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Chair

Mr. James Bezan

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● (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. We're going to continue with our study on readiness of the Canadian Forces, pursuant to Standing Order 108 (2).

We have joining us today as witnesses, from the Department of National Defence, Jill Sinclair, assistant deputy minister, policy; and from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Kerry Buck, who is the assistant deputy minister, international security branch and political director. She is joined by Marie Gervais-Vidricaire, director general, stabilization and reconstruction task force. Welcome, ladies.

I'll allow you each to have 10 minutes to make your opening comments.

Ms. Sinclair, you have the floor.

Ms. Jill Sinclair (Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy, Department of National Defence): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. Good morning, committee members. It's my pleasure to be back here.

[*Translation*]

Welcome.

[*English*]

Thanks for the opportunity to be here, along with my colleagues from Foreign Affairs, for your continuing study on CF readiness.

Over the course of your study, I know you've heard from a number of senior Canadian Forces personnel and officers about what readiness means from a military perspective: from generating capabilities, to employing them on operations, to coordinating the training and maintenance to keep the forces agile and flexible when needed.

[*Translation*]

I hope that this wealth of information—in particular the testimony of the Chief and Vice Chief of the Defence Staff—has served to cement a few key points about readiness for the committee members.

[*English*]

I hope that you heard that readiness is a distinct endeavour. It's a specific activity.

Readiness is a complex undertaking. Being ready requires preparation for a range of eventualities, such as how quickly we need to respond, on what scale, with what tools, and for how long. Determining and shaping readiness is all about whole-of-government, shared awareness, and understanding of the broad strategic environment.

For the Department of National Defence and the CF, the broad policy context for readiness is captured in the Canada First defence strategy. I know you've heard quite a bit about this from other witnesses here.

The CFDS establishes the government's level of readiness ambition by providing clear direction for the CF on the missions they must be prepared to conduct. It lays out the three main roles for the military, which are to defend Canada, to be a strong and reliable partner in the defence of North America, and to project global leadership abroad by contributing to international peace and security.

The strategy also describes the essential day-to-day missions the CF needs to perform, as well as the flexibility they need to maintain in order to perform a broad range of challenges.

[*Translation*]

Specifically, the government bases its investments in—and expectations of—the Canadian Forces on the ability to perform any and all of the following core missions, at times simultaneously if required.

[*English*]

This includes conducting daily domestic and continental operations, such as through the North American Aerospace Defence Command; supporting a major international event in Canada, such as the Vancouver Olympics in 2010; responding to a major terrorist attack; supporting civilian authorities during a crisis in Canada, including natural disasters; leading and/or conducting a major international operation for an extended period of time, such as in Afghanistan; or deploying forces in response to crises elsewhere for shorter periods.

This is a pretty broad range of requirements that we have from the Canadian Forces. I think it's fair to say that, by any measure, it's been fulfilled exceptionally by the CF in the very challenging period since CFDS was first released in 2008. When General Natynczyk was here, he used the example of 2010 to lay out how the CF had been performing those tasks simultaneously, as I think he talked about. He explained about Kandahar, our folks carrying out major operations in support of the Vancouver Olympics, and also about being able to deliver supplies and personnel to Haiti in less than 24 hours in the wake of that massive earthquake.

In a similar fashion, I just mentioned spring of last year. Even while the Canadian Forces were essentially carrying out three operations in Afghanistan: the close-out of combat, the massive logistical move of equipment and personnel, and the stand-up of our training mission in the north, we were still able to play a leading role in Libya, as well as to respond to significant natural disasters in Manitoba, Quebec, and Ontario. It's a very impressive track record.

This level of success is the result of several factors. First, it's the product of planning, prioritization, and recapitalization. I think my military colleagues have walked you through that in some detail.

Second, it's the reflection of the effectiveness of an integrated defence team, where Canadian Forces personnel and DND civilian personnel work side by side as an integrated defence team.

Third, it is the result of our defence team's contribution to whole-of-government approaches to missions at home and abroad, whether it's working with Public Safety and its agencies on floods and forest fires or working with colleagues at Foreign Affairs and International Trade on global engagement issues.

Finally, it's about being an effective global partner. That includes through the UN, NORAD, NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in the Americas, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

In order to support that level of global engagement, we know that being ready means developing real global partnerships and an understanding of the global environment. That's a lot of the role that the policy group plays within National Defence. In National Defence we have a network of more than 30 defence attachés covering more than 140 different countries as part of Canada's overall presence abroad, using the extraordinary offices and instruments of our Canadian embassies.

We have a military training and cooperation program, which, through an interdepartmental process, sets priorities aligned with foreign policy objectives, and it lets us target training to build capacity and relationships with around 60 countries.

We also have a wide range of military-to-military exchanges and engagements, whether it's through the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Canadian Army, and even through our Judge Advocate General and our Chief of Military Personnel. We ensure that we use all of our instruments of defence relations to enhance our ability to be ready to act where and when we need to.

As I've mentioned, I think the Canadian Forces' track record speaks for itself in terms of our readiness at home and abroad and how we work as an integrated whole-of-government team.

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

I'll be happy to answer your questions.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Sinclair.

Ms. Buck, you have ten minutes, please.

Ms. Kerry Buck (Assistant Deputy Minister, International Security Branch and Political Director, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

Many of today's most pressing security concerns are the result of civil wars and civil unrest within states or regions, which are often compounded by state fragility. By state fragility I mean a state's incapacity or lack of will to maintain a rule of law and to provide core services to its population.

Fragility affects roughly 15% of states—a population of some one billion. The human impact can be terrible. Fragile states are often conduits for transnational organized crime, piracy, terrorism, arms proliferation, and the violent targeting of vulnerable populations. State fragility also costs the international system; the estimates are some $270 billion annually.

When the Government of Canada decides to respond to such insecurity, it draws on a range of tools. The tools that my department contributes include the following: diplomatic engagement through preventative diplomacy and mediation efforts; support for economic sanctions, including export controls; the deployment of civilians and, at times, military experts bilaterally in areas such as elections' monitoring; legal and constitutional reform; policing; borders; corrections; the training of foreign military forces; and, finally, financial and expert support to international peace operations.

Across this spectrum, from soft security to hard security engagements, cooperation with DND is absolutely integral to our efforts. We've learned that responding to conflicts almost always requires a multi-dimensional approach, close civilian and military cooperation.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

Let's talk about a vital lesson we learned in Afghanistan. We, the local team, on a personal basis, and Canada, as a government, have learned a lot about integrating civilian and military engagements in fragile states and states in conflict, such as Afghanistan, post-earthquake Haiti and the two Sudans. We also learned about the importance of cohesive and coordinated efforts, especially in the context of Afghanistan, as I just mentioned.

Afghanistan led us to develop shared strategic priorities with very specific parameters for the first time. Through joint planning, leadership, intelligence sharing—in Ottawa as well as in Afghanistan, including the south, in Kandahar—resource allocation and communications, we developed a single, completely integrated strategy. In addition, joint training and pre-deployment exercises increased considerably over the course of Canada's engagement in Kandahar. They helped introduce the key players to each other and bridge institutional cultures.

We have learned many lessons in Afghanistan, and those lessons are ongoing. Our coordinated civilian-military efforts continue to support the development of the Afghan security forces, as Canada is the second-largest contributor to the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan, providing both military and civilian police trainers.

[*English*]

In the case of peace operations, another example is that the engagement of civilian experts alongside defence personnel can make a critical difference. I'll give you some examples. Civilian experts help build host governments' capacity for security, governance, economic development, and the establishment of the rule of law, so they can get at the root causes of the insecurity, but they can also work alongside military to address the impacts of state fragility. We currently deploy Canadian government personnel to eight UN peace operations, with a total, as of February 28, of 42 military, 164 police, and 17 corrections experts. These are just the UN peace operations, and it excludes ISAF, etc.

Foreign Affairs works closely with partners, notably National Defence, RCMP, Corrections, and Justice, and we do that to coordinate deployments in a way that identifies special skills that Canadians bring to the table. It matches those skills with the core functions of the mission. So we're bringing something special, a special interest, a special niche, to the table.

One example is in the Democratic Republic of Congo where Canadian civilian experts work alongside the UN mission to give technical assistance to Congolese military and civilian authorities to investigate and prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual violence.

As one of the top 10 financial contributors to the UN peacekeeping budget, we've got a strong interest in ensuring proper training, coordination, and burden-sharing to make these UN multidimensional operations as effective as possible. We do that through a number of modalities, and we can talk about that in the question period. They include financial support of civilian deployments, as I said.

One of the key tools that we use to address fragility is our international security programming. We manage it in Foreign Affairs, but we do it with the rest of government by deploying experts across government, as I said. So we focus on state security and justice sectors, clearing and containing weapons of mass destruction, training police and border guards, and helping support citizens' rights to redress injustice. Those will help prevent conflict, but in a post-conflict environment those are also important tools to stabilize.

Let me give you a couple of examples and I'll finish, Mr. Chair.

The Americas, Haiti, Central America, and Colombia, are top priorities for our engagement on security for a number of reasons. There's a direct impact on Canadian security interests. A lot of the transnational organized crime issues that are in Central America make their way to Canadian borders. It also poses a risk to Canadian economic and security interests in those regions. It's also part of our burden-sharing with Mexico and the U.S., with this important partnership that we need to maintain.

A second example is in the Middle East and North Africa and the transitions in the Arab world over the past year. We've responded through diplomacy and programming, in addition to some of the military interventions in Libya, which we can talk about as well. But as a corollary to that, throughout the region we're supporting a range of weapons of mass destruction threat reduction programming, in Libya, for instance, and chemical weapons destruction.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

Finally, let's talk about cooperation in terms of foreign affairs and defence.

As I mentioned in the introduction, our close cooperation with the Department of National Defence is a key element of our department's engagement in security matters, but also of the whole spectrum of security considerations.

[*English*]

In Libya, to get a political consensus amongst 28 allies and to bring military authorities to plan and deploy recent military assets in record time required extremely tight coordination. As I said, the NATO response to Libya was absolutely done in record time. Another example—we'll get into it in questions—was the response to the Haiti quake. It was fully integrated. The quake hit at five-something in the afternoon. The next morning at seven we had a fully integrated team at Trenton ready to get on a plane to go south—a fully integrated team. There are a few other examples.

In conclusion, we work alongside National Defence. The way we put it is we live in each other's business lines, and this has been something that's developed over the last while. There's always more room to improve, and we're always improving, but we're living in each other's business lines now. It's not just us in Defence, but it goes across the gamut of security institutions with intelligence, RCMP, corrections, etc. This is at the core of what we're doing. It maps out in our bilateral engagements and in our multilateral engagements.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you. I appreciate your opening comments. I know we're going to have some interesting discussions.

On a point of order, Mr. McKay.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Chair, on a point of order, before we go to questioning—and I apologize for not raising this earlier, but as you saw, I came in a bit late—I am given to understand that by virtue of the business of supply and the ordering of supply days, the vote on supplementary estimates (C) will take place on Monday in the House. We are not scheduled to see the ministers until Tuesday.

The Chair: My understanding is we had to report the supplementary estimates (C) back, and correct me if I'm wrong.... It was yesterday? Did they change to Monday? I originally thought it was going to be Wednesday. That's what we were told. It's three days.

Okay, you are correct.

Hon. John McKay: It renders our examination of supplementary estimates (C) moot, shall we say.

The Chair: Well, we're tacking on the main estimates as well on Tuesday.

Hon. John McKay: Yes, but the main estimates don't tell the story. I'm not quite sure what to do with it, but I just want to confirm that. It may be that we should have a bit of a private conversation about what it is we want to do with Tuesday. As I say, the business will be done by Monday night. Maybe we should have an offline conversation; I would offer at the end of this meeting, but I have further conflicts of interest. Maybe we could talk about this.

The Chair: Okay.

Are there comments?

Mr. Alexander.

Mr. Chris Alexander (Ajax—Pickering, CPC): On that point of order, Chair, I thank Mr. McKay for raising that. On our side, and I think it goes for all of us, we were absolutely unaware of that. We had been given to understand that these votes would take place on March 15 and that our scheduling of the time with the ministers would be in advance.

So apologies for not having been aware of that, and we should have an offline conversation.

The Chair: Are there any comments?

Madame Moore.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): We could perhaps deal with the point of order in subcommittee. I could replace Mr. Christopherson so that we can look into this issue. If everyone agrees, we could consider this at the end of the meeting, in subcommittee.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm seeing consensus, so I'll save 15 minutes at the end of the meeting.

Hon. John McKay: Well, that leaves me in a conflict of interest because I have two events, and I was actually going to have to leave the meeting early. I don't want to hold up the business of the committee, but I do—

The Chair: What time are you taking off, John?

Hon. John McKay: I'm hosting a meeting at 12 and I'm supposed to be attending another meeting also at 12. It should be formal, but on the other hand, it doesn't have to be formal. We could probably meet between, say, one and question period, or just before question period, to talk about how we want to handle this.

There's the immediate issue of what we do Tuesday morning, but there's the larger issue that this just makes the committee decoration. We're going to have no examination of the supplementary estimates (C).

● (1120)

The Chair: We'll make a point to do that before QP. We'll find David. He's in the House anyway. You and I, Chris, and Cheryl will sit down quickly and have a pow-wow. That sounds good.

Sorry about that. We'll move on.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Moore, you have the floor.

Ms. Christine Moore: Thank you very much.

I don't know whether it was intentional or not, but I think it's really nice to have three female experts today, International Women's Day. I don't know whether the subcommittee planned that. If so, I commend it.

I would like to keep my comments in the same vein and talk about a women's issue that has not been discussed much thus far. One of the lessons we learned in Afghanistan is that there is a woman's world to which male soldiers don't necessarily have access. Interactions with civilians, either in combat or humanitarian missions, led to the realization that, in some cultures, the world of women was truly reserved for women. For instance, the men who intervened could not gather accounts of what was really happening in the field. That's something to keep in mind.

I would like to know whether armed forces, in their current state of readiness, are aware of the need for enough female members. Has that idea been incorporated so as to ensure effective interventions in other countries?

[*English*]

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Mr. Chair,

[*Translation*]

thank you for the question.

[*English*]

I think Canada, in fact, and the CF lead the way in terms of having women integrated into the CF to begin with. If we look at the operations we've conducted in the south, and even our training now, we've had women who are specialists in civil-military interface, and they've gone into the communities and they've engaged with women specifically. Your question was whether we have enough women to be effective. I think we have them deployed in the right areas.

I'm at a little bit of a loss here because I would want to have one of my military colleagues from the strategic joint staff answer that in detail for you, and I'm very happy to get those numbers for you.

But certainly in terms of the operations, women are fully integrated throughout the Canadian Forces—which is still pretty unique, even in the NATO family—and deployed in every imaginable way on every mission, whether it's in Haiti for disaster relief or in Afghanistan for training purposes. I feel fairly confident in saying yes.

I don't know if Foreign Affairs would like to add to that.

Ms. Kerry Buck: When it comes to ensuring that there is an awareness of the differential impact of conflict on women, when we go and work with UN peacekeeping operations, other military interventions, and also some of the softer security interventions, we do a few things through our programming. We work with partners on this, obviously.

We do training of peacekeeping troops to ensure they understand women's human rights perspective in what they're doing and how international humanitarian law ensures protection of civilians from that perspective of women's human rights.

We do training of judges and police, so when prosecutions happen after the fact—post-conflict and that kind of thing—they understand the differential impact on women. This has been embedded in our programming for quite a while.

We do embedding of gender monitors into peace support operations, etc. We have a women, peace, and security action plan that the Government of Canada adopted a year ago, which Marie can speak to briefly if you wish.

It's a whole range of actions to ensure that women's perspective and the different impact of conflict on women and the state fragility on women is better understood and that we have active, concrete tools to respond to it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire (Director General, Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you for the question. It is especially timely and appropriate.

I just want to add that we do have a Canadian national action plan, as you know. The Department of Foreign Affairs is in charge of coordinating the plan's implementation, along with the Department of National Defence, the RCMP, the Correctional Service of Canada and the departments that deploy people abroad.

The Department of Foreign Affairs will also coordinate the preparation of the initial report on the plan's implementation. It should be ready in September. The department has emphasized training. For instance, four pilot project courses have been tested. The purpose of those courses is to educate all department officers—especially the ones involved in START, of course—on the issue of women in the analysis of all the projects planned for implementation. We also have a civilian protection course for all department officers posted in fragile countries. That course obviously covers resolution 1325. We also continue to chair the Friends of 1325 group in New York.

Our permanent mission is very active when it comes to intelligence sharing with other countries that are interested in those issues. We share experiences, information, lessons learned, and so on. Many activities are ongoing. When our minister of foreign affairs went to Afghanistan, for instance, he took the time to meet with women to discuss their particular viewpoints. The same was done in Libya. So, there are activities on several levels. We hope all that will be properly captured in our September report.

● (1125)

Ms. Christine Moore: Okay.

I have two more questions.

Is there any specific training for female military members who will have to intervene with women in the countries requiring army involvement? Are they provided with any special training?

In addition, is the need for military women assessed prior to Canada's intervention in another country? In other words, is it decided whether any military member may intervene in a given zone or whether it would be better to use women to make the intervention more effective? Is that kind of assessment made to decide whether female military members are needed on site?

[*English*]

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Thanks for the follow-up question.

Cultural training for the Canadian Forces at large is a central part of the pre-deployment phase of their preparation. Whether it's for female members of the Canadian Forces or male members of the Canadian Forces, there really is.... Again, I think Canada has a bit of the gold standard in terms of cultural preparation for these sorts of missions abroad. The complexities, whether they happen to be gender-based or if you are going to be encountering child soldiers, or if you're looking at religious differences and sensitivities...this really is integrated into the staff training school from the very beginning of the training. When it's mission-specific, it is very focused.

In this situation you can only have women going into these sorts of areas to perform these sorts of tasks. I think the success of our mission in Afghanistan, whether combat or training, where we still have 950 folks out every day doing training, attests to that. We have been very welcomed. We've had great relationships at the tribal levels and with the elders. I think it's because of our sense of respect and dignity that we bring in the preparation of our folks before they go in.

Obviously we worked very closely in a whole-of-government setting. This isn't just the military. There is a civil-military side of this. We have the Foreign Affairs and the CIDA people, and they work as a joined-up team. They certainly have done so in Afghanistan, and I think that's a model for future interventions.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Moore. Your time is up. That was a very good question,

[*English*]

especially in light of International Women's Day.

For the committee's information, I just heard from the chief government whip that supps have to be reported back on March 14 to be deemed tabled in the House on the 26th. It is Monday, March 26, so we still have—

Mr. John McKay: So we're not just going to be decorators.

The Chair: No, we actually get to vote on the line.

Moving on, Mr. Strahl, you have seven minutes.

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

Again, on the issue of International Women's Day, I also noticed the good planning of the chair and the clerk. I'd like to salute you on having arranged for having these high-level and powerful women, a great example for all Canadians.

I wanted to ask you.... We've been studying readiness, as you know, for quite a while, and it's been raising quite a lot of questions for us about what we need to be ready for. While we aren't issued crystal balls, you are subject matter experts, I would argue. We've talked with some witnesses about threats versus vulnerabilities on which you should be focusing. What are some of the vulnerabilities that you see?

I'm certainly interested in the Foreign Affairs perspective as well around the world. What are the hot spots? Do you anticipate that the Canadian Forces are going to need to continue to be ready for a full-spectrum operation, or are we going to be looking more towards counter-insurgency still? Or are we looking more at cyber-security threats or little flare-ups? What do we need to be preparing for that will allow us to determine how ready we are to address those vulnerabilities? An easy question to start.

● (1130)

Ms. Kerry Buck: We will first of all talk about how we monitor the security environment. We will then touch on some of the thematic threats and maybe some of the regional areas we watch. Then Jill can speak to the global context from a perspective of defence and CF readiness.

At the core of any foreign ministry is a mandate to track current conflict trends and map out future ones. We do so through our network of missions abroad—geographic branches and headquarters. In my realm, we look at stabilization, human rights, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons, terrorism, and transnational organized crime. We have a methodology for tracking things that we think might turn sour, where state fragility is increasing and might require engagement by Canada. When I talk about engagement by Canada, I don't necessarily mean hard military engagement. We have a range of engagements we can use—soft security, hard security, and a mix of those. It depends on where and what the issue is.

We have a framework for analyzing situations of acute fragility of state. We ask whether there are intense social tensions or violent conflict, whether there is pervasive criminality, whether there is local capacity to address those things, whether the government is in step with basic international norms on human rights or the rule of law, and whether there is deep and widespread deprivation. If we get affirmative answers, we are in a situation of acute fragility. It's probably somewhere we are going to want to intervene.

Then we ask questions regarding when we would engage. Is there a direct or indirect threat to Canada? Is there an alliance or a multilateral response to which Canada would be expected to contribute? It's in our interest to build those networks and promote the rule of law. Have we been invited to engage? If we haven't, if it's a question of a harder military intervention, is there a legal basis to engage? There's no one list of questions. There is an analytical framework. When we're looking at a situation that's worsening, we never do this analysis alone. It's us, DND, CIDA, and others who are in the international portfolio. We have a whole host of mechanisms for this depending on what the problem is.

At the same time, I work with all of the national security departments, and we monitor direct threats to Canada. For instance, transnational crime in Central America—what's coming to our borders? Once we figure out what's coming to our borders and where it's coming from, then we'll push our programming out. We'll push our interventions out to try to address those at source. We call it "pushing our borders out". If we know one port in Central America is a major transit route for narcotics, there will be military training of some of the military in that region to interdict the narcotic traffic and to look at some of the maritime routes. We'll be training border guards with CBSA. We will be helping to train police. There's a whole range of tools we bring to bear. That's how we do it.

It's hard to come up with a list. Everybody has a different list of fragile states. OECD's DAC has one. I think it has 30-odd states on it. I'm not going to go there and say we're watching all this, but I can say there are some hardy perennials right now. Central America is a focus now, and it's going to be a focus for a while. There are some amazing successes in the region. For the next while, we have our priorities, which are Afghanistan, Sudan, and Haiti. These have been set for a couple of years. I'll just put those out, but there are other areas where we're watching fragility up and down and how it's going.

Then, as I said before, we choose a Canadian niche engagement. We're good at high-level police training. We're good at non-proliferation programming. We're very good at military training.

That's the overall context for how we watch hot spots.

● (1135)

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Mr. Chairman, may I supplement that? Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Strahl.

What do we need to be ready for? Uncertainty. And I don't mean to be trite by that. If we just look at the news today, who would have thought we'd need to be getting ready to send a foreign minister to Burma, and who knew that we'd have to be getting ready for continuing revolutions in the Arab world, which are so very uncertain?

CFDS, the Canada First defence strategy, maps out that in fact we do have to be ready for everything. You talk about threats and vulnerabilities. Of course, vulnerabilities can become threats pretty quickly.

We're always trying to anticipate. We've been told to make sure the home game is safe and that we can do everything we need to protect Canadians; make sure we're there for our continental partners, for the United States, and that includes, as Kerry was saying, looking at the Americas; and then make sure that we need to do what we need to do out in the world.

You asked about whether we need to be ready for full spectrum operations? Unfortunately, we're in an era where there's much more uncertainty and instability than anything else. All of the old kind of givens have shifted. So at the moment we're getting ready for everything from the traditional kinds of military conflicts, because they still exist in the world—and we've seen that, as we've been engaged in things like Libya and Afghanistan—right through to, as you point out, the new sorts of challenges out there, which are cyber asymmetric threats. You have to look at everything. That's the "what" to be ready for.

The question, really, in the readiness bit, is how do you get ready for it and what's your level of ambition with regard to your ability to deal with it? That's where you start to get into the realm of "you can't do everything all the time"—even the United States can't. But how do you offer those niche capabilities? How do you make sure that your response is a joined-up response so that you're not just looking at the military? This is because, in many cases, the best instruments we have are going to be early intervention through development assistance, effective diplomacy, getting the CBSA out there, doing the corrections thing. The military is a very finely tuned instrument, also an expensive one, and you want to deploy it when you really need it.

I don't mean to be trite in my response at all.

The Chair: No, we appreciate it.

The time has expired.

Mr. McKay, you have the floor.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

It's interesting that Christine hit on the notion that's it's International Women's Day and we have a women's panel. The question I'm going to ask will not be in your briefing notes. It essentially is about the strategic value of women, and the strategic value of women operating in some societies. I think you can draw a direct correlation between fragile states and oppression of women. If it's not a 100% correlation, then it's darned close to a 100% correlation.

The interesting aspect is that it is not simply the one side of the equation, which is the integration of women in our diplomatic corps and our military and CIDA; it is your very presence in those fragile stages, those countries of intervention, that stimulates and causes a conversation about the role of women in those societies. Frankly, sometimes your presence just irritates, in many ways, the established order of that society. The correlation is that not only are you irritating to the established order, and therefore that established order has to respond to your very presence, but your presence also stimulates the conversation in that larger society. So the established order has to respond, in effect justify their exclusion from the state decision-making and active involvement in society.

I'd be interested in your thinking with respect to the strategic value of women operating in the Canadian Forces, the Canadian diplomatic corps, and CIDA, as it relates essentially to the oppression of women and whether you've made any observations.

In particular, I'd be interested in your reflections on Mr. Karzai's recent announcements. We've poured billions and billions of dollars in there, and I assume that we've been ably represented by the best and the brightest, yet we seem to be going backwards. Just give us your reflections on your presence in those societies, particularly Afghanistan, but there may be others as well—in 25 words or less.

● (1140)

Ms. Kerry Buck: To boldly go where no man has gone before.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Kerry Buck: Sorry.

On the strategic value of women, I'll make three points, and some of these are personal reflections of someone who's worked on peace and security issues for a couple of decades now, actually more than that.

Women are, as I call it, the canaries in the coal mine. When you see state fragility, political transitions...look at the position of women in a society and you can almost start to predict where state fragility might go, and predict the differential impact on women.

We've done a lot of work internationally in Canada, etc., on the particular vulnerabilities of women. Sexual violence in conflict is still going on at alarming rates in spite of all the efforts. It's something we need to, and we do, address, but we need to keep trying.

On specific vulnerability, in a lot of the fragile states women are the economic generators in agriculture areas, the invisible market, and those are some of the areas that are hit first when a state devolves into conflict. They're also caring for more of the family, so they'll get hit a little worse from an economic perspective.

So women are canaries in the coal mine. Watch where they are. It helps you measure how badly a state might end up doing, and how badly the women are going to fare, because quite often they'll fare worse.

Women serving as models/irritants—I like that—to the established order in fragile states. It's not us as western women coming in and steering these things that I think is the key game changer. I think it's the women in those countries, and it's really important.

I met—and Chris can speak to this—some very strong Afghan women MPs, and every time I'd go back to Kabul I'd be meeting some different MPs and different women police in Kandahar. Why? Because somebody I met with the time I was there before had been killed and assassinated after my last trip. These women would just keep coming forward, putting themselves forward for election, and putting themselves forward as policewomen in Kandahar. Incredible courage. We're not in the same ballpark as those women who are leading, the women in Egypt in Tahrir Square, etc. You're seeing women at the vanguard of these changes as well, and they are the ones who are particularly vulnerable in places like Afghanistan. But I also think it would be a mistake to idolize.

As a personal reflection, at the Arusha peace talks after the Rwandan genocide, I remember a Tanzanian woman minister very strongly saying, if women had been running Rwanda, the genocide wouldn't have happened. A Rwandan woman stood up and said, yes, it would; there were women participating in the genocide.

So we have to be careful as we approach this. Women are integral parts of society. They're not always the peacemakers and peace bringers, so when we approach an integrated intervention or engagement in a country, we have to take into account the different roles women play, the different political leadership roles.

On Karzai's recent announcement, we've been pretty tough back at him. I was in conversations a couple of years ago with President Karzai, where he was absolutely lauding the progress they've made —300,000 girls in school, etc. Sometimes you'll see political positioning from the man that is unacceptable, and we make it very clear on that front. We'll see where he goes on this issue or whether this is just an aberration, and we're watching it really closely.

● (1145)

Mrs. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire: Let me add something that relates to a comment that was made to me recently by somebody who was very close to the training of officers who participate in peace operations in Africa.

He was saying that he had heard from African leaders that they were quite concerned, in fact, about these African women who participated in the training to be peacekeepers. They were coming back to their homes with a completely different attitude, and that was creating many problems. They were leaving their husbands and so forth. His conclusion was that it's not a good idea to send women to these training sessions because they come back with all kinds of crazy western ideas.

We have to continue to make sure that women are part of this training, but at the same time we have to realize what they're facing when they go back to their country.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I just have a final word from my perspective. It's a great question, but it's all about broader societal change, right? It's all about culture, and that's what Marie's point is all about, that integrating women....

I think the Canadian example and the model, to get back to the earlier question, saying Canadian women in the Canadian Forces just.... We've all been around Foreign Affairs and Defence for nigh on three decades, and there weren't many of us when we started off. For Canada it's been a no-brainer for a long time.

The Chair: Time has expired. Everybody's gone over eight minutes today.

Mr. Norlock, you have five minutes.

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

Through you to the witnesses, thank you for coming.

I guess I come from a different level of government. I'm just going to preface my question by saying that it's nice to say that we do things, but then you find out, in my end of the world, that any of the problems that went down had to do with a lack of direct communication.

This question would be primarily for DFAIT as it relates to the CF. But it could be the reverse. To be more specific, given the nature and scope of your responsibilities in the planning and execution of reconstruction efforts in nations that have undergone turmoil, whether it be a natural disaster or political upheaval, what is your relationship with officials at National Defence? How do you coordinate with your counterparts at National Defence to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of service?

It's nice to say that you do it. But how do you do it? Are there frequent meetings? It's nice to say that we sent them a memo, but somebody has to read that. You have to ensure that they have. What is the official mechanism? The “how” is what I'm asking about: how do you do that?

Perhaps I will ask Ms. Buck, Ms. Gervais-Vidricaire, and then Ms. Sinclair, back and forth.

Ms. Kerry Buck: I'll start. In my introduction, I said that we live in each other's business lines, and it's true. There's no one mechanism. There are hundreds and hundreds of them, depending on the issue and depending on how we need to work together at headquarters, in theatre, and at a post. I can give you a couple of examples.

First, for day-to-day interactions, from the deputy ministers on down to the working officers, for every international security issue we're on each other's speed dial. I couldn't count the number of interactions a day between policy officers at this level—me and Jill, Marie and Jill. It's pretty good, and it has changed.

● (1150)

Mr. Rick Norlock: If you don't mind, would I be correct in saying that there's no general way you do it? In other words, there's no official structure. It just depends on the issue.

Ms. Kerry Buck: Well, there are official structures. I was getting into that. I was just trying to explain the culture.

For fragile states, there is a DM committee on fragile states in conflict that meets regularly. It is joint CIDA, us, and DND. Then we have governance boards for Canadian policing arrangements, for instance, or for START, writ large, etc. DND will be part of those discussions.

When we go to a specific military operation, we have structured working groups for specific interventions. On Afghanistan we had an integrated task force.

It will show up in different ways. On the Haiti quake response, for instance, we had at the beginning, three times daily, task force meetings between DND, us, CIDA, and a host of other people across government.

There are different, very structured ones.

I won't get into all of it, but around NATO, NORAD, etc., there are some structured committees that allow us to come up with integrated projects. They are structured within Canada and with partners. Then we have a whole web of political-military and military-military structured dialogues with other countries, our key partners. We do that together. We'll shift lead. We'll shift chair. We'll share chairing, depending on which one it is.

We let 1,000 flowers blossom.

Mr. Rick Norlock: There are official protocols. I hate to mention anything that's current, because of course in my world that gives somebody else an opportunity to open up something that was not intended. Let's say that in some foreign country this morning something occurs that may engage Canada in some kind of direct response because of international agreements, etc. When you get to your office, does somebody tell you to call somebody? Or is there a protocol that says that when these things occur you should contact so-and-so and so-and-so to make sure that, if required, there is an integrated response?

Ms. Kerry Buck: We're going to give an integrated response.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Yes, we are, in fact.

It's a really great question, and I think we've all been around long enough to say there's been a tremendous evolution in this relationship. What your question gets to is that there actually is a culture of integrated cooperation, and then there are the formal mechanisms through which we play that out.

There really is a culture, and I'm not just saying this for the committee's sake. If we look at the headlines in the morning and say, “Good gracious! Tuvalu, or wherever, is going up in flames”, the first thing we do is say, “Okay, where is Foreign Affairs on this? What are we seeing from our embassies abroad?”

Our embassies abroad, under the head of mission, act as a whole-of-government integrated team. I talked about our defence attachés. They report to the head of mission. They're part of this integrated approach to how Canada is looking at this. As we consider what the response mechanisms are, it's immediately to Foreign Affairs. What's the government's approach to this? What do we think makes sense? What are our allies doing? What assets does DND perhaps have out in that part of the world that we could call on?

The integration and culture of cooperation goes from the fact that we're on each other's e-mails, so we're in continual contact. We all copy each other. The lines between the departments for that strategic level of analysis and cooperation are totally erased, I can say.

The Chair: We're moving on to Mr. Kellway.

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

Mr. Rick Norlock: I have a point of order. There was a finishing of the thought, and I believe that Madame Gervais-Vidricaire had something to say to that.

The Chair: Unfortunately, time has expired. I'm going to have to move on to be fair to all the committee members.

Mr. Kellway, you have the floor.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and through you to our speakers, thank you very much for coming today.

Ms. Sinclair did a good job of establishing, I think, the Canada First defence strategy as the basis for military readiness. But I have to admit I still find it an unsatisfactory basis for determining readiness, or an assessment of readiness, or even any operations.

In fact, you confirmed that for me today with the response: it means we have to be ready for uncertainty, and hence ready for everything.

It seems to me just too difficult to operationalize.

Ms. Buck, you spoke in your opening remarks about tracking analysis programming. But I'm wondering what forms the policy basis for all of that activity? Do you share with National Defence the Canada First defence strategy as the policy basis for what you engage in? That's part one of my question.

Perhaps you could leave room in your response for peacekeeping. We've had witnesses before this committee, and experts—I think we all agree—away from the table have lamented our lack of involvement with peacekeeping. You spoke about our involvement in peacekeeping here. They've even suggested that we can't even fill a school bus these days with peacekeepers. Our ability to engage in peacekeeping has virtually entirely atrophied in this country. We don't have people who are trained to do peacekeeping anymore. And we don't even have the right equipment to engage in peacekeeping.

I'm wondering, too, if you could give us your thoughts on our state of readiness for peacekeeping and our ability to deploy peacekeeping as a response to some of these fragile state issues.

Thank you.

● (1155)

Ms. Kerry Buck: I'll lead off. You asked if the Canada First defence strategy is something that DFAIT shared as part of our framework for readiness. Yes, it was developed in close consultation, etc., with us and others in the system. So yes.

I think Jill is better situated to answer your questions about the Canada First defence strategy as a framework.

On peacekeeping, Jill, maybe you can lead off if there's anything else we want to add.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: It is the Canada First defence strategy, and it assumes that it is embedded in a broader kind of Government of Canada approach. That is, CFDS doesn't say that we're going to go out and do everything all the time. It says that we have to be ready to look at this full spectrum of operations. Where we go, why we go, when, and what level of intensity is defined by the Government of Canada saying that this is a priority for us, and obviously it's a foreign policy priority in which we'd like you to engage. CFDS is not an overarching "Government of Canada, where will we be, everywhere, all the time". It tells the defence department and the Canadian Forces what they have to get themselves ready for. Obviously, CFDS also has a capability part of it, which is about modernizing the forces to be able to do that.

I don't know if that's a convoluted response or not, but this is all about us and the CF being ready to respond to the Government of Canada's desire for us to deploy somewhere, and that's whether it's at home or abroad, and that's informed heavily by Foreign Affairs.

On peacekeeping, again, I would like to have one of my military colleagues at the table to kind of bring real veracity to this. But I think I'm not incorrect in saying that if a soldier or an airman or a sailor is trained for full-spectrum operations, which is everything from war fighting to engaging in complex and delicate failed and fragile state-building exercises, that is the same set of skills and techniques that one needs to be able to do peacekeeping.

Kerry can talk to the missions, but that is why the folks we do have deployed into UN operations around the world go through the same training system. They have a full spectrum of ability to be able to go into any sort of setting, and that relates to some of the questions about cultural sensitivity training and all sorts of other things.

I don't know, Kerry, if you want to talk to UN things a bit.

Ms. Kerry Buck: We're currently participating in 8 of 16 active UN-led missions. I won't use the word "peacekeeping" necessarily. Peacekeeping and peace support operations are different versions of UN operations, with different focuses, from robust military action to more comprehensive UN operations. So we call them UN peace support operations, which is our moniker.

As of January 2012 we had 198 uniformed personnel, 38 military and 160 police, deployed to UN operations, along with a number of civilian corrections experts as well, and some other civilians. So we do participate in them.

Part of our push—and we're the chair of the General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations—to be frank, is to engage more partners from the global south to participate alongside us. That's an important political signal to those countries in which the UN engages. It ensures more regional buy-in to the concept of peace support operations and it makes it more of a global political message to those states where the UN intervenes, that this is a global thing and not just a western thing. So we've really been working hard to expand not just the troop-contributing countries but other countries that will be in command.

● (1200)

The Chair: Thank you.

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

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

Thank you very much to the witnesses who are appearing in front of our committee.

I take this opportunity, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, to remember today, on this International Women's Day, the supreme sacrifice made by Captain Nichola Kathleen Sarah Goddard. She was killed on May 17, 2006, the first female Canadian soldier killed in combat operations. I think it is very appropriate to mention and to remember her. I was in Afghanistan in 2007 and it is still in my memory, her supreme sacrifice for our country.

I have a question for you. We are seeing more and more missions becoming multinational efforts, with Canada and our allies coordinating in a variety of areas. I am not looking only at the strategic level where you are able to coordinate these things, but I am looking at the tactical level.

I remember that in Kandahar you had officials both from DFAIT and from CIDA. Can you elaborate on lessons learned from Afghanistan in this very dynamic succession of operations, and how you think this cooperation will, in future, be elaborated on more and more? What do you think about that?

Ms. Kerry Buck: As to lessons we learned in Afghanistan, there are a lot of them. But in terms of how we work together, I said in my introductory remarks that in terms of our policy priorities, which map out into our programming priorities, that was whole of government. It was developed to whole of government, so the highest strategic level was fully integrated metrics for how we would measure our success.

When you got down to the deployments, it's really in the field and the theatre of operations where the rubber hit the road. Somebody talked earlier about cultural awareness training. We would have joint training of our civilian and military deployments before they go out and deploy. We would have joint training on cultural awareness by both military in the field and civilians. So it's joined up in terms of the trainers and the trainees.

Then, in terms of planning on the ground, if you're going into an area to clear and hold an area, obviously the Canadian Forces do more of the clearing, but the holding has to be done through a combination of forces—security perimeters, security support, and development programming and security programming, which we would do with the RCMP and others. That's how you hold an area and make sure insurgents don't come back in. To do that, we had to have fully joined-up planning in theatre and then fully joined-up deployments. We had people out in all the four operating bases at the PRT, etc.

Those are lessons we've really taken to heart. I won't talk now, but we've done it in different...like in the Haiti quake; we had the same kind of approach.

● (1205)

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I'd just add a word to that, because Kerry touched on what I think is the key issue, and that is the pre-deployment training. I think if there's anything that we really learned about how to prepare whole of integrated government teams, it was the training that we put people through, and it was really tough training. We brought civilians into the military training environment. We mocked up Afghan villages. We put together *loya jirgas*. We did a lot of role playing, all as integrated teams, so that folks, first of all, were exposed to everything: the military to the different way that civilians think and the issues they bring to the table, and vice versa. But also then, to be able to take that sense of community into the field....

As you know, when you're at the tactical level, all this stuff works because you're on the ground together and you make it work. That's the beauty of it. I think one of the lessons learned out of Afghanistan about our other operations is that we need to reverse engineer that to make sure we get that same degree of intense integration back here. I think we are making some progress there.

I would just note also that we have diplomatic advisors with our military personnel. We have military advisors with our diplomatic personnel. I know when Haiti broke, one of the first things we did was to send a senior military officer down to work alongside the ambassador. We embedded somebody from Foreign Affairs into the defence department, and also from CIDA too, because we needed to know what we were going to put on the pallets so that we were getting the right stuff to folks. That level of integration back in headquarters is one of the things that we will need to make sure we exercise and preserve when we're not in the intensity of operations that we were through in the last number of years.

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brahmi now has the floor.

You have five minutes.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to begin by congratulating you on selecting today's witnesses. This panel is especially appropriate in light of International Women's Day.

On that note, yesterday, I was invited to speak at a meeting organized by the Centre de femmes du Haut-Richelieu, the Upper Richelieu women's centre, from my riding. In my speech, I pointed out the following paradox. On the one hand, status of women in Canada and in western countries in general has improved. On the other hand, status of women in some other countries has deteriorated. I used Afghanistan as an example.

This morning, I came across a very interesting article in *The Globe and Mail*, titled “Gender apartheid cannot be justified in the name of religion”. The article talks about the code of conduct enacted by Afghanistan's Ulema Council. The council is made up of 150 Afghan clerics. The article contains what I see as a rather relevant quote from Oxfam's executive director, Robert Fox, who talked about the code of conduct that plays a role in future male-female relationships in Afghanistan.

Mr. Fox said the following:

[*English*]

> While the code is now legally binding, it comes at a critical time for Afghan women. Many are already concerned about the future, especially if peace talks with the Taliban move ahead.

[*Translation*]

I would like to hear what our experts think about the risk of the status and living conditions of Afghan women deteriorating if the talks with Taliban authorities do not advance.

[*English*]

Ms. Kerry Buck: The position of women in Afghanistan has always been a challenge, particularly so under the Taliban, of course. It's a society and culture that has a long, long history of women occupying a smaller space and a closed, private space. In the eighties, or more the seventies, there was a brief period when more Afghan women were in universities. They've got the capacity, they've got the willingness, and they've got the desire, but it's really an uphill battle in Afghanistan, trying to help Afghan women have a space where they don't get assassinated for taking public office.

We've made tremendous strides—we, the international community—working with some elements of Afghan women and the Afghan government to get more girls in school and to get more Afghan women MPs. No one ever thought this was going to be easy. It's particularly difficult in a place like Afghanistan.

I don't know what else to say. We've been targeting a lot of our programming to try to make sure, as I said, that we help Afghan women find that space. So there's training of Afghan women police, and training of other police in awareness of women's human rights as well. But this is a very difficult context that the international community went into at the beginning, post-Taliban, in a country like Afghanistan.

We agree, it's hard, and it's going to keep on being hard. It's always been hard, but we've had some successes with the Afghan women.

● (1210)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire: I just want to add that, in terms of programming, we are very aware of that challenge. For instance, we support a project with Rights and Democracy that has to do with women's rights and access to justice. That is one of our many contributions.

I'm very worried that this problem may persist for many years. We will have to keep working on that, as it's a huge concern.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Ms. Sinclair, do you have anything to add?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I have very little to add to that.

[*English*]

I think the international presence at the moment is very important in continuing to bring this debate to Afghanistan, but at the end of the day the society has to embrace it themselves. So I think that continuing international presence, our trainers...there are still 40-odd countries that are there that are trying to inculcate so that it is irreversible. But as Kerry said, this is a country that's been through an awful lot, so this massive cultural shift...we have to make sure it's sustained and enduring, but that really is up to the Afghans at the end of the day.

As both my colleagues have said, a lot of Afghan women have put their lives on the line for this one, so I don't think they're going to give up easily, but it's going to be a very tough fight. As you said, there are some other forces there that would put things back very quickly if they could, but can't quite yet.

The Chair: Thank you.

Moving on, Mr. Opitz.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): First of all, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for being here today. You're three of the best panellists I have ever heard. You are very articulate, and you're certainly knowledgeable about your topics.

I know you've mentioned on a few occasions and just now that you wished you had your military colleagues here, but I think you're pretty well aware of what's going on in the military. And it sounds like you're uniformed people yourselves. I know you work very closely with the military, but that's obviously evident in the amount of work you've done on the whole-of-government approach.

I used to work at Canadian Forces College. I'm not sure if any of you were on that course.

Were you on the NSP?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Yes.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Okay, well, there you go. It is, of course, our comrades from around the world, Canadian Forces officers, and of course EX-level civil servants, which I think is just a tremendous way to educate, to coordinate. The benefits of everything you've learned throughout your career, through that course and now, are actually quite evident in the effectiveness of it because you're able to basically interchange your own job with people in uniform, people in the military, and Foreign Affairs. And I was going to ask you about that entire whole-of-government approach, but you very effectively explained it earlier on, so I thank you for that.

One of the things that you did explain very clearly as well is in peacekeeping terms. I would disagree that it's atrophying, and you explained the training, the whole-of-government approach, because we do have to be ready for everything in peacekeeping. I would add that combat capability is also a credibility factor in any peacekeeper. We're not peacekeepers, per se. Peacekeeping is a tool in a toolbox that we employ, depending on where we have to go in the world. That's basically how it's applied. But if you are a credible force, then the people you are trying to keep apart tend to see you as somebody credible enough that they're not going to mess with you and they're going to abide by the rules of engagement and so forth.

I wanted to just turn to Ms. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire for a minute.

You were cut off a couple of times with a couple of speakers. I want to give you an opportunity if there is anything you want to say right now to add to the discussion.

● (1215)

Mrs. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire: That's very kind of you. Thank you.

I wanted to maybe make a quick reference to what we do in terms of responding to natural disasters. When something happens—an earthquake, a flood, whatever—we have what we call standard operating procedures that were adopted a few years ago and are now very well appreciated by the various departments.

The way it works is this. We monitor the situation at DFAIT. If something happens, there's definitely a message sent to all the departments. If the disaster is big enough, we call immediately for a task force meeting, and National Defence would be part of it. Then if it's really a big catastrophe, let's say, like what we saw in Haiti, there's an interdepartmental team that is sent to evaluate the needs, whether the DART should be deployed, or what is needed in terms of humanitarian assistance, and so forth. That is dispatched very quickly. Then the rest of the response is also discussed by the various departments of the whole.

I think that's a concrete example of how we work together. I had the opportunity, for example, to go to Sri Lanka and Indonesia after the tsunami. I led the reconnaissance team there and I saw firsthand how well it works. Everybody knew what they had to do, what their role was. I think this is a great achievement that we've seen. It was adopted in 2003, I think. That has made a big difference in the way we do business. In terms of readiness to respond, I think it's a great achievement.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Do I still have time?

The Chair: It's not a lot of time.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Okay, then it will be quick.

Both Ms. Buck and Ms. Sinclair, in turn, if you were to make two or three key recommendations for how we maintain our readiness, or two or three critical things that we need to be mindful of in maintaining readiness, what would you suggest? What would you recommend?

I'll start with Ms. Sinclair.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I would like a little bit more time to consider the answer to this question. Are you asking about a whole-of-government perspective? Is that your question?

I think if we had more ability to interchange our personnel... because there's no substitute for being in each other's shoes. That's always a challenge, because people need their personnel to do their line jobs, but I think getting more folks.... We have had exchanges between Foreign Affairs and National Defence over the years, but I think more of this would be good.

So would continued improvement to the IT systems be good. They do talk to each other, but they need to talk with more fluidity to each other; that's the way the world works at the moment. I know from having worked at Foreign Affairs that there's an extraordinarily comprehensive system there.

IT is expensive. DND is able to tap into that. I'm not sure how much it's shared across the whole of government, because it's cumbersome and you need to make it secure—all those sorts of things.

Those are two quick thoughts. But as I say, I think your question deserves a more considered response.

Mr. Ted Opitz: You can always add to that after the committee meeting. It was fine.

The Chair: That time has expired, unfortunately. We're well over time now. I know it's no fun, but I have to make sure I'm fair to all members.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Mrs. Groguhé.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): I want to thank all three of you on your comments. They are very appreciated and very interesting.

My question is about the most vulnerable individuals, women and children.

Regarding women, we know that rape is increasingly being used as a weapon of war in many countries in conflict. I would like to know what kinds of solutions are being considered, not only to fight that phenomenon, but also to take care of women. Women who are raped are then also rejected by their family and social environment.

As far as children go, I want to know whether you have noted a decrease in the number of child soldiers and, if so, how you are getting involved in terms of that.

Thank you.

● (1220)

Ms. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire: Those are important and broad issues. We are certainly very concerned about that situation, especially in countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the number of rapes continues to be extremely worrisome. We have already talked about what kind of training is being provided to the deployed officers. In this case, we are talking about deployments as part of the UN mission, MONUSCO. Of course, the deployed officers have been made aware of that issue. They try to deal with it and reduce the problems. We also do programming.

One example is a project we are carrying out in cooperation with World Vision. The project's objective is to protect children and prevent sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have invested $650,000 in that project. A number of our projects are aimed at addressing that issue.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: But how is the protection of those women ensured? Is it possible to actually ensure the protection of those women who, in some regions, are more exposed to sexual violence? How do you establish connections with the governments in power and the institutions in order to contain that phenomenon as much as possible?

Ms. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire: Those are matters we have addressed bilaterally with the government. In the case of the DRC, for instance, the government established a zero tolerance policy. I think that international pressures have contributed to that decision. That policy now has to be implemented. It has so far still not been completely implemented, obviously.

That is also the role of peacekeeping missions. MONUSCO is one example. MINUSTAH, in Haiti, also aims to ensure safety. Abuse is taking place in various countries. Trying to create an environment that prevents abuse is part of the training all participants in peacekeeping missions undergo. Of course, that is not easy and remains a problem in many countries.

[*English*]

Ms. Kerry Buck: When we work with international partners on building civilian capacity of states in conflict and security sector reform, we're very conscious of the need not just to ensure that there is an understanding by judges and police of how to prosecute and how to investigate crimes against women—they are specific to women—but we're also pushing hard to make sure there's a victim's perspective brought into it, including after prosecutions.

Then it segues over into a lot of our development assistance to figure out how we improve the place of women in society and economic opportunities for women.

So it's part of a continuum. When we work on security sector reform, we're also working side by side with CIDA to try to make sure there's a segue into other programs that would help women. We're doing that across the board, not just on sexual violence but on trafficking in women, etc.

I think Jill is prepared to speak to child soldiers, if that's all right.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I am, a little bit, and thank you for the question.

I don't have statistics on the reduction or not of the number of child soldiers, but what I can tell you is that since the negotiation of the convention on child soldiers, we have at least succeeded in establishing a new norm, so I think the debate and the awareness of the issue—and obviously we have some extraordinary Canadians who have made people aware of this issue, with General Dallaire.... I know that Canadian Forces personnel, for example, when they go out into operations, are given training around the convention on child soldiers, for knowing how to recognize and how to treat children differently.

The raw numbers I don't know, but my very strong sense is that as the convention was negotiated—it must be 18 years ago, or something....

Is it longer than that?

Anyway, since the convention came into force, we have the norm established, and as you know, that's an extremely important first step, at least.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much. Your time is up.

[*English*]

Ms. Gallant, it's your turn.

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

Overnight we've seemingly had a generation awaken to what is going on outside their Facebook pages. As MPs we've had an explosion of e-mails, texts, and bombardment from the twitterverse over the Ugandan warlord Kony's actions. His Lord's Resistance Army has been systematically abducting children to wage its campaign of terror, and that has this "me generation" demanding that Canada take action.

Would our military be ready for an intervention in a situation such as this, and how would it be in our national interest to intervene?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: If I could, Chair, I'd like Foreign Affairs to start, because your question shows very clearly that it isn't at DND or the CF that we decide to take that action; this is a foreign policy decision.

Kerry, why don't you lead?

Ms. Kerry Buck: This has been an issue for a long time, not just in northern Uganda but over into southern Sudan, and well before we had the referendum and the splitting of Sudan and the creation of a new country.

It's been a serious problem that the international community has tried to address for a long time. Some progress has been made, and we've tried to address it through a number of means.

There have been, throughout the years, some serious mediation efforts, quiet ones, trying to get the warlords—because it's not just Kony, it's a kind of web of warlords—to step down and step back. There have also been programming efforts to strengthen some of the communities from which kids were taken, in terms of their own security but also their own awareness. As I've said, it's a lot of cross-border stuff that was also happening.

Then there have been efforts, working with international partners, to try to retrieve the kids and help the kids reintegrate in a healthy fashion into the community. We are talking about interventions that have happened across a whole range of states that are helping out, but also states in the region.

Uganda's not.... There are some positive forces within the government in Uganda with which we had previously tried to work—the Human Rights Commission, etc.—to try to address the problem. There has been some progress; it's not completely intractable. It goes across, as I said, the development assistance programming by us and partners, and the security programming that we do, and then those diplomatic sorts of engagements, which sometimes we'll fund and sometimes we'll do ourselves, depending on the context.

Mrs. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire: I will just add that Canada also chairs a group of friends in New York working on this issue of children in armed conflict, and we've been with others pressing for more accountability for persistent violators. That group is in touch as well with the sanctions committee to see what more can be done to address the problem.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Ms. Sinclair, were you going to—

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I think this points out how there are a number of ways in which you intervene to affect a situation. In this case it's diplomatic, it's social, it's through development assistance. There are a number of countries that are working on it as well as NGOs on the ground. So we would wait to hear whether there is a need for anything—in this case capacity-building or whatever—on the ground that the Canadian Forces particularly could bring to this. It's all about an integrated approach to conflict management, and the committee is of course focused on readiness.

We need to be ready across our instruments of engagement. That's from diplomatic right out to having fighter planes to deploy.

● (1230)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: With respect to the female children you referred to as having been soldiers, are there any exchange programs or have any of those young women who have been rejected by their families been sent to Canada?

Ms. Kerry Buck: I don't have the full details on our programming on this specific issue. I think it would be useful, Mr. Chair, if you agree, if we could return to you with a little more clarity, which we can get from CIDA and from some of our programming, about how this has been addressed by Canada and other partners.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Canada is already in various countries across Africa. How is our presence there helping us to be ready for the uncertainty in the world that was mentioned earlier?

Ms. Kerry Buck: Across Africa we've participated in a number of UN peace support operations.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Actually that brings up a question for defence, if we have defence personnel situated. I'm looking at military readiness.

The Chair: Ms. Sinclair, could you give just a brief response?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Very quickly, we have our defence attachés. And we prepare for readiness by understanding what the dynamics are, who the players are, and what might be useful or not if we were needed to do something or directed to do so.

The Chair: Mr. Alexander, you have the last of the second round.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Thanks very much, Chair.

I'm going to ask my former colleagues a number of questions about very big issues. I'd be grateful if you'd give a very short answer because I'd simply like them to be on the record of our meeting with you today.

The first is a factual question. You mentioned missions in which we have personnel. Are there Canadians in the new UN mission in Libya?

Mrs. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire: The answer is no.

Ms. Kerry Buck: There are not to our knowledge, but there are Canadians in Libya doing a lot of programming in coordination with the UN and guided by the UN.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Understood. That's important for us to know.

Second, on training, you mentioned the extent of our training relationships. Some of them are very small-scale, with, I think you mentioned, 60-plus countries. Obviously training military and police in fragile states is an important element of conflict prevention and in some cases conflict resolution. Do you think we're doing enough of it? Give us your personal views...professional views.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: There is always room for more training, of course. Within our capabilities to deliver training we're doing a fabulous job, and we do it as a whole-of-government team.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Great.

Regarding sanctions, we are depending for diplomatic pressure on the sanctions regime, perhaps more now than ever in Syria, Iran, and many other places. There are long-standing sanctions regimes for the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and the sanctions committee in New York is, I think, busier than ever. Do you think enough has been done to bring the sanctions tool into the modern era to reflect fully what's happening in a globalized economy and so forth? Or should that be an area of focus for us in the future? That's with a view to our conversation about readiness, because military readiness, and all of the military deployments we've had, have gone with a sanctions regime recently.

Ms. Kerry Buck: There are different sources for sanctions. I believe—firmly believe—that if you add the panoply of UN sanctions that can be implemented pursuant to chapter VII, plus sanctions done in coordination with like-minded states, then you can address some of the security concerns you have by using these sanctions.

Can you address them completely? It depends on the situation, to be frank. Sanctions have to be targeted at the source of the instability. For instance, regarding Iran's sanctions, Canada has been an absolute leader in this regard. We fully implemented the UN sanctions based on six Security Council resolutions. We brought them in. But in addition, we've done a number of other things to make sure that none of the component parts of Iran's nuclear program come from Canada.

So you add a whole host of measures brought in under the Special Economic Measures Act to those sanctions that are mandated by the Security Council to give you a big menu. But at the same time, we're working with partners to broaden the support for those sanctions and to deepen them, so pressuring on an oil embargo and moving to make sure that sanctions are outside of the small group of western states in order to make them broader. So a sanctions regime, yes—

● (1235)

Mr. Chris Alexander: So we have been innovating in that area.

One quick last question.

There was a report yesterday from the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London noting that this year for the first time military spending in Asia will outstrip military spending by European countries. We've talked in this committee about Obama's pivot to Asia, and some witnesses have suggested that there's an arms race in Asia under way. Are we ready for that?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Yes, some academics have said that there's an arms race in Asia. Is there arms spending? Absolutely. Is it part of a modernization point? Yes, absolutely. Is it driven by certain players in the region who are modernizing and who always said they were going to do this modernization? Yes, China. But are we ready for an arms race? Let's look at the other side of the ledger, Chris.

There's the ASEAN Regional Forum, the work that's going on among the countries, which is actually quite unprecedented for a region that never sat around multilateral tables. There's also the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting. So there's a lot more dialogue and engagement. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't be concerned about increased military spending, but militaries are all about having a capability. It's the intent of the governments to use that capability that really worries you, and that's where the analysis has to be.

Ms. Kerry Buck: If I may add, I know there's a lot of talk about a strategic pivot to Asia. We've always been a Pacific nation as well as an Atlantic nation. There's no one NATO for Asia, but we do have a number of things—not just the ASEAN Regional Forum—but a whole array of political-military and military-military dialogues with key Asian partners: Japan, South Korea, India, etc.

The Chair: Thank you. Time has expired.

Before we go to the third round, I have a couple of questions I want to interject with.

The whole time that we've been dealing with readiness, we've been talking about lessons learned, about the whole-of-government approach that we always deploy in an international coalition. The one thing that I believe Canada has done extremely well is deal with the issue of cultural sensitivities. Unfortunately, we have just experienced in Afghanistan some asinine decisions that were made in destroying holy books, and there's been significant fallout.

How has that situation evolved over the last couple of weeks? I'd like to know that. And I'd like to know what we're doing as a country to reach out to our international partners to ensure that they undertake correct cultural training so that these types of circumstances don't arise.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In terms of reaching out to the international partners, I think I said, in response to an earlier question, that Canada's mission in Afghanistan, the way in which we have engaged with local communities and the way in which we prepared our folks before they went out, is the gold standard. I can tell you that around the NATO and ISAF table, countries come to us for our lessons learned, for our practitioning practices, and for how we prepare people. We have a lot of delegations that come through and learn from us, because we have managed to do this, and it's through good training and good preparation. These are volatile situations, and people have to be aware of all of the many sensitivities that exist within these societies.

The Chair: We're in this situation today because of decisions that were taken by our coalition partners. It has undermined our ability on the ground in the whole areas of training and stabilization. It's not only affecting our soldiers who are doing that training, but also our diplomats and departmental officials who are part of that reconstruction team. When we're talking about whole of government and working with our international partners, what types of discussions are we having with our coalition partners, with the ISAF?

● (1240)

Ms. Kerry Buck: Within ISAF in Brussels—a bit at NATO headquarters, but more importantly in the field—there has been intense discussion through the chain of command, but with the civilian side as well, about the appropriate response to the Koran burning incident. They are assessing if there were any gaps in decision-making and the cause of that particular incident, but they're also looking at damage mitigation with the Afghan population—a communications strategy to the Afghan population to clearly explain that this was a serious mistake and no disrespect to Islam was meant.

At the same time we are talking to some Muslim states through diplomatic channels to reiterate sincere regret that something like this would happen, but also to make it clear that this was not a message from ISAF. It was not a message from ISAF allies or partners in any way. Mistakes happen, and this was a mistake. I think NATO has been very clear in how it's communicating that mistake. We've talked to folks like the new government in Libya, etc., to say, “How can we help you, and how can you help us manage any fallout from this incident?”

The Chair: As we move forward talking about readiness when we're working with our coalition partners, what are we articulating here?

Ms. Kerry Buck: It's part of an overall approach that we have been taking, but there are always mistakes—and we'll continue to take cultural sensitivity training—when you deploy missions to a region and there are cultural gaps from the people deployed to the country into which you're deploying.

I said earlier that we're trying to make sure that the global south... the pool of troop-contributing counties is larger. This isn't just about burden sharing; it's about political messaging and suitability of troops when they deploy. One of the reasons Canada has been omnipresent in Haiti—and there are many Haiti deployments to MINUSTAH and its security sector reform, etc.—is because of our bilingual nature. We have a civil code background and we can be more interoperable with the Haitian forces, for instance, the Haitian police, than perhaps other nations.

Cultural awareness training is integrated into all of the training we do for troops we deploy. We do it and continue to do more. It's a matter of choosing the right troops to deploy so that you minimize the cultural gap. That is a push that we have all been putting on over the last decade, and will continue to do so.

Mistakes happen. This is a very unfortunate one, but we're working to mitigate damage with our NATO partners.

The Chair: I have a quick follow-up.

Have operations today in Kabul returned back to normal levels by our troops and training?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Yes.

The Chair: They don't feel there is a threat there any longer.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: We think there's—

The Chair: There's always a threat, I understand that, but the elevated circumstances we're under....

Ms. Jill Sinclair: It's back to the normal operating situation.

The Chair: My final question is to DFAIT.

Talking about the Canada First defence strategy, one of the key components is our Arctic sovereignty. What role is DFAIT playing in supporting the Canada First defence strategy in relation to our role in the Arctic?

Ms. Kerry Buck: I'll start on that, but Jill will likely have more details to add. She was doing this, and at the time I was not directly on the file.

I'll give you an example. The Arctic search and rescue agreement is a good example of the close cooperation between our two departments on Arctic matters. It was negotiated under the auspices of the Arctic Council that we sit on in DFAIT. The Canadian delegation was led by the Department of Defence under the leadership of Lieutenant-General Lawson, with support from us and the Canadian Coast Guard. This is a microcosm of how we hold government coordination on the Arctic.

I think I'll leave it at that.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I would just add quickly—and Kerry and Marie can jump in—that the northern foreign policy, the government's overall approach to the Arctic, provides the broad framework within which CFDS and the Canadian Forces play out our part on Arctic sovereignty. There's a very close linkage here: the work that Foreign Affairs does on the Arctic Council, for example. We stay in very, very close contact to make sure our Arctic sovereignty mandate and mission is reinforced by what's going on from Foreign Affairs. It's a very close partnership between the two departments.

Also, Foreign Affairs—and here you guys can jump in—has a hub in Oslo that is actually focused on Arctic issues. The situational awareness we get from the work that Foreign Affairs officers do from that hub in Oslo helps inform what we are doing with regard to fulfilling our mandate on Arctic sovereignty.

Obviously we do our own work, too, from a strictly military perspective, but it's a very close relationship there.

● (1245)

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Moore, third round.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: I would like to discuss slightly different issues in order to take advantage of Ms. Vidricaire and Ms. Sinclair being here.

In terms of the Canadian Forces' history, you could say that the Disaster Assistance Response Team is a relatively new unit. We had the opportunity to talk to the commanding officer. He explained to us that the members of that unit were not all at the same location and that the team made sure they were available for deployment. Do you feel that is the best solution, in terms of readiness, or should the members be at the same location instead?

In addition, I quickly read that, on one occasion, a team was ready to respond to a requirement, but since no aircraft was available to transport the machine for water transformation, the operation had to be postponed a bit. Do you think that unit should have aircraft and a crew available on site so that its needs are met and it can respond more quickly in the case of a natural disaster? What's your assessment of that unit?

Ms. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire: Based on my own experience in the deployment of the Disaster Assistance Response Team, or DART, I would say that the response was very satisfactory. The team was ready to assess the needs very quickly. A survey party was very quickly sent to talk about how DART should be deployed, but it took some time for DART itself to set up on site with all its equipment.

In the case of Sri Lanka, for instance, the first step consisted in arriving on site and talking to the local authorities to ensure that they agreed with the deployment. We cannot go ahead with a deployment without that agreement. We had to figure out where assistance was most needed. So some diplomacy, of sorts, and survey work were needed. I was amazed at how quickly that could be done. In a day and a half, we succeeded in obtaining a recommendation for the prime minister, specifying where we could deploy. Afterwards, it took about two weeks to deliver all that was necessary.

There is always room for improvement, but I think the way we are currently organized is well-suited to the new needs.

[*English*]

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Thanks. I'll just add to what Marie said. I share her assessment of the effectiveness of the DART.

Your question was whether it is better to have a unit there all the time ready to go or to do it the way we're doing it. I think successive operations have shown that by doing it the way we're doing it we can respond quickly. The fact is, we need to have everybody available for certain contingencies all the time. The key is to make sure we have folks on maximum readiness who can be brought to a crisis very quickly if they're needed, and we have been able to do that successfully.

As Marie also said, an important part of the DART process is this assessment team that goes out. Often what we find from the assessment teams, which are usually led by Foreign Affairs, is that it will be, "You know what? There are actually quicker commercial means available. There's actually food available in the country. We don't need you to fly stuff from Canada or from somewhere else." That assessment part of it, before you actually deploy the pointed end of the DART, has been proven to be a very good methodology of responding quickly, effectively, and appropriately to crises.

With regard to equipment—and again, here I will defer to my military colleagues—I would simply say that since we've had the C-17s there's no question that our ability to get strategic airlift, to move stuff out quickly, to be places on the other side of the world, has vastly, vastly improved. That is a really important new instrument in our ability to respond quickly and effectively.

● (1250)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Do you feel that a C-117 and a crew should be reserved for DART in order to respond to those needs quickly?

[*English*]

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I think the way we have been dispersed but brought together quickly, as you saw when you visited the folks in Kingston during your visit, has proven itself to be extremely effective.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you. Your time is up.

[*English*]

Mr. Alexander, you have the last question of the day.

Mr. Chris Alexander: Thank you very much.

I'll ask one, and we might have a very short one from Mr. Chisu.

I thought we shouldn't let the session end without making some reference to the conflict and the deep crisis in Syria. Obviously, the decision for Canada to be involved beyond the way we're involved today, through sanctions, would be a political decision.

I'd like to ask about our readiness militarily and in a whole-of-government context to cope with potential demands to tighten sanctions or be involved on the ground in a robust humanitarian mode or in other modes, because certainly there are a lot of proposals out there that could see the international community become more heavily involved. For all of us who've played a part in developing or seeking the observance of the responsibility to protect, the death toll is something that none of us can ignore. All of us in Parliament are increasingly concerned.

There's also a report today of a potential high-level defection in the Syrian government. As sanctions ratchet up, the situation could take new turns.

What kind of contingency planning happens as a matter of course to make sure that options and capabilities are ready to inform political decisions down the road?

Ms. Kerry Buck: I think your question on readiness should be taken in a broad manner, because readiness to respond to Syria has to include a range of things.

Are we ready on sanctions? Yes. We imposed a fifth round of sanctions on the Assad regime on January 25. Are we ready on humanitarian assistance? Yes. We've announced that we'll be giving further humanitarian assistance, and we're working with partners to pressure the Assad regime to make sure there's humanitarian space to deliver that assistance.

Are we ready on diplomacy? Yes, to the extent that we can be. I have two comments here. I think the role and the leadership shown by the Arab League is very important—this is almost a historic evolution—and it's very important to have partners in the region leading the charge against Assad.

Second point: the Friends of Syria meeting that Minister Baird attended in Tunis two weeks ago is a very important international coalition to increase the pressure on Assad, but Assad appears to have taken a strategic decision that he's crossed that line. He's hanging on until there's extreme violence to move him out. I think that's the context we're in now. So the diplomacy that we're deploying is in an effort to pressure a man who's already cornered. And we have serious issues with Russia not allowing even the UN Security Council to make a sufficient condemnation of the situation. That's the context within which we're working.

On military readiness, I'll just make one point: Syria is not Libya. It's a place of an entirely different magnitude. I'll leave it at that. Right now we're all focusing on the diplomatic track and putting extreme pressure on Assad and on the Assad regime.

Mrs. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire: If I may add to this, of course, we are already looking at what we could do in terms of programming when the situation will allow for it, but in the meantime, for example, we're providing support to the department of political affairs of the UN to support the efforts of Kofi Annan, who's the special envoy. We've just announced to DPA that we will be giving them $250,000 to support Kofi's efforts.

● (1255)

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Just to close out on that, you asked whether we're doing contingency planning. Defence departments and militaries do constant, consistent contingency planning. We're obsessed with contingency planning, so we're always taking a look at what's going on, where our assets are deployed, what's our level of readiness. I would just remind committee members that we have the *Charlottetown* in the Mediterranean. It's always good to have a ship in difficult neighbourhoods. Should there be a decision by the government to ask us to do anything in any eventuality, we would look at it and see what options we could put forward for government.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're almost out of time, but I have just one quick follow-up question before I adjourn.

Earlier this session the committee had a chance to witness training by the Canadian Forces at Wainwright. One of the things we picked up on is that they had actors stepping in for CIDA and for DFAIT officials. Part of readiness is training, so even though we're talking about the Canadian Forces here, because we have a whole-of-government approach, what is the civil service doing from the standpoint of DFAIT, and even within the Department of National Defence, to make sure that everyone is trained to a high level of readiness to be at the same level of deployability as the Canadian Forces members?

Ms. Kerry Buck: First, on the same level of deployability, we focus on making sure the individual civilians who can be deployed are ready. When we're dealing with training exercises like the one at Wainwright, we can't always field folks for the integrated training; we have to choose, because there is an imbalance between the number of CFs who deploy and the number of civilians. That's just the way it is, and in most operations that's the way it should be. So we try to avoid being absent from the training sessions, but sometimes it happens, because of imbalances in numbers, and it is what it is.

We've taken a number of steps to make sure our folks are ready. Our folks include the other civilians we help coordinate across government.

There are five steps I'll tell you about. One-third of participants in the Canadian Forces' 10-month senior-level national security program are now government civilians, including, right now, I think four officers from my branch. We also go. I've gone a few times to deliver training courses to that program as well. So we integrate at the trainee and the training level.

Point two, START officers in Marie's bureau regularly deliver courses, as I said, to the military on civilian-military cooperation and leadership, not just in that program but in other programs.

Point three, we have recurrent joint exercises in training between the civilian agencies and the Canadian Forces on responding to natural humanitarian disasters. We have rosters. We have contact lists that we're constantly updating. So if another big quake hits, we know each other. It's not personality driven. We know the skill sets and we've trained those folks together, so they're up to the same standard.

Point four, we exercise specifically with the DART on those same things.

Point five, we're working on institutionalizing liaison between DND and DFAIT to make sure there's cultural integration.

We're also working on a more systematized approach to our civilian deployments, and this is a work in progress. We've been doing it for a long time. We want to make sure it's a little more systematized, so we have better structure on our rosters, we know who has what skills, and we know when to deploy.

Go ahead, Marie.

Mrs. Marie Gervais-Vidricaire: I would just add to this that quite a few of the START officers have done what we call hostile environment training, so that when something happens, they are ready to go.

● (1300)

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Chair, I'd simply echo your comments that training is key to readiness, and the more training we can do together, the better, and the more ready we're going to be to serve together.

As I think I mentioned earlier, one of the things we're going to have to make sure we keep our focus on when we reduce the operational tempo in Afghanistan is that we continue to do that training integration back here so that when we deploy, we go out as an effective joined-up team, because that's what we managed to get to in our deployment in Afghanistan and Haiti and elsewhere.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We've had a very interesting exchange today, and we really appreciate your presentations and the direction you're giving us as a committee.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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