



House of Commons  
CANADA

# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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FAAE • NUMBER 013 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

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EVIDENCE

**Tuesday, February 12, 2008**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson**

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## Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Tuesday, February 12, 2008

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)):** Good afternoon, committee.

This is meeting 13 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, Tuesday, February 12, 2008.

Our orders of the day today include a briefing on the situation in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

As witnesses today we have senior officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. First of all, we welcome back Mr. Randolph Mank, director general, Asia South and Pacific bureau; and Jim Nickel, director of South Asia division.

In our second hour we will proceed with our committee business, but in this first hour we will hear from our officials on the briefing out of Pakistan. It seems like only a couple of weeks since we said hello. You're back again, and we appreciate it.

To the committee, because this was put together fairly quickly, there is no written text of what they're saying. They're here to give us just a verbal briefing.

We very much appreciate your coming on short notice, and the record will bear that short notice. We appreciate it, and we look forward to your remarks.

**Mr. Randolph Mank (Director General, Asia South and Pacific Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade):** Mr. Chairman, honourable members, *mesdames et messieurs*, I'd like to thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss the government's active role in working with the Government of Pakistan and other key international players to help Pakistan boost its security and return to democracy.

Pakistan is an ally in the global campaign against terrorism, and we seek and receive a high level of cooperation from the Government of Pakistan. Though Pakistan is of obvious relevance to our objectives in Afghanistan, I'll focus my presentation today on Pakistan itself.

Committee members will recall that on November 3 last year Minister Bernier issued a statement condemning the imposition of emergency rule in Pakistan at that time and urged the Government of Pakistan to cancel the state of emergency and the new provisional constitutional order. In our view, these measures were undermining democratic development, judicial independence, and the possibility of free and fair elections, to which the people of Pakistan are, of course, entitled.

[Translation]

The minister has called for the government to end the state of emergency and has urged it to respect the judicial process, to restore the powers of the judiciary, to abide by the principle of the rule of law and to allow free and fair parliamentary elections as scheduled. He has also asked all parties not to resort to violence and to respect human rights; he also stated that Canada expects the Government of Pakistan to continue its efforts to improve the security of the region.

Canada has played a pivotal role in the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, which, last November 12, issued a statement urging the Government of Pakistan to fulfill its obligations in accordance with Commonwealth principles through the implementation of the following measures:

- immediate repeal of the emergency provisions and full restoration of the Constitution and of the independence of the judiciary. This should also include full restoration of fundamental rights and the rule of law that have been curbed under the proclamation of emergency;

- President Musharraf to step down as Chief of Army Staff as promised;

- immediate release of political party leaders and activists, human rights activists, lawyers and journalists detained under the proclamation of emergency;

- immediate removal of all curbs on private media broadcasts and restrictions on the press;

- move rapidly towards the creation of conditions for the holding of free and fair elections in accordance with the Constitution.

As you know, Prime Minister Harper took part in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Kampala at the end of November. With all the other heads of government, he approved the decision to suspend Pakistan from the Council of the Commonwealth. Canada played a key role in the discussions. He specifically pointed out that, while some progress had been made towards fulfilling the conditions imposed by the Commonwealth, Pakistan had not succeeded in meeting them all. In particular, the state of emergency had not been lifted and General Musharraf had not stepped down from his position as Chief of Army Staff, though he had promised to do so on several occasions.

• (1540)

[English]

Fortunately, some progress was made after that. We acknowledged that publicly, too. On December 15, 2007, the minister issued another statement, which welcomed President Musharraf's lifting of the state of emergency and his stepping down as chief of the army staff. However, the minister also encouraged the Government of Pakistan to create the conditions necessary for free and fair elections by clearly allowing electoral oversight by an independent judiciary, by releasing all persons detained during the state of emergency, and by lifting all restrictions on the media.

Then tragedy struck. Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto was assassinated at a political rally. Again, Canada urged the government and the people of Pakistan to continue to reject all forms of violence and to resist those who seek to destabilize their country. The elections were delayed by a month to their current timeframe.

We believe that it's important to maintain close engagement with Pakistan, given its importance as a pivotal country for regional security. While Canada has now rotated off the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, after serving two consecutive terms, a Commonwealth mission will visit Pakistan following the February 18 parliamentary elections to assess the situation with regard to its readmittance to the councils of the Commonwealth.

[Translation]

The many high-level bilateral visits that have taken place lately, such as the visit of Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs in January 2007, the visit to Canada of the Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan and, more recently, the visit to Pakistan of Canada's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in January 2008, demonstrate that our bilateral relations with Pakistan are solid.

We continue to encourage the government and the people of Pakistan to remain on the path to restored democracy and specifically to hold parliamentary elections on February 18 in a transparent, peaceful, free and fair way.

[English]

Canada is committed to supporting a return to democracy in Pakistan, because we believe this is a key to security and development.

We're providing \$1 million to a United Nations development program project to strengthen Pakistan's electoral processes and \$1.5 million to the Free and Fair Election Network, involving over 30 non-government organizations spread throughout Pakistan.

As we do in other places, our high commission in Islamabad will also be unofficially observing the election, with officers travelling to key areas throughout the country on election day, provided of course that the security situation permits.

Given the fast-moving political developments in Pakistan, we continue to review our bilateral engagement to determine how best to influence a return to the path of democracy, while remaining mindful of our security interests in the region.

As a partner in the fight against terrorism, Canada continues to cooperate with Pakistan to address the cross-border movement of

insurgents between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In particular, we acknowledge Pakistan's loss of about 800 soldiers in this fight. Canada urges the government of Pakistan to resist those who seek to destabilize their country. We are concerned that political instability in Pakistan is being exploited by Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other extremists who threaten Afghanistan, the international community, and Pakistan itself.

Canada strongly supports cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan and believes that positive relations are crucial for the long-term stability of the region. We're very supportive of the Pakistan-Afghanistan peace *jirga* process, recognizing that this must remain a process led by the parties involved.

We continue to support efforts to manage the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, including the provision of technical assistance.

We're also providing support to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for work on border management and counter-narcotics and have increased our development assistance in the border regions.

In a rather unique initiative, Canada convened senior officials from Pakistan and Afghanistan from October 30 to November 1 in Dubai for a confidence- and capacity-building workshop to discuss bilateral cooperation on customs, immigration, law enforcement, counter-narcotics, and economic development of the tribal areas. It's not always easy to get these parties in the same room, but they seemed willing to work together. We're now preparing for five follow-up workshops to be held in the spring of 2008.

The goal of these workshops is to produce a Pakistan-Afghanistan-inspired action plan and list of capacity-building priorities. We see this as practical and important work that could have a positive effect down the road.

Canada's commitment to Pakistan, however, is not just limited to security interests. The record shows that Canada's engagement with Pakistan goes back many decades and has focused on a range of basic development needs, such as education, primary health care, governance, and gender equality. Our development assistance in 2007-2008 totals \$43 million: \$30 million in bilateral programs and \$13 million for the ongoing response to the October 2005 earthquake.

The Canadian development assistance program has also been rapidly growing in recent years. CIDA programming has recently been expanded to include the Pakistan-Afghan border area in Baluchistan province and in the federally administered tribal areas of northwest Pakistan.

Canada also initiated the recent Pakistan-Canada debt conversion program, under which Pakistan's outstanding debt is converted into educational programming. This is Canada's largest debt-conversion initiative in the world, valued at about \$450 million. Education is an area of obvious need, and we hope to make a difference with this support.

I'll conclude my remarks with that, since I know there will be many questions.

We are deeply aware that Canada's engagement with Pakistan is extremely important, as are our efforts to work with that country towards democratic development, particularly at this crucial time in its history.

Thank you.

• (1545)

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

We'll proceed into the first round of questioning. We have about three on the list here, so we'll let them figure it out.

We'll begin with Mr. Wilfert.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Chairman, if I could put mine on the table and Mr. Chan put his on the table, then we'll go from there.

Thank you, gentlemen. Mr. Mank, it's good to see you back here. You're becoming a regular.

Reports this week suggest that Pakistan has reached a ceasefire agreement with the Pakistan leader, Baitullah Mehsud. What is the view of our government regarding the ceasefire, given the fact that in previous ceasefires, it has allowed the Taliban and al-Qaeda to rearm? Do we have any estimates of the number of Afghan Taliban, Pakistan Taliban, or al-Qaeda in Pakistan?

Finally—and this may not be a fair question—the Department of National Defence put out in October 2007 a report called *3-D Soviet Style*, on the Soviet role in Afghanistan. Are you familiar with it? Maybe you want to comment on the observation that basically national reconciliation is the only way to solve the problem in Afghanistan, rather than a military solution. And that would obviously very much deal with the issue of the peace *jirga* process that you had talked about.

• (1550)

**The Chair:** Mr. Chan, go ahead and ask your question.

**Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you once again, Randolph, for being with us.

One of the frustrations that we have in dealing with Pakistan is that we've been working in that country for so many years. We've poured so much money in for capacity building, good governance, and so on, yet the country, even though it's what they call a democracy, is still very tribal. And the brightest light that I've experienced is with the judicial system there. The legal sector is one of the most open, I think, compared to all the other sectors.

It was really disturbing for me to watch on TV, once again, a couple of days ago, the police continuing to use brutality on the legal professionals who were demonstrating. Is there any way we can have more impact in stopping the violence that the government is exercising on the legal sector?

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

Mr. Mank.

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** Thank you very much for those questions. I'll take them as they came.

In regard to the reports of a ceasefire agreement between the Pakistani authorities and Mr. Mehsud, of course we've heard these reports. We don't have any way of confirming those independently.

Our message to the Government of Pakistan is always a consistent one: that they ought to be taking appropriate actions to put a stop to the violence in their own country, particularly in the tribal and federally administrated areas, and they ought to be doing whatever they can to control the flow of Taliban across that very important border, which is, of course, of tremendous importance to Canada at this particular time.

We haven't changed our messages to the authorities in any way in that regard. We'll wait for them to explain whether they are pursuing a ceasefire, and what that might mean in terms of their own efforts to achieve those two objectives that we insist they work towards achieving.

On the numbers of Taliban in Pakistan, I don't have those, I'm afraid. I don't have access to those numbers. We are, of course, concerned. The bottom line is that there are Taliban in Pakistan, and there is tremendous movement across that border with Afghanistan for historical tribal reasons related to the movement of the Pashtun population, which is enormous, as you know, and that is a matter of great concern. I think numbers would be very, very difficult to ascertain.

On national reconciliation within Afghanistan, I'm not going to really comment on issues related to Afghanistan, but of course our focus is on supporting the *jirga* process, which involves getting people together for a dialogue. To the extent that they want to initiate that, our belief is that we should be supportive wherever that kind of activity is going on.

On the question from Mr. Chan about the legal sector, I agree with you. We were very encouraged to see the independence of the judiciary, the way it had been developing last year; and then, of course, we're very concerned, equally, by the crackdown that was imposed upon that judiciary. The minister was on record as expressing Canada's concern in that regard.

What you're referring to, the imagery of the protests of the lawyers, and then repeated crackdowns on them, including the one that you saw recently, is something that concerns us equally. It's certainly not an image that gives anyone very much comfort around the world in watching Pakistan and hoping for national reconciliation and democratic development there. This is not a good sign. So our call has always been for respect for the judiciary, and for that matter, respect for peaceful protest.

• (1555)

**Hon. Raymond Chan:** Is there any additional pressure that we can put on the government, maybe calling the ambassador or something like that, to make a strong point on this particular issue?

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** We can certainly do that. We have been doing it, and we intend to continue to do that when incidents arise that generate our concern. We have a regular habit of talking bilaterally, whether it's through the ambassador, whom we call in locally, or in Islamabad through our own high commissioner.

As to what we can do to stop it directly, it's very difficult, but of course we're going to be part of that moral suasion that's brought to bear on Pakistan to respect the rights of peaceful protest and assembly of its own citizens.

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

We'll proceed to Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, gentlemen.

Canada has redoubled its efforts, not only to try to help the people of Pakistan but also to stabilize the situation so that they can live in peace, or at least in a climate of greater security. However, a number of observers are saying that there is no real will on the part of the Pakistani government, especially in stabilizing the tribal areas.

Do you think that this is the case? Furthermore, do you think that the Pakistani government has the means to undertake something like that? If not, do you not think that we should be targeting our assistance to that area specifically?

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** The degree to which the Pakistani government is sincere in its commitment to combating the tribal chiefs in the region has recently been strenuously debated. My colleague, Mr. Nickel, had the opportunity recently to travel to the border. He could perhaps comment on the present situation there. The situation is quite different from what we see on the border between Canada and the United States, for example.

**Mr. Jim Nickel (Director, South Asia Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade):** Thank you very much.

It is difficult to bring lasting solutions to that area. In fact, the Pakistani government has little power to influence the development of the border regions between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The approach that Canada and our G8 allies have adopted, together with the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan, is to deal with this very complex situation in various ways, choosing solutions that impact different aspects. For example, in economic development, those in the area face economic problems and extreme poverty. Here, our aim is to encourage greater cooperation between the Pakistani and the Afghan governments in helping the people who cross the border freely and whose families live on both sides.

We are also dealing with the problem of Afghan refugees who have been living in the area for 25, almost 30 years now. There are still 2.1 million refugees from Afghanistan in that border region today, on the Pakistan side. Then, of course, we cannot achieve security without dealing with the problem of drug trafficking, which is very serious in the area.

Working with the other members of the G8, and, of course, with the Pakistani and Afghan governments, Canada is trying to deal with at least four problems: economic development, the Afghan refugees who are still in Pakistan after 25 years, security, including the drug trade, and one more that I have not mentioned, border control. We foresee the border remaining wide open, but, with some investment made in the capabilities of Pakistani and Afghan guards, improve-

ments could be made to border control, on both sides and with mutual cooperation.

• (1600)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

*Madame Barbot, vous avez deux minutes.*

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** How can the border be controlled if, as we are told, the people in the region recognize no government for all practical purposes? They cross from one side to the other. Development is needed too, but how can we succeed in reaching these people?

**Mr. Jim Nickel:** True, that is perhaps one of the most difficult problems to solve in the area. As you know, even when the British were there, they had no way to tackle the problem. Nevertheless, strategies have been put in place. There is the strategy presently being adopted by Pakistani government with the support of various development and international aid agencies, including ones from Canada, to develop the frontier region.

Canada's investments will mainly be made at community level and will target education, health, the status of women in the area and ways to find jobs other than those provided by the Taliban or the drug trade. This is new for Canada and it is being done as part of CIDA programming. Targeted programs have only been in place for two years in Baluchistan, one of the provinces right beside Kandahar. It is new. We must find partners, and historically we do not have any there. It is going to take time. Of course, this is one of Pakistan's least developed regions. As I said earlier, it is a region where the Pakistani government has little authority.

The question is a good one: what challenges do we face in having a positive influence in the area? It is very difficult and very complex, and we are only just beginning to tackle the problems.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Monsieur Nickel.

Mr. Khan.

• (1605)

**Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Mank and Mr. Nickel, for appearing in front of the committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister for his leadership in the Commonwealth and for the strong statements the Minister of Foreign Affairs has made in this regard.

I also want to compliment our mission in Pakistan. I have visited several times. They have good access, and they utilize that access to the best of their ability.

I just have a comment. Pakistan has up to 100,000 troops deployed on the border. And, sir, your estimate of 800 is an underestimate; I am told that there have been up to 4,000 casualties. They don't want to disclose all the casualties, because the people of Pakistan, naturally, don't want to see their soldiers dying in the war against terror.

I want you to understand the added pressure my colleague was talking about. What pressure can you add? It is time to work with people, and I think the DFAIT people are doing a great job of that. Certainly, on the pressure, the comments of the leader of the opposition about withdrawing from the United Nations mission in Afghanistan and about military intervention in Pakistan, a sovereign nuclear power.... As you said, sir, Pakistan is an ally in the global campaign against terrorism, which receives a high level of logistic and military assistance from the Government of Pakistan. These comments are foolish, foolhardy, and dangerous. This is not the type of pressure that's required in that country.

Having said that, we are also talking about the elections. General Kayani is the new chief of the army staff, and he recently made statements that there will be no military intervention. The military will be there only to assist the civilian authorities to keep law and order. I think that is a good sign. The politicians I spoke to over there are hoping for a free and fair election. The new chief of the army staff has indicated that there will be no intervention. They will also be getting transparent ballot boxes. They have representatives from all parties who will be deciding and counting the votes, instead of the elections commissioner announcing the results. They will be counted.

With all those things happening, this is a step forward. Once again, that is the outcome of continued diplomatic engagement and diplomatic pressure by Canada and the Commonwealth.

My question to you, sir, is whether there is anything else you are doing. The EU has observers in Pakistan. Is Canada going to be sending any observers? Or are we going to rely only on the deployment from the mission in Pakistan?

Is there a plan for settlement of the FATA? There is a plan. Is Canada considering any participation in that?

I think I will ask my next question after you answer these two.

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

Go ahead, Mr. Mank.

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** Thank you for those comments.

On your questions, we're certainly looking at the issue of observers. I will defer to my minister to make his decisions on that and any announcements in that regard. What the mission will be doing is on a more informal basis, as you've alluded to. We think that can be very useful. We've done that in the past in countries, and it certainly gives Canada a sense of what's actually happening on the ground during an election, so it's very useful for our own purposes.

I think your main point—that a lot of effort has been made by the international community to ensure that Pakistan will move in the right direction and hold these elections in as free and fair a manner as possible—is extremely important. It's important that they realize the world will be watching and that there is a set of expectations we all have. We think the real future for Pakistan lies in starting to get some of this right in returning to democracy and ensuring that elections can be done in the open and in a fair way. In the long term that is the key to development and security, in our view.

In terms of settlement of the FATA, the federally administered tribal areas, yes, there is work going on there. Canada is, as I mentioned in my remarks and as Mr. Nickel has reinforced, looking at activities in Baluchistan through our CIDA program, which we see as highly complementary to that ongoing work in the FATA. There's potential for doing more there. I assume there's lots of potential for many countries to get involved. It remains under consideration by our friends at CIDA in terms of the development program. I'll let them explain in greater detail what their future plans are, but I think your point is a very good one. That's an area that requires support and assistance.

• (1610)

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Thank you.

Do you agree that Pakistan needs to be looked at through a Pakistani prism, rather than a war on terror prism? The ambassador, as you know, has been kidnapped. Benazir Bhutto has been assassinated. It is going through a difficult time, and its capacity-building to handle these issues is crucial. Is Pakistan, as I believe—and I'd like to receive your comments—the solution to the Afghan problem, or another problem added to it? There are 160 million people in a destabilized country that is fighting terrorism. Obviously it is facing an enemy right at its border, unlike us; they're across the Atlantic and many miles away. Do you believe that Pakistan is a solution to the problem, and should we look at it separately from Afghanistan?

**The Chair:** I'll tell you what I'm going to do: I'm going to let you answer that question on the second round. Could you just make note of that?

We'll go to Mr. Dewar, and then we'll come back to Mr. Khan and Mr. Goldring.

Go ahead, Mr. Dewar.

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

Thank you to our guests for their presentations.

Many of us of course continue to be worried about the situation in Pakistan. In and of itself, just the situation within the borders of Pakistan is of concern—a nuclear power, with many, many expatriates here in Canada. I guess my concern, however, is not just confined to within the borders of Pakistan but also to what has been alluded to as the Doppler effect, if you will, or the effect within the region of what's happened in Pakistan.

As a party, we have written to the minister. Back on November 6 I wrote to the minister asking for the following actions: to call on the Government of Pakistan for the restoration of constitutional rule and timely free and fair elections, unencumbered by the Pakistani military; to call for international observation of the elections; to offer Canada's experience in observing the elections; to empower Pakistani democrats and human rights activists in developing civilian leadership, free from military interests; and we called on the Commonwealth to suspend Pakistan's membership until such time as democracy has been restored. Some of those things were followed up on, I'm glad to say.

As for the idea that we can have elections there of the same standard as Canadian elections, I don't think anyone would assume those are going to happen. But you mention that there are going to be unofficial observations of the elections. I'd just like to know if we've provided additional resources to the consular services already in the area, and if so, how many resources have been afforded to our mission in Pakistan since the crackdown.

Secondly—this is related, but might seem like it's a little off topic—I'd like to know whether or not the whole issue of the pipeline presently proposed to go from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and to India has come up. The reason I'm bringing this question up is that it's something we certainly haven't debated here, but it relates to energy security. I know it's going to be an issue that will be raised at the NATO meetings this spring. I think most Canadians are unaware that energy security has been an issue at NATO.

I'm just wondering if there's been any dialogue with our mission there about the security concerns regarding the proposed pipeline through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

• (1615)

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** Thank you.

First of all, as to Mr. Khan's question about whether we should see Pakistan—

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** You can answer that on my time.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I was about to make a point of order, but I won't.

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** I am very sorry about that.

**The Chair:** What you can do is answer Mr. Dewar, and then we'll come back to Mr. Goldring and Mr. Khan's questions.

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** I see. I understand. Okay, thank you very much.

These concerns that you have about Pakistan as a nuclear power, as a country that faces enormous challenges to its own internal stability, and the fact that we have significant diaspora interests in the sense that we have many Pakistani Canadians in our country and we have other interests in the country and have long been connected to it suggest that it's a country we need to keep close contact with and keep a close eye on.

Your letter suggested things we should do. I'm very happy that we very much had a meeting of minds on most of those things. Those were things we felt we should do, and the minister went ahead and decided we should proceed to advocate on behalf of, for example, a

Commonwealth action, which finally occurred. They remain suspended from the councils of the Commonwealth.

As I said in my remarks, we've also been actually contributing funds to support the electoral process. We very much want to see a return to democracy, and that's exactly what we're working towards, as well as making contributions, as appropriate, to the security situation, the security of the border.

You asked whether additional resources have been made available for consular purposes at the mission. I don't think so in the sense of new staff being deployed there, but we have looked very closely at the consular situation. We have sent a small team out to do the normal kind of contingency planning we do at all our missions around the world, to make sure everything's in order in the event that we need to exercise our planning.

On the pipeline issue, of course, we're aware of the dialogue on this, but we're not involved in it. We're waiting to see how that develops. Energy security is obviously an important subject for all of those countries of the region and for just about every country in the world these days. It will be an important part of the economic futures of these countries in the region.

**The Chair:** Mr. Dewar, you do have another minute.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I just wanted to follow up on that issue, if I may, on energy security. The reason I brought it up is that my notes here have that we had been involved in a dialogue in Delhi in November 2006 on the whole Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline. It's a matter not only of energy security, but of course the security in terms of what our troops are doing, certainly in Afghanistan.

Many people see Afghanistan as a bridge. I think Turkmenistan has the fourth-largest gas fields in the world. This pipeline, by the way, is being proposed to go right through Kandahar and it will be going through Pakistan and India, as I'm sure my colleagues are aware.

The reason I brought it up, and underlying my opening remarks, is that it's not just about Pakistan in and of itself and the stability there, but it seems to be a wider dialogue and investment around security of the pipeline. I brought it up simply because I'm wondering if DFAIT has underlined this issue, along with the nuclear issue, about the concerns of stability of Pakistan. If so, what are the concerns around the pipeline that you might have?

• (1620)

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** It's been discussed in the context of the regional economic development framework. That's the meeting you were referring to. It's on the agenda. It's seen as part of the economic package that is going to be required for the future of the region, but we haven't taken a position in pushing it one way or the other in a positive or a negative direction.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** So you're observing it, though.

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** We're watching.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Khan did have the question about whether we see Pakistan as the answer to some of the problems in Afghanistan. I'm not certain if he meant more democratization of Pakistan or...



**Mr. Wajid Khan:** I can clarify that, Mr. Chair.

When we are talking about Afghanistan and Pakistan, I think we have to recognize that Pakistan is a country that has institutions, that has infrastructure—although perhaps not up to standard—and that has a very strong and disciplined military. It has all kinds of institutions, whereas Afghanistan has naturally hardly any of that.

So the commitment it has made, and the terrorism that has spread within the country, with, as I mentioned, the assassination of Benazir, bombings every day, Baitullah Mehsud doing all that stuff... And I can tell you that there's a full-fledged war going on in Waziristan, with tanks and airplanes. I know that because my nephew, who I brought up like a son, is a general fighting that war in that region.

What I'm trying to ask, then, is do you agree that we need to bring more stability in Pakistan, which will then help stabilize Afghanistan?

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** Yes, I think that's a broad consensus among allies, that Pakistan is very important both in and of itself—Pakistan qua Pakistan—and for regional stability. Clearly they have some severe security challenges, as you've outlined. What we need to do is encourage them and support them, to the extent that we can, in meeting those security challenges. That's in all of our interests.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Goldring.

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Thank you for appearing here today.

I have a question along the lines of what my colleague was asking. Understandably, it would be very hard to quantify the number of Taliban we're looking at in the region, but I'm asking this because a reporter on TV yesterday did quantify it, coming up with a number of 40 million—in other words, under the assumption, I suppose, that all Pashtuns are Taliban.

Could you in some way comment on that type of number, and then maybe try to advise on where the major belligerents would be dispersed, by percentage numbers, in Pakistan or Afghanistan or other regions? It seems to me that some of the numbers being bandied around are just incredible, and very misleading.

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** I don't want to get drawn into the numbers game, because you can imagine how inaccurate census processes would be in such a situation. It's really hard to guess on the numbers.

It is a mistake to equate the Pashtun people with the Taliban. Whereas the Taliban might well draw from the Pashtun people for support, and for recruits even, they are a very small subset, a minimal subset, of the Pashtun people.

I'm no historian, and I'm not a particular expert in this area, but my understanding is that the Pashtun people have been there for an awfully long time. Their traditions of moving across that territory cause the problems that exist for that border as it's currently situated. It doesn't necessarily mean that all the Pashtun people, whether there are 30 million or 40 million of them, are doing something that might be nefarious or harmful to our interests. It's the Taliban, the radicalized people who are looking to use violence to further their ends, that we're concerned about.

In fact, extremists are in quite a minority in Pakistan. We should remember and we should put a line under the fact that most Pakistanis are quite moderate people. We're not really dealing with a highly radicalized country in general. We're dealing with, as is so often the case, a very small minority of radicalized and violent people who are causing trouble for all the rest.

• (1625)

**The Chair:** Mr. Goldring, we'll come back to you. Your time is up.

We'll go to Mr. Patry and Mr. Martin, who can do a split. Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen.

We are all aware that Pakistan's stability is crucial for democracy and for the security of the entire region. In the past, Afghanistan stood with India in countering the influence of the United States on Pakistan. In March 2007, Afghanistan and Pakistan signed an agreement in Ankara. In June of the same year, they signed a tripartite agreement that included Iran.

We spoke about the frontier region. We met with the ambassador of Pakistan who told us that more than 100,000 Pakistani soldiers are in the Northwest Frontier area and the FATA as a whole. They have lost 7,000 men. He told us that their main mission was to track down foreigners. By "foreigners", they mean Uzbeks and all the Arab presence that comes in large part from the Middle East. Not the Taliban, because they are all Pashtuns. Of necessity, the Pashtuns are allies of the government in Islamabad and of the Pakistani secret service.

You are with the Department of Foreign Affairs, not with the Department of Defence. Is the Department of Foreign Affairs working with the Commonwealth or the United Nations to try and find a diplomatic solution and hold an international conference that will bring together Afghanistan, Pakistan and the neighbouring countries? Is your department putting pressure on Pakistan, or indirectly on Saudi Arabia, to stop the funding of madrasahs? You know what madrasahs are. Why, for example, could we not ask Pakistan to lift the embargo on Afghan products en route to India?

[*English*]

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Mank and Mr. Nickel, I just have two quick questions.

First, what is needed for the ISI and other groups inside Pakistan to stop supporting the insurgency coming from Afghanistan?

Second, what are the conditions, do you think, for civilian government to be acceptable to the ISI and the military, rather than the military side of the equation undermining a civilian regime in Pakistan?

Thank you.

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** Thank you.

Again, the question of the number of soldiers who are deployed in Pakistan to deal with the instability in the tribal regions is up for debate. The Pakistani authorities are the best sources of accurate numbers in that regard, and I don't want to guess or second-guess what the ambassador, the High Commissioner for Pakistan, has said about that.

We are working within our alliance, obviously within the Commonwealth, as I detailed in my remarks, to bring pressure to bear on Pakistan. There is no stone left unturned, as far as we're concerned, in trying to encourage them to get back to a path to democracy, whether bilaterally, regionally with our allies, or multilaterally through the UN.

What the neighbours are doing, of course, factors into Pakistan's situation itself, and we're encouraging everyone to stick to their own knitting and allow a country like Pakistan to deal with the challenges it faces with its own security and cooperation with those who want to help it in a positive sense, and that includes Canada.

On the question of the role of the ISI, as you put it, to stop supporting the insurgency, and how to get the ISI to accept democracy—

**Hon. Keith Martin:** A civilian regime.

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** —I think what you're alluding to is essentially a phenomenon that President Musharraf perpetuated by wearing the uniform while he was still president. That was something that the minister, the Government of Canada, spoke out very strongly against. This disentanglement of the military interests from the civilian rule...that's essentially at the heart of everything we're saying to Pakistan, that we want those institutions.

There's nothing wrong with a military institution if it sticks to military work. Most countries have important military institutions, but they should do military work. There's a huge security job to be done in that country, and they know very clearly what we expect of them in terms of controlling their border regions and working towards stabilizing that. We obviously insist that they accept civilian rule. We wouldn't accept any other position from the military side, or the intelligence side, or anyone else. That's our expectation; that's the demand we're exhorting of Pakistan all the time.

•(1630)

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

Mr. Obhrai, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC):** I just want to say something. The elections.... It's very good to see I excite my friends on the other side here. That means I am doing a good job.

I just wanted to say that the Liberals keep putting on extra pressure. I hope they don't mean what their leader said about invading Pakistan. I hope that's not what you mean by....

My colleague out here would like to—

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, point of order. Just for the record, that was not true, and you know that, and that was clarified. That was not what was said, and the member knows that. For the record, I want to make it clear that was not done. I don't want him to mislead the committee. That would be a point of order.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** They can read the newspapers. I don't have to say anything.

However, coming here, my colleague here would like to propose a motion, and I hope we do get unanimous consent for that.

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Mr. Chair, if I may propose a motion to seek unanimous consent—

**The Chair:** One moment.

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** He's sharing his time with me.

**The Chair:** What motion do you have here?

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Hear me out. If you don't agree, don't agree.

I would move, in light of the importance of Pakistan and the security of the forthcoming elections, that the committee invite departmental officials and other experts to provide analysis on the situation in Pakistan following the general election in Pakistan.

**The Chair:** Could you read the last part of that motion again, Mr. Khan?

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Following the general election, which is February 18, we invite them to come back here and—

**The Chair:** Okay. You're basically just asking that after the election takes place we have input from the department again—

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** And other experts.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Mr. Chair, I would just like to ask one question. Are we not hearing from guests now? According to the rules, is this the time to make a motion?

[English]

**The Chair:** It is in order. If the motion is on the subject matter that is being discussed, a motion can come right off the floor. This isn't the same kind of motion that would be brought up for the 48-hour.... But you need unanimous consent to do that.

We will be on a break week, and because of the timelines we obviously wouldn't be able to put forward a motion for 48 hours and get it through committee business, because it would appear way down on the order list on the agenda.

So it is in order, and basically it's just asking for a response after the election. I guess we have to have some debate. If this is a problem motion, we won't allow it.

Mr. Chan.

**Hon. Raymond Chan:** Is the chairman using his time? It's five minutes, right.

•(1635)

**The Chair:** Yes, that's right.

I'm going to ask if we have unanimous consent for this motion.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay, it fails.

You still have about two minutes.

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's disappointing that on one hand we show great concern about that region and its stability. We talk about central Asian pipelines without mentioning Iranian pipelines or India and Pakistan. We talk about our mission in Afghanistan. We talk about border security. We talk about deployment. We talk about terrorism. Yet for some reason my colleagues across the way do not want to acquaint themselves or inform themselves, through experts and others, and will base their judgments and questions, I'm sorry to say, on superficial information—like my colleague here said, “40 million Taliban”. That is not even the total population of Afghanistan, 40 million. Somebody mentioned about the nuclear aspect of Pakistan—it's a risk, they read in some headline in some newspaper over there. There are command-and-control centres in place. Everything is absolutely secure.

We need to get educated on this, and if there is not interest in that, I guess it basically will put this committee at a disadvantage to understand. This is an opportunity to bring in experts who can educate this committee on Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the whole region: some real experts, not just NGOs, but people who know, people who have acted with them and who understand the situation. So when the debate happens or otherwise, we as a country and as parliamentarians representing our constituents have the proper knowledge and insight. If they don't want it, it's up to them, but I have to say that I'm really disappointed.

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

Madame St-Hilaire.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** I would like to welcome our guests first, but I certainly also want to return the volley from my honourable colleague. I am speaking as an individual. If I refuse to support the Conservative party's motion—who like to lecture us, which is always very amusing—it is not about the substance but mostly about the form. I feel that eventually, we will have to ask the question again and re-evaluate the situation. We have no lesson to learn from our colleagues opposite.

That said, gentlemen, you too have surely read Michèle Ouimet's article on the situation in Pakistan. I have read it, and, as I listened to you earlier, I got the impression that she did not go to the same place as you did. She finds things in Pakistan very troubling. But you say that poverty is not such a big problem and the education of girls is not going too badly.

Lastly, I wonder if the Pakistani government is not speaking out of both sides of its mouth. Internally, the discourse seems to be pro-Islamic in order to get the people on their side. Outside, the discourse is more conciliatory in order to win support from the Government of Canada, for example.

[*English*]

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** I can just say that whether they are speaking out of both sides of their mouth or not, we hold them to account to the goals that we have for that country.

It's certainly within Canada's right, given our involvement in the region, to insist on a certain kind of behaviour and certain types of actions by the Government of Pakistan. We have no hesitation in doing that.

We're not naive, but at the same time we're not going to back down on the things that we want Pakistan to do. So we're going to continue to insist on a greater effort on the security side, and not just insist without being willing to help—because we are ready to help with border management in this very practical and technical way. But also we will insist on a return to democracy, which we think in the longer term will both complement security and put them on the right path in that regard and also open up greater possibilities for development.

I'm not going to make judgments on the veracity of their own plans and their intentions. I have no way of knowing, but we have our expectations, and we're going to be consistent in communicating those to the Government of Pakistan.

● (1640)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire:** I have another question; I am no expert in the area. Do you really think that it is possible to have a democratic election in a country where people are killed for owning a record store? I cannot imagine how that can be possible.

[*English*]

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** I must say, in my experience it always looks somewhat hopeless when a country is going through a transition.

Forgive me for going off Pakistan for just a moment, but I spent a lot of time in Indonesia both before and after the great democratic change that occurred there. It looked hopeless for a long time. Very brave people fought very hard for the democracy that they eventually won. But they went through some very, very dark times, which involved violence and involved people sacrificing their lives in order to achieve that.

I think some of the references to positive signs among the judiciary and the fact that the media is taking a very critical view of negative developments, as they perceive them, are good signs. They are signs that there's a spirit of democracy there in the Pakistani people. They are making demands of their own leaders. So while we need to work hard to make sure that their commitment is sincere and to help them with the technical aspects of getting back on the path to democracy, don't give up hope, because there are a lot of people in Pakistan who have high hope, and we ought to be standing with them to make sure they realize the dreams that they have for their country.

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

Mr. Obhrai, go ahead.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Irrespective of the fact that the Bloc refused to put our motion through, which was after the elections—because the elections are one of the steps forward in what we have been demanding, which is stability in the region.... Unless there is stability in the region, we will have turmoil and instability in the whole of that region. Pakistan by itself is not just Pakistan; it's the whole region. I would like to advise you that we will be putting a motion for you people to come forward after the elections to come and give us—

**An hon. member:** What election?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** The Pakistan election. I don't think I was talking about Canada here, was I? This motion is about....That's why it shows that you guys are fast asleep. I'm talking about Pakistan.

It is important for us. I would like to say that when you do come back, we would like an analysis on the whole situation in Pakistan following the elections, and if that would create the stability that would allow us to bring work and stability to the northwest regions, considering the fact that the spillover is into Afghanistan as well.

As you know, the government has put forward a motion to extend our mission until 2011. It is critically important that part of the success in Afghanistan is also the success in Pakistan.

Since the Bloc has already stated that they want to pull out of Afghanistan, they have no interest in Pakistan, which is fine with us.

My colleague has one more question.

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Mr. Mank, Mr. Nickel, or whoever would like to answer, can you confirm that there are reserved seats for women in Pakistan? In the federal election, can women have reserved seats or run independently? Also, are there seats for minorities?

• (1645)

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** I believe that's correct, yes.

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Do you think we should support the purpose or the cause of the election going forward, and after the elections we should see how democracy is evolving there and perhaps come back for more opinions from experts to tell us what we should or should not be doing, and how we should engage after the elections?

It's very crucial to understand how the prime minister of the day, the president, who will now be sandwiched between the chief of staff of the army—they obviously know the importance of Afghanistan... and how the operation is happening. We need to know that. When do you think we would be in a position to see how it's evolving?

**The Chair:** Mr. Mank, I have one suggestion.

In your opening statement you spoke about the Commonwealth assessment following the elections there in February—this week, I believe—but then you also stated that Canada wasn't involved in that. Am I correct on that? Are we part of that Commonwealth evaluation?

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** We are, of course, part of the Commonwealth, but we're not on the evaluation mission, which is sent by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group. We were part of that action group for two consecutive terms. Now our membership term has ended and we're not part of that mission. Of course, as an important Commonwealth member, we're watching that very closely to see what their report is going to be.

**The Chair:** Did you have other comments for Mr. Khan?

**Mr. Randolph Mank:** I'll leave it to the committee. I don't understand the procedural issues as deeply as you do. Chair, you, in your wisdom, will figure that out with your colleagues, but I can assure you we will, at the department, be watching this extremely closely.

I can also add that my colleague Mr. Nickel and I are involved in looking after the relations with many countries, but we spend probably more time on Pakistan than on any other single country,

and have done so for the past year and a half. It's something the Canadian government has been taking very seriously.

There are some newcomers to the idea that Pakistan is an important place to watch, but we're not really newcomers in that regard. We've been paying a lot of attention to it for a long time and looking for ways to strengthen our influence in that country in order to achieve the things we want.

Whatever the committee decides, we're at your disposal. You can rest assured that we'll be watching the situation very closely in Pakistan.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We've already taken you past the hour, but Mr. Wilfert has asked for a few minutes.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, although the committee is going to be seized with other issues, given Mr. Khan's proposal and in the spirit of what Mr. Khan has suggested, couldn't we maybe host an all-party information evening after the break with regard to the elections, where we could put forth to all members of Parliament who might be interested—and I'd be more than happy to work with Mr. Khan and others on this—an opportunity to do an evaluation and to listen to the experts with regard to the post-election situation in Pakistan?

Certainly, as the vice-chair of the Canada-Pakistan Parliamentary Group, I'm sure we could use the latter as a vehicle, if you wish. But again, I think an all-party hosting of this event might be very helpful, and we could certainly send out an invitation to Mr. Mank, Mr. Nickel, and others, as it could be very useful.

I just don't think the committee's time, given everything else.... I'm sure we could find an appropriate evening. I've already talked to Mr. Khan, and he certainly seemed disposed to that.

**The Chair:** Well, that's wonderful, except it really doesn't deal with committee business. We can arrange those things informally.

Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

We want to thank the department again for coming here today. Certainly we'll be watching—as you will—the elections in Pakistan next week. We appreciate your being here and giving us a comprehensive update as to what's happening there.

We're going to suspend for two minutes and then we'll come back to committee business.

• (1650)

(Pause)

• (1655)

**The Chair:** In our second hour today we are going to discuss committee business, so we'll call the meeting back to order.

When we left the committee business in the last meeting, Mr. Obhrai had moved that pursuant to Standing Order 108.(2), the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development undertake a study investigating the effectiveness and quality of Canada's food aid policy and whether current methods of delivery meet the objectives established under the Food Aid Convention.

Debate arose from that motion and Madame Barbot moved an amendment that the motion be amended by adding after the words “food aid policy” the following: “and whether the local productive capacity of developing countries is sufficient to feed their populations and export agricultural products”. As I've stated, as we left and adjourned for the day, Mr. Obhrai was speaking to that amendment to the motion. So we will go back to Mr. Obhrai's debate.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I have a point of order, just to clarify.

Is the amendment still alive and we're debating that?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Speaking on the amendment, as I was stating before we broke, the purpose of my original motion was to talk about food delivery in Canada and its effectiveness in Canada. The proposed amendment talks about something else outside, by itself. We are now expanding the scope by bringing outside countries and developing countries into it. It takes away from the whole study on what Canada was going to do. I don't have it, in principle... another motion put forward by the Bloc somewhere down the line to study what that would achieve, which would be a different study.

From my perspective, to combine it within the context of what we would call a Canadian study would muddy the waters. I have no idea about the direction and which witnesses we would call. Would it require us to make an overseas trip to see whether the productive capacity of developing countries is there? We would have to see the structure and what is happening there. So what you have here are two totally different aspects of the study, hence our reluctance to agree to this amendment.

Based on my past experience with these things, I can talk about the developing capacities of these countries. Before I talk about that, I want to add a comment on what my colleague from the Liberal Party was saying about Pakistan. The productive capacity of developing countries would apply to Pakistan as well as Afghanistan. Due to the war conditions and the insecurity that exists there, the local productive capacity of those countries has suffered seriously.

Let's talk for a minute about the poppy-growing issue in Afghanistan. The farming capacity of Afghanistan—agriculture—through all these years of war has collapsed. It has made room for this development of poppies, which one can very clearly say has damaged the agricultural capacity of Afghanistan. In that context, I was a little surprised that the Bloc refused to accept an amendment to discuss the security situation in Pakistan. That security situation in Pakistan also has a developing impact, a farming impact on that country, which is part of this thing here.

Frankly, because it came as a proposal from the Conservative Party, those in the Bloc don't want to support it, which goes to show the nature of partisan politics that exists in this committee. Even if you propose a common-sense motion, you are going to get opposition just for the sake of it. There was no reason.

After opposing it, they didn't realize they had made a blunder of it. Henceforth, the Liberals came along proposing to have an all-party committee meeting. My friend on the other side is the vice-chair of the Canada-Pakistani friendship group. He could have easily gone to

his own group over there and asked the department to come to do something, but we were doing this portion here in the independent committee of the House of Commons, where we can decide what to do.

I'm still puzzled as to why the Bloc said no to a very good, common-sense.... We called the people from the department. It's all about local capacity.

• (1700)

**The Chair:** Mr. Obhrai, can I encourage you to keep your discussion to the point of the amendment, not to another motion?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** It is about the productive capacity of developing nations. Isn't Pakistan a developing nation? Doesn't an election in Pakistan have a direct impact on the developing capacity of a developing country? Yes, it does.

You see, now they want to study this. But when you bring forward a motion—no, not even a motion, but somebody's statement that says let's look at the election.... Because with that election, there will be stability. If there's stability, the agricultural capacity of Pakistan will increase. That is exactly in line, Mr. Chair, with this proposed motion we have put forward. Yet I am quite surprised that the Bloc said no. Again, I will go back and ask why they are opposed to this thing.

Now let me talk about capacity. I can now say why I think this whole thing gets muddled. I'll tell you why it gets muddled. When you talk about the development of Pakistan—

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Point of order. Mr. Chair, I think Mr. Obhrai is filibustering. If he can get to the point, then others will have a chance to answer the questions he is posing, which we are all waiting to do, for his edification.

**The Chair:** I'm not certain if it's, as you suggest, a filibuster. An amendment was made to a motion that had been tabled. I know that even as Mr. Obhrai continues to speak on this....

The amendment does take it away somewhat from the original. I'm being convinced, in a way, that it does take it away from the original motion. Now I've let the amendment stand. I know that Mr. Obhrai has been very disappointed that when he brings these motions, they just seem to automatically get amended. But one thing I can't do is cut off debate on a motion, as long as he stays on the topic the motion brings out.

So I'll take your point of order, but it's not really a point of order.

Mr. Obhrai, continue.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Thank you.

I would suggest that you write down the questions I'm raising. All of us have the opportunity during this debate to address this issue. When I'm finished going through 190 countries and the development of their agricultural capacity....

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Point of order. I just want to ask a question of my colleague.

If you want to speak until 5:30, we might as well quit right now. That's it. We're going to save half an hour, every one of us.

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

Continue, Mr. Obhrai.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** I just want you to listen to me. It is my democratic right. So just listen. You must listen. I want this to go in the record.

I'm not filibustering for the sake of filibustering. I am just saying to you that I feel that this amendment, by itself, is going to override the study that I intended to study, which was on the Canadian food aid delivery program. This one that has been proposed moves it to the other side, which is why you're finding reluctance.

I have stated right from the beginning that you can put your own motion forward on this idea and leave us to do the Canadian study. Then you want to go to the development study. At that given time, I will be more than happy to make the same speech I'm going to make right now.

But that's what the Bloc did. Mr. Chair, these guys don't understand. What I'm saying is being recorded. If I'm in Hansard, they're supposed to listen. If they don't listen, they'll ask foolish questions, like they did with that question on where the elections were. So go have some coffee and listen.

I still don't understand your reluctance. I hope Mr. Dewar will understand. Why can't you do a Canadian study?

• (1705)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** I can handle the member opposite not understanding, but I am ready to explain things to him. I brought the convention from which the amendment came, and I would be very happy to explain so that we can move on, Mr. Chair. But, in all sincerity, bringing the motion back to Afghanistan is not going to change anything.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Barbot.

I think Mr. Obhrai understands very clearly how this works. He's been here for eleven years.

Continue, Mr. Obhrai.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** I would fall off the chair if Madame Barbot agreed with me.

What I'm saying quite clearly, and I'm going to say it again, is this is a partisan display. The amendment that came down here that Madame Barbot wants is not exactly what she's trying to make. She can put the amendment again. I've given her that opportunity. She refuses to do it. She wants to muddle my motion, which I want to study, which is the Canadian delivery. Why are we not talking about Canadian delivery? Why do we want to talk about foreign capacity for developing nations under this motion?

That is why I am raising this question. And I do understand, Madame Barbot, exactly what it is, but I also understand that you, being a third party, can't just keep bringing on to your agenda what you want to do. This being the foreign affairs committee, you do have the opportunity to do that, as you took the opportunity when you declined our motion when we asked for unanimous consent on Pakistan, which was nothing, just asking for—

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Point of order.

Mr. Chair, the honourable speaker, Mr. Obhrai, has said he wants this on the record. I feel it my duty to inform him that his children will read this one day, and he may be embarrassed—

**The Chair:** It's more a point of clarification.

Continue, Mr. Obhrai.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** I think it was stupid of him to come around and say that. I am here on a serious debate, and these guys here talk about my children. I think my children would be very proud of what I am saying here, making sense here. What would be the stupid thing is for them to know how you acted stupid, not me acting stupid.

**The Chair:** Mr. Obhrai.

Madame Barbot on a point of order.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Mr. Chair, please tell me if I am mistaken, but I feel that we are addressing the chair when we have the floor in this room. I really do not feel comfortable when I am addressed directly by the speaker. I would like us to follow the rules. I do not need to feel attacked by anyone when I am making a motion. Making motions is part of our process. I am asking that my motion be considered, not that it be thrown back at me as if I had done something terrible.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Barbot.

Madame Barbot brings out a very important point, and that is that in this debate we will continue to bring it through the chair. On the other hand, there has been a little bit of conflict and confrontation from the opposition as well, straight through to the member as he was speaking.

I agree that Mr. Obhrai needs to put his comments through the chair. I also would suggest to the opposition, in order to keep a certain level of decorum, which we want to have here, that those comments be brought through the chair as well.

Mr. Martin, you've had a couple of interventions already on a point of order. You now have a point of clarification. Is this to clarify something, or wanting clarification?

**Hon. Keith Martin:** It's just a clarification of what Mr. Obhrai said, Mr. Chair.

Through you, Mr. Chair, I would ask Mr. Obhrai. He accused us of acting stupid. Could you ask him to clarify what "acting stupid" is?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Obhrai, there's no need to clarify that. We need to be very cautious in our language, be judicious in our comments.

Just one other thing, Mr. Obhrai. Just for another point of clarification, you mentioned that you intended to go through the 190 countries. Where are we on that list now?

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** We've just started.

**The Chair:** Okay. Continue, Mr. Obhrai.

•(1710)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, the issue is quite serious. We want to discuss delivery of Canadian food aid. We want to hear from Canadian players. We want to hear about this thing. But when you start muddling this with capacity-building of developing nations.... It's a very wide subject.

Let's talk for a second about the capacity of developing nations and why the scope of that study would be very different from what I propose, and why the motion that Madame Barbot proposed would change the essence of what I'm trying to do.

Under the proposal that Madame.... She may have picked it up from the food convention, and that's fine, but I am more interested in the study that I put forward about how Canada's food aid program is effective and what it's doing to Canadian players.

When we talk about developing capacity, we can talk about many things. Every developing country is different. There is no cohesiveness over there. I said in my last speech that we had people here from Kenya, who talked about climate change and the impact it was having on the collapse of the Kenyan agricultural system.

When I was in Nairobi the grass that feeds the cattle industry and on which the milk production is based was contaminated. Canada had to help them because the milk production in that country had started falling down, which was impacting the poor people of that region. This is the kind of capacity-building you're talking about. I'm only talking of country number one, which is Kenya at this stage.

Let's talk about capacity number two, in Tanzania. When the Ujama program took place, and when the Government of Tanzania moved over a million people into collective villages, the whole delivery system of that country collapsed. The whole agricultural delivery system collapsed, and they had to start importing food. One can do the study and ask what happened in Tanzania and why the productive capacity of that developing nation has fallen down.

As a matter of fact, let's talk about Zimbabwe—the gentleman's favourite country, which he likes to talk about—and how the—

**An hon. member:** How long is he going to be allowed to talk?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** You refuse to worry about Canada, because you're not following my motion. Let's talk about Canada. Let's talk about Quebec. Let's talk about what is happening. That's fine. Just leave my motion exactly where it is and don't go to the other countries.

But you want to go to the other countries. Let's talk about what has happened in Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe the dictatorship of Mugabe and the moving of the white farmers has resulted in a total failure of the production of food grain in that country. So what happens? What is the food production capacity that we are going to talk about in these countries? This is only in Zimbabwe.

Now, for this present moment South Africa has a good agricultural policy. It is one of the driving economic forces. And in the developing countries, as Gerald Schmitz, who's written a very good book on international development says, agriculture is the prime economic engine of growth of those nations. Is it not? Therefore,

capacity-building is critically important. That is why CIDA gives food aid, to assist.

•(1715)

I can give you a very good example. When I was growing up in Tanzania, Canadians came and said we are going to teach you how to grow wheat. They came in with their food aid program. They brought in large trucks. They had vast fields of maize plantation turned into wheat plantation, and it was considered to be the top disaster in the world for food aid programs into another country. Why? Because it didn't have the local capacity.

What I'm saying here is that every country has a problem, not only one country. We can't lump them together and ask, which developing country do we want to pick? Do we want to pick Egypt? Which country to we want?

Today they are fighting in Chad. Many of the experts who have come back talking about Darfur are also saying that Darfur is about land reform; it is about the capacity to grow food over there. That is one of the other major wars going on. Now that has spread into Chad. I just came from Mali, and the same thing. So which country are we going to talk about on this productive capacity of developing countries?

When I'm finished, my colleague will speak on Haiti. He did a thorough report on Haiti. You know what happened in Haiti.

**An hon. member:** The committee did the report.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Well, yes, you're right. The committee did the report. I'll give you that. The committee did the report, and the report talked about deforestation and agriculture, lost capacity in Haiti, which was, by itself, a big report.

We can do a report on Zimbabwe. We can do a report on all these countries. How in hell's name can you fix it in here? That's what I want to know. So in that capacity, I am asking that this amendment be removed.

I haven't even talked about Latin America, so let's go to Latin America. When I moved it, I just said Africa. So what about capacity-building in Latin America?

I've just been through five countries.

**The Chair:** Yes, I know, but for the good of the committee, I'm going to ask you to consider this: I'm telling you, we're on the edges of our seats on this speech, but I would like to see if you'd be willing to close off your speech here.

There are a couple of comments here on the amendment, and then we would vote on this amendment.

I don't want this committee to be.... I don't think anyone is hijacking it. I know the disappointment. I made the decision that it was in order, so I'll abide by it, but there are some difficulties here. I understand your frustration that it takes us off into a completely different study.

It's entirely up to you. I'm not going to cut your time off, but if I could encourage you to close down, there are a couple of others who would like to speak to the amendment.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, since you are a very nice chairman, and you have been a fair chairman, despite what the others say, in the interests of this thing I am willing to consider that.

I was going to speak about 198 countries; I've only gone through five. There is a lot more we could talk about here, a lot more about developing capacity. There are a lot of countries we could hear about. I just want it to be on the record very clearly that this amendment and the one we just finished keep coming out here because they're coming from us, but it takes away...

However, we will put forward the motions. We will put forward our witnesses. We will not participate in that portion of this thing, but we will bring forward doing the study in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. You have my floor.

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

Mr. Martin, and then Mr. Goldring and Mr. Patry—very quickly.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be brief. I will not use the soaring rhetoric of our colleague across the way—

• (1720)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order, is the rhetoric...*[Inaudible—Editor]*.

**Hon. Keith Martin:**—other than to say that while we certainly have sympathy for the issue at hand, we will not be supporting this particular initiative, amended or not amended, because the committee has really determined that we have other more urgent priorities to deal with, priorities the Canadian public is aware of, priorities that are a matter of life and death, as, of course, is food security. Hopefully we'll be able to incorporate the issue of food security when we examine such issues as Afghanistan and Sudan, and perhaps we'll be able to get to the larger issue of aid effectiveness in Canada, which we hope we'll be able to look at as a committee.

Let's look at the larger picture of the effectiveness of aid, the activities of CIDA internationally, and by doing so we'll be incorporating Madame Barbot's issue and the concerns of Mr. Obhrai and others.

Merci .

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

Mr. Goldring.

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** Mr. Chair, I have to agree with my colleague and emphasize that this amendment diametrically changes the original motion. I'll cite a couple of examples to illustrate this.

If we look at the issue of Haiti, what we're going to be determining there is its local productive capacity. Or if we look at the situation in several other countries—it might be Guyana too—what is the local productive capacity there? Without analyzing Guyana and understanding the necessity of it having dike systems and dams in order to have any productive capacity... In other words, it's a multiple-layered analysis that would have to be done on each and every situation. In Guyana, it's like Holland, in that they've created their productive capacity by damming and diking the oceans. And if you

look at Haiti, what is their productive capacity with all the erosion they've had in Haiti? Something has to be done on reforestation. The erosion is what's holding the productive capacity back.

Each and every country may have different elements to it. If we try to analyze what Canada's aid-giving capacity is for each country and get bogged down trying to analyze what each and every aid-receiving country has as its own inherent capabilities for producing foodstuffs on its own, we're going to be talking about two entirely different initiatives. I'm very much afraid the amendment that's being proposed to the motion would in effect make a very ineffectual study from the initial motion.

With that in mind, without going into all of the different countries, the 180 different countries, there are certainly enough examples to go by to see that each country, each area, has its own variables that would have to be examined. Those variables may be, as I said, from diking to damming to erosion, and they may also be irrigation requirements, or even salination plants in order to be able to have any water to be able to have any production.

So if we try to include that amendment, the complexity of any resulting study would be so vast as to be virtually ineffective.

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

Mr. Patry.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Thank you very much.

*[English]*

I really appreciate the comments of Mr. Goldring. If you had spoken before your colleagues, we would have saved a good 20 minutes. Just to let you know, I really appreciate your comments.

But for me, the issue is the main motion itself. It proposes that we do a study investigating the effectiveness and quality of Canada's food aid policy, but we don't even know what we're talking about. Is it just when there is an emergency? Is it food aid quality or effectiveness? Let's say there is an earthquake or a tsunami like we had in Asia, or anything else like that. What are we talking about?

If it's just about those, we need to call CIDA officials to tell us how they're doing those things, and you will get the answer. I know the answer, because they have appeared before our committee before. Is it just about giving money to the WFP, or international food aid, or about what we are giving to the Red Cross? How do we proceed?

Before doing a study, first of all, I would like the department to come here to explain in one hour what they're doing; and after that, we will see if we want to have a study, yes or no. It's as simple as that. But now we're just talking and passing the time. We have another six minutes.

Those are all my comments—but I don't understand the main motion.

• (1725)

**The Chair:** I'll tell you, because I just asked Mr. Obhrai, the intention here is to have exactly that, a very quick study done. Our intention is that we study Afghanistan. We have a motion that it be our major study.



I think that came up in a meeting before, when we had them here for just an hour or just one day. But the problem with the amendment is that it makes it much longer—and we don't want to divert the study on Afghanistan, because we could be on this one forever.

Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot:** Mr. Chair, I am being given all manner of explanation why the amendment was made. But it is very simple, this amendment refers to the Food Aid Convention. This convention describes precisely how food aid is handled in the various countries. It is all very well to talk about Canadian food aid, but I feel that to be able to evaluate the effectiveness and the quality of Canadian policy, we must know where and to whom this aid is given and under which conditions.

We are not asking to go and study the situation in each country. In that context, I would like to have the translation again because I did not get it in writing. It did not seem adequate to me. Because the mover himself referred to the Food Aid Convention, we tried to identify the exact countries to which food aid is given in order to understand the nature of Canadian food aid. We do not give food aid here, we give it to other countries. As we examine our food aid, can we say whether it is effective in the light of each country's needs and resources?

If the matter needs an in-depth study on what is done elsewhere, that is not my problem. Furthermore, I completely agree with the colleagues beside me: we have plenty of other fish to fry. For me, the amendment was simply in order to get to a coherent study. I am perfectly happy to vote against the motion and not hear of it again.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Barbot.

Mr. Goldring, did you want to add to it?

Maybe we could even vote on this amendment here today.

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** I think the main motion was very clear. It's a study on the delivery—

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** We can vote on the main motion if it's clear.

**Mr. Peter Goldring:** You seemed to have some questions on it.

I think it's very clear that it's on the food aid policy. It's on the current delivery methods, the methods of delivery. Of course those are all relative questions on the effectiveness and how the delivery of the aid transpires, and it should be looked at on a periodic basis.

I can see huge logistical difficulties in certain segments of the world that we're trying to provide aid to. It should be looked at once in a while to see how effective that delivery system is, maybe even examining how other aid contributors are handling their distribution. We're looking at the long term here too, looking at biofuels and how much of the foodstuffs of the world are going into other forms of energy creation. I think all of those are relative for the future, as we look at how our delivery system is now, how effective it is now, and what we can do to make it better.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Lebel.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC):** I have certainly heard our liberal colleagues and Mrs. Barbot talk about the amendment making a course correction, but that was a complete change. Finding out the ability of a country to produce enough to feed its own people and finding out what Canada is doing in every country it helps are two completely different things. I understand when you say that there is some overlap. We can look at the two questions, but we do not have to study 180 countries to know what Canada is getting in return for the aid we are providing.

We are regularly criticized because we are not clear about our activities here, and that is completely wrong. We are going to be even more clear about the part of Canada's budget that deals with the aid we give to other countries. But when we set about it, we are told that it is not really necessary.

Is it more important to know what Canada is doing for all the countries to which we provide food aid, or to take each country and study what the political scene is there? We have to ask ourselves how we prioritize the questions we debate. We are here to represent Canada.

● (1730)

[*English*]

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

Are we ready for the question?

(Amendment negated)

(Motion negated)

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

We are adjourned.





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

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