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Chair

Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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• (0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. Pursuant to Standing Order 108 (2) and 81(5), we're here to discuss the mandate letter of the Minister of Defence and the supplementary estimates 2015-16, vote 1c.

I would like to welcome the Minister of Defence, Mr. Sajjan. I would like to welcome the chief of defence staff, Jonathan Vance, and the deputy minister, John Forster.

As discussed prior to the meeting, we'll spend the first hour discussing the mandate letter and the second hour discussing the supplementary estimates (C). The minister will have to depart after 30 minutes into the second hour, so at the 90-minute mark he'll have to leave because he has another commitment.

I appreciate that there's some overlap, so there will be some latitude afforded to questions where these intersect and make sense, but I would like the committee to focus on the mandate letter first and the supplementary estimates (C) second. Again, I appreciate that there may be overlap and I will allow for latitude on that.

Mr. Sajjan, you have the floor.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Members of the committee, it is my pleasure to be here for the first time today and a true honour to serve as the Minister of National Defence.

As all of you know, I served in the Canadian Armed Forces, so I know from personal experience that we ask a lot from our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces, and I know they deserve to have the right tools and support in return.

Last fall, the Prime Minister made public the mandate letter in which he outlined the top priorities of my portfolio. That letter is a testament to the level of importance that this government places on national defence and I would be happy to speak to any aspect of it.

To set the context for our discussion, I wish to encapsulate my priorities into three fundamental lines of effort: a new defence policy for Canada, a well-equipped and ready force, and the care of our members.

Let me take a moment to summarize each of these briefly. First of all, a lot has changed since the previous defence policy was elaborated in 2008. Look at the situation in the Middle East with the

so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, and look at Russia with its actions in the Ukraine. We live in an era of instability, uncertainty, and surprise. Insecurity today comes in so many different forms and from so many different places.

Against that backdrop, we need to undertake a comprehensive policy review to produce a Canadian vision for defence that responds to the wide array of emerging challenges. It needs to articulate our priorities in the current security environment and provide meaningful guidance for our investments. This review will be launched shortly and I intend to have it completed by the end of 2016. Of course, the core pillars of a Canadian defence policy will remain the same: defend Canada, defend North America, and contribute to international peace and security.

This review will allow us to look at how we deliver on these responsibilities and invest in our military, so it can continue to be flexible in responding to an uncertain and evolving security environment, and provide support to United Nations peace operations. We have committed to conducting the defence policy review in an open and transparent manner. With input from academics, parliamentarians, defence experts, and allies, we will develop a vision for Canadian defence that is both credible and relevant. In this regard, I believe that this committee is particularly well positioned to offer an informed perspective on Canadian defence as the review progresses.

I recently put forward a proposal to this committee to undertake a study related to the role of the Canadian Armed Forces in the defence of Canada and North America. This input would help shape a core component of Canada's new defence policy. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this suggestion.

Second, as a government, we recognize the importance of a well-equipped military with a range of capabilities. The new defence policy will help define the future requirements of the Canadian Armed Forces over the long-term.

In the short-term, we will have to move forward on a few pressing projects. We have made a commitment to rebuilding the Royal Canadian Navy, while meeting the commitments that were made under the national shipbuilding procurement strategy. I am working with Minister Foote to design an open and transparent competition to replace the CF-18 fighter aircraft.

My department manages highly complex procurement projects and despite sound, long-term planning, these are inevitably faced with changes in scheduling and cash requirements I am pleased to say that I am currently working with my colleagues from Public Services and Procurement Canada as well as Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada to improve these processes.

Third, our military members are the backbone of our defence capability and our greatest asset. That is why I feel so strongly about the level of care they receive.

As a former soldier, I know that the success of any mission is dependent on having healthy, well-trained, and motivated personnel. I also want to ensure that Canada's sons and daughters belong to an organization that offers a safe workplace that is free from harassment and discrimination, an organization that provides the necessary care and support both during and after their time of service. Given what they sacrifice for Canadians, they deserve no less.

This is a shared responsibility between the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces, and Veterans Affairs Canada. That is why the associate minister of defence is also the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

● (0850)

I'm pleased to be working with my colleague, the Honourable Kent Hehr, to strengthen the relationship and smooth the transition between our two departments. Our focus will be on streamlining, simplifying, and accelerating the transition from military to civilian life. We will also be reviewing our income support and rehabilitation measures, streamlining functions, and eliminating gaps and duplication in our programming.

Finally, recognizing the importance of mental health care, we are developing a suicide prevention strategy that will leverage existing government-wide initiatives and increase Canadian Armed Forces leadership involvement in existing programs. The well-being of our military members, whether they are currently serving or whether they are in retirement, is our number one priority.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you once again for giving this opportunity to appear before you today. As the Minister of National Defence, I invite all parliamentarians to help us advance the defence agenda. Our government is committed to providing the best level of support for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, and our work here today will serve to provide them with the required tools and supports to continue building this proud history.

On this note, I'll take any questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Okay, Ms. Romanado, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Minister Sajjan. First of all, I'd like to thank you for coming today and presenting to us your mandate letter as well as the supplementary estimates (C).

As a parent of two sons in the Canadian Forces, as you know I speak on behalf of fellow families of Canadian Forces' members. I'd like to congratulate you on your commitment to the care of our

Canadian Forces' members both in active service and when they leave service. I'd like to get a better understanding from you on what concrete actions you're taking to make sure that our forces' members, from the time they are recruited to their active training to the time they leave the forces.... In terms of that relationship and the cultivation of that relationship and the care of them and their families, can you elaborate on how you're working with your counterparts in other ministries to make sure that our sons and daughters are taken care of?

Thank you.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Thank you for the question, and I also thank your sons for their service. What we also need to recognize is that while they serve, the families also serve alongside them. In fact, in some cases it is more difficult on the families when their sons or daughters, brothers and sisters are deployed because they don't know what's happening when they are deployed. We need to be mindful of how we take care of the families as well.

Since early on when I was sworn in, within the first weeks we sat down with the Chief of the Defence Staff and the deputy minister. We talked about the wellness of our troops. I'm very fortunate that a lot of great work has already been done by the Chief of the Defence Staff on this, and I recognize the importance of our greatest asset. We talk about purchasing-equipment capability, but what we have to realize is that really our greatest capability is the men and women. Their well-being has to be our number one priority. When we look at their well-being, it's the training and discipline side of things, but we also have to look at what we are providing them in terms of their support from the time they serve, and how that transition period is going to look when they become a veteran. There are some challenges that we have to go through. There are some gaps that we have to fill.

We have started early discussions with the Minister of Veterans Affairs, and we're working in collaboration with him to make sure that we come up with a plan that transitions a member from when they're serving and that it's a seamless process to when they become a veteran. One example of this that we're working on is when somebody is injured in the Canadian Armed Forces they go through the medical system, but unfortunately currently when you become a veteran you have to then explain the same injuries. We want to make that process seamless. That is one of the gaps that we would like to fill. Also, there are certain benefits we'd like to realign.

Those are the things we're looking at. We're at the early stages. We have already been working in collaboration with Veterans Affairs on this, but a lot more work still needs to be done.

● (0855)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Moving on to a different topic, as the defence of Canada is our number one priority, could you elaborate to the committee what you feel is our current biggest threat in terms of our operational readiness in Canada?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I wouldn't call it a threat for our operational readiness. I'm comfortable with the readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces in terms of our ability to respond, whether it's an environmental disaster, such as forest fires or floods, or even when it comes to the other side, a terrorist attack. That does not mean that we stay at the status quo. We always need to look at how threats are evolving, and we need to evolve with them to make sure our troops have the right equipment and the right training so we can be ahead of any perceived threats.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: To elaborate, what do you feel is the current threat in terms of cyber-attacks?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We do need to be mindful that this is a growing threat. We need to, not just internally, make sure that... The defence of our systems has to be paramount. As technology evolves, we need to evolve with it. We are very fortunate. We do have the best minds. I'm very encouraged with what we have. However, this is a realm that we need to look at. The defence review will be looking into this. We'll not only be looking at cyber threats from a National Defence perspective, but I'll be working in co-operation with Minister Goodale as he develops the security framework for cyber threats.

What we also need to take a look at is where cyberwarfare needs to go. We need to also look at our capability and what it's going to be on the defensive and the offensive side. A lot of these discussions will come out in the defence review.

The Chair: Mrs. Gallant, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Vice-Chair): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Through you and on that note—maintaining Canada's strong commitments to NORAD, encompassing maritime and aerial situational awareness—the frontier being exploited by both ISIL and Putin is cyberspace. How is National Defence currently collaborating with U.S. Cyber Command for the defence of North America?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: When it comes to our cybersecurity, there's a lot of great work being done, not just from a National Defence perspective but also, as you know, through CSE, which comes under my mandate as well. Unfortunately there's a lot of stuff that I can't actually discuss in this forum. Right now we are well poised in a defensive posture. But we need to be mindful that even though I'm comfortable with where we're at, we need to be able to evolve with the technology, because technology is changing rapidly. We need to invest in the right areas to make sure we continue to evolve.

● (0900)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

Putin's current narrative is that World War III is just a matter of time. RS-24 ICBM systems were rolled down the streets of Moscow last year.

How does the minister plan to work with the United States to help safeguard North America from this type of threat?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: With regard to some of the images, I think that all of us have been watching them on TV from the days of the parades in the early Soviet Union, and even to this day. Regardless of how Putin's rhetoric might be portrayed in the media,

whether he's talking to the outside world or internally to his own country....

We're very fortunate. We have a very unique binational relationship with the U.S., which is NORAD. In terms of where we are and where we need to go, I was able to get a really good picture of our defensive posture and our capabilities during my recent visit to NORAD. What we need to look at now is what NORAD is going to look like and what NORAD renewal is going to look like. That's a discussion that we need to have here in Canada, and it's a discussion that the U.S. also needs to have. How are we, as two nations, going to move forward? What is the defence of North America going to look like 10 or 20 years from now?

It's not an easy game to predict threats, but we need to make sure that we invest in the right technologies and that we have the right command relationship and the necessary tools to be able to carry this out.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Russia is strengthening its nuclear posture. How will our military be equipped to help defend North America from this type of threat?

We've mentioned NORAD, but I'm looking for something more concrete. How are we, as a nation, going to be able to help defend North America?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Without getting into hypothetical questions, it all depends on what type of threat we'd be facing. Right now, our best defence is making sure that we do not get into a World War III type of scenario, as Putin stated in his rhetoric, and making sure that we have the right communication and the right diplomacy to prevent that.

Having said that, we, as a nation, need to be mindful of how we're going to look at our own sovereignty, making sure that we have the right equipment moving forward. I hope that we will be able to answer a lot of these questions after the defence review.

What types of capabilities are needed? I don't want to get into the exact details of what type of equipment we need to buy. Capability is going to be the key. How are we going to integrate? How is our command structure going to continue, in terms of a relationship? Where do we need to invest in technologies, and where do we need to invest in our people to make sure that we have the right defensive posture to prevent any type of attack?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: According to NATO, there's a very real, but not yet fully identified risk of foreign fighters in ISIL's ranks using chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear materials as weapons of terror against the west.

What is the minister doing to defend against this type of threat, recognizing that a threat is just a threat until it happens? What are we doing in advance?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: When it comes to these types of enemies, we need to predict what types of capabilities they might be bringing forward. This is something that has been identified. Our troops have the right equipment in place. They have the right training to be able to deal with it. More importantly, we have to make sure we have the right intelligence assets to be able to predict any type of attack that they might carry out.

We are aware of their rudimentary ability for this. Nonetheless, our troops have the right equipment and the right training to be able to deal with this.

● (0905)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Garrison, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thank you to the minister for appearing today. I also want to say thanks for not just promising greater openness and communication, but for actually practising it so far. You have been a man of your word, and I do appreciate it, both as a member of this committee and as a member of parliament who represents a large military riding.

In your opening statement today, there were two things, which I want to ask you about, that I think were missing under the supplementary estimates (C). I was disappointed to not see mention of the reserves or civilian employees of the Department of National Defence. I have a couple of questions that I think belong in the other section, which I'll come back to.

I want to start by asking you about refocusing the mission in Iraq. During the campaign, the Liberals promised very clearly to end the combat mission. My question is about the train, advise, and assist role that you're now tripling in Iraq. Both you and, I think, General Vance have acknowledged that it involves greater risk to Canadians in the field.

My question is about the rules of engagement, and whether they include participation in exchange of fire at the front lines, which most Canadians would see as combat.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'll let General Vance talk about the rules of engagement, but just to answer your question more directly about the mission itself, as the Prime Minister stated early on, we want to be a responsible coalition partner and make a meaningful contribution. That's why we took the time to make sure we had the right intelligence, and to speak with our coalition partners so that when we looked at refocusing, it wouldn't be strictly from a military perspective but also from a diplomacy and a development perspective.

The military solution will buy you time to fix the real problem, but that political solution is just as important, if not more so, for the long-term stability of the country and that region. But before we get to that, we need to make sure the Iraqi security forces have the right training and the right structure in place so they can not only retake their cities but actually hold them as well, because with ISIL they weren't able to hold the cities in the first place, and that's why we are in this situation right now.

The critical piece at this time is making sure that we train not only enough Iraqi security force members but also the right ethnic groups to go retake some of those cities. In the buildup to that though, we require the right intelligence. It's been over a year since the intervention. The enemy will learn quite rapidly from how we operate, and because of that, our intelligence also needs to get better. This is one reason we're making sure to provide the right type of intelligence capability that will provide the theatre-wide perspective and be a greater asset for the coalition commander but also, in particular for our troops in the north, to protect our forces, anticipate

some of the future threats, and also contribute to the coalition targeting.

I'll let General Vance answer the question on rules of engagement.

General Jonathan Vance (Chief of the Defence Staff, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Minister and Mr. Chair.

You asked a specific question about rules of engagement and whether they allow for the exchange of fire on the front line. You understand that this train, advise, and assist mission is largely defensive in posture given that the Kurdish line, if you will, which, where we are, will overlook the Mosul basin, is largely static with some skirmishes to try to establish a better line. The nature of the mission is to support them in their ability to defend and in their ability to launch the offensive operations they need to. We don't accompany them on those defensive operations.

The rules of engagement, to answer your question specifically, allow Canadian Forces to defend themselves and to anticipate their defence so they can engage a hostile act or intent before it materializes. In other words, we won't take the first hit. We can anticipate in order to protect ourselves and those with us. The right of self-defence is paramount and pre-eminent and never ever leaves a soldier. It's an inherent right. The rules of engagement that I assigned to the armed forces allow them beyond self-defence to defend themselves tactically should they come under fire.

● (0910)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much. I think for most Canadians that does sound a lot like being engaged in combat. Given the shortness of time, I want to ask about equipment needs. As I represent CFB Esquimalt and have a large naval contingent, I was interested in your comments about the national shipbuilding strategy. Is the national shipbuilding strategy a ceiling or a floor? A commitment was made in the past regarding the number of ships and the kinds of equipment, and we've had lots of stories about the funding not being adequate to actually achieve those goals. Are we talking about a ceiling or a floor here when it comes to re-equipping the navy?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I don't consider it a ceiling or a floor. There are some challenges based on the previous amount that was set, and also on the number of the ships. If you give a number, it could be difficult to say what type of capability you want; for example, that this is a certain ship, but you haven't even decided what types of systems you need in it. This is where we get into the difficulty of assigning a number.

What I'm focused on is making sure, as part of the defence review, what type of capability we need from our ships; or we could be getting into a conversation in regard to NORAD about how the interoperability of our communications would work as well. From that process we'll derive what type of capability we need, and then we can figure out what the cost would be. It's too early at this stage, when you're just looking at deciding on the type of capability you require.

I'm hoping that with the defence review we will be able to decide on the capability, but I think it is premature to say that this is exactly the number of ships and this is how much it is going to cost, because by the time you come out with what types of ships you need, that decision may not fit well with the number that was provided earlier, especially with the economic challenges that we may face.

The national shipbuilding strategy is nonetheless a great strategy for Canada. Not only will it provide the navy with the right capability, but we have the right expertise. We need to work through some of the challenges to make it more efficient. I've stated this before; our procurement process has not served the Canadian Armed Forces well, but we learn continuously. Some improvements were made in the past, but we need to move further.

One simple step is working in collaboration in departments. Right now, Minister Foote and I actually have joint briefings. It's a simple matter of doing something like that. A file would normally come to me, but then it has to be reviewed and briefed in another department. This way we can save months. We've done a few other things that are going to drastically decrease the time.

But concerning the numbers, I want to wait. This is what the defence review will allow us to do, make sure that we have a thorough discussion amongst Canadians, the academics, experts within the military, and with our allies to make sure that we have the right capability and decide what we need for the future. Then we can have the discussions on the number of ships and what types we need.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We ate a little bit into the time, but I thought that discussion was worth listening to.

Mr. Fisher, you have the floor.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank you, Minister.

Two points of interest for the east coast are of course the national shipbuilding program and the Cyclone helicopters.

You touched quite a bit here on the shipbuilding, but you didn't speak about actual funding, about ensuring that we have sufficient funding to live up to the commitments of both our platform and the contract. Perhaps you can touch on that just a bit and maybe give us an update on the Shearwater project with the Cyclone helicopters.

● (0915)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'll let General Vance talk about the number, but right now, we have six Cyclones that are operational.

I have visited Shearwater myself, and I think we have the right type of aircraft to suit the needs. We have six that are operational,

and there has to be a transition period for the training. It is not going to be fully operational for a number of years.

I'll get that answer for you in a second.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay.

Perhaps you could touch on whether we're going to have appropriate funding for the commitments we've made for the shipbuilding contract. You spoke about the types of ships we need and the capabilities we need, but there wasn't really mention of the budgetary side of it.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: It's too early to say exactly how many ships we're going to be able to have with the numbers, the funding, that has been allotted from the past. It's too early right now to say exactly what types of ships and how many, but as time goes on we will have a better idea of the number of ships. It's going to depend on what type of capability we're going to want to have in the ships.

One of the things we do need to do is to make that process more streamlined. Before we actually give the number, we need to be able to decide on the capability, and we've set a date for when we need to stop adding new capabilities. Otherwise what happens is that you decide on a number, then you go past a date and you add in new capabilities. Then the cost will start to increase and that will also then eventually decrease the number of ships we're going to have.

So back to the Cyclones, there will be 28 new Cyclones.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Twenty-eight. We have six.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: There will be 28. There's six right now being trained up.

Mr. Darren Fisher: What do we have for trained pilots for the Cyclones right now? Do we have the ability, if the six were completed and ready to go, to put them in the missions?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Actually, I don't have the answer to that.

Gen Jonathan Vance: The Cyclones are just beginning the workup to be able to land on and operate from ships, so they're at what we would call IOC, interim operational capability. They won't be fully operational for another year and a half or two years.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Do I have any time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have ninety seconds.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I'll just ask you a quick and snappy one.

We have folks who are struggling when they come back and transition into civilian life from the military, and you spoke about working with Veterans Affairs on this type of thing. Is there a strategy? Is there a plan on how to make that transition a little bit more seamless, a little better?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We are working on a plan right now to make sure that there is not only that transition from while you're serving and into civilian life, but that, if you are injured and you need care, you have a good transition directly to Veterans Affairs as well.

I know that General Vance is looking at revamping JPSU, and he can talk about that in a second.

The reason our troops join is to be able to serve, but we need to also make sure that they will be well taken care of, and this is a challenge that we have identified. I know a lot has been done since the early days, at least from the Afghanistan mission, but we also need to do a lot more.

Some of the challenges that we have faced in the past... One sense I want to bring to all of you and to all Canadians is that the Canadian Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs want to make sure that we do the best for our troops, but it's not just one solution that will fix things. It's a continual process of learning and making sure that we suit the needs because this is a very complex problem, but we are committed to it.

General Vance, do you want to talk about JPSU?

• (0920)

Gen Jonathan Vance: Minister, thank you.

The intent in transition through the JPSUs in partnership with VAC will be to ensure that each individual who is injured and needs to transition somehow... It's really one of two missions. Get well and return to duty or transition successfully post-retirement out of the armed forces with an absolutely seamless transition, where going from the care of the armed forces to the care of VAC is not rocky or causing lag times in benefits, uncertainty about care, who to see, and so on.

The effort under way right now between the two ministers and between the two departments—we're working closely with retired General Natynczyk—is to ensure that VAC and the armed forces pace each other as they deal with a customized program per individual. This is what's been missing, I think. We need to treat each individual very specifically and have a customized transition plan for them that either gets them well and back to work, back to duty, or successfully transitions them. It needs more customization. To do that between the departments means that their needs and what they are anticipated to need as they transition are met so there is no lag time, so that it's seamless.

More importantly, lots of people retire or transition out of the armed forces healthy and problems materialize after the fact. So that seamlessness and that transition point or the access to VAC has to be able to occur at any time and place if something after the fact materializes, whether wear and tear on the body or psychological injury.

We need the systems also to accommodate for the fact that if someone manifests late they can approach VAC or the CF and then instantly will have programs available to them and be recognized without a great deal of burden of proof and whatnot that they are in fact who they are and they've suffered what they've suffered.

The Chair: General Vance, I'm going to have to cut you off there and move on to the next questioner in order of fairness.

Mr. Spengemann, you have the floor. I'm going to cut you back a couple of minutes. You get three minutes and we'll resume with five minutes, so both sides of the table have equitable time.

Thank you.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister Sajjan, Deputy Minister Forster, General Vance, thank you for being here and thank you most importantly for your service to the nation.

Minister Sajjan, I wonder if you could take the now limited time that I have to tell the committee and the Canadian people how the nature of conflict has changed, how it has transitioned from interstate conflict to conflict that's now on a preponderance of evidence taking place within the borders of nation states and what implications that has both for the humanitarian and the military work that we're doing and also for civilian populations that are caught in the crossfire of these conflicts?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: This is one question I think many nations are struggling with. We're facing these evolving challenges, the conflict has changed, whereas in the past we used to have two states come to an agreement and we could put peacekeeping troops in between them and maintain their agreements.

With the evolving change in conflict we need to be cognizant that a military solution cannot be the one-stop solution. We need to make sure how diplomacy and development are going to be synchronized. This is one experience that I think Canada is very well poised to be able to offer to our allies. We have done this well.

What we're talking about here is after the fact. What we also need to now get better at is to start identifying where, in terms of some of the conflicts that we have seen, we could have possibly looked at dealing with them early on. We need to be looking at how do we identify some of the early indicators of say, for example, a political vacuum that might have been created in an area. What can we do early on to prevent the problem from getting even bigger?

What it comes back down to is our understanding of conflict and our understanding of certain regions of the world, understanding their social dynamic and how it's connected in with the political realm. The situation in Iraq is an example of this, where the ethnic sectarian violence created a political vacuum to allow a radical organization to take a foothold in a country and this is where we're at.

We need to be able to learn from those lessons and see what we can do in the early stages to prevent it from getting into a full-scale coalition effort to stop the threat.

• (0925)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Maybe very briefly, what implications would that have for our work with our allies, both organizational allies like the United Nations and our coalition partners? Coalitions are broadening. New cultures are coming into the resolution of conflicts. It's a very complex picture and it requires, in my view, a lot of coordination. Would you make very brief comments on that?

The Chair: Sir, if you could do that in 30 seconds or less I would appreciate it.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We need to set the example of it. We have some great lessons here in Canada, and I think we've already started this where our Operation Impact mission was done in collaboration with myself, Minister Dion, and Minister Bibeau. It set the example of interdepartmental works.

It's not only at the leadership level, our departments also work in collaboration as well. My counterparts around the world, especially in the European nations and particularly in the U.S., realize the value of this. They need to also start working together.

The next mechanism for us as a coalition is to be able to bring these resources together and then determine how we use multilateral organizations like the United Nations, like NATO, to be able to bring proper solutions to this.

Very quickly, on my first meetings at NATO with my counterparts, these are the discussions that we were having. How do we look at capacity building early on in areas and at bolstering the security forces so they can provide better policing? How do you bolster the governance structure in countries to prevent radical groups from taking a foothold in a country?

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor for the last five minutes of the first round.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, in February 2016, the International Institute for Strategic Studies concluded that after the long deployment of troops to Afghanistan, Canada would not be able to reorient its defence posture and reconcile plans and resources overnight.

Minister, we both served in the military during the same period. At the end of the 1990s and the beginning of 2000, we experienced the transition of a peacetime army to a more warlike one.

My question is simple. How do you think the troops perceive that transition, as they were in combat in Afghanistan and will now be asked to act as blue berets in UN missions, without being able to intervene, either to fight or in the decisions that will be taken as to the course of these peace missions?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: When we look from the outside at how the conflict has changed and how we have transitioned... I have been on peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and then full-on conflict. One thing that I'm very proud of now, as a minister, is that the Canadian Armed Forces, because of our size, are actually quite adaptable to situations. We provide very good theatre-specific training, so regardless of the mission we're going on, we'll have the right training moving forward.

The staple of the training will always be there. That's going to be for the combat training for the kinetic fight. That provides you with the baseline. What we bring to the table, as Canadians, and what our troops bring to the table, is the uniqueness of our experience. I still can't explain what it is, to be honest, but watching our troops overseas, they do provide a unique thought process when it comes to dealing with other cultures and nations.

The Canadian Armed Forces are well suited and can adapt quite rapidly to various missions. Even in Afghanistan, we were doing full-on combat, but at the same time, in some cases, we were actually doing very similar things to what we were doing in Bosnia.

Canadians can be proud of the fact that the Canadian Armed Forces can be adaptable. Having said that, we still need to ensure that we have the right capabilities and the right training in place to look at potential future threats that we may face.

● (0930)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: You will remember that when we were in Bosnia, we had to transition from the United Nations to NATO. The troops were satisfied to exchange their blue berets for green ones and to know that they would from there on in have clear rules of engagement and would be able to engage in combat.

Now that our troops have been trained in combat, how much time will it take for them to make this transition? In other words, how long will it take to change the soldiers' mindset and get them to accept being blue berets?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I don't think that the transition takes very long. For example, when we were wearing the blue helmets, we were involved in serious situations where we lost troops in Bosnia. When we look at transition, we should be looking at what the situation requires. In Bosnia, the United Nations came for a certain period of time and as the situation changed, NATO took over that piece to bring greater stability.

Instead of looking at it from what we're going to do, what we need to get better at—and in Canada, we're very well poised for it—having a better understanding of the problem that we're facing, and then look at what type of capability we need to bring in and, more importantly, which multilateral organization is well-suited to bring stability into that region.

Regarding our troops, I'm personally confident—and I'll have General Vance speak to that, considering that he commands the Canadian Armed Forces—that our troops are very well suited to adapt to various threat environments.

Gen Jonathan Vance: Thanks, Minister.

I certainly agree with the minister. I think our edge has been well-educated and well-trained troops, well equipped and well led. I think that gives us an edge internationally and places us in the first tier of nations among our closest allies.

I'm not quite certain I understand your premise, where we were one way and now we're going to be another. We're not necessarily facing a broad transition just to one type of force. I think we remain *polyvalents*. Canada's reputation and I think our strength is that we bring the right capability to the right conflict at the right time, so if we need to do peace support operations, we do peace support operations. If we need to do train, advise, and assist, we do train, advise, and assist, and if we have to do combat operations, we do combat operations.

Maintaining a good baseline level of training from which you can transition rapidly to theatre-specific training is one of our great skills and talents in the armed forces, and I think we are very well postured as a result of our breadth of experience over time, including in the Balkans, to bring a variety of different skill sets to bear because no conflict now is static and in just one form.

I think you can be confident that the armed forces are and will continue to be well postured to be agile to work within a UN blue beret environment or work in a potentially more kinetic environment with a coalition of the willing. I think we have that range.

The Chair: That's all the time we have left for that particular question.

Thank you to the CDS for that.

I made a mistake earlier. We have another 12 minutes left on the mandate letter, so I'm going to move to Mr. Gerretsen. We're back on track, and everyone has their time.

Mr. Gerretsen, you have the floor.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): How long do I have, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have seven minutes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today.

• (0935)

The Chair: My mistake, you have five minutes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I'm going to jump right in. I have two questions and I don't think there has been a whole lot of discussion around the table, other than perhaps the first one, about care of our military personnel, and I'd like to explore that a little.

Coming from Kingston, where we have CFB Kingston, I'm quite familiar with the military resource centre, which is a centre that helps to provide services to family members of military who are deployed. One of the things I unfortunately witnessed was the fact that it seemed a lot more of the community was being depended upon to provide those services, and I think there is a much better role for us to play.

I'm curious what you think the government's role will be in that. In particular, in light of the fact that today is International Women's Day, it being March 8—and we're hoping to get more women into the military—and unfortunately as we're seeing that occur more pressures are being put on providing those resources. The resources that we provide to families of military personnel in particular will change with the fact that more women are coming into the military.

Could you expand on what your commitment will be to make sure that those families are taken care of? As you so eloquently put it earlier on, they are part of this process of having their loved ones deployed.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We have an absolute commitment to the member's family.

I think every Canadian knows, if things at home are not going well and there are concerns, how can one person operate effectively?

This point is even more poignant for our men and women who serve, because they are in very complex environments, dealing with very sophisticated equipment and very high-level threat environments. We need to make sure that they feel their families are looked after. That commitment will always be there to our troops.

Talking about the women in the Canadian Armed Forces, we're very fortunate to have a very inclusive Canadian Armed Forces. We do have some work to do in terms of increasing their numbers. There are some challenges that we need to overcome in terms of making it easier for women to look at the Canadian Armed Forces as a career, and at the same time, not to feel that they have to choose between a family and.... I know, personally. For example, there is paternity leave, and our members are encouraged to use that. But there is some work that needs to be done to increase our numbers.

One thing I can say with hand on heart is that the level of commitment and support by our leadership for increasing the number of women in uniform.... How we do that is going to take a bit more effort. I think today, especially the day that it is, we need to be able to send a message out to Canadians about our commitment to them.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

Quickly, from a layman's perspective, talk to me about the importance of Arctic sovereignty. It's something that seems to come up every once in a while in the media. It's something that I think resonates with Canadians because they understand the implications of it.

In your mandate letter you're given the directive to form a new defence policy for Canada. You go on to say that there will be a collaboration with Canada and North America. What do you see as our role in that in comparison to our partners in North America, in Arctic sovereignty in particular?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Very briefly, we have really good mechanisms in place, and one is in NORAD.

We also can't look at Arctic sovereignty strictly as national defence. With Minister Tootoo, we have to look at the wider picture of what type of presence we want to have in the Arctic with our Coast Guard. As National Defence, we provide one umbrella for that. We have good mechanisms in place, but we do need to be mindful of what that defence is going to look like, what type of surveillance, what type of presence.

I don't want to get ahead of myself before the defence review in answering some of these questions.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You expect that to play a big role, and that will at least come out in it?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Absolutely, yes.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank Minister Sajjan, General Vance, and Mr. Forster for taking time out of their very hectic schedules and coming here and appearing before the committee. This was a great opportunity for us as members to get the answers on your mandate letter and on the supplementary estimates (C).

I want to continue on this discussion that we've been having about Russian aggression. You talk about it in Ukraine. You're requesting some more money for Operation Unifier, for the training mission. I'd like to follow up on the question of Arctic sovereignty. Do you see the aggressive posturing of Russia, not just in Ukraine but in terms of what we're doing in Operation Reassurance and bolstering up Eastern Europe, and the buildup of Russian forces by opening two new military bases and reopening six others in the Arctic, as being disconcerting at the very least and something that we'd have to match?

• (0940)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: It is concerning given Russia's posture. I think it goes even beyond that when we look at their early days in Crimea, then into Ukraine, and then their involvement in Syria. Russia needs to come back to the table and be a productive partner in the world. With regard to how we deal with this, I think it's important that national defence priorities be well nested with my counterpart Minister Dion's.

I think it's very important to bring Russia back to a level where it can be a responsible partner. That being said, I've had some very good discussions with my NATO counterparts with regard to making sure that we are responsive to Russian aggression and making sure that we have a responsive force. We are doing a considerable amount, I think, with our NATO partners. We have a company in Poland, as well as in the Ukraine, and there are some early discussions going on right now regarding what Canada's role is going to be with NATO.

One thing we need to be very mindful of, when we look at Russian aggression, is that NATO's solidarity is critically important to this. We do have that. As we move forward, I think having NATO working well together and seeing how responsive NATO can actually be sends a powerful message to Russia. Many meetings with my counterpart, Minister Dion, are coming up, and the Warsaw summit is coming up in July as well.

Mr. James Bezan: I'm going to shift gears a little bit here.

Your mandate letter talks about you working with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to launch an open and transparent competition to replace the CF-18 fighter aircraft.

During the campaign, the Liberal platform said, quite bluntly, that we would not buy the F-35 stealth fighter-bomber. Now cabinet has set up a secret committee to look at procurement. To follow up on that, just a couple of weeks ago, I understand, National Defence put almost \$33 million into the consortium to maintain our position there.

I'm wondering if you're having a change of heart on the F-35 and are seeing it as something our military wants. There are some comments out there, such as those by George Petrolekas of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, who said he didn't think there would be a significant savings in acquisition and he suspected there probably wouldn't be a significant savings in operating costs either that could be plowed into naval shipbuilding if we didn't get the F-35 and got something else.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: One thing I'll be very clear on is that we're committed to replacing the CF-18s. It's too early right now, I think, to discuss some of the costs of the aircraft. There are a lot of details

that I, personally, have to go into myself. We need to be able to choose what type of capability we need. When we have the defence review, we'll be able to decide what type of aircraft is needed to suit the needs of Canada, including within NORAD and to meet our responsibilities to NATO.

In terms of the program, we have been part of that program for industrial benefits. Going through the process and making that decision allows our Canadian industry to take part in the industrial benefits. Right now a decision has not been made. That in no way is an indication that we're going to be looking at buying the F-35s. We are part of that program; however, we're committed to replacing the CF-18s.

• (0945)

Mr. James Bezan: But the Liberal promise was to not buy the F-35.

I was actually in Magellan Aerospace in Winnipeg just on Friday, touring their facility, at which they are already creating the vertical tail fins for the F-35. They already employ over 200 staff; they're going to have to go to over 300. We also know that over 60 companies have already acquired over \$750 million in F-35 contracts. If we don't buy the F-35, all those jobs are going to be cancelled, because we aren't going to be participating as a true full partner in the stealth jet fighter program.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I don't think those jobs are going to be cancelled. These Canadian companies have been selected for a particular reason because of their skills. I know there's a company even in B.C. that has a uniqueness that it brings to the aerospace industry. This does not mean that these companies are going to be losing these benefits. As we move forward, regardless of what aircraft is decided upon, we need to make sure that there are going to be 100% industrial benefits for Canada. That will always be part of any decision.

The Chair: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer.

I'm just going to suspend for two minutes so we can shift gears, get new witnesses, and get some speaking notes for the next segment, which is going to be focused on the supplementary estimates (C).

• (0945)

(Pause)

• (0950)

The Chair: I'd like to resume our meeting, focusing on the supplementary estimates (C) in the remaining time. This is a reminder that the minister will have to depart after 30 minutes, and maybe a little bit less than that now that we've eaten into the time a bit.

Minister, if you could introduce the new witnesses, I would appreciate that and then you have the floor for your opening statements.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to introduce Lieutenant-General Thibault, the vice-chief of the defence staff, and Mr. Claude Rochette, who's the ADM of finance, and Greta Bossenmaier, who's the chief of CSE.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. You have the floor for your opening comments.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am here to discuss the Department of National Defence supplementary estimates (C). The department is requesting an additional \$191.6 million in spending authorities to complete fiscal year 2015-16. This net change is in addition to the \$219.8 million increase in supplementary estimates (A) and it brings the department's total budgetary authority for the fiscal year to \$19.7 billion.

As I will explain, this additional funding is primarily for overseas operations, namely Operation Impact and Operation Unified.

As you are aware, Operation Impact is our military contribution to the U.S.-led global coalition to counter ISIL. Last month my cabinet colleagues and I spoke in detail about the government's efforts to refocus and enhance this mission. To be clear, however, the additional funding identified in these estimates is only for those elements of the mission that are already under way, so the previous year.

The Canadian Armed Forces are currently conducting air operations using Polaris air refueller and Aurora reconnaissance aircraft. They are providing training and assistance to the Iraqi security forces, providing capacity building to regional forces, and supporting the coalition with highly skilled personnel.

With that in mind, the funding in these estimates is mostly for personnel allowances, such as hazard pay, operating and maintenance costs for aircrafts and vehicles, and lodging costs.

In total, the department is requesting \$211.7 million in additional funding for Operation Impact for the year 2015-16. The final costs for this fiscal year will be reported to Parliament in our next departmental performance report. As we look toward the next fiscal year, funding for the refocused mission will be reflected in the budget later this month. Following the budget, this committee will have the opportunity to further consider the expenses associated with this operation.

In these estimates, additional funding is also being requested for Operation Unifier, Canada's training mission in the Ukraine. As you may know, approximately 200 Canadian soldiers are providing training in the areas of tactical soldier skills, explosive ordnance disposal, military policing, medical support, logistics, and flight safety. This training mission is an important component of Canada's support to the Ukraine as that country seeks to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. As I said two weeks ago in the House, our military trainers are among the best in the world as they are providing a critical service to our Ukrainian counterparts. To support these activities, the department is requesting \$7.1 million.

This brings the total incremental cost of the operation for this fiscal year to \$16 million. Of note, \$18.9 million of this funding comes from Global Affairs Canada.

In the estimates before us today, the department has also requested funds to support the health care of our men and women in uniform. Specifically, \$2.1 million is marked for the construction of a health service centre in Saint-Jean, Quebec.

Today's estimates also include some transfers to other government departments. The most significant transfer is \$8.8 million to Shared

Services Canada for the Carling campus refit project. Starting this fall, National Defence headquarters is moving approximately 8,500 departmental employees and military personnel to a consolidated location at the Carling campus. To support that move, Shared Services Canada is undertaking the necessary modifications and upgrades to the existing buildings at the Carling campus. Together, National Defence, Public Services and Procurement Canada, and Shared Services Canada are working together to minimize the cost of the project to the greatest extent possible.

In closing, this government is steadfast in its commitment to effectively support the Canadian Armed Forces as they undertake the defence mission for Canada. In the coming year, as I mentioned earlier, I look forward to undertaking a comprehensive review of the priorities, activities, and resources that make up that defence mission. In the immediate term, I can assure you that these supplementary estimates represent core requirements for National Defence right now. This funding contributes directly to the operational success of our Canadian Armed Forces, and it helps to ensure that our military personnel and their civilian counterparts have the resources and support they need.

On that note, I'll be happy to take your questions.

• (0955)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Rioux, you have the floor for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, Minister.

Minister, as you know, I represent the riding of Saint-Jean. The Minister of National Defence has asked for almost \$2.2 million in funding for costs related to the construction of the Health Services Centre at the Saint-Jean garrison.

Could you describe the project to us, tell us what its total cost will be, and when you think the work will be completed?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: On that, unexpected funds from 2014-15 are being reprofiled into the current fiscal year. The funds are specifically related to preparation for the cost of the new health services facility, which I believe will be a new dental and health facility.

I don't know the exact date of when it will be completed, though. I can get back to you on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Fine.

Rather than the question I intended to ask you in the beginning, I am going to ask one about your mandate letter instead.

I am surprised that the supplementary estimates do not contain any funds for the Royal Military College Saint Jean, whose garrison is in this riding.

Given the new mission of the Canadian Forces, which is military assistance and supporting populations, the Royal Military College Saint-Jean is planning to offer a humanities baccalaureate. It would focus on the new needs of the army and would promote the recruitment of French Canadians into the Canadian Armed Forces. In fact, the alignment of the Canadian and Quebec school systems is something of a problem.

Do you think that funds will be earmarked in an upcoming budget for the Royal Military College Saint-Jean, more specifically for a new humanities baccalaureate?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I just wanted to let you know that when I was made aware of the project.... I think it is an important point to make if you want to make sure that when we recruit the right calibre of people we have the right institutions to train them. I think the military college plays an important role.

We are looking extensively at this project, but unfortunately I can't announce anything just yet. I want to make sure that we go through the proper analysis for this. I do recognize the importance of the role that it has played in the past and can play in the future.

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Thank you. That is very encouraging.

Now that I have talked about the riding of Saint-Jean, I am going to move to another topic.

Local projects were mentioned. The Department of National Defence is requesting authority to transfer close to \$8.8 million to Shared Services Canada for the provision and installation of information technology equipment and infrastructure for the Carling Campus re-fit project.

Could you describe that project and explain in more detail how the amount will be spent?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Before I turn it over to the vice-chief to answer you with more details for this question, I just got the answer. The health centre will be finished in 2019.

[*Translation*]

Lieutenant-General Guy R. Thibault (Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With regard to our Carling Campus project and the relocation of 8,500 National Defence members in the national capital region, we are working on this in conjunction with Shared Services Canada. Shared Services Canada together with the Department of National Defence and Public Services and Procurement Canada are responsible for preparing the site.

This involves the responsibilities of Shared Services Canada regarding the installation of technology and information systems and all of the technology that will allow us to work in a very modern way. In addition, the use of mobile technology would be entirely appropriate.

All of these costs are related to the retrofit of the site for the members of our National Defence team.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have no further questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Very good.

Let's move over to you, Ms. Gallant. You have the floor for seven minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be sharing my time with Mr. Bezan.

Almost six years ago, we had our JPSUs, our integrated personnel support centres, stand up. At the time, they were open to veterans and currently serving soldiers from all conflicts. It was a good way to ensure that the proper medical appointments were being made, but over time they've become victims of their own success, in a way, because they're overloaded.

Now we're hearing that soldiers who are in precarious positions are just left to check in, as opposed to going there and having the people in place to ensure they're still feeling that they're part of an active unit. Also, the appointment times are taking longer. That had been remedied with extra mental health care workers, but we're hearing that there are some changes going on and that the soldiers are not getting the care they currently need.

Can you tell me where in the supplementaries the monetary changes are? What exactly are these changes that are about to occur and that seem to be in conflict with the care that they initially were receiving in the past?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I believe you've raised a very important point. When it was started, I think JPSU was a great vehicle to address the challenges that our troops faced, especially when it came to the transition and the care when a unit could not provide that personal care. Even though it may not be in the supplementary estimates, I can assure you that there is a considerable amount of focus being put, not only on JPSU but on the overall context, and we've discussed the wellness of our troops in broad strokes.

For JPSU, we are adding some resources in terms of the command relationship and making it more robust, but it has to now, as we have learned.... It provided great support, but now, as we have learned from the different types of needs of the troops, JPSU also needs to evolve as well to make sure that we stay current for that.

It's going to be more, not only from a monetary sense. We need to make sure that the whole structure is in place and works well, that it fits well into the unit, and how it's also going to be transitioning into Veterans Affairs, but there is considerable focus on this, though.

• (1005)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The military has started to make strides towards the issue of sexual misconduct in the military. I am hearing at the top levels, at the command level, that the job is being done. However, when we talked with the victims, they say largely that they feel like it's lip service. They were left to call a 1-800 number when something like this happened. They're not outside the chain of command for their care. They're required to see the same military doctors and they're really not getting the care that they need. If it's specialized care, mental health care, that they need, it's taking up to five months to get the very first appointment.

Is there some place in the supplementary estimates where you can point out this additional care, even though it may mean going outside the regular military medical chain?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: First of all, I want to make sure the Canadian Armed Forces is a harassment-free environment, and anybody who has been victimized in any way does need to come forward. I would say that the ruthlessness that the CDS has put to this, in making sure the chain of command is fully aware and all commanders right down to the lowest level implement this, has been passed down.

As to how it's going to be done on the ground, I would say more work needs to be done in making sure that anybody who has been victimized has confidence in the system. I don't have the exact details of how the system actually works, but I know that a lot more work needs to be done. The main priorities are making sure that we create a harassment-free environment and making sure that the victims are treated in the respectful manner that they deserve.

The Chair: Very quickly, I'd give a general reminder of relevance.

Mr. Bezan, you have the floor.

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

I wanted to go into the supplementary estimates (C) a little bit. There are two transfers of around \$331,000 to support departmental staff located at missions abroad. I'm assuming that's part of Operation Provision—

It's not? Then, what was that money for?

For Operation Provision, where is that money budgeted? We definitely had troops abroad. We had to provide force protection for those troops who were helping Citizenship and Immigration Canada in the refugee screening process. There are also the costs associated with converting summer barracks into winter barracks to winterize those barracks for the possible settlement of Syrian refugees at Valcartier, Trenton, Kingston, Borden, and others. To my understanding, those haven't even been used yet.

Where are those costs coming from? Is this coming out of ordinary operational budgets of the Canadian Armed Forces? Is it really fair to winterize barracks that weren't used?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Before I hand it over to the deputy minister to answer the detailed questions on that, when creating a project of this magnitude, the military has to have the ability to be able to respond. We wanted to make sure that we had the right lodging in place. The last thing we wanted was to create a project where we weren't ready for it.

Even though the interim lodging would have been for refugees, it also allows our troops to benefit, because we can now use the facilities that are upgraded and winterized, whether it's for courses or for training as well.

I'll let the deputy minister answer some of the more detailed questions.

Mr. John Forster (Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For the transfers of staff abroad, there are two components. Part of the transfer is to Shared Services Canada, who provide the IT support for defence and military representatives abroad. The other component is a transfer to Global Affairs Canada. When we station military or civilian staff at embassies around the world, we pay a little bit to Global Affairs for their accommodations, their computer support, and so on. Those are the amounts for that.

• (1010)

The Chair: That's it for time.

Mr. Garrison, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much. I appreciate seeing in these estimates an amount for Operation Impact for 2015-16. It's reassuring that the rest of the Canadian Forces don't have to try to find the money to support it. I'm glad to see that item here, and I know, Mr. Minister, that you're saying that in the next budget we'll see an amount for the next fiscal year.

But we're going to be voting on this mission in Parliament and we haven't had any indication of the time frame. I'm wondering—and I'm phrasing this in terms of financial planning—how long you anticipate that this mission might last. In the NDP, we've expressed our concern that this military mission is not the best way to defeat ISIS. How long, in terms of planning, is this mission going to last?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We can't put a timeline... It would be difficult to answer that question, because it's difficult to be able to predict how the plan will work. Right now, there is obviously a military focus for this. When we review the mission for next year, even though our commitments are longer, we want to continue to review what capabilities are needed. I'm hoping that if the situation improves there will be less emphasis on the military, and then we can then put greater emphasis on capacity building from Global Affairs and on development as well. It's difficult to put a timeline to it.

We also have to be very cognizant that if we don't focus on stability in Iraq and in the region, we will pay for it in some other way. It's important for all of us to work together as coalition partners to bring stability to the region and to look at it in a wider context, but I'm hoping that the military plan will be effective so that the diplomacy and development plan can kick in. My hope is for that to happen next year—the earlier the better.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I'm going to switch to some very specific things under supplementary estimates (C) that I had hoped to see some money allocated for. We had shortfalls or cutbacks under the Conservatives in some areas that have had a big impact on the Canadian Forces.

One of those is to the Canadian reserves, which are running on average 20% to 25% below strength. My understanding is that a cut to recruiting is one of the key reasons that this happened.

The second one is that in October 2011 the Conservatives ended the practice of rolling over civilian employees who had been at DND for three years into permanent positions. As a result, we now have an increasing number of civilian employees who have been in what's called a temporary position for four, five, six, and even seven years. It's making them and their families absorb the cost of this flexibility for the Canadian Forces.

The third one is the closing of the Lester B. Pearson Canadian International Peacekeeping Training Centre, which had 20 years of world-leading work in training for peacekeeping. Your mandate letter calls for Canada to resume that international leading role. My question on this is whether there is any intention to recreate the Pearson centre or an institution like it.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'll just answer the question of the reserves and the peacekeeping centre first and then hand over the question from the civilian side to the deputy minister.

In terms of the reserves I think they play an integral role; we know this. In terms of the budget and having some pretty good experience in the reserves myself it's not the amount of money. There are challenges within the recruiting system. One of them is that when recruiting has slowed down it's difficult to start ramping back up. That is changing, so we need to be able to recruit to the levels, plus we have the geographical challenges where some areas cannot recruit to certain levels, it's just difficult, but other areas are capped. We are looking at options right now of potentially allowing the reserves to grow larger in certain portions of the country while the regional challenges are dealt with within other areas. The reserves will always have a focus. I don't think there are any budgetary challenges for the reserves. The defence review will also take a look at how we're going to utilize the reserves into the future, and there are some pretty good ideas on that.

In terms of the peacekeeping centre, yes, we are looking at how we utilize it better, but also at how it fits into the wider context. The centre itself is not the only solution. How do we look at which country's leadership to take and be able to train them while we potentially may look at capacity building as well? When we take the leadership from a different military, we're also looking at the capacity building. I'm hoping that as we look at the wider context of National Defence's role as part of peacekeeping with Global Affairs and also with the UN, we're going to look at all the capabilities, not just the peacekeeping centre and how we can make conflict prevention more effective.

• (1015)

Mr. John Forster: I'll comment quickly on the question of terms. The previous policy had been that after three years of terms the department would convert them into permanent employees. That was suspended as the department worked through its reductions. We're

now reviewing that policy. We know there are a number of areas where we need to grow capacity, for example, in procurement. We're reviewing that policy and we're discussing that with the unions as well and we'll continue. We'll hopefully make a decision this year on whether we want to put it back in place or not.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

The minister has to depart. If that's still the case I would like to suspend for two minutes for the minister to depart and we can resume.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Thank you very much. As you know if my schedule permits I'd be happy to answer any of your questions that weren't answered in this forum.

The Chair: Thank you, sir, for coming. We appreciate it.

• (1015)

(Pause)

• (1015)

The Chair: Order. We're going to resume the supplementary estimates (C) discussion. Leading off for the last question in round one for seven minutes is Ms. Romanado.

You have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You spoke today about the importance of creating a new defence strategy for Canada. However, that initiative is not mentioned in supplementary estimates (C). That is why I would like to know what personnel resources and what budgets will be allocated to that initiative, and whether this review will be carried out by an independent organization.

• (1020)

Mr. John Forster: Thank you for the question.

Regarding the resources for the review of our national defence policy, we are looking at next year. There are no funds marked for this in the 2015-2016 fiscal year budget. A budget will be allocated to complete the review of the national policy and carry out the consultations. We are in the process of determining a budget, but in this case, the funds will probably come from our department's operating budget. They will thus be included in supplementary estimates (A) and (B).

The Minister of Defence will soon announce how we will establish the policy, carry out the review and conduct the public consultations. This will probably take place over the next weeks and months.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Fine.

There are four cadet corps in my riding. This program is very important for young people throughout Canada.

I would like to know whether there is a plan to increase the funds allocated to that initiative.

LGen Guy R. Thibault: Thank you for the question, madam.

As the Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff, I am in fact responsible for the cadet program. There is nothing in these supplementary estimates, but to manage the Cadet Program, the Department of Defence invests around \$200 million. In addition, in order to ensure that we can better support cadet corps in our communities, we have a renewal program. That is where the program is truly put into effect. It is very important to see to it that these \$200 million are focused on local programs. There is also the national program, which is implemented in cadet camps during the summer. We really ensure that we use the available funds to offer a program that meets the needs of young people who are engaged in this program, which has national importance.

Thank you.

[English]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I have one final question. This is with regard to transfers to other organizations in the supplementary (C)s.

Approximately \$250,000 will be transferred to Indian Affairs and Northern Development to pay for costs associated with unexploded explosive ordnance services for the Okanagan Indian Band, as well as Tsuu T'ina Nation. Given our renewed relationship with first nations, while we appreciate the amounts that are being allocated during the supplementary (C)s, are we willing to put any more resources into these initiatives given the importance of our relationship with first nations?

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

We actually put a very important priority on this program. We have a regular program to do this, to clean up unexploded ordnance on not only first nations lands but on any other lands that were used after World War II, etc., and since then for military training. The two items here are the amounts we are asking for to complete this fiscal year, but we also have a very well-established ongoing program to try to clean up those areas in partnership, particularly with first nations where it's their land. That will be in our budget for next year.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Do I have any more time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have two minutes, if you like.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Okay.

In addition, I notice there are some transfers from other organizations—specifically SSHRC, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and NSERC, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council—to support federally funded research at the Royal Military College in Kingston as well the Canada research chairs.

Can you elaborate on whether this research will be at the undergraduate level, or are we looking at graduate-level research?

Mr. John Forster: About \$1 million coming from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council is going into RMC Kingston, and about \$5,600 into RMC Saint-Jean. These research

grants are from the SSHRC for projects and labs. I don't have the specific projects for those two, but if you'd like that information, we'd be happy to provide it to the chair.

Another \$350,000 from NSERC is going to RMC of Canada. That is to support four new professors going into RMC in those fields. I can get you the exact subjects if you want their specialties.

• (1025)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I'm sure I can find it on the NSERC website.

Mr. John Forster: All right. Great.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks very much.

Mr. Gerretsen, you have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have one question. Depending on the length of the answer, I'd be happy to share any remaining time with another member if they have a question.

I see that roughly \$1.2 million is going toward the phase two of Canada's cybersecurity strategy. Can you elaborate a little bit more specifically on what the money will be spent on? As well, can you provide a bit of an update on the strategy as a whole and where we are with it right now?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier (Chief, Communications Security Establishment): Sure. Thank you very much for the question.

I'll start by noting that from a CSE perspective, cybersecurity is a really important part of our mandate. We look at cybersecurity from a number of different perspectives. We look at it, of course, in terms of protecting the Government of Canada networks and the information that's contained on those networks. We do that in association with partners from other departments, such as Shared Services Canada and the Treasury Board Secretariat, for example.

We also have the mandate to ensure or help to protect systems of importance for the Government of Canada. We're working with our partners in Public Safety in particular on phase two of the cyber strategy, which is looking at critical infrastructure. We're working with them to see how we can help support private sectors, in particular critical infrastructure sectors, in terms of cybersecurity. That includes, for example, sharing some cyber-threat information that we have, or cyber-mitigation advice that we might have, given the focus we have on cyber from the Government of Canada perspective.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: How much was spent in phase one?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Overall, on the strategy, I don't have that. It's a Public Safety-led initiative.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay. You've described what's involved. Can you provide an update as to where we are at this point?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Right now we're looking to see how we can further support the private sector in cybersecurity, and again, from a CSE perspective. This is a horizontal initiative. There are other departments involved led by Public Safety.

From a CSE perspective, we're looking at things like being able to share some of our advice, for example, in cyber-threats we're seeing coming across the world to Canada and also in terms of potential mitigation advice that we may have.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you. I'll defer the rest of my time to the next member.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I have a short question, Mr. Chair.

The additional request for funding of \$211.7 million for Operation Impact says that the funding for the refocused mission will be reflected in the budget later this month. Do we know yet, on any proposed change to the scope of the mission, whether it's going to be seen as a cost-saving, cost-neutral, or an increase in cost over what has been done in 2015 and is currently being done?

I'm not sure if it's appropriate at this time to ask that question, but I'm curious to see what a refocused mission might look like financially.

Mr. John Forster: I believe that when the Prime Minister announced the change in the mission, he announced the funding amounts as well. For the military portion next year, the estimate is about \$306 million. That will include some contingency, which we may or may not use.

The first year of the mission, which was from August 2014 to March 2015, so only a half-year when it was just rolling out, we spent about \$70 million. For this fiscal year, the one ending in March, we'll have final results on the exact costs later this year, which we'll provide to Parliament.

Mr. Darren Fisher: You're not sure yet whether the proposed refocused mission would be a cheaper mission.

Mr. John Forster: There will certainly be some savings in returning the six CF-18s and the support crew back to Canada, but at the same time we're sending more trainers. This current year is the first full year of Operation Impact. I don't yet have the final numbers for the end of March.

• (1030)

Mr. Darren Fisher: There are no assumptions being made, then, that this might be a cheaper mission or a more expensive mission.

Mr. John Forster: Not at this point.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Paul-Hus, you have five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Forster, Mr. Thibault, refocusing Operation IMPACT involves assisting Iraqi security forces by providing equipment to them such as small arms, ammunition and optics. Regarding the \$200 million requested in supplementary estimates (C), could you elaborate on the type and quantity of arms, ammunition and optics to be provided,

and how much of it will come from the funds requested in the supplementary estimates (C)?

Mr. John Forster: The budget for the program to provide equipment is a part of Operation IMPACT, but for next year. Consequently, no amount has been set aside for the fiscal year 2015-2016.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: So the cost of arms, ammunitions and optics is not included in supplementary estimates (C).

Mr. John Forster: That is correct.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: I see.

In the beginning of 2015-2016, the budget of the Department of National Defence was \$18.9 billion. During the year there were three supplementary estimates that totalled \$769 million, bringing the final amount to \$19.7 billion.

As for the 2016-2017 budget, since an amount of \$305 million is earmarked for Operation IMPACT, do you expect the budget to be \$19.2 billion initially, or do you expect it to be at the same level as the 2015-2016 budget? What will be the scale of the cuts, if there are any?

Mr. John Forster: The Operation IMPACT funds are for supplies for the next year. Once the budget has been tabled on March 22, we will come back before the committee. This will probably be in the fall. We will then ask for additional funds to finance Operation IMPACT, i.e. the \$306 million. We will have to wait until the budget is tabled on March 22 to confirm the amount for Operation IMPACT.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: So, you do not expect these \$300 million to be in the initial budget.

Mr. John Forster: Correct; this will be added to the National Defence budgetary expenses for next year, to be included in the supplementary estimates.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Do I have a little time left, Mr. Chair?

[English]

The Chair: Yes, you do. You have about three minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Fine.

About the Quebec City Armoury, I would like to know if the \$95 million are a part of the National Defence budget, and if that is the case, if the budget is confirmed and protected.

[English]

Colonel Claude Rochette (Assistant Deputy Minister (Finance) and Chief Financial Officer, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

[Translation]

We will receive an amount of money this year for funds needed for that project. In addition, that amount is already included in the funds we will be receiving over the next few years. They will be a part of our main estimates.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Fine.

I would like to go back to the point raised by my colleague regarding the Reserve Force.

The 2011 report of General Leslie, who is now a member of Parliament and a colleague, mentioned cuts to the Reserve Force. I was myself once a reservist and I experienced an era where budgets were more or less adequate. On the face of it they seem very interesting, but at the unit level, there are cuts of unknown origin.

Can you confirm to us that in the next estimates, adequate funds will be allocated to the Reserve Force?

LGen Guy R. Thibault: Thank you for the question.

I think it is quite true that investments in the Reserve Force are comparable to those earmarked for all other military needs. To obtain a budget that will allow us to do some truly adequate planning, we need confidence.

Our purpose is to instil confidence in all of the elements of the Canadian Forces, and this involves the budget of the Department of Defence which is established for a three-year period. We want to ensure that we can increase our resources either through the Reserve Force or the regular forces.

We are aware of the attrition rate within the Reserve Force. As the minister already mentioned, when there is a loss of resources, it is difficult to offset that through recruitment. At this time, we are really placing the emphasis on a renewal program for the Reserve Force. A few months ago, the Chief of the Defence Staff implemented a work program through which we want to strengthen the resources of the Reserve Force. Within our budgetary program, we want to ensure that we protect the funds that are earmarked for that force.

• (1035)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: That reflects the changes to the mission.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Spengemann, I'll give you three minutes, and then Mr. Bezan will get a couple of minutes. Then we're going to have to excuse our panel and vote on the votes.

The floor is yours.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have two very specific questions, because I also sit on the committee for public safety and emergency preparedness.

There are two transfers. They are both very small in magnitude, but I'd like to know the rationale.

The first one is to transfer \$3.4 million to Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness concerning the national search and rescue secretariat functions of control and supervision. I'm wondering if you could comment on the rationale of this transfer and if you have any information on how those funds are going to be spent.

Mr. John Forster: Last year the previous government made a decision to transfer not search and rescue but the secretariat to Public Safety. It's a small team of about 20 to 25 people that was in National Defence. It was felt it was better placed to work within Public Safety, because they're working closely with provinces, territories, and cities on emergency management. The secretariat, which is a coordination function, was moved to Public Safety to get them closer to that.

We still retain search and rescue responsibility using the air force, and so on. That part hasn't changed. This is just a transfer of the budget to Public Safety to go with that responsibility.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: In accordance with the decision to... Okay.

The second is a \$3-million transfer. It includes a number of agencies and departments under the Canadian safety and security program. I'll list some of them. They are Atomic Energy, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, nuclear safety, Security Intelligence Service, health, industry, National Research Council, Natural Resources, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Can you comment on that transfer in the context of the Canadian safety and security program and how the funds are going to be spent?

Mr. John Forster: Yes, sure.

There is a program called the Canadian safety and security program, and it funds research, technology, and development. Our research organization, DRDC, manages that program on behalf of all the departments. We hold the money. Departments generate proposals to do research projects for better safety and security, new technology, and we're the banker. Once a project is peer-reviewed and approved, we transfer the money to the sponsoring department that will conduct the research, and that's what these transfers are.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: That's all I have, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have about ninety seconds, Mr. Bezan, for a quick question and answer, please.

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

I just want to ask a quick question, then, on Arctic security. There's \$1.7 million that has been requested for Fisheries and Oceans to go towards our Nanisivik Arctic naval facility. I just want to get an update on how that's going. Yesterday General Vance appeared before the Senate committee on national security and defence and brought up the issue of drones with the justice program, using them for surveillance in the Arctic, and also he was speculating on the arming of those drones.

I would like to get comments on that as well.

Mr. John Forster: Quickly, with respect to the transfer in the supplementary estimates for Fisheries and Oceans, it's actually the money. We are transferring property from the Fisheries and Oceans department to ND. It's about 43 hectares, which will be part of that Nanisivik port. So that's the money we owe them for that property transfer.

I think the project is moving along very well. If you'd like, Mr. Chair, we'd be happy to send you a more detailed update on the status of the project, but we're pleased with how it's progressing.

LGen Guy R. Thibault: Thank you, Mr. Bezan, for the question.

Quickly, on the JUSTAS program, which is our joint unmanned surveillance and target acquisition program, we currently have a request for information to industry to solicit their views on how they might be able to satisfy our requirements. What we're looking for is expressed in the defence acquisition guide. As well, at the same time as we consult with the industry, the commander of the air force has reached out to allies to look at capabilities that might form a potential investment for us, but we will expect to have more, which we'll bring through our regular defence capabilities governance in the early spring.

•(1040)

The Chair: Thank you very much, General.

I'd like to thank the panel very much for appearing today. We appreciate your time and you're welcome to leave. If you'd like to stick around, that's up to you.

We're really pinched for time here so we're going to move on. We have to be out of this room in about four minutes, so I'm hoping we can get done what we came here to do.

By a show of hands, do I have unanimous consent of the committee to call all the votes on the supplementary estimates (C) together? I need a show of hands, please. Okay, it looks like we have unanimous consent.

COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT

Vote 1c—Program expenditures.....\$34,343,682

(Vote 1c agreed to)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Vote 1c—Operating expenditures.....\$215,485,400

Vote 5c—Capital expenditures.....\$2,148,160

(Votes 1c and 5c agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the chair report the votes on the supplementary estimates (C) to the House?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Yes and no.

The Chair: I saw all the hands yes, but you didn't...?

Mr. Randall Garrison: I'm voting against the estimates.

The Chair: You're voting against the estimates.

I didn't see you, my apologies.

Shall the chair report the votes on the supplementary estimates (C) to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you for your patience and thank you for your time.

The meeting is adjourned.

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