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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, January 31, 2013**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Dean Allison**



## Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)):** Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), our briefing on the situation in Mali will begin. I want to introduce our witnesses today.

We have Kerry Buck from DFAIT, who is the political director and assistant deputy minister of international security, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean branch. Welcome, Kerry. We have Patricia Malikail, who is the director general of the African bureau from DFAIT, and we have Lisa Helfand, who is the director of peace operations and fragile state policy division. We have a group from DFAIT.

From the Department of National Defence we have Major-General Jonathan Vance, director of staff, strategic joint staff. Welcome, sir.

From CIDA we have David Morrison, who is the senior vice-president of the geographic programs branch, and Leslie Norton, who is the director general of the international humanitarian assistance directorate. Welcome to our friends from CIDA as well.

Ms. Buck, we'll start with you with an opening statement. Then we'll go to Mr. Vance, and then Mr. Morrison for opening statements before we get to questions and answers.

Ms. Buck, the floor is yours.

**Ms. Kerry Buck (Political Director and Assistant Deputy Minister, International Security, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to address the committee and provide you with views on the subject of Mali.

The situation in Mali presents an example of the complex challenges facing many African countries. The country grapples with three crises, each distinct but interrelated.

[Translation]

The first is the political crisis stemming from the coup d'état of March 22 of last year.

The second is the occupation of the country's north by terrorist groups such as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the Salafist movement Ansar Dine, and the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest that has destabilized Mali and is a threat to the Sahel region and the entire international community.

The third is an ongoing humanitarian crisis stemming from the 2011 Sahel drought and the subsequent food and nutrition crisis.

[English]

As background, Mali is one of the poorest countries in the world. The government has had limited ability to control the northern part of the country, and in the past decade terrorist groups have begun to operate more freely in the region. The north is the poorest area of the country, and the ethnic Tuareg have a history of grievances and rebellions against the central government.

In January 2012 the main rebel Malian Tuareg, supported at that time by extremist groups, attacked Malian forces and started to advance from the north. The Malian army collapsed.

On March 22 soldiers dissatisfied with the Malian government's support to quell the northern rebellion took control of their barracks, leading to the successful coup in Bamako by a Captain Sanogo, thus ending 20 years of democratic rule.

The various groups finished driving out Malian government forces from the northern two-thirds of the country. The terrorist groups then defeated the main rebel Malian Tuareg group and took control of a large geographic area, an area that is a little larger than Alberta.

The takeover of the north worsened the already precarious dynamics of the humanitarian crisis in northern Mali that to date has affected more than four million, including almost two million in the north.

[Translation]

Canada has interests in Mali.

Regarding development assistance, my colleague David Morrison will tell you about Canada's commitment implemented by CIDA.

[English]

Canada has some commercial interests in Mali, and we have a firm interest in the re-establishment of a democratic Mali. We have been calling for a return to constitutional order and the adoption of a road map in order to lead to free, fair, and credible elections.

Last year the international community witnessed with great concern how terrorist, extremist, and other armed groups took control of nearly two-thirds of Mali's territory. The entrenchment of these groups in northern Mali was accompanied by violence, human rights abuses, and oppression of the local populations, threatening the stability of Mali, its neighbours, and the entire Sahel region.

On December 20, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2085 authorized the deployment of the African-led international support mission in Mali, AFISMA, *en français*, MISMA.

The mission is mandated to take all necessary measures in compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law, and respecting Mali's sovereignty, to contribute to rebuilding the Malian defence and security forces; support national authorities in recovering areas in the north under the control of terrorist, extremist, and other armed groups; help to stabilize the country and consolidate state authority; support authorities in protecting the population; and finally, contribute to creating a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the return of displaced populations, and to protect its personnel on missions.

While the UN Security Council authorized AFISMA in December, in the first week of January the Islamist groups advanced towards the capital, Bamako, in an effort to secure their control over the whole territory of Mali. This would have enlarged the sanctuary for terrorists around the world to train, plan, and effectively launch attacks against our closest allies and our global strategic interests.

• (1110)

[Translation]

At the request of the Malian government and operating under the mandate of resolution 2085, France launched a military operation to support the Malian defence and security forces in their efforts to drive back the heavily armed Islamist groups and to prepare the ground for the deployment of AFISMA. Canada immediately joined the international community in supporting France, which acted promptly to halt the Islamist offensive.

The Prime Minister stated the following: "We are very concerned about the situation in Mali. The development of essentially an entire terrorist region in the middle of Africa is of grave concern to everybody."

Canada heeded the call from one of its closest allies to provide logistical support to their operations with a large-capacity transport aircraft. My colleague Major-General Vance will give you some details about that.

Canada's direct support to France will contribute to the efforts to stabilize Mali, weaken the enemy and facilitate the transition towards the effective deployment of AFISMA.

Moreover, the Prime Minister specified that Canada had no intention of becoming directly involved in combat operations.

[English]

On the margins of the African Union summit this week, and in Addis Ababa, the international community pledged \$455 million to support the international effort against Islamists in Mali and the Sahel region. Canada was represented by the Honourable Julian Fantino, Minister of International Cooperation. Minister Fantino announced an additional \$13 million in humanitarian assistance. This new funding will be channeled through NGOs and international organizations to assist the most vulnerable.

Members of the committee, I outlined the three interrelated crises. Canada is addressing each of these. We are actively engaged in supporting Mali's return to an elected government. A road map was adopted by the Malian national assembly on Tuesday of this week. The interim president has called for elections to be held by July of this year. Canada will be following closely the implementation of

this road map. As well, we are addressing humanitarian needs through our support to UN agencies, the Red Cross movement, and NGOs.

Finally, we are addressing the security front through logistical support to the French operation—as I said, my colleague, General Vance, will be speaking to you about this—through the deployment of a C-17, but we are also providing training equipment, and technical and legal assistance. As we have been doing for quite a while for other states in the region, that includes training on international humanitarian law and military ethos to enhance their operational capacity to prevent and respond to terrorist activity in a manner consistent with international human rights and humanitarian law norms.

For instance, some of our current projects in West Africa include military training with Niger on armed forces in the context of exercise Flintlock, provision of training by police, and regional training projects for law enforcement and border security through Interpol.

• (1115)

[Translation]

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is coordinating a whole-of-government effort that will respond comprehensively to the crisis in Mali and the Sahel region with targeted assistance that has value added for Canada. Canada's efforts will be coordinated with international partners, including the United Nations, and respond to the peace and security needs of the Malian people.

[English]

Mr. Chair, I will now pass the microphone to my colleague, David Morrison from CIDA, to briefly outline CIDA's engagement on development assistance and humanitarian assistance.

[Translation]

**Mr. David Morrison (Senior Vice-President, Geographic Programs Branch, Canadian International Development Agency):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, everyone.

For a number of years, Canada has been one of the major partners in Mali's development. On average, since 2007, Canada has provided over \$100 million annually to support Mali's development. Until recently, Mali was moving ahead on the road to development in a number of areas, especially in education and management of public finances, thanks in part to Canada's support.

[English]

For example, Canada's support has increased the percentage of infants under one year old who are fully immunized against five childhood diseases from 69% in 2007 to 92% in 2010. Malian school children have had access to textbooks which they never had before. Canadian assistance has put 1.2 million new textbooks in the hands of Malian girls and boys over the last few years. Following the suspension of aid programs involving direct payments to the Government of Mali in March 2012, CIDA has continued to provide critical support to help the most vulnerable Malians in the areas of food security, nutrition, immunization, and access to basic health and educational services.

For instance, CIDA is currently providing funding through international and Canadian organizations working in Mali to ensure the continuation of critical services, such as health and education services to vulnerable populations in the south of the country.

[Translation]

Those initiatives are aimed at both strengthening the country's stability and preparing Malians to withstand any future shocks. This kind of support is key for avoiding social unrest in the south of the country, where 90% of the population lives and where the transitional government's seat is located. Stability in the south makes it possible to focus more on the country's north, where the security situation is worrisome.

[English]

CIDA is also providing substantial support through its humanitarian partners to respond to the needs of people affected by the ongoing food and nutrition crisis and the more recent conflict in Mali. In the last year, Canadian funding has helped our humanitarian partners achieve the following results: food and nutrition assistance to some 1.3 million people in Mali, as well as to 142,000 refugees in Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso; life-saving water and sanitation assistance to more than 49,000 people; life-saving activities, such as the screening and referral of children suffering from malnutrition, as well as activities designed to protect livelihoods and enhance resilience, such as the distribution of seeds and tools to 58,000 people; and finally, cash transfers and cash for work programming for 3,000 vulnerable households affected by both the food crisis and the conflict in northern Mali.

As my colleague from DFAIT mentioned, earlier this week, on January 29, at the African Union Donors' Conference on Mali in Addis Ababa, Minister Fantino announced an additional \$13 million for a number of initiatives aimed at the most pressing of these humanitarian needs. These include support for emergency food and nutrition assistance and shelter, primary health care, water and sanitation to people displaced by the conflict.

In conclusion, the deployment of the African-led international support mission and efforts to address the security situation must be considered as part of a broader process of restoring the legitimacy and stability of the Malian government, and with concerted efforts to address the current situation in the country.

Although our suspension of direct aid to the Government of Mali remains in effect, we will continue our significant development programming working with partners to address the needs of

vulnerable Malians, particularly women and children. We will also continue to respond to the humanitarian situation as appropriate.

• (1120)

**The Chair:** We'll now turn it over to General Vance.

[Translation]

**MGen Jonathan Vance (Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence):** Mr. Chair, honourable members of the committee, I am pleased to be here today to discuss the Canadian Armed Forces contribution to operations in Mali.

My statement will focus on three main areas. I will begin by describing the Canadian Armed Forces mission in support of operations in Mali. I will then provide a timeline of key events associated with the Canadian Armed Forces contribution to this mission. Finally, I will give you some basic statistics highlighting the Canadian Armed Forces contribution and achievements to date in this mission.

[English]

The Canadian armed forces' mission is to provide strategic logistical support for France's efforts in Mali in support of our allies and to demonstrate the Government of Canada's support for the requirement to stabilize the situation in Mali. To achieve this mission, the Canadian armed forces is contributing one CC-177 Globemaster heavy-lift aircraft. This strategic lift capability, commonly referred to as a C-17, is helping the French transport military equipment and personnel between France and the Malian capital, Bamako.

[Translation]

The following timeline summarizes the key events pertaining to the Canadian Armed Forces contribution and, more specifically, the deployment of the C-17 transport aircraft in support of our French allies.

[English]

On January 14, the chief of the defence staff received a letter from the Minister of National Defence directing the Canadian armed forces to provide one C-17 transport aircraft, to support France's strategic lines of communication, for an initial period of one week.

[Translation]

The first flight of the C-17 transport aircraft from France to Bamako occurred on January 17. So the above-mentioned period when the Canadian Forces provided air mobility support ended on January 23.

The next day, the Government of Canada announced the extension of its air mobility support for an additional three weeks, bringing the total duration of this support to 30 days, with an end date for the mission of February 15.

[English]

Currently there are approximately 40 personnel from the Canadian armed forces deployed on this mission. They are operating from Le Tubé air base located in Istres, France. As of today, the C-17 transport aircraft has flown 13 missions and has moved over 775,000 pounds of cargo from France to Bamako, such as armoured vehicles, medical supplies and ammunition, as well as French military personnel.

For our C-17 to be deployed for one month, the projected full-cost estimate is \$18.6 million. The incremental estimate is \$11.7 million. Please note that the actual costs will only be available approximately 60 days after the full completion of the operation.

[Translation]

The C-17 transport aircraft has made a significant contribution to the transportation of essential supplies between France and Mali. Moreover, the success enjoyed by the Canadian Armed Forces during this mission has been underpinned by the efforts of our members, who have been working closely with their French counterparts to ensure seamless support throughout Canada's current commitment.

Thank you very much.

• (1125)

[English]

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

We're going to start with the opposition. Mr. Dewar, the floor is yours. You have seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to our witnesses.

I will start off by mentioning how we ended up with the committee briefing. The opposition wanted to make sure that we had some parliamentary oversight so Canadians could be aware of what we're doing in Mali. To that effect, we had asked the government, and it complied, to have some parliamentary oversight through committee. Hopefully, we'll have a debate as well. I just wanted to note that.

Just as a polite criticism, we had been concerned about the information sharing. Since that concern was raised, we have had briefings, and we have this committee briefing today.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to start on the diplomatic side. I'll start maybe with a wider lens. I think, Ms. Buck, you and others have mentioned that we're not dealing just with a concern around Mali, per se, that in fact, this is a regional concern. We certainly heard that from Mr. Fowler, for instance. He was quite clear about the concern he had when he was a captive about the plans afoot for what we'll call the extremists to gain a foothold in places like Mali and certainly beyond. Obviously, you would see this as not just a Mali concern, that this is a regional concern.

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** It's both a Mali and a regional concern.

In terms of Mali, prior to the coup there had been 20 years of democracy, a democracy with some weaknesses, but a democracy, and one of the most vaunted democracies in Africa. The political instability in Mali and the bifurcation of the country meant that... It

was a geographic bifurcation, a geographic split of the country, but also ethnic and increasingly religious, about a year ago. That's not good for Mali's return to democracy. There have been some important developments on that front, as I mentioned in my opening statement, with the Tuareg in the north no longer siding with the Islamist extremists, and some important steps to go back to democracy in the south as a road map.

It's a Malian problem, but it's part of a broader Sahel problem in that across that region of northern Mali, Niger, Mauritania, and the parts of Algeria running across that part of Africa, over the last few years it has become increasingly a haven for some terrorist extremist groups.

There have long been very porous borders in that area. There are long histories of certain ethnic groups moving freely through the Sahel, certain smuggling enterprises through the Sahel, but the rise of terrorist groups that have been increasingly emboldened is alarming to the whole international community, emboldened partially because of some money and outflow of arms in the context of Libya, but that predated the Libyan military intervention. The arms and money have been coming out of Libya for a while, and from other sources starting to fuel the Islamist extremist groups.

As a terrorist haven the Sahel has caused concern to the international community for a while. I won't get into great detail, but as I said in my statement, we have been active for a long time on that front in security and counterterrorism programming.

At the same time there's a humanitarian crisis in the Sahel, and a food crisis in the Sahel, which I mentioned, and I think Mr. Morrison mentioned, that exacerbated the vulnerability of the population as well.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Thank you for that overview.

One of the concerns we've raised in the recent past is the fact that whilst this is a regional concern, as you mentioned, and a very localized concern as well with regard to Mali, the government has decided to close embassies, as you're aware, including, I think, in particular interest for people, next door in Niger.

With the closing of our diplomatic capacity in Africa generally, but particularly in Niger, could you explain why that decision was made? How is that hindering us? As was mentioned, we are doing work in Niger and it is a regional issue. How has that affected our capability to act?

• (1130)

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** Canada is very much engaged in Africa. There has been no stepping away from our engagement in Africa. You'll see that in the frequency of ministerial engagement over the last while. Minister Baird has been there five times now. The Prime Minister has been there. Minister Fast is in Africa right now on a trade mission, and there have been other ministers, including Minister Fantino. There's a high degree of engagement.

We are constantly making decisions about where our diplomatic presence will be most useful. Part of our calculation is to focus our diplomatic engagement in countries where we have significant Canadian interests and where we can bring significant Canadian value.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Time is running out. I'm concerned about the decision to close the embassy in Niger. With due respect to Minister Baird and Minister Fast, we're not talking about trade deals here, we're talking about this regional threat.

How are we making up for the loss of capacity in Niger when it comes to dealing with this particularly difficult scenario?

**The Chair:** Ms. Buck, you have 45 seconds.

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** It's a regional threat, and we have taken a regional approach to addressing that regional threat.

For instance, Canada co-chairs the counterterrorism working group on the Sahel, and that is like a clearing house for contributions of countries in the regions and for partners to move forward programming, to build capacity to stop terrorism, to be able to detect bad guys and bad things going across borders. We're taking a regional approach that way. We use our African diplomatic resources to also send that message and help mobilize those programming resources.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I'm simply making the point that we have fewer of them on the ground.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dewar. That's all your time.

We're going to turn it over to Mr. Dechert. Sir, you have seven minutes, please.

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

I'll help my friend Mr. Dewar by reminding him that Canada has a very significant diplomatic mission in Mali itself.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for being here today and sharing this very important information. Canadians are very interested to know about the situation in Mali and how it affects the stability of the entire region.

We've learned in the last couple of days that the French have made some significant progress in pushing back the rebels in northern Mali. I'm wondering if you could share with us the composition of those rebels and what we know about them. Maybe you could describe some of the recent reports that we've heard that the Tuareg have welcomed the idea of dialogue with the interim government. Is that true? What dynamics exist among the various factions in the north?

That's a question for Ms. Buck and perhaps General Vance.

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** I can lead, and then General Vance will come in.

First, I'll give you the backdrop. A year ago, prior to the declaration of northern Mali as a separate Islamist state, one of the main Tuareg groups, the MNLA, had affiliated itself with al Qaeda and a few of the other groups. Immediately after the declaration of the north as an Islamist state, the Islamist extremist groups parted company with the MNLA, pushed them out of the cities, and took over. I'll deal with the MNLA in a second.

There are four main armed Islamist extremist groups or terrorist groups loosely associated with each other to varying degrees. There's

al Qaeda in the Maghreb, listed as a terrorist entity by Canada and the UN. There's MUJWA, also known as MUJAO, which is the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa. This is an AQIM spinoff, which also has an ideological aim to spread jihad across West Africa. There's Ansar Dine, which is a Tuareg-led salafist movement seeking to impose sharia across Mali, but we understand that faction is splintering right now. Then there is a group called Signataires par le sang established by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, which is again a splinter group. I want to make the point that this is very distinct from the Tuareg nationalist group, the MNLA, which seeks an independent homeland for the Tuareg, but which is primarily secular.

In terms of what's happened politically recently, it is very important. The MNLA came out on the weekend saying that they supported the French military intervention. Also, they have begun to say they want to come back to the table with the Malian government to seek reconciliation. From southern Mali, the president of Mali has clearly indicated two things: he's willing to sit down with the MNLA; and he and Islamic leaders and other members of the Malian population have also indicated that the other extremist groups are not welcome at the table, including Ansar Dine, which had been at a previous mediation effort about a year ago. It's an important split between the groups representing some of the Tuareg and the extremist groups; it's an important political signal to bring the political track together. A mediation effort has been supported by ECOWAS in Burkina Faso, and this will be key in moving forward to a reunification of the country.

• (1135)

**Mr. Bob Dechert:** General Vance, could you tell us about the six tests the French military has had?

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** Yes, sir. I think generally speaking we can say that the French offensive operations were mounted extremely quickly, very professionally, and indeed have been very effective to this point in time.

Over a very short period they have served to do two things: primarily to stop the southern advance of the rebels, as Ms. Buck has indicated; and actually to reverse that such that they are now being pushed above the Gao-Timbuktu line, in fact all the way up to Kidal, a city where the MNLA are prominent.

To be sure, there has been some attrition of hardened terrorist elements, AQIM and others, and some attrition of Islamist extremist rebel groups. But largely speaking, from the very beginning of the operation, the rebels started to melt back and were pushed out of the towns. There's been some attrition, but lots remain, particularly in the mountainous region bordering Algeria.

The French would intend to take advantage of any political rapprochement that would occur and use this period to then support the arrival of AFISMA forces that would then start to conduct operations in Mali, both to secure Mali and to set conditions for a training mission, and while the EU training mission mounts, such that they can be effectively rebuilding the Malian forces.

The one thing I would leave you with is that the description of the intertribal, inter-group relationship is one thing that's extremely complex, as we know. I think we've done a very good job of understanding to this point in time, but it would be impossible for us to say at this point in time what the regional Islamist radical threat will do as a result of what's happened in Mali.

I think there's a very sound plan and approach. We have yet to see what the response is. If you think of all-up numbers, generally speaking the trend is a growth of Islamist extremism in the area. If that trend continues, this will help Mali, but of course there remains the regional concern.

**Mr. Bob Dechert:** Thank you, General.

I have one quick question for Ms. Buck.

You mentioned the road map transition back to democratic elections. Can you tell us a little more about that? What are the challenges facing the Malian government as they prepare for those elections, and what are the benchmarks that Canada will use to monitor their success in the lead-up to those elections?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** Canada pushed the Malian government very hard to adopt a road map to bring back constitutional normalcy at all levels. On Tuesday the Malian national assembly did adopt the road map for transition. The president also came out and announced that he intended to hold elections before July 31, 2013.

These are very, very important steps. The road map includes some very important elements. It confirms that the interim president and interim prime minister can't run in the next elections, and confirms a number of other elements to ensure fair, credible, independent elections.

We are going to be watching very closely in the lead-up to the elections that those elements of the road map are being respected, but as I said, over the past week this has been a very important move. The return to a full civilian authority and constitutional rule is something for which we've been pressing for a long time.

• (1140)

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

Mr. McKay, you have seven minutes, sir.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to all for your participation.

My first question is for General Vance, and it's a very simple question.

General Vance, what is Canada's military goal?

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** Our military goal is to provide effective C-17 support to France until February 15.

**Hon. John McKay:** Isn't that simply a supply of an asset rather than a goal? Do we actually have a specific goal as a nation, our nation?

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** The mission assigned to the Canadian Forces is to provide a C-17 with a good crew and capability to provide strategic logistic support with that C-17 until February 15.

**Hon. John McKay:** Does that mean, therefore, that Canada has no separate military goal apart from France?

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** I'm not quite sure of your line of questioning. The fact is that the goal that has been established for us at this particular juncture is to support the French, a key ally, as they seek to respond to the crisis in Mali.

**Hon. John McKay:** You and I might actually agree it's a good idea, but it's not a goal, so let me suggest goals.

Is the overall goal of the mission to contain or degrade the Islamist threat in the Maghreb?

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** The Canadian military objective is inside a whole-of-government approach that speaks to wider national goals. It's difficult to pick one from another. Canada has, as has been well described by Ms. Buck, a whole-of-government comprehensive approach. Tying the Canadian military contribution as part of that whole-of-government approach to the military campaign at present is specifically designed to ensure the French are able to build up their forces rapidly to be able to conduct the operations they have been able to do.

They've been successful because they've been able to bring to bear an overmatched capacity against the Islamist rebels as a result of the international community and Canada bringing the equipment and materiel to bear rapidly so they could do that.

**Hon. John McKay:** I don't disagree with that, but it strikes me as curious that our nation has not actually been able to articulate that we are there to contain or degrade the Islamist threat, because that is, for our nation, the issue. The issue is that this may go beyond regional; it may become more than just that.

Just as a point of clarification, can I assume that is the French goal in their efforts? They have had some success. They've had rapid success. It's perfectly understandable. They are a 21st century modern military up against, if you will, a 7th century mentality, but the way the 7th century mentality sees success is far different from the way we see success, so we shouldn't exactly break out in a parade just yet.

I go back to the core point. What will we consider to be success of our military mission?

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** At this juncture it is probably important for this to be seen in the context of Canada's foreign policy objectives, so I'm going to hand it to Ms. Buck.

I can tell you that Canada doesn't usually approach something like this with a one-off. In other words, it's not just a military goal. There is a wider set of goals, and the military contributes to that, as does CIDA or anybody else.

It would be inappropriate for me right now to try to comment on the French government's foreign policy objectives in Mali. It's not my area of expertise.

**Hon. John McKay:** If we don't actually have our own goal, we end up adopting one by default, so perhaps the French—

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** If I may, Mr. Chair, I will pass this to Ms. Buck to put the wider Canadian government foreign policy objectives in relief to what the military is doing.



**Ms. Kerry Buck:** The military objective of the French operation has been articulated by the French leadership, but it's in the context of the AFISMA mission, and in my opening statement I set out what those goals are. One of the first military goals, of course, is to turn around the Islamist extremists, and they have succeeded in that effort to date, but it's a wider objective of securing control over the north, which leads into a wider objective of stabilizing Mali and returning it to a sovereign, unified, democratic country.

We are looking at all of the tools we can use, and the C-17 supports the military, but we're doing stuff on security and stuff on the political—

• (1145)

**Hon. John McKay:** The problem with all of those wider goals is that almost without doubt it drags us into a much larger conflict. You can pick your goals, like stabilizing the Malian government. That's a pretty significant goal in and of itself. Dealing with the Tuaregs is another very significant goal in and of itself. Degrading or incapacitating the Islamists is a very significant goal.

The approach seems to be to attempt to achieve all of those goals, and yet there is no timeline.

My concern is that by having this broader approach, you may miss what some would argue is the most significant goal, which is the containment of the Islamist threat.

**The Chair:** Ms. Buck, you have about 45 seconds left.

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** The goals I set out are the goals of the international community in response to the crisis in Mali. I take your point, but it has to be a complex and multi-pronged approach. Canada will be doing its part and has been doing its part. Mr. Morrison talked about our significant development assistance. I talked about our security capacity building. General Vance talked about the support to the French operation. We will do our bit, but the broader international goal has to be complex. It's a complex crisis with a lot of causes.

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** Mr. Chair, if I could just add one point quickly, there is a tendency sometimes to see military kinetic action as being the silver bullet on the Islamist threat. In fact, kinetic action does not address root causes. An appropriate balance between hard military and all of the other things that have been mentioned here is what actually stops the Islamist threat. You simply are unable to use kinetics to stop this.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. That's all the time we have.

We're going to start a second round, which will be five minutes for questions and answers.

We will start with Ms. Brown.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to all of our witnesses for being here.

I have a very personal reason for wanting to see Mali get back to stability. For the last 10 years, our family has supported a little girl by the name of Tolatta Togo in Mali through World Vision. To know she is living in a country that is undergoing such turmoil does not give me the satisfaction that there is hope and opportunity for her for

the future. I personally want to see the country return to some sort of normalcy just so that in a very selfish way I can see Tolatta have hope and opportunity.

Mr. Morrison, you gave us some of the perspective on Canada's humanitarian involvement now. You said we have withdrawn our support from the government directly. Canada has been an actor in Mali for many, many years. I wonder if you could just lay out for the committee some of the things that Canada has been involved with in helping to build capacity. I understand we have been working with an auditor general's office there to help them develop some government structures. I wonder if you could lay out for the committee some of our larger activities. Maybe, if we have time, you could comment on how Canada responded to the situation in the Sahel last year when the drought was emerging.

**Mr. David Morrison:** I will take the bulk of the question talking about what Canada has been doing and is doing now, and then I'll ask my colleague, Leslie Norton, to talk about the humanitarian response to the Sahel crisis.

At CIDA, we do both long-term development helping to build a better future for the people of Mali, as well as responding to short-term crises, and that's what my colleague will talk about.

You're completely correct; we have been in Mali for quite some time. It is one of CIDA's countries of focus that we nominated in 2009. It has been a very significant part of our overall portfolio. The specific areas upon which the program focuses are a couple that I mentioned in my remarks: health care and education within our rubric of building better futures for children and youth. That has been the bulk of our programming, but we also are involved in trying to strengthen public financial management and trying to strengthen the justice system. Both are, you would recognize, integral to the proper functioning of a democratic country.

In terms of access or the capacity building we've been doing in the justice sector, we've been working for over a decade on what you might consider the demand side of the equation, letting Malians know that they have recourse to a formal justice system to resolve their disputes rather than taking disputes into their own hands. On the supply side, we've been working with the formal structures of the justice system, for example, training Malians in courthouse administration, caseload management, the bread and butter of a functioning justice system.

You asked about the auditor general. This has been kind of a flagship project for Canada because it has involved the Office of the Auditor General of Canada providing direct support to the Malian office of the auditor general so that there is appropriate oversight on the expenditure of public resources. I believe this is the only country in francophone Africa that has chosen to adopt the Canadian model of a more independent audit function than the French model, which is the case in many of the other countries.

It's a multi-faceted long-term set of priorities that we're following in Mali. Before turning to my colleague, let me add that we suspended direct aid to the Government of Mali in March 2012, but we have continued to provide, for example, inoculations for children, textbooks for children, to ensure that crucial years aren't lost because of the current turmoil.

Leslie.

● (1150)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Ms. Brown, we'll have to pick you up maybe in the next round because that's all the time we have.

We're going to turn back to the other side, to Madam Laverdière for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank all of you for your very thought-provoking presentations today.

I would like to go back to the announced Canadian contribution of \$13 million. I would first like a clarification. Is that really a new amount of money or is it part of our response to the United Nations' appeal?

[*English*]

Is it new money?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Leslie Norton (Director General, International Humanitarian Assistance Directorate, Canadian International Development Agency):** That money does come from the CIDA international humanitarian aid program for this year. We're not talking about money earmarked for something else.

Our budget for the international humanitarian aid program has not yet been fully allocated. We are waiting for the UN's consolidated humanitarian appeals for 2013 before we allocate money. We make recommendations on the distribution of expenditures between January and March.

So it comes from our existing budget, but the money for Mali is new.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Thank you.

Let's compare that contribution to that of Japan, for instance, which is contributing almost 10 times as much as Canada. That's somewhat surprising. Canada has always been Mali's long-standing and key partner, but we are giving a little bit less. Canada is ranked eight.

Why is that?

**Ms. Leslie Norton:** In this context, we are talking about what is called burdensharing, where the burden is distributed among nations. Canada makes sure to contribute as much as that distribution calls for.

We also need to consider the context of Sahel. The \$13 million is not our only contribution so far. We have already provided assistance for Malians who are affected both by the conflict and the food and nutritional crisis. In the current fiscal year—the fiscal year of the UN and our partners is not concurrent with our own—we have contributed over \$21 million to the assistance for the two crises the Malians are experiencing.

● (1155)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Morrison:** I want to add a quick comment. That's on the humanitarian side. Our regular development program is continuing to run. Before the suspension of direct aid we were the second largest bilateral donor and the fourth largest overall. We've had to slow down a little bit, but we're ramping back up such that this fiscal year in the bilateral program we will deliver in order of magnitude almost what we were delivering before the coup.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Okay. Thank you very much.

It was one of my subsequent questions about how much we delivered this year on our regular programming. I understand the concept of burden share but it's such a discrepancy that Japan, for example, which is not at the same level as Canada as a contributor, has pledged nearly 10 times as much in Addis Ababa.

For the regular programming, which is now going through a number of organizations on the ground, you expect to disburse, what, 90% or 95% of what you would have disbursed otherwise?

**Mr. David Morrison:** On the regular programming, not the humanitarian side, pre-crisis we were in the range of 110%, with 90% of that being the regular development bilateral programming. That dropped a lot last year in the wake of the coup. We've had to shift gears so that now we're delivering it via Canadian NGOs and the multilateral system. It will climb up, depending on what happens in the next couple of months, but we will be up in that range again.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** I have a quick question about the \$13 million that has been announced. It's mostly for emergency support, except that there's \$1 million that appears to be more like regular programming. I'm not condemning or criticizing the project itself, but the \$1 million project for World Vision Canada for hygiene promotion campaigns and sanitation, is it for emergency assistance or is it for more regular funding?

**The Chair:** Ms. Norton, that's all the time we have, but I'll let you answer the question.

**Ms. Leslie Norton:** Okay.

It is in the context of the emergencies to help respond to the displaced who require water and sanitation facilities. It's also for cash transfers so that they're able to eat and purchase the basic needs that they have. It is all emergency funding. Sometimes the definition of emergency in an emergency can be a bit grey but it's basically to meet all the needs of those who have been displaced as well.

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

We're going to finish off this round with Mr. Van Kesteren. You have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Thank you for appearing before us.

My question is for the Foreign Affairs officials.

Of course, you're aware of the government's foreign policy on religious freedom and specifically the rights of religious minorities in the world. Last spring we heard reports that the Islamists had entered Timbuktu and the reports that religious minorities were persecuted.

Can you give us an update on the current situation of religious minorities in Mali? Has the situation become better or worse?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** Thank you. It's a good question. I'll be frank that it's a hard one to evaluate at this point because the situation is so fluid, but I'll say two things.

The international community has been monitoring reports over the last year of some very, very serious abuses committed in the north against the civilian population. Part of it flows from an extremist ideology. Those abuses have been committed against all sorts of different elements, not just the Tuareg population, but also other tribal or ethnic groups in the north. They have also been perpetrated against some of the more secular Muslims in the north. It's more of a split between an extremist ideology, committing abuses in the name of that, and then different religious groups who don't share that ideology, including more moderate Muslims. But yes, some abuses obviously are committed against religious minorities as well.

Also, significant abuses are committed by those groups against women, with many reports of sexual violence and other abuses of the human rights of women and against children.

There are very serious concerns. The international community has been focusing over the last year on these concerns. The UN continues to monitor. I know they've sent in a couple of monitoring missions to gather information. Canada will continue to monitor concerns.

In Geneva this week the situation in Mali was discussed at the Human Rights Council. Canada intervened, and we also joined a Francophonie statement on this. We've made the point about the abuses committed in the north by extremist groups. We've also raised concern about some recent reports that there have been some extrajudicial measures taken by Malian troops. Those reports are starting to emerge. We've been very vocal, as have the international community and the Malian government, that these abuses won't be tolerated.

As I said, the focus has been on the abuses by the extremist groups in the north, because they have been very, very severe.

• (1200)

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren:** Prior to the conflict, of course, it was a democratic state. It was a state that was emerging, an infant in that state. Prior to that, what were conditions like in regard to religious freedoms? Had they escalated to a point where...? It's not only in that area but I suppose broadly across the northern Sahara. Had there been an improvement prior to the crisis? If we have this rectified, can we see that perhaps we're moving in the right direction?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** Mali traditionally has been a very tolerant society with a lot of space for different religious minorities and different expressions of religious majorities too. That was the practice and the culture prior to the events in the north.

Part of the rationale for Tuareg uprisings hasn't been primarily religious at all. It's been levels of poverty and a feeling that they have not been sufficiently reflected in the political elite in the south and some ethnic divides as well.

Prior to the events of the past year, it's been quite tolerant. The Tuareg themselves do not have a history of that kind of extremism. It

was the Islamist extremist groups who imported the extremist ideology. There are some Malians who form part of those extremist groups, but there are a lot from outside as well. They've imported that extremist ideology and that sense of oppressing the local population for their own extremist religious views.

Over the last year it got worse in Mali. We'll see what happens in the north, but the trend is good to push the extremists out. The fact that the Tuareg have indicated a desire to come back to the table to talk to the Government of Mali is a very important signal.

Across the Sahel, as I indicated previously, and as I think General Vance did too, Islamist extremist groups have become emboldened. They have created some links. Many of them have a very extreme ideology related to Jihad. Some are more extremists for hire; there's a bit of mercenary brigandry going on, but that's the lay of the land.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Van Kesteren. That's all the time we have.

We're going to start our next round, and we'll start with Mrs. Grewal, for five minutes.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the witnesses for their time and presentations.

As the former colonial power in Mali, the French-led intervention has been kind of like a roller coaster. How are Malians responding to the French troops deployed in Mali who are leading the effort against the al Qaeda linked terrorist network in Mali? Would you have some comments?

• (1205)

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** It won't be a long answer because our understanding, from reporting on the ground and from our allies, is that there is a very positive reaction to the French military intervention. They wanted the Islamist extremists pushed out. The French military operation has started that move and has gained some considerable success. We're seeing in the north and in the south considerable support. As the French military was moving up into Kidal, our understanding is that there was not a shot fired. The MNLA, the Tuareg group, had announced that they're in control of Kidal. They welcomed the French troops. That's our understanding.

Again, we're not there in the north right now. I'm hearing this from allies. There's a positive reaction from the Malians and from the international community to the French move.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** It is estimated that about 90% of Malians are Muslims, mostly Sunni or Sufi, and approximately 5% to 8% are Christian. If the French are unsuccessful in beating down al Qaeda linked terrorists, what will this mean for the Christian population living in Mali?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** I wouldn't want to predict what would happen if the French and Malian troops are unsuccessful. They have had some very impressive successes. But we've seen over the past year how bad the human rights situation has been in northern Mali with AQIM and other extremist groups in charge. I won't go into detail, but there are amputations. There are floggings. There's sexual violence committed against women. It's horrific.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** From our consular perspective, what steps have we taken to ensure that Canadians in Mali remain safe? How is the population dispersed in Mali? Is the majority in the south?

Can you give us a rough idea of the current situation in Bamako? Is the situation still relatively calm there?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** I'll pass to my colleague, Pat Malikail, who is the DG for Africa.

**Mrs. Patricia Malikail (Director General, Africa Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade):** At the moment, the situation in Bamako in the south is calm, and it has been calm. There are approximately 250 registered Canadians in Mali. We estimate that the total number is about 450. Foreign Affairs has been in touch directly to encourage them to leave the country. Officials both here at headquarters and at Bamako have been monitoring the situation, and we've been advising people regularly about what has been offered. We've offered assistance on travel documents, for example, if people need them.

We've advised for some time against all travel in Mali in the north. That had been there for some time.

At the moment, because the situation has been calm in Bamako, commercial flights have continued to function, so that hasn't been an issue. We have also taken the precaution of relocating some of our dependents and non-essential staff from the embassy. We'll be monitoring that and looking at how to adjust that as we go forward.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Earlier there was a question from Mr. Dechert regarding the elections. Do you think this is a step in the right direction? The Malian government will face resistance and will struggle to hold democratic elections. In your opinion, how successful will Mali be in running democratic elections? Second, how can Canada assist Mali in the battle to hold elections in July this year in a democratic way?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** Mali has a history of being able to hold elections that are free, fair, and credible. It's a fluid situation right now. I know that the international community has already begun talking about the assistance that others will bring to the table as they move towards elections, so I'm hopeful.

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

Mr. Harris, sir, the floor is yours for five minutes.

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

As defence critic, I will focus on the military aspects of Canada's commitment, not the overall military plan of other nations.

Thank you, General Vance, for your presentation. I wasn't here, but I did read it.

It would appear the use of the C-17 is exclusively in relation to French assets and French troops. There were some reports that we were transporting African troops as well. That's not the case, is it?

• (1210)

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** They would not have been reports from us.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** No, I'm talking about media reports. But that's not true.

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** It's only French assets and troops.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** The other aspect of Canada's current involvement has to do with what's being called protecting assets and personnel in Mali. Would that include perhaps people at the airport in Bamako, where we would have the C-17 there for unloading purposes, and our embassy? Are those the only two areas where we would have need for personnel inside Mali?

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** You can understand my broad reluctance to get into too much detail in terms of operational security reasons as to where we are and what we're doing.

I can assure you first of all that we're not involved in any combat operations. Second, we are not doing any force protection at the airport. We do protect our plane, the actual asset itself, when it's on the ground, but we don't have armed troops stationed there at the airport. At a request from DFAIT, we are supporting embassy and consular security.

I just need to leave it at that.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** That's fine. I just want the kind of assurance that I think Canadians want, that our diplomats, for example, are protected. I know the kind of close personnel protection that we've seen in other countries, and it appears to be necessary there.

The other question that has arisen in the overall context of the arming of the AQIM group has been around arms from Libya. Not all of them escaped after the conflict in Libya, but I know Canada was involved in arms control in Libya and contributed \$10 million to assist with arms control in October 2011.

Perhaps you're not the one to answer this one, General Vance, but there are concerns about whether this \$10 million that we contributed provided any assistance or did any good. What can be said about that?

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** Mr. Chair, if I may, I should hand this to Ms. Buck.

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** We did spend a significant sum in Libya to help to secure weapons of mass destruction-related materials as well as conventional weapons. For weapons of mass destruction-related materials, there was \$7.5 million, including \$6 million to the OPCW, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, to support destruction of weapons of mass destruction, training for Libyan personnel operating the destruction facility, etc.

It's more conventional weapons flowing out and into the Sahel that have been the concern. We did devote just under \$2 million to disable and clear MANPADS, which are shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles, and other conventional weapons in Libya. We did that with the U.S. and other partners. The situation on the ground in Libya is a difficult programming environment still, as you can understand, but working with allies we have been able to clear and destroy a number of MANPADS and other conventional weapons in Libya. During the time of the fighting in Libya, there was an outflow of arms, and as I said, there was an outflow of arms prior to that.

AQIM has been well stocked for a while. No doubt it was increased post-Libya, but they've been well stocked for the last few years.

**The Chair:** We have one more round.

We'll have Mr. Williamson finish off this round, for five minutes, sir.

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Thank you.

This question is directed, at least initially, to Mr. Morrison.

Just as a back-of-the-envelope calculation, it looks like the Government of Canada has spent upwards of half a billion dollars on aid to Mali since 2007. As I look at what's happening on the ground there, and I'm aware from testimony today and elsewhere how those expenditures have helped the population, I do kind of step back and look at the security situation, the collapse of the armed forces, the *coup d'état*, and of course insurgents who have now come in from elsewhere in the region and perhaps elsewhere in the world.

I'm not asking you to second-guess how that money was spent, but going forward—and Ms. Buck, you're welcome to hop in here as well—I wonder if, as part of CIDA's evaluation, Canada has to do a better job of looking at the security on the ground, whether it's military or police, in countries where we're investing significant tax dollars to ensure that if we're spending money on civil society, education, and health outcomes, the government itself is able to protect its borders and its population so we don't have a situation like there is now.

I recognize there are a lot of factors here, particularly insurgents, but is that taken into consideration? Going forward does that have to be a greater part of the evaluation in countries not only in Africa but around the world to ensure that as moneys are invested, institutions are going to be there for the medium and long term?

• (1215)

**Mr. David Morrison:** Thank you very much.

It's a good question and I'll ask Kerry to speak to just how rapidly this came on as a security threat. That has to be a key part of the answer.

Other components are that, as I said in my remarks, 90% of the people live in the south. I think all donors have been aware of the situation in the north, but they've been focusing on the good work that could still be done in the south. That certainly has been CIDA's posture.

We need to take into account that Mali was a democratic country until very recently. It was also a country that was making, by broad consensus within the international community, the right choices for the development of its people. Canada has invested significantly there, but if I might say about the areas in which we've invested, which I mentioned in my opening remarks, health care and education, those are investments that are going to pay off for a lifetime for Malians.

If you're talking about inoculating children, that has to be done in the first year of life. If you're talking about textbooks that will allow kids to learn while they're in school, and also the kinds of support that will allow schools to stay open, those are investments that will pay off for the people of Mali.

Looking at the holistic sense of the country and whether anyone missed anything on the security grounds, as I said, I think it came on

very quickly. Despite all that's happened I think our investments in the south have been well made and will continue to pay dividends well into the future.

Kerry.

**The Chair:** Ms. Buck, you have about a minute, but go ahead.

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** We have been doing a lot over the last few years.

Since about 2006 we have really upped our game on training in the security sector to build capacity. We've trained African police, African civilians who work in the security sector, and African military.

I'll give you two examples. Through the Global Peace and Security Fund, we have trained police who are in the ECOWAS standby force, so many of them will end up being deployed through AFISMA. We have trained them in improving their capacity to look at issues of sexual violence, to respond to them, and to prevent them. That's just one small example. I have a raft of them. I won't get into all of them.

The second example is counterterrorism training. We have undertaken military training with some African armed forces on international counterterrorism but also on respect for international humanitarian law and how to protect civilians, and also on sexual violence issues. We have a number of programs to get at the civilian police and military arms of the security sector to build their capacity. We did some of that in Mali prior to the coup, as well.

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

We're going to move back to Madam Péclet for the last round. You have five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Good afternoon. I want to thank our witnesses very much.

I will begin by asking a fairly general question about the humanitarian situation.

Several cases of major violation have been reported, especially with regards to human rights, the use of child soldiers and sexual violence. Some media have published brief reports on that.

Do you have any other reports? Has anyone on the ground mentioned similar cases of violation?

• (1220)

[*English*]

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** I'll answer on the reports we have.

We regularly look at a number of sources of reports when there are human rights concerns being raised. We have reports on human rights issues, obviously, from our embassies in the region, in Bamako, but we also look at reports by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the United Nations human rights mechanisms, etc. For instance, Canada intervened on Tuesday in Geneva on the situation of human rights in Mali.

We look at a lot of information sources, as do you. You're quite right: the violations or the issues of child soldiers and general abuses against kids and women have been bad over the last while.

Les, do you want to speak to some of the humanitarian funding we have?

**Ms. Leslie Norton:** I'll add very briefly that as part of the coordination mechanisms that are set up in country to respond to the humanitarian situation, they set up what we call a protection cluster. All of the actors who address protection concerns come together around a table and share information but also speak to how they're addressing these concerns.

With regard to sexual and gender-based violence, for instance, some of our partners are undertaking health interventions. In their health interventions, while they're not specific to SGBV, sexual and gender-based violence, they will of course be well aware that this is an issue, and they will address it as it comes up. As well, in the refugee camps where our partners are, the High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as UNICEF, both inside and outside the country, they're also very attuned to this issue in responding.

**Ms. Ève Pécelet:** Maybe you can talk about the situation of the refugees right now and what Canada is doing. Maybe you have updates for us.

**Ms. Leslie Norton:** Yes, with pleasure.

The numbers we have as of today are that there are 159,647 refugees residing in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mauritania. There's also a small number in Algeria. The numbers have increased somewhat since the beginning of the conflict on January 10. There are about 15,000 more refugees since that time. The UN has launched an appeal in order to address the regional dimensions of this crisis, which means to help address the refugee situation per se.

I would point out a couple of things. Part of the Canadian support is to help address the refugee situation. I think everyone is aware that Minister Fantino visited the refugee camp in northern Burkina Faso in September. He heard the refugees' concerns. Predominantly, they want to go home. At this time, while there is an outflow of refugees, there is in fact a lot of will to return.

The refugees are being provided with protection and assistance by the High Commissioner for Refugees. The World Food Programme is providing food. UNICEF and other actors are also in the camp meeting their needs.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Ève Pécelet:** My last question is about human rights violations. We know, for instance, that France has asked that observers be sent to Mali to monitor the situation and help avoid cases of abuse.

What is Canada doing in terms of that?

[*English*]

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** As I said, we have spoken out about our concern about human rights abuses and will continue to do so. We'll continue to monitor the situation very, very closely.

If your specific question is about the human rights monitors as called for by the French, we are currently considering what further

assistance Canada will be providing across a range of potential interventions. I won't pronounce on whether we'll participate in that particular effort. I do know that the UN has human rights experts in field and in the past has sent in human rights expert missions to monitor the human rights situation, and will be reporting out this March, I believe, back to the UN Secretary-General, on their findings on human rights.

• (1225)

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

Thank you, Madame Pécelet.

We'll finish up with Mr. Schellenberger. Then, as I assume we have some more time, we'll determine who wants to go back and forth for some additional questions, maybe for the next 15 minutes. We'll wrap it up at around quarter to one so that we can do a little committee business and discuss further meetings.

Mr. Schellenberger for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here this morning.

Can you explain the role the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States are playing in the conflict? How important is it to have regional actors taking a leadership role?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** Before I pass this to my colleague, Pat Malikail, I will just say it's absolutely crucial that there be an African response to an African crisis. The African Union and ECOWAS have taken a leadership role, not only in supplying many more troops than originally had been envisaged but also in pledging financial support.

Pat will talk about their—

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Even to what you have just said, it's been reported that the French have said that when they leave, and they've said they're going to leave as quickly as they can, they will turn things over to the African forces. I've heard that the Malians do not want the African forces to take over from the French.

Do you have any idea if this is true? If it is, why don't they want the help from their neighbours?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** The Malian government was part of discussions about what ECOWAS would be contributing. It's already happening that the French and the Malian troops are pushing forward, and coming in behind are AFISMA and troops from Chad. Chad is not technically part of AFISMA, but they have significant troop strength there. They're already moving in behind to hold some of the cities that have been taken back by the Malian and French forces.

AFISMA is already working on the ground. The Africans really have stepped up to the plate in terms of troop numbers, even financial contributions, as I've said, and real leadership.

**Mrs. Patricia Malikail:** It's a really interesting question, because there are different layers of organizations working in Mali. ECOWAS, which is the group of west African states—it's one of the regional economic communities of the African Union, so it's a subset of the African Union—sent a very strong signal immediately after the March coup by saying that coups were unacceptable. They sent a very strong signal saying that there should be a return to constitutional rule, and if there wasn't one, they would impose certain sanctions.

This was a welcome move by ECOWAS. The international community appreciated it. That's one of the reasons we have now an interim government in Mali that follows the constitutional rule.

ECOWAS continued to play a very strong role, saying that they as a community would be willing to go to Mali not only to deal with the threat in the north but also to stabilize institutions in the south. That went along, and the AU was certainly behind it, and it led, in December, to the authorization of the deployment of the African-led international support mission in Mali.

Let's talk a little about what is AFISMA, which was authorized by the UN. AFISMA was asked to be in place for an initial period of one year to contribute to rebuilding the capacity of the Malian defence and armed forces. It has a domestic component. It was to support Malian authorities in recovering areas in the north under the control of terrorists. Now that's happening with the help of the French.

It was also supposed to help the transition to stabilization activities to support Malian authorities maintain security and consolidate state authority—the political track of what's happening in Mali. It was also supposed to help Malian authorities create a secure environment for civilian-led delivery of humanitarian assistance and the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees. This is all part of the package.

The pledging conference that was just held under the auspices of the African Union on Tuesday, January 29, had a quite remarkable response from the international community, from ECOWAS, but also African Union countries that aren't part of ECOWAS, such as Chad.

I think there are different layers of work here. The important thing to take away from it is that there's real coordination between ECOWAS, what's happening at the next level up with the African Union, and also what will happen in the United Nations.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Thank you, and thank you, Mr. Schellenberger.

We'll start with Mr. Dewar. We'll go to Mr. Dechert, and we'll finish off with a quick question by Mr. McKay. Then we'll wrap up and go in camera to discuss committee business and what we're going to do on Mali over the next week or so.

I will turn it over to Mr. Dewar for five minutes.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Is the government going to be participating in the upcoming EU meeting in Brussels on February 5? I am assuming they are going to participate, but I want to know if we are going to have political representation there. Is the minister intending to attend?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** We just received the invitation to the Brussels meeting. I can say that Canada will be participating in the Brussels meeting, but we haven't decided at what level yet.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Thank you for that.

Regarding the political road map that was referenced, the road map which I believe was just adopted by the legislature in Mali on Tuesday, one of the pieces was aid in the next steps forward.

You've already mentioned the elections that have been planned for July. I noted that the U.K. has contributed to that road map. Does Canada intend to contribute to that, and if not, why not?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** As I said, we have been consistently pressing for a return to democratic and constitutional rule, and part of the reason the road map came out when it did is pressure from the international community. I think the Malian government has made sure there are some strong elements in that road map, but there's been a strong message from the international community that it has to be a credible road map. All credit to the Malian government, but the international community and Canada did their part.

As David Morrison said, we are continuing to support provisional critical services in Mali: education, health services, etc.

Going forward, the government will continue to reflect on contributions Canada can make to address the situation in Mali, taking into account where those contributions would have most value, and taking into account where our international partners are directing their assets.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Thank you for that. I guess we would encourage the government to consider supporting the road map. As you mentioned, government was pushing for the road map. Obviously, the next logical step would be to put our money where our mouth is. I know that's not necessarily your decision, but perhaps a it's strong recommendation.

On the other issue, Mr. Morrison, you have a difficult dilemma because there have been, and we could use different descriptors but I'll say disproportionate cuts at CIDA for the continent of Africa. I know there have been countries of focus and I know about the investments in Mali. We've had the closing of embassies. When it comes to the reduction of funding going forward, about 62% of the countries that will have their funding cut are countries in Africa. That's the mathematics of it.

My question goes back to what my colleague, Ms. Laverdière, asked. You've got defunding of the continent of Africa, and we've got embassies that are being closed, but for you to be able to take money and respond to this humanitarian crisis, I want to be assured this is new money that isn't going to affect other countries. I want to be assured that you're being given extra money for this humanitarian crisis, and that it won't negatively affect other programs. At the end of the day, we need to see a strong commitment like others have made, such as Japan, and that your defunding at the agency isn't going to negatively impact the need to respond immediately.

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Mr. Morrison, you've got about 45 seconds.

**Mr. David Morrison:** As my colleague, Kerry Buck, has pointed out, Canada remains very involved in Africa. Roughly half or slightly more than half of our development assistance will still be going to Africa, even after the deficit reduction action plan to which I believe you are referring.

The case in point here as I've mentioned is the Malian program was a significant program beforehand. It remains a significant program. My colleague, Leslie Norton, responded that on the humanitarian front there is a separate allocation yearly for humanitarian assistance. This is new money for Mali from that allocation at the expense of no other African country.

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

Mr. Dechert, you have five minutes, sir.

**Mr. Bob Dechert:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would remind my friend, Mr. Dewar, again that Canada untied all of its aid to Africa.

Ms. Buck, I have two questions for you.

My first one is on the March 2012 coup that seems to have taken the international community by surprise. Were there any red flags? Should the international community have seen this coming? Also, can you give us your impression of how the international community has responded and of the speed with which they responded?

Second, after the security situation has stabilized in Mali and the elections have occurred, what other programs would you suggest Canada support in order to reinforce democracy in Mali?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** The March 2012 coup came on very, very quickly. There has been a history of unrest, as I mentioned, by the Tuareg in the north, but it was different in March because of the presence of the extremist groups from outside. It was like a force multiplier in March, and the international community was taken by surprise. It was a three-day exercise by the time they were declaring the north an independent, sovereign Islamist state. It came on very quickly. The international community acted fast in that regard, but that situation has pertained in the north until right now.

The other surprising element was the push in early January by the Islamist extremists to move militarily down south towards Bamako. There weren't red flags on that one. It was a surprising move, and the international community responded more quickly.

I've had the joy of working on wars for a couple of decades now, and the international community reacted more quickly to this push by the Islamist extremists than I've seen before. It was impressive and, as Ms. Malikail said, the African leadership on this has been particularly impressive. I'm counting this as a minor success—well, a major success—but it's hard to call it that in the context of a conflict like this.

**Mr. Bob Dechert:** My second question was about what we should do going forward after the election to help support democracy in the future.

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** As I said, the situation is changing hourly. It's changing daily. We'll have to take decisions and make recommendations on programming going forward in a very flexible manner, but if

you look back to what we have done in the past, I think we have some of the main elements right.

Mr. Morrison talked about the work we've done on health education, but also on some elements to stabilize democracy and help build the capacity for democracy. My department, through our funding but with help from the Canadian Forces, the RCMP, and international partners, had started to work in Mali to build the capacity of the security sector and the security forces to do their jobs professionally, to do them well, and to do them in a way that protected civilians and respected the law.

The events over the last year were surprising. They were unfortunate in, as I said, a democratic state like Mali, but events of the recent week, I think, have started to turn things in the right direction.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Finally, Mr. McKay, you have a couple of questions.

**Hon. John McKay:** Thank you.

If security against the Islamist threat is job one in Mali, why is it that we've not contributed to AFISMA?

• (1240)

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** The French and the Malian troops stepped up to the plate immediately. The first military push by the Islamist extremists was on January 7. On January 10 they moved down to what is sort of the dividing line between north and south in Mali and started to take over cities there. On January 11 there was an emergency session of the UN Security Council, and the French started their deployment at the request of the Malian government and in response to an invitation by the Malian government.

The French vanguard started, and they moved in quickly with aerial raids and some troops on the ground. The Prime Minister chose, in response to a request by a close ally, to support that element of the military operation through the provision of the C-17 strategic lift capacity. When the French request came, we reacted quite promptly.

**Hon. John McKay:** I know, but that doesn't actually answer the question. Why is it we didn't respond to the UN request to financially support AFISMA?

Yesterday you announced humanitarian aid in the amount of \$13 million. Assuming it's new money, and assuming it's not just re-profiled money, that's a worthy announcement. Other nations simultaneously announced funding for AFISMA. If, in fact, the French have the success we hope they will have, the need for training, organization, and what General Vance would know way better than anyone else in this room is necessary will have to come through AFISMA, and it needs to be done now.

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** As I said to Mr. Dewar, the government will continue to reflect on the contributions Canada can and should make to address the situation in Mali. We are looking at where other contributors are directing their resources and where Canada can make an effort, but we're also continuing on a number of other fronts, such as humanitarian—



**Hon. John McKay:** You have to say that other countries have reflected, and with the greatest respect, I'd have to say that the time for reflection is over. The necessary contribution that needs to be made at this point is to training and to helping the African-led mission. We all agree that it should be an African-led mission. If they are not properly financed, trained, etc., you increase the chances of failure.

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** As General Vance said, there are many different tools the international community uses to respond to a complex crisis. We have continued on the humanitarian front. We're continuing on development assistance. We're still doing security programming across the Sahel. We are training some of those troops in counterterrorism through exercise Flintlock. We will continue to reflect on other contributions Canada can make.

**Hon. John McKay:** Part of it has to do with the use of our troops in Mali and surrounding regions. The presentation has been that they are there to protect Canadian assets. Will any of those assets include non-governmental assets, such as Iamgold's mine in south Mali or any of the other Canadian investments there? Apparently there are 10 or 12 Canadian-registered companies operating there. For that matter, are there any other assets, such as the investments of Canada pension, which is also significant there? Just out of curiosity, is there any intention to deploy to protect any of those non-governmental assets?

**MGen Jonathan Vance:** Sir, no, there is no intention to deploy to do as you just described. We are strictly focused on the support requested by DFAIT to protect the nation in Bamako.

**Hon. John McKay:** It's just for protection.

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** We have advised Canadians to leave the country because of the unrest and have been doing that for a while.

**Hon. John McKay:** Of the Canadians who are there, what percentage are dual nationality?

**Ms. Kerry Buck:** I'm afraid we don't have that statistic handy. We can get back to you on that.

**Hon. John McKay:** Okay. Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** To our witnesses from DFAIT, Defence, and CIDA, thank you very much for being here.

I'm going to suspend the meeting so that we can go in camera to discuss committee business. We will allow a few minutes just to clear the room, and then we will come back to discuss future meetings.

Thank you very much.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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