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Chair

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)): I'd like to bring this meeting to order.

This is the ninth meeting of this session of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. We are today studying border security.

We would like to welcome our witnesses. From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police we have Mike Cabana, assistant commissioner, and Warren Coons, director. Also, from the Canada-United States Cross Border Crime Forum we have Barry MacKillop, director general, and Joe Oliver, co-chair of the border enforcement group.

We look forward to the information you will supply us with today on a very important issue.

The usual practice at this committee is to allow opening statements of approximately ten minutes, and then we usually open it up for questions and comments, beginning with the official opposition and moving around the table.

Without any further ado, I think we will begin. Who would like to start?

Mr. MacKillop, go ahead, sir.

Mr. Barry MacKillop (Director General, Law Enforcement and Border Strategies Directorate, Public Safety Canada, Canada-United States Cross Border Crime Forum): Thank you.

[Translation]

First of all, I would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to speak on the Canada-United States Cross-Border Crime Forum.

With your indulgence, I will take a few minutes to provide an overview of the Canada-United States Cross-Border Crime Forum, or CBCF, its mandate and evolution to date. I will also discuss briefly an overview of its past and current work.

The CBCF, which was created in 1997, serves to advance bilateral cooperation in the areas of law enforcement, criminal justice and intelligence issues. Strengthening the ties between our two countries on these issues is extremely important, not only in terms of enhancing domestic public safety, but also regional and international security.

Through the CBCF, we have built strong partnerships and increased awareness of Canadian and U.S. justice and law enforcement systems across the border. In short, the CBCF helps advance Canada-U.S. cooperation on the entire spectrum of cross-border crime issues and encourages effective coordination between law enforcement and justice communities across the border. It facilitates the resolution of impediments to effective law enforcement and prosecution of cross-border crimes. As part of this work, a number of CBCF subgroups study national and binational issues that help advance the fight against cross-border criminality.

In order to further cross-border law enforcement cooperation, the CBCF Ministerial Forum brings together over 120 senior law enforcement and justice officials from participating organizations in Canada and the U.S. The Minister of Public Safety co-chairs the CBCF, along with the Canadian Minister of Justice and the U.S. Attorney General. CBCF subgroups meet continually and work on an ongoing basis throughout the year leading up to what is delivered and presented at the Ministerial Forum.

[English]

The mandate for the CBCF, the Cross-Border Crime Forum, is to serve as a forum in which Canadian and United States law enforcement and justice officials from the federal, state, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments can identify major issues and national policy priorities related to transnational crime and terrorism.

With respect to the evolution of the CBCF, the first forum held in Ottawa, in 1997, was organized to discuss the issues of cigarette smuggling, which was a concern on the Canadian side of the border at the time, and mass marketing fraud, which was a particular concern on the U.S. side of the border. At this early stage, the forum was essentially an exchange of names and phone numbers so that officials would know who to talk to in the other country.

• (0910)

After September 11, 2001, however, the Canada-U.S. Smart Border Declaration renewed our countries' joint commitment to enhancing cooperation on border management. As a result, the Cross-Border Crime Forum benefited from a high level of activity and increased attention on both sides of the border.

Since its inception, the forum has expanded to address broader law enforcement and national security issues, including illicit drugs, counter-terrorism, identity theft, firearms trafficking, mass marketing fraud, human trafficking, and transnational organized crime, to name a few.

The forum, despite its broader scope, continues to focus on developing best practices and concrete tools to resolve operational, policy, and legal challenges that may hinder the ability of law enforcement and justice officials to reduce cross-border crime.

Ongoing collaboration has helped us to forge countless working relationships across the border and to strengthen the relationships between organizations in both countries. It's important to note that the CBCF also provides an opportunity for the Canadian ministers of public safety and justice and the U.S. Attorney General to offer direction and guidance for future efforts of the working groups. In this sense, the annual ministerial meeting is the culmination of the Cross-Border Crime Forum's ongoing activities throughout the year.

The agenda for each ministerial forum is developed jointly by Canada and the U.S., and is designed to address ongoing initiatives and emerging challenges in cross-border criminality.

The forum has served as a useful vehicle to undertake several intelligence-based initiatives, such as joint threat assessments on drugs, firearms trafficking, migrant smuggling, organized crime groups, and joint action plans to address shared concerns. Some of the more notable discussions that have taken place within the CBCF relate to operations of integrated border enforcement teams, which you will hear about from my colleagues in a few minutes.

Last March, Canada hosted the tenth CBCF in Quebec City. Some of the main deliverables coming out of that CBCF included "United States-Canada Border Drug Threat Assessment 2007", "Canada-United States IBET Threat Assessment 2007", and a five-year Canada-U.S. report on mass marketing fraud, as well as a public advisory on counterfeit cheques.

Turning to our current work plan, the next CBCF is scheduled for the fall of 2009 in the U.S., with a date and location yet to be determined. We're at the very early planning stages for that next meeting.

The CBCF, as mentioned, is driven by the work plans of several subgroups, including the border enforcement subgroup, which is currently working on establishing new radio interoperability pilot projects, and finalizing the integrated maritime cross-border law enforcement operations framework agreement, commonly known as "Shiprider".

The counter-terrorism subgroup is exploring personnel exchanges and other means of enhancing cooperation between the RCMP and FBI, as well as joint investigations on terrorism financing.

The drugs and organized crime working group is exploring RCMP participation in the U.S.-led joint inter-agency task force in Asia west, and is considering developing a threat assessment model that utilizes current threat assessments from the RCMP, DEA, and FBI to more effectively address operational needs and ensure efficiencies between agencies, as well as analyzing emerging technologies and challenges to law enforcement.

The firearms trafficking group is working on implementing the real-time exchange of forensic ballistic data and updating the 2006 cross-border firearms trafficking overview.

The mass marketing fraud working group continues to work on the joint targeting of top echelon criminal organizations, based on

recent threat assessments, and identifying new areas for future public advisories.

Finally, the prosecution subgroup is working on developing guides to assist and facilitate extradition requests, MLATs, and access to information required for prosecutions related to cross-border crime.

• (0915)

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, the CBCF is a testament to the continued strong and collaborative relationship that augments the safety and security of our citizens. As new and innovative cross-border law enforcement and justice initiatives advance through the CBCF, they help combat transnational crime along our shared border.

While the CBCF does not replace bilateral mechanisms that are in place, it does provide a meaningful forum in which a broad spectrum of issues can be brought to the forefront.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity to appear before you today. Of course, I will be happy to stay and answer your questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Cabana, do you have some opening remarks as well?

[*Translation*]

C/Supt Mike Cabana (Assistant Commissioner, Federal and International Operations, Border Integrity Section, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Mr. Chair, Honourable Members. I am very honoured to be appearing before you today.

[*English*]

The RCMP's Federal and International Operations Directorate, or FIO, works to ensure the safety and security of Canadians and their institutions, both domestically and globally. This is achieved through intelligence-based prevention, detection, investigation, and law enforcement measures aimed at terrorists, organized criminals, and other criminal elements.

Border integrity falls under FIO and encompasses branches with expertise in investigating cross-border criminality and identifying threats to Canada's national security along the shared land border, and at major air and marine entry points.

The integrated border enforcement teams, or IBETs, are an important component of the RCMP's border integrity strategy. I welcome this opportunity to talk to you about their concept and some of their successes.

Fifteen IBET regions have been created since the signing of the smart border declaration, with integrated units implemented in 24 locations along the shared border between Canada and the United States. The five core IBET agencies are the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada Border Services Agency, U.S. Customs and Border Protection/Border Patrol, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard.

[*Translation*]

The IBET concept is based on intelligence-led policing, coordinated information sharing and identification, investigation and interdiction of persons or organizations posing a threat to national security or engaged in other organized criminal activity. It encourages the involvement of municipal, provincial, state, federal and First Nations law enforcement agencies, other stakeholder agencies and related government departments.

[*English*]

I would like, if I may, to spend a few minutes explaining why the IBET is crucial to border security, the benefits of this arrangement, and the way forward.

Sophisticated criminal organizations exploit vulnerabilities in border demographics, geography, and enforcement patterns to smuggle people and commodities—such as narcotics, currency, firearms, and contraband tobacco—between Canada and the United States. Such criminality is adaptive and ever-expanding, compromising the integrity of our border and posing a real threat to the security of both nations.

On many occasions we have seen the innovation and flexibility of organized crime groups. They respond rapidly to enhanced enforcement pressures, resorting to smuggling by air or even building tunnels when faced with difficulties crossing the land borders. This puts a tremendous amount of stress on our resources as we try to anticipate their next move and respond accordingly. It emphasizes the need for law enforcement and public safety agencies to also find new ways of doing business. Simply patrolling the border hoping for a chance encounter with criminal activity is not an effective use of government's finite resources.

Several years ago the RCMP patrolled specific parts of the border. Over time it became clear that criminal organizations knew exactly how to avoid detection by such patrols and their effectiveness became questionable. As a result, we have become more intelligence-led, developed solid partnerships at home and abroad, and found better ways to share information.

The strong relationship between Canada and the U.S. makes the issues at our shared border unique. One of the greatest challenges we face is how to increase security without impeding trade. This reality directs the need for a layered approach to law enforcement efforts, as the border is much more than a line in the sand; it is a continuum.

Success in maintaining Canada's border integrity requires a multi-faceted approach to border enforcement—international, in transit, port points of entry, and inland. Border security must employ a seamless, integrated, multi-layered, and balanced approach to best protect our citizens and target the real threats.

When I say a balanced approach, I mean in addition to border enforcers we also need law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border partnering and working very closely together on the same goal, disruption of criminal activity.

The IBET model brings to bear the resources and authorities of a binational, multidisciplinary team with a full range of police, customs, immigration, and regulatory powers to support public safety and national security, not just customs and immigration authorities. Of course front-line law enforcement officers have been working together on joint operations for decades. IBET, however, is a formal relationship endorsed by both the Canadian and American governments.

The core IBET agencies are dedicated to building and maintaining strong relationships, sharing information, meeting to discuss problems, and sharing best practices and threat assessments. IBET has succeeded in opening the lines of communication among law enforcement agencies in our two countries.

All five core agencies have jointly developed and agreed to an IBET charter, a foundation document that provides authority from all signatories to ensure cooperation and deliver the mandate of the smart border declaration, to improve information sharing and cross-border enforcement for border security.

IBET is a functional, totally integrated program, with an appropriate governance structure in place to reflect the partnerships. This structure consists of an international joint management team, IJMT; international coordination team, ICT; and joint management teams, JMTs. I apologize for all the acronyms.

The IJMT consists of one official from each of the core partner agencies to represent their organization by providing general direction to the IBET program. The IJMT identifies common concerns, issues, challenges, and best practices within IBET regions and provides guidance and direction to the joint management teams. The IJMT ensures that particular attention is focused on the coordination and development of communication, standardized reporting, training, intelligence, and border awareness.

The ICT, or international coordination team, is co-located at RCMP headquarters here in Ottawa. It consists of one official from each of the core agencies, who provide day-to-day advice and assistance to IBET and joint management teams on behalf of the international joint management team.

● (0920)

At the local level, joint management teams have been established in each IBET region, consisting of at least one official from each of the core partner agencies and any local law enforcement agency with an interest in the integrity of the Canada-U.S. border. The joint management teams hold regular meetings to identify investigative priorities and ensure the development of both internal communication mechanisms and annual threat assessments. Regular intelligence reports are shared and joint investigations are directed.

Now, organized crime is not static at the border. Conspiracies occur in and between major Canadian and U.S. cities. The joint management teams are critical to effective border enforcement, as they facilitate the required dialogue with inland enforcement entities and coordinate appropriate responses.

Another very important component of the IBET model involves the co-location of intelligence resources in the field to facilitate the exchange of law enforcement information on criminal activities observed or interdicted at the shared border. These co-located intelligence teams jointly develop the intelligence products that are so important in implementing focused enforcement operations on the criminal organizations that are taking advantage of gaps in the security of the border between the ports of entry.

The IBET threat assessment working group jointly prepares an annual Canada-United States IBET threat assessment. This provides law enforcement with an overview of the various land and marine threats that IBET units have encountered along the border between the ports of entry.

● (0925)

[Translation]

Since their inception, IBET units have identified national security cases, disrupted smuggling rings, confiscated drugs, weapons, tobacco, and intercepted criminal networks attempting to smuggle illegal migrants. They are disrupting larger and more sophisticated criminal operations. An example is Operation Julien/Aorte. An organized crime group operating out of Montreal was overseeing smuggling operations occurring across the Maine/New Brunswick border, approximately 600 kilometres from Montreal.

Several IBET partners, including the DEA and the Quebec Provincial Police, have been involved in intelligence gathering. There have been 29 arrests. Seized contraband included: 26,500 marijuana plants, 880 lbs of marijuana, 3 kg of cocaine, 25,000 methamphetamine pills, 1,168 cartons of contraband cigarettes, 29 handguns, cash in the amounts of \$186,000 US, \$266,000 CDN, and an estimated \$3 million in assets. It should also be made clear that IBET does not work alone. IBET units work closely with local and provincial law enforcement, with RCMP resources and the resources of our partner IBET agencies.

[English]

In closing, I would like to emphasize that maintaining public safety, safeguarding Canada's international borders, and combatting organized crime are inextricably linked. Our border security solution must be both tailored to address specific vulnerabilities along a diverse border and flexible enough to respond to the ever-evolving criminality. The IBET initiative is a critical component of that solution, and has been internationally recognized as a best practice.

Over the past several years, the Government of Canada has reiterated its commitment to ensuring the safety and security of Canadians and to working with the United States to protect the safety and integrity of our shared border. This commitment has been declared in speeches from the throne and in international policy statements.

The IBET initiative has made remarkable progress in strengthening our binational partnerships. We've seen significant improvement in our ability to share information, coordinate investigations, and enforce the laws in support of our shared mandate to enhance border security.

The IBET partners are all keenly aware that we must improve on the existing foundation to ensure the sustainability of this important

bilateral initiative. We continue to examine opportunities for improvements. These include advancing and investing in interoperable border technology; increasing the number of IBET partners and resources on both sides of the line; working together to improve border integrity; creating an intelligence-led, uniformed presence between the ports of entry; eliminating barriers to effective border enforcement; and ensuring the timely exchange of border-related information with all inland enforcement partners.

I'd like to thank you for inviting us here today. We would now be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your presentations.

Without any delay, I think we'll immediately go to questions and comments.

Mr. Holland, you indicated you have a question.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for the work they're doing.

I just wanted to start questioning with an issue that is probably the most pressing right now, with respect to trade. One of the concerns we have—and obviously we want to maintain security to the greatest degree possible—relates to how we still allow people to move back and forth. I'm very concerned with the condition in June that Canadian citizens will have to have a passport and U.S. citizens will have to have a passport. We've really not taken a lead on this. Certain jurisdictions have. Governor Gregoire and B.C. Premier Campbell have been very aggressive in developing an enhanced driver's licence to take the place of a passport. Even there, the reality is that most people won't have that document in time for the Olympics. As the world's two billion eyes train on that corner of the planet, you're going to have a requirement for a passport that a lot of Americans aren't going to be aware of and they're going to try to get up to Canada. We could have a real mess on the border. It's one of the reasons that I think it's so important that it be at least put off until the other side of the Vancouver Olympics, and we have to make overtures to the Americans in every way possible to do that.

I just wanted to get your comments on this. Let's take constituents in a riding like mine, who want to go down to Buffalo and maybe watch a Buffalo Bills game, or maybe take in a bit of shopping, making sure they declare everything when they come back. How do we make sure we maintain that casual travel? How do you view this enhanced driver's licence?

What other things should we be looking at to make sure that those people who want to legitimately move back and forth and are just casual travellers who aren't going to go and get a passport can do that? Let's be realistic. Particularly in the United States, only 20% of Americans have passports. We don't want to get hammered by this when it comes forward. Already we've seen that we've lost a lot of trade.

● (0930)

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Mr. Holland, your question is directed at whom?

Mr. Mark Holland: I'd be interested in both of your comments, or if any one of you wants to volunteer on how effective you feel an enhanced driver's licence as a tool would be and on how realistic it would be to roll it out.

Secondly, perhaps you have some other ideas of how we can ensure that casual traffic moves back and forth between our two countries.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Thank you very much for your question.

I can say that we share the concern that you've expressed in terms of implementation of any new requirements to cross the border. We also share a concern with what's been termed as a thickening of the border. This is partly one of the reasons we are promoting the IBET model, which is actually looking at a balanced, layered approach.

In terms of enhanced or additional travel documents, the risk always exists that if the passports can be counterfeited, it's reasonable to think that any other kind of document has that potential as well.

In terms of our views specifically on what happens at the port of entry and what Canadian citizens are going to be required to produce, this is a question, I believe, that would be better directed to CBSA. Unfortunately, in Canada there are two agencies that are responsible for securing the border.

Mr. Mark Holland: I understand that.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: The RCMP is between the ports.

Mr. Mark Holland: I was wondering, from a security perspective, about your viewpoint, about how you feel in your conversations regularly with American security officials. How do we satisfy their need? Obviously we would prefer not to have a passport as a document at all for people to cross. They can use two pieces of government ID.

From a security perspective, how do you think we can satisfy them on whether or not an enhanced driver's licence would be there? What about an idea of something like a day pass or a two-day pass? Congresswoman Slaughter has recognized this for the person who shows up at the border.

My concern here is that, look, we have almost no time between now and June, and there's not a lot of talk being put into this. When I talk to congressmen and congresswomen and governors on this, I find they haven't put a lot of thought into it. We're going to hit this date in June. People are going to show up at that border and they're going to be turned away. You only have 20% of Americans who even have a passport, so this is going to have a hugely detrimental impact upon trade, and it's not greatly improving security. It's something we all have to be thinking about here.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: I'm not disputing what you're saying. I agree with you. From an enforcement standpoint, the concern would be that the more documents that exist to allow the cross-border travel of individuals, the more risk there is.

If I remember correctly, as this goes back several years—I believe this is based on discussions with our American counterparts—right now there is something in excess of 1,200 different kinds of documents being used to cross the border. As for the likelihood of

any border enforcement official being able to recognize whether the document being produced is a true document or a counterfeit, with that number of documents, it's pretty challenging.

I agree with restricting the number of documents that are being used to allow this travel. In terms of specifics for the day pass, I have not been privy to any of those discussions so I would have to go back and check. I can undertake to come back to the committee here with a more formal response.

● (0935)

Mr. Mark Holland: I appreciate that.

In April of 2004, for the first time, there was a national security strategy that was implemented by the Government of Canada. A year later, we had an annual report, with an expectation we would have one every year thereafter. There has been no annual report since then. There has been no renewing of a national security strategy.

This is something that comes up in the discussions I've had with American officials, with them saying that we're not reporting annually and we don't have an updated national security strategy. Can you talk to me about what you're hearing about that and how that is impacting our discussions with the Americans?

Mr. Barry MacKillop: Thank you.

I haven't heard that it's had any negative impacts on our discussions. Certainly it's not something that's focused on as a problematic area at the CBCF, for instance.

I understand there is work under way right now on updating the national security statement or the national security policy, but I'm not exactly sure of the state of that work at this point in time. I understand there is work and a commitment to move forward on that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Ménard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): I see from your respective presentations that you attach a great deal of importance to relations between law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border. You talked about joint operations and in particular about information sharing. I think this is what enables you to make timely arrests or to use enforcement measures. As one of the people behind the Carcajou Squad, I can appreciate that tremendous progress can be made through cooperation.

You've talked to us about two types of measures. We hear a great deal about these agreements, information sharing and joint operations, but very little about traditional, linear measures at the border aimed at stopping people from entering the country, measures that occasionally result in someone being intercepted.

Regarding these two types of operations, in your opinion, what percentage of these are cross-border criminal information and intelligence operations, versus measures taken at the border itself. I realize that this is not a simple question, but I do think it's an important one, given that it could help those who are planning for the future and help determine if funding should target one type of operation as opposed to another.

C/Supt Mike Cabana: Thank you for your question, Mr. Ménard.

I agree with you that there is no simple answer to that question. Unfortunately, I can't give you a percentage. However, I can confirm that border security operations flow from a partnership arrangement. As you said, certain operations focus on activities at the border and these are carried out in conjunction with ongoing investigations in larger centres. Some of the investigations and interceptions occurring at the border even provide the information needed to develop long-term investigations involving law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border.

Unfortunately, we do not focus on establishing a percentage. One has to understand that IBET units are based on the partnership concept. Each core IBET agency brings to the table the knowledge and skills set of its members with a view to ensuring border security. Some of the agencies, like the RCMP which operates in certain locations across the country, or the U.S. Border Patrol, focus their attention especially on what is taking place along the border itself.

• (0940)

Mr. Serge Ménard: I see. We have so little time to talk. I would like to continue our discussion of this subject, but I have to wrap it up.

Many Canadian travellers make the same observation when they go to Europe, where there are no borders and people move about freely. Europe is not immune to terrorism, money laundering and drug trafficking. Nevertheless, people can travel from Poland to Spain, from Italy to France, from Luxembourg to other locations and move sums of money from one country to another.

Given all of the efforts made to maintain our border, one of the longest in the world, do you feel that we are safer than Europeans are from the threat of terrorism, money laundering or drug trafficking?

C/Supt Mike Cabana: Mr. Ménard, I will answer that question by giving you my personal opinion.

I do believe that the attention paid to maintaining the Canada-U.S. border does strengthen our security. For example, activities that our banned or detected at the border enable us very often to identify individuals in major centres in the United States or Canada who are involved in organized crime. Some of the biggest investigations conducted in Canada and the U.S. came about as a result of an interception at the border. The border is also a vulnerable point for criminal organizations.

Mr. Serge Ménard: I understand.

Do I have any time left?

[English]

The Chair: You have another minute and a half.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard: I'm interested in getting Mr. MacKillop's opinion. Perhaps you can respond as a civilian representing another agency.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but what strikes me is that under pressure from the Americans, who have become absolutely paranoid about wanting a tightly sealed border, we have been forced to establish new procedures. For example, Canada, and Quebec in particular, is home to a number of border towns in which homes are built right on the border. People have lived this way for many years. We have the

impression that the Americans are the ones who have forced us to devote this level of energy and these resources to border security. As a result, there is less energy and fewer resources devoted to intelligence gathering and to increased surveillance of criminal organizations.

Mr. Barry MacKillop: I don't think the problem originates solely with the United States. Both sides are responsible for it. It is in Canada's interest to pay special attention to the border. As Mr. Cabana said, ensuring the security of our border is in Canada's interest. Efforts are also being made to enhance resources at the border and abroad, to facilitate the arrival of people into the country.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Harris, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to our committee.

I suppose this is a question for the RCMP to answer, or Mr. MacKillop, if you will.

One of the concerns that Canadians have—and people are dying as a result of this failure, in my view—is the number of handguns in this country. We go to an elaborate extent to register firearms in this country, yet it seems that the border is a bit of a sieve for handguns coming into the country. In fact, a report of two years ago from the CBSA shows that the number of firearms seized at the border has actually steadily declined since 2001.

CTV has done a recent report in B.C. The RCMP indicates that roughly half the guns fuelling the gang war in British Columbia's lower mainland come from the U.S. There's a big concern. People are dying as a result of handguns being loose. Some of them are people involved in criminal activity, and often, unfortunately, we have, very sadly, innocent bystanders being killed as well.

What confidence can Canadians have that this problem's being seriously addressed?

• (0945)

Mr. Barry MacKillop: Thank you for the question.

Certainly it is a significant concern in terms of the number of firearms that end up on the streets in Canada that are used in gang violence and other types of violence. Through the CBCF, the firearms trafficking working group does take this issue very seriously. They participate in joint threat assessments, joint targeting, as well as joint training on both the Canada and U.S. sides, which is, as I said, simply one mechanism that our law enforcement agencies use in order to collaborate.

There is ongoing work between the RCMP and their colleagues in the States as well to target and address illegal firearms trafficking across the border. I'll let Mike talk to that in terms of some of the efforts that are under way in the RCMP. But certainly it is one of the standing subgroups at CBCF and it's an issue that is taken very seriously.

Superintendent Warren Coons (Director, Integrated Border Enforcement Team, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): With respect to the issue of firearms, in terms of the IBET program and our coordination and cooperation, our purpose, as discussed in terms of the structure of the IBET program, is that we meet on a regular basis with the joint management teams, which are local law enforcement agencies. Anybody with an access to the border will be meeting and talking about common threats, the common operating picture along the border. This would include firearms, though we're not exclusively directed towards firearms; it crosses all commodities that can be smuggled across the border. But over the course of the past year we have had significant successes, notable successes, certainly, in the province of Quebec, in Atlantic Canada. When during our investigations the information arrives that there's a boat-between-the-ports type of smuggling activity, certainly it's a high-priority investigation for the IBET program. As I mentioned, we currently have ongoing investigations with respect to that.

Mr. Jack Harris: What we're hearing, though, is that the number of seizures is going down. Most of the seizures are from individual Americans who think they can carry their gun into Canada and don't even know the difference or don't declare, and what we see is kind of an after-the-fact report. Sergeant Tim Shields told CTV News in Vancouver: "We know that they have been smuggled when we find them in the hands of criminals, being used in a drive-by shooting or a homicide." So it's after the fact that we find out they're smuggled.

What steps are being taken that are new to this game? Because the number has been going down over the years. The estimate, actually, of one person in the Canada Border Services Agency is that between 1% and 3% of illegal guns are being found. What are we not doing that we should be doing to ensure that this doesn't continue?

Superintendent Joe Oliver (Co-Chair, Border Enforcement Group, Canada-United States Cross Border Crime Forum): The important thing to highlight is the ongoing work between Canada and the United States in addressing the firearms smuggling, particularly under the umbrella of the Cross-Border Crime Forum.

With respect to some of the ongoing activities at the front line, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has placed three of their liaison officers here in Canada to support investigations of firearm trafficking. Protocols have been put in place to support the tracing of firearms in real time. And with that information... Although there may be cases where firearms are seized post-crime, the importance of the intelligence is identifying those sources of the guns in the United States. And what occurs is that, concurrent with the Canadian investigation, the U.S. usually launches a collateral investigation for violations of their federal laws and to identify those sources of the firearms.

Last year at the Cross-Border Crime Forum, a hugely successful investigation identifying the links between activities that occurred at the border and inland, as well as the collateral investigations in the United States, profiled the extent to which good cooperation, information-sharing, and the use of ballistics identification equipment can bring success to some of these investigations.

• (0950)

Mr. Jack Harris: You referred to the Cross-Border Crime Forum. It's suggested in your remarks, Mr. MacKillop, on page 11, that in firearms trafficking, the RCMP and the ATF in the U.S. are currently

working on "a possible update of the 2006 Cross-Border Firearms Trafficking Overview". In light of the recent statements by the RCMP in British Columbia and the concerns the public has, why is it only a possible update? Why is it referred to as that? Is it something we're thinking about but not taking too seriously, or is it something we can count on you doing?

Mr. Barry MacKillop: No, it's not a reflection of whether we think it's serious; it's a reflection, in terms of pulling this together, of not knowing the timing of the meeting and whether we would in fact have the report updated and done in time for the meeting. But certainly the update and the work on it is currently under way.

Mr. Jack Harris: Do you have any view...? I know you're not the Canada Border Services Agency, but you, and the RCMP in particular, talk about their responsibility for this international concern. Do you have any concerns about the lack of pickup of firearms at the border crossings? Do we need some enhanced searching or investigative procedures or methodology at the border crossing to ensure that...? There's some suggestion in some of the materials I've read that dogs are able to sniff out gunpowder in certain circumstances, and that helps. Is there any update of methodologies that can be implemented that would see greater seizures and fewer guns coming into Canada at the border crossings?

The Chair: There's time for a brief response.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Well, I have a very quick response, Mr. Harris. I believe your question should be directed to the Canada Border Services Agency. In terms of enforcement at the ports of entry themselves and the mechanisms and procedures they have there, we can't speak to that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. MacKenzie, please.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

We all share concerns similar to those of Mr. Holland about people coming to Canada for the Olympics, in particular. But I think in a general sense, it's good for our economy—people who come to Canada for our culture, our shows, shopping, and so on.

He's illustrated one of the issues that we hear about in the western hemisphere travel initiative, which is that the Americans will need a passport to get back into the U.S. after the first of June. What will they need to get into Canada when the Americans implement their rules on their side? Will they need the same documents to get into Canada as they will need to get back home?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Mr. MacKenzie, my understanding is that it's a reciprocal arrangement with the U.S. Therefore, they're going to require passports to come into Canada, as well.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Okay. And those from other countries, beyond the Americans who may visit Canada, will come in with a passport.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Exactly, as they currently do.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Okay. So it's not going to be different—I guess that's the point—for Americans and Canadians and British subjects to go back and forth across our borders, whether they fly in or cross that American-Canadian border.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: No.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: I'm not sure if you're aware, but I was reviewing a speech Secretary Napolitano made toward the end of February. She indicated that she understood the importance of the Olympics to the Americans and to Canada, and they're quite prepared to work with us to make sure the games are a success from the standpoint of visitors. Have you seen any change, or is it fair to say there is a willingness to work together?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Absolutely. The willingness to work together goes back many years. There is a concerted effort, if I may call it that, or a renewed effort since the announcement of the Olympics in 2010. A number of Canada-U.S. working groups have been created, looking specifically at some of the security issues surrounding the Olympics in 2010.

• (0955)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Okay.

Not long after she was appointed to her position, I know the secretary indicated she wanted a report on the northern border, and there was some concern she was somehow telegraphing her concern about the northern border. Have you heard of anything since then that would indicate other than she just wanted to be informed about the northern border in that report?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: That's the message we received, specifically that she was new to the issue of the northern border and was looking at getting the lie of the land and understanding what the issues were. That was the purpose of the report, and the RCMP contributed to that report.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Okay.

Supt Warren Coons: If I could just add to that, we work on a daily basis with our United States law enforcement colleagues in the same office here in RCMP headquarters, so we have a fairly good pipeline when major issues are about to break. I can assure you it is pretty much business as usual in terms of the relationships, and nothing has been indicated to us that causes us any concern that there will be any kind of escalation or major concern on the part of the U. S. with respect to border security.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: You still have three and a half minutes.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Norlock, would you like to continue, or Mr. McColeman?

Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): I have a pretty brief question.

I don't know the percentages. They are not large, but quite a number of people hold NEXUS passes. Will it be required, with the NEXUS pass, to also show a passport as you cross through the NEXUS line at any given border crossing?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: My understanding is the NEXUS pass is meant to expedite the crossing of the border, so I doubt very much that it would become a requirement, but that question should be directed to CBSA, which administers the program.

Mr. Phil McColeman: You are not certain whether it is required to show your passport as well as the NEXUS—

Mr. Mark Holland: It will be a requirement as of June 1.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Okay.

I have one final question on NEXUS, if I might. Since the launch of that program, it seems to me it has been trying to achieve certain principles. Is that a program that offers opportunities in the future to increase border security? Do you see it as an area where cross-border movement can be facilitated in a much more streamlined fashion, as Mr. Holland has indicated is so important at certain border crossings?

Mr. Barry MacKillop: Again, it's a program that's run by CBSA, so it's difficult for me to provide an accurate answer to that. My impression is the screening that's required for individuals in order to obtain the NEXUS pass would facilitate more rapid and easier movement of people with those passes across the border, both now and in the future. The opportunity to obtain that pass is open, and people can certainly apply to get that. The screening involved in obtaining that pass will go a long way to facilitating that.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Just give a yes or no on this. The sense I'm getting is it doesn't seem to be a program that holds big promise and everybody's talking about it in the various agencies as something we should be moving toward and encouraging. Obviously people will be mandated to have a passport, and to encourage them to get a NEXUS pass in parallel to that....

Mr. Barry MacKillop: I can't answer that. CBSA would be a better place to get an answer on the promotion of that program.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Okay.

The Chair: CBSA will be here on Thursday, so we can redirect those questions.

Mr. Oliphant, please.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you for coming here today. I also want to thank Mr. Harris for his questions on handguns, which was going to be my leadoff as well.

As a member from a Toronto riding, I am increasingly concerned about illegal firearms and handguns. Just to put it on record, I am disappointed in your answers on that. We need more work on that.

You focused primarily on the American border with Canada, and we have three other borders. We have other points of entry. We heard a lot about our communications with the Americans. Can you just explain what communications we have with the Asia Pacific world, the European world, and the circumpolar world? Do we have equal attention being paid to those borders?

•(1000)

A/Commr Mike Cabana: We have attention being paid to those borders as well. As to whether it's equal attention, no, obviously it's not, but we are regularly in contact with our counterparts in Asia as well as Europe. We have liaison officers who are deployed to those areas to facilitate the discussions.

Similarly, there are working groups. I can think of two, the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum and the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum, which focus specifically on looking at the security of our respective borders as well as the activity that is taking place in between, in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, that regroup representatives from a number of different countries—for obvious reasons they are different countries. But there is attention being paid to borders other than strictly the Canada-U.S. border.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: What about the crime forum?

Mr. Barry MacKillop: The crime forum is more specifically focused on Canada-U.S. relations and the Canada-U.S. border.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: If we have human smuggling coming in from Asia or from the Atlantic, do we have any cooperative activity going on around it?

Mr. Barry MacKillop: Certainly that would be addressed in the forum. Once they land, Canada is often seen as a transit country, so there is work done there. We're also involved and do a significant amount of work through the Bali process, the UN, the G-8, and the Organization of American States. We're involved in all of those and we address a lot of very similar issues, but on a broader, more global scale.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Secondly, I have a concern that we have not had a national security strategy report since 2005, since the new government came in. Has either of your bodies been asked to contribute to a report that could come to Parliament or to the people of Canada?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Yes, we have been asked to provide input into the preparation of such a document. Unfortunately, I don't have the details with me here today.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: We will have to ask the minister. But we're disappointed that in four years there has been no.... There's a lot of information sharing going on with the Americans, but I'm worried that there's not information sharing going on among the Canadian bodies. I think that would be revealed in a report. Even today, there are things that the border security group doesn't have that you have, and I'm worried about whether it would be the nature of such a report to tie that information together. We'll ask the minister about that.

The third question is this. We talk a lot about information sharing with the Americans. I'm wondering whether there have been changes in the protocols or changes in your procedures as a result of the Iacobucci or O'Connor reports talking about the information that was shared that caused four Canadians to be sent and tortured in other countries. Have your procedures changed since those reports were issued?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Yes, I think it goes without saying that as a result of their findings the two inquiries have caused us to go back to look at the different processes we had in place and the methodology followed to share the information.

We need to make a distinction, however, between the sharing of information in a national security context and sharing of information in a criminal context, which are different issues altogether with different processes in place.

The IBET program specifically looked at the issue of making sure there was a standardized approach to the sharing of the information amongst all enforcement agencies that participate in the IBET program. There was a working group created.

Warren, I forget what year that was created.

Supt Warren Coons: It was 2007.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: It was in 2007, and as a result of the work they have done binationally, they have developed a matrix.

Do you want to speak to that?

Supt Warren Coons: Yes. There is an information-sharing protocol within the IBET program based on the matrix that was devised. Essentially it's a recounting of all of the legislation that each of the agencies has to deal with in respect to sharing of information, and a "how to", if you will. Everybody is in possession of those matrices. In other words, the U.S. border patrol has the documentation that supports how the RCMP shares information and what they can expect from the RCMP when they request information, and vice versa. Everybody is well versed in what information they can, one, ask and, two, expect to get back.

It's very important to recognize that information sharing is a two-way street. There's a concern obviously about over-sharing of information. There's also a concern about not sharing the information that can and should be shared to make sure that our borders are secure.

•(1005)

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I'd add a third concern about wrong information being shared, so verification is very important.

Supt Warren Coons: And this is part of the protocols, as well, that we make sure that the information is verified. If we do find out that some of the information that was provided was inaccurate, there are provisions in there that we go back and correct those errors in information.

The Chair: Thank you. We have to wrap up this round.

Mr. Richards, please.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Thank you.

I apologize if I'm a little difficult to listen to today; I've got a pretty bad cold.

Thank you all for being here.

I'm going to focus a little bit on organized crime.

Last night I was waiting for my medication to kick in so I could get some sleep and I was watching a program on CNN about the Mexico-U.S. border and the problems they're dealing with in terms of organized crime and drugs.

Certainly the problem with organized crime here in Canada is nowhere near the level of what we see in Mexico, but it is still in fact a problem here in Canada, and I think one that's becoming more of a problem on a daily basis almost. When we deal with these issues with organized crime, it stems from drugs, it stems from the violence they bring to our society.

First of all, we have this issue within the broader society to deal with, and I think our government has taken some good strong steps to deal with organized crime. But from a border perspective, can you tell me, particularly with regard to the smuggling of weapons, the smuggling of drugs, what's being done to put a stop to allowing these gangs to do this smuggling and use that to then carry out their activities here in Canada?

I know that you've had a chance to highlight a little bit about the firearms side of it, but can you share with us a little more about what's being done on that side to deal with the smuggling of drugs, the smuggling of firearms? That is, of course, what allows the gangs to carry out their organized crime.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Thank you, Mr. Richards. Thank you very much for the question.

It's a very broad question that would require a lengthy and detailed response. For the purpose of the hearings here today, what I can say is there's actually quite a bit that's going on. It goes to the intelligence-led model that is implemented to enforce the security of the border.

In my opening remarks I spoke of the layered approach, I spoke of the importance of ensuring seamless sharing of information and collaboration among the teams that are operating inland with the teams that are operating on the border. In essence, I can make the distinction, to start with, that we do not focus on the commodity. If a criminal organization is operating on the border, today they might be smuggling narcotics, tomorrow individuals, and the day after it could be firearms. These organizations are in the business of operating to make a profit, and the commodity to them becomes secondary.

So the importance for us is to ensure that we have as accurate a picture as we can of what is happening in the U.S., in Canada, and on the border. This is where the sharing of information protocol becomes very important, and this is where the work of IBET is important, developing on a yearly basis threat assessments on the activities that are happening at the border. On a yearly basis, all the agencies get back together—this includes the five core agencies, as well as the 50-some other agencies that are participating in IBET—and compare their intelligence to identify exactly where the activities are taking place, which organizations are involved in them, and what commodity they're involved in. So this is an ongoing process.

•(1010)

Mr. Blake Richards: I think it was you, Mr. Cabana, who in your opening statement mentioned briefly this “Shiprider” program. I wanted to give you an opportunity to highlight that a little bit more. I assume that it would be dealing with smuggling, dealing with drugs and guns that are being smuggled. Can you help me to be sure that is in fact what is being dealt with there, and, if so, how effectively is it being dealt with? And maybe you could even give me some measurable results or some examples, if possible.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Shiprider actually is a proved concept. There have been four different exercises to date—I believe the first one was in 2006—looking at specifically changing the processes, changing how law enforcement interact on the border to try to interdict some of the criminal activity that is taking place on the border.

Shiprider involved the RCMP and U.S. Coast Guard co-manning each others' vessels. In other words, you would have a U.S. Coast Guard member who would be patrolling on one of our RCMP vessels and you would have RCMP members who would be patrolling on a U.S. Coast Guard vessel on the U.S. side of the border. Both countries have entered into agreement for administrative forbearance of some of the cross-border legislation that is in place now in Canada to be able to, in essence, eliminate the existence of the border for the enforcement effort.

Criminal organizations that are operating on the border, although it is a vulnerability for them, are still operating with relative impunity in terms of crossing the border back and forth. For a law enforcement officer to be able to do the same thing, up until now, we can't. We have regulations that we need to respect. In terms of cross-border carriage of firearms, in terms of peace officer designation in the other jurisdiction, all of those do not exist.

Shiprider was specifically put in place for both countries to be able to see if a different model would work better. It was also put in place to have a look at the impact such a model would have on criminality at the border and how criminality was operating, to see if there were possibilities in enhancing the coordination of what is happening in the marine environment with what's happening on the land environment, and to be able to create displacement to direct the criminal activity to an area where we were better equipped to interdict it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go over to the Bloc Québécois now.

Ms. Mourani.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Thank you.

Good day, gentlemen. Thank you for coming.

First of all, can I ask you some questions about NORAD? Are you familiar with this agency?

[*English*]

Mr. Barry MacKillop: No.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Very well.

I would like to discuss your activities on native reserves. For example, it's no secret that the Akwesasne reserve straddles the Canada-U.S. border and that the St. Lawrence Seaway is used freely.

What is your authority on reserves? What can you tell me about native reserves along the border?

C/Supt Mike Cabana: Clearly they present—

Mr. Barry MacKillop: —some challenges.

C/Supt Mike Cabana: When we conduct our operations on native reserves located close to the border, we face some unique challenges that may not necessarily arise elsewhere in the country. However, the enduring principle is collaboration and forging partnerships with aboriginal police forces working in this area. We face additional challenges in working with aboriginal police forces on a daily basis.

[English]

Joe, I don't know if you want to add something.

Supt Joe Oliver: I think there's an opportunity to highlight some of the exceptional work. IBET is well placed in the Cornwall area, and they actually have a very good working relationship with the aboriginal community as well as the U.S. law enforcement agencies.

Just going back to the Shiprider concept, it was in that environment in which the Shiprider model was deployed, and it proved to be a successful enforcement response model for that environment: a combination of working with the law enforcement agencies in the area, the ability operationally for law enforcement agencies to cross the border and to coordinate with land operations as well. It's an area that is fairly volatile in terms of the smuggling, and it's that type of innovative law enforcement response that, through the Cross-Border Crime Forum, Canada and the U.S. are trying to develop in order to provide appropriate responses, depending on the unique geographical and crime problems in each area.

•(1015)

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: You talked about challenges, Mr. Cabana. What specific challenges do you face?

C/Supt Mike Cabana: The challenges vary depending on the type of property or crime being investigated. Agreements between Aboriginals and the Canadian government, or the way in which some of these agreements are interpreted, can cause problems, particularly as far as tobacco is concerned. With respect to more traditional types of crime, such as drugs and so forth, the problems we face are different and cooperation is far more extensive. All of these sensitive issues must be taken into account when formulating an investigation strategy involving a native reserve.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: In some respects, it also depends on the goods.

C/Supt Mike Cabana: To a large extent, yes.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Do police respond the same way on native reserves, whether it be carrying out an arrest or conducting an investigation, when drugs or firearms are involved?

C/Supt Mike Cabana: The response is pretty much the same. The same procedures are followed. In Quebec, for example, in areas where the Quebec Provincial Police or a municipal police force is the primary policing body, clearly some sensitive issues will be taken into consideration. We cooperate with these individuals. The same holds true on reserves.

[English]

The Chair: You have one minute.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Regarding weapons smuggling, statistics show that between 80% and 90% of illegal weapons arrive in Canada via the United States, primarily over land. Do you think the problem of weapons smuggling is compounded by the widespread availability of guns in the United States? The U.S. has a different relationship with guns than Canada has. Carrying a weapon is almost a constitutional right in the U.S. Guns are sold legally. A large number of weapons that come into the country, whether through identity fraud or some other means, were initially purchased legally in the U.S. Do you feel that the lack of standardization between U.S. and Canadian weapons laws has repercussions here in Canada?

C/Supt Mike Cabana: Ms. Mourani, it's realistic to believe that this does have an impact of some kind, but I have no idea of how big an impact. Even if our laws were standardized, there would still be weapons smuggling. However, I'm not in a position to say right now what impact this may be having on us.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kania, please.

Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.): Mr. Cabana, you indicated that the RCMP contributed to that report, referring to Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano's report. Who asked you to contribute?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: If memory serves me right, the request did not come directly to us. I believe the request came in through Canada Border Services Agency. Exactly how the request came into Canada, I have no idea.

Mr. Andrew Kania: You don't know how or when you were requested to contribute?

Supt Warren Coons: I believe Assistant Commissioner Cabana is correct that it came to us through the CBSA, but I believe they received that request through the Department of Homeland Security. If memory serves, it was in December sometime.

•(1020)

Mr. Andrew Kania: How did you contribute? Did you have a written report?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: I'm not sure it would be a report. We had written documents. Input was provided to the CBSA response to the tasking that they had received.

Mr. Andrew Kania: So you provided something to the CBSA?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: That's correct. We contributed to the preparation of a report that was being prepared by the Canada Border Services Agency.

Mr. Andrew Kania: So who authored the report that you provided to them?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: It was someone from within the border integrity program of the RCMP.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Do you happen to know the name of the individual and the date of the report?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: I don't have the date of the report. The individual was Inspector Mike Furey.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Is it something that exists that you could provide to the committee?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Yes.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Will you do that?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Yes, I'll undertake to find it. As I said, it's not a report; it's input into the preparation of a report.

Mr. Andrew Kania: That's okay. Please provide whatever documentation there is that was contributed.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Certainly.

Mr. Andrew Kania: You indicated you were asked to prepare information in order to have an up-to-date progress report. Do you know what I'm referring to?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: No.

Mr. Andrew Kania: In response to Mr. Oliphant, you indicated that in terms of securing an open border, Canada's national security policy, and getting up-to-date reports, you had contributed to a potential update report on the national security plan. Who asked you to do that, when, and can we see what you contributed?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: The request for contribution—again this is from memory—did not come directly to my program. It came in through another RCMP program. Again, it was contribution toward preparation of a document.

Mr. Andrew Kania: So did a written request for an update come to you?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: I assume that, but I don't know. I can't answer that.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Can you provide us with whatever might exist in requests made of you, and what you submitted in response to update them?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: I can undertake to look into what that request was and what was provided. But as you can understand, given the nature of the report, depending on the classification of the report I might be limited in what I can provide.

Mr. Andrew Kania: I understand that, and you can let us know if you won't be producing something. But you will at least be able to tell us who made the request and when, who responded and when, and anything else about that, such as conclusions and input.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Yes, sir.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Thank you.

On the O'Connor and Iacobucci reports, you made a comment that it goes without saying, and then you said that certain things in your procedures had changed because of those reports. Is there anything you did not mention about how you have changed to try to adhere to the recommendations?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: I'm sorry, I'm not sure I understand your question.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Various recommendations were made on different procedures to avoid the problems that occurred with the Canadians who were tortured. Other than what you've mentioned today so far, is there anything else the RCMP has done, to the best of your knowledge, to attempt to adhere to those recommendations or change their procedures in any way?

The Chair: There is time for a very brief response.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Every area of the RCMP reviewed the recommendations and made sure that the policies in place were in compliance with those recommendations.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Rathgeber, please.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Thank you for your appearance here today.

Following up on Mr. Kania's questions regarding the information provided to U.S. Homeland Security, I understand it's not uncommon for border officials or the RCMP to provide information on request to the Department of Homeland Security on border issues. Is this done as a matter of course?

•(1025)

A/Commr Mike Cabana: It's done as a matter of course. Border representatives work in our office here in Ottawa, and we have RCMP members working in their office.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: So there would be a reciprocal arrangement. If Canada Border Services wanted United States perspectives or opinions on matters, they would likely cooperate in the preparation of a report prepared by the Canadian minister.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Yes. I know that the Canada Border Services Agency has similar arrangements with the United States agencies. The same kind of sharing or exchange takes place.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: This is a collaborative arrangement between the two countries to provide border security that is reciprocally beneficial.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Absolutely.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Holland, please.

Mr. Mark Holland: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One of the things that came up during conversations I had with congressmen was the perception, still, that Canada is a safe haven for terrorists and that we have a leaky, porous border. Even in the Senate some have said that southern Toronto is teeming with terrorists. I don't know where they are. Are they all hiding in Centreville? This is a real problem. This perception has sort of ingrained itself.

I wonder if you can help us with some facts and information to combat that. As an example, one of the things I have seen that I think would be helpful, if I could get it in some form other than anecdotal, are the names on the terror watch list and the number of hits on those names at different points of entry. It would demonstrate that Canadian ports of entry are showing fewer hits on that terror watch list than are American ports of entry.

I think we have to make the point crystal clear—and maybe you would agree with me on this—that an attack on New York is more likely, or at least as likely, to come from somebody landing in Boston as from somebody coming in through Toronto. Yet that is not the perception right now. The perception is that we are allowing terrorists to come in here and that we have a weak border through which people travel south. How do we combat that perception? Do you have some empirical data you can give us? I've given you one example. Do you have others?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Mr. Holland, that's an excellent question, and actually, it is something I took to heart in my previous function, before I assumed the position of assistant commissioner of FIO. At every opportunity I've had at conferences or meetings with U.S. officials, I have focused on trying to dispel some of these myths, which have long existed, about the situation in Canada and the porousness, if you want, of our border. Rather than take the time here in the committee hearing, I can undertake to provide you with some facts about the border to dispel some of these myths.

What I would like to point out, though, is that depending on who you speak to in the U.S., those myths don't hold the same weight. The individuals we deal with on a daily basis—the enforcement representatives of the United States—have a fairly clear understanding of the reality.

Mr. Mark Holland: That's not so much my concern. My concern is both the population at large, which is reading very skewed editorials that aren't based on fact, and congressmen and congresswomen who don't have a lot of affiliation with the issue. One congressman told me, as a statement of fact, that those who committed 9/11 came from Canada.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: You're right.

Mr. Mark Holland: These are people charged with making decisions in the U.S. legislature. They believe that the 9/11 terrorists came from Canada. That's why I think we have to do a charm offensive, as legislators, to reach out and provide that information. When I was having these meetings, the problem was that I could only combat this idea with anecdotal evidence or with my own word. I think that some of that stuff about ports of entry that I was talking about, if you could provide some empirical data.... I think we have a responsibility. We have to get down there and get the real story out, because stuff that you would think is a ridiculous urban legend exists as fact there. They really believe it. That has a hugely detrimental impact on our trading relationship.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: I couldn't agree with you more. Actually, I'm very happy to hear you say this.

In my previous life, we put an initiative in place specifically targeting this. We prepared presentations and actually travelled to Washington to meet with legislators, staffers, and embassy folks to provide them with that information so we could dispel some of those realities that they believe actually take place.

•(1030)

Mr. Mark Holland: One of the biggest concerns that comes up is the ability to share information. We have to do it to maintain a free and open border. But by the same token, there are a lot of Canadians who fear that if that information is given, it will be misused or will be used in relation to something we would disagree with. How do we

make sure that there is containment of that information and that the information isn't used by U.S. agencies for other purposes, purposes we would have concerns about with respect to the privacy of Canadian citizens?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: In terms of our ability to make sure that it will be never be used, we don't have that ability. What we have is an understanding and a trust that goes back many, many years. There have been instances when maybe that trust was breached. But for the most part, in my experience, there is a clear understanding, on both sides of the border, of what this information, this intelligence being shared, can be used for. And it is hugely respected.

The Chair: Very quickly, Mr. Holland.

Mr. Mark Holland: Just as a last question, is there anything more that you think we can do to sort of assuage the concerns of Canadians that information would be used in a way with which we disagree? Given the fact that there have been problems in the past, what sorts of additional things do you think we could do?

Supt Warren Coons: Certainly in the IBET world, which is obviously vulnerable in the sense that we're working on a daily basis with our U.S. colleagues, we have instituted a protocol whereby the information that's shared is tracked. We have five co-locations—Assistant Commissioner Cabana referred to them in his opening remarks—where U.S. and Canadian law enforcement officers are working together on a daily basis, in the same office, exchanging intelligence.

All the information that crosses is tracked so that at any given time we can determine what information has changed hands and for what purpose. Obviously, it has to follow a protocol, and conditions have to be followed in order for that information to be shared. Once that threshold has been reached, the information is shared and then tracked. That's as good as we can possibly get in terms of controlling the information and determining how it's being used at the other end.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: For any sharing outside the norm, outside of what is regularly done, prior to any sharing occurring, there's a privacy impact analysis that is done to make sure it still respects the parameters of our legislation here in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Ménard, do you have any questions?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Public safety is a very broad field, but I would like to move on to another area, namely civil security.

When natural disasters occur and broken equipment must be repaired or replaced, officials on both sides of the border exchange procedures. At least that's what happens in Eastern Canada because I have taken part in some of these exchanges. This is especially true when some areas are without power following a storm or hurricane. The state or province in which the outage occurred requires assistance in order to restore the power quickly. This happens quite often.

A number of agreements have been worked out to avoid having to check workers' qualifications, for example, in such instances. I would imagine some similar arrangements apply when we send our tanker airplanes off to fight fires in the U.S., and so forth.

In such cases do people need a passport to travel? Are they asked to produce a passport? For example, if Hydro-Québec confirms that a natural disaster has cut power to a large portion of the state of Maine, we can quickly dispatch some linemen to provide assistance. In fact, Hydro-Québec employees must have obtained their passports in advance in case they are called abroad.

How do such agreements work?

• (1035)

Mr. Barry MacKillop: Unfortunately, because this is not my area of expertise, I can't really answer that question. However, I would imagine that in an emergency situation, agreements allow workers to cross over the border and to provide the requested assistance, without encountering too many problems at the border. It's really not my area of expertise.

Mr. Serge Ménard: In other words, it's left to the good judgment of the customs agent. There is no set protocol in place.

Mr. Barry MacKillop: I'm not sure whether there is a protocol in place.

Mr. Serge Ménard: We read in some of the briefing material provided to us that attendees at certain conferences expressed the view that borders were ill-adapted to contend with modern-day problems. Nevertheless, you have advanced some very good reasons for believing that they do serve a purpose. There is also the whole question of the cost and inconvenience to honest citizens.

To address this issue, we've come up with systems like Nexus that people who travel extensively can use. Is any thought being given to expand these measures? Do they help us achieve our objectives, that is allowing the free movement of persons who are not deemed to pose a threat? We have something similar here. We push a button and gain entry without having to identify ourselves.

Are you satisfied with using the system in place or are there some people in your organization who are thinking about possible ways of enhancing freedom of movement without increasing the threats posed by terrorism, firearms, drugs and so forth?

Mr. Barry MacKillop: I can assure you that we are not resting on our laurels. We constantly strive to improve things or to make changes, if necessary. We try to learn something every day and to look at best practices, to achieve a balance between security and the freedom of movement of goods and people. We're looking for solutions to achieve this balance as quickly as possible.

Mr. Serge Ménard: So then, if I understand what you're saying, you're trying to enhance mobility, but you're not focusing on any one measure in particular.

Mr. Barry MacKillop: We're weighing available options and looking at procedures that we could adopt, but I can't say that the solution to all of our problems is right around the corner.

Mr. Serge Ménard: Perhaps Mr. Cabana would like to weigh in. *[English]*

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Actually, all I wanted to point out from the RCMP's perspective is that we need to make the distinction between the role and responsibility of CBSA and the RCMP on the border. In terms of facilitating the flow of people and goods, that's entirely a CBSA responsibility.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Harris, you indicated you have a question.

Mr. Jack Harris: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Cabana, like Mr. Oliphant, I'm a little unhappy with the responses to the concerns about firearms. You are the assistant commissioner for the federal and international operations directorate. In your remarks you said you were working to ensure the safety and security of Canadians and their institutions domestically and globally, and that

Border integrity falls under FIO and encompasses branches with expertise in investigating cross-border criminality and identifying threats to Canada's national security along the shared land border and at major air and marine entry points.

The entry of prohibited weapons into the country, whether they be handguns or assault rifles or other weapons readily available in the U.S., seems to me to be an overriding concern, yet you're telling us to ask the Canadian Border Service when they come here.

Do you feel that measures are adequate? I'll give you an example. It's been suggested by one employee of the border service that Americans travelling through Canada to Alaska are permitted to take their guns if they declare them. Sometimes they declare as many as ten or more guns. Yet there's no system in place to find out whether these guns actually leave Canada once they come in.

Does your organization have any concerns about the methodologies used at the border, how easy it is for guns to get into the country, whether this kind of system is adequate, etc.? Or are you saying it's not your affair, that it's the Canadian Border Service?

• (1040)

A/Commr Mike Cabana: I'm not suggesting it's not my affair, as you stated, Mr. Harris, and that we are not concerned with the entry of any firearms in Canada. To the contrary, we're actually very concerned with the flow of firearms, as demonstrated with some of the efforts we have with CBSA and the ATF to try to stem the flow.

I'm suggesting that our focus is between the ports of entry. CBSA is responsible for the ports of entry. Firearms that are being reported at the ports of entry and processes surrounding the tracking of those firearms are a CBSA responsibility.

You're asking me to speak on the appropriateness of procedures that another agency has. I'm suggesting you should be directing those questions to the CBSA.

Mr. Jack Harris: Can you say whether you're satisfied with border security as it affects firearms?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: I can tell you that I'm not satisfied with border security and I never will be. It goes back to a question made a few minutes ago in terms of whether we are basically just sitting and happy with what we have. I think, as a country, we need to pay attention to what's happening at the border and be always looking to better protect Canadian citizens. So am I happy? No. I never will be.

Mr. Jack Harris: I have one more question. I guess it's for you, Mr. Cabana, or Mr. Coons.

In your discussion of the IBETs, you mentioned the core agencies being the RCMP and the CBSA. On the U.S. side, it's the U.S. Customs and Border Protection/Border Patrol, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

I take it from your answer to Mr. Richards' question that you do have some maritime capability with the RCMP. Could you describe that, please, and could you let us know whether there's any coordination with the Canadian Coast Guard as well? Or do you do it on a go-alone basis? What kinds of capabilities do you have in the maritime world?

Supt Warren Coons: From an IBET perspective, yes, we have assets for the maritime environment, but most of those are close to shore. That's what we focus on primarily with our U.S. partners. In a maritime environment, on both the east and west coasts, as in the Great Lakes, there is greater coordination with the Canadian Coast Guard. In particular, we have marine security enforcement teams in the Great Lakes, on which RCMP officers are deployed and patrol with the Canadian Coast Guard during the months in which the waters are navigable.

Mr. Jack Harris: They are not listed here as an agency.

Supt Warren Coons: They are not, because the Canadian Coast Guard is not part of the IBET program.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Norlock, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you, gentlemen, for coming this morning.

My question is for Mr. Cabana or Mr. Coons. It has to do with the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre. Does your department receive threat assessments from ITAC? If so, do you have any personnel seconded to that unit?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: We regularly receive threat assessments from ITAC, as does a large number of the intergovernmental community here. Up until recently, we had individuals seconded to ITAC. I don't know whether we still do or not.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Could you advise the committee if you do, please?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Certainly.

Mr. Rick Norlock: What I'd like to know about the assessments is if they are provided to you in a timely manner. Has the information provided by ITAC assisted your agency in investigations? Could you elaborate on that part of it?

•(1045)

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Unfortunately, I'm afraid that I probably can't give you the details you are looking for. I am not aware of any issues in terms of the timeliness of information from ITAC. Whether the information has been useful to any ongoing investigations, again, I don't have any direct knowledge. I cannot point you to a specific report that was submitted, but I can state that any intelligence provided is beneficial at the end of the day.

Now, we need to remember that ITAC focuses mainly on national security issues.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

I have been on this committee for a while, which previously studied the Anti-terrorism Act, and we heard that Canada is very much an importer, rather than an exporter, of intelligence. How much information from ITAC assessments, to your knowledge, comes from threat assessments from the U.S., the U.K., New Zealand, or Australia?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to answer that.

Mr. Rick Norlock: You would have no information on how we're improving our intelligence-gathering capabilities? Are you not part of that?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: If your question is in relation to ITAC, I have no knowledge of the source of the information ITAC is getting for a specific report. I basically see the final product.

If you're speaking of the RCMP's intelligence capabilities, even though this is not in my area of expertise, I am aware, from some of the programs falling within my area, that our focus on gaining greater intelligence is ongoing on a daily basis.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

The Chair: We'll now go over to the Liberal Party.

Mr. Kania, please.

Mr. Andrew Kania: I ended my questioning of you the last time with your giving an answer concerning the Iacobucci and O'Connor reports. You indicated that you had reviewed those reports and had made changes as a result, but there wasn't enough time to provide detail on that.

Whether now or by way of a report you provide to us, could you please give us the exact details of what you've actually done to attempt to remedy the situation in compliance with those recommendations, rather than a generic comment: we looked through it, and everything is fine?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Actually it's not an issue of we looked through it and everything is fine. There were adjustments made at the time.

Since you are seeking specifics, my preference would be to return to the committee with a detailed, specific report.

Mr. Andrew Kania: Thank you very much for that.

You indicated that you're not satisfied with the border security and you never will be. You'll agree with me that in terms of handguns being imported into Canada legally it is a problem, and you're not satisfied with that either. Would you agree with that?

So my question to you would be, first, do you have enough resources to combat the problem? Because I also want to know how we can help you. If it's increased legislation or whatever it may be, you can tell us how we can help you so you can solve this problem. And secondly, I'd like to know from you what else you think you can be doing to help solve this problem.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Thank you, Mr. Kania.

The Chair: At the very end of the meeting you get that question.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: It's a loaded question. I would be very surprised, actually, if you had anybody appear in front of your committee who would say—

Mr. Jack Harris: You want fewer resources.

A/Commr Mike Cabana: —that actually we have too many people and we'd like to lose a few hundred. So the offer for additional resources, of course, is always welcome. But I think that resources is one part of the puzzle. And if I go back—

Mr. Andrew Kania: Can I interrupt you for a second? Maybe what we can do is this as well. I'd like to see if we can come up with some solution to improve the situation. So because you're offering to come back and give us more information on O'Connor-Iacobucci, maybe you can also prepare something and come back and tell us what your proposed solution is and how we might be able to help you solve this problem or improve it.

• (1050)

A/Commr Mike Cabana: I could come back and propose solutions. I can do that.

I can speak of probably the key one that I can see right now as a missing component. Again, we're talking about pieces of the puzzle. In terms of our ability to secure the border, one of the big pieces for us that we feel we're missing is a visible presence along the Canada-U.S. border, not a duplication. And this is where it gets very complicated. It's not a duplication of what the U.S. has done through the presence of border patrol, but it's complementary to what is there now. But the piece that's missing is a visible, uniform presence along the border that would be intelligence-led. So we're not talking specifically about a border patrol here; we're talking about the ability to engage the communities that are, as Monsieur Ménard pointed out, on the border, with people who are living there and who know the community and know the individuals who are there, to be able to reach out to them through an enhanced presence. This is, I would say, the primary piece we're missing at this point in time.

The Chair: Do you want to share...?

Mr. Mark Holland: I can keep going.

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Oliphant.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: I'll ask one. I want to ask about the cross-cultural round table on security and whether either of your agencies avail yourselves of either information from it or have been asked to provide experience to them?

Mr. Barry MacKillop: Yes, in fact Public Safety Canada leads that, so there is a group within Public Safety Canada that acts as the secretariat that calls the cross-cultural round table on security together. It supports that group and does provide and participate in the meetings in terms of sharing information and learning from each other and hearing from their experiences and what their concerns are in order to inform policy on public safety.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: May I ask one last question on the IBETs? CSIS is not a formal partner in those. What is the relationship between CSIS and the IBETs?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: The relationship actually is through the NSCI, which is our national security component of the RCMP, which has a very close-working relationship with CSIS. NSCI is involved in the IBETs in terms of information exchange, and

anything of a national security component that surfaces within IBET is immediately shared with them.

Supt Warren Coons: That's correct. We have representatives from IBET who are located in the national security criminal investigations component of the RCMP, and they're the ones who coordinate the sharing of national security information.

The Chair: Okay. Our last intervener is Mr. Norlock, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

This is to the RCMP, to carry on with the questions.

What do you need to help you do your job? Would you not agree with me that the addition of an additional 1,600 personnel to the RCMP was a good start at improving the ability of the RCMP to do all the tasks that have been assigned to you, and through that directly to what you do, in that you have more resources to draw upon because there are 1,600 more people?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: There's no question—absolutely.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Would you also say that the addition to training capacity at Depot assisted too in getting those 1,600 people trained up to a better level?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: It did, greatly.

Mr. Rick Norlock: And would you agree that to attract the right kind of people, those the RCMP needs, the fact that as opposed to paying for it recruits are now paid for training adds to the attractiveness of the RCMP and leads in to your ability to do your job?

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Yes, sir.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Would it also be correct to say that additional resources, the extra funding for municipal and provincial police agencies to hire extra police officers, and the interrelationship you have with the Sûreté du Québec, the OPP, and other municipal police forces enhance their ability to help you to do your job?

• (1055)

A/Commr Mike Cabana: Yes.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

I just wanted to ask those questions.

The Chair: Thank you.

I want to thank the witnesses very much. It sounds as though you may reappear at this committee sometime in the future; I'm not sure. We look forward to the information on supply again. We appreciate it very much.

Mr. Mark Holland: Gary, before you hit the gavel, we have a couple of items before the committee. It would only take a couple of minutes. Maybe I can just read them now.

The Chair: I'll dismiss the witnesses, because it would be an in camera thing.

I'll ask committee members to stick around. I'll officially end the meeting and then we'll deal with the issue.

Thank you very much.

This meeting stands adjourned.

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