghanistan, in the central highlands, in Bamiyan. Here, if you can just spot the laser pointer, that's a Shura or a community development council. The one in Bamiyan is actually a cluster of councils. It brings together a number of these groups, and importantly, they are councils of men and women who meet together.

This is supported by the Aga Khan Development Network, so in turn it's supported by funding from Canada. They plan out community activities, community economic development needs. I had a chance to chat with them, and I asked the group what they saw as their greatest need going forward. A gentleman on one side of the room said, "We think it's supporting agriculture". Three women stood up and said, "No, no, it's education". The men said, "Actually, they're right; it's education". It was a very lively discussion, and in fact education is one of our programming priorities.

We also had a chance to visit—this picture here—the hospital in Bamiyan, which has a real focus on lowering a terrible rate of infant mortality in Afghanistan. They've made some inroads in that.

● (1835)

The next slide shows the *shura*. Patrol Base Wilson is out in the Zhari district of Kandahar. It's just west of Kandahar. This was an area that in 2006 was controlled by the Taliban and was the scene of some of the heaviest fighting in Operation Medusa.

The head of the *shura* is shown here. Our ambassador, Arif Lalani, is seated beside him.

We had a good chance to talk with him about what he saw as his needs going forward. In addition to hearing from him, we had some expectations too. We talked about what the *shura* and local leaders could do to increase security in that part of the Zhari district. It's a two-way street, and with increasing security we can do more by way of programming.

The next slide is of a visit to a school in Kandahar. It shows the director of education. Canada is providing funding to a project called EQUIP, which is building schools in various parts of Afghanistan. There will be a particular focus on Kandahar, and the director of education was relatively confident that he can push this project out—we're in Kandahar City right now—into other parts of the province quite quickly.

The next person may be a little hard to see. It's Elissa Goldberg, who is the representative of Canada in Kandahar—the acronym is ROC—and the ROC is the senior Canadian on the ground in Kandahar. She is the person who coordinates the work of Foreign Affairs, CIDA, the RCMP, and Correctional Services. She's the counterpart to General Laroche, or now of General Thompson, who is the commander of Task Force Afghanistan.

She is there with a police trainer and a person from Correctional Services. This is at the in-service training facility at our PRT. They're training Afghan National Police on such things as procedures for safely detaining suspects and also how to identify IEDs.

The first thing we do with the police is teach them survival skills, because some of the IEDs that are planned use very diabolical strategies. We've been able to teach the police ways of identifying IEDs and safely disarming them to keep themselves alive.

The other thing I would point out is that in a couple of these meetings we were out to the west of Kandahar City. In addition to meeting with the Canadian Forces, we have people such as Elissa and Karen Foss, a young foreign service officer, who are out there on a regular basis. Karen Foss goes out to some of our bases about one week a month to work with the forces as they try to build community networks out beyond Kandahar City.

Our current civilian deployment at the PRT is about 25. We think we can at least double that number this year. We're thinking carefully about how we deploy these people safely, but they have an important job to do. Whether it's in police training, building community networks, or advising the provincial government in Kandahar, our civilians are really standing up and sharing the burden that our forces have led with.

I'll stop with that and will be happy to take questions.

• (1840)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney. That was a very interesting presentation, particularly given your recent return from Afghanistan itself.

We'll now move into the first round of questioning and we'll start with Mr. Rae.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Mulroney, it's nice to see you again. I don't want to jeopardize your career, but I would say we've had a long and very productive association over many years. I'm delighted you're working on this file for Canada.

How often does the cabinet committee meet?

Mr. David Mulroney: The cabinet committee meets, on average, once a week while the House is sitting. I think we've had seven meetings now.

Hon. Bob Rae: And how many are on your task force?

Mr. David Mulroney: In my task force at PCO I have about 25 people now.

Hon. Bob Rae: This is obviously a bit of an easy question, but how well do you think we're doing in following...?

You were advising the Manley report as well, weren't you?

How well do you think we're doing on implementing the new direction that Mr. Manley has suggested we should be taking?

Mr. David Mulroney: I had a chance to chat with one of the members of the Manley panel who was in town today, and he was expressing his gratitude for the way the report had been picked up.

The government immediately set up a cabinet committee—that was a recommendation—which created the task force in PCO. They launched a diplomatic strategy that was aimed at securing the thousand additional troops and the enablers, the UAVs, and the helicopters.

What we're doing now in the committee and at the departmental level is, first, working to establish a limited set of key priorities; second, ensuring that we're aligning our programming behind those; third, working on the establishment of benchmarks to measure progress; and fourth, working continually on communications.

I think we have an ambitious work program in place and I think it's true to the direction the Manley panel was giving. I've always believed that the core message of the Manley panel is that you have to take control of your own strategy in a place like Kandahar. That means being really clear about priorities and really clear about what you can do in a certain amount of time, and I think the government is doing that.

• (1845)

Hon. Bob Rae: When I was in the area last year, I spent quite a bit of time in Pakistan. One of my overriding concerns or takeaways from that was simply that it's very difficult to deal with the insurgency unless we're able to deal with the situation in northwest Pakistan in particular.

Do you think we have a handle on that situation?

Mr. David Mulroney: You're absolutely right, and I don't think it's possible to contain an insurgency if there is unrestricted access across a border.

There are a number of things. One is that regarding political change in Pakistan, these are still early days yet, and the political coalition is still finding its feet and experiencing some challenges right now, but I think the tone of the conversation between Afghanistan and Pakistan is better than it has been in the last couple of years, which is important.

Two, there is a growing realization in Pakistan that the insurgency in Afghanistan and the security problems in Afghanistan have the potential of flowing back across the border into Pakistan. So there is a higher level of self-awareness and self-interest in terms of the need to combat that.

Also, there are some basic but important measures that are taking place on the border to begin to build that basic level of cooperation that you need between two governments. I was out at a place called Torkham Gate, on the Khyber Pass. There's actually a joint coordination centre, where an Afghan official and a Pakistani official sit side by side watching screens. I asked the person who coordinates the centre what kinds of things they work on, and he mentioned that there had been a terrible tanker accident on the road through the Khyber Pass, which killed a number of people. There was a fire raging and others were injured. The Khyber Pass road is so narrow that trucks from Pakistan couldn't get in there. The accident happened on the Pakistan side, but they dispatched emergency vehicles from Afghanistan.

These are still early days. Canada invited a bunch of officials from Pakistan and Afghanistan to meet together in Dubai—these are officials who look at the border—just to talk about the nuts and bolts of how you manage a border, if you think of a border as an economic entity as well as a security barrier.

So these are early days, but we're trying to inculcate a sense that it's in everybody's self-interest to manage the border safely and securely. It's in the economic interests of both to manage it wisely, and an insurgency anywhere along the border threatens both. It's still a big challenge, but I think there's a higher level of engagement on both sides.

Hon. Bob Rae: Do you think we have the ability to influence Islamabad, in terms of dealing with the underlying issues in the northwest? Do you see us making any progress there at all?

Mr. David Mulroney: The message is much more concerted by the main allies. The new government appears to be listening carefully to that message. Actually, I think the presence of more troops in the border areas will help, and is helping already. I think the Americans would say in their sector, in RC-East, that's helping, and we're looking at an increase of people in the south, and that should help too.

Hon. Bob Rae: What's the size of our embassy complement or high commission complement now in Islamabad?

Mr. David Mulroney: In Islamabad, I'd have to check. I suspect it's probably 20 to 25 Canadians, but I'd have to double-check on that.

Hon. Bob Rae: What is it in Kabul now?

Mr. David Mulroney: In Kabul, now, we have 30 to 35 Canadians there. That's grown steadily over the course of the last year.

Hon. Bob Rae: So you're satisfied we have the diplomatic strength on the ground to begin to effect some of these changes in a geopolitical way that we've been talking about?

Mr. David Mulroney: One of the things we've done, in addition to increasing numbers, is to increase the level, the seniority. We currently have in Kabul a diplomat named Arif Lalani. Arif has very good access to President Karzai. He meets with him one on one. In the times when I've had a chance to meet with Afghan officials, they have said spontaneously, "The Canadians are doing a good job, and Arif has our ear". We've backed him up with a lot of good people. This is something I think the military led on, conveying the sense

that this is Canada's number one priority. You have to put your best people in place, and I think we're doing that.

It's interesting—the U.S., the Brits, and others are all struggling with this challenge of deploying as many top-quality people as possible into what is a very difficult operating environment, and I think we've done well.

• (1850)

Hon. Bob Rae: What's the typical tour of duty?

Mr. David Mulroney: We've had to vary the typical tour of duty, but I'd say it's about a year. We've had people who wanted to stay for two years or three years. But it's also a place where they're without family, and there are difficult living conditions. In Kabul they eat communally and stay on the compound. In Kandahar it's even more restrictive.

Hon. Bob Rae: I've been there, so I'm familiar with it.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Rae.

Thank you, Mr. Mulroney.

I noticed that in your previous responses you were talking about Mr. Arif Lalani, our Canadian ambassador to Afghanistan. He will be appearing in front of this committee on May 28 because he will be in Canada. I just wanted to update people on that future appearance.

Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Thank you for coming to meet with us again, Mr. Mulroney.

Did the film you presented take place in Kandahar?

Mr. David Mulroney: It took place in Kandahar, in Kabul as well and in Baniyan, in central Afghanistan.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: My question concerns the schools. This subject often comes up. We hear that some schools are being built, but that others are being destroyed. I would like you to give me the most accurate picture possible. How many schools are there? Are some being built for girls and others for boys? What can Canada do better in that area? I imagine this subject should appear in the action plan you are preparing. I would also like to know what position it occupies in Canada's priorities, and how we can evaluate progress in that area. People should avoid telling us that certain schools have been built, when they don't know there are no more schools in another region.

I also imagine it's not the same in the Kandahar region as in the rest of the country, and I'd like you to provide a picture of that situation.

Mr. David Mulroney: It must be said that education is one of our priorities in Afghanistan. It's a priority of the Government of Canada. When we work in this sector, we must work at the national level in Kabul, for the entire country, and also at the provincial level in Kandahar. This work is being done at two levels.

Security is very important. It is closely linked to development. We must coordinate our development ambitions and progress accomplished on security. It is therefore important to conduct our operations in the sectors where there is an Afghan army presence, Afghan police officers or the Canadian armed forces. It's a matter of coordination. When we make progress in security, we can also make progress on development.

The school we visited is a school for men and women. It is located in the city of Kandahar. That city is better protected than other locations far from the capital. We have a number of ways to measure our progress. First, we can talk about the number of students, which continues to rise. We can also talk about the number of women at school, which also continues to rise. That's a very important measure. Perhaps it's easier in the north of the country and harder in Kandahar. One of our objectives is to increase the number of women who are studying.

We are also focusing our actions on administrative issues. How should we manage the education program in Afghanistan? Is the department functioning well? Is there a real administrative framework? Schools have to be built, but there also has to be a functional administration. We have a number of measures of progress.

• (1855)

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: May I continue?

The Chair: Yes, of course. You have three minutes left.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: All right.

You talked about the deployment of civilians in Kandahar. What do you mean by that?

Mr. David Mulroney: In Kandahar, we now have 25 civilians who come from a number of organizations like the Department of Foreign Affairs, CIDA, the RCMP and the Correctional Service of Canada. Ms. Elissa Goldberg is acting as consul general; she is responsible for all civilians in the south of the country. We will need a number of civilians as a result of the many program objectives in Kandahar. And we are increasing the number of civilians.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I hear that security is sufficiently established to bring more civilians into Kandahar.

Mr. David Mulroney: We will also be targeting our activities in Kandahar because 80% of the population lives in Kandahar and in the suburbs of Zahri and Pundjuai. So it may be easier to protect our civilians when they are targeted in this way. That's one of our concerns, and we are working closely with the Canadian armed forces to ensure there is enough security.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Dewar.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you.

I want to thank our guests for appearing today, and to say for many of us it's really important that we do have that kind of information from the ground and have more reporting. I think there are many things people might disagree on in terms of the mission in Afghanistan, but one of the things I think everyone agrees on is having more information, more reporting. So that's helpful, and your presentation tonight was a piece of that.

One of the people who has been working...and it was interesting to see Rory Stewart. I'm glad you visited him there. I was able to catch him when he presented here in Ottawa. He's a delightful speaker but also very knowledgeable. One of the things I think he brings to the table is a knowledge of how not to do things as well as how to do things. One of his considerations is that when you're planning development and aid or you're looking at governance models, it's perhaps helpful if you talk to the people you're trying to aid. I recall his charts of the acronyms, pages of acronyms, that have been brought to Afghanistan from the international community. He would flip to a village elder and say, "He doesn't understand these acronyms and neither do I, and this guy is a wise person, and I think we would do better to listen to him." The *shuras* are obviously something we're trying to use a bit more so that we can have first-hand input from the people we're trying to help.

You said that just in the last month or so we've increased the number of people on the ground, both in Kandahar and Kabul, from the perspective of an integrated approach, diplomatic as well as aid and whatnot. Are there plans for more people to be going to both Kabul and Kandahar in the next couple of months?

• (1900)

Mr. David Mulroney: That process has been taking place over the last year. Over the course of the last year, we've more than doubled the number of civilians in Kabul and Kandahar. We're looking at the next phase now. We have a total of more than 50 on the ground in both places and we're going to move beyond that. We'll probably be putting more in Kandahar in relative terms. We've got a good, strong team in Kabul; we've got to augment that a little bit.

But we think we've got to have more people in Kandahar, from the following perspective. One, we want to reinforce the team at the PRT and put some more management structures in there. We've got lots of young people working in the different sections. Now we need to put a management structure on top that mirrors the management structure the forces have.

Two, as we look at specific projects, whether it's in education or water supply, we're going to need more people who can help implement those projects as subject matter experts, but also to handle the administration. We're also looking at devolving more funding to the local level at the level of the PRT, so they can fund projects they see as valuable much more quickly.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So that's working in concert. You said kind of marrying the management structure the military has in place there, in terms of doing the PRT development, and buttressing that, if I can use that word, a bit more?

Mr. David Mulroney: Yes. Right now, the PRT is run by a lieutenant colonel. We're going to put a civilian in place who is his counterpart, so the lieutenant colonel will be responsible for enabling the work of the PRT and the senior civilian will be responsible for coordinating all the civilian, governance, and development work. But it's actually a little more integrated than that because the force is also, in addition to developing.... I've always been impressed when I've been out there talking to some of the young captains who go out into the districts. They take their community work quite seriously, so there's a level of expertise that we want to tap into.

For me, I think it's ensuring that on the civilian side we're doing the burden-sharing we need to do. So we simply need more civilians.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I guess Kabul would be the place, but do we have people who are actually monitoring human rights and doing human rights reporting to the embassy in Kabul?

Mr. David Mulroney: We have people in Kabul and in Kandahar who do that.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So they actually are doing human rights reports and handing them, obviously, up the chain?

Mr. David Mulroney: There are human rights reports. Reporting on human rights is part of our daily stock in trade, so that's one of the things we monitor in Afghanistan. It's part of our regular reporting, but beyond that, there's also capacity building. For example, we've had teams out with the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police to talk about things: how you conduct an investigation, how you safely detain someone who may be perceived to be a danger to others, proper rules of evidence, and things like that. It's essentially professionalizing their work.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I appreciate that. So right now we have people who are doing fairly regular human rights reports for the ambassador and obviously for the government?

Mr. David Mulroney: As I say, human rights reporting is part of the daily business of the—

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, no, I appreciate that. I just mean a document that would be a human rights report—and I know this has been done in embassies in the past, and in fact I have had access to some—that would say that right now, in Afghanistan, be it Kandahar or Kabul or where we have people, we have a report; here's the human rights report for the last three months. Is there—

Mr. David Mulroney: That has been an annual process. There's an annual report that is done on a formal basis, and there is ad hoc reporting that goes on through the year.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay, and we're still doing that.

Mr. David Mulroney: We're still doing that.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you. Two minutes?

I'd like to switch slightly, and I know the military facet isn't your expertise, but it does touch your work obviously. I'm thinking back, I guess it's two weeks now. We had reports from the States—musings, I'll put it that way—by Mr. Gates about how maybe they should just bring in their folks because they do this better than the other guys. I guess that would be the premise. I guess that means we would go somewhere else, if that is in fact going to happen.

When you look at some of their concerns, the six-month rotation we have, and they're looking at... I guess they feel they can do a "better job" in terms of the military mission in the south. Here's a very straightforward question. Are there any discussions at all at this point, speaking about military and planning, because you'd be somewhat involved with that, contemplating moving our troops at all and having American troops come in?

• (1905)

Mr. David Mulroney: No, there are no discussions about moving Canadian troops.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So what do you think he was discussing or thinking about?

Mr. David Mulroney: We're waiting. We are obviously waiting for the deployment of a U.S. battle group into Kandahar, as per Bucharest, and I can't and I won't try to interpret Mr. Gates' comments.

I will say, though—and this is very genuine—that when I travel in Afghanistan, when I meet with the like-minded in Europe or in the States or in other places, one of the things I hear is that the Canadian PRT model is a pretty good one and what we're doing in Kandahar is actually of interest. We have more civilians in our PRT in Kandahar, which is a pretty tough neighbourhood, than almost any other PRT.

One of the challenges we face in Afghanistan as a whole, though—and I think this was present in the Manley report, and it was part of the NATO discussions—is that we've been kind of provincialized. The Dutch work their way in Uruzgan. The British work in Helmand. So there's a need to compare notes, but I'm confident that in any sharing of best practices, Canada would do quite well.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Just one last—

The Chair: Sorry, we're over time.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Hawn.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be sharing with Mr. MacKenzie.

Mr. Mulroney, thank you for being here.

First of all, I have to say I think there's some mischaracterization of the remarks or the musings of Secretary Gates. He did not suggest they would do a better job than us. He was suggesting they might perhaps put in more troops in the south to help us. I agree with you; anybody I talk to has nothing but respect for what our folks are doing over there.

One thing that wasn't covered in the Manley report that surprised me and surprised others was any reference to the strategic advisory team. From my observation in two short visits there, but also from a lot of talk and reading, they are doing an outstanding job of teaching the Afghan government how to govern, teaching the bureaucracy how to be a bureaucracy, and so on. I think if anything, that needs to be expanded. I'd like your views on that, as to how you see the role of the strategic advisory team going forward, the makeup and leadership of that, the impact that will have, and the combination of folks you would see in there.

Mr. David Mulroney: The committee under Minister Emerson is really looking at all aspects of our engagement in Afghanistan, and that includes the strategic advisory team. They have played an important role. As we focus on some core priorities, what I think we have to look at now is, are we aligning all our resources, including the SAT, against those priorities? Some ministries will be more important to our national and Kandahar objectives than others, so we want to focus there.

I think there's also a natural evolution over time, from a military-led organization to one that includes more civilians, because while we have the SAT, we have quite a few civilians working in Afghanistan, some of them in Kabul, but perhaps under the media radar screen. So we want to network them more efficiently.

The final question is, do we want to put our effort in Kabul or do we need to increasingly put our effort in Kandahar, because one of the challenges—and I think this was evident in the Manley report—is that we haven't made the progress on basic governance in Kandahar that we need to make. Kandaharis need to feel the reach of government, whether it's in water supply or education or policing, that anybody would expect to find. It's still early days, but I think some mechanisms are coming together in Kabul that are moving in the right direction.

At the very micro level of the community development councils and the *shuras*, that's being brought back to life, because they were devastated during the years of war. What's missing is the piece in the middle, and that's provincial government. Sometimes people say governors are mainly guys—there's one woman, the governor of Bamiyan—with cellphones, and they sit there and they get on their cellphones and they fix problems all day long. But that's not a very sustainable form of governance. What we need to do in Kandahar is build out that level, connected to the *shuras* and the councils and connected better to Kabul.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: I would agree with that. Would you see the function of the SAT staying in Kabul but being expanded and adding another SAT in Kandahar? If that's true, and obviously there needs to be a bigger civilian component to that, how much challenge do we have in getting civilians, whether they be DFAIT, CIDA, whoever, to do those kinds of jobs and be outside the wire where things are obviously not quite as secure?

Mr. David Mulroney: In Kabul they're as outside the wire as the SAT is and in Kandahar they are outside the wire. Karen Foss, who was just acknowledged in one of the public service employee publications, is someone who travels out on a weekly basis and stays out at Patrol Base Wilson and at places like Ma'sum Ghar. So I'm quite confident they can do that.

The other thing is that the byword of the coming months and years will be “focus” and where we can really make a difference, particularly between now and 2011, because we will be held accountable with our quarterly reports as we report to Canadians. Are we aligning our resources in those key areas? We're looking at our CIDA funding, we're looking at our DFAIT funding, and we're looking at the SAT from that same point of view. But I agree, they've set a very good example.

• (1910)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

I'll pass to Mr. MacKenzie now.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Mulroney, for being here.

Just carrying on a little bit from Mr. Hawn, as we increase that Canadian component of civilians in the area to meet the Manley report requirements and also the parliamentary motion, how do you see us properly training and equipping our civilians who are going in there to do that job, and are you confident we can do that?

Mr. David Mulroney: I think Canadians are sometimes surprised by the range of things that foreign service officers do.

I remember when I was giving a talk in Victoria, I mentioned the same officer, Karen Foss. She worked for me when I ran the Asia Pacific branch. She worked in Aceh, in Indonesia, on post-conflict situations, helping to knit together communities, and she volunteered for Kandahar. I talked about her work. Some people came up afterwards and said they didn't know we had people who did that. We do. We have a good core of people in DFAIT, CIDA, the RCMP, and now with Correctional Services, who have worked in Bosnia, in post-conflict situations in a number of places.

Where we really have to learn from the forces—and the state department and the foreign office in the U.K. are doing the same thing—is that we have to deploy people even earlier. We're used to three-year, four-year posting cycles, where you can assign someone with relatively little notice. They go through their training and off they go. The challenge for us now, as we have a one-year rotation, is that you put your best and brightest out in one year. You have to recruit another 50 for the next year, and then another 50, and you have to recruit them quickly. We have a bunch of people who were in Wainwright, Alberta, with the forces last week getting ready. We have to do this on a regular basis.

There's a revolution in HR management in DFAIT and CIDA, which we're encouraging in our task force function at PCO. We're encouraging them to move that along. I think it will be increasingly the face of international work in the coming decades.

It's a challenge, but it's an absolutely necessary thing to do. If you're going to deploy a PRT—a provincial reconstruction team—you really have to have those people working together before they leave Canada. That's a leaf from the forces' book, which we're trying to learn from.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. MacKenzie and Mr. Mulroney.

We now move to Monsieur Patry.

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): I will share my time with Monsieur Dosanjh. He will start. We're going to ask our questions together.

Monsieur Dosanjh.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Mulroney. I have a couple of questions.

In 2001, I understand there was about \$25 billion worth of aid promised to Afghanistan. About \$15 billion has been delivered. About 40% of that is reported to have ended up back in the donor countries as corporate profits. I would like to know whether that's true. I ask that question because now I understand they're going to be asking for \$50 billion more over the next number of years, at the Paris conference.

One of the things that concerns me, obviously, is the corruption. I understand that a significant amount of this money ends up being siphoned off by corruption. Do you have any sense of how much money ever gets on the ground? Are there discussions to make that more effective? You know, 40% of \$15 billion that has so far flowed and ends up back in the donor countries as corporate profits—one would say that 40% profit, if it is profit, is huge.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Patry: Thank you, Mr. Mulroney.

I would like to go back to Afghanistan. The new government is currently negotiating with the rebels. It has virtually succeeded in negotiating cease-fires in the north, the south and in the northwestern territories.

As part of those negotiations, they are even talking about releasing certain prisoners, including one of the alleged murderers of Benazir Bhutto. Can the fact that Pakistan is setting up these negotiations have an effect? What effect will it have on the Taliban attacks on our troops? Is the effect of those negotiations positive or negative?

In the slides that you presented to us, we see that our troops very frequently meet with the leaders of the various villages, the shuras, to establish contact, which is excellent. I don't know how many districts there are in Kandahar province, probably about 15.

In how many districts and villages are our troops present? What is your plan so that we can have KPRTs and carry out various projects in all those regions? Will we start around Kandahar province and then go further? Do you have a plan?

Thank you.

•(1915)

[English]

Mr. David Mulroney: If I can just address the first question, I'm not sure which study you're referring to. There was one by ACBAR, an NGO, that mentioned performance and pointed out that some countries have pledged money that they haven't delivered. They provided a list, and you'll note that Canada and Japan are at the top of the list in terms of having delivered on the funds they pledged.

I can also tell you that we work very carefully, both in Canada and in Afghanistan, to track the funds we spend and to ensure they are actually going to the projects and the objectives we've set out for them. Corruption is a big problem in Afghanistan. It's a corrosive problem because it undermines people's respect for government, it

encourages the creation of shadow governments, and it threatens to undermine the international effort.

I think right now there's a pretty concerted approach on this subject by the countries that are engaged in Afghanistan. There were pretty clear messages delivered in Bucharest. The Government of Afghanistan is coming to terms with it in a number of ways. One of them is in the creation of an organization or an entity called the Independent Directorate on Local Governance, which looks province by province at the key officials and has had some success in rooting out people who have been found to be corrupt.

We work at it from the diplomatic end in terms of our interventions, and also at the grassroots end in terms of training local officials. It's a problem in every developing country, and unless we focus on it, the Government of Afghanistan and the friends of Afghanistan, it will continue to be a problem there. But it's something we take very seriously.

[Translation]

We don't have all the details on the negotiations or the dialogue between Pakistan and the Taliban, but I think an effective policy must put respect for the constitution and human rights first. In Islamabad, the Taliban jeopardize Pakistan's future, and that of Afghanistan. The idea isn't to negotiate with the Taliban, but to enable people to accept the law and constitution of Afghanistan or Pakistan.

With regard to organizations like the shuras, we have supported all the local councils around Kandahar. I believe there are 30 to 40 of them. The provincial reconstruction team is central to our activities, and we are able to work directly with the councils. Even more important, we are reinforcing the capability of provincial officers to work with their own councils.

•(1920)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney.

I'll now move to Mr. Obhrai. I just want to remind colleagues that we're on a five-minute round. If you ask too many questions, it doesn't leave enough time for answers.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be sharing my time with Sylvie, so I'm going to go for a quick one.

Thank you, David, for coming. It's good to see you again. I have two quick questions.

My colleague on the other side talked about Pakistan. Perhaps you can tell us about the other regional players, Iran and China, in the context of providing security in the region.

The other question is this. You are the DM for this new committee, the cabinet committee, and this is a parliamentary committee. How do you see these two committees working hand in hand together, and where do you see the coordination, the effort, and ultimately the achievement of that objective? Perhaps you can tell us where you think this committee is going as well.

Sylvie, you can ask your question now.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): People often talk to us about things that don't work or don't work well, but very little about things that have been done there. I would like you to tell us about things that Canada has achieved. Did you see any developments on your last trip? Is Canada on the right track to assist Afghanistan?

[*English*]

Mr. David Mulroney: With reference to the region, as we were developing our strategy towards Afghanistan back in 2001, one of the things that struck us was the obvious comparison with the Balkans, but the great advantage the Balkans had—and it didn't have an overabundance of advantages—was the neighbourhood: ultimately, countries in that region could aspire to membership in the EU; there was a carrot just up the road that was actually accessible.

One of the problems Afghanistan faced is that traditionally almost all of its neighbours have seen Afghanistan as a place for what they may call strategic depth—some form of mischief, some form of staging either against Afghanistan or against other neighbours. Nobody has seen Afghanistan as an economic partner or, not for a long time, as a place through which you could reach other markets.

The long-term strategy for security and peace in the region has got to be to encourage the countries that border Afghanistan to think about trade, to think about pipelines, and to think about highways and transportation links. That's not quite there yet. Iran and Afghanistan have a long and complicated relationship that is linked to things like differences in religion, Shia versus Sunni. It's linked to history, and I think it's almost certainly linked to the fact that ISAF's presence in Afghanistan offers unfortunate opportunities for many neighbours to try to undermine the stability of Afghanistan.

All these things are of concern. The long-term future really requires a much higher degree of coordination.

[*Translation*]

Our efforts have produced results in a number of areas in Afghanistan. We have developed projects with the department of education, and we are building a number of schools in several regions of the country. Efforts to ensure security are being directed by the Canadian armed forces in Kandahar. We are trying to establish governance systems at the federal level, and that is starting in Kandahar. We are also carrying out projects in the areas of health, economic development and the development of traditional governance systems like the shuras.

[*English*]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: What about coordination between the two committees?

Mr. David Mulroney: One of the messages of the Manley panel was that Afghanistan is a national priority and requires the highest level of coordination and oversight. That means the government needs to play an increasingly active role in the oversight and direction of the mission.

We haven't had a mission like this ever. We've had aspects of it at different parts of our history, but a mission that involves the Canadian Forces in the field, an unprecedented development effort, and a foreign policy issue that engages us not just in Afghanistan but

in the neighbourhood of Afghanistan, in Washington, in London, in Brussels, and in New York is something entirely new, and I think it requires and demands a level of oversight, not just because of its complexity but because Canadians demand it.

Your role in calling together the people in government who direct the mission, people in Afghanistan who are part of the mission, and people who are knowledgeable about part of the mission, and making it as public as you're doing, is absolutely essential. In a way it mirrors and complements what the cabinet committee is doing, so I think it's timely and I think it's important.

● (1925)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Bachand.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to welcome Mr. Mulroney.

You seem to be saying that we must wind up the cabinet committee's discussions on Afghanistan. Can we go further than that? Can you give us the minutes of the meetings that are held in cabinet? Wouldn't that ultimately be the best way to inform us about what's going on there? These people know what is happening on our side because they can see us on television in the evenings, but the reverse isn't true. Is it possible for you to convince the cabinet committee to give us the minutes of their meetings?

Mr. David Mulroney: Recently, Mr. Emerson took part in an information session in which he talked about the committee's work. As I said at the outset, these people are establishing key priorities and orienting progress with regard to our contribution in order to ensure that it is consistent with priorities. They are also directing the process for developing reference points to target our performance in Afghanistan. I believe the Prime Minister, Mr. Emerson and the other ministers have often talked about their work on the committee.

Mr. Claude Bachand: You head up a task force of approximately 25 persons. They assist the cabinet committee, if I can call it that. Is the information you give them and the information you give us the same?

Mr. David Mulroney: Yes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Since these people are all from the Privy Council, you could give them classified information. Do you do that?

Mr. David Mulroney: We occasionally deal with classified information.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Could you do that in our case?

Mr. David Mulroney: I have to discuss that with the committee.

Mr. Claude Bachand: So you admit that the information you communicate to that task force cannot be the same as what you share with our committee.

Mr. David Mulroney: In the task force, we have access to that kind of information from time to time, but Mr. Emerson's committee is really focusing on a work process, setting priorities, developing points of reference and that kind of thing. These are not meetings during which we exchange documents.

Mr. Claude Bachand: All right, but, to set key priorities, you nevertheless have to know what is really going on in the field. So you'll admit with me that, if those people have access to classified documents, that means they have more information than we do. I will therefore go back to my question: do you think that the minutes of the proceedings of that task force could be remitted to our committee?

Mr. David Mulroney: I believe the committee often consults people like Arif Lalani or Rory Stewart. As you do in your committee, it exchanges with individuals involved in the same field.

● (1930)

Mr. Claude Bachand: I now want to talk about a question raised a little earlier by my colleague. You were in Bucharest with the Prime Minister, I believe. Was there an agreement when the Americans announced that they would send 1,000 soldiers to southern Afghanistan as soon as the French arrived? The American General McNeill said that the Canadians should now adopt much more American doctrines and tactics. However, he wasn't just talking about the military aspect, but also about development, reconstruction and diplomacy. According to General McNeill, American and Canadian soldiers should distribute humanitarian aid and take on

responsibility for construction. That's what the Americans want from the Canadians.

So tell me frankly whether Mr. Harper and Mr. Bush entered into a kind of contract. For example, in exchange for 1,000 additional soldiers, they could ask that the way of providing services be Americanized.

Mr. David Mulroney: Not at all. The Canadians, Australians, English and French work under the direction of NATO and ISAF, a multilateral organization. The Canadian forces are under the direction of the Government of Canada. We'll continue to do our job, to direct our KPRT as Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Bachand.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Mulroney.

That brings us to the end of our second round.

On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank you very much for your presence in front of us tonight and for sharing with us your view of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan based on your experiences. Thank you very much.

I'll suspend the meeting for a few minutes to allow the room to clear.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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