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## Standing Committee on National Defence

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, December 3, 2009**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Maxime Bernier**



## Standing Committee on National Defence

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•(0835)

[Translation]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce my colleagues.

[English]

We have Dan Ross, the assistant deputy minister (materiel) from the Department of National Defence, and Bill Pentney, the assistant deputy minister. Of course everyone will know and recognize the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Walt Natynczyk. We also have the deputy minister, Rob Fonberg; Vice-Admiral Denis Rouleau; and Kevin Lindsey, assistant deputy minister, finance and corporate services.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, committee members, and members of our support staff who are with us, thank you for inviting me here to discuss Department of National Defence supplementary estimates this morning.

[Translation]

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to explain how the government is investing in our Canadian Forces and supporting the Canadian economy. As you all know very well, we ask a lot of the men and women of the Canadian Forces. Their job is to defend Canada and Canadians, at home and abroad.

In the complex and unpredictable world that we live in, this is a daunting task. But the Canadian Forces perform their duties formidably—with honour and valour. They are one of the finest militaries in the world, the best that Canada has to offer. The least their government can do is provide them with the resources they need to continue to excel in what they do.

[English]

Giving our forces the means to do what they do and what we ask of them requires a great deal of investment. This is why the Government of Canada has committed to do this with the Canada First defence strategy. Members of this committee will no doubt be aware of that document.

Over the last year and a half, we've been hard at work implementing the strategy itself, Mr. Chair. Our government's blueprint will allow the military to deliver excellence at home, be a strong and reliable partner in the defence of North America, and project leadership abroad.

Mr. Chair, I've also observed our military at work in Canada and overseas. It's with great admiration that I see what they're accomplishing today at a human level. It's truly humbling to witness the courage and the dedication of our men and women in uniform. These special individuals in uniform today are meeting incredible challenges wherever they find themselves—in 18 different missions around the world—often at great cost to themselves and to their families. The Canada First defence strategy is a reflection of the government and the country's admiration for the work they do. It's designed to ensure that we are able to maintain this excellence in operations over the long term.

There will always be need for the Canadian Forces and a demand for what they do so well. Over two decades the government will invest, in a balanced way, across the four pillars of military capabilities: personnel, equipment, readiness, and infrastructure. Delivering on such an undertaking demands that we methodically and in a coherent way plan for those inevitabilities.

That's why we developed an investment plan that details the investment that the department will make over the coming five years. It ensures that the timing of major investments corresponds with the availability of funds. Considering the magnitude of financial investments involved, prudent spending is of course critical. When we're dealing with taxpayers' dollars, we are taking all steps to ensure that the money is spent responsibly, accountably, and transparently.

Much of the additional funds requested in the supplementary estimates will allow us to continue to invest in the Canadian Forces in line with the Canada First defence strategy. We have managed the sums previously approved by Parliament well, and we will require \$2 million more than we were originally given. The rest of the previously approved sums are being moved into other areas of spending.

A central part of our plan is investing in the most important resource of all; that is, the marvellous people who make up the Canadian Forces—the soldiers, sailors, and airmen and women of the Canadian Forces. The supplementary estimates include \$69.5 million to help support those troops directly. This allocation will fund increases in pay and allowances for the Canadian Forces members, in accordance with legislated increase in wage restraint measures in the Expenditure Restraint Act. I think most would agree that the Canadian Forces are compensated well. The personnel pillar of the Canada First defence strategy will also address the need to increase our numbers. We're expanding the Canadian Forces to reach 100,000 members.

Today I am proud to say that we are over the 67,350-person mark—the highest mark in a generation, Mr. Chair. Despite demographic and retention challenges, our recruitment efforts are delivering concrete results. Young men and women everywhere are inspired by the possibilities offered by a career in the Canadian Forces and are showing up at recruiting centres in droves—our largest recruiting drive since the Korean War.

Recruitment is a key element of ensuring that Canada maintains a combat-capable modern military force. There are numerous exciting trades and career opportunities open to Canadians from coast to coast. And here's the bonus: we'll pay for a student's way if they join the Canadian Forces. So we are requesting \$3 million to provide additional support to the successful Canadian Forces recruiting campaign. This new funding brings current fiscal year funding up to the same level as the last fiscal year, a total of \$10 million.

With respect to infrastructure, Mr. Chair, we have recently also been making significant progress in our efforts to revitalize defence infrastructure across the country. This past year I had the opportunity and honour to travel across the country to announce important investments in infrastructure at bases and wings from Esquimalt, British Columbia, to Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador. These investments will help provide the modern infrastructure that our men and women in uniform deserve. It will help the Canadian Forces personnel to be safe and healthy as they go to work and as they go about their training in the places where they live.

● (0840)

These investments are bringing tens of millions of dollars to local economies across the country, putting people to work while at the same time building a better Canadian Forces for the future. The supplementary estimates will help keep the work moving forward. They include \$23 million to fund consolidation of Canadian Forces Station St. John's and several military units in a new facility at Pleasantville, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

In the estimates, there is also a request for \$6.6 million for a new special facility for Communications Security Establishment Canada.

On the equipment side, again I am very honoured and pleased to tell you that much progress has been made in terms of the Canada First defence strategy's investment in the third pillar, that is, equipment. We are investing roughly \$50 billion over 20 years to revitalize core capabilities of equipment for the navy, army, air force, and special forces.

For example, this August a contract was awarded for 15 new Chinook F-model helicopters. This is, of course, in addition to the six Chinook helicopters that our government previously acquired for the Afghanistan mission, as per the recommendations of the independent panel. These aircraft have made an enormous difference for our troops, considerably important in terms of moving them within the theatre of operations in Afghanistan and proving their safety and effectiveness.

Now we're making sure that the Canadian Forces have access to that capability for future operations both at home and abroad with the additional new Chinook helicopters. The new fleet of Chinooks is expected to be delivered by the year 2014.

Last summer, we also moved forward with the family of land combat systems and vehicles projects. This is a \$5 billion investment that was announced at CFB Gagetown this summer. It's intended to improve our land forces with the vehicles and to protect the vehicles if they need to respond to a full spectrum of operations. These vehicles will offer survivability, protection, and mobility to our military to operate in any challenging security environment.

The projects include the upgrade of a fleet of light armoured vehicles and the acquisition of three new fleets of land combat vehicles: close combat vehicles; tactical armoured patrol vehicles, or TAPV; and armoured engineering vehicles. The supplementary estimates contain a \$24.3 million request to support those projects.

We are also requesting, Mr. Chair, \$57.1 million for the urgent upgrade, repair, and overhaul of a number of battle tanks for operations in Afghanistan. This investment will also help to bring some tanks for training standard and provide the Canadian Forces with a sustainable heavy direct-fire capability for future operations.

● (0845)

[Translation]

Mr. Chairman, we're preparing our military for the 21st century security environment with investments to rebuild and modernize our army, as well as our air force and navy. The Canada First Defence Strategy is good news for the Canadian Forces. It's also good news for Canadians.

The economic activity generated by the investments the government is making in our military is putting people to work in communities across Canada. It's also helping Canadian businesses to become suppliers of choice in national and international markets.

Mr. Chairman, this government is looking to the future. Canadians deserve to be confident that their government is doing what is necessary to safeguard our nation now and for tomorrow. Our requests for additional funding are rooted in ensuring that the Canadian Forces have the capacity to act when called upon.

[English]

Mr. Chair and colleagues, in conclusion, we've made a commitment to rebuild the Canadian Forces into a first-class, modern military for the future. We've demonstrated that commitment over the past months and years, and the Canada First defence strategy is all about keeping Canadians safe at home and abroad, fulfilling our responsibilities to be a reliable partner in continental defence, and ensuring that Canada can offer leadership abroad.

The funding we've requested will allow the Canadian Forces to continue to assume those roles successfully.

I thank you and I look forward to your questions. *Merci beaucoup.*

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

I will give the floor now to the Liberal Party of Canada. I know you will share your time, so it's Mr. Wilfert, and after that it will be Mr. Dosanjh.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Minister, for coming.

General Natynczyk, it's nice to see you.

Minister, I certainly agree with you. I wouldn't say that we have one of the finest militaries in the world; I would say that we have the best in the world. I've been very impressed with what I have seen and heard over the past number of months.

On the Canada First defence strategy, which we could debate for a long time, I have a question specifically, through you, Mr. Chairman, for the minister.

There doesn't seem to be any obvious strategic framework in terms of identifying or prioritizing the Canadian Forces' contributions to the overall government defence and security objectives. Could you tell me how you go about assessing the actual utility of the forces and, more specifically, assessing the resources needed to respond accordingly?

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

Mr. Chair, in response to that question I would suggest that the strategy that went into formulating the Canada First defence strategy occurred over a significant period of time. It perhaps goes back as far as the late 1990s or early 2000, when members of the Canadian Forces, on both the civilian side and the military side, began to assess their equipment, personnel, and infrastructure needs, as well as readiness.

I would have to be honest and say that when the Afghanistan mission shifted in late 2004-05 to a deployment into Kandahar province, the equipment priorities, in particular, changed very rapidly. It became clear to everyone, given the high tempo of operations, that the necessity of protective equipment—that is to say, protective combat vehicles and things such as battle tanks—suddenly appeared on everyone's radar. As well, as a result of the preponderance of IEDs, which I know you're familiar with—members of this committee would understand well that these improvised explosive devices became a deadly weapon of choice for the Taliban in the theatre of operation—there would have been a reassessment at that time to look at how we would up the protection quota. That meant both equipment on the ground and things such as helicopters. It wasn't until, I would say, roughly two years ago that the decision was taken to purchase Chinook heavy- to medium-lift helicopters, which we were able to procure through an accelerated procurement process. We also then made up-armour investments in our existing fleet of Griffon helicopters, which provide escort to those Chinook helicopters in theatre.

I would invite General Natynczyk to contribute here, because as Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff, he was very involved in that decision-making process.

In short, the decisions in terms of priority equipment changed as a result of Afghanistan. Investments on bases across the country and investments in personnel were also meant to address certain anomalies that existed at the time. The decision to increase personnel to 100,000 obviously caused investments on the personnel side. On readiness, I just spoke of the capabilities as to protecting people on the ground in Afghanistan.

On the Canada First defence strategy, I'd invite General Natynczyk to comment.

● (0850)

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, because General Natynczyk will be here for the next round, I would ask to give my colleague a chance, but I'll come back to that.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I will give the floor to Mr. Dosanjh.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

Minister, I have some questions for you with respect to the testimony we heard yesterday at the other committee.

We heard testimony from Ms. Garwood-Filbert, who agreed that she was present at a particular facility in Afghanistan in Kandahar and identified three detainees who made allegations of abuse.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we are here to discuss the estimates. That's what the minister is here for. He'll be at the Afghanistan committee next week.

I believe that Mr. Dosanjh is talking about a time in 2006 when the minister was not, in fact, the Minister of Defence; he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He's here as the Minister of National Defence to discuss issues related to his ministry, not what happened when he was Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**The Chair:** On the point of order, Mr. Harris.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** This is an estimates committee. We know that the Afghanistan committee is looking at a particular matter. But with the exception of the possibility that he's talking about another ministry that this minister was in that time, I think it's open to this committee to ask the minister about anything that is relevant to his department.

I think it's arbitrary. The chair cannot say that he can't talk about this because another committee is discussing it. I believe the point of order is not right. This is an estimates committee, and it's a free-flowing chance to discuss things with the minister.

**The Chair:** Ms. Gallant.

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

To this point of order, I believe this committee did pass a motion that we would reserve the topic of Afghanistan detainees for the special Afghan minister, but further to that, Ms. Swords did say that publicizing the direction given, or alleged to have been given, could end the access to prisoners by the International Committee of the Red Cross, so the whole public discussion of the Red Cross communiqués could actually end up resulting in prisoners being abused without the proper monitoring by the Red Cross being in place.

• (0855)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Gallant.

Mr. Dosanjh.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** Mr. Chair, my understanding of the parliamentary tradition you mentioned is that when the minister is there, if there is anything even remotely relating to his current responsibilities, one is allowed to ask questions. I would just say to my colleagues on the other side that in fact we're doing this in full view of the cameras. If you have anything to hide, you should prevent me from asking questions. If you have nothing to hide, you should allow me to ask questions.

**The Chair:** Mr. Hawn.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** There is absolutely nothing to hide. The point of this meeting is to talk to the Minister of National Defence as the Minister of National Defence on the subject of the estimates. This committee already agreed that issues concerning the Afghan mission, whether they be detainees or anything else, would be handled by the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan, of which most people here are members.

Mr. Chair, what Mr. Dosanjh is getting into is an area that was under the minister's purview as Minister of Foreign Affairs, not as Minister of National Defence. He is not here testifying as the former Minister of Foreign Affairs; he is here testifying as the current Minister of National Defence.

I would leave it to your judgment.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Bachand.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Chairman, in my great wisdom and given the fact that I have a great deal of seniority on this committee, I would invite my colleague to stick to the supplementary estimates. Isn't that a good point?

In the supplementary estimates, \$721,000 are earmarked for the Military Police Complaints Commission. I would therefore invite my colleague to raise this issue with the minister. If he wants to stray from the subject, we will let him do so, but we have questions to ask. Personally, I would like to ask some questions about the Military Police Complaints Commission. I will certainly make that connection, but that falls within the discussion we must have with the minister.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** That's a good point because it is in the supplementary estimates.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Exactly. It's already in the supplementary estimates.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** But not in the 2010 estimates.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Yes, it is in the supplementary estimates.

Is that acceptable, Mr. Chairman?

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Would anyone else like to speak to the point of order? No.

In that case, I would like to remind committee members of what is contained on page 108 of the manual entitled *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*:

The questions and discussions at these meetings are generally wide-ranging, although the rule of relevancy does apply.

Is the question before me relevant? To assess the relevance of questions, subsection 101(2) of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons indicates the following:

(2) Speeches in committees of the whole must be strictly relevant to the item or clause under consideration.

It also says that the chair must show great flexibility as to the nature of the questions which can be asked in the course of deliberations.

Any issue which has to do with the supplementary estimates we are studying would normally be relevant. I would therefore invite Mr. Dosanjh to ask his question, but, as Mr. Bachand put it so well, to establish a connection with the supplementary estimates, so that we can get on with our work. I would invite him to be a little more specific and to word his question so as to establish a connection with the supplementary estimates we are studying today.

Mr. Dosanjh.

[*English*]

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** Mr. Chair, I have a lot of respect for you. I disagree with your ruling. I am not challenging it. This is, in fact, an effort to prevent us asking wide-ranging questions on the minister's current responsibilities. Just because he wasn't the Minister of National Defence then doesn't mean that he's not responsible for answering even historical questions on what may have happened and what he has learned about the positions. Therefore, if your ruling is that I can't ask the question that I was beginning to pose, I shall ask no questions.

Thank you. I will allow my colleague to take the balance of my time.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** All right, given that—

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Chair, if I might, Mr. Dosanjh, in fairness, wasn't given a chance to continue his line of questioning or the subject matter. What I did hear him say was that it was in reference to testimony given yesterday before the other committee. I was in the House for the balance of that testimony. I did not hear all of the specifics. I did of course see some of the reporting of that this morning.

Ms. Garwood, as I would expect all of you to know, was a member of a different department, not even the Department of National Defence. She was at that time, I believe, a member of Public Safety or Correctional Service Canada and gave testimony, yes, over a relevant period of time.

But if these are questions with respect to what she said yesterday with respect to e-mails that she sent or received or was privy to, if the member wants to pose that question and I have any information on that, I'd be glad to share it with you, but again within those parameters. She did not work for a department for which I was responsible. Yes, the general subject matter of Taliban prisoners, understandably, was the subject. I'm here to respond to questions, Mr. Chair, but I also respect your ruling.

● (0900)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Dosanjh, do you have another question concerning this—

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** I'm sorry, you've actually prevented me from asking the question. If I ask the question, it's going to be based on the evidence that we heard yesterday and you will rule me out of order. Therefore, I will not ask the question.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Minister, there appears to be a realization with regard to the Department of National Defence, in terms of its capabilities, that you've identified in your budget and your Canada First defence strategy, which is that they can't be achieved within the 20-year plan given the funding envelope that's available. Could you respond to that and, as well, respond to the issue of the pressures that you have in terms of the core responsibilities, coupled with ongoing challenges in terms of overseas deployments? This is obviously going to create more pressure on the defence department, and on your budget and your ability to respond.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and Mr. Wilfert.

There is no question that the Department of National Defence is a high-tempo department, particularly the deployment in Afghanistan and other missions that we are currently participating in. There is a current and continued demand for Canadian soldiers because of their capabilities and professionalism.

Clearly deployability is an expensive item. The decision to purchase four C-17 aircraft, for example, allows us to not only deploy soldiers for the purposes of participating in combat missions but also respond to humanitarian missions, such as we saw in the Caribbean, such as we have seen on other occasions where Canadian Forces, along with aid workers, deploy for the purposes of humanitarian relief and assistance in times of natural and sometimes man-made disasters.

We have seen, certainly in recent years, the necessity to purchase specific types of equipment that have great utility. For example, there is the use now by most countries, including Canada, of unmanned aerial vehicles, which are a very high-tech capability that allows us to have vision both day and night. So 24-hour vision on the ground in a theatre of operations like Afghanistan has incredible preventative capability to allow us to detect, for example, the planting of IEDs in the road. It allows us, when combined with other capabilities such as signals intelligence, to interrupt and very often pre-empt those bombs from killing Canadians soldiers or civilians or to detect where they're being made or, in some cases, where the materials are being gathered to allow those insurgents to use that type of explosive device. So that is an example.

Tanks we spoke about earlier. Because of the force of the blast of some of these IEDs, going to a main battle tank...and you can ask General Natynczyk in particular about this. As a former tanker, this is something he's very familiar with—yes, still a tanker.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** But these Leopard 2 tanks, which we were able to procure through a very innovative process from the Dutch, gave us a new capability that we hadn't been in possession of for some years.

Other modern land craft are equipped with body armour that again is designed specifically to protect the soldiers who are operating that equipment. Even the body armour itself, which is of a lighter composition that allows for greater mobility, the type of weaponry that is being used in theatre, M-777s, and the type of protective capabilities that we now provide our soldiers were important investments and, as you indicated, came about as a result of the experience in Afghanistan.

But to your question, when those pressures arrive they can clearly cause a change in the type of investment required. Over 20 years, to be frank with you, sir, I expect that there will be other changes and other innovations that may put pressure on the budget of the Department of National Defence. But this Parliament and, I would suspect, all members of this committee would agree that we can't send people into harm's way without proper equipment, without proper protection in particular, and without giving them the best capability to perform this important work that they do for us both at home and abroad.

● (0905)

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Maybe, Mr. Chairman, I can come back to this in the next round.

**The Chair:** Thank you, and thank you, Minister.

Now I will give the floor to the Bloc Québécois.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bachand, I know that you will ask a question regarding the Supplementary Estimates.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Chair, if I could, I have one qualification in response to Mr. Wilfert's comments about the cost here.

There were incremental costs in addition to the Canada First defence strategy. So included in the regular line items of the budget, when it came to Afghanistan, this Parliament also afforded additional funds, and in particular you will recall the independent panel recommendations that Parliament endorsed. That included incremental costs. So all of those items related to the Afghanistan mission specifically named were incremental costs, and then we have things for search and rescue, base improvements, and personnel improvements that I mentioned earlier in my remarks.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bachand, you have 10 minutes.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** I will share my time with my colleague, who will also want to ask a question.

First, Mr. Chairman, I would like to congratulate you and your clerk because you arrived at this morning's meeting well prepared. I was very impressed to see that you referred directly to the relevant provision of the Standing Orders. I believe this should be pointed out. Congratulations for being so efficient! Members of Parliament also do their homework. I expected what happened to happen, especially after what you said at the beginning.

I discovered a supplementary estimate of \$721,000 for the Military Police Complaints Commission. I would like the minister to explain to me why the commission, although it is unable to do the work it should be doing now regarding the prisoner issue, will receive an additional amount of \$721,000. I would like the minister to respond briefly, because I have other questions on this subject.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** First of all, I have to correct the honourable member. The MPCC is currently not sitting, at the call of the chair. The chairman decided that the committee did not accept the ruling of the Federal Court with respect to their mandated jurisdiction, which was to deal with issues specific to the Military Police Complaints Commission's mandate. As a result of a ruling from the Federal Court that affirmed the legislated mandate, the chair decided to appeal that and subsequently cancelled all ongoing committee hearings until such time as the appeal was heard. That was not a decision of the government; it was a decision of the chair.

With respect to the specific question on budget, I would defer to officials with respect to the budgetary increase for the Military Police Complaints Commission.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to hear the answer to that question later on, once I have asked all of my questions. Then, if the minister or his officials do not have time to answer, they can always do so in writing.

Mr. Minister, to begin, I cannot share your opinion. When witnesses are prevented from giving their testimony, and when redacted documents are tabled with the Complaints Commission, I believe this means that the commission cannot do its work. That is basically what happened.

Can you tell me whether you think that a parliamentary committee should therefore do the work of the commission because the issue is so serious? Do you acknowledge that it is important for a parliamentary committee to look into the detainee file? That is the work the Complaints Commission should have been focusing on in the previous months. So do you believe that parliamentarians have an important role to play in trying to find out exactly what happened?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Chair, I would certainly agree that Parliament plays a very important function with respect to the

examination of all items that Parliament chooses to examine. But as far as the Military Police Complaints Commission is concerned, there is a legislated mandate; that is to say, there is set out specifically in legislation the mandate of that body, in the National Defence Act.

I want to come back to a reference that was made by my friend with respect to additional funding. My understanding is that the additional funding came as a result of the decision of the chair to pursue this issue through a public hearing. The public hearing required travel and required committee support, and that was the basis of the additional funding request, and Parliament was asked to approve it.

Concerning the reference to documents and witnesses, again these decisions are made by the arm's-length independent body, the Military Police Complaints Commission. Rulings with respect to what documents they access and what testimony they could give were made by that body and then affirmed by the court, in some cases. These are not made by the political branch of government.

Similarly, decisions about documents that are redacted or documents that would be limited for release are made essentially within departments after review by officials, usually with legal training, and then affirmed by and ultimately decided by a special department within the Department of Justice or of the Attorney General. This again is not a decision made by ministers or by political staff; it is made by professional public servants, with legal advice from the Department of Justice. And it is made, as you know...and this has been a subject of public debate recently. These decisions are made to protect, in many instances, issues that relate to national security, issues that relate to confidential information received from international partners and allies or information from other agencies who specifically request confidentiality, such as the Red Cross, or international bodies, or confidential sources.

So there's a whole array of considerations that go into making those decisions about release of information as it pertains to national security. It's also important to note that the information can, of course, endanger both civilians and soldiers operating outside the country if it is disclosed.

Those are some of the considerations that go into the decisions around the release or the inclusion of documents from a hearing.

• (0910)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Please go ahead, Mr. Bachand.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** I would not want to ask a two-minute question, only to have the minister respond for eight minutes, which would not leave me any more time to ask further questions.

**The Chair:** Do go ahead, you still have some time left.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** The minister says he has a great deal of respect for the work of parliamentarians. He continues to insist that the commission decided to stop working on this matter of its own free will, and another committee studying the situation of detainees is also being shut down. What he says is true, because there were probably matters of national security at stake.



Mr. Chairman, this does not help us do our job. If they want to help us and if they recognize that we have an important job to do, they have to acknowledge our rights under parliamentary law, but they also have to give us the means to properly do our job. When we receive redacted documents, Mr. Minister, it doesn't take long to translate them into French. In fact, it only took a couple of seconds. It's no different here. We have received a lot of documents, but we cannot get to the bottom of things. The commission cannot operate even if it receives additional money. On top of that, our rights as parliamentarians are being curtailed.

But there's worse, Mr. Minister. How dare you claim that opposition members are friends of the Taliban? You did indeed say that. You compared us to the Taliban! Didn't you also say that we are against the Canadian Forces? In my opinion, the purpose of such tactics is to shut up the opposition. The government is hiding behind the wall of national security and we cannot even find out whether it is giving us valid reasons for doing so. Could you, once and for all, acknowledge that the opposition has a very important role to play and that it must be listened to? If committees are to work, you have to let them do their job. It is not so hard for you to shut down a commission, but it is harder to shut down a parliamentary committee.

I apologize for raising my voice, but I would like you to address this matter.

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** I have just a few corrections for the record, Mr. Chair.

I've never personally stifled the committee. I've certainly never ever referred to members of the opposition, including my friend, as a friend of the Taliban. That is simply factually incorrect, as were much of the references throughout his speech.

Parliament, of course, is extremely important in this process of examination of issues such as this. Having spent eight years in opposition, I fully respect our parliamentary process. I fully respect members opposite who have to take part in the sometimes very challenging, very onerous task of examination.

I want to come back to the Military Police Complaints Commission, because the record will clearly show the complaints commission had access to hundreds, if not thousands, of documents that were provided by the government. They were also given access to the witnesses. But of course, any witness from the public service has certain professional obligations and when it comes to disclosure of information in their possession, the Canada Evidence Act applies, the rules of that particular complaints commission apply. So the proceedings are operating within the parameters prescribed by law. That is the case with the MPCC. That is the case with the parliamentary committee. We will continue to cooperate. We will continue to provide evidence that is legally permissible.

● (0915)

**The Chair:** Okay, I will give the floor to Monsieur Bouchard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bouchard, you still have a minute and a half remaining.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me the opportunity to ask the minister a question.

Good morning, Minister. In your opening statement you referred to the Chinook helicopter fleet. On several occasions, you told me that you were as yet undecided as to where the new fleet of helicopters would be based. Your brief states that delivery of these helicopters is scheduled for 2014. As I'm sure you're aware, these helicopters require infrastructure support, which cannot simply be thrown together a few months before the 2014 deadline. It needs to be set up a few years ahead of the deadline. Minister, when are you going to make your final decision as to where the new Chinook helicopters will be based?

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** We have nearly made our decision, Mr. Bouchard. I know that this is a subject of great importance for you and your constituents. I would like to assure you that it is of equal importance to the Department of National Defence. With regard to the Chinooks, you are absolutely right; we will require infrastructure support to protect this new acquisition. The Chinook is a very sophisticated helicopter, particularly the new model F type.

[*English*]

As you know, we have undertaken a very extensive examination of the existing infrastructure found on various bases throughout the country, including Petawawa and the Bagotville facility, which I know you're very interested in. We're going to make a decision based not only on that infrastructure but also on the proximity, meaning the availability to deploy that particular aircraft as needed.

We'll make that decision, I would suggest to you, in the very near future. All of these things are worked up through the department. We have expertise within the department to help us make that decision at a policy level, as is the case with most, if not all, decisions at the Department of National Defence. I rely very heavily on the experts within the department, people like Mr. Ross in terms of procurement and people like General Natynczyk and others in terms of deciding what will optimize our capability and what will optimize the availability of an important piece of equipment like the Chinook. You will hear about this decision very soon, I assure you.

Thank you. *Merci*.

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

Now we'll give the floor to the Nouveau Parti démocratique du Canada. Go ahead, Mr. Harris.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to our committee, Minister, Generals, and officials of the department. First of all, I agree wholeheartedly with the opening comment with respect to the courage and dedication of our troops, and I think we all share your admiration for the work they do and the risk they take at the request of their country. That should be said first.

I can't help but say that I was rather disturbed by statements made by you in the House, Minister, a couple of days ago, suggesting that someone questioning a general was somehow unpatriotic. That seems to be not part of the Canadian tradition. Obviously we respect the military, but we have the right to ask questions and make comments about them. Again, that's not to suggest anything else.

I do want to ask a question concerning the role of the Military Police Complaints Commission. I am following up on your response to Mr. Bachand and your statement that numerous documents were made available to the MPCC. I have here a three-page memorandum that was made available to the MPCC and also to the committee of this House. It is dated December 6, 2006. It's a three-page memorandum, which—

• (0920)

**Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Braid has a point of order.

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Mr. Chair, I find it regrettable that certain of my colleagues on the other side of the table are not respecting parliamentary procedure. Your ruling earlier in this meeting made it very clear that questions from these members of the committee need to be relevant to not only the minister's presentation today and to the estimates, but also to the time and the tenure of this minister as Minister of National Defence.

I would remind my colleagues of the importance of respecting not only parliamentary procedure, the Parliament of Canada, and the people of this country, but also your ruling from earlier today.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Dosanjh, you have the floor, and you will followed by Mr. Harris.

[English]

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh:** On this point, sir, I hope it is not Mr. Harris's time that we're expending in terms of the arguments.

Let me just say that this is the second time this has happened. I controlled myself before, but I find this absolutely shocking. This never happened in my 10 years in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. It has never happened here in the last five years. The questions have been wide-ranging on previous estimates; this is part of the cover-up. This is part of the prevention of disclosure.

This minister is not a weakling. He stands up in the House every day and answers questions. Why would you not let him answer questions? It's about the MPCC. It's about the documents that are being disclosed or not disclosed by your government. Why would you not let this minister, who is quite capable of answering questions, answer the question?

[Translation]

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

I would like to remind members of the committee that Mr. Harris has not yet asked his question. He was still at the preamble, waxing lyrical, when he was interrupted. I would also like to ask him whether he has a comment to make on the point of order.

[English]

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I was going to add the very same thing.

I would ask Mr. Braid to have some patience until I get to my question, which is quite relevant and very similar to the kinds of things the minister was just talking about, which presumably are on the topic; otherwise you would have ruled him out of order.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your understanding.

The document I'm referring to is one written by Mr. Colvin, in consultation with Lieutenant-Colonel Elms and Madam Bloodworth, and sent to a number of people, including a number of addresses in Foreign Affairs as well as military addresses, CEFCOM, etc., and the Privy Council Office. It's on the subject of Afghanistan detainee issues. It refers to memorandums back in July, October, and November of 2006. The entire memorandum is blacked out for two and half pages, so there's absolutely nothing made available. The answer, which is directed to the ambassador, is also blacked out and entirely unavailable to the MPCC, the House of Commons committees, or the House of Commons in general.

Minister, given that one of the questions arising in terms of international human rights law is that the rule expressed yesterday by Colleen Swords and also expressed a little while ago by Brigadier-General Watkin.... The rule of international law is that we aren't to transfer prisoners to a real risk of torture or abusive treatment. That's what Brigadier-General Watkin has said is an expression of international human rights law. The question is very simple. Do you honestly think that either the MPCC or a committee of this House can actually understand what Canadian officials knew about the situation with this kind of evidence, and does this fact, this problem, not support the need for a proper public inquiry with a justice who could sift through this, who would be able to decide what is relevant and what is not? Isn't that a more proper forum for this kind of thing?

We're talking about giving more money to the MPCC, but they can't get the documents. Isn't it more sensible, more realistic, and more open to have a full public inquiry so that this can get off the agenda of the political realm, which it is very much in now, and get to an objective, proper consideration of the relevant issues and not go off on sidetracks?

• (0925)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Mr. Chair, on a point of order—

**The Chair:** Mr. Hawn.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Obviously the minister is free to answer as he wishes, but I will repeat—

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I'm sure he will, by the way.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** I'm sure he will, but I have to raise the point of order that, once again, this is a timeframe when the minister was not the Minister of National Defence. It is not related to the topic at hand. This committee already agreed, as was discussed previously, that items to do with the Afghan mission would be discussed by the special committee on Afghanistan, not this committee. This is the defence committee.

The minister is obviously free to answer, but I want to reiterate the point of order. What's happening here is that he's hijacking this process of the defence committee for this meeting, with the minister, as the Minister of National Defence, on the topic of estimates and other related issues relating to his job as the Minister of National Defence, not the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This is an attempt to hijack this process, and we object to that.

Having said that, obviously the minister is free to conduct himself and answer as he sees fit.

**The Chair:** Mr. Harris.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** To the point of order, clearly the minister's job involves answering questions daily in the House about this issue and about whether—

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** He's not in the House, he's in committee.

**The Chair:** Mr. Harris.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** We're talking about his job, excuse me. His current job includes answering questions in the House and dealing with this issue.

Are we wasting \$722,000 by giving it to the Military Police Complaints Commission when they can't do their job? That's relevant. Let's get sensible here. I think the minister—

**The Chair:** Order, please.

I will ask the minister to answer the question, please.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd be pleased to answer Mr. Harris' question. With respect to the MPCC, I'm more than happy to discuss the subject matter.

Referencing December 6, 2006, I was in fact the Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time, but specifically related to the question of documents, Mr. Harris has in his possession, as others have, documents that have been turned over by the government for the purposes of the other committee and the purposes for which they can be used here as well.

I come back to the point, Mr. Chair and colleagues, that the decisions around redaction—or editing, if you will, because I think a lot of people are perhaps not familiar with the word “redaction”—are not taken by politicians or ministers. Those decisions are taken at an arm's-length level by trained officials with national security clearance, aided by the Attorney General's special department on national security. That is to say that decisions are taken around what information can be made public for the purposes of a parliamentary committee or otherwise, based on national security concerns, to protect individuals, agencies, and countries who have in some instances given us information and, perhaps most importantly, to protect Canadian citizens—soldiers and civilians—who are working in missions like Afghanistan, where they could be put in harm's way. Their lives could literally be at risk if certain information is made public for a nefarious purpose. The Taliban or otherwise, those who would do us harm, having access to that information could endanger their lives, so an arm's-length decision is made with respect to that disclosure.

Coming back to the point of commentary that may have been deemed offensive by my colleague and other references to this, the public commentary that references war crimes or being complicit in

cover-ups or being complicit in some sort of torture without proof is offensive to everyone. I heard General Gauthier and others take great offence, great umbrage. These are men with 30-plus years of military service having their careers tarnished, tainted by references to inappropriate, even criminal activity. Surely they would be offended by that, particularly when it's unfounded or without evidence.

Let's talk about facts. Let's come back to evidence. Let's come back to issues that can be proved, issues that can be backed up.

We've heard testimony now before the other committee, Mr. Chair, if you will permit me, from three respected generals in charge of the Afghan mission at the time in question. We've now heard testimony from three high-ranking public servants also tasked at that time with respect to the Afghan mission, none of whom in their testimony referenced being in possession of or being aware of specific torture allegations when it came to Canadian-transferred prisoners or detainees.

So based on that, how would anyone at this committee or anywhere else, knowing full well that we take our advice and see the mission through the lens, through the filter of those individuals...? If they didn't see torture or pass on allegations of torture, how would government officials come to any other conclusion? That's how I would respond to the question.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

●(0930)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Harris, you still have 30 seconds.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** The question that really hasn't been answered is, can you seriously think that any committee or commission can do the job of answering the questions that need to be answered if they have information like this? Doesn't that really mean there should be a judicial inquiry, where a justice can look at this and decide whether or not it should be redacted or whether it's relevant?

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Harris, the MPCC has received thousands of unredacted documents. You would know as a barrister, sir, as we have already discussed and I think you've referenced, that there are very capable individuals, including the chair, including the MPCC itself, including military and non-military lawyers taking part in that process, who have access to thousands of unredacted documents. Like the parliamentary committee, they also have to respect the Canada Evidence Act. They have to respect the National Defence Act. They are in conflict right now with a ruling from the Federal Court. So it was the committee chair who made the decision to suspend those hearings.

With respect to disclosures, there will be a continued examination of documents and relevant information for disclosure, and the arm's-length departments will turn over information based on advice from the Attorney General and the Department of Justice. These are decisions made by professionally trained officials, not by politicians.

So continued references to me or anyone in the political branch redacting documents is nonsense, and you know that. Mr. Dosanjh, as a former minister, has to acknowledge that this is not a decision taken by government; it's a decision taken by professional public servants. It's not done at a political level.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** How come the media gets in?

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Are you somehow suggesting leaks by the government? We're being simultaneously accused of a cover-up and of leaking at the same time.

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

Now I will have to give the floor to the Conservative Party of Canada. The first to have the floor is Ms. Gallant, please.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Payne.

I'd like to start off by saying that I can confirm that the purchases on behalf of the military are greatly appreciated by the soldiers on the ground. At the Petawawa base I had the benefit of speaking first-hand to soldiers and asking them whether they're getting the equipment they need, and they confirmed that they are.

With respect to the tempo, many of them are eager to get back to the next rotation in Afghanistan. There are giant strides in achievements being made there, and they see how they help from one rotation to the next.

The only concern had to do with how the dependants are being treated and with making sure they have everything they need. Together with General Semianiw, we now have another person on board who is a military spouse herself, and she's helping the dependants throughout the country. Her name is Leslie Natynczyk. It's great work that she's doing, and I can tell you that our dependants at the Petawawa base greatly appreciate her work.

I have two questions. The first has to do with the students' payments. You made reference, Minister, to a way that people joining the military could have part of their tuition paid. That is the first question.

The second question has to do with the new Chinooks coming on board. Do the troops require time on how to interact with this type of chopper for operational purposes, bearing in mind that there has to be the proper funding allocation for that?

• (0935)

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Thank you, Ms. Gallant. I thank you as well for the long affiliation you've had with CFB Petawawa and the work that I know you've personally undertaken with respect to military families.

I would agree with you that the Canadian Forces have come a long way in the last number of years in efforts made to, shall we say, embrace military families in a more substantive way through programming and recognition at the bases for the need to invest in such things as child care, education in the broad sense, and support for families while soldiers are deployed. This has been a priority of the Chief of the Defence Staff. It has been a priority of the senior leadership of the Canadian Forces. Certainly General Walt Semianiw, who is here with us, bears both the responsibility and much of the credit for those advances.

You also mentioned—and I know the general will forgive me—Leslie Natynczyk. She has now taken on responsibilities, many of them voluntary, with respect to further advances in assisting both

military families and those who are returning from deployment with deployment-related injuries, whether psychological or physical. She has taken a specific interest in programs such as the Soldier On program. Such programs are designed to assist those suffering deployment-related injuries and to assist as well in the family-related matters that you mentioned.

We are very much making this a priority in the Canadian Forces. This is very symptomatic of a modern military, a military that recognizes broader responsibilities that go beyond equipment and infrastructure. These concerns are very personal for the members of the Canadian Forces, because they impact directly on their family and their future. I am very proud of the advances that are currently taking place and that have already taken place. Again, it's an example of their professionalism and of the appreciation and affection that Canadians feel for their men and women in uniform.

To come back to the question of scholarships or support for young Canadians who wish to embark on a career with the Canadian Forces, money is available when it comes to education. Whether you're entering the Canadian Forces as a reservist or as a member of the regular force, there are education bursaries, and Royal Military College in Kingston, one of the finest education facilities in Canada, has scholarships to offer. At high school graduations I attended last spring, a number of young Canadians, including some from my riding in Central Nova, were given significant—we're talking tens of thousands of dollars—scholarships for entering the Royal Military College and other university programs that can lead to a career within the military.

Much of that information is available on the Canadian Forces website, and we have individuals now who are going to campuses and community colleges and universities around the country to make that information available.

I'll come back to your last question, Ms. Gallant, about the helicopters. We have purchased used helicopters with heavy lift and medium lift capability, for lack of a better term. They are in good condition and were maintained by the American forces. These Chinook helicopters were made available to us on an urgent basis so that we could get that capability into Afghanistan immediately, and we purchased them. They're there now. We're back in the business of that type of helicopter and have the previous capability that we had going back some years. We have also contracted to purchase 15 new "F" models, a modern version of the same helicopter that will serve us well into the future.

Mr. Bouchard has asked some questions about where they'll be based. The new helicopters that we purchased are piloted by Canadians. It took some time, of course, for the pilots to familiarize themselves with flying that type of aircraft. Some modifications, I believe minor ones, were made.

In order to have that capability, we had to invest. These are not unsophisticated machines. They are not available at your local Canadian Tire. They had to be modernized somewhat for our purposes. I'm not going to single out any other country, but Canada has a very high standard when it comes to maintenance and mechanics. We have people in the Canadian Forces today who are nothing short of magic. Imagine keeping a 45-year-old Sea King helicopter operable and available for missions. The same can be said of the Buffalo and of some of the aging Hercules aircraft that we use on the west coast. Those incremental amounts are meant to help maintain and upgrade certain aging equipment and to make certain modifications to equipment that was recently purchased.

• (0940)

Does that answer your question?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** The question was actually from an operational standpoint. Do army soldiers actually have the opportunity to interact with the pilots? Is there a requirement for training, or is it automatic, as a part of having dealt with Griffons, for example?

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** A lot of the training would be standard when it comes to the use of helicopters. The Chinook, as you know, is a much larger aircraft used to transport both personnel and equipment. Since we haven't had that capability until very recently, there would be some training, but it would be pre-deployment. As it turned out, we have received those helicopters already in theatre because of this accelerated purchase, and the pre-deployment training would simulate the use of that larger helicopter, but yes, you're correct.

The Griffon helicopter, a smaller transport helicopter, is really a utility helicopter. There would be training available to all Canadian Forces going into theatre on its use and on how to appropriately perform duties around a helicopter. The larger one I would simply call a lifesaving instrument. Because of the threats, the less time soldiers are on the ground in Afghanistan and the more they are able to go between forward operating bases and to receive equipment and supplies out in the field via helicopter rather than via land transport, the better. That's literally saving lives today. As you know, that is consistent with the recommendations that came from the independent panel that studied much of the situation around the operation in Afghanistan.

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

I know Mr. Payne has an important question.

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Thank you for coming, Minister, and thank you to our Canadian Forces personnel and to the department. I'll try to keep things relatively short.

I'm interested in the land vehicles and in particular in the tanks we have purchased. I think there is some confusion in terms of the number of tanks we have. How many of those tanks are actually in Afghanistan, how many of them are here for training purposes, and where are they located for training purposes here in Canada?

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** The short answer is that we purchased 100 Leopard 2 main battle tanks, the purpose being that because they were up-armoured, they had a greater survivability. These are state-

of-the-art tanks. We received them at a much-reduced price from the Dutch. That was actually done by my predecessor, Minister O'Connor.

They have been very useful and very successful in protecting soldiers and doing what tanks do. A tank of that size and capability breaks up a party very quickly.

Twenty of them were sent into theatre after certain modifications. There are now 40 that have returned to Canada. There are an additional 20 that we swapped with the Germans. We bought 100; the German department of national defence actually gave us use of 20 tanks immediately so that we could get them in theatre quickly, and we are replacing those with 20 that we had purchased. There are 20 currently being upgraded in Europe to swap out and be sent into theatre. Some have been damaged quite badly, as you might expect; those will return to Canada for repair.

In terms of training, certain modifications are being made to the tanks that have already returned home. Some of these tanks will be used for very special purposes, such as road clearance. They are modified for a specific purpose.

All of that is to say that we will be in receipt of, and we will have, 100 Leopard 2 tanks in the fleet. They will be used for training purposes, primarily at Wainwright.

Would it be Wainwright?

**General Walter Natynczyk (Chief of the Defence Staff, Department of National Defence):** It would be in Gagetown, New Brunswick. Some will be in Wainwright.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Some will be in Wainwright, Alberta, and some in Gagetown, New Brunswick, for the purposes of future use of tanks and those who operate them and repair them.

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

[Translation]

On behalf of all committee members, I would like to thank you for making yourself available to us this morning.

We are going to suspend the proceedings for three minutes before hearing from senior officials from the Department of National Defence.

Thank you, Minister.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you colleagues.

[English]

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

• \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•  
• (0950)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Good morning. We shall now resume the 43rd hearing of our committee, and we are pleased to welcome today representatives from the Department of National Defence.

We have the pleasure of welcoming Mr. Robert Fonberg, Deputy Minister, who is accompanied today by his Assistant Deputy Minister, Mr. Dan Ross. I would also like to welcome General Natynczyk; Vice-Admiral Rouleau, Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff; Mr. Lindsey, Assistant Deputy Minister, Finance and Corporate Services; and Major-General Semianiw.

[English]

Thank you all very much for being with us.

We have about half an hour. Right now I will give the floor to Ms. Neville.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Thank you Mr. Chair, and thank you all for being here.

I would have liked to ask my question to the minister, but clearly I didn't have the opportunity to do so.

The minister talked quite eloquently, and I think we all agree that we can't send people into harm's way without proper protection. If we look at the appropriations, there are certainly reallocations of dollars to support the personnel. There are wage increases.

I have a concern. It's a very real concern and it is a present-day issue as it relates to the Afghan mission and as it relates to the protection of the personnel on the ground there. If we are suppressing warnings about torture by Afghan authorities, does that place those men and women in the field in greater harm's way? Does it turn the Afghanistan people against them? Does it make the Afghanistan people more vulnerable to recruitment by the Taliban and al Qaeda?

We all value the military. We endorse their efforts. We believe they should have every protection required for them, but my own view is that not addressing the issue of the Afghan detainees in a forthright and open manner is insidious and it potentially puts them in greater harm's way.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Forget it. I'll go to the next one.

**The Chair:** Ms. Neville, you have the floor.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** That's it.

**The Chair:** Who wants to answer that?

**Gen Walter Natynczyk:** Mr. Chair, I guess I would say that I don't think we should ever underestimate the amount of intelligence gathering that others do on Canada and the knowledge that we have. Each and every day, our men and women leave their forward operating bases and go into combat, and we are doing our very best, using the very best technologies, the very best intelligence, but also the instincts of our men and women so that they can achieve the Government of Canada's missions and goals in Afghanistan, do those tasks successfully, and come home safely.

On the issue of protection, I do want to applaud the tremendous work that the defence team and the rest of the government has put into providing the very best equipment that we could ever have. It's tremendous. I would just say from my perspective that we should not underestimate the intelligence gathering that happens, whether it be over the Internet or whether it be through the media, on what we do.

I don't think Canada has been in this situation of facing combat every day since the Korean War. It's very difficult to sit here in the beautiful city of Ottawa and think about what our men and women are feeling when they're in harm's way in combat. The fact is that intelligence is what ensures that we are successful and what saves our lives.

**Mr. William F. Pentney (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence):** Mr. Chairman, I just add that the opening of the question was based on the premise that the government is actively suppressing information about torture. I think, as the record has made clear, every specific allegation of torture has been treated very seriously and has been investigated. There have been three occasions on which the transfer of detainees has been paused because of issues that have arisen. Civilian officials from Correctional Service of Canada and from Foreign Affairs have conducted, I believe, over 150 visits, at some risk to themselves, into Afghan prisons to check on the condition of Afghan detainees.

So there are considerable efforts being expended now to support the Afghan government in building a better detention and prison and justice system. Millions of dollars have been invested in that, and individual Canadians have put themselves at risk, over 150 times I believe, going into Afghan prisons to inspect, to speak directly to Canadian-transferred detainees, and to provide assurances of their conditions.

• (0955)

**Gen Walter Natynczyk:** I would add that it's actually four times that we have stopped transfers. I am personally responsible to do the right thing for the men and women in uniform. In 2006, I was the vice-chief of defence, working for General Hillier. I saw material, and I acted if indeed we had to act. But reinforcing what General Hillier said, we had no cause to act until November 5, 2007, with regard to detainees.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Wilfert, you have 30 seconds.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, can I put three questions on the table and ask for a written response?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** The first is that while major acquisitions have been accounted for in the Canada First defence strategy, the demand for replacement weapon systems, in my view, seems to be skewed, particularly at the front end of the 20-year projection—for example, ships in 2015, combat vehicles, etc. I would ask you to respond to that.

Also, there is this issue of the 2%. The government has talked about this 2% issue for inflation, but the way I read it, it looks as if it's only going to maintain the current spending within the defence budget, yet the demands are obviously going to increase.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, it's difficult to identify quantitative performance parameters that have been set out in measuring the government's successes in delivering the CFDS, especially in the short term—it's the short term I'm concerned about, I understand the future.

If you could respond to those through the clerk, I'd appreciate that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** I will give the floor to Mr. Payne, for five minutes.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to welcome, again, the Canadian Forces and staff from the department.

Earlier this week this committee heard about the reserves, 2,000 in Quebec, who argued that the important role they're playing in supporting the Afghan mission is, in effect, undermining the regimental system and calling into question the very survival of the reserves. Do you agree with that statement, and could you elaborate on the role the Canadian Forces is playing in terms of the reserves?

**Gen Walter Natynczyk:** The reserves have never had such an important role as they do today. Again, under the Canada First defence strategy, the reserves will grow to 30,000. The fact is that thousands of Canadians are signing up each and every year in order to have a part-time career with adventure in the reserves. We are putting about 20% of each rotation into Afghanistan with reservists. Those individuals volunteer twice. They volunteer once to join the military; they volunteer a second time to go to Afghanistan. There's no reason compelling them to go. We have many reservists who want to go on repeat tours, and they're bringing home a wealth of experience.

I just visited Trois-Rivières a short while ago, the *12e Régiment blindé de milice*, and their level of experience and expertise has grown over the past few years. Those young soldiers and officers are coming home with a wealth of experience in both reconnaissance and tank operations, and they are bringing that back and training the other soldiers. We have a new normal in the reserves, which is affecting the Canadian Forces from coast to coast.

Closer to home, we've now identified reserve units for the Arctic. They're getting experience going into the north on exercise. It's not a surprise that many units want to be identified as being Arctic units, because again they want to do something different.

In this current environment, we have a very high operational tempo, whether it be in support of the RCMP and the Olympics, Arctic sovereignty, or in terms of operations, not only in Afghanistan but in places like Sierra Leone and the Congo, the Middle East, and Haiti. When people put on this uniform, it means they want to go somewhere, and they bring home that experience and raise the level of expertise of the units even higher.

• (1000)

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** Thank you for that.

There's one thing that I want to make sure is quite clear. It was implied during that other presentation that the regular Canadian Forces were saying these individuals must join the regular forces. My understanding, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, is that the reservists are volunteering.

**Major-General W. Semianiw (Chief of Military Personnel, Department of National Defence):** If I could, I'll respond to that question, Mr. Chair.

First, they are volunteers. Reservists volunteer to go on any mission operation throughout the world. What happens is that they

actually move to a different class or status within the Canadian Forces, from part-time to full-time. Even in that full-time status they are not in the regular force, even though they are afforded all the benefits and the support that you would receive if you were in the regular force. When they come back from that time overseas or even here in Canada—as they will support the Olympic operations—they revert back to their unit.

To build on what you said, regimentally, they wear their regimental cap badge and maintain their regimental identity. I would submit that they come back very strong regimentally.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** Thank you.

I'll share the rest of my time with Mr. Boughen.

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC):** You're generous to a fault, Mr. Chair.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Ray Boughen:** Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank you for taking your time out of your busy day to meet with us.

I have a question for Mr. Fonberg. Most departments have the ability to carry over 5% of their funding. DND has only a couple of hundred million. Can you share with us what the impact of that is on your programs within DND? Do you have a recommendation that we might look at that would change that around a bit?

**Mr. Robert Fonberg (Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This was an issue that we had a lengthy discussion on at the public accounts committee. The member is right. Every other department has a 5% carry-forward opportunity. The Department of National Defence was set at \$200 million back in the mid-1990s, and I think there's a general growing realization by the Auditor General, the public accounts committee and, by virtue of your question, this committee as well as to the ability to manage a \$20 billion organization while not being allowed to go to \$20 billion and one dollar because we would blow our appropriation. We are not allowed to have anything other than \$19,800,000,000 spent, because we lose it to a lapse.

The implications really are the amount of management time that's focused on trying to land, essentially, a 747 on the back of a small aircraft carrier, to a \$200 million carry-forward. It is extremely time-consuming. We do it and we do it with great diligence—and frankly, great expertise on the financial side—but it probably is not the best use of time overall in the organization. So if I were looking to the committee for a recommendation, it would certainly be to help us move that number up. We're in discussions with the Department of Finance and others on that issue.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

I will give the floor to Monsieur Bouchard.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning and welcome General Natynczyk, Deputy Minister, gentlemen. Thank you for being here this morning.

In October, when you and the minister appeared before the committee, I asked you a number of questions and you agreed to submit a written response; however, I have not yet received any answers. I would appreciate that you keep your word and provide me with these answers.

The Minister of National Defence and the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, my region, said that, by 2010, the Bagotville expeditionary squadron would reach its operational level of 250 members of the Canadian Forces. They also said that they still expected to meet the 2015 deadline for the expeditionary squadron: 550 military and 100 civilian members.

Can you confirm whether you are acting in accordance with these statements?

• (1005)

**Gen Walter Natynczyk:** These staffing goals for the expeditionary squadron are very important to the Canadian Forces, especially since their mission is first and foremost one of leadership.

That being said, the Canadian Forces are currently experiencing a staffing squeeze, given that we have an aircraft squadron in Afghanistan. We currently have some 400 aircraftmen in Afghanistan. A certain degree of pressure is also generated by transfer requirements for our members and their families.

This has an effect on the Bagotville expeditionary squadron. We have our objectives, but we also need to strike a balance for CF members and their families with regard to the intensity of our operations in Afghanistan. Those are the pressures that the air force is facing at the moment.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** I understand that you are facing pressures and that you have to prioritize. However, I would like Bagotville to be a priority.

General, I understand that there are other priority bases that, due to the activities in which they are involved, have seen a rise in personnel. I believe that Bagotville has not seen a rise in personnel because it is not a priority for the Department of Defence, and that is a shame.

According to some statements that have been made, there should be 250 members of the Canadian Forces in Bagotville in 2010; however, I think that we will have barely 60 by December 31. We are only a few weeks away from the deadline for this commitment that was made to the public, yet no work has started regarding the infrastructure needed in Bagotville.

It takes not months but years to build aircraft hangars and other infrastructure.

Have building plans been drafted to provide infrastructure for this section of the battalion? Do you have deadlines for building aircraft hangars? Do you have a deadline?

**Gen Walter Natynczyk:** I believe that is part of the Expeditionary Squadron Project. Perhaps Mr. Ross could provide you with more detailed information.

[English]

**Mr. Dan Ross (Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel), Department of National Defence):** Thank you for the question.

We have had a series of studies, working with the Chief of the Air Staff, on the problems of infrastructure and personnel to meet that requirement. Those plans are still in a fairly preliminary state. The air force, as the general said, is fairly challenged to meet the current exigencies of deployed operations, which they recently embarked on with the Hercules and Griffons, and they're trying to sustain the Chinooks with all the support personnel that entails. Their hope is to centralize that expertise and that deployable capacity at some date in the future.

I have to say that I'm not exactly up to date on where the Chief of the Air Staff is in being able to execute that, but we take that commitment seriously and continue to work hard at it.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[Translation]

**Gen Walter Natynczyk:** I would like to reiterate the importance of this squadron. I would be happy to take the time to provide you with a written answer.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Could I have a written response to all the questions that I asked? When will this expeditionary squadron be operational; in other words, when would the staffing goal of 250 military personnel be reached?

I also have another question.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bouchard, your time is up. The witnesses will provide you with a written answer to your last question.

I now have to give the floor to Mr. Braid for five minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks very much to all of you gentlemen for being here this morning.

I would like to wrap up our time today by asking a question on the important issue of recruitment. The minister, in his presentation earlier, indicated that the Canadian Forces were in the midst of our largest recruitment effort since the Korean War. Could you update us on the status of our recruitment efforts, the effectiveness of these efforts, and how this fits into and supports our Canada First defence strategy?

• (1010)

**MGen W. Semianiw:** I would like to first provide some context. We recruit annually to something called a strategic intake plan. It lays out that for each occupation and trade within the Canadian Forces we can recruit so many people. It's not just wide open; there are specific targets.

As you heard from the minister already, we've achieved many of those targets. In 35 of the trades and occupations we've already achieved our targets for this year. The overall target for this year was about 7,700. The last time we had to successfully achieve that volume was a long time ago.



So looking at the results at this time—which is not the best recruiting time of the year—we are at 75% of our target for this year. The best time to recruit, when we see most of the numbers come in, is in December, January, February, and March. We look at the recruiting period over the fiscal year. So overall we've had great success in many of the trades occupations.

We are still working hard. Particularly on the navy side there are some stressed trades, as I mentioned the last time I was here. These are trades that are more difficult to recruit, not because of what we do but because they are in such a high demand across the entire Canadian and international spectrum on both the military and civilian sides. We've had impressive numbers, in particular on the navy side. We have already recruited as many as we recruited last year in the naval electronics trades, and there are still four months left to go.

So overall we've had great success when it comes to the recruitment function.

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, do I still have time?

**The Chair:** Yes, you still have two minutes.

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Changing gears somewhat, I note in the supplementary estimates—and I believe the minister touched on this during his presentation as well—a line item of \$6.5 million for the Communications Security Establishment. Could you elaborate a little bit on the importance and the purpose of that funding?

**Mr. Kevin Lindsey (Assistant Deputy Minister, Finance and Corporate Services, Department of National Defence):** Mr. Chair, as you will know, the Communications Security Establishment is located in dated facilities that really don't accommodate the growth that has been necessary there, given developments. This funding is to do the initial work to assess options for a longer-term accommodation strategy for the CSE.

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Very good.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** I will give the floor to Mr. Wilfert. You will be the last member to have the floor.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Mr. Chairman, I'd like to put some questions on the table and then get an answer back, because I'm sure I won't have enough time.

On the issue of linking the broader national security issues with the need to really build our defence industrial base across the country, again, the Canada First defence strategy seems a bit weak in that area, and I would like more clarification and more information on that.

One issue that has been touched on is the need for a mechanism to review the content on a regular basis within the Canada First strategy. I would like to have that scoped out a little more in terms of changing priorities and changing needs, particularly over a 20-year period, to have a kind of mechanism in place that gives a regular review update to this standing committee.

And the final issue, in my reading of it, is the failure to prioritize any of the initiatives that are in there. For example, we have this

issue that the minister touched on, about capability and supply of resources. This is going to be a challenge as we continue to move forward.

Obviously we've seen some projects stall. We've seen setbacks in a number of areas. Announcements don't deliver. Just because we've announced that we're going to have ship X or aircraft X doesn't mean we have it. So it seems to me that there is a need to develop a straightforward procurement approach. Obviously that touches also on other departments, but it is something on which we need to get more information.

I put those three questions out. I don't know if anybody wants to respond in the short time remaining, but I have found in this committee that if you don't put your question out, it might not get answered. So if we could get those answers in writing, I would appreciate that.

Thank you.

• (1015)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Robert Fonberg:** Mr. Chairman, I will just make two or three really quick comments. One, on the issue of supply, it is a 20-year plan. As to the 2% question on the envelope growth, this is an organization whose funding has grown by over 50% in the last five years. The 2% comes on top of that 50% growth. Going forward, the 2% itself amounts to about \$12 billion over that 20-year period.

In the context of a 20-year plan, the government certainly was committed to having the department come back for a review of that plan. It is not a static plan. We don't expect it to survive intact for 20 years. The government will review that plan, I suspect, on a three-year basis, which is about the right kind of time to understand what's going on in terms of changes that are out there.

Lastly, we absolutely have prioritized all our major procurements, based on the lifespan of the existing equipment and the amount of time we expect it to take under contract to get new equipment, so we are moving all that forward, but in a program that is this big with a capital procurement run rate of \$5 billion to \$6 billion a year, things move by months, and sometimes by a year or two, depending on what the market actually has to provide and what the needs are.

We will actually answer in writing, if the member would like that.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** I would appreciate that.

Obviously priorities change, but the question is, when we announce something, there is the perception that we are going to have it. As we know, there have been delays in a number of areas, including the navy high-tech anti-aircraft weapons, as an example, supply ships, and so on. A more rigorous update for this committee would be helpful, because all of us around this table are interested in making sure that our personnel have the equipment they need.

General, this is probably not something we can really get into today. I know it has more to do with veterans, but I am concerned about the issue of when veterans come home, particularly from Afghanistan. There have been issues raised about pensions and payout and whether we are really providing the kind of standard that lives up to what the veterans charter indicated. I don't know if you could briefly comment, but that is obviously something, as we get more veterans coming home, that concerns me and, I am sure, everyone around the table.

**Gen Walter Natynczyk:** Mr. Chair, those men and women who are coming home are in uniform. They're my soldiers, sailors, airmen, and airwomen, and we have a responsibility on your behalf to take care of them.

We have learned a tremendous amount over the past three to four years. We're better today than we were a few years ago. Again, we're adapting in terms of caring not only for those individuals but also for their families, and we're recognizing the complexity of things like post-traumatic stress disorder and its effects on the individual and on families. In fact, we have to counsel all of them on how to take care of their physical injuries, and again, a great credit goes to General Semianiw and the Surgeon General regarding how we're doing that and working with Veterans Affairs.

Having said that, I'll let General Semianiw pile in.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** Very briefly, Mr. Chair, the Department of Veterans Affairs, with which we work closely, is actually in the process of looking at the new veterans charter, which came out in 2005-06. At that point in time, the commitment was that it was to be a living charter, which means it would see changes.

Our sense is that there are areas we'd like to see improved on. We're working with that department in concert, going through a number of focus groups, and hopefully we'll see some progress there in the short term.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Hopefully, we'll then get an appropriate update.

Thank you very much, gentlemen.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Bouchard.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Can I ask a second question?

• (1020)

**The Chair:** Yes, Mr. Bouchard. You have one minute.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** I have a short question for the general and the deputy minister. In my region, we are experiencing a major crisis in the forestry sector. The military base in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, the Bagotville base, is an integrated part of the community. I made a suggestion to the Minister of National Defence, and I would like you both to reflect on it as well.

The department has decided to rebuild hangar 2 on the Bagotville base. I suggested that as much wood as possible be used in the construction of the hangar so that the government can lead by example and drive up domestic demand for wood. Do not forget that

the forestry sector is important not only to Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, but to Quebec and Canada as a whole.

I would ask you to consider my suggestion that wood be used rather than steel and concrete for rebuilding hangar 2.

**The Chair:** Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Bouchard.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Harris for one minute. As you know, we will have to leave soon for the votes.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you.

I have just one question, and it's related to the estimates, so I hope I won't get any objection.

Why didn't you ask for more money for reserves? We've heard it said to this committee by witnesses, and Mr. Hawn suggested it to the witness, that maybe people have gone over their budgets. But we keep hearing stories about training budgets going down. The Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment has been told their training budget is going down. We've heard others saying that their people are being laid off.

Reserves are obviously very important today and will be in the future. Why was there not a request for more money for the reserves and what the reserves are doing? Can you mention that briefly?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** I would like to ask a favour of Mr. Fonberg. I did not get the opportunity to ask all of my questions. There are four subjects that I would like to raise with you. I think that you are the perfect point person, because you could direct my questions to the appropriate members of your staff.

I have one question regarding the military college; one on the Leopard 2 tanks; one on the lowering of the specifications for search and rescue aircraft; and, one as to whether conclusions have been drawn from the public consultation on maritime policy.

Mr. Fonberg, I will be very grateful if you could submit a written answer to my questions.

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

The answers will be sent to you through the clerk.

I am now going to give the floor to the major-general.

[*English*]

If you want to answer the question from Mr. Harris in a minute, we still have a minute.

**Gen Walter Natynczyk:** I rely on how the commander of the army balances his budget across the board.

We have seen a tremendous growth of reservists going on full-time duty over the past three to four years while our operational tempo has really increased. Many of our reservists have gone from part-time to full-time duty. In 2003-04 we had in the order of about 3,000 reservists who went on to full-time duty. Today, we're at 8,500 reservists on full-time duty, and this has put a lot of pressure on the reserves—we've heard that—but also on the army and on how it balances its budget across the board.

As well, we're seeing the operational tempo and how the army is mitigating it coming to some level of stability. So again, the commander of the army and his commanders are balancing their budget in terms of their operational pressures and how they actually do things in their regions and who actually does the work now that they're getting into a steady state.

So in this regard, I think we can probably give you a better answer in a written form. But this is really a reflection of the army balancing its budget, and also of the tempo coming to some kind of equilibrium in terms of how we support operations in Afghanistan as well as the training burden.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I would like to hear more in a little bit more elaborate written form.

**The Chair:** Yes. Ms. Gallant.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** I just have one question.

First of all, I understand this is Mr. Lindsey's first time appearing before our committee and I compliment him on the job he has done so far.

But I do have one question. I am not sure if it's for General Natynczyk or Mr. Lindsey, but it is on the question of residuals. At the end of the year, there is a percentage allowed to be carried over to the next fiscal year. My question is whether there has or hasn't been a request to increase that very minuscule amount.

**Gen Walter Natynczyk:** That's an issue that is near and dear to all of our hearts, but I'll ask Mr. Fonberg to respond.

**Mr. Robert Fonberg:** We did talk about that perhaps when you were out of the room for a second, and we said we have had discussions all the way through the Auditor General, the Department of Finance, and the public accounts committee.

The member asked if there was anything the committee could recommend or help us with, and certainly the idea of raising that limit would be of benefit to us, because it would take away from the time we spend—not necessarily hugely efficiently—trying to land on that small number and allow us to use it to manage the organization probably a little bit more efficiently.

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

I will ask the members if we have unanimous consent to

● (1025)

[*Translation*]

adjourn proceedings, given that it is 10:24. Are there any objections? Is everybody in agreement? Thank you.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the deputy minister, the assistant deputy minister and the members of the Canadian Forces for appearing before our committee to answer our questions today.

That concludes the 43rd hearing of our committee.

[The meeting is adjourned]

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