



House of Commons
CANADA

Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan

AFGH • NUMBER 018 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, November 24, 2010

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Chair

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)): I'd like to bring this meeting to order. This is the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan, meeting number 18.

Today we're continuing our study on the Canadian mission in Afghanistan. We'd like to welcome as witnesses to our committee the deputy minister of the Afghanistan task force, Mrs. Greta Bossenmaier; the assistant deputy minister for Afghanistan, the Middle East, and Maghreb, Mr. Gordon Venner; the vice-president of the Afghanistan task force, Françoise Ducros; the assistant deputy minister of policy from National Defence, Ms. Jill Sinclair; and the director of staff, strategic joint staff, Mr. Robert Davidson.

We welcome all of you. We look forward very much to the assistance you will give us as we continue to study the Canadian mission in Afghanistan. My understanding—

We have a point of order.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Yes. Maybe you were going to say this right now. A lot of the previous discussion here was held in camera, but I think the intent and purpose of having these witnesses here today perhaps should be explained beforehand. We had a specific set of questions that we put to them so that we could understand the state of play for our recommendations.

The Chair: I don't think I have to go through all those missions. I think the opening statements should address that, because they were given direction beforehand as to what we're looking for as a committee in terms of the future non-combat role, etc.

Mr. Jack Harris: I think the point is that what we're looking for is information so that we can make our own recommendations as to what the committee would believe is the priority. We didn't anticipate that the government might be ready to make its own recommendations. We wanted to hear what the current state of affairs was from the point of view of these officials. So I hope that's what we're going to hear.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

I understand that you have an opening statement, Ms. Bossenmaier. You may go ahead whenever you're ready. Thank you.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier (Deputy Minister, Afghanistan Task Force, Privy Council Office): I do, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee.

Thank you for inviting me and my colleagues here once again regarding Canada's mission and engagement in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

As you know, Canada has approached its engagement in Afghanistan from a whole of government perspective. I am pleased to be joined here today by a number of colleagues from some of the departments and agencies which are contributing in a major way to Canada's engagement in Afghanistan.

[English]

The last time I appeared before this committee was prior to your trip to Afghanistan. I am so pleased that all went well during your visit, as I understand it, and most importantly, that you had the opportunity to meet with the dedicated and courageous individuals, both military and civilian, who comprise Canada's team in Afghanistan, and to see first-hand their efforts, their challenges, their environment, and the results being achieved.

[Translation]

They are focused on making a difference each and every day on advancing Canada's priorities in Afghanistan, for which they, and their colleagues who have gone before them, have worked so hard. And they are making a difference.

Your visit and your words of thanks were much appreciated by all involved.

[English]

A voice: The bells are ringing.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Shall I continue?

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead. We'll try to find out what the bells are for.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you.

Since my last appearance before this committee, two new quarterly reports to Parliament have been issued by the cabinet committee on Afghanistan. These quarterly reports have reported on the progress being made on Canada's six priorities and three signature projects.

The latest quarterly report covered the period from April to June 2010 and focused on how priorities and projects are supporting the delivery of basic services to Afghans. As Minister Cannon noted in his last appearance, while the situation in Afghanistan remains volatile and challenging, there have been noticeable improvements in a number of key areas. Allow me to highlight a few.

[Translation]

up to 1,800 hectares of land benefitted from improved irrigation as a result of Canada's work on the Dahla dam;

around 400,000 children in Kandahar province received polio vaccinations during two vaccination campaigns;

● (1535)

and Canadian funding helped the UN World Food Programme provide over 15,000 tonnes of food nationally to over two million Afghans.

[English]

Furthermore, Canada made advancements in the provision of new health measures for two highly vulnerable groups, pregnant women and children under the age of five, with 78,000 women receiving iron and folic acid supplements, and 140,000 children receiving micronutrient powders.

Because of our efforts and the dedication and commitment of Afghans, there are more police and soldiers protecting Afghan communities and Afghan interests. There are more children in schools, particularly girls. Food crops are replacing the production of opium. Basic governance is taking hold, and basic services are being built.

As ever, we must place our results in context. Afghanistan remains a dynamic and difficult environment.

[Translation]

As well, over the past several months, there have been a number of significant events both in Afghanistan and internationally which have contributed to the current situation in the country and the prospects for the future.

At the London Conference in January, the international community and the Afghan government set a direction toward improving governance, building a stronger connection between the Afghan government and its people, and ensuring Afghanistan's long-term ability to meet its security challenges.

That process continued at the Kabul Conference in June which assessed progress from London and developed concrete plans for continuing improvement.

[English]

As well as being the first major international conference hosted and organized by the Afghan government, the Kabul conference also initiated the development of a plan to transfer lead security authority to the Afghan government by 2014. This plan was adopted by the heads of state of the Government of Afghanistan and ISAF contributing countries at their meeting in Lisbon last weekend.

As well during this period, parliamentary elections were held in Afghanistan, the official results of which were announced earlier today. While the international community has taken note of the irregularities and fraud committed, the hard work of the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission to identify and deal with these problems marks a significant step forward for Afghanistan's electoral institutions. In the coming weeks, a new Parliament will start its work on behalf of the Afghan people,

another step forward in Afghanistan's path to improving its democratic governance, and an essential element in Afghanistan's efforts to build stability and sustainable peace.

Also in recent months, while the security situation has certainly remained challenging, the U.S. troop surge has helped achieve progress. The surge has permitted a further refocusing of the Canadian Forces area of operations to critical districts of Panjwayi and Dand.

While the leadership of one ANA kandak, or battalion, trained and mentored by the Canadian Forces has been transferred to support the establishment of new kandaks elsewhere, two new Afghan National Army kandaks arrived in Canada's area of operations in September, and they're now being trained and mentored by Canadian Forces personnel.

Mr. Chair, it's a fact that progress has been challenging. Change has been incremental. But in the midst of conflict and in light of all the obstacles we have faced, we are making progress.

[Translation]

Last week, ministers announced Canada's new role in Afghanistan that will build on significant progress in the areas of security, diplomacy, human rights and development.

Canada's new non-combat role post-2011 will be centered in Kabul and will focus on four key areas, namely: investing in the future of Afghan children and youth through development programming in education and health; advancing security, the rule of law and human rights, including through the provision of up to 950 military trainers and support personnel for Afghan security forces; promoting regional diplomacy; and helping deliver humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.

● (1540)

[English]

Our developmental and humanitarian assistance will be channelled through trusted implementing partners for programs aligned with the priorities of the Afghan government. We will address critical food security and emergency needs through food assistance, disaster preparedness, mine clearance, and education.

[Translation]

Moreover, the rights of women and girls will be a particular cross-cutting focus of all these programs.

[English]

In sum, Canada continues to make real progress in Afghanistan, but this work is not yet complete. The objective remains unchanged: to help Afghans build a more secure, stable, and self-sufficient Afghanistan that is no longer a safe haven for terrorists.

My colleagues and I would be pleased to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I have received instructions here that we're supposed to proceed to the House immediately, but I wanted you to finish your comments. What I'm going to do is to suspend the meeting until after the vote. We have no control over these things. I apologize.

Then we'll continue our meeting until 5:30. I hope you'll be able to bear with us in regard to this.

This meeting is suspended until after the vote.

- _____ (Pause) _____
-
- (1620)

The Chair: I'd like to call this meeting back to order.

If it's okay with you, some members have suggested that we go to 10-minute rounds here, instead of the usual seven minutes for the first round. Does anybody here have an issue with that? We'll then go to five-minute rounds with whatever time we have remaining.

Is that agreeable to the committee?

All right. There are no objections.

As usual, we'll begin with Mr. Wilfert from the official opposition.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, thank you for accepting that suggestion.

I want to thank the witnesses for coming here today.

As you know, we want to do a report that makes certain recommendations with regard to the non-military role for Canada in Afghanistan and also look at the other aspect on training.

The Prime Minister indicated the other day that corruption was the number one issue, in his view, as we've acknowledged around this table for a number of years now. We also note that the government has now indicated that it's going to reduce the amount of aid to Afghanistan.

Now, how do we do capacity-building, how do we deal with the rule of law, how do we deal with some of these issues if in fact corruption is the major issue? Again, I notice that corruption was not in one of the four objectives in the November 16 press conference of the three ministers. How are we going to address this particular issue of corruption?

Plus, what are the objectives and priorities of this task force and what it might suggest to this committee with regard to some of these other issues, such as the Dahla Dam? Are we, or are we not, going to be able to complete that on time? If we're not, what are the issues?

Finally, in terms of the three signature projects we have, can you give us an update on those?

I will leave the remainder of my 10 minutes for Mr. Dion.

An hon. member: Good luck.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Bryon Wilfert: And as succinctly as possible, please.

Thank you.

- (1625)

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Mr. Chair, thank you.

There were a number of questions there, so if the committee permits, I'm going to suggest that we sort of work our way through those.

On dealing with corruption, I'll ask my colleague from Foreign Affairs to lead off on that question, and then perhaps my colleague from CIDA can speak on the signature projects and their status.

Mr. Gordon Venner (Assistant Deputy Minister, Afghanistan, Middle East and Maghreb, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): I just have a couple of points. We have actually had a fair number of specific initiatives dealing with corruption in the last little while. I can just run through them. Most of them are still under way.

Canada provides anti-corruption training to justice officials in Afghanistan. We assisted in the establishment of the High Office of Oversight and Anti-corruption, and we supported the drafting of anti-corruption legislation in Afghanistan. We also funded the development of a code of ethics and professionalism for justice officials, and we trained 1,000 officers.

We made a contribution of \$80 million to the United Nations Development Programme's law-and-order trust fund for Afghanistan to help strengthen the rule of law. That trust fund helps ensure that police officers are paid regularly and directly, which helps build the morale of police services, increases officer retention, and reduces incentives for petty corruption.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: What benchmarks or measurements are you using to ensure that this in fact happens?

Mr. Gordon Venner: I'm not aware of a specific method for measuring that, but we provide direct training for Afghan officials, the national security forces, and police officers, for example, as an element of the overall training package.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: But you mentioned that there's no way you can tell us whether or not that's being achieved because you don't have any measurements.

Mr. Gordon Venner: Well, all of our aid benefits from external and internal monitoring. There are external and internal audits. There's the application of standardized fiduciary practices. There are multi-donor evaluations and there's regular financial reporting.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I presume, Mr. Chairman, that could be made available to this committee.

A voice: Yes—

Mr. Gordon Venner: Yes.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I'll take that as a yes—

Mr. Gordon Venner: The other thing I would note is that in October of 2009 Canada signed a \$1.5 million grant with the United Nations Development Programme to support accountability and transparency in Afghanistan's Ministry of Education. That was another initiative.

I'll turn to my colleagues for your specific question on the signature projects and the Dahla Dam.

Ms. Françoise Ducros (Vice-President, Afghanistan Task Force, Canadian International Development Agency): Just on the issue of building capacity, as well, with a view that we can't provide budgetary support, which is indeed the case—we do not provide direct budgetary support—we have provided, though, several technical advisers to build capacity in various ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Finance.

On the issue of honouring the Afghan priorities and the building of that capacity, we've worked through the World Bank Trust Fund, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, so we have recognized the fact that you can only build capacity if you're working with the Afghan government and meeting the priorities, and we do that. Unfortunately, it is still the case that the financial oversight mechanisms are not in place, so we work through the trust fund very closely with the Afghans in the various ministries.

On the issue of the signature projects, we're well on our way, and we have no reason to believe that we won't finish the Dahla Dam project, including the reconstruction of the irrigation system, the building of capacity in local water usage and water usage organisms, and the building of community ownership in that project. As well, we've done a lot of capacity building on just the whole agricultural side of things, including experimental farming and the changing of crops, and we have no reason to believe we won't meet that target by December 2011.

On the specific signature project of the building of schools, again, we believe we're well on our way to completing the 50 schools. We have 27 completed. Others are well advanced. Then there are commitments around that signature project, including the training of teachers, the building of curriculum, and again, as I said, the building of capacity in the Ministry of Education. We're on our way to do that.

On the signature project with regard to eradicating polio, we will not be eradicating polio by the timeline, but there are many reasons for that. We've increased coverage of the vaccination—7.2 million kids are immunized—and we have an ongoing program, and it has been stated that we would continue to do that through partners. We won't meet that target of eradicating polio, but we will continue to work on that. Part of the reason for that is actually the trans migratory infection of the virus coming up from Pakistan. CIDA has been working with other donors to elicit their support for addressing the polio issues in Pakistan.

That's the update on the signature projects.

•(1630)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I understand, Mr. Chairman and Ms. Ducros, the rationale on the third one, but on the first one dealing with the Dahla Dam, can we get something in writing that says this is what we've completed at this point?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Absolutely. I can provide that.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I would appreciate that.

As a final comment, Mr. Chairman, I just find it amazing that we have no financial oversight yet we are pouring in money left, right, and centre. It's important, and I want you to understand that I believe that development is absolutely critical, and I believe that taxpayers

need to get value for the dollar, but if we don't have the kinds of benchmarks, measurements, or oversights there.... In this case, the Prime Minister said there's a lot of corruption and he's not going to give another dime. Well, he's not going to give another dime, yet no wonder he wouldn't give a dime. If you don't have these frameworks in place, that bothers me. That's what I'm concerned about.

I do appreciate that you're going to bring back some written information. That would certainly be helpful to this committee, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Sorry, Mr. Chair. We do have oversight on the moneys that we spend. There's an accounting system. On a lot of the education and capacity-building projects, we work largely through the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund, where we can account for all of our funding. On other projects, including the polio eradication, we can account and provide accountings for the funding that goes to those projects as well.

The issue, as I understood it, is how you ensure that moneys are properly spent with the Afghanistan government. We are clearly uncomfortable with doing that, so no money goes directly to the Afghanistan government. The oversight mechanism is provided through the World Bank and the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund or other mechanisms through other partners. I'm glad to provide the written documentation behind it.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: The Afghan government doesn't have the capacity to deal with it anyway.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Which is why we're building the capacity—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Yes, but—

Ms. Françoise Ducros: —and channelling the money through other sources.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Mr. Chairman, perhaps I could just add on both of those.

The next quarterly report, as all of the quarterly reports do, provides updates on all of the priorities and the signature projects. The next quarterly report will provide an update on the status of all the signature projects: what has been accomplished and also what the challenges are.

Just in terms of the accountability, as Ms. Ducros said, there are robust mechanisms in place, whether they be internal and external audits, or whether they be oversight mechanisms for the aid that Canada provides. I'd be happy to provide more of those details.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move to the Bloc Québécois.

Monsieur Bachand, please.

[Translation]

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

I'm a bit disappointed by the report presented to us today. I recognize the colleague from the Privy Council Office who was here last time. If I remember correctly, we asked for more explanations; we wanted this to be more explicit. However, I see they've regurgitated the quarterly reports. We're reminded of Kabul and Lisbon.

I believe the Privy Council Office insists on wearing rose-coloured glasses. We see the same terms that we've been hearing for years. They talk about little girls going back to school; that's really great. There's talk about soldiers and police officers who protect the Afghan community; they write that governance is very well established and that essential services have been set up; they mention agricultural production.

I've had access to other information that tells us the contrary of what we see in this report. This comes from a study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. It contains tables that come from NATO and the UN. I didn't make them up. They were presented to the major-generals of the Afghan forces.

It can be seen from this that the war is completely escalating; the curve is rising. All that's in colour. We can read the words, Time is running out, which means that we're short of time. If I look at the maps of Afghanistan in 2005, 2007 and 2009, I see that the yellow indicating Taliban control is expanding. We're regressing; we're losing this war. And yet we read only good things in the report.

The same is true with regard to combat locations. In one of the tables, we see that all combat locations in Afghanistan are constantly expanding. There's also all of Afghanistan and the ability to control the Taliban and insurgents that are expanding as well.

I also have the number of incidents or attacks per month, in recent years. For example, that number increased from 630 in 2008 to 1,369 incidents or attacks this year. Numbers are similar for improvised explosive devices. We can see a peak, with a vertically rising curve, in one of the tables.

I have another NATO report. I went to Warsaw. Here are the programs noted by NATO. This organization uses the following expressions: insufficient quality of leadership, high illiteracy and attrition rates, limited facilities and forward operating bases, incomplete ability to provide combat or maintenance support, a lack of developed institutions, inadequate logistics capabilities, a lack of accountability for funds, equipment and personnel actions, and a historical under-resourcing of the training mission.

I draw your attention to the high illiteracy rate. And there have been some fiascos over there. For example, we sent an Afghan section to conduct an operation and they were caught so unprepared that they had to call in air support. So it took air strikes to get them out of where they were. Everyone had a map, but no one was able to read it. It didn't go well.

In addition, corruption in the Afghan security forces is appalling. Fuel and weapons disappear. The Americans deliver weapons to the Afghan armed forces and those arms are then found in the hands of the Taliban when they are captured. Some are even found in bazaars in Pakistan. It's not going well. The same is true of equipment. There's also a very high rate of substance abuse.

I don't feel like asking any questions. I previously questioned a general who came to talk to us about a subject and I said that what he was telling us was false. I prefer not to ask questions; I can only deplore the fact that no consideration was given to what we asked for last time. They're still not specific enough and they're still wearing rose-coloured glasses.

I'm going to ask my colleague whether he wants to ask a question on a subject that is important to him.

• (1635)

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): My question is for Ms. Bossenmaier.

Women's rights, the promotion of women and so on are generally cited as reasons justifying this mission. That is a factor that has very often been cited.

What strikes me in the copy of the statement you submitted to us is that the subject is almost entirely avoided. And yet it states on page 3 that there are more children, particularly girls, in schools. At the end of this six-page report, there are two brief lines stating: "Moreover, the rights of women and girls will be a particular cross-cutting focus of all these programs." These are the only references. There are no figures or statistics; there's nothing.

How do you explain why the issue of women's rights is virtually missing from a report designed to justify extending the Canadian mission in Afghanistan? Is this attributable to the observation that is gradually being made, that the Karzai government's views on these matters are approaching those of the Taliban? In fact, the situation of women has probably deteriorated in the country.

That's my question, Mr. Chairman.

• (1640)

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Mr. Chairman, I have a few comments to make.

[English]

My colleagues may also have comments to add.

The rights of women and dealing with women's issues in Afghanistan have run through I would say all of our initiatives, if not most of our initiatives that we have to date in Afghanistan, through all of the priorities, whether it's the security situation increasing and trying to improve the security situation in Afghanistan, so that it will have a positive impact on the lives of Afghans, but also and in particular on the lives of women.

On the education work we have done, you've heard around this table before the statistics that deal with the number of young girls in school in 2001 compared to the number of girls in school today. Our education efforts—again, improving the education opportunities for all Afghans—have had significant impact on women.

In terms of our focus and the efforts we've had in health, and in maternal health in particular, again, it's affecting and improving the opportunities for all Afghans, but again for women there are significant advances.

Micro-financing is something that we've reported on in our quarterly reports in regard to the number of micro-finance loans that have been provided to Afghans. Again, a majority, or a large proportion of those, have gone to women so they can have increased opportunities from an economic perspective.

So I would say that a wide range of various initiatives and of programs there have been focused on women and have actually produced results for women. My colleague from CIDA might want to provide some additional commentary, because CIDA has done a lot of work in terms of programming for women.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I think Ms. Bossenmaier has covered it well, but the numbers are fairly staggering. On the micro-credit loans, 66% of those have been provided to women. We've been forwarded results as to what impact that has had.

On issues of education in particular,
[Translation]

one-third of the six million students are girls and now have access to education, whereas they had none in 2001. It's not just a matter of giving girls access to education, but also of targeting all teacher training for women. Now 30% of teachers are women, and that enables girls to go to school.

We've also provided transportation. We always talk about girls' safety: we've ensured transportation for girls so that they can go to school.

[English]

On the issues of health, it has been targeted to things like obstetric care in the Mirwais hospital. The stats on the issues of literacy and health care for women are quite staggering. What we can say is that we've decreased those stats with regard to childhood mortality.

I'm quite comfortable in saying that when you can establish not only the 50 schools and the training of the teachers, but the 4,000 community learning centres, the literacy programs, and the vocational programs, we have in fact left Kandahar province and the rest of the country a little bit better off with regard to the state of women.

Moving forward, we have said that in our approach to all of our programming, which will be focused largely on children and youth, education, and humanitarian assistance, there will be a specific focus on the fate of women. I would be remiss not to add that with much of the \$35 million that was provided by Canada on preparation for the elections and the building of institutions, we provided training to female candidates that reached 70% of the female candidates who ran for Parliament.

We've also provided female parliamentarians with the tools that we take for granted here, including offices, phones, and the ability to actually participate in the parliamentary process. We have been fairly stalwart in targeting our programming largely to women, from economic development to education to health, and we will continue to do that as we move forward—and I'm glad to provide details.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go over to the government side.

Mr. Hawn, go ahead, please.

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

Thanks to all of you for being here.

I'll share my time with Mr. Kerr.

My friend across the way has a filter, apparently, through which he listens to the bad news and cherry-picks that, but he filters out any of the good news. Clearly, there's a lot of bad news in Afghanistan—there's no doubt about that—but it is not all bad news.

I direct this to Admiral Davidson.

We've talked about the increase in IED incidents and contact with the Taliban and so on. Isn't that a natural byproduct of putting about 100,000 extra boots on the ground? Of course there are going to be more incidents and more activities; it's part of the surge and part of getting a grip on the situation. Is that a fair statement?

RAdm Robert Davidson (Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence): Yes, sir, I would say that's a fair statement. There's been roughly a 40% increase in the last year in the number of troops on the ground. That includes both NATO troops and Afghan security forces. That 40% increase has meant that we're now getting into areas that we were not able to get into. In fact, that was the point behind the whole surge: the need to get into areas in which we had not had an enduring presence. For a counter-insurgency strategy to be successful, you have to not just take the ground but hold it for a long-term period, in order for the population to gain the confidence that you're actually going to be there in the long term to protect them.

The initiatives that we have started to see over the last year have meant that the troops are actually getting out into the field. They're living amongst the people, both Afghans and NATO forces, and that's starting to have an impact, but of course the violence level was bound to go up because we've gone into areas that we hadn't been in before.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: So it's a pretty simplistic approach to take a raw statistic without understanding what that statistic means and throw out a statement like that.

I'd go back to another comment that was made about resources for training. Obviously, we are going to be transitioning from a combat role to a training role. Can you comment on the kind of capacity building that we will be able to do with our trainers in and around Kabul and that will address the issue of resources for training, and what impact that might have on the Afghans' ability to conduct operations?

RAdm Robert Davidson: Yes, Mr. Chair.

We received government direction last week, so we're now in the process of consulting with our allies in terms of exactly where and in what capacity we can contribute towards the training. But the objective behind the increase in the training mission is to contribute across a broad range of areas. We're not talking just about training troops in issues of how to do combat; we're also talking about training the institution in how it needs to conduct its business. There will be training required in areas of staffing and in areas of how to plan and conduct operations. There are "asks" out there for signals, logistics, and medical training areas.

There's a broad range of areas in which we could contribute. I don't know exactly which areas we will contribute to yet, because, as I say, we need to do some more detailed planning. But there's a broad range of areas that we can contribute to, and I would say that our soldiers, sailors, and aviators definitely have the expertise and capacity to do that.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: But we will be providing a pretty significant resource for training.

Just quickly on recent election, people pointed to a million spoiled ballots or disallowed ballots as being the bad news. I would suggest that's probably good news, because it means that the election complaints commission actually works and actually has done their job, and that even with those million spoiled ballots, their turnout was 42%.

Ms. Bossenmaier, is this good news or bad news?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: On the parliamentary elections, this is definitely an issue that the international community has paid a lot of attention to, and as Ms. Ducros said, it's one that we've also tried to contribute to in helping with the electoral process. The Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission are two really important bodies that have played important roles throughout this exercise. The fact that they have been able to exercise their responsibilities, that they identified fraud, and that they took action...those are important steps forward in terms of the electoral process. Results were just announced this afternoon from that process, and I think folks are now looking forward to being able to form the new Parliament and get back down to business.

As Ms. Ducros also mentioned, we've tried to support that process from the women's perspective as well in terms of helping Afghan women candidates participate in the electoral process. Turnout is an issue that has been examined and probably will be examined in the coming days, but the facts are that millions of Afghans voted and hundreds of Afghans participated in the process, and these are important steps forward in the democratic process taking ground.

I'm not sure, Mr. Venner, if you'd like to add anything else in terms of the electoral process and Canada's contributions.

• (1650)

Mr. Gordon Venner: No. I think that covers it. Just to link back to the previous question, though, on support for women, I think 27% of the members of the current Parliament are female.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I'll turn it over to Mr. Kerr.

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all of you for being here today.

There's a lot to cover but very little time in which to do it, so I'm going to wrap some stuff together, if I may.

Knowing that we've been I think quite successful in the combat role to date, while I realize that this is changing, I think any rational person would agree that to stay there and continue the training and the commitment in Afghanistan is critical if we're going to carry on with this transition.

There are a couple of things. I'll first mention the crops versus opium. I want to tie that in with getting to where we have to get to, given all the corruption we've heard about, which is getting off the dependence on the drugs and the vulnerability of incomes and so on. How important is that to tying it in with continuing the training mission so that the Afghan authorities can in fact control this problem and continue to work on things like the human rights issue? That's kind of roundabout. I guess we're still in the very early transition to real and long-term crop sustainability and also to making sure that we deal with those human rights issues. I'm just wondering how that ties in with making sure that we stay there until the mission is finished in terms of training.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Mr. Chair, there may be a couple of ways to address the issues the member has raised.

We already had a little bit of discussion around this table about the Dahla Dam: will the targets be met and how is it progressing? It may be helpful if we talk a little bit about the impact of the dam. It's more than just the dam; it's really the irrigation system. There are opportunities that the irrigation system is opening up to the Kandahar region in particular, which is often known as the breadbasket of the region. Through the work of CIDA and partners, they've been looking at how to try to help the Afghans now use the new irrigation possibilities in terms of crop development.

Ms. Ducros, you may want to talk a little bit about that.

In terms of the training, the importance of training going forward, and capacity building, I think Admiral Davidson already touched on that, but he may have more points to add.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Just on the Dahla Dam, 80% of the people of Kandahar live along the Dahla Dam and the irrigation waterways the Dahla Dam feeds.

We are well on the way to meeting that target. We've de-silted canals. We've worked with local communities in establishing their ownership of the various gateways and waterways in the irrigation systems and in reclaiming that land.

We also have done a lot of training on new farming mechanisms and new crop development on Tarnak Farms, with the University of Guelph and other Canadian and Afghan partners, with a view to returning to pomegranate and other crops. So there is a net gain as to what we do with regard to soil reclamation and harvest reclamation.

I don't know what more to add. It's fairly significant. It is basically reclaiming what used to be, as Ms. Bossenmaier said, the breadbasket not only of Kandahar but of Afghanistan and the region. It could create livelihoods that theoretically would bring people back to traditional farming.

Mr. Gordon Venner: Maybe I can just add one point. In addition to work being done in terms of substitute crops, there is also work being done in terms of better enforcement with respect to counter-narcotics. We had a really interesting example recently. Pakistani authorities seized 15.8 tons of precursor chemicals that are used in the production of heroin.

The Pakistani officials who made that seizure, which is the largest of its kind, were trained under the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime with the cooperation of the World Customs Organization. That program was funded by Canada as part of our efforts in the Dubai Process, which works to facilitate better cooperation between the Afghans and the Pakistanis on border issues.

• (1655)

Adm Robert Davidson: If I can, I'll just make another comment on the issue of the connection to training. We have some fairly ambitious targets, but we're meeting them, for the most part, in terms of growing the size of the Afghan national security forces. This comes back to the issue we talked about earlier with respect to violence.

The more we get the troops out into the field and out into the sparsely populated areas where we haven't been before, the more we are going to be able to counter some of the challenges associated with the drug trade and so on. If you look, for example, at Helmand province, which represents about 5% of the population in Afghanistan, and where about one-third of the incidents are currently taking place in terms of violence, this is also the area where a large part of the drugs are being produced. They have the opium fields.

We're trying to get the Afghan national security forces to a total that will exceed 300,000. When you start to get to those levels, you're going to be able to put the police or the army out into those areas. They'll be able to take over behind NATO forces, and they'll be able to deal with issues like the drug trade.

The Chair: Thank you, Admiral.

I'm sorry, but we're going to have to cut it off there. We're out of time.

Mr. Harris, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you.

I'll share my time with Mr. Dewar.

Now, we're here to talk about post-2011 civilian-side development or non-military contributions. I note that in 2008-09, Canada spent \$227 million on programs in Afghanistan. We understand that the PCO was working on a projection of a \$550-million program over the three years following 2011, which from what we were told the other day is now \$300 million—\$100 million a year for three years—and which seems to be a cutback by about half of what we've been spending up to now, or at least lately, and also a reduction in what was being projected.

Can you tell us what programs are being eliminated as a result of this cutting back to \$100 million a year from our relatively current commitment and what was projected up until a week or so ago?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I can speak to the humanitarian development side of things, which was a program of about roughly \$220 million this year—\$633 million over the last three years—and it is estimated to be roughly \$100 million in the years coming.

On the programming that we've funded in the last year, about half was to Kandahar province. There's no question that we achieved many results, which I have outlined. We believe that these projects will be sustainable into the future, but we will not be programming directly in Kandahar province. We'll be focusing on continuing to draw from those lessons that we learned throughout Afghanistan and focusing on two areas of concentration where we think we've had a tremendous impact.

The first is education, where we've been the lead donor in many respects in developing approaches, building capacity, and ensuring results. Also, we will continue to work on humanitarian assistance. We are going to continue to develop that programming, and we will do so in consultation with our partners in Canada and working to the national priorities of the Afghan government, which has basically redefined or focused what those priorities should be pursuant to the Kabul conference.

That's not to say that we haven't achieved great ends with the economic development side of things and the other issues, but—

Mr. Jack Harris: That'll do for now.

When we were in Afghanistan last spring, one of the most successful programs described to us by the Minister of Agriculture and confirmed by some of our Canadian civilians in Kabul was the national solidarity program, which was said to enable communities to identify, through elected community development councils, local development priorities that would be delivered based on their priorities. Canada contributed \$46 million to that program between 2008 and 2011. It seemed to give an opportunity to let communities have some local governance and some say or control over their future—this development aid coming. Is Canada going to continue to contribute to that?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: The national solidarity program is actually a program delivered by the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, to which Canada contributed. A lot of it went into education, and that may be one of the tools as we move forward with education. It's a multi-donor project.

Mr. Jack Harris: But not this specific program?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: The NSP? Well, we'll have to work that through. We're still in the planning stages. But part of what the NSP provided was local projects around education, so we wouldn't rule that in or out at this point.

•(1700)

Mr. Jack Harris: Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but I know that we were at the Kabul conference, and we were told again in Afghanistan that one of the big concerns of the Afghan government was that all the people delivering the programs were non-governmental people or outside agencies, and the government was not seen as being a player in any of this.

That was considered to be a negative for nation building, for institution building, and for building confidence in the government, and they wanted a 50% commitment to donors.... I understand from what you said that Canada is giving zero money to the Afghan government for them to deliver programs. Am I right or wrong about that?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: You're not right about it—

Mr. Jack Harris: I thought I heard you say that.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: No. Canada is giving no money directly to the Afghan government. Canada is giving money to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which actually programs according to those Kabul priorities. So the Government of Afghanistan has developed its priorities pursuant to their development strategy and, now, the Kabul conference. Some of those priorities include building capacity, training teachers, and ensuring curriculum.

We do that in consultation with the Afghan government, but it is done through the financing mechanism of the trust fund, so it is not “to” the budget, but on budget, with the proper oversight and accounting mechanisms to ensure the money is well spent.

Mr. Jack Harris: We were told by CARE Canada that the Ministry of Women's Affairs is grossly underfunded and doesn't have the funds to do the job in supporting women's activities in Afghanistan. Can we possibly help that agency?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I'm not in a position to say what we will do project by project as we move forward, but it is certainly something we have supported in the past through the UNDP, and we'll certainly look at it as we develop programming with women.

But I do want to be straightforward: our focus will be on education and humanitarian assistance. So insofar as that fits in, we would look at programs such as that and projects such as that.

Mr. Jack Harris: Paul.

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

Thank you to our witnesses.

Ms. Bossenmaier, I'll ask you this question. When did you become aware that there was going to be a change in direction in the Canadian mission in Afghanistan? In other words, when did you learn about the Prime Minister's decision to change from no extension of the military mission to an extension of it?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Mr. Chair, as you know, the government made an announcement last week in terms of what Canada's new role will be in Afghanistan post-2011. As to when I found out, this is a whole-of-government mission, we work collectively, and when I found out...I don't really believe that's something I can advise the committee of.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So you can't tell us whether it was last week that you found out?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: No.

The Chair: I'm not sure, Mr. Dewar.... How is this relevant to the issue we're exploring here today?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Well, because we're talking about post-2011, I'm just asking. I'm assuming—

The Chair: No, we're not. We had decided where this—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Well, it's about what—

The Chair: I'm not sure whether you were in—

Mr. Paul Dewar: If I may—my time is precious—I was simply asking. I think we established, through witnesses at least, not through Ms. Bossenmaier, that it was last week that it was established there was a change in the mission. We'll take that as an agreement.

I guess my next question would be about the strictly civilian mission. You had been under the impression until last week that it was going to be a strictly civilian mission. I think most of us are aware of the plan that had been put forward and that my colleague had talked about.

How long had you been working on a strictly civilian mission for post-2011?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Mr. Chair, the decisions that the government makes in terms of what the policies and programs will be, and what the priorities will be in the future, are government decisions. In terms of the public service's role, you know, in terms of being able to provide advice and then now being able to implement what the government's priorities are...that is the role of the public service.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So you can't tell us how long you were working on those plans?

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Hawn.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Yes, and please give Mr. Dewar more time.

But it really is not Ms. Bossenmaier's position to tell this committee how that process unfolds outside of the public purview. She is doing her job, as they all are as public servants. It's not up to her to make those announcements. It's up to government to make the announcements. Clearly, things are worked on for some period. It's not her position to reveal that kind of information. She's under no obligation to do that. So I wish Mr. Dewar would stick to—

Mr. Paul Dewar: I wasn't asking for cabinet secrets. I was simply asking how long—

Hon. Laurie Hawn: You're asking how long she has been working on this and that's not relevant.

Mr. Paul Dewar: No. I asked how long the team had been working on plans for post-2011.

Can I start again? I still have a few minutes.

• (1705)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Chair, please keep a good eye on relevance.

The Chair: Yes, I've been trying to do that.

You have another 30 seconds extra. Go ahead.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you. I have two minutes, according to my clock.

The Chair: Well, I meant—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Chair, what we have established is that before the announcement of the government last week to extend the military mission, there was a plan, which we have access to and which was put out last August, that we were going to have \$550 million on this civilian-only mission. Now we have established that there has been a cut to that program, so that instead of \$550 million for a civilian-only mission we'll have only \$300 million.

I guess the question I was trying to establish was what the government and cabinet were directing the public service to do. We can't get information, and that's unfortunate. Maybe the question should be, are we going to be cutting back on diplomacy? I didn't hear about that. If so, where are we cutting back on diplomacy? It is one of your initiatives, but I didn't hear any discussion about how much money there is and exactly what you'll be doing. Could we establish that?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Mr. Chair, as I mentioned earlier, as you well know, the government announced last week that the post-2011 role would focus on four priorities. Development and investment in the future of Afghan children and youth is one. Advancing security, the rule of law, and human rights is the second. The third is promoting regional diplomacy, which really builds on a lot of the work that has been done in Kabul, in Kandahar, and also internationally, in the sense that my colleague has already mentioned the Dubai process and some of the work that's been happening there. So promoting regional diplomacy will continue. The fourth priority is delivering humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Sorry—I just asked how much you were going to invest in that.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: I don't have a figure in terms of the breakdown by those various elements.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Chair, just—

The Chair: Thank you. You're at 10 minutes and 45 seconds, not 10 minutes and 30 seconds, so we're going to have carry on.

Mr. Jack Harris: Could we ask for that, Chair? Can we ask for that breakdown?

Mr. Paul Dewar: If you could provide it to the committee when it's available....

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

We'll now go to five-minute rounds, with Mr. Dechert.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Bossenmaier and Admiral Davidson, through you, I want to thank you and the people you represent for the great work you and your colleagues are doing in Afghanistan. I had the privilege of visiting there with this committee last June, and we got a good overview of what Canada is doing in Afghanistan. I have never been prouder to be a Canadian than I was when I saw the work that our brave young men and women, on both the civilian and the military side, are doing to make Afghanistan more democratic and the world a safer place. I felt proud, and I feel a lot safer today knowing what I saw there with the progress that's being made to improve the stability of that region.

Ms. Bossenmaier and Ms. Ducros, you mentioned Canada's project to support women seeking election to government. I learned while I was there that the proportion of women in Parliament, as of the last parliamentary election, was 27%, which compares pretty favourably with Canada. Fifty per cent would be better, but we'll get there. Could you describe for us, in greater detail, exactly what the project is and how you support women seeking elected office in Afghanistan? Could you tell us the results of the elections that were announced today?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Before Ms. Ducros answers, I would like to thank the you for your comments about the visit. I had the opportunity to be in Afghanistan a few weeks ago and I must say that folks are still talking about your visit: how much they enjoyed seeing you, and how much they were moved by your words of appreciation. On behalf of our colleagues in the field, I want to thank you again.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Yes. Thank you very much for that question.

We did multiple projects. UNDP elected an overall body that dealt with preparing the elections, so there were projects that included building the capacity of the IEC and providing things like women searchers, so that women would be able to go and vote, to access public awareness campaigns, and to access independent polling booths, so that women could vote on the institutional side for election day.

On the specific issue that you referenced with regard to training of candidates, there were a couple of projects. One of them was on training candidates on how to message, how to present, what to do in order to get elected, and who to target. That reached, as I said before, 70% of the candidates. I should say that it was also noted by Staffan de Mistura, a representative of UNAMA, who thanked Canada in writing for the contribution they made in order to provide access to the system for women, both in allowing them to vote and in providing training.

There were earlier projects in the workup to this election. They included things like providing them with the ability to work, should they be elected. There were various groups of projects, but they reached an overwhelming number of candidates through different mechanisms. There was also a public awareness campaign throughout the country. I'd be glad to provide the committee with the details of the breakdown as to what we did on that project.

• (1710)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you very much.

Ms. Bossenmaier, you mentioned the training of the police. When we were in Afghanistan, we were told by a number of people how important it is that the people of Afghanistan have confidence in their justice system. They said that one of the best ways to get people to accept the elected government of Afghanistan is to have a credible and trustworthy justice system. Obviously, the police are a big part of that.

Could you contrast the situation of the Afghan police five years ago with what they are today? What needs to be done in the future, and how will Canada participate in that?

Mr. Gordon Venner: I'd add a couple of things. I might just add one comment to the end of Françoise's answer to your earlier question. Among the things we've done is that we've provided to the Afghan Minister of Justice a technical expert on legislative drafting, an expert on women's rights and Islamic law, so they can draw on that expertise in their own work.

With respect to training of the Afghan National Police, Canada currently has 50 police trainers in Afghanistan. I can give you a very specific list of the types of things they're currently doing there.

They provide first responder training to the Afghan National Police, who are the first responders to incidents involving improvised explosive devices, or IEDs. They provide training in searching and handcuffing. They provide training in searching buildings and vehicles. They provide training in establishing and maintaining vehicle checkpoints. They train people to do city and district police station surveys. They train police in vehicle repair. Also, substation and Afghan National Police headquarters improvements have been facilitated through them. They also provide first aid training.

I think your question deals also with some of the challenges that remain, and certainly there are many. One of them is attrition rates within the Afghan National Police. We're working with them to find ways to lower attrition rates. The work that's done, for example, to provide them with direct pay is a way of improving their satisfaction with their jobs.

We've also been helping improve police stations, because police officers tend to spend an awful lot of time in the stations. They're almost second homes, in some cases, so we try to improve their working environment.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Mr. Dion, please.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I'd like to make sure that I correctly understood. Mr. Ducros, you said that the Dahla dam will be completely finished for 2011.

Mrs. Françoise Ducros: The project that we began will be completed for 2011. It's a rehabilitation of the process that was in place and a rehabilitation of the waterways—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: I don't understand. Is the dam ready or not?

Mrs. Françoise Ducros: The \$50 million project that we undertook with SNC-Lavalin was to rehabilitate the existing dam. And yes, it will be ready.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: So it will be completed and operational for 2011.

Mrs. Françoise Ducros: Yes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you very much for that information.

Let's get to the bottom of things. I don't believe that anyone here questions the quality of the work that our military members and civilian personnel are doing with immense courage in Afghanistan. We don't doubt that a number of your programs are working well and achieving results. The question is whether we are dealing with a money pit. That's what's happening; that's where Canadians disagree.

For example, we're building schools. However, if the ambient culture there is hostile to the idea of girls going to school, even if we build them, what will happen to those schools later on? That's what Canadians are wondering.

You say we're teaching them to control crops and so on. The UN tells us that the cultivation of poppies has resumed with a vengeance. So what's the point for us in doing that if, in any case, most of their incomes go to drug-trafficking?

The same is true for everything we're teaching them about the operation of institutions, the legal system and so on. Everyone tells us that there's a culture of impunity, that we're still looking for the first human rights criminal to be prosecuted in Afghanistan. That's the issue.

So giving us a long list of all your programs can't give Canadians a sense of security.

My question will focus directly on training issues. If my information is correct,

● (1715)

[*English*]

We are spending—NATO is spending—\$12 billion a year for training. That \$12 billion means that it is more than the budget of the Government of Afghanistan. So if it were a matter of money, I guess it would be solved already.

There's a lot of concern that we are training people that don't stay very long. Some of them even go to the Taliban. Also, they don't really want to fight. After all, we are speaking about the people who have been able to win against the Soviet Union. If they were really willing to win against the Taliban, they would not need so much training.

[*Translation*]

We're talking about a country where young people are able to dismantle and reassemble a kalashnikov.

What is the current retention rate among the Afghan military members that we are training? How many Afghans do we have to train in order to have 10 who stay in combat?

[English]

Ms. Jill Sinclair (Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have an attrition rate for the Afghan National Army of 1.6% monthly, and for the Afghan National Police, 1.2% monthly. Clearly, the issues of attrition and retention both have to do with the broader governance challenges in Afghanistan. There's no question that it's costly and takes time. That's why we're reinvesting in the training mission.

But there have been some improvements on the literacy front. This is a massive challenge, there's no doubt about it, but the impact this is having on the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police is showing in terms of the effectiveness. They were key in helping support the recent elections, for example, so they are beginning to have an impact.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Admiral Davidson, how come these people who have been able to win against the Soviet Union need to have training to win against the Taliban? Is the motivation as strong as it was against the Soviet Union? Isn't it true when a lot of testimony of our own soldiers on the ground...? I went there. They're telling us. They don't trust a lot of these Afghan people. They think some of them may be Taliban that have infiltrated the Afghan army; they prefer to be on the ground alone than with them. Under these circumstances, your assessment as a professional is what...?

RAdm Robert Davidson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Sadly, there have been some examples of trained personnel who have been insurgents and who have infiltrated, but those are a very few and isolated cases and ought not to be the basis on which we judge what we're trying to achieve with the training.

I understand your question. Being that they fought the Soviets and won, why do we need to train them? What occurred then and what we are essentially fighting is a counter-insurgency. It's a very small percentage of the population is doing the fighting. They're doing the fighting using mechanisms such as IEDs and ambushes and those kinds of things.

What we're trying to do in terms of building a capacity and an institution in Afghanistan is to build a professional armed force that has the capacity to control its own country in the long term and also the capacity to generate its own forces. In other words, we need to train them to the level where they can train themselves. We need to give them skill sets in areas like counter-IED. Today, that's a very complex skill, so it's very costly to teach it and to give them the equipment they need.

We need to give them skills in how to plan missions on a large scale. If you want to counter an insurgency, you have to put people on the ground and you have to hold the ground. That means you have to be the guy who's standing there on a corner. You're not the insurgent. You're not fighting from behind the rock. You're standing out on the street corner providing security for people. That's a different skill set. It requires that they be able to operate in groups, mutually support each other, learn how to communicate, and learn how to call in air support. It requires that they learn to coordinate all the various elements of the force so they can achieve the effect. It's a very complex business.

You look at the Canadian Forces and the complexity of our own business. We're trying to produce a modern force, and you cannot produce a modern force with a lot of experience in a short period of time.

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

It's very frustrating for me. We're getting good information, yet I have to end the discussion.

Mr. Abbott, please.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Thank you.

Ms. Ducros, because we're trying to look at the future, I'm interested in getting you to quickly recite so that we understand a thing like polio eradication...can you tell us what it was, the volume, and the number? Can you give us a history, where we are, and what we're looking at in the future?

The second part of these questions is this. We were very active in the Kandahar area. Are we going to completely wind down our humanitarian efforts in the Kandahar area and move just into Kabul?

Those are two questions. I have a third if we have time.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: If I may, Mr. Chair, I will take the second one first. We are winding down our projects and programming in the Kandahar area, that is true; we'll be working on a national program. That doesn't mean the reach that we will be attempting to get...it includes throughout the country, including Kandahar; the idea would be to build capacity with the national government, to provide necessary training to allow those departments to be able to reach down into the provinces. So it isn't that our reach in the provinces will be foregone.

On the issue of polio, there was a time—probably in the last week—when I could give you, chapter and verse, all the numbers. I can't do it off the top of my head now, but the narrative history is that Afghanistan was one of the four countries where polio continued to exist. There was a spike in cases in 2008 when we went in; we'll have the numbers there. We were on track to eradicate the cases completely. There are 12 or 13 a year and can all be traced back to the polio virus coming from Pakistan. Because there was an outbreak in Tajikistan recently, we believe the virus may be coming in from there.

What is essential in what we have achieved with regard to polio eradication is broad-based immunization of children. We are reaching up to 95% of the areas across the country, so if there are outbreaks of cases, it tends not to spread through the area: 7.2 million children across Afghanistan have been vaccinated against polio. Although eradication hasn't been achieved, we are just basically covering the country with vaccinations. It is particularly prevalent in the south because of the infection coming from Pakistan.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Will this be an ongoing effort?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Yes. The minister has stated that we would continue to work to eradicate polio.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Can you give us an overview of maternal, newborn, and child health? What does that mean? Help us understand what that means in the Afghan context.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Speaking from memory, and depending on the year, I think Afghanistan has the second- or third-worst newborn mortality rate. It's a very prevalent issue. We have had some basis of programming, including working with obstetrics in the Mirwais hospital. Since the government's announcement of the \$1.1 billion on the G-8 initiative, the minister announced her countries of focus and included Afghanistan. MNCH was not a principal area of focus prior to that announcement in Afghanistan; we did other health initiatives and there was some of it.

There are multiple issues there, including access to hospitals, the ability to get to clinics, the care that's provided, and the training of midwives. We are currently developing that programming. But the issue in Afghanistan is that it has the second- or third-worst rate, year over year, of child mortality, and we'll address it through institutional capacity building, access to systems, and nutrition, which is the principal issue.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Now, there's no possible way that one single nation like Canada, no matter how well intentioned and no matter how well funded, can solve that entire problem. Give us a bit of an idea of what percentage of the entire Afghan problem we are actually able to impact.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: On every issue or on MNCH?

Hon. Jim Abbott: No, no: on maternal, newborn, and child health.

• (1725)

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I think it would be premature for me to give you that information. Currently what's happening is that the various donors are staking out what can be done across the country. We can approach it two ways. We could approach it either by addressing it geographically and picking an area, or systemically by dealing with the training of professionals or institutions.

I think it's fair to say that we have to consult and do the proper analysis, both on what we can achieve and do and also on where we fill the gaps with regard to what other donors are doing.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Is this a work in progress? What I'm trying to drive at is that, with the government's initiative on this issue, there is more focus. Are we ramping up fairly rapidly or is this a continuation of something that has been occurring?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Oh, no, we've announced that we would be providing.... It is a ramp-up quickly over the next five years, from 2010 to 2015, so we would be programming fairly quickly. It always takes some time to develop that programming, but we would be providing \$45 million on that issue over the next three years—or yes, \$15 million a year over the next five—

Hon. Jim Abbott: Mr. Chair, may I...?

The Chair: Very briefly.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Yes.

I apologize. I'm not trying to put you on the spot. I'm trying to quantify. I'm trying to understand \$45 million and what that means in

the giant picture. In other words, how much impact does \$45 million have—1%, 10%, or 50%—on the issue?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I can honestly say that I don't think I have that information to give you right now. It could be 1% of addressing all the nutritional needs or 1% of addressing the obstetric needs. That analysis really has to be done.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Thank you.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I can tell you, though, Mr. Chair, that the minister was in Afghanistan in May and had a round table with experts in the field. There is certainly a view that Canada has a leadership role to play in that area, because it has provided great leadership on the coordination of education programming. We're looking to play a leadership role in the field.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bachand, please.

[Translation]

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

My questions will be for Admiral Davidson.

Admiral, do you feel the war in Afghanistan is intensifying?

[English]

RAdm Robert Davidson: As I said previously, there's no doubt that there's been an increase in the level of violence because of the surge that has caused us to find ourselves with troops, both Afghan and ISAF troops, in much larger areas across the country.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Do you trust the NATO fact sheets? Among other things, they show that, of the number of incidents caused by insurgents, such as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Haqqani network, with which you're all familiar, 523 attacks occurred from 2009 to 2010 and that there have already been 1,319 attacks in 2010?

Do you attribute that solely to an increase in U.S. armed forces, which, consequently, would double the attacks?

[English]

RAdm Robert Davidson: It's not just because of the growth in the U.S. forces; it's also as a result of the growth in Afghan forces. While those statistics don't break it down, a lot of those initiated incidents by insurgents are actually IEDs. There are IEDs spread out across the country, so the more roads you patrol and the more ground you cover with foot patrols, the more you're going to encounter IEDs.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: In April 2009, there were approximately 350 IED attacks. In 2010, one year later, there have been more than 1,000. That's not just due to the presence of the Afghan and NATO forces. It's also because the Taliban are better organized, which intensifies the conflicts.

RAdm Robert Davidson: It's true that they've focused on IEDs, but

[*English*]

I think it's important to note that the reason they're doing it—putting more emphasis on it—is that they can't fight in the field against the number of forces that are there. If you look back to 2006, Canada went into Kandahar province in 2006. We went in there with a single battle group, and we were therefore representing the bulk of the forces that were in Kandahar province at the time. We encountered Operation Medusa. At that particular time, the insurgents were starting to mass. They had the strength of numbers. There had not been a significant NATO presence in the area or, indeed, an Afghan government presence in the area, so they started to mass.

When we went across that wadi to attack them, when the Canadian army did that crossing, they went with 40 personnel—one platoon's worth—of the Afghan National Army. Today there are

thousands of Afghan National Army personnel standing shoulder to shoulder with us and getting out there. Because of that, because of the surge, the insurgents are no longer able to stand and fight, so yes, IEDs are a weapon of choice. Ambush is a weapon of choice. They don't stand and fight. But these are all individual incidents. If you compared the incidents and the complexity of them to before, that would be a factor as well.

• (1730)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Unfortunately, our time is up.

I'd like to thank Admiral Davidson, Ms. Sinclair, Mr. Venner, Ms. Bossenmaier, and Ms. Ducros for appearing here. You've given us very valuable information and we thank you as a committee.

This meeting stands adjourned.

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