



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on National Defence

NDDN • NUMBER 053 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, March 25, 2015



Chair

The Honourable Peter Kent

Standing Committee on National Defence

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC)): Colleagues, we have a very full agenda before us this afternoon.

Before we begin, I would ask that because of the half-hour witness segments we adopt five-minute question segments so that all parties can ask questions. Do I have agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Our first witness this afternoon, from the Department of National Defence, is John Forster, deputy minister.

Mr. Forster, thank you very much for joining us today.

We will have your opening comments, please.

Mr. John Forster (Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair and honourable members of the committee.

It is very much a pleasure to be here again before you, albeit in a different role as the deputy minister of National Defence. It has been a little over seven weeks since I took up my new duties, and I will confess that it has been an extremely busy introduction.

[Translation]

It is a role that I am honoured to have been asked to assume at such a very interesting and demanding time. I have devoted over 35 years of my career to public service and this is a job which will allow me to continue to contribute to the safety and well-being of Canada and Canadians.

[English]

Both my father and my grandfather served in the armed forces in the two World Wars, so it is indeed a great privilege for me to work in partnership and in support of the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I thought I'd take a few moments to tell you briefly about my background. I have worked in areas of policy, programs, and regulation in a number of areas in the federal government: environment, transportation, infrastructure, national security, and now defence. I have a bachelor's degree in science and a master's in business administration. I did start my career early on in the federal government, in the field of natural resources and forestry.

[Translation]

I was involved in implementing policies and programs to improve forestry practices in Canada that supported an important part of our economy.

I then worked in the broader field of environmental policy, including mining and energy, and later as Director General of Environmental Affairs at Transport Canada where we led efforts to reduce pollution from all modes of transportation.

[English]

After I was asked to roll out a new highway infrastructure program at Transport and oversee the agencies that manage our international bridges, it gave me a good understanding of the challenges that Canada faces in managing its border with its largest trading partner.

In 2004, I became the associate assistant deputy minister of safety and security at Transport, with a particular focus on transportation security. It was a very challenging time, a couple of years after 9/11, as I led the development of a transportation security strategy for the department. I was very much involved in managing responses to threats to our transportation system, including, quite literally, the overnight banning of liquids and gels on flights as a result of the threats to international aircraft, and our response in Canada to the subway bombings in London.

• (1535)

[Translation]

I was asked to move to Infrastructure Canada where first, as assistant and then associate deputy minister, I helped launch the first Building Canada Plan.

[English]

Then, when the recession hit in 2007, we were tasked with managing billions of dollars in infrastructure funding under the government's economic stimulus programs. That was a tremendous experience in working with provinces, municipal governments, and non-government partners to fund thousands of extremely worthwhile infrastructure projects contributing to Canada's economic recovery and helping to create jobs for Canadians.

More recently, and as this committee knows, I moved back into the field of national security, serving three years as the chief of the Communications Security Establishment, which was part of the National Defence portfolio.

[Translation]

This agency plays a vital role in gathering foreign intelligence and protecting Canada from cyber threats. I worked in close partnership with the Canadian armed forces, as well as federal law enforcement and security agencies, Foreign Affairs and our international allies.

[English]

Throughout my public service career, I've had the pleasure of working with a number of different agencies in a number of different fields, and I think this experience will help me in my role as deputy minister of National Defence, certainly in experiencing the managing of very large budgets and large programs. I think when I was at Infrastructure we actually had about the third-largest budget in the government at the time. Also of help will be my knowledge of evolving international security and defence matters, an ability to work in partnership with a variety of organizations and international allies, and certainly, based on my time at CSE, a very sincere respect and appreciation for the capabilities of the Canadian Armed Forces and the professionalism and dedication of the men and women who serve Canada.

I'm certainly impressed so far with the dedication, experience, and knowledge of the team at National Defence. It will be critical in my role to continue to work to build a strong partnership between the civilian and military members of the defence team. I will work closely with the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Lawson, with Vice Chief General Thibault, and with the leadership of the forces. I am supported by two excellent associate deputy ministers, Bill Jones, whom you've already met, and John Turner, who is here today to speak to you.

I'm both pleased and honoured to have been asked to take on the role of deputy minister of National Defence in a very interesting and very challenging time.

Mr. Chair, I'd be pleased to take any questions you might have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Forster.

We'll begin our rounds of questioning in five-minute lengths with Mr. Chisu, please.

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

Thank you very much, Mr. Forster, for your presentation, and congratulations on your appointment.

Throughout your extensive career in the public service, which we've witnessed in the various government departments you have worked for, what are the major accomplishments and successes that you have presided over?

Mr. John Forster: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

I look back very fondly on a number of interesting jobs that I've had in the public service, and certainly on my time at Transport Canada, where I led the department in doing a first kind of multimodal security strategy: after 9/11, where would we spend our time and priorities in protecting the various modes of transportation from terrorist threats? At Infrastructure, I'm extremely proud of the work we did in rolling out the stimulus program. It was a huge challenge to roll out billions of dollars and do it in a way that built

great projects and took good care of taxpayers' money. Finally, at CSE, I enjoyed my time there in helping that organization by increasing our cyber-defences across the government and moving CSE into a new building.

I think those would be things that I'm very proud of in my career.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much.

How has your experience as head of the Communications Security Establishment, which you've just mentioned, prepared you for your role as deputy minister of National Defence? Can you elaborate?

Mr. John Forster: Thank you.

First and foremost, I think, my time at CSE in collecting foreign intelligence—certainly the armed forces are a very important partner with CSE, particularly in Afghanistan and since in providing intelligence and working with the forces—gave me a very good overview and exposure to the threats that we face globally from terrorism, that Canada faces in the Middle East and other parts of the world, and of how to work with our allies and international partners. In the intelligence world, that relationship is very important.

Obviously I think there are some big differences between CSE and National Defence in terms of both size and complexity. As the chief of CSE, I was also a member of the National Defence management committee, so I spent the last three years as a member of the management committee at Defence, which gave me some understanding of and exposure to some of the issues and challenges there and allowed me to have a good knowledge of the folks in the forces and in the department.

• (1540)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: As you alluded to, in your position as associate deputy minister at Infrastructure from 2009 to 2012, you oversaw the design and delivery of many of the government infrastructure stimulus programs and the economic action plan. In your opinion, how has this experience helped prepare you for your role at National Defence, specifically in terms of improving procurement policies and processes?

Mr. John Forster: Thank you for the question.

Our time in Infrastructure was fascinating and very challenging. The role of the department was how to get money through and into infrastructure projects quickly, because time was of the essence. We were starting in the recession after 2007, and the programs were designed to get Canadians back to work.

We worked with Treasury Board and with other partners to streamline the delivery of those programs. We had effective partnerships with other governments and agencies to get the money out the door quickly, all the while making sure that we were funding good projects and getting the work done quickly in a sound manner and a good management fashion.

Clearly, I think one of my challenges as deputy will be on procurement. How do we build those partnerships with the other agencies, with Public Works, Industry Canada, and the Treasury Board? John Turner has been appointed the new associate deputy minister and will be helping me in that regard. I think my experience there I will certainly put to good use to try to get our major procurement projects through in a timely manner, as fast as we can get them done.

The Chair: That's time, Mr. Chisu. Thank you.

Mr. Harris, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you and welcome, sir, to our committee again, in a different capacity, and congratulations on your new post. I don't doubt your experience, sir, and I'm not going to quiz you on your qualifications, but I do want to know how you are going to put it to use to solve some of the major problems that I think we all are aware exist at DND.

Most recently, of course, on procurement, which you just mentioned, a report by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, the so-called Vimy Paper from the CDA Institute, lists some of the problems with procurement as being "the manner in which military requirements are generated...and an overwhelming lack of trust directed towards National Defence". It's fairly scathing, I would say, from an august body like this that knows the system pretty well. How do you hope to change that?

First of all, we had an announcement in 2013 that there was going to be a reset on the Canada First defence strategy, which is basically a procurement list. That was in October 2013. Do you think that we'll hear in the next month or two what that reset amounts to? That might go some way in restoring the faith that people might or might not have in DND under your new leadership.

Mr. John Forster: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

Coming into the job, I've also heard the same thing that was indicated in the report. I think that one of the really new features we're going to build into the procurement process within National Defence will be an independent third party review on the requirements up front. I think you've interviewed Keith Coulter, a former air force general who will be leading that work.

Keith and I have had several discussions about that process. I think that will really help us to provide that challenge function up front and make sure the requirements are good, so that everybody will be able to believe and trust in this and we're not second-guessing those as they work their way through the system and other partners.

• (1545)

Mr. Jack Harris: Is there a worry from the Defence point of view, and perhaps the military point of view, that this lack of trust has taken the pace of work out of your hands? Is that a problem, do you think, or is it actually going to be faster with the kind of cooperation we're getting now?

Mr. John Forster: My hope and my belief is that it will end up being faster. We'll spend a bit more time at the front end to make sure of the requirements and then will be able to demonstrate, and help the military demonstrate, that those requirements are sound, valid, and justified. That will prevent us later on, as we go through the process, from having any kind of challenging second-guessing by

other partners in the process. I think that overall it will help us streamline and improve the speed of the process. I've spent a lot of time with Keith, and I'm pretty confident that this is going to be a good addition to the procurement process.

Mr. Jack Harris: I hope so, sir, because there have been some very quick turnarounds in the past. I know that the Cormorants were commissioned in 1998 and delivered in 2003, which is a pretty fast period of time. I hope you can get back to that kind of set-up.

I have one final question, and it has to do with something that you know about from your role at CSEC. We'll hear from the new chief shortly, but I know there's a plan for greater cooperation among CSEC, CSIS, the RCMP, and CJOC to share information and work together.

One of the things that always comes up when we're dealing with CSEC or anybody is the notion of parliamentary oversight. We see it in other countries. Is there an institutional fear of that in these agencies? If they can do it in the U.S., they can do it in Britain, and they can do it in Australia.... Is that fear what's holding this up? Or is this simply a political decision? If there were a change in government, there might well be a government that says it wants this. Do you think our public service is ready to handle that and cooperate with such a system?

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, under—

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: —Standing Order 111—

Mr. Jack Harris: Oh come on. He's been around.

Mr. James Bezan: I understand that, but it's just that Standing Order 111 states:

The committee, if it should call an appointee or nominee to appear pursuant to section (1) of this Standing Order, shall examine the qualifications and competence of the appointee or nominee to perform the duties of the post to which he or she has been appointed or nominated.

I would ask for your guidance here. Keep in mind as well that on I believe page 1068 in chapter 20 of O'Brien and Bosc, it is stated that when we do have public servants at committee, things such as policy or political decisions are not forced upon them. To give those answers might compromise their relationship with their minister.

The Chair: You were approaching close to the line, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jack Harris: I know exactly where the line is, sir.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jack Harris: We have a tradition and a convention that not only do we ask about the qualifications, most of which we don't normally question, especially in the case of someone as experienced as Mr. Forster, but with his experience and knowledge of the relationship between the oversight issue and his experience in CSEC and now in Defence, he's going to have to deal with that issue. I'm just wondering whether he thinks it's something that would be a significant challenge for him and his department or whether it's something that can be done quite easily.

The Chair: Mr. Forster, I'm sure you're well equipped to answer within the confines of your appearance here today.

Mr. John Forster: Thank you. I'm humbled and flattered by the comments on my qualifications.

I'll give you the same answer I gave when I was chief of CSE, which was that I felt CSE does have a good review mechanism in the commissioner in the office, and it's not the role of the intelligence agencies to decide review and oversight mechanisms, but to cooperate with whatever review and oversight mechanisms are in place. I believe all of the agencies will do whatever government and Parliament decides.

The Chair: You're out of time, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Norlock, please, for five minutes.

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

To the witness, thank you for being here today, and congratulations on your appointment. I hope you feel as good at the end of it as you feel right now, because I have a deep suspicion that events in the new world, which you in your previous job with CSEC are very much aware of.... It's on that experience I'm going to ask a couple of questions.

Having worked as a public servant for 30 years, I know that the vast majority.... As a matter of fact, when I say "vast", I mean that the vast majority of public servants know the bounds within which they must operate and at each level of accountability must make sure that those are constant, that superiors to subordinates are constantly....

My question is simple, since we are televised. We hear in the news about CSEC. Now you're going to be dealing with confidential information and those types of things in your cooperation with CSEC. Do you feel that the communication, the flow of information from one silo to another—there are silos, we know that—could be improved on? Do you feel that you can bring in that intimate knowledge of the differences in each of the silos? You have had a very great career with the federal government in senior positions to be able to say that information flows the way it should flow.

Do you feel that there could be improvements to the flow of information, especially in the times we are in, in dealing with terrorism and the interconnectivity of every asset of government and what terrorists like to do? Do you feel there could be improvements? Do you feel that in your capacity you will be able to make those known to your political bosses as well as your confreres in other departments? How do you feel that this could occur?

• (1550)

Mr. Jack Harris: On a point of order, I was anticipating an objection from Mr. Bezan—

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rick Norlock: I'll let you make your objection, and I'll tell you what—

Mr. Jack Harris: You're delving into a significant policy question here that has nothing to do, of course, with the qualifications of Mr. Forster.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, if you'll listen to the question, I basically said, do you feel that you could speak to your confreres in other departments freely and offer them information as to how we could do that, and then bring it to the attention of your supervisor? I did not ask him to talk about policy.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Norlock.

Thank you, Mr. Harris.

I think there was a bit of tit-for-tat here, but in the interests of time, Mr. Forster, an appropriate answer, please.

Mr. John Forster: I'm at your call, Mr. Chair.

I think the quick answer is that there's been a dramatic improvement I think in the exchange and coordination between the security intelligence defence agencies since 9/11. Certainly my experience is that.

Can we do it better? Absolutely. I think that's one of those things you never stop trying to improve, because you might have a piece of information over here that's of value to somebody over there.

The main thing is to make sure you're protecting and safeguarding that information even within organizations. One of the things that I did at CSE quite a bit was to try to get the organization to break down its silos and work more horizontally across. I think that would be an experience that I hope to also bring within defence and across the defence intelligence communities.

Mr. Rick Norlock: So far with DND you've had some challenges, obviously, I think you intimated that in your introduction. I wonder if you could address the challenges and how you feel you can overcome those challenges.

Mr. John Forster: Well, coming into it, it's a very large, complex department. It's one of the largest in government. It's a very unique department in that you have both the civilian and the military personnel. Coordinating that and giving clear leadership direction at the top is going to be key. As I mentioned in my remarks, working closely with the military leadership, with General Lawson and with General Thibault, really is important, because I think it sets the tone for the organization.

For our priorities, I think obviously they're going to continue to be making sure we provide the support to the military operations around the globe, including in Iraq and the Ukraine, and ensuring good support and readiness for the forces. Procurement, we mentioned, is a big challenge for all of the department, particularly for me and John Turner. I think those will be key priorities for us in the year ahead.

• (1555)

The Chair: That's time.

Ms. Murray, the final five minutes are yours.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks for coming in front of our committee, Mr. Forster.

You talked about some of the challenges. I want to go back to procurement for a moment.

There was a discussion about lack of trust, but also in the report by David Perry was a concern that the funding provided in the Canada First defence strategy was fixed at the outset. It wasn't flexible, so when things dragged on and on, costs were increased and the ministry had to go back and reapply, as it were. What background do you have in your career that would help you fix that problem? Or do you not see it as a problem that needs to be fixed?

Mr. John Forster: No, I think it is definitely one of the challenges in procurement. The longer the delays are in some of these major projects, the cost escalation we see can be quite significant, particularly in defence. So when you are budgeting and getting approval of a project at a certain amount of money, if your procurement is delayed, by the time you get around to getting through that process, your costs are quite high. That's certainly going to put pressure on the long-term funding envelope we have for procurement.

First and foremost, it's going to be critical for us to do really good budgeting up front and make sure our costs are sound before we embark on a project. As I mentioned earlier with Mr. Harris and others, I have experience, at least in the federal government, in accelerating programs. Infrastructure projects used to take us forever—forever. They took a long time to get through. One of the things I'm proud about is how fast we were able to streamline that process when we needed to.

I will certainly be trying to do that. To do that, I need to really work closely with Public Works and Industry in particular. I have a biweekly meeting with the deputy and the associate at Public Works, with John, and we just go through it and crunch any issue and every issue that might be blocking us and try to move it off the plate.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Thank you.

Another failure, as we know from Elinor Sloan's report, is that 15 out of the 16 priority procurements over \$100 million are still stuck in the pipeline somewhere or have been cancelled. Only one has been delivered.

Another one of the challenges, according to Mr. Perry, is that while the appetite for more procurement appeared to be real, at the same time this government cut the capacity in terms of something like 400 procurement staff.

What experience of yours with budget cuts would help you to figure out how to do a task when there isn't the capacity to really deliver on that task? That appears to be the case by the results we're seeing so far.

Mr. John Forster: I'm not familiar with the procurement cuts and levels, but it's certainly something I will be getting into and looking at as we go through our budget and our priority-setting for this coming year.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Excuse me. That's procurement in National Defence.

Mr. John Forster: Yes, I understood that.

I think another one of our challenges will be the defence renewal process, which is how we streamline processes so we can reinvest those savings in other areas where we need resources. Certainly, procurement is going to be one of them. We'll be looking for that.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Thank you for mentioning the streamlining. I understand there was a transformation project a few years ago that was intended to do just that, to find streamlining for reinvestment in a department. In fact, I'm told that the project was essentially sidelined and instead the moneys were clawed back by the government, as opposed to having them reinvested somewhere else.

Do you have experience in that kind of re-engineering project? How would you handle it, given the budget cuts and clawbacks in this ministry that you're in charge of?

• (1600)

Mr. John Forster: When I was at Infrastructure and Transport, I led that department's efficiency review to find savings there. It was a large department as well, and a regulatory department. We found areas where we could cut and then put money into more important areas, particularly on the regulatory side.

I've seen a lot of good work done to date. I think it will be a signal to our folks. With Generals Lawson and Thibault, I think we need to re-energize our efforts on the defence renewal to try to find greater savings that we can focus on important areas.

The Chair: That's time. Thank you very much.

Thank you for your time with us today, Mr. Forster.

There is the formality of the question, colleagues.

Shall the chair report to the House that the committee has examined the competence and qualifications of John Forster to the position of deputy minister of National Defence and finds him competent to perform the duties of his respective position?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All agreed. Thank you very much.

We will suspend for a minute while a new witness takes the chair. Thank you.

• (1600)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1600)

The Chair: Colleagues, we will resume.

Pursuant to Standing Orders 110 and 111, this is a review of the order in council appointment of John Turner to the position of associate deputy minister of National Defence, referred to this committee on Friday, February 20, 2015.

Mr. Turner, welcome to this committee.

We will have your opening remarks, please, sir.

Mr. John Turner (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. It's my pleasure to be here.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today about my recent appointment as associate deputy minister of National Defence.

[Translation]

I would like to take a few minutes to summarize the career experience—both military and civilian—that positions me to take on this role.

[English]

I have been a senior executive with the Department of National Defence for a number of years now. Earlier in my career, I spent nearly 26 years in uniform with the Canadian Armed Forces as an infantry officer with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

[Translation]

In fact, I am a graduate of both the Royal Military College of Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces Command and Staff College.

[English]

I also hold a master's degree in business administration from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, and a master's in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

During my time with the Canadian Armed Forces, I held a number of appointments that helped prepare me for the challenges I would face in my civilian career. These included appointments as the commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, in Winnipeg, and as the commander of the joint operations group in Kingston, where I led the operations, training, and administration of Canada's only tri-service high readiness and rapidly deployable command and control headquarters.

Upon retiring from the military in 2004, I continued to serve Canada as a senior member of the civil service during a time of change and renewal, and was motivated by a desire to use the skills I had gained in the military to help foster whole-of-government relationships, manage complex projects, provide strategic guidance, and allocate resources in a sound and effective manner.

As director general of strategic planning, business integration, and shared services at Public Works and Government Services Canada between 2004 and 2005, I was responsible for developing the engagement and reporting frameworks related to issues management and departmental renewal initiatives, as well as implementing strategies to promote the delivery of services.

In 2005 I went on to serve as executive director of the security and justice division at the Treasury Board Secretariat, where I led the analysis of program issues within 16 Public Safety and Justice departments and agencies, providing guidance, oversight, and advice on program requirements and resource allocation.

Following two years in this position, I became the deputy commissioner of the Atlantic region within the Correctional Service of Canada, based in Moncton, New Brunswick, where I was responsible for fostering stakeholder relations and improving operations within six institutions, four correctional centres, and several parole offices spread across four provinces.

In 2008 I returned to National Defence as the assistant deputy minister for information management and chief information officer, an appointment I held for four years. In this position, I led an

integrated team of 3,000 military, civilian, and contractor personnel in the delivery, sustainment, and life-cycle management of information management and technology services to over 100,000 clients located across Canada and around the world.

• (1605)

[Translation]

This included direct support to military operations during a period when our operational tempo was intense.

[English]

I also planned and oversaw the transition of over 220 employees and over \$120 million in resources from National Defence to Shared Services Canada when it stood up.

I completed the year-long advanced leadership program at the Canada School of Public Service in 2010.

In 2012 I assumed the duties of assistant deputy minister for materiel. In that position, I was responsible for a budget in excess of \$5 billion. I led a team of 4,500 military and civilian personnel in the acquisition and support of aircraft, ships, vehicles, and other capital equipment while facilitating the department's implementation of the new defence procurement strategy.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, although I have not worn a uniform for many years now, I remain deeply committed to this country and to the well-being of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[English]

I feel privileged to be part of the senior leadership of the defence team. I believe that my knowledge of the department and my experience leading people and managing budgets, programs, projects, and renewal initiatives, including those in the areas of high-readiness operations, information management technology, and materiel have helped position me to take on the role of associate deputy minister. This entails responsibility to the deputy minister, Mr. John Forster, who just spoke, for files related to defence renewal, search and rescue, information management and technology, and defence procurement.

[Translation]

Thank you for your time.

[English]

Thank you for your time. I look forward to any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Turner.

Our questions will begin with Mr. Williamson, please.

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

Mr. Turner, thank you for coming in today. As ADM, or associate deputy minister, for materiel, much of your work will involve the procurement file. Can you speak to any significant procurement or equipment upgrade projects that have been completed since you have taken over?

Mr. John Turner: I would start by saying that each year the materiel group moves over \$5 billion in programs on an annual basis. That's not only new equipment coming into service, but providing the in-service support to existing fleets. Over the last few years, four C-17s have been delivered on time and on budget and 17 C-130Js, the Hercules aircraft on time and on budget. When I talk about being on time and on budget, I'm talking about the latest TB approval for schedule. Sometimes those schedules were updated, but based on the approvals received for definition and implementation, those projects were delivered on time and on budget.

To meet an urgent operational need in theatre, Chinook-D medium-lift helicopters were provided to the forces in Afghanistan, as were Leopard tanks. I was actually at the Treasury Board Secretariat when the secretariat worked through the weekend to deliver the Leopard 2 tanks that were urgently needed in Afghanistan, to make sure we got them to the troops in theatre.

At the moment, as I speak, we're still working on the Halifax class modernization. It's a \$4.3-billion project and a major success story on both coasts of the country. All 12 frigates are being modernized. The most recently modernized frigate is now participating in operations in support of the Operation Reassurance mission with the allied effort in Ukraine.

We've taken advantage of opportunities to buy a fifth C-17 on extremely short notice. We were advised that Boeing was shutting down the production line and had 10 aircraft left and, from flash to bang, that was about a six-month process to get that fifth aircraft, which will be delivered any day now.

We were also told that the production line for the wing kits for the Aurora aircraft, which are being flown to great effect in theatre in support of the mission in Afghanistan, was going out of business as well. We managed to get four wing kits at the very last minute in very fast time to make sure of that, and rather than having just 10 Aurora aircraft available for operations, we increased the number to 14. Again, that was done very quickly.

• (1610)

Mr. John Williamson: That's very good. Thank you.

How's my time, Chair?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mr. John Williamson: You might have mentioned this, and if you did, I apologize. You served in the CAF for how long? I see that you retired in 2004.

Mr. John Turner: I served for 26 years, including my time at the military college.

Mr. John Williamson: So it is safe to believe that you understand the importance of getting equipment to the men and women who serve. Either defence spending cuts, as we certainly saw under the previous government in the "decade of darkness", or even delays, affect the men and women in their duty. Can you tell us how your knowledge of or experience in the forces will impact your duty to work on procurement and ensure that equipment is delivered in a timely fashion, on budget, and importantly, I think, in how the decisions are made?

I don't think anyone in the country expects the department or the officials to come up with the perfect solution—I don't believe there is a perfect solution—but with good solutions that can be justified and acted upon in a manner that is appropriate, so that equipment rolls out properly.

Mr. John Turner: It's a very good question. There are three components to any major military procurement. There are always factors around cost, capability, and schedule. Sometimes we'll consciously sacrifice schedule to make sure that we get the most capability for the dollar available.

When we're talking about the Canadian surface combatant, for example, those ships will be built over three decades. We'll start taking delivery in the mid-2020s. The last ship will be delivered in 2042. That last ship will sail out to 2070, so we want to make sure that we're going to get the most capability we can for the dollar that's available. It takes a lot of time in the design phase to make sure we're getting a design that enables technology insertion, if you can imagine how much technology is going to change over the next three decades. We don't want to have a design that leaves us stuck with a solution that produces a ship that's obsolete by the time it comes off the production line.

That's why procurement takes a lot of time up front to get it right so we deliver, as we say, as much capability as we possibly can, maximizing the value for Canadians while delivering the equipment that our soldiers, sailors, and airmen and airwomen need.

The Chair: That's time. Thank you very much.

Mr. Harris, please, for five minutes

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Turner, thank you for being with us today. Congratulations on your appointment.

If I may ask, first of all, you were the ADM materiel. What's the relationship between the associate deputy minister, which you are now, and the ADM materiel? Is there a reporting relationship or are they parallel?

Mr. John Turner: I get to work on the same files, but at a slightly higher level. We have governance around major procurements at the DG level—the director general level—the ADM level, and the deputy minister level. I support John Forster at the deputy minister level in dealing with deputy colleagues at Industry Canada and Public Works to try to move—

Mr. Jack Harris: You would be an associate of the deputy minister, but there is no direct reporting relationship through, say, the ADM materiel?.

Mr. John Turner: The ADM materiel reports to Mr. Forster, who is the deputy minister but works very closely with me.

Mr. Jack Harris: I get it. That was the question I had. Thanks.

I appreciate your experience and am happy to see you lay it out. I am particularly pleased to see that you have a lot of experience with the military, so you know what the needs are and how that all works together.

With your experience, can you answer this question? I think Mr. Forster didn't quite provide an answer about the date at which we might see the reset of the Canada First defence strategy. Do you have a date for us?

Mr. John Turner: That would be a policy decision question that I actually can't answer.

Mr. Jack Harris: Are you aware of any date being identified as a rollout date?

Mr. John Turner: No, I am not aware.

Mr. Jack Harris: It was announced in 2013, so isn't that something that you were working on as ADM materiel?

Mr. John Turner: We would contribute to the equipment that would be potentially listed in a reset, but in terms of a date of release, I couldn't answer that question.

•(1615)

Mr. Jack Harris: I appreciate your comments on the efficiency with which the C-17s and the C-130Js were purchased. I understand that these are production models that were purchased. It's not quite like buying a car off the assembly line, but essentially, it's buying something that's already designed and being built, and it's a question of acquisition. As well, of course, the Chinook-Ds were bought from the U.S. forces, again without a procurement rollout, design, or anything like that.

I can understand why we could be efficient at that—and there is nothing wrong with being efficient in that aspect as well—but we have had problems, of course, with the JSS, which was ready to go to tender in 2008 and then was cancelled for a strange budget reason, which was that there wasn't enough money allocated at some point in the process.

I didn't have a chance to ask Mr. Forster this, although he did talk about how money is managed. Are there ideas about solving those problems? Sometimes we have money left over at the end of the year. At other times, changing the way the money goes could actually solve a problem so that it wouldn't leave us waiting until 2021 to get new supply ships, for example. Is there a way to deal with that? Or is that something we're stuck with forever?

Mr. John Turner: The department can reprofile funding and did so a couple of years back with respect to \$3 billion that couldn't be spent in accordance with the original schedules around some major procurements. That money was profiled to the time at which the actual procurement was going to deliver on the capability. It was lining up the cash to the actual milestone payments in various

contracts. That's an example of how we can do that. We can reprofile money from year to year.

Mr. Jack Harris: Are there any improvements that you might suggest?

Mr. John Turner: You mentioned the joint support ship. One of the lessons from that.... That procurement was cancelled because of the procurement strategy, which had us dealing with two design teams. Once we put out the request for proposal, we weren't able to get into detailed cost-capability trade-offs with them until they came back with their bids. By the time they came back with their bids, their bids had exceeded the initial budget that had been set.

The government announced the NSPS in 2010, and the umbrella agreements were let in 2011 with Irving on the east coast and Seaspan on the west, which pretty much re-baselined the delivery dates for the joint support ship, the Arctic offshore patrol ship, and the Canadian surface combatant. I can tell you now that the Arctic offshore patrol ship is on time based on that schedule, and with regard to the joint support ship, we think there is perhaps a one-year delay from when we initially thought we would take receipt of a joint support ship.

The Chair: That's the end of your time, Mr. Harris. Thank you.

Ms. Gallant, go ahead, please, for five minutes.

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

Through you to Mr. Turner, Mr. Chairman, why is it that when an equipment requirement arises in theatre, the procurement is on time and on budget, but purchases not required in theatre, such as the SAR helicopters—originally ordered over 22 years ago but cancelled by the Liberals after they used this critical life-saving equipment as a political football during the 1993 election—take decades for delivery?

Mr. John Turner: I think that when there's an urgent operational requirement, Mr. Chair, the emphasis is on getting the equipment to the personnel who need it as soon as possible. In many cases, that will lead to a sole-source procurement. We may be getting the capability we want, but we may be paying more money than we would pay for it through a competitive process. The urgency of the operational requirement creates a situation whereby an exemption to the government contracting regulations is permissible.

In a normal environment, the default position is competition, to make sure the process is open, fair, and transparent and that we're getting the best value for Canadians in the course of that particular procurement.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Could the witness describe a major piece of equipment that we paid more money for during combat requirements than we would have with a competitive process outside combat requirements?

Mr. John Turner: I couldn't give you an actual example, because there would be nothing to compare it to. On a sole-source procurement, we pay what the asking price is. If there had been a competitive process, there may have been a cheaper option, but whether it would have delivered the same capability is difficult to say.

• (1620)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Why don't you use the Chinooks as an example? We accessed Chinooks in theatre, but we ended up purchasing them afterwards. Was there a more expensive price tag on the ones we used in theatre, which weren't ours, than the ones we purchased subsequently?

Mr. John Turner: Off the top of my head, Mr. Chair, I don't know what we paid for the Chinooks in theatre. The Chinooks we purchased were a more recent model. The ones in theatre were a D model. The ones that we just purchased were an F model. The last of them was delivered in June 2014, and that was a \$2.3-billion acquisition.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I'm just questioning whether or not going the other way and not sole sourcing really does save us money. As the ADM of materiel, your responsibilities include working with other government departments. Based on your experience at Treasury Board and Public Works, which are two other departments that DND closely works with, how will this ensure that our procurement will run more smoothly than in the past?

Mr. John Turner: Despite the fact that we move a lot of program every year, I think there's obviously room for improvement in the overall defence procurement process. I think everybody would be in agreement with that.

As a result, we spend a lot of time working on a defence procurement strategy with three key objectives. One is making sure that we get the right equipment in a timely way to soldiers. The second objective is leveraging that procurement to the economic benefit of Canadians. The third objective is streamlining defence procurement.

In working with Public Works, one of the key ways we're going to streamline is actually a delegation of increased contracting authority over to the Department of National Defence. At the moment, our delegation of authority is \$25,000 for goods, which is very low for a department with a \$20-billion budget. That delegation will eventually potentially get raised to \$5 million.

As an interim step, it will go up to \$400,000. That would be about 50% to 60% of the contracts that PW currently lets on our behalf, which will free up resources to focus on the higher level of materiality, the more complex projects. That will be one way in which we hope to streamline defence procurements on a go-forward basis.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

We are missing some key pieces of equipment in terms of naval ships. We don't know when a critical time is going to occur or when they're going to be needed for combat or for national security within our waters. Is that not as important, equal to a combat situation, when we critically need that equipment for our navy, seamen, and air people?

Mr. John Turner: I think that following NSPS the timelines that have been developed for the delivery of the joint support ship, the Arctic offshore patrol ship, and the Canadian service combatant are timelines that are realistic and that will deliver real capability on an acceptable timeline and minimize or avoid altogether any gaps in capability.

The Chair: That's time. Thank you, Mrs. Gallant.

Ms. Murray, please, for five minutes.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Thank you.

Thanks for being here today.

In looking at your very impressive background in the Canadian Armed Forces, and seeing that you joined National Defence in 2008, I'm going to speculate that it must have been very difficult times, because over the last four or six years there has been such a gap between the myths that have been propagated about stable and increasing funding for this department for 20 years, and the reality of the budget cuts and the clawbacks. You have been in the middle of having to deal with some of that.

I hear from men and women in uniform about the morale problems in various areas of defence because of the budget cuts and also about the lack of provision of replacement equipment, which means that people can't train on the equipment. I want to ask about morale and what your past experience has suggested or has led you to have as a framework for improving morale when there is a systemic problem in a department.

• (1625)

Mr. John Turner: It's difficult for me, Mr. Chair, to comment on morale in the Canadian Armed Forces. I'm no longer in the Canadian Armed Forces. That's probably a better question for some of the commanders.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Okay, no worries. We can go on to another question.

In this department, one of the myths around providing equipment that was propagated by the Canada First defence strategy laundry list of equipment—versus the reality of all the delays and cancelled equipment projects—ties into the vote 5 budget being announced and then allowed to lapse. I call that a deliberate clawback, because it's 23% that has been lapsed, whereas prior to the Conservative government, the average was 2%.

In your previous work in other ministries, have you had to deal with managing a budget of which up to a quarter of what is announced and promised is actually not allowed to be spent or is not spent? How does one manage a program when there's that kind of uncertainty and instability in funding and budgets?

Mr. John Turner: Thank you for that question.

Mr. Chair, I'm not sure of the precise numbers with respect to a lapse, and we have different terminology within departments with respect to carry-forwards, which we're allowed to—

Ms. Joyce Murray: That's \$7.3 billion, actually.

Mr. John Turner: —carry forward.

I can't comment on that actual number. I would tell you that project teams will bring down extra contingency into their annual spending plans, because they're always anticipating the unanticipated. I want to make sure that they have the contingency money available to them should they need it in a given year. If they don't need it, we reprofile that effort. We reprofile that money to future years so that we spend it in the years in which the contract milestones will actually be met.

Money may shift from year to year, but it's a case of having the money available in case it's required. If it's not, we reprofile it to a future year.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Well, contingencies I understand, having been a provincial minister and a business person. A 2% lapsing, which was the previous average, is understandable, while 23% appears to be deliberate. That's why there's an impact on the ability to plan when you have multi-year programs but in a single year the funding that has been approved by Parliament may be clawed back by up to a quarter. It looks as if that's.... At this point, you'll have a responsibility for that. What would be your strategy?

Mr. John Turner: Again, I'm not sure where you're getting the numbers from for a 23% lapse. I'm unable to comment. We reprofile money from year to year. I'm unaware of the 23% figure, but I'd be happy to look into it.

The Chair: Your time is up. Thank you, Ms. Murray.

We have the formality of the question, colleagues.

Shall the chair report to the House that the committee has examined the qualifications and the competence of John Turner to the position of associate deputy minister of National Defence and finds him competent to perform the duties of his respective position?

An hon. member: So moved.

The Chair: So moved.

Thank you very much, Mr. Turner, for your time with us today.

We'll suspend briefly as the next witness approaches the table.

•(1625) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1630)

The Chair: Colleagues, pursuant to Standing Orders 110 and 111, we are examining the order in council appointment of Greta Bossenmaier to the position of chief of the Communications Security Establishment, referred to the committee on Friday, February 20, 2015.

Thank you very much for joining us here today. Let us have your opening statement please, Ms. Bossenmaier.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier (Chief, Communications Security Establishment): Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the

committee. Thank you for inviting me here today to speak about my qualifications and my recent appointment as chief of the Communications Security Establishment.

[*Translation*]

Let me begin by taking a few minutes to introduce myself, and then I will be pleased to answer your questions.

I understand that you have been provided with a copy of my resume.

[*English*]

I'm originally from Winnipeg and come from a family of public servants who have served at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government. I grew up understanding the importance and the values of public service, including serving with integrity and respect. Joining the public service was a natural career choice for me, and I have now had the honour of being a federal public servant for more than 30 years, with seven of those years at the associate or deputy minister level.

My first job in the federal public service was as a summer student with the Department of National Defence while studying at the University of Manitoba. For two summers, I worked as a defence scientist in Air Command. Working in direct support of the Canadian Armed Forces brought home for me the military's critical role and also the vital work that is done by public servants to enable their missions and to serve Canadians.

[*Translation*]

After graduating from Stanford University in California with a master's degree from the School of Engineering, I moved to Ottawa to join the Operational Research and Analysis Establishment of the Department of National Defence.

Over the past 30 years, I have had the privilege of serving in seven government departments, including Foreign Affairs, the Privy Council Office, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Canadian International Development Agency and National Defence.

Throughout my career, my key areas of focus have been in international affairs, defence, security, technology, innovation and whole-of-government initiatives. Along with these areas of focus, I have had the opportunity to lead and manage diverse organizations of talented public servants and have worked closely with the Canadian armed forces and with international partners.

[English]

I was both humbled and honoured to be asked to serve as the chief of the Communications Security Establishment. It is a unique institution within the Government of Canada and one of Canada's key security and intelligence organizations. For almost 70 years, the CSE has played a vital role in helping to protect the security of Canada and all Canadians. In today's challenging and dynamic security environment, the CSE's foreign intelligence collection and Government of Canada cyber-defence roles are more critical and relevant than ever.

[Translation]

Before closing, Mr. Chair, I would like to share with you some of my initial impressions of the Communications Security Establishment, CSE. Since arriving in the organization six weeks ago, I've been impressed by the dedication, commitment and professionalism of its employees. The calibre of the people in CSE is one of its greatest assets.

[English]

I believe that a key part of my job is to provide the leadership necessary to ensure that CSE remains a high-performing organization dedicated to helping to protect the security and national interests of Canada and Canadians.

As well, I have already observed first-hand the commitment throughout the organization to respect CSE's legal framework, including the privacy of Canadians. This culture of compliance has been affirmed by the independent commissioner of CSE. I can assure the committee that I take very seriously my responsibilities to ensure that the organization complies with the law and protects the privacy of Canadians.

• (1635)

It has also been important for me to realize that, by operational necessity and in keeping with the law, much of the important work of CSE will never be widely known. Against this backdrop, I welcome the opportunity to underscore the work of the women and men of CSE and their important contributions to Canada's security.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, I look forward to continuing to serve Canadians in my new role as chief of CSE and to lead the organization to continue to deliver on its mandate to help protect Canada and Canadians.

Thank you for your attention. It would be my pleasure to answer the questions of the distinguished members of the committee.

[English]

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Bossenmaier.

Mr. Bezan, please, for five minutes.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Congratulations, Ms. Bossenmaier, on your appointment. It's always great to see people from friendly Manitoba moving up the ranks in the civil service. I don't know if I've ever mentioned, Mr. Chair, how great the people are from Manitoba.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. James Bezan: You have a very interesting background and have had very interesting career opportunities. Can you talk about how your mix of work at Foreign Affairs, International Development, and National Defence coalesced into what you're doing today at CSE?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you very much.

You know, when you come into a new job, you do spend a bit of time reflecting on what you can bring to the position. I was very humbled and honoured to be asked to assume this position as chief of CSE. With regard to my reflections, I guess I would highlight a couple of my experiences and the background that I hope will help me in this position and will help me advance the objectives of the organization.

First of all, I come from an analytical background. I have a master's degree in operational research and feel very comfortable when dealing with analytical issues. I think that will serve me well given the type of work we do at CSE and given a lot of the types of employees that we have at CSE.

Second, I reflected on the fact that I have been a chief information officer or have had responsibilities in terms of being a chief information officer in three different federal government departments: the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Department of Foreign Affairs, and also the Canada Border Services Agency, all organizations for which information and technology are very important.

When I think about the work of the Canada Border Services Agency or Foreign Affairs, the security of information was very important from a Foreign Affairs perspective in regard to how we ensured that the information for all of our embassies abroad and the people who were serving abroad was available and was protected. Being a chief information officer I think will serve me well in understanding the important cyber-defence role that we play at CSE.

As you pointed out, I've also worked in a number of departments that have an international background or flavour, such as Foreign Affairs, of course, and also the Canadian International Development Agency, which has an international focus. What was interesting there is that in this committee, your committee, I was able to see the work of the Canadian Armed Forces along with that of development experts coming together to deal with some very important humanitarian issues.

My work on the Afghanistan task force when I was at the Privy Council office was a very important role, and one I took very seriously. It was also an opportunity to see what it was like being on the client end of the work of the Communications Security Establishment and dealing with international issues.

Finally, reflecting on this, I have had a number of different types of management and leadership responsibilities, some in large organizations like the Border Services Agency and Foreign Affairs, and smaller ones in terms of the Afghanistan task force, which is really a whole-of-government task force. I think the diversity of those leadership and management experiences will serve me well in this position at the Communications Security Establishment.

• (1640)

Mr. James Bezan: As you mentioned, technology is the critical factor at CSE and also having the right personnel to stay on the leading edge of things as they are changing. Of course, we're dealing right now with the Canadian Armed Forces being in the theatre against ISIL, who are being a little overt in some of their communications. Can you talk about how you're dealing with this challenge that we have right now to ensure that the members of the Canadian Armed Forces that are in the theatre are safe?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: An important role for CSE throughout the years, both when it was part of the Department of National Defence and now is a stand-alone agency under the Minister of National Defence, has been to work closely with the Canadian Armed Forces.

I can tell you from my experience in Afghanistan on that task force that I saw the important working relationships from a whole-of-government perspective, but I also saw the importance of good intelligence and good cooperation between the Canadian Armed Forces and the work of CSE. I hope and I'm sure that's something that will continue under my leadership as well.

Mr. James Bezan: You mentioned the importance of the role CSE plays in cyber-defence. We, of course, are just wrapping up a study on defence of North America. Cybersecurity has become a major part of that study. Can you talk about the role CSE plays in cyber-defence for Canada?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: CSE actually plays a really important role in the cyber-defence world. As this committee appreciates, I'm sure, and as we hear almost every day in some kind of news story, there are increasing threats and concerns in terms of cyber-defence, whether it's from our own personal situations to private sector companies and of course, to government. It's a very dynamic environment now in terms of the variety of different threats to systems. I think that's going to be a really important part of my role going forward.

CSE is a lead security agency from an IT perspective for the Government of Canada. An important role is that cyber-defence role of trying to ensure, along with our partners, such as Shared Services Canada, the Treasury Board Secretariat, and Public Safety, that government systems remain safe and secure, and that the information they hold remains safe and secure.

We have a really skilled team at the CSE that works diligently to protect Government of Canada systems, and I'm sure that will be a very important part of my role in the coming years.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor. You have five minutes.

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Bossenmaier, thank you for your testimony, and congratulations on your appointment.

I was happy to hear you mention the importance of respecting CSE's legal framework, and I would like you to give me a few clarifications as the new chief of the establishment.

Recently there have been several allegations that the CSE was increasingly spying on Canadian citizens by collecting metadata in airports using wireless networks or by analyzing downloads and uploads from everywhere in the world in the context of a project entitled "Levitator". We also learned that beyond defensive and offensive capacities, CSE is developing the possibility of pirating certain devices throughout the world or of collecting data from these devices. It is alleged that the establishment did this in Mexico, a country that is our ally and commercial partner.

Can you confirm that or provide us with further details on this more offensive vocation the CSE seems to be taking on? Is that one of the directions the establishment intends to take?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

I hope you can appreciate that I cannot comment on the unauthorized disclosure of classified information. To do so would put me at risk in terms of violating the Security of Information Act. I hope you can appreciate that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud: In that case, could you explain a bit better what threat could lead the CSE to play a more offensive role? Without directly describing the facts, I think that you could explain to us what could push the CSE to take more offensive measures, either against enemy countries, or conceivably against allied countries, as was reported.

• (1645)

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you again for your question.

[*English*]

It would be inappropriate for me to be speaking about the operations, capabilities, or the methods that—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud: That is not what I am asking you.

[*English*]

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: —CSE uses.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud: That is not the question I put to you.

I asked what threat in today's world could justify that the CSE turn to offensive rather than defensive techniques? I'm not asking you to comment on operations as such, but to comment on the environment that could force the CSE to make certain decisions.

[English]

The Chair: Certainly the committee understands your situation, Ms. Bossenmaier, and the requirements of maintaining secure the operational intent of the CSE. If there is any element of that question that you do feel comfortable in answering, the committee would be glad to hear it. If you would rather not, the committee will fully understand, and I'll support that decision.

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

What I can say is this. CSE's foreign intelligence collection operations and activities are founded on the basis of the National Defence Act. They are in the law under the National Defence Act. We collect foreign intelligence and conduct our foreign intelligence activities according to the government's intelligence priorities.

As you know, all of CSE's activities are reviewed by an independent commissioner who oversees all of CSE's activities. That commissioner has full access to all of our systems, our people, our information, and our repositories. He has the power of subpoena. He has never found CSE to be unlawful in any of its activities.

That is what I can tell you, Mr. Chair. Commenting on any specific or potential capabilities or operations of the Communications Security Establishment would be inappropriate of me.

[Translation]

Ms. Éloise Michaud: Thank you.

I think that your answer demonstrates once again how essential it is that we have a parliamentary oversight committee that is empowered to analyze what is going on in the security field. Currently, accountability to parliamentarians is strictly impossible. Nor can they obtain replies to legitimate questions. I thank you for having helped me to clarify that situation somewhat.

In another connection, can you tell us how the construction of the new headquarters is going? Will there be delays and additional costs? There have already been some quite major cost overruns.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for those questions.

[English]

Mr. Chair, if I could just go back to the previous question, I did remark that as part of the legislation CSE has an independent commissioner who oversees all of our activities, and again, he has never found CSE to have acted unlawfully.

In terms of our new building, I'm pleased to say that CSE has moved into the new building. That move happened in the fall. It was a little bit before my time, so I don't have the exact date. I'm going to say that it was perhaps this past October or September.

CSE is in the new building and we are now working collectively in this new building. Our finding is that it very much suits our needs, compared to a number of issues that were faced by the organization in the previous building. Again, I never had the opportunity to work in the previous building, but I understand that it had a number of operational limitations. We have moved in, as of this past fall, and

are becoming accustomed to our new neighbourhood and our new working environment.

The Chair: The clarity of your response to the previous question is on the record, so thank you very much.

Mr. Chisu, please. You have five minutes.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Ms. Bossenmaier, for your presentation and your presence here. Congratulations on your appointment.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: You mentioned in your presentation that you are a graduate of Stanford University in California, with a master's degree from the school of engineering. What was the field that you graduated in? What was the specialization? Master's degrees are for a specialization.

• (1650)

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

As I mentioned, my undergraduate degree is from the University of Manitoba. I have a Bachelor of Commerce with honours from the University of Manitoba. My specialization there was operational research. If you'll allow me, I'll come back to what that means. I think my mother still doesn't quite understand what operational research is.

After graduating from the University of Manitoba and working as a defence scientist at Air Command when it was in Winnipeg, I went to Stanford University in California. At Stanford I studied operational research as well. I'm not sure how it's organized anymore, but at that time operational research was within the Faculty of Engineering. I have a Master of Science degree from Stanford University from the Faculty of Engineering in operational research.

There's a description that I often give my mother, and again, I'm not quite sure she's ever understood what exactly I graduated in. There are a lot of different definitions, but the one that I often come back to is that operational research is the discipline of applying advanced analytical methods to help make decisions. It's a subfield of mathematics. It's sometimes called management science or decision science. It has strong ties to computer science, statistics, and mathematics.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: I was asking you because I also am a graduate in engineering and have a master's degree in engineering physics.

It is quite interesting that you went to Stanford, which is a very prestigious university with a very prestigious Faculty of Engineering.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: It's always nice to meet another graduate from an engineering school.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: You made a couple of references to your experience in working with the task force in Afghanistan. You were working in the field of information management and technology with this task force. I was there in 2007, so I know that was the beginning of the combat operations. They had just started in 2006 and 2007, and we were absolutely in a situation that we hadn't encountered until then.

How has this experience—and of course building on the relations with the task force in Afghanistan—contributed to your ability to carry out the responsibilities as the chief of CSE?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you very much for that question.

In terms of my experience with the Afghanistan task force, I was the deputy minister of the Afghanistan task force at the Privy Council Office for about two and a half years. I was the second deputy minister of that task force. I served as the deputy minister of that task force from 2009 until 2012. As for how I believe my experience with the Afghanistan task force may contribute, and hopefully will contribute, to my role as the chief of CSE, it is about how our work on Afghanistan, in terms of the time that I was part of it, was very much a whole-of-government effort.

I sometimes reflect upon that. We hear a lot of talk these days about “whole-of-government”. It's a terminology that's used for a lot of different work. Actually, that makes me quite proud, because I believe that when the whole-of-government effort came into play, we really saw it in terms of the Government of Canada and the Canadian Forces work in Afghanistan. It was a true partnership, bringing together the military and the civilian organizations. In terms of the civilian organizations, whether it was from Foreign Affairs, the International Development Agency, or the Canada Border Services Agency, a lot of organizations came together with a common objective.

I hope that experience in terms of bringing together various skill sets and backgrounds and being able to apply all of our work collectively to serve the mandate that we have at CSE will serve me well, and I believe it will. In fact, I really have seen the power of that whole-of-government experience, having worked in Afghanistan.

I also was able to see the important role of the Canadian Armed Forces, and as I raised earlier in this discussion—

I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. Are you trying to cut me off?

The Chair: No. I'm sorry if my facial expression was hurrying you, but finish your thought, please.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Okay. I'm sorry. I didn't want to use up someone else's time.

As for the important role of the Canadian Armed Forces, again, I mentioned earlier in my testimony this afternoon how important the work is between the CSE and the Canadian Armed Forces. I hope that will also serve me well in this position.

•(1655)

The Chair: Thank you. That is time.

Mr. Hsu, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I'd like to say congratulations, Ms. Bossenmaier, on your appointment as the new chief at the Communications Security Establishment.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you very much.

Mr. Ted Hsu: My constituents in Kingston and the Islands are concerned about privacy as the CSE goes about its business, and in particular when it goes about its business of doing things like collecting metadata. I think they would like a leader of the CSE to understand that. I'd like you to talk about how you see the line between the work of collecting metadata and the protection of Canadians' privacy.

I'm not asking you about how the CSE conducts its operations, but I'm trying to get a sense of your judgement and your principles, because I'm sure there are cases where you have to make a judgement call when it comes to collecting data and protecting privacy. Could you just elaborate a bit on that and how you think about that problem?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

In my opening remarks, I talked a bit about some of my early impressions of CSE. Having been there now for approximately six weeks, one of the things that has struck me is the focus within the organization on the corollary issues of lawfulness and privacy.

As you know, the protection of Canadians' privacy is a key part of our act, of our legislation under the National Defence Act. We have an important role to protect the privacy of Canadians. Throughout our organization, in our policies, in our practices, in our training, and in the discussions I've had to date, protecting the privacy of Canadians is of critical importance. I see it, Mr. Chair, throughout the organization already in the short time that I've been there.

As I've mentioned, that will be a very important part of my job going forward. It will be not only to ensure that the mandate of CSE is met in terms of delivering high-quality cyber-defence and foreign intelligence for the Government of Canada, but, also, and again as part of our act, to ensure that the organization continues to be lawful and continues to keep the privacy of Canada at a very high priority.

That will continue to be my focus. I don't see it to be a conflict, actually. I see it to be that these are our mandates. It is ingrained in our legislation. It is something that, again, the organization is already very well attuned to. I mentioned our commissioner at CSE before. He has remarked about the culture of compliance that he has seen. Again, in the short time that I've been a part of the organization, I have already seen that. It will be an important priority.

I guess you asked me about my priority. It would be a really important priority for me to continue the legacy that I already see existing there and ensure that it continues in all of our work.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Is there something about your background that you might like to highlight that would contribute to reinforcing that culture of protecting privacy as you go about necessary business?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: As I mentioned, I have worked in the fields of information management and information technology in a number of different departments. The importance of protecting privacy not only of our own staff, of course, but of Canadians in the information that we are entrusted with is a very high priority.

Again, I reflect on my time at Foreign Affairs, when ensuring that we had secure communications and that the work of Foreign Affairs officers, wherever they were, was protected and being managed in terms of secure systems. I'll try to bring that experience as well to bear on this. Also, in my work at the Canada Border Services Agency, there was always a big focus on compliance and in terms of lawfulness and protecting privacy.

All of those pieces I will hopefully bring to bear in my job now as the chief of CSE. Again, it's really building on that foundation of privacy that I believe already exists there.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's time, Mr. Hsu.

Now, Ms. Bossenmaier, we have the formality of the traditional question.

Colleagues, shall the chair report to the House that the committee has examined the qualifications and competence of Greta Bossenmaier to the position of chief of the Communications Security Establishment and finds her competent to perform the duties of her respective position?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That's carried. Thank you.

We'll suspend for a moment as our next witness approaches the chair.

• (1700)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1700)

The Chair: All right, colleagues. In the interests of short time, we will proceed.

Again we return, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), to our study of the defence of North America. As you know, we have one witness from the Department of National Defence, Captain S.A. Virgin, the deputy commander of Canadian Special Operations Forces Command.

Colleagues, before we begin, I would caution you that Captain Virgin is unable to provide responses to any questions about the actual readiness levels on which the Canadian Joint Incident Response Unit operates. The CJIRU's specific capabilities can be discussed in broad terms, but the specific equipment used and their advantages and limitations, cannot be, including the size of the CJIRU and the conduct of a counterterrorism operation, besides a very high-level general overview. Finally, the domestic CBRN threat assessments in regard to these threats—colleagues, I'm sure you'll understand—are an RCMP and CSIS responsibility.

Captain Virgin is also placed to answer general questions about CANSOFCOM as they relate to the defence of North America, but again, I would caution you that similar caveats do apply.

Captain Virgin, welcome to our committee.

Your opening remarks, please, sir.

• (1705)

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin (Deputy Commander, Canadian Special Operations Forces Command, Department of National Defence): Thank you.

Mr. Chair and honourable committee members, thank you for the chance to speak to you today on chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear—commonly referred to as CBRN—threats to Canada in the context of our Canadian special operations forces role in responding to them.

To start, I will set the stage with an overview, first situating the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command, or CANSOFCOM, into the rest of the Canadian Armed Forces. I will then talk about the role and evolution of the Canadian Joint Incident Response Unit, known as CJIRU, which is our CBRN unit located in Trenton, Ontario. Finally, within the limits of operational security, I will talk about how CJIRU would respond to a CBRN scenario here in Canada.

To start with, CANSOFCOM was created in 2006. The command could be regarded as an emerging capability within the wider CAF and is the organization chiefly responsible for all aspects of Canada's special operations forces. The commander of CANSOFCOM reports directly to the Chief of the Defence Staff and is the Canadian Armed Forces functional authority for counterterrorism. CANSOFCOM's purpose is to force-develop, force-generate, and, where required, force-employ special operations task forces capable of achieving tactical, operational, or strategic effects desired by the Government of Canada.

The enterprise is composed of a national headquarters and five distinct subordinate units or organizations, including Joint Task Force 2, which is a Canadian Armed Forces counterterrorism unit, 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron, which is the command's rotary wing aviation squadron, as well as the Canadian Special Operations Regiment, which provides overt military SOF effects, including robust, flexible expeditionary forces. The command also has the Canadian Special Operations Training Centre, which is responsible for providing our common SOF-specific training as well as our command headquarters, located here in Ottawa.

Finally, the fifth unit that I would like to turn to is CJIRU, for a more detailed look at the CBRN component of what CANSOFCOM does.

When CANSOFCOM was established in 2006, the command incorporated existing capabilities, such as JTF2, for example. In other aspects, however, new units were formed or transformed into special operations forces. What was known at the time as the Joint Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence Company, part of the Joint Operations Group, was transitioned to become a specialized joint incident response unit focused on the CBRN threat.

The CJIRU was officially established in 2007. It is a highly skilled world-class formation of specialists that continues to evolve and grow toward a final operational capability for the Canadian armed forces.

The CJIRU has three key mandates. First and foremost, on the domestic front, the CJIRU supports the RCMP and the Public Health Agency of Canada in response to CBRN incidents. Second, the CJIRU also provides specialized CBRN support to CANSOFCOM forces both here in Canada and overseas. Finally, the CJIRU provides support to other CAF elements, including instruction, training, and education in any aspect of CBRN matters.

For operational security reasons, I am not in a position to provide in-depth details regarding the precise capabilities, mandate, or details regarding the conduct of operations; however, I can provide a general overview of the five roles that the men and women of CJIRU undertake.

First, they can sample and identify chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear agents. Simply confirming or denying the presence of these threats is paramount to the potential follow-on activities that may take place.

Second, the CJIRU can undertake CBRN surveillance, that is, to define the CBRN threat and determine the extent of the contamination.

Third, the CJIRU can perform decontamination and medical extraction. This is a rather precise and limited role. The CJIRU would not perform large-scale decontamination of an area or population. Rather, they can support the immediate force conducting operations in the area. For example, small teams of operators from the CJIRU would accompany counterterrorist forces during a mission in order to provide CBRN protection to other members of CANSOF.

• (1710)

Fourth, they can provide a CBRN incident command centre where they can coordinate and analyze all of the information related to a specific attack or threat, including modelling and projecting weather effects. This command centre would be complementary to the command and control centres of other government departments.

Finally, they can also perform CBRN explosive ordnance disposal, that is, destroying or rendering safe an explosive chemical, biological, or radiological device.

I'd now like to turn to how the CJIRU would be employed in reaction to a CBRN incident. It is important to note that special operations forces are not first responders. While we maintain very high readiness and are able to assist, the request for special forces as part of a Canadian Armed Forces request is a deliberate process. Disaster and emergency management is a scalable response that

starts first with the organizations and first responders closest to the community where the incident occurs.

If an affected community or municipality cannot effectively manage the incident, normally they would seek additional capabilities from neighbouring communities. If more is needed, they would then seek support from the province, and only after those resources had been exhausted would the request come for support from the federal level.

Certainly there can be some scenarios under which CJIRU support could be asked for very quickly. In the case of police suspicion of an impending CBRN terrorist attack, a request for assistance could be made so that certain aspects of CJIRU's specialized skill sets could be deployed very quickly. CANSOFCOM has strong links with other government departments and agencies, and the whole-of-government team keeps each other informed about potential threats and concerns.

As well as supporting other SOF teams in a CBRN threat environment, the CJIRU, under the command and control of CANSOFCOM, provides direct support to other government departments and agencies through its position on the RCMP-led national CBRN response team. The national CBRN response team is led by the RCMP and supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the CJIRU. Some of the capabilities and roles are complementary between the CJIRU and the RCMP, whereas in other aspects the RCMP is the sole lead and authority, such as for forensics and evidence, as part of any response. The RCMP would certainly be the authority to expand upon the national team response remit.

In summary, the CJIRU is a key component of CANSOFCOM. They are a very agile and very specialized group who are highly trained and equipped to address CBRN threats. The unit is not a first responder element, and it is also not a large-scale consequence management organization. It is, however, very well situated to provide niche capability to sample and identify agents and toxins, determine the extent of potential contamination, and provide integrated support to other departments and agencies, from municipal to federal, and it is a capability of the Canadian Armed Forces that is still evolving.

I hope I have provided an adequate overview of the CJIRU's role within CANSOFCOM, the sorts of skills it can provide, and the ways in which it would be employed in an operational context.

With that, I would be pleased to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Captain.

Leading off our questions will be Mr. Norlock, please, for five minutes.

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

To our witness, thanks for attending today. I had the privilege of touring one of your facilities in Trenton. I'm very impressed with the capabilities of the men and women under your command.

Since we're talking about CFB Trenton 8 Wing, and for the benefit of Canadians, would I say that it is strategically located there because Trenton is the hub of Canada's air force and because, if there were a necessity for the team to go somewhere, it facilitates the ease of their getting there in a timely manner?

• (1715)

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for that question.

I wasn't in my position at the time the CJIRU was created in 2007. Its physical location is certainly one aspect that I believe would have been taken into consideration, but at that time there were a number of factors, from proximity to the airlift capability in 8 Wing and to some of the elements that transformed, as I mentioned in my prepared remarks, to become CJIRU, which were roughly in that geographical vicinity, as I understand it. A number of factors led to their being physically set up in that location.

But like many and most of our special forces, they also need support from a larger base. They are not large teams. We have special forces in Petawawa, for example, and in Trenton, and they rely on their respective bases or wings for integral support.

There would have been a number of factors that drove that choice of final location.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

As someone who has climbed the ranks within the Canadian navy, can you comment on the level of professional training available to members of the Royal Canadian Navy and the ability of Canadian Forces members at large to develop their professional careers?

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: I could take up the rest of my time here, I'm sure, to answer that.

Mr. Rick Norlock: I think you have three minutes.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: Okay.

Overall, it's fantastic. I've been in the service for 33 years. I spent the first 25 years in the submarine service. As a young lad in Toronto, I joined the navy to become a submarine captain, and the training is, in short, phenomenal. There is training and there is education. There's professional military education. I have had the opportunity to get a bachelor's degree, I've attended international studies in Beijing, I've attended Canadian Forces colleges that give a university and even post-graduate-level education. Plus, within the navy, I've had an immense amount of training year-in and year-out, almost month-in and month-out.

Whether it's tactical training for proficiency on a particular weapon system, professional military education, or studying past wars, it's an amazing experience, and there's an amazing amount of training and education available to all the officers in the navy.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

You mentioned the submarines. We had some very old ones and now have some newer, fixed-up ones. Based on your extensive naval experience, how would you evaluate Canada's current maritime fleet? Also, would you like to make a comment on Canada's national shipbuilding project?

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: On the former I can speak; on the latter, I can't, really. I left the submarine service about 10 years ago, and I left the general navy ranks, so to speak, seven years ago.

With respect to the overall maritime component of the Canadian Armed Forces, if I understand your question, it's superb. As it's designed, it's multi-purpose, so we have capability on, underneath, and above the surface. We have the capability to protect globally. We have the capability to protect at home. I think the vision that was set out for the navy probably a number of years ago when I was a young officer, has held true. We've been able to procure, build, and maintain a very balanced fleet to answer to the vast amount of oceans that we have and the vast amount of missions that get asked of us.

With respect to the shipbuilding strategy, I must admit that since I've joined special forces I've been fairly focused on that for the last two years, and I admittedly have not really tracked some of those larger issues.

Mr. Rick Norlock: The reason I ask that question, of course, is that, knowing some of your more recent background as you indicated in your opening remarks, I know that people in the Canadian Armed Forces maintain friendships, and you must still have buddies in the Royal Canadian Navy and still keep abreast of what is going on. Feel free in any of the questions that come up to rely on what you've been told, because in my previous job, although I've been gone for 15 years, I still try to keep up with how things are going.

I have one last quick question. How do the operations of CANSOFCOM, both domestically and internationally, contribute to the operational success of other units in the Canadian Armed Forces?

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: They contribute greatly. It depends on the exact mission set that we would be talking about, for example, but in the spectrum of operations that SOF would be involved in, it could be from very discrete, non-kinetic small teams up to support to larger CF operations. We work extensively with the air force, the army, and the navy within their respective domains. Most theatres have a joint component where you would have army, navy, air force, and SOF, and we enable them in some of their operations, and they greatly enable us. We can't get to where we need to go without the support of other elements of the Canadian Forces, by and large.

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Harris, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Captain. I'm struggling to find questions that you can answer here, but I'll do my best.

We're glad to have you here. I want to perhaps ask you to give us some history here, but special ops in Canada is relatively new, I should think, at least as an amalgamated unit that we're talking about here today. JTF2, of course, was the domestic terrorism response unit, I think, that was the beginning of this. It was designed to respond to incidents such as kidnappings or the takeover of a building or an airport, or these sorts of things. Am I correct about that? Was that the first element of this or does this go back much further?

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: Yes. In the early nineties, JTF2 was created to take over from what was called CIRT, a component of the RCMP. They took over that counterterrorism domestic mandate in the early nineties.

Mr. Jack Harris: But now it is integrated with the other aspects of this, including an expeditionary capability such as we have in Iraq today.

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: The unit itself has certainly evolved over time. Afghanistan was a big turning point for the evolution of JTF2. It is still a stand-alone unit. We have the five units. They are separate, but a number of the forces that we would deploy would be made up of elements from each of those five units that I described.

Mr. Jack Harris: These five units are under CANSOFCOM command at the moment?

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: Yes, sir.

Mr. Jack Harris: You're the deputy commander.

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: In 2006, as part of the transformation of the Canadian Armed Forces, it was determined that we needed a unified integrated joint, and more robust special operations capability, so CANSOFCOM, as a level-one entity within the CF reporting directly to the CDS, was created.

Mr. Jack Harris: You deal with the aviation squadron that is part of or at least under the command of those operated by the air force.

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: Yes, that is true. They are one element that has a unique relationship. In the military lexicon, they're under the operational command of my commander. They are assigned to us in the direct support they do with regard to our missions, but they still have another parent-functional residual responsibility to the commander of the air force for airworthiness.

Mr. Jack Harris: I guess the flying, air readiness, and all of those things would be dealt with by the air force, but the operational side is under your command.

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: Exactly.

Mr. Jack Harris: Okay. There is a domestic aspect of this, an extremely important one when you're talking specifically about the nuclear, biological, and chemical defence, which is potentially something very important, and extremely important on an urgent basis. All of this is probably on an urgent basis. I'm wondering about your suggestion that they're not a first responder, but they can act quickly, and then we have this provincial government having to ask the federal government to aid the civil power, and all of these things that are part of the way that the military works.

Does that inhibit a quick response? You're not a first responder, but I'm sure there are many parts of this country—and I'm sure you're aware of them as part of your response capability—where none of these facilities or capabilities exist. You would inevitably be the first responder, would you not?

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: I don't think it would be fair to say that we would be the first responder. First responders—fire departments, paramedics, and municipalities—will respond in minutes, I would estimate, to a call. We don't have that level of readiness. I can't give you the specific number of minutes or hours that we keep our people at, but very quickly we would be able to be brought to bear.

We also have—in fact, under review at the moment—various mechanisms, such as, for example, with the CJIRU, an MOU with the RCMP. We're in the process of updating that MOU, but having a mechanism like that allows us to be called out with a phone call. Right now, we would take requests for assistance, but that can be done verbally, for example, with a phone call from the Minister of Public Safety to our minister. We'll be on the road very shortly after that.

Mr. Jack Harris: That's encouraging, and I hope that is more effective than what we've seen in some cases with search and rescue, which has caused problems in Labrador, for example. You may have heard about the problems up there with communication between different aspects, whether it be provincial, federal, or RCMP communications. I hope you don't have those in the case of a need for chemical, biological, or radiological problems.

In regard to your activity, are the only threats or incidents that you respond to necessarily attacks, or terrorist-related, or somebody seeking to use chemical, biological, or nuclear elements as a means of disruption? Would you also be available and would you respond to the kinds of things that we see in as chemical factories or perhaps a nuclear accident? Is that something that you would participate in as well?

• (1725)

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: It's something that we could participate in. Normally what we would see happen is that if a municipal, provincial, or federal agency doesn't have the capability or the capacity, they could turn to us. For example, we could have a unique surveillance system, a robotic system. We do employ the highest of high technology so that our men and women are as well equipped as possible to deal with the unique challenges they have to deal with. There could be an example where, yes—

Mr. Jack Harris: Is this just speculative or have they actually done that?

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: That's speculative.

The Chair: Thank you very much. You're out of time, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Bezan, you have five minutes.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Captain, for coming in.

Does your unit have its own risk assessment process or are you trying to analyze through other segments of CANSOF?

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: Yes, it does. In pretty much everything we do, whether it's the formulation of a fairly benign project or the actual mission to do an operation, we go through a robust risk assessment. It's done at the tactical level, right at the working level, and then through and up to the commander of the command, who does a the risk assessment in looking at all aspects of the spectrum. Then, depending on the level of the risk, say, he would even take it higher to his superiors to discuss the potential risks in anything that we do.

Mr. James Bezan: So you're looking at both state and non-state actors, the proliferation of dirty bombs, and things like that. Are you always doing the analysis and working with allies to determine where the threat lies?

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: Yes, we are, to a degree. The security and intelligence practitioners within the government are more of a lead on that side, but we are so well-networked.... It goes back a little to the previous question in terms of response and working with others. One of the great attributes of the special forces is that we are thoroughly integrated and networked across all levels of government. We exercise together, work together, and have everybody on one another's speed dial, so to speak. That certainly enables the rapid sharing of information.

In some of those areas in terms of the state and non-state actors, those who would do us harm, we track what they might have, but I would not say that we are the leading edge in terms of the intelligence community. We draw from those authorities, and then we do our analysis for the capabilities that we have, because all of that gets fed right back into our training, for example, and our force development and capability development for the future to respond to whatever threats are out there.

Mr. James Bezan: Captain, I suspect that you need some very specialized people under your command. How do you go about recruiting? Is it people from within the Canadian Armed Forces or do you recruit from outside as well? Are you taking fresh recruits or are you looking more at seasoned members of the CAF?

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: It depends on where one would work within the organization, but we don't recruit straight from the street. We recruit just from within the Canadian Armed Forces. We are a reflection, so to speak, of the Canadian Armed Forces, because we draw all of our people from the navy, army, or air force. They come into our organization. Part of the fundamental definition of SOF is

specially equipped, specially trained, and specially selected individuals.

We recruit across the country and across the Canadian Armed Forces. We look for certain attributes, cognitive as well as physical. We put individuals who volunteer to work in any one of our units through a screening and selection process. If they are successful, they carry on and do some very rigorous and precise training following that.

● (1730)

Mr. James Bezan: You mentioned in your comments and did just now too that one of the things that is part of the CJIRU is the training component. Where is that actually located and how do you go about training the members you recruit?

Capt(N) S.A. Virgin: The CJIRU has some very unique training outside of the normal SOF training, because they are very specialized in chemical, biological, and radiological hazards. For example, we have agreements with colleges and universities, so we actually have a number of junior members in that organization who have post-graduate education qualifications in those respective fields.

We do practical training across Canada. We work with the DRDC organizations. We work right out to Suffield. We work with allies and with other members of the CF. That's what we would call common training or collective training, and then the individual training is very precise skill sets for those operators, be it the shoot-move-communicate skills that they would need, or their more precise tradecraft, which is a thorough scientific background.

The Chair: Thank you. The time is up, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. Hsu, we are virtually out of time, but in the interests of fairness and balance on the committee, I will allow you two minutes for perhaps a question or two.

Mr. Ted Hsu: I'll ask some questions with—

An hon. member: The bells are ringing.

The Chair: I'm afraid we have bells. We're being called to the chamber.

Under the standing orders for this committee, Captain, we must adjourn.

Thank you for your time with us today. I'm sorry that we're cutting it short.

We are adjourned.

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