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Mr. James Bezan

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): I call this meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone.

We will continue with our study on readiness. Joining us today from the University of New Brunswick, we have Lee Windsor, the deputy director for the Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society. From the Public Policy Forum, we have retired Vice-Admiral Larry Murray, who's the chair. I welcome both of you to the committee, and we look forward to your input into this very important study that we're doing.

Dr. Windsor, please give us your opening comments.

Dr. Lee Windsor (Deputy Director, Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society, University of New Brunswick): Distinguished and honourable members, Admiral Murray, it's a privilege to be asked to appear before you and participate in this important discussion on Canadian Forces readiness. Please excuse my lack of proficiency in French and inability to converse with you competently in both official languages.

I speak to you today representing the Brigadier Milton F. Gregg, VC, Centre for the Study of War and Society, or the Gregg Centre for short, at the University of New Brunswick. The broad purpose of this centre is to study the cause, course, and consequence of war in history and in the world today. A subset of that mandate is to study the Canadian army's past, present, and future. In this we are closely partnered with the army's combat training centre in CFB Galetown.

That partnership involves the Gregg Centre faculty members in professional development for both the field force and for training units. Our program of research includes, but is not limited to, ongoing projects concerning Canada's mission in Afghanistan, the era of violent peace and stability missions during the nineties, and the Canadian Forces in two world wars. There are other projects as well, but these are the ones I am directly involved in and best able to comment on today.

The common thread linking Afghanistan through to the 1990s and of course the world wars is that Canadian military forces in all three of these particular periods operated as part of a larger coalition of allies, joined for a common purpose. They also include what in today's terms we label whole of government, or the comprehensive approach, or, alternatively, they are operations with joint inter-agency, multinational, and political dimensions.

I should add that our faculty members, including me, are military historians by training and discipline, and therefore we bring a historical, evidence-based approach to the study of operations and readiness. For example, back in 2006-07, the Gregg Centre undertook a focus project on Canadian army operations in Afghanistan by studying the training, deployment, and return home of one rotation, Task Force Kandahar. The result was essentially a short history of one tour of duty. That study, along with subsequent research into how events unfolded from 2008 on, informs what I have to say today.

In today's era of technologically sophisticated warfare, I understand that the issue of military readiness almost always defaults to equipment. I submit to you today that the most important elements of military readiness I have observed, the ones that define more than any other factors whether a unit can succeed in its mission and win on the battlefield, are training and education. These two distinctly intellectual preparations create both the will and the mental capacity to solve whatever problem there is that must be solved in order to accomplish the mission. Training and education are equally important for both officers and non-commissioned members.

Canada's military past contains many examples of well-trained units led by well-educated officers who found innovative and sophisticated ways to achieve their mission, even though they neither had the perfect equipment nor enough resources to guarantee success. I'm not arguing that investing in training and education is a replacement for good equipment. There are plenty of other examples of Canadian units paying too high a blood price for being under-equipped and outgunned in a fight, but I am arguing that the best ships, aircraft, and armoured fighting vehicles are only as good as the minds that operate them.

I mention training and education in the same breath because they are inseparable in providing Canadian Forces members with both the practical skills and the critical thinking ability to solve military problems. It is important to consider the value of training and education this year, as the Canadian Forces come to grips with the belt-tightening we all know is coming. Difficult choices need to be made about what people, institutions, capabilities, and equipment are essential to maintain the level of defence readiness Canada needs and which ones should be cut to lower costs.

If the last 65 years are any indication, the national tradition in times of peaceful budget reduction is to reduce training and education allocations to maintain funding for major equipment purchases.

In the years since the Second World War, the rising costs associated with keeping up the rate of military technological advance create a reality we cannot avoid. But the people who man those systems must always be upheld as the most important investment. It may take 10 years or more to get a warship from the drawing board onto the high seas, but as I always tell my students in the classroom, it takes 35 to 40 years to build a skipper, it takes 22 years or more to produce a high-quality infanteer, and it takes 30 years to create a seasoned professional section commander or petty officer. The training and education institutions and establishments across Canada that produce these high-quality personnel have never been so sophisticated. As in 1914 and in 1939, the necessity of this most recent war and the risk that failure means death forces them to be excellent.

I submit to you today that in the world we live in, where the nature of the threats to Canada's global security are uncertain, never has the need for well-trained and well-educated soldiers been greater. Our search for the essential ingredients to the Canadian Forces readiness must therefore include those components of training and education establishments that have proven themselves in the last 20 years in which the Canadian Forces have been in or at war on our behalf.

On the educational side, these include the Canadian Defence Academy, the Royal Military College, and the Canadian Forces College, as well as linkages to supporting civilian universities and colleges.

On the training side, I am most familiar with the army case. In this respect, the land forces doctrine and training system and the various schools that form the Combat Training Centre are the critical pieces that produce high-quality individual soldiers and leaders. Those individuals are then assigned to field force units to train collectively as a team. Historically, one way to reduce budgets has been to cut costs for that individual training system in the hope that skills can be learned when a particular member reaches their regiment, squadron, or ship. On the flip side, wartime requirements often tip the balance in favour of that collective training, the idea being that individuals not qualified for their jobs can be trained into them or weeded out as the unit collectively goes through its high readiness training cycle immediately before action.

Arguably the best way to maintain readiness for whatever the Canadian Forces face next, though, is to produce better qualified individuals before they are assigned to their units. Those individuals will then be able to be prepared more rapidly and mobilized more rapidly on short notice for surprises, be they the Libyan uprising, be they a suddenly violent counter-insurgency in Kandahar, or be it Germany's invasion of Poland.

I'd like to close by identifying two particular training and education areas that I believe the Canadian Forces can use more of. The first is military history, a bit of self-promotion perhaps. I'm aware that the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs is looking into matters related to commemorative events for great Canadian wartime achievements. Certainly, Canadian history is important for

national public education purposes. However, the study of military history and placing a priority on research into our distant and recent military past offers an inexpensive way to maintain intellectual readiness for what comes next.

The second new training and education priority that requires deeper commitment from several departments—and I know there is one member of this committee who has some experience with this particular matter—is to create opportunities for Canadian Forces members to train and interact alongside DFAIT and CIDA officers. Few people know it, but Sicily, Normandy, Somalia, Bosnia, and Afghanistan all teach us that Canadian defence and foreign policy is more effectively implemented when combat leaders work in concert with civil affairs operators, diplomatic envoys, and aid workers.

Different professional cultures exist between these groups, which makes collaboration difficult. You've probably heard this message before. Improving cooperation between these entities can only happen when Canadians serving in the four military and civilian assignments are trained and educated to understand that together they can build a better world for all humanity. Indeed, they have performed this feat in the past.

• (1110)

Thank you for your time.

The Chair: That was exactly 10 minutes. Thank you, Dr. Windsor.

We're going to move on.

Admiral Murray, you have the floor.

Vice-Admiral (Retired) Larry Murray (Chair, Public Policy Forum): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to appear as a witness today.

The Standing Committee on National Defence has made a significant contribution to Canada's defence and security over the years, and it's a real privilege to be here to provide input in support of your ongoing study on maintaining the readiness of the Canadian Forces.

I must note at the outset that I am not appearing today in my capacity as an external member of the National Defence Audit Committee, and the comments I express represent my personal views as a private citizen.

The current Canada First defence strategy, or CFDS, includes a requirement to deliver:

...a balanced, multi-role, combat-capable force that will give the Government the necessary flexibility to respond to a full range of challenges in the years ahead.

Meeting that CFDS stated requirement is essential to Canadian defence and security.

In my opening remarks I will elaborate on what that commitment means with respect to readiness, which is defined in the CFDS as:

...the Canadian Forces' flexibility and preparedness to deploy in response to Government direction. It encompasses the resources needed to maintain equipment, conduct training, and prepare units for operations.

Readiness is one of the four military capability pillars described in the CFDS, with the other three being personnel, equipment, and infrastructure.

Returning to the commitment for a balanced, multi-role, combat-capable force, I will now outline some key aspects of what balance, multi-role, and combat-capable require with respect to the readiness of the Canadian Forces.

First, balance is multi-faceted and must include balance among the four pillars themselves, balance among the navy, army, air force, and joint and special forces capabilities of the Canadian Forces, and balance in terms of the readiness levels among and within our various Canadian Forces capabilities and units.

Achieving the various types of balance I'm talking about is an art and not a science, and it requires a good deal of well-seasoned, professional judgment of exactly the type that has been acquired and amply demonstrated by the Canadian Forces in the past decade.

Balance is also a somewhat theoretical, ongoing goal, which must be adjusted from time to time based on actual operational and fiscal realities. For example, a combat mission on the ground in Afghanistan necessitated that a particularly high priority be assigned to the readiness of army combat arms units, air force tactical helicopter capability, and so on.

In terms of the four pillars, balance between personnel and readiness requires enough funding to ensure adequate individual and collective training to enable the personnel on strength to achieve useful and meaningful readiness levels. Stated somewhat differently, the number of personnel in uniform must be in balance with the resources available to make them effective, trained members of the Canadian Forces.

In terms of equipment, it must be modern and able to fight and win on a complex and very challenging 21st century battlefield. In today's highly technological age, no amount of training—even of world-class personnel like the Canadian Forces is blessed with—can overcome the limitations of outdated, obsolescent equipment, which cannot match that of a well-equipped opponent. Unfortunately, modern weaponry is readily available these days to any state or non-state player with enough money.

In addition, given that funding and other resources are and probably always will be limited, it's essential that every possible effort be made to replace obsolete equipment, which is extremely expensive to maintain and operate and which usually brings quite limited operational capability to the readiness equation, despite the huge costs. The venerable Sea King helicopter, which has done yeoman service since before I joined the fleet in the late 1960s, is a classic example of this problem.

Similarly, there must be balance between investments in infrastructure and readiness. Infrastructure location, capability, and cost all impact directly or indirectly on readiness. Useful infrastructure must be adequately maintained, and unnecessary

investment in old, outdated infrastructure of limited utility or operational value must be minimized, particularly in the resource-constrained environment facing Canada and the Department of National Defence today.

As noted at the outset, and as has been evident in the diversity of Canadian Forces operations globally since the end of the Cold War, there also must be balance between the navy, army, air force, and joint and special forces capabilities of the Canadian Forces. This is essential if the government is to have the flexibility to respond to the full range of possible operational requirements in the dangerous and unpredictable world in which we live.

● (1115)

The recent and almost concurrent need to conduct a whole-of-government, counter-insurgency combat role in Afghanistan while mounting a major short-fuse humanitarian relief operation following the devastating earthquake in Haiti, or commanding and contributing combat-capable naval and air forces to the NATO mission in Libya, illustrate why over-investing in the readiness of one capability at the expense of others would be a very high-risk strategy for Canada.

My final comment with respect to balance relates to the need to have adequate resources to ensure that no one component, unit, or group of Canadian Forces members is retained at high readiness or on operations without adequate relief. This has occurred sometimes in the past in the Canadian Forces and among our allies and is ultimately a recipe for personnel burnout, retention problems, and reduced operational effectiveness.

The Canadian Forces are renowned for their exceptional professionalism and remarkable can-do spirit. However, when it comes to readiness, less investment means less readiness, which can translate directly into reduced tasking flexibility and operational tempo, with much slower operational response times in areas of low readiness.

To some extent, my comments have incorporated many aspects of what I would say about multi-role. For example, ensuring a good balance between the readiness levels of the navy, army, air force, and joint and special forces capabilities guarantees to a considerable extent a multi-role-capable Canadian Forces.

However, the diverse nature of the six missions assigned to the Canadian Forces in the Canada First defence strategy also highlights other aspects of their multi-role requirements.

Briefly stated, the six missions include: conducting daily domestic and continental ops; supporting a major international event in Canada; responding to a major terrorist attack; supporting civil authorities during a crisis in Canada such as a natural disaster; leading or conducting a major international operation for an extended period; and deploying forces in response to crises elsewhere in the world for a shorter period.

This is not some hypothetical list. During 2010, the Canadian Forces effectively executed four of these missions concurrently.

In addition to traditional military requirements, it is clear from this list of assigned missions that multi-role for the Canadian Forces must include readiness to support other government departments and provinces as well as law enforcement agencies and emergency relief organizations in Canada and abroad.

Maintaining combat capability is the final and overriding requirement for the Canadian Forces stated in the Canada First defence strategy. In today's world, Canadian Forces units and personnel deployed abroad in harm's way must be combat capable.

Canada's military operations since 1990, and in particular for the past decade, have provided the leadership of the Canadian Forces with invaluable combat experience and the ability to assess in practical and credible terms the training, equipment, and support requirements necessary to achieve the high readiness essential for continued success in combat.

This expertise will be critical in the coming months and years as CF transformation progresses and the government, DND, and the CF strive to continue to implement the Canada First defence strategy in a manner that ensures the delivery of a balanced, multi-purpose, combat-capable force, notwithstanding budget constraints in the near term owing to the global economic crisis and its impact on Canada.

Finally, I would emphasize that the selfless pride and commitment of the members of the Canadian Forces, together with their superior readiness, is based on the confidence they have that they and their families will be cared for if they are killed or injured in the service of Canada. Thus, I can not overstate the importance of the Department of National Defence's commitment to support ill or wounded Canadian Forces members, veterans, and their families, including the families of the fallen, with dignity, compassion, and generosity.

Recent investments in casualty support programs and health care as well as in improvements to the new Veterans Charter are essential in that regard and must continue.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would now be pleased to join my colleague in trying to answer the committee's questions.

● (1120)

The Chair: Thank you, Admiral. I appreciate that insight.

Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair, and my thanks to both our witnesses for attending today. We much appreciate it.

Both of you made reference to the upcoming budget and the pending cuts. I wanted to get your thoughts on the notion that the budget will be coming before readiness is concluded. I'm assuming that the government has not yet decided on readiness. Otherwise, everything we're doing would be moot, and I know the government wouldn't do that to a standing committee. Therefore, I have to conclude that readiness is not yet finalized. Yet the budget cuts are going to start.

By making cuts before we know what readiness looks like, do you think we might have to tailor readiness to the dollars available, which practice has been a problem in the past, as opposed to determining what readiness means and then ensuring that the dollars are there to back it up?

I would say as an opposition critic that there's an argument to be made that the government is putting the cart before the horse. I'd appreciate your thoughts.

VAdm Larry Murray: Thanks very much for the question.

As I said at the outset, I think the Standing Committee on National Defence and the joint committees of this body have made a huge contribution to defence over the years. But I don't believe that the government of the day or the Canadian Forces of the day have stopped doing business as usual awaiting a committee report.

Certainly readiness is a work in progress. It's always a work in process; it's a dynamic. I presume that the Chief of Defence Staff and his senior leadership sat around this morning and kicked around questions in their morning operational thing that would impact on readiness. The world changes. Libya changed the focus.

In my view, readiness is always a work in progress, and it would be surprising if the government held off on a budget awaiting the wisdom of a parliamentary committee. I'd be very surprised if the government didn't act on the report of this committee on readiness, because it's always a work in progress.

That's the way I see it unfolding. I don't see the two being out of step with each other.

● (1125)

Dr. Lee Windsor: I would like to add one point.

From what I've been able to observe on the army side of things, a great number of the budget increases we've seen have been driven by wartime necessity; therefore, we are currently entering a period of post-war retooling as we've seen in the past. A great number of officers and the senior leadership of the Canadian land forces understand that to meet wartime demands.... Some institutions, some capabilities, are created very roughly, not necessarily without thought, but without the time to do the kind of review that can normally be done in peacetime when time is available, because equipment needs to be made available to people.

So there's an awareness among many of the officers I've spoken to that it is time to take a look at moving into the future with new kinds of equipment in a more efficient fashion. That includes taking a look at what types of specific military capabilities were developed for the mission in Afghanistan, which of them were purely mission-specific for that task and will not serve any purpose in the future, and which new kinds of ideas and capabilities make good sense and should be institutionalized, given what's likely to happen in the future.

That process, as Admiral Murray suggested, is what armed forces do. So I can safely say I'm comfortable that the senior leadership at least understands that some degree of reduction is necessary.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you.

Admiral, you mentioned in your presentation on the third page, second paragraph from the bottom:

My final comment with respect to "balance" relates to the need to have adequate resources to ensure that no one component, unit or group of CF members is retained at high readiness or on operations without adequate relief.

We know that any supplement or relief to the regular forces is the reserves. We've heard from numerous people that the expectation among people with experience in this area is that one of the first areas to be cut, because it's the easiest, is the reserves.

If one accepts that you need the reserves.... In the last 10 years, without the reserves we wouldn't have had a Canadian armed forces. If you removed the reservists from the equation, we wouldn't have had the standing armed forces we all thought we had. The reservists were critical.

Coming back to the budget, I hear what you're saying, Admiral, that no government is going to wait for a mere committee. I accept that. But I did preface my remarks by saying that I assume the government hasn't finalized their readiness; otherwise they would be having us chase our tails here, and I know they wouldn't do that to this committee.

Without a sense of what the ultimate plan is in the budget, the low-lying fruit to cut is the reservists, because that would do the least amount of damage right now. But it would immediately impact readiness, particularly as you were saying, Admiral, that we need to make sure no one group or individual members are stretched beyond their abilities when they're standing at high readiness.

Give your thoughts on some of that, Admiral—and Dr. Windsor too, if you have any comments.

The Chair: I'm just going to limit this to Admiral Murray, because your time is running out.

Admiral Murray.

VAdm Larry Murray: Thanks very much.

I didn't use the term "mere" committee. I think this committee is extremely important, and I mean that.

The question of reservists is a huge question. There's no question that through the 1990s both the regular forces and the reservists did get overstretched. That's what I'm referring to here. As well, early on in his days as commander of the army, Rick Hillier concluded that the army had been in a state of overstretch and that it was time for a time out. I would apply that to what I have here. Certainly in the context of some of our allies, I'm not sure how some of them keep going. When one looks at some of the budget cuts in some of those countries, it's very sobering.

In terms of the reservists, I think I would await both the budget and the defence minister and the Chief of Defence Staff to see where they actually land. I'd be surprised to see a reduction in reservists. I think the change that may happen post-Afghanistan, as recommended in the Leslie report, and presumably you know that it's being looked at, is some reduction in full-time class B reservists, because the need has decreased with the move from the combat mission in Afghanistan. I'd be very surprised if there were a change in the traditional class A reservists.

I also think that through the 1990s and in Afghanistan, all the services learned a very great deal about the tremendous capability value of the reservists. I would presume that as part of CF transformation and some of the lessons learned that my colleague was talking about, we would be looking at trying to ensure that the reserves stay vibrant and that the lessons learned from Afghanistan and other recent missions get rolled into them. I'd be very surprised if there were a change in the reserves following from the budget.

● (1130)

The Chair: Time has expired.

Ms. Gallant, you have the floor.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you Mr. Chairman, and through you to our witnesses.

The NATO forces in Afghanistan adapted to changing circumstances and changing enemy tactics. Examples of this include the increased use of UAVs and ISRs and a shift away from land transportation to Chinook choppers to transport soldiers. In your opinion, how important were these changes to the success of the mission? What lessons can be learned and derived from the way NATO forces, and especially the Canadian Forces, adapted to overcome the challenges?

VAdm Larry Murray: I'll start.

One thing I would say, in case my colleague doesn't, is that in part, the flexibility, agility, and ability to move and be nimble was actually from the training and education aspect Professor Windsor was talking about. It didn't seem that way at the time, but I would say that arguably, in terms of the lasting impact of the reform process in the late 1990s—the 100 recommendations to the Prime Minister and so on—the emphasis on professional development and training and all that entails, forces wide, for officers, senior NCOs, and others, was key. That particular area is one that has paid huge dividends in recent years in Afghanistan and in Libya. It really does need to be protected.

The other point I would make is that some of these technological advances are absolutely huge. I was in Afghanistan in January 2010. I found it amazing that the small UAVs, operated out of a little shed in the back of Kandahar, were essential to foot patrols going out in bandit country in southern Kandahar. The troops really relied on them. So a number of these technological advances really are extremely important.

Maybe I'll stop there.

Dr. Lee Windsor: Without question, all of the assets that you've described have proven invaluable in saving lives and helping to accomplish the mission itself, but always in concert with the fundamental skills that exist within the Canadian army, the skills acquired conducting a range of peace-building missions that look a great deal like Afghanistan in the decade prior to the deployment to Kandahar.

From what I've been able to observe, the increased capacity to see into all places in Kandahar province.... I've been in the room when a UAV has saved a life and contributed to terminating a life that would in turn create an operational effect that contributes to victory—and for a comparatively small amount of money, which is I suppose one of the striking pieces about this.

In many respects, the answer is obvious to many: these new kinds of assets are some of the very ones I was referring to earlier—they are new to Afghanistan but are not specifically useful only there, and they are the capabilities and assets that we want to retain for whatever comes next.

It's also revealed a great deal about the value of one particular branch of the army that I think had been one of those ones that, in our referring to the issue of balance, had fallen into the dark corners of the Canadian Forces, and that is the artillery. The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery, both regular and reserve, provides the kind of training that can produce soldiers qualified to handle this sort of equipment, partly because the motto of the Royal Canadian Artillery is "*Ubique*"; they are everywhere. They are trained to control the battle space in all its dimensions and in every aspect, from one corner to the other, and to be able to see into all dimensions and all aspects of it. They provide timely information to commanders that will enable them to make informed decisions about how they should apply fire, how they should manoeuvre, or how they should conduct a negotiation with a key leader.

Therefore, the people—and I come back to my opening remarks—who man the UAVs and the ISR capability are largely gunners. It has raised new questions about the importance of maintaining the

artillery profession of the Canadian army still at the forefront of the army of the future.

● (1135)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: If Afghanistan and Libya are any indication, it appears that any future Canadian missions abroad will be as part of a larger, multinational NATO-led mission. How then do the allied partners work in unison to ensure that there is operational success, and how important is interoperability, especially as it relates to equipment?

VAdm Larry Murray: Again, I could give a long answer or I could say it's essential. It's essential. One of the great benefits of NATO is the protocols, the processes, the shared tactical approaches, the equipment, the interoperability of that equipment—it's actually transferrable globally and provides the foundation for an effective multinational response to a crisis somewhere.

Without that, the world is left with more and more scenarios where it's the U.S. or it's NATO, and unilateral U.S. action obviously generates a whole bunch of other issues that are much better done within the framework of a multinational body.

I would also say that within the Canadian Forces over the years there have been wise decisions on interoperability. In many cases where the equipment was going downhill, we generally focused pretty heavily on trying to maintain interoperability, particularly with the Americans and particularly within NATO, and that has paid huge dividends.

Many of the command opportunities that Canada has had in multinational operations in recent years simply would not have happened without not only the expertise of organizations, like-minded nations within NATO or like-minded nations outside NATO, many of whom are NATO members, but the knowledge a Canadian commander brings to the table, and also the technical ability to operate effectively together from a command and control communications and intelligence perspective. So there's a trust thing as part of that interoperable aspect.

I'll stop there.

The Chair: Give us just a very brief response, Professor.

Dr. Lee Windsor: The only thing I'd like to add to that is that I would argue that Canada has never operated alone, with the exception of its response to the 1885 rebellion. It's inherent in the structure of the Canadian Forces to operate in concert with our allies; therefore, it's ingrained in all aspects of Canadian Forces command and control or procurement structures to think about how our field units will operate with our allied partners. It works very well.

● (1140)

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to move on.

The last of the seven-minute round goes to Mr. McKay.

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

Thank you both for coming.

In the last couple of weeks I had the great privilege of listening to a couple of presentations by Lieutenant-General Bouchard, who, I suppose, is on the pointy end of readiness. Certainly, in terms of experience among our military leadership, he's probably as ready as anybody. He talks about leading the force in 2011-12, and his comments strangely echo yours. He talks about cultural sensitivities when you're leading a coalition force. He talks about military limitations. At any given time, he may have had 80 or 90 planes that he was supposed to be able to call on, and in fact he had 40 or 45 that he could call on. It was the same with the boats: he may have had a fleet of 10 or 12, but in fact only 5 or 6 would actually be useful. He talked about differing mandates among governments.

The other interesting observation he made was with respect to the various levels of secrecy among the allies: that the intelligence that is gathered is not always shared; that literally, during the first part of the bombing runs, they were using Google Maps to figure out where they were going to be bombing. All of this leads him to a conclusion about "agility of mind", which speaks to both of your points, really, Professor Windsor: knowing your military history, but having, if you will, the intellectual training that's required in order to lead.

You made an interesting observation with respect to the interoperability, for want of a better phrase, between DFAIT, CIDA, and the CF. There are some limitations among those three silos, and I'd be interested in your thoughts with respect to that point of interoperability.

The second I'd be interested in is what advice you would give the CF with respect to changes in recruitment, if any, given that "agility of mind", if it's really important in 2011-12, is going to be even more important going forward.

The third is with respect to General Leslie's report, in particular the issue of "tooth" and "tail" and all of that sort of stuff. At this point, neither the CDS nor the minister has chosen to respond to General Leslie's report. Were you given the opportunity, what would you suggest to both the CDS and to the minister with respect to picking up on some of General Leslie's recommendations?

Dr. Lee Windsor: I'm not terribly comfortable responding to the third question, because I don't know that I can offer up any important insights. But on the first two, I have some ideas that may be of use to the committee.

On your first question, the issue of interoperability between the Canadian Forces and other government departments is a far bigger problem than the problem of being able to operate effectively with our NATO allies. The Canadian Forces have a long tradition of conducting multinational exercises, officer exchange programs, and joint training programs, with staff officers being sent abroad to other NATO partner countries. The problem is not there. The problem is certainly in trying to find ways to improve the cultural barriers that exist between the Canadian International Development Agency, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Canadian Forces.

At the times we have seen in the last 20 years when those three departments have worked well together, it has been, I think all the persons involved have suggested, because of the personalities involved at the time. Those individuals managed to work well together; the departments didn't work well together because they were structurally organized that way.

The greatest barrier seems to be in their approaches to military planning and their outlook on time and space and how long it will take to deliver on any given project. The Canadian Forces are by necessity focused on being able to create plans and deliver operations on a very short turnaround. Foreign Affairs operates on a horizon wherein effects are delivered over six months, a year, or two years; CIDA certainly over many decades.

I suppose the only one of those three organizations that has sufficient size to be able to send its senior officials on a focused and organized professional development program is the Canadian Forces.

• (1145)

Hon. John McKay: Let me interrupt you, because the chair is going to yank my chain in a second.

I want to bring Admiral Murray in on this conversation, because he's going to see it from the military perspective. I think you're onto something. I'd like to drive to a conclusion as to how you structurally get over that interoperability hurdle, as opposed to being dependent upon the personalities involved.

Dr. Lee Windsor: There have already been some good recent strides towards solving the problem. I think all parties involved—anybody who has done a tour of duty in Afghanistan, in any of those three departments—understands that this is a problem. The solution is to try to create more opportunities for these people to train and learn together.

The challenge is that the numbers of personnel available in Foreign Affairs and CIDA just don't exist to be able to detach people from their duties long enough to go on some of the longer training and development programs the Canadian Forces have available to them, such as the Canadian Forces College joint command and staff program, which lasts for one year in Toronto.

I think the solution is to create opportunities for shorter periods of joint training and education—more professional development seminars, more cross-departmental communication. The need for this has been promoted by many people for a number of years.

Hon. John McKay: Vice-Admiral Murray?

VAdm Larry Murray: I'll maybe start with General Bouchard.

The Chair: I'll ask Admiral Murray to take about a minute.

Hon. John McKay: He's a very nasty chair.

VAdm Larry Murray: How much time do I have?

The Chair: You have about a minute, because we're already over time now.

VAdm Larry Murray: Okay.

I think Bouchard has done a great job. The forces keeping him in and drawing on his lessons learned both within Canada and in NATO was a great idea.

On the DFAIT-CIDA-CF thing and the corrections services, I agree that it's a challenge, but I would say that the Manley report, the government response to the Manley report, the lessons learned out of Afghanistan, the efforts of people—including one member of this committee—and the model coming out of Afghanistan are first class.

The challenge is to hang on to those lessons learned, to institutionalize them, and to ensure that we don't lose what we learned in Afghanistan, and what people like General Bouchard bring to the table about managing 31 nations and all that kind of stuff.

The Afghan whole-of-government approach and where it landed at the end of that mission is the best I've ever seen. I think it's as good as that of any of our allies. It was working on the ground, but it wasn't working in Ottawa. It has been working in Ottawa for the last few years, and we need to make sure we don't lose that model.

To your question about recruiting, I would say the answer is education. Education matters.

In response to your earlier question about reserves, I was amazed with the reserves. They bring Ph.D.s to the table. You'll find in the regular force actually that education is the answer in recruiting, as is ensuring that there are professional development opportunities both inside the military education structure and in civilian universities.

General Leslie's report on "tooth to tail" is being acted on, as far as I know. Part of the problem is that it's a budget process, and there's budget secrecy and all that kind of stuff. But the Chief of the Defence Staff said at the Ottawa conference on security and defence—as did the minister, I think, last week—that they were drawing on the Leslie report. Certainly, as I mentioned, I think it's no secret that the number of class Bs, the civilian infrastructure, and so on will change. I think there will certainly be significant aspects of Leslie's report that will be acted on and are being examined with care.

I'll stop there.

•(1150)

The Chair: Thank you.

Just so the witnesses know, we're going to go to the five-minute round now, so please keep your responses very concise and to the point.

Mr. Chisu, you're kicking us off.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to the witnesses for the very good presentations that I heard.

And thank you, Admiral, for your balanced approach, which is a very important one. I think you made your point.

Dr. Windsor, I know that you assisted in Afghanistan during the period of 2006-07. I was on a tour of duty in 2007.

I will put the question to you regarding the lessons learned from the mission in Afghanistan. As you know very well, in 2006 we were just realizing that we were in combat. We have a lot of lessons to learn from that mission, and they are very valuable today in approaching other counter-insurgency operations. I don't know if

you can elaborate on whether there will be a future approach to the counter-insurgency basically, and whether we need to be prepared for the counter-insurgency. What is your opinion on the counter-insurgency with regard to training, to approach, and to how we look at future missions, because they are also very well connected with anti-terrorist operations?

Thank you.

Dr. Lee Windsor: I'll try to be brief, although doing so is fundamentally difficult for university professors.

The Canadian Forces, or the army in particular, asks itself this question every day when it comes to structuring training courses in the combat arms. The response they've come to is the same one that I as a detached observer would recommend, looking at both the recent history and taking a longer view of the past, and that is that good counter-insurgency doctrine and training for armies, navies, and air forces is virtually the same as good doctrine and training for multi-purpose forces that are ready for any kind of conflict in the conflict spectrum, including peace-building, peace support, and stability-building operations, because the very same practices and the very same soldier skills, sailor skills, and air crew skills that are required to fight a counter-insurgency war or a high-intensity war against an equal enemy, or to conduct a peacekeeping or more classic peace-building operation, are the same. The level of violence, of course, changes the way in which one applies deadly force, but the necessity to have the basic fundamental skills required of a fighter squadron, a warship, or an infantry company to be able to destroy the enemy or neutralize its movement are the same.

So the argument in the army is to train the way you've always trained and add mission-specific components as necessary.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Dr. Windsor, you are a military historian, and we need to be aware that we are learning a lot of things from military history, actually from the First World War, concentrating on the western front. Joe Whiteside Boyle was a hero on the eastern front in Russia. I don't know if you are aware of him.

We have to see how counter-insurgency is working, so that is my question to you. In a counter-insurgency operation, you don't have an enemy who is identified by uniform; he blends into the population. Do you think we are prepared for that? What should we do to be ready for that?

Dr. Lee Windsor: To be ready, I would suggest that the maintenance of a long-service professional force is the most essential ingredient. Those NATO partners who have delivered the best kinds of forces to the Afghan counter-insurgency have been those such as Canada, which maintains long-service professional forces. If you want to fight an insurgency, you need older, disciplined, experienced sergeants and mid-grade officers who can make decisions about how to make the kinds of personal connections to the population that enable you to understand the insurgent opposition, and who can protect and assist the people that you've gone there to assist.

Any counter-insurgency operation must essentially be an assistance mission to the nation that's at risk. Older, more mature junior leaders are essential to winning that kind of struggle. I think some of the recent news reports we've heard coming out of Afghanistan, with the difficulties that the Americans are encountering, reveal the problem of military forces raised for service in shorter periods of time.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you.

Moving on,

[*Translation*]

Ms. Moore now has the floor.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Can we stop the clock while he puts in his earphones?

[*English*]

The Chair: If you guys need translation equipment, the interpreters are on channel 2. I'm on channel 6.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Can we start the clock now, Mr. Chair?

It works, perfect.

My questions are specifically for you, Mr. Windsor. I see that you have studied post-traumatic stress syndrome at great length. The link with readiness may seem weak, but as mental health problems can affect soldiers and slow down operations, I still think there is a link.

A study done over a 4-year period on 800 members of the Royal 22^{ème} Royal Régiment, so infantry, who were deployed to Afghanistan, showed that 23% suffered from mental health problems and 20% suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome.

In your opinion, are the Canadian Forces doing all they can to prevent this problem and to make an early diagnosis in order to prescribe treatment? Do you think these mental health problems could have an adverse effect on the readiness of the Canadian Forces? Since those who suffer from those kinds of problems cannot be deployed, do you think it could negatively impact our operations?

[*English*]

Dr. Lee Windsor: Thank you for that question. Merci.

To start with, I'd like to take a very short but long view and suggest that throughout Canada's military history, the issue of mental casualties has always been a fundamental problem. The number of stress casualties and psychological exhaustion casualties has always been high when you engage in something as traumatic and violent as war. It is the reality of modern war, and in that sense, I would suggest to you that the research findings in the civilian psychiatric profession and corresponding developments in the military profession in Canada and in our NATO partners have come a long way in a hundred years, based on this experience.

At the Gregg Centre at the University of New Brunswick, we have been closely following the tour of duty that was deployed from there in 2007, and what we've seen suggests that never before have the Canadian Forces, in particular, been better prepared and equipped to handle the problem of mental health when it comes to soldiers. We

attribute this to the challenge of the 1990s. In the 1990s, the Canadian Forces senior leadership recognized that mental health was an issue that must be addressed and that institutions must be created to screen soldiers before they enter the armed forces, to take care of them when they are mentally injured, and also to look after them after they are released from the Canadian Forces. Never before have those institutions and systems been better in our nation's history.

So I would put to you that yes, this issue is a significant problem, but as long as we continue to keep resourcing the institutions that have been created to address the problem, then in my opinion it is well attended to.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Do you think that we should invest a bit more in this area, or do you think available resources on the ground are sufficient so that our soldiers are treated rapidly and thus able to take part in operations?

[*English*]

Dr. Lee Windsor: That's an excellent follow-up question. I would suggest that the issue is resourced effectively, to the best of my knowledge, for soldiers currently serving in uniform.

There are, however, two significant holes, two significant gaps that remain. One concerns veterans released from the Canadian Forces, and I understand the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs is looking into this question, and Veterans Affairs itself has been making progress recently to try to offer better services to those soldiers who have been released.

The other ongoing problem area continues to be with reserve soldiers, sailors, and air crew who have completed a tour of duty and returned to small communities across Canada. While there have been some steps taken to ensure that these soldiers and sailors and air crew can be provided with treatment, quite often it is difficult to keep track, frankly, of where these reservists disappear to. We've got some experience with reservists in northern New Brunswick and the far corners of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, and despite the fact that services are available to them, that fact is irrelevant if those reservists don't know that the services are there and don't seek them out.

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired. Merci beaucoup.

Mr. Norlock, it's your turn.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and through you to our witnesses, thank you for appearing.

I have five minutes. Feel free to take that time to answer my question, Vice Admiral.

In 1996 you led a working group that sought to improve joint command and control functions. That being the beginning, in your opinion, how did the establishment of the 1st Canadian Division assist in the efficient and effective management of joint command and control operations?

Having answered that, what advice if any would you give for either continuing with the present approach or changing it?

Vadm Larry Murray: Thanks very much for that question. I would hasten to say that I retired in 1997, so I'm not an expert in everything that's unfolded in the evolution of that centre, although you're correct that absolutely, in the context of the reform package I mentioned, enhancing that whole area was a significant part of the recommendations.

My sense is that the subsequent chiefs of defence staff, deputy ministers, and ministers have paid great attention to that. I think that's evident in both Afghanistan and Libya, where with 15 minutes' notice we had a Canadian commander.... In fact, his story is that the biggest part of the problem was banging holes in the wall so they could hook up the communication pieces.

So I would say it's gone a long way. I would say that the Kingston headquarters has played a key role in all of that, and that continues to be the case. It would certainly be my hope that it be an essential capability. As I mentioned in my comments, the balance argument isn't just navy, army, air force; it also includes joint capability. The Kingston headquarters has been a pretty key player in that, and special forces capabilities, which were kind of nascent in the early 1990s, have become an absolutely essential—in today's world—component of the capabilities of the Canadian Forces.

Maybe I'll stop there.

• (1205)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Very good.

The next question...somewhat succinct, but perhaps both of you could answer.

How important is it to sustain long-term viability, not only of the Canadian Forces but also of the security of our nation through the procurement of new state-of-the-art equipment, and to ensure interoperability with our allies? In a previous question you were asked I think you agreed that interoperability...and the fact that Canada will be joining partners, in all likelihood NATO partners, in any future operations.

Could you both respond to that?

Vadm Larry Murray: I'll start and say it's essential, as I said in response to an earlier question. I think there has been a significant effort to do so, significant investment both in the training and the equipping, and we need to continue to do that, absolutely.

I think an additional complication, and my colleague alluded to it, is that in talking about the security of Canada, not just the defence of Canada, the whole-of-government issue comes into play: the establishment post-September 11, the maritime operational centres on both coasts, interdepartmental op centres where we have RCMP, coast guard, and Canada Border Services Agency folks full time drawing on and contributing to the DND maritime domain awareness picture and being able to communicate and operate with each other. This is really essential.

There are some legislative issues around that. There are some technical issues. But it is really essential that we don't lose sight of that ball and that we continue to ensure interoperability there. If we can do that, we will also ensure that we maintain the connections with Homeland Security in the U.S. and the U.S. Coast Guard, and so on. So the whole interoperability piece is much more complicated

in this day and age than it was with just purely Cold War... We operate with NATO or NORAD, or whatever; it's multi-dimensional, and it has to include other government departments in Canada as well.

Dr. Lee Windsor: I echo Admiral Murray's comments completely. I would just throw in one short caveat, one short additional comment that the exchange training programs with NATO partners are an essential part of that interoperability to ensure that we continue to speak the same military language.

Mr. Rick Norlock: That would also facilitate the equipment.

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired.

Moving on, Mr. Kellway, you have the floor.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses today.

I'd like to try to take advantage of the fact that we have a historian here with us today and ask a couple of questions.

Admiral Murray, you gave us what I guess one would call a “doctrinally sound” presentation on the issue of readiness, and you talked about the issue of balance. It seems to me that when you go through the six missions set out in the Canada First defence policy, the issue of balance really comes up when you look at numbers five and six. In terms of this discussion of readiness, they seem to be the flies in the ointment here. How do we deal with those missions in terms of readiness?

Your discussion of balance seems to assume, and my own perception is that we keep coming up against this in the discussions, that our history is going to repeat itself, that we've been in Afghanistan for ten-plus years, training. So in terms of readiness, our balance has to anticipate that we will have another Afghanistan and have to be able to fight another mission of that nature.

My question to you, to start, Professor Windsor, is how do we use history to inform what we can anticipate in the future? Is there, in your view, any inevitability to having to be ready for another Afghanistan or another major international operation requiring boots on the ground and a very significant army, for example? Or are there lessons we can learn from that history that may inform a different perspective on the issue of balance of forces, for example?

• (1210)

Dr. Lee Windsor: That's a difficult question.

I would suggest to you that we would not be well served—this is the kind of question that military historians tackle regularly—by preparing for a last mission. That's not really what this discipline is about.

But we can find examples of...and let's take the case study of Afghanistan as an example.

There is nothing in the Canadian mission in Kandahar that had not been experienced in some form by the Canadian Forces at some time in the past, and therefore new institutions and capabilities and ideas had to be created when in fact they previously existed.

I'll just give you the quick example, from a project we're working on right now, of the Allied invasion of Sicily. The armed forces are trying to effect or influence a diplomatic negotiation against an opposing force, the Italian government, and therefore military operations must be waged with an eye to influencing a diplomatic process. The landscape must be reconstructed in order to pacify the population and bring them onside to the Allied cause, and therefore reconstruction forces are part of the fighting forces and integrated fully into them...as well as fighting a high-intensity war against an army that was attempting to use improvised explosive devices to stop you from moving in the mountains that looked strangely like Afghanistan.

You can find whatever you need in history to serve as a training tool, but you should not use the example of Afghanistan to suggest that whatever happens next will look exactly like that. If there's a lesson from both—the Second World War experience in Sicily and Afghanistan—it's that there's a common set of principles you can train for that by and large the Canadian Forces are in agreement with alongside our NATO partners.

If you train for the worst-case scenario, you are capable of fulfilling any mission required of you lesser than war.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Thank you.

Admiral Murray, if you accept Dr. Windsor's premise here that the principles may remain the same and almost, I guess, unchangeable, at least in recent history, but that the conflict won't actually look the same, does that impact your perspective on the balance issue you talked about?

The Chair: I would ask that you keep your response very short, please.

Vadm Larry Murray: We're in Afghanistan and we find ourselves, thankfully, having C-17s and ships and sending them to Haiti within a couple of days. We're in Afghanistan, where we find ourselves not just involved in a NATO operation in Libya but commanding it, which means a significantly enhanced profile to a very challenging mission. In both those cases, I would say we had enhanced—for reasons that I suggested in my comments, or hadn't shortchanged it, to put it differently—the army combat arms, the air force helicopter, and other things we needed in Afghanistan. But we had the wisdom as a country not to reduce the readiness in the navy and the air force to a level that would have precluded the Government of Canada from being able to respond to those other missions.

I would say it's an art, not a science. I would also say that the whole special forces side of the piece is new and evolving, from a Canadian context anyway, on the joint side. I would fundamentally argue for balance.

I don't think this is what the professor is saying, but I also would not sign up to train for World War III and say you'll be ready for Afghanistan. I'm not sure that's what he's saying. I think to some extent we scrambled coming out of the Cold War end and we found ourselves in the Gulf War and then in a whole bunch of things. We were really scrambling, and the rules of engagement hadn't been evolved. The UN was in mission creep, and all that kind of stuff. To some extent, part of the challenge we faced is that we had a navy, army, and air force that had training for World War III, if I can put it

that way, in terms of the Cold War, trying to adjust to all these evolving things.

So you have to be combat capable, but to me that's not the same as saying we're going to train for a World War III scenario because a counter-insurgency operation like Afghanistan is quite different. You need to be able to fight, but you also need to bring those other attributes to the table, and you've got to understand the culture of the place and a whole bunch of other things.

I'll stop there. It was a really good question, actually.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thanks. That's not what I had in mind when I said short response, but....

Mr. Strahl, you have the floor.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Following on the issue of training and what we should be training for, the committee had the opportunity to travel to CMTC and to CFB Vegreville to see and actually participate to some extent in some training manoeuvres there. One of the things they were training for...they were doing some counter-insurgency work. They were also training for a near-peer combat and more conventional warfare.

I have a two-part question. To determine readiness, we are also trying to determine what the threats are that Canada may face. So using history as a guide or experience, what do you see as the threats facing Canada and our interests in the next five or ten years? In terms of the training, do we need to try to be predictive in determining what sort of training we need, or do we need to train people to make good decisions no matter what they're faced with? Do we need to focus on specific scenarios or on specific types of training that will allow Canadian Forces personnel to be flexible to face whatever comes their way?

Vadm Larry Murray: I'll start with the third question.

Absolutely, we have to have professional navy, army, air force training, joint training and all of that. But at the end of the day, what's most important is that you have people who are comfortable, capable, well educated, and able to take those decisions on their feet that they have to take. This is why professional development and education and creating an atmosphere and leadership approach within the organization....

I think my observation would be that it currently exists big time right now. Leaders are comfortable that if they take the decision at a roadblock, and it's a reasonable decision but it doesn't work out exactly the way the CBC evening news might show it, they will be supported by the chain of command, and at the end of the day they'll be supported by Canadians who have confidence in the Canadian Forces.

So you've got to have that ability to think on your feet. But they've got to have the confidence that if they make the right, credible, moral, professional, and ethical decision and that decision goes south, they're going to be supported by the chain of command.

Dr. Lee Windsor: I think what you're suggesting already exists in both elements. The Canadian Forces, all three branches, and SOF operators already train to anticipate what might happen next.

They're able to do this because they have a well-educated leadership structure, well-educated leaders at all levels. They're familiar with international relations; they're familiar with the world that's unfolding around us. They can anticipate. They talk in the mess on Friday afternoon after work about what's probably coming next. It's an issue that they're always engaged in, and they bring that kind of sophistication in their understanding of the world to all of their training in innovative ways, as they always have done for over a hundred years.

Vadm Larry Murray: Can I just say something, since I'm allowed to be subjective and I'm no longer...?

I would also say there's something fundamentally inherently Canadian about it. I think it's to do with our education system before people are in the forces. I've now served in a lot of different places with a lot of different folks, and fundamentally Canadians are different, and they do bring a certain something to the table that really does matter, and thankfully the Canadian Forces builds on that. But I think it's education, it's training, it's the foundation of what is your ethical base, and it's perhaps the nature of this country and how we find balance. I'm not sure.

• (1220)

Dr. Lee Windsor: If I can just hot pursue that with one observation on what we've seen over the years at the University of New Brunswick, the Canadian Forces are a reflection of our multicultural society, and they are inherently more sensitive to those cultural differences that define the new kind of stability-building and counter-insurgency operation of the last 20 years.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. David Christopherson): Thank you.

Over to Mr. Brahmi. You have the floor, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Windsor, when you decided to publish your book, there was a lot of criticism based on the fact it was not impartial since you were receiving funds mainly from the Canadian government, specifically the Department of National Defence.

Since a major part of your funding comes from the government, how can you have an objective approach? How do you balance your funding so that you can maintain some objectiveness?

[*English*]

Dr. Lee Windsor: I didn't anticipate having my credibility questioned.

What you're speaking about is the now defunct Security and Defence Forum program that has existed since 1971, whereby the Department of National Defence provided research grant funding to universities across Canada to conduct research on matters related to national defence, including military history. That program, when it was conceived of and established in 1971, and throughout its 40 years of existence, has had as its foundational principle the idea that

it would not be directed research, research directed by the Government of Canada to support the Government of Canada. Indeed I would put to you that a great number of the most vocal critics of government defence and foreign policy have been those scholars who come from the various centres—now called the Security and Defence Forum centres across Canada—funded by that pool of grant funding.

Therefore, no one asked the Gregg Centre to conduct that study of Task Force 1-07. Nobody told me to go to Afghanistan. Nobody from Ottawa told us what to include as the findings of that book. We undertook it as an independent scholarly exercise, and I suppose some of the critique came from a rather...the book had some harsh words for the Canadian media about the situation in Afghanistan between 2006 and 2007. One bad review came out from a media person, who was arguably offended by that hard line against the media, and the review stuck.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: One of the things that was criticized was your optimism in your analysis of the number of Canadian soldiers who were killed. We noted that this number increased over the years, until 2011, with a peak in 2010, I think. That was more or less criticized. Some people didn't agree with your optimism about a situation that was worsening every year.

[*English*]

Dr. Lee Windsor: Might I ask, sir, have you read the review?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: No, this is not a question about the book review. If we look at the number of Canadian casualties over the years, we see it has increased, but you did not elaborate too much upon that when you described the situation in Afghanistan.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Dr. Lee Windsor: Have you read the book, sir?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: No, unfortunately, I haven't had the time to read it.

[*English*]

Dr. Lee Windsor: This is my point in asking if you have read the review or if you have read the book. The reviewer had not read the book. Had you read the study—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: My question is this: how do you evaluate the Canadian Forces performance in Afghanistan? Do you think the number of casualties is higher because the resources have been allocated elsewhere? Why did the number of casualties increase? Is it because we moved some forces to Kandahar, which is a more dangerous area, or is it because Afghan resistance was becoming more and more organized?

The Chair: Mr. Brahmi, your time is up.

[*English*]

May we have a short response, if possible, Professor Windsor.

Dr. Lee Windsor: That's going to be a difficult short response.

I would suggest to you that the shortest answer I can offer, because we have done follow-on work, is that I think everyone concerned with the mission was optimistic in 2006 and 2007. In 2008 we saw an enemy response to the way in which Canada, NATO, and the United Nations were delivering effects and operations in Kandahar. In particular, the nature of providing reconstruction assistance across a broad swath of Kandahar without securing the areas that were being reconstructed meant that the opposing force murdered the people whom we had assisted.

The Canadian Forces then became embroiled in a campaign to try to protect the wide array of people across southern Afghanistan whom the Canadian government had engaged in reconstruction tasks with. The rest is history. We're all familiar with the series of small battles that raged across the province. I don't think anybody anticipated that. It certainly was news that was greeted with a very heavy heart, as I lost friends in that timeframe.

I would suggest to you again that we were—I've said enough.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

Mr. Alexander.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I have one question for each of our witnesses. I am very grateful to both of them for their remarks. Because we just finished with Professor Windsor, I will start by asking him about his expertise on IEDs and the effort to counter IEDs and the extent to which we have institutionalized lessons and become more ready to counter both the technical threat—the threat to life and limb from IEDs—and the political threat.

I'd just like to remind him of an interview he did with *Maclean's* magazine in 2007 when the death toll for Canada was still at 66, when he said:

Really, the Taliban's target when they killed Captain Dawe and his men...

—that was the group of six that had recently died. I think it was the largest group—

...was you, the media. This is because the focus of all western media is on deaths and casualties rather than on successful aspects of the mission, like our reconstruction efforts. As long as the focus is on deaths, the Taliban will look to the Western media as a secret weapon that they can manipulate to bring public opinion to a tipping point of fear.

It was to try to get countries to pull out.

Do you think we've learned the political lesson as well as the technical lessons about how to counter IEDs as well as we should have? Do you think we are readier to encounter them in the field?

Dr. Lee Windsor: Certainly the Canadian Forces are more prepared to deal with them. The amount of resources that have been put into solving this problem has increased. The new technologies and capabilities that have been made available are making great strides forward. But we haven't had that conversation in Canada about dealing with an enemy who deliberately tries to inflict loss as part of its strategic policy. We're not talking about IEDs in that fashion. We're talking about IEDs in Canada, all too often, purely in terms of capability, equipment, and technology.

We haven't had the wider conversation about strategy in a counter-insurgency, and how IEDs are not new. The armed forces have used various explosive traps to deny mobility to the opposing force since things have been able to blow up. That's why the Canadian Military Engineers of the Military Engineering Branch exist.

So I think that while the Canadian Forces have reacted to the emphasis on that particular type of weapon system employed by the opposing force in Afghanistan, the rest of the country, as a whole, has not caught up.

• (1230)

Mr. Chris Alexander: Admiral Murray, I have a question for you.

You mentioned the core missions of the Canadian Forces, as described in Canada First. One of them, of course—I believe number 5—is to lead and/or conduct a major international operation for an extended period. That can, of course, be leading in a coalition, as we almost always do, but it can also be leading alone when others are unwilling to act.

When you were Acting Chief of the Defence Staff in late 2006-07, we had one of the few cases when Canada acted alone in the Great Lakes region to deploy, in the end, just over 300 troops, out of 1,500 offered, in a situation where refugees were prevented from moving, and so forth.

Based on your experience then, and everything you've seen until now as deputy minister and in your many roles in government, do you think we are more ready, less ready, or as ready as we were in 1996 to lead and/or conduct a major international operation for an extended period?

VAdm Larry Murray: I could say something facetious, like we couldn't be less ready, but I won't.

Mr. Chris Alexander: I was hoping you would say that.

VAdm Larry Murray: I would like to just say a word on the IED thing, because I think that story is an incredible story. It's probably too sensitive still, too classified to be told, but the story of the Toronto coroner's office, the defence scientists, and everybody who has been involved in that, is a classic case of why the term “tooth to tail” is a really dodgy expression that should be avoided, because where's the tooth and where's the tail on the IED story? It's an amazing story, and hats off to the Toronto coroner's office and everybody involved in that.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Admiral, just for your information, as a parenthesis, this committee has been to Defence Research and Development Canada and has heard part of the story—an important part.

VAdm Larry Murray: Great.

For a number of years, I was asked back to the Staff College on one of their case studies on the Great Lakes region story. The problem with that story is that the problem got resolved. We had a mission, we had constraints, and we had buy-in from allies, but then the problem got solved before the mission actually went out the starting gate, which made managing it to the conclusion kind of fascinating.

Having said that, to say that Canada was ready then to lead an operation of that nature.... I'm not just talking about the Canadian Forces. I go back to my comments about the Manley report, the government response to it, and the whole-of-government approach around Afghanistan. We are leagues ahead of where we were there.

I would also say that I used to think this was a pretty low probability anyway—and it's not necessarily a high probability—but I'm not sure the Australians expected to find themselves leading the operation in East Timor. I think Canada needs to pay attention to it, actually, and part of the reason why I think the lessons learned out of Libya and Afghanistan need to be applied to that question is so that Canada is ready.

I think we are significantly more ready today. The challenge is that if the world unfolds and we don't find ourselves in that scenario, and people move on—not just in the forces but in all these other government departments—and we lose all the stuff that we have gained in the last 10 years, or certainly 7 or 8 of the 10 years in Afghanistan, it would be a huge loss to Canada's ability to lead an operation of the type you're talking about.

• (1235)

The Chair: Your time has expired.

Mr. Storseth, you have the floor.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you for your presentation.

To follow up on that last comment, how good a job do the Canadian Forces and Canada do in retaining some of that institutional knowledge within the staff colleges and places, so we can still access that? I know from my riding that we've got men and women who had key roles in Afghanistan at different levels of command, as well as in Libya. How good a job do we do in keeping them even after they're ready to retire?

Vadm Larry Murray: Within the forces we're doing a much better job. Are we doing a good enough job or not? The professor may have insight into that. Certainly, the staff colleges have been an area of great investment in recent years, both in terms of the course at the major level and the more senior “baby generals” course, with colonels and one-stars and civilian equivalents. The really good news is that I talk to that latter course each year, usually networking in Ottawa. What I was really struck by in the last year or two is that there has been a much better presence of serious players from other government departments, including DFAIT, the RCMP, and so on. That's essential.

I would say the forces do a pretty good job. The forces are used to—like most major police organizations in the country—after-action reports and all of that stuff, but I think they're doing a better job of institutionalizing it now. I would say we're still at the starting gates in terms of whole-of-government, which is why the Afghan task force and all of that is so critical. That would be the first time, in my memory, that we've actually had the opportunity to work our way into something that was working on the ground and in Ottawa. We really need to make sure we don't lose that, because it's not in the culture of most other government departments.

Dr. Lee Windsor: I would follow it up very briefly by echoing Admiral Murray's view that the lessons learned review process has always been part of the basis of armed forces organization for a modern professional military force. The particular offices that carry out this work have been resourced very effectively in the last 10 years. Afghanistan is an issue that's tracked well. Perhaps one of the problems we have is that for the period of the 1990s, in which there were a great number of missions in a wide variety of places across the world, we know very little about those. We've remembered very little about those, partly because of a major demographic shift in the nature of personnel in the Canadian Forces. The people who were there on those missions have retired. We probably do need to make a major effort to undertake historical research on the nineties before the memories of those individuals who were there, like Admiral Murray, are lost.

Mr. Brian Storseth: I have a question for you gentlemen on interoperability. Oftentimes when people talk about interoperability they think about other nations. For example, up at the air weapons range at Cold Lake there are always joint operations every year. One of the things I've learned in my relation with the forces is that interoperability within the CF itself is critical to maintain that high level of performance.

How good a job are we doing maintaining that? How big a role do some of our training facilities such as Wainwright, Cold Lake, and other training facilities...? How good a job are we doing overall when it comes to this?

Vadm Larry Murray: I'm no longer a member of the forces, but my observation would be that they have come an awfully long way. One of the things that was a little bit bemusing was around 1990, at the time of the Gulf War. We had been a unified force since 1968. People assumed we were joint and everything else, but in fact the three services had operated quite separately, generally, in the Cold War scenario. Other than at staff college or at the occasional training around a humanitarian relief operation, or whatever, we didn't meet each other.

It was really only in the nineties that we did start to become joint, and I would say that one of the fallouts that I mentioned earlier was that we learned a lot in the nineties. In fact, there is a great deal in the 1990s with the Canadian Forces, and the folks who are members of it can be extremely proud in terms of what was achieved in very difficult circumstances. But I would say in the sole area of joint post-September 11, the operations in Afghanistan, the operations in Libya, it's second nature now. It really is.

There is not the kind of...how would I say this? “Joint” used to be the afterthought. Now you'll find the commanders of the army, navy, and air force really working at being truly joint, and it is a challenge, actually. It's definitely a challenge, and we're probably not there yet in a technical sense, but they're certainly there in a procedural sense now. And they've done a lot of it in recent years.

So I would say that it will always be a work in progress, but we're in pretty good shape and continuing to make progress. That is my assessment from a little bit afar.

• (1240)

The Chair: Thank you. Your time has expired.

We're going to go to our third and final round, where each party gets one last five-minute question.

Mr. Kellway, you have the floor.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to return to my line of questioning around the issue of balance, if I can follow that from earlier.

We've had folks come before the committee—I should call them witnesses—to talk about those first four missions as no-fail missions, that whatever we do, we have to do that stuff and we can't be in the position to fail at any of that. But others have offered the opinion that 5 and 6 are really, in a sense, more discretionary, and it's a matter of policy, and the term about projecting your borders and how far one projects the borders of Canada around the world is really what determines whether we're going to have to be ready for those types of missions. If we're not projecting our borders around the world, that seems to me to impact this issue of balance, Admiral Murray. I was wondering if you could pick up on your thoughts about balance from where we left off. Others have even said we can't afford to be combat ready across all three elements of the forces.

You used the language that this isn't a hypothetical list. I guess I'm asking if it is an inevitable list, that we're going to have to be engaged in these kinds of battles. If it's not inevitable, then can't we look at our forces and think about balance differently, about having priorities, perhaps, between being combat ready in different elements of our forces?

Vadm Larry Murray: I think the only thing discretionary about the latter two missions is that it's up to the government of the day to decide whether or not to commit the Canadian Forces. I can't think of any government of ours that would want to be unable to respond to some kind of awful scenario on the international scene that required international multilateral engagement and would have to say, "Sorry, but we decided that we're not going to be able to do that, so we'll send money," or something like that.

I think it comes down to our being a credible nation. Let's say Haiti had some potential for organized violence in addition to the earthquake. I don't think that a government in this country would last very long by failing to respond the way Canadians think Canada should respond in those kinds of situations.

In most places in the world today, when we send Canadian Forces in, there are bad actors in the vicinity who have high-tech weaponry and may even possess small submarines. Who knows? Committing the Canadian Forces abroad these days means they have to go with the ability to be combat capable.

Trying to decide whether you have an army or a navy or an air force is a mug's game. A look at the number and diversity of missions that a range of governments have committed the Canadian Forces to since 1989 leads me to conclude that the best approach is a balanced one, and that this must be adjusted on an ongoing basis if you find yourself in an Afghanistan or someplace like that. It would be wrong to put real options off the table so that Canada couldn't respond if it had to.

● (1245)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Dr. Windsor, do you have any comments on that?

Dr. Lee Windsor: No, I agree completely.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: In this committee, we talk a lot about joint missions and the necessity to cooperate with allies, NATO and the rest. Does this issue affect your perspective on balance? Is it necessary to have fully combat-capable forces across all elements? We have an enormous shipbuilding exercise under way now. Can Canada's contribution be a niche contribution in multilateral efforts?

Vadm Larry Murray: I'm not suggesting for a minute that Canada should have aircraft carriers or that we need divisions of troops. We need the joint and special forces, though. They are essential capabilities. To some extent, the task is to try to figure out what are those credible, affordable niches?

The navy has ended up being a frigate, small-submarine navy. The army is not a division but has combat arms units and could get to a brigade, group, or division level if it really had to.

I'm not saying we're all things to all people and we have everything, but we have to have those five capabilities in order to put a credible response in place. We need to be able to respond to the possibility of leading an East Timor-type scenario, and that means you better not forget about the joint capability of the Kingston headquarters or your ability to inter-operate with nations of like minds. It's a challenge. It's an art, not a science.

The Chair: Thank you, Admiral.

Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses. You offer some very thoughtful comments.

Possibly one of the most significant strategic developments in the last few weeks and months has been President Obama's pivot towards the Pacific, and generally where the Americans pivot we will follow. If you put that within the context that a lot of our NATO partners are broke or near broke, if you put that in the context that, as Professor Bercuson said, the not broke member is Germany but they have a deeply held value of passiveness, and given President Putin's somewhat bellicose ways of late, it strikes me that we are going to almost necessarily be reorienting away from the Atlantic and more to the Pacific, and indeed up to and into the Arctic, for the foreseeable future.

If in fact that's a valid working premise, how do you see a study of readiness addressing that change in strategic reality and planning?

I was rather hoping the navy guy would go with that first.

•(1250)

Vadm Larry Murray: I think it's a really good question. Certainly it's something that the forces and I think Canada, at some level, have been struggling with for some time: what is the way to the Pacific? Certainly the navy was rebalanced with the Canadian patrol frigates, the submarines, to try to have a more significant naval presence on the west coast than we had previously, relative to the size of the nation. Because we are a Pacific nation, that's not new for Canada. So how do you strike that balance?

The Arctic question is an intriguing one as well because it's one where readiness in a Canadian context in the Arctic does mean the kinds of investments that are being talked about or implemented around naval patrol vessels and so on. But it also means that interdepartmental capability being maximized, which I spoke to earlier. The Canadian Coast Guard has a tremendous presence there, with seven ice-breakers up there every year, kind of on an ongoing basis. Are we maximizing that investment? We're certainly maximizing it from a scientific and other points of view, but are we maximizing it from the perspective of a Canadian sovereignty scenario? Are they doing enough hydrographic science and fisheries patrols? Is there a need for the RCMP as well? It cries out to some extent for kind of a whole-of-government approach big time. That, in my view, will be necessary as the naval and other capabilities of the Canadian Forces come into play. In other words, it's going to be essential to integrate those four to six arctic patrol vessels with the coast guard fleet.

I think the exercises that have been going on in recent years, on a very regular basis, and the significant presence of the government in the Arctic in the last while, are quite helpful in all of that. I think the Arctic part of the answer is a much more significant interdepartmental collaboration, cooperation, and working together in a meaningful way with the vehicles we have, which include vehicles that aren't all belonging to the Canadian Forces.

Dr. Lee Windsor: I would add that while the regional focus may shift, in terms of the missions that may be required to be accomplished by the Canadian Forces in a shift towards the Pacific Rim, there's no indication that the potential missions of the future would change. The main threat to stability continues to be the collapse of failed states and the instability and insecurity that results from that. Being able to respond to failed states in that region of the world—and we're already involved in a response to a failed state that's bordering on that regional world—will continue to call in the future for the kind of balance that Admiral Murray is been speaking about.

Whereas the tendency may be to look at the challenge of the Pacific in the future as a profoundly naval problem—certainly the United States viewed it in that way in the 1930s—the best way to be capable of responding to a variety of international, political, and military necessities is, again, to have a range of options open.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, your time has expired.

Batting cleanup, Mr. Norlock, you have the last question of the day.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

In some people's view, my question may be a little distasteful, but it builds on some of the other testimony you gave to previous questioners. It has to do not only with the readiness of the armed forces, but with the readiness of a population to support their armed forces and how the armed forces can maintain the support of a population.

We know that future conflicts will undoubtedly incur terrorist activities and civil unrest. We also know, in learning from our experience in Afghanistan, that the enemy tries to demoralize and show the population and the countries that are in there—and I'm referring in this specific case to NATO countries—how futile it is to be there, because they're going to kill more of our people and they're going to kill a bunch of theirs. As we saw those numbers of casualties going up, we of course saw at the same time the numbers of people who worried about the utility of being in a conflict that, on its face and in reality, was a just cause.

So realizing what the aim of the terrorist is, and realizing that they utilize against us the very things you look to as precious, such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and making sure that things are reported on, how do we prepare a military to talk to the public? I think it was done very well in the middle and near the end of Afghanistan, when generals got up and talked about the sacrifice being made.

Could both of you comment?

•(1255)

Dr. Lee Windsor: Well, again, taking a long view, a 100-year view of this issue, the best way to maintain popular support for the mission is to carry out missions that are morally just. In those instances in which Canada has become involved in struggles around the world to do the right thing, whatever that may be, whatever it's understood to be at the time, the armed forces have had the full support of the population—with the extension that it's your job, the job of all of you, to make the public understand what the morality of the mission is.

There were no Winston Churchills for Afghanistan. There was not even a good William Lyon Mackenzie King for Afghanistan. The Canadian public and the Canadian Forces were let down by a political leadership of Canada that did not clearly explain to the public—and still has not explained—why it was necessary for our men and women to die for the service of this nation or any other.

Vadm Larry Murray: I think that whole area is really an interesting one. I would say that I take considerable pride as a Canadian in the context of... Let's talk about Afghanistan. Whatever individual citizens' views might have been about the commitment in Afghanistan, there was never any doubt that they were supporting the members of the Canadian Forces. Whenever there was an issue around PTSD or health care or support of families, there were 30 million Canadians who rallied around it, whatever their views.

I think the challenge is to figure out, when you look south of the border, how some of these things sometimes develop if you don't support the troops. I'm not saying there wasn't a little bit of that, but for the most part that wasn't the way it played out in Canada, and the challenge is to figure out how to continue in this way.

It's not up to the generals or the troops to advocate why they're somewhere, but it's certainly fair ball to expose them and to expose Canadians to the Canadian Forces to explain what they do. Short of an Afghanistan, I would say we should have open houses at bases, open houses on ships, and should be exposing Canadians in general.

I would say that this is a huge reason the reserves and cadet programs are so important in this country. The reserves are in many more communities than a regular force. Whatever number we end up with—70,000, 60,000—is located on super-bases normally away from large population centres. This is a huge reason for our needing the reserves, and as I said, the cadet programs. The reality is that the Canadian Forces.... I mentioned my view that the reason they do so well is that they're Canadian. Exposing Canadians to them, particularly given the wonderful multicultural makeup of this country now, with many of those folks coming from other countries, where a uniform is not necessarily somebody you actually want to spend any time with—in fact, going the other way is usually a pretty good idea.... Giving them some sense that folks wearing a Canadian Forces uniform are actually Canadians who have morals, ethics, and all of that stuff....

How we do it? I'm not sure. You folks are much more expert at that than I am. I think that engagement is extremely important. If we don't have another Afghanistan soon—which I would be very happy with—or a Libya, how does the conversation happen?

I think that whole area of how, in a democracy, the citizens engage with the military and the military with the citizens, so that everybody has some mutual trust and understanding, is really important.

●(1300)

The Chair: Thank you.

Time has expired. We're out of time.

I have one question for Professor Windsor, and I'm going to ask it. Even if there's not enough time for a response verbally, if you could, please provide it to the committee in writing.

You made the comment that we're not well-served by preparing for the last mission and that this was an opportunity, as we went through a retooling of the Canadian Forces. In particular you're alluding to the Canadian army. You mentioned the Afghan assets that we acquired for that battle. Some of those definitely enhanced capabilities, and some of them only really applied to the Afghanistan mission.

I would like you to jot down your thoughts on what assets we bring out of Afghanistan that are going to enhance capabilities and our readiness, and which you see as being of no value as we move forward. If you could do that in writing, I'd appreciate it.

With that, I'll take a motion to adjourn.

An hon. member: I so move.

The Chair: I want to thank both of you for your presentations today.

We're out of here.

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