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## **Standing Committee on National Defence**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, November 15, 2016**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Stephen Fuhr**



## Standing Committee on National Defence

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• (1135)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)):** Welcome everybody. I call the meeting to order. I'm sorry that we're a little bit late. We had votes in the House. I'd like to welcome General Jonathan Vance, chief of the defence staff, to update this committee and Canadians on Canadian Forces current operations.

Sir, you have the floor.

**General Jonathan Vance (Chief of the Defence Staff, Department of National Defence):** Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for inviting me to appear before you once again.

As chief of the defence staff, I'm responsible for providing military advice to the Government of Canada, but I also have the privilege to engage parliamentary committees, such as yours, to discuss issues of importance to the defence of Canada. I'd like to personally thank you for all the work that you do.

I take my responsibility seriously, as do you. Today I will provide you with a short update on some of our operations, following which I will be happy to answer any questions that you have.

[Translation]

I'll begin today with a brief overview of my primary responsibility: the defence of Canada.

Our international operations tend to draw the most public attention. But while more than 1,500 Canadian military members are deployed internationally, tens of thousands work every day here at home, along all three coasts, and across the breadth of our country.

This assistance takes many forms. One of the most important is our involvement with the national search and rescue program. The Canadian Armed Forces operate three Joint Rescue Coordination Centres in Victoria, Trenton, and Halifax, and provide military assets to more than a thousand incidents each year.

[English]

These efforts are particularly important on our east and west coasts, where our citizens live and work with the dangers of wind and tide. Every day, air crews at Gander, Greenwood, Trenton, Winnipeg, and Comox stand ready to assist Canadians in distress, as do our search and rescue technicians. Each one is ready to leap into harm's way at a moment's notice, and each day they honour their motto, "That Others May Live".

We also have other standing missions inside our borders. Consider Operation PALACI as one example. Every year we deploy teams to the critical Rogers Pass in British Columbia, just three hours' drive from Kelowna. There, our gunners use artillery pieces to prevent snow build-up in the surrounding mountains, reducing the risk of a major avalanche that could block the pass. With more than 4,000 vehicles and 40 trains passing through Rogers Pass every day of the winter, this modest effort helps save lives and protects the vital flow of commercial goods between British Columbia and the rest of Canada.

[Translation]

I'm sure members of this committee will also be able to recall specific natural disasters to which the Canadian Armed Forces have been called to assist, such as floods in Manitoba, the effects of Hurricane Igor in Newfoundland, the evacuation of northern communities or the wildfires around Fort McMurray.

[English]

I would be remiss if I did not single out for special mention our reservists who are not only the face of the military in their communities—very often so—and ready to provide support in crisis, but also form an increasingly important part of operations and training in Canada.

There are many other efforts, most notably, our involvement in NORAD, seeing to our air and maritime security and surveillance, and our annual northern operations, which also contribute directly to the defence of Canada.

Moving to the international stage, we continue to support Iraqis as they fight to liberate their country from the scourge that is Daesh.

First, our special operators continue their mission to train, advise, and assist. In the early stages, this mission was principally focused on training. As peshmerga forces have closed with the dangerous and determined enemy, the advise and assist roles have become more prominent and are more critical.

Yes, our troops are working with the peshmerga as they move forward. They must, in order to do their job. But the peshmerga and the other Iraqi security forces are the ones doing the fighting.

We advise them on plans and tactics. We assist them if they are unable to defend themselves alone against the threat. We provide them with the same support we provide to other coalition partners, including our enhanced intelligence capability that continues to support the coalition.

Medical personnel have also been deployed to a role 2 medical unit in the region. The ministerial liaison team is working within the Government of Iraq, with a Canadian general officer leading, looking ahead to the future while also helping to insure Mosul is liberated.

I expect the coming months will be crucial. Iraqi military successes will need to be reinforced and solidified with political, economic, and diplomatic ones.

Finally, Mr. Chair, I will address the issue of peace support operations. While I cannot discuss the specifics at this time, I will provide an outline of the principles I consider as I approach this question.

The first is how these operations fit into our overall framework, in terms of conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict termination, and harm reduction. Can peace support operations produce desirable outcomes in this framework? If they are well managed, well planned, and supported, then yes, they can. They can help prevent conflicts from breaking out, or from worsening. They can help reduce harm to civilian populations.

• (1140)

[Translation]

Second, can we help achieve these outcomes? Yes, we can.

As a top-tier military, we can help improve the skills of both UN and local forces. We can help them be more effective and professional. This capacity-building will help these countries achieve lasting stability. We must help them achieve their own security. And finally, can we mitigate risks to our people and to civilians? Yes, we can.

We have learned lessons over several decades of UN missions. Beyond simply placing forces into a particular mission, we must retain some control over them. We must ensure they are able to act, and to protect themselves. And we must consider all aspects of a mission, including the different threats faced by sub-sections of the population, such as women, children, or fighting-age males—and plan how to address those.

These are the broad principles I must consider as Chief of Defence Staff. And I will be happy to expand upon these principles with you today.

[English]

Mr. Chair, committee members, I have not yet had the chance to mention Operation Unifier, or our reassurance efforts with NATO. I believe I could probably fill all of your time today with details on our current operations, but I would like to leave you with one last point, and in many ways it is my most important one.

We will only succeed on operations if we succeed in looking after our people, if we build a culture where each and every member of the Canadian Armed Forces is treated with respect and dignity as

they train to that high-skill level that we expect of them, one that allows them to serve their country to the full measure of their ability.

Whether it's eliminating harmful sexual behaviour through Operation Honour, or making sure that military families are looked after while their loved ones are away, there is both a moral and operational imperative driving these activities, which is why looking after the people I have the privilege to command is, and always will be, my top priority.

Mr. Chair, I am grateful for the opportunity to testify before you and the committee today. *Merci*. I will be very happy to take your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, General. We all know we lost some time here, so I'll be a little less flexible with running over. Having said that, Mr. Fisher, you have the floor for seven minutes.

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Thank you, General, for being here today. Welcome. Thank you for all you do in your service to our country.

I want to chat a little about mefloquine, the anti-malaria drug. With the possibility of sending troops to some countries where malaria is a current problem and a current issue, and knowing that the U.S. and the United Kingdom have now banned mefloquine—I believe for the U.S. it was maybe six, seven, or eight years ago. Australia and New Zealand are considering it and were discussing it. I'm not sure about other countries.

This is a big issue in my constituency, my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. I've met with veterans who take this very seriously and who are very concerned about mefloquine. I understand it was taken voluntarily by our military members. But with new issues possibly popping up and side effects that, perhaps, weren't known back in the 1990s when we were administering mefloquine, at least in a larger capacity, do we have a plan?

Is there a plan for our country to discontinue the use of mefloquine, or to ban it? If so, is there an alternative for when we send troops into countries where malaria is a major issue? Could you maybe chat a little about what we are looking at or considering doing going forward?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** This is before the surgeon general right now. If it's an issue that concerns our veterans, and it's an issue that is on people's minds, then it's certainly on mine. It is before the surgeon general. We will use the scientific approach in this regard. There are alternatives to mefloquine that have been used in other missions, and I think it would be premature right now to foreshadow the advice the surgeon general will give to me before he does so.

I appreciate the question, and it is being looked at as we speak.

• (1145)

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Are we currently using just mefloquine, or are we using different alternatives now while this is before the surgeon general? Are you able to elaborate on exactly what the use is right now of mefloquine?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I don't have the exact details of what we're doing today on various operations. I do know that the use of mefloquine is less prevalent than it was in the past.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** My understanding was that mefloquine was the drug of choice, because you took it once a week, where there was an alternative that you took every day. Do you know what the name of that alternative is? It slips my mind right now.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Mine, too. Maybe that's because I took it. I don't know.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Did you take it?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** No.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Okay.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** If I could, Mr. Chair, maybe I take this question on notice to give you a more fulsome explanation of where we're at exactly right now. I know, having done operations where I've taken anti-malarials, which was not mefloquine at the time, that each operation is different. The threat vectors through the mosquito populations are different. We take a prophylactic approach to protect our Forces, no matter where they are. Each approach is different, so I think it's probably best that I offer you on notice a more fulsome explanation of exactly where we're at from a medical perspective and how that prophylaxis works. When the surgeon general finishes his work on this and reports to me, then we will certainly share that with the Canadian public.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Do you know when the surgeon general might report back to you?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I don't have a date right now.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Is it imminent, or is it years away?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** It is absolutely not years away. I would say it's imminent.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Somewhere between imminent and years away.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** The surgeon general has an opinion right now on the validity and the use of anti-malarials, and I think it's probably worthwhile that we put that in as a "take on notice" response.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Thank you very much, General.

There are a few minutes left, so I'm happy to share that if someone wishes to take that extra time.

**The Chair:** Mr. Gerretsen.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Thank you, General.

I have one question that I think will take up this time, and then my other line of questioning afterwards will be different.

Can you tell us, because we've heard the two terms, "train, assist, and advise", and, "train, advise, assist, and accompany", what the difference is between those two terms?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** The difference is that the first mission—"train, advise, and assist"—is the mission that we are on. That's the scope of the mission that we've undertaken. The use of the term "accompany" is used by some nations, including Canada, to describe the difference between providing assistance—providing support in planning, providing support in such things as medical evacuation, provision of intelligence, provision of expertise in planning and control of forces—and the accompany function, where you're actually fighting with them. "Accompany" is used to describe that you are actually with them in the fight on the front line in combat.

By illustration, when we were in Afghanistan and we were doing the operational mentoring and liaison teams, that was very clearly an accompany mission. When the Afghan National Security Forces were involved in combat, not only did we mentor them in combat, but we were fighting with them shoulder to shoulder at the most pointy end of what they did.

In our mission, we are not doing that. In our mission, we restrict ourselves to the training—which I said has a predominance in the beginning—advising and assisting commanders, principally at the battalion level, on what to think about, how to contemplate the operations they're doing, and while they're fighting, to help them maintain situational awareness of where they are in relation to flanking forces, how to support them in terms of how they can call for fire, how they manage themselves better in conflict. We are not accompanying them, by virtue of that definition.

Where the assist function comes in, there's a number of different ways that we assist. One is through supporting them in their medical evacuation. Another is to help commanders maintain control of their forces, to help them keep an eye on things. Their forces aren't as well trained as we are. No matter how much training we do, there is still an element of assist that we can provide them in operations.

Another element of assist that I think is germane—and what's certainly caught people's attention—is when and under what conditions we would shoot, we would fire. It is for defensive purposes. Whether we are static and in a defensive posture or whether we are moving into an assault or an offensive operation, we have a mandate to not only protect ourselves—the right of self-defence is inherent with every soldier—but we also have the rules of engagement that allow us, in the event that there is an attack or something approaching our forces that would overwhelm us and therefore we are defenceless or approaching a point of defencelessness, to engage.

• (1150)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** And that's in "assist", correct?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** That would be one of the ways that you could describe how the assist function is defined.

You've seen it reported on, I've spoken of it, and it is absolutely a part of the fact that we are there with them and have the responsibility to protect ourselves, and as we have explained repeatedly, the responsibility for the defence of others if they are to be overwhelmed.

A great example is that we have weaponry that allows us to not be on the front line, to be well back from the front line, well back. If a heavily armoured suicide vehicle laden with explosives is approaching the line or exposed peshmerga forces and its detonation would result in the death of dozens of them, or civilians, then we have the ability with the weapons we have to eliminate that threat before it materializes.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I think that's probably it. Thanks.

**The Chair:** Ms. Gallant, you have the floor.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you, welcome to General Vance.

How long has the Canadian role 2 hospital been in place in Iraq?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I think it just declared full operational capability in the last week.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** How long does it take to get a casualty from the battle front to our field hospital?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Depending on where it happens, it can take minutes. We usually try to do that within what is called the "golden hour" if it's serious enough.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** So they can go by air, as opposed to—

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** They can go by helicopter, which is the preferred method, the faster the better, or they can go by ground. They are triaged. One of the things we do to help them at casualty collection points, given our expertise, is to help determine through a process of triage who needs to travel on what conveyance to receive the medical support they need.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** What is the ratio of Canadian doctors to Canadian soldiers in Iraq?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I don't know the answer to that question, but we could find out for you. Because we're working in a coalition environment, we access all manner of medical...

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** What number of Canadian doctors are in theatre in Iraq?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I think we've got three doctors there right now, but I'm not 100% sure.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Is there a role 2 hospital in conjunction with other hospitals at the same location?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** A U.S. role 2 hospital is going to be departing that location. I don't know what the status of their movement is right now.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** What type of doctors do we have? Do we have surgeons?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** They would probably be general surgeons.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** In terms of equipment, do they have CT scan access on site?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Again, I'm not 100% certain what they've got in terms of equipment.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Does this Canadian role 2 hospital treat allied soldiers?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** A coalition role 2 hospital would treat any person who was brought to that hospital.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Does it treat civilian casualties?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** It could.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Does it treat Daesh casualties, or would it, could it?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** How long does it—

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** To define that point, we would never deny medical support to any casualty on a battlefield.

• (1155)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** How long does it take to transport a casualty to a hospital that can provide more intensive care if a patient were to need more than what the role 2 could provide?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** It depends on the nature of the casualty, how much stabilization they would require at the role 2 facility. We have access to more medical capacity in Iraq proper, and then of course we can use the evacuation route to Landstuhl hospital as we did in Afghanistan.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Why are Canadian soldiers deployed in Afghanistan? We know we have troops there. What are they doing?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** We have a small team there doing close protection for the head of mission at our embassy.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Really? So the mechanics who are soldiers would also be there to support the close protection?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I don't know of any mechanic deployed to Afghanistan.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** What is the role of the Royal Canadian Navy in the NATO maritime collaborative effort to stem the flow of migrants into Europe? What's our ship in the Mediterranean doing?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Right now our ship is on Operation Reassurance, a standing naval task force supporting NATO operations in NATO waters.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** We know that.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** They're not actively on an anti-migration effort right now.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** They're just patrolling.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Right, and responding to NATO direction.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Let's talk about other commitments the government has made.

Is the troop level in the support unit or service battalion for the NATO commitment to Latvia included in the overall number of, I believe, 450 soldiers that has been announced?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Yes, it is.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** If the mission in Ukraine were to continue, what number of troops would be present there in the form of a service battalion to support them?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** The service support element in Ukraine is a subset of the overall number that we've capped at 205.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** The service battalion is included in the 200.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Yes, the service support element; a service battalion is not deployed to Ukraine. There is a task force that's built principally on a unit and a rifle company for the combat training, and a number of other people are doing specialist training—medical and otherwise—and they are supported from a theatre perspective by a service support element that's not a service battalion; it's a small cell that provides all the service support they need in Ukraine.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Another type of deployment has been talked about and will eventually be announced in terms of service battalion, making sure that the soldiers and airmen in place.... Will there be enough support service to continue all the missions that we have in place right now, including the future ones?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Yes. We would not undertake a mission that we couldn't support.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** All right.

What is the Canadian Armed Forces doing to strengthen capacity in the cyber domain, as agreed to at the NATO summit in Warsaw?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** We are involved in a wide number of initiatives. Principally, we work here in Canada with CSE. We have our own organizations and agencies that look after the defence of our networks, the details of which I'm not prepared to discuss here, given their classification. We are on a 24/7, 365-day basis monitoring and protecting our networks, and continuing to increase our capability through technical means of being able to identify potential intrusions and responses.

This is an ongoing effort that we do in partnership with CSE.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Are serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces being trained in cyberwarfare presently?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** They are. When you say cyberwarfare, that's a term that, perhaps, covers a pretty wide range. We are right now focused principally on cyber-defence of our networks.

We are undertaking an effort to be able to do offensive cyber-operations, should we need to, but we're not there yet. We're examining it. We're putting in place the command and control. It still has some way to go before we are either authorized to do so or have the ability to execute an offensive cyber-operation.

That said, we do have people who are experts in cyber-operations. Instead of saying cyberwarfare, I would call it cyber-operations, which is broken down into a defensive and offensive component. Right now we are principally focused.... I have a director general of cyber-operations. We have a command and control methodology that allows us to develop and perfect our defensive cyber-operations, and

we are looking very closely with an intent to be able at some point to have the option of having an offensive capability.

• (1200)

**The Chair:** That's your time, Ms. Gallant.

Mr. Garrison, you have the floor.

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Thank you, General Vance, for being with us today.

I want to ask a question about the involvement of our troops in Iraq, but I want to ask it from the point of view of the person in the field and their families.

Whether or not we call this a combat mission or whether it's a train, assist, advise, or train a company, are the people there now receiving the same benefits and supports as if they were in full combat mission? In other words, is the hazardous nature of the mission being acknowledged and the benefits and supports going to those members?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Yes.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** That's very reassuring, because I think sometimes it's an important question of what kind of mission it is. I just want to make sure that people are actually getting those supports.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** If I may expand briefly. When we deploy soldiers into an area, it's called a special duty operations area. It's prescribed by me, with approval from the minister as to what exactly are the boundaries. There is no question whatsoever that when you're in there you're on military operations, you're on military duty at the time, and the work that you are doing is recognized, as it would be for any mission.

The only thing that changes are hazard and risk and the benefit that you receive under hazard and risk. If you are in a joint operations area, but not subject to the hazards and risks that someone else may be, then the exact compensation changes for that.

Nonetheless, everybody is treated the same in terms of if you become a casualty, if you are hurt, if you need any support. Certainly, the families are supported the same.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Are there some serving right now who would be at that maximum risk compensation?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I suspect so.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Thank you.

Right now the Canadian Forces are operating at a rather brisk operational tempo. And now they have to take on additional NATO responsibilities, which we support, and also peacekeeping responsibility, which I also would say we support.

My question is about your budget, and the discussion that the forces may be asked to take a 5% budget cut. How will you maintain this operational tempo and take on these new responsibilities if you get less funding than you got this year?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I think it's a hypothetical question. Before me right now is not the prospect of a 5% budget cut. In fact, we are in a process right now to approach government on a defence policy review. Anything to do with budgeting and what we might do about any budgeting, I think is premature.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Okay. Thank you.

I have with me today over 140 letters from DND employees in my riding, and I know other members have received them. I'm going to deliver these to the Minister. They express a concern about the contracting out of operations in DND and the Canadian Forces, especially around maintenance, where we're bringing in outside contractors onto bases to do maintenance work that's traditionally been done by either DND or regular serving members.

The concern is very clear. Bringing a lot of non-DND personnel onto bases raises security concerns. The second concern they raise is that these contracts may, in fact, go to foreign companies, even though they might be allies. This raises some questions I know that Britain got themselves into with some of their contractors from countries that didn't agree with their military objectives.

Have you conducted a study about the possible impacts on combat readiness and security for the Canadian Forces to do with this contracting out of maintenance work and, if so, would you table that study with us?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I think this is a question that's probably best asked of our assistant deputy minister of materiel, Mr. Finn, who has a global view on how we contract and conduct maintenance activities.

• (1205)

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** I'm asking about combat readiness and security.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** From a combat readiness perspective, we maintain the forces necessary on our bases and wings to be able to project force and support those Forces wherever they are in the world. Whether it's maintenance or the service battalion activities, other than maintenance we maintain the ability to do so. We do not deploy Forces anywhere in the world who have a maintenance requirement and not maintain them. Even on operations, such as when we were in Afghanistan, where we can, Canada and other allies will contract out third-line or depot-type maintenance while we're on operations.

But we maintain the ability to deploy and be self-sufficient for all of our operations in our maintenance capacity. So anything that's contracted in is contracted as a result of either a special initiative or a refit. If it's ongoing maintenance, again, I think this is something you may want to talk about with ADM materiel.

As far as the contracting goes, the contracting follows the government contracting regulations. Again, I think Mr. Finn would probably be best suited to describe the details on that.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** So there's no specific study that's looked at how this might affect security or combat readiness.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** There's no specific study that I know of, but I do know that as we design and maintain our force, we ensure we have the correct number of people who support those who would be conducting the operations.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Thank you.

I was pleased to see you mention Operation Honour and Military Family Resource Centres, even if obliquely, here in your presentation. And we had a very good report from General Whitecross and Admiral Bennett on the excellent work they're doing.

There's some overlap into the Military Family Resource Centres when sexual misconduct affects family members, spouses, or children. Right now DND has ordered a review of the governance of Military Family Resource Centres, and the 2013 report of the ombudsman already did that review and suggested it should continue as it is.

My concern—and again I'm hearing from families—is that there's some attempt to reduce the input or control of families over what happens at the Military Family Resource Centres and bring it more under the line of command. Would you have any comments on whether that's what's really under way here?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I do, and in fact, thank you for the question because I always look for opportunities to talk about and support the families.

I have spoken with lots of people about this, and there are some who think a review automatically means that there's going to be some sort of alteration that would maybe privilege the chain of command over the family management.

I'm actually in the completely opposite space. I think what we need to do is continue to put MFRCs, correctly resourced and correctly supported, firmly in the hands of families, firmly in the hands of those who are either volunteers or paid employees, in such a way as to be responsive to family demands, which are asymmetric across the country. Each MFRC has a great deal of independence in terms of how they deal with their community. At the same time, they have a close and important relationship with the base that they support.

The review is locked because I wanted it locked to make certain that we're doing right by the MFRCs in every respect. It's certainly not to remove power from families. At the same time, the chain of command has to be appropriately engaged to make certain that they are adequately resourced and that they don't become a residual to other things. As we contemplate the future of MFRCs and how they might support the broader military community including veterans, we have to make certain that they are equipped and prepared for them as well.



You asked about Operation Honour. To be able to interject additional programming, or where we ask that MFRCs have mandatory programming available, there has to be some sort of connectivity and some sort of responsiveness by those MFRCs to be able to do so. To do that, they have to be funded, trained, and equipped accordingly. They also have to be in appropriate accommodations. So there is a close connection with the chain of command to make certain that we understand where it is that any MFRC would want to go. They are not independent. They are part of our family, and so we're going to take care of them, and that's why the review is occurring.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Great. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Gerretsen.

• (1210)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** General, thank you for coming today. I have some questions about our current level of defence spending, and I'll preface it by saying that I'm not interested in asking you to get involved in the politics of it. I realize where that lies and who's responsible for making those decisions. My questions are more of capacity and the commitments that we've made. I apologize in advance if I do cut you off. I'm limited in time, and I have a number of questions.

My first question would be with respect to the amount of spending that we are currently engaged upon and whether or not that is enough to meet the commitments that we have with NATO. From a practical implementation perspective, can we meet those commitments with what we're currently spending?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Yes.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Okay.

As we know, NATO is recommending that all partnering countries be spending 2% of their GDP on defence. We are spending about 1% in Canada. Obviously increasing the spending, if we were to go down that road, would be something that's done over time. Can you see how that would be implemented? Can you get an understanding of how we could spend more over a period of time, or would that money just be going to waste?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** It's a bit of an odd question, sir.

I think I'll answer it this way. You're talking about an undefined time horizon and an undefined amount of money with an undefined question of whether or not it's going to be a waste of time.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Okay, let me put it differently then.

NATO is suggesting that we should be spending 2%. You're saying that the current level of spending, which is roughly 1%, is enough to meet our commitments. Are you saying that NATO should not be recommending that we spend 2%?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** You asked me if we can meet our commitments now. We can meet our commitments now.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Okay, fair enough.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** And I think that faced with details of any spending, up or down, and a time horizon, short or long, we would come up with an implementation plan on how we would deal with it.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Do you think we will still be meeting our commitments 10 years from now?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I believe we will. I believe that Canada as a member of the NATO alliance—

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Sorry, I meant at the current level of spending.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Are you asking me if we're going to stay spending at 1% 10 years from now?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** No. What I'm asking you is, if we continued the same level of spending that is indexed annually, will we still be able to meet the commitments that are expected of us 10 years from now?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Again, sir, it's a hypothetical question. I don't know what the commitments are going to be 10 years from now.

I'm not trying to evade the question, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Sorry. Will we be able to if the commitments are the same?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** If the commitments remain the same 10 years from now, I think I would have to look at that in detail. We deal with defence inflation. We deal with when materiel is brought into service, and at what spending rate, and what that costs.

Mr. Chair, it's so hypothetical.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I'm not trying to put you on the spot. I'm trying to wrap my head around the fact that we are meeting our commitments, but we're only spending half of what's recommended.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I think I could put it to you this way because I know you have other questions.

It has never been my experience and it is highly unlikely—in fact, I would say impossible—that the Canadian government would commit its military forces beyond their capacity. If we were to project ourselves forward 10 years with an undefined budget line, I would imagine that the government would respect its own decisions on defence budgeting and commitments to make certain that the military is able to do what it is asked to do.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I'm going to completely change gears now. I want to talk about Russia's changes in attitude or capacity in the last, let's say, five to 10 years.

In terms of parts of the Arctic that Russia might be engaging in, activities that it might be doing in the air, can you give us a sense as to what Russia might be doing now that is different from what it may have been doing five years ago?

• (1215)

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** In particular, Russia is developing, and has developed, basing in its part of the Arctic in northern Russia. It is, as many are, taking advantage of ice-free time in the Russian Arctic. That activity has increased in last five to 10 years.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Does that include submarine activity?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I am not prepared to talk about submarine activity here due to its classification. I can tell you that Russia has accelerated its long-range aviation activities. I can't define it for you exactly—again because of its classification—but Russia has spent more time in the last five years in air space around North America and Europe.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Now I have a practical question. Does the increase in activity concern you?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** It does.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Given our current level of defence spending, do you think we are currently spending enough to be able to properly alleviate your concerns?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** At this juncture, I can only say, yes, because I deal with the force that I have with the threats that we have. We're able to adequately deal with them right now.

I would just remind you that we are on the cusp of a defence policy review that will look at all things in a horizon beyond the operational horizon I deal with. Inside that defence policy review will certainly be an acceptance, or an acknowledgement, of the strategic situation we find ourselves in today. It will also project it into the future, and we'll address it thoroughly in terms of what it is that we would do about it.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Thank you, General.

**The Chair:** Mr. Spengemann, you have the floor.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.):** General Vance, thank you very much for being with us again, and thank you for your service.

I would like to take you back to Iraq and take you up on the offer you made in your written submissions to expand a bit on peace support missions. Iraq is a country of great interest to me. I had the privilege of serving under the UN for almost seven years in Baghdad. I understand the complexity of the country. What wasn't a factor at the time that I served was ISIS. We're now moving into an environment where we're considering steps beyond ISIS being a predominant force in the theatre.

What I wanted to put to you is the tension that we're facing between, one, wanting to take action and systematically take action against threats to international peace and security—that includes the fight against international terrorism—and, two, the sense that we don't nation build, which I don't want to present as a Canadian doctrine or want to attribute to U.S. officials who may have used it. We intervene against terrorism, but we don't necessarily stay for the long haul and reconstruct the country. In some cases, a country resists our becoming too heavily involved in the governance and reconstruction issues that would actually pull a country like Iraq out of the morass and move it into the paradigm of resurrected nations, if that's the right term.

Could you talk a bit more about where you see the role of the Canadian Forces between those two policy constraints? How would the Canadian Forces intervene on the one hand when there is a clear threat against international peace and security, but also see the effort through to the point where a country is back on its own two feet?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** The way I would describe this to you is that it's not just a Canadian Forces effort—it's a Canadian effort. In

the recent past, it's become more germane and acknowledged that a comprehensive approach is required if a more thorough and enduring stabilization is to arise as a result of military activity.

I believe, and I have said this many times, that the military can play a part, a good and useful part, in helping to set conditions for the re-establishment of norms in a country that has failed or is failing. It can help set sufficient stability conditions for government to consider in respect of the access of government to get to its people, providing sufficient stability for infrastructure to be addressed, or for getting the economy going again.

I think it is also true today that you would be hard-pressed to find any chief of the defence staff amongst our allies who does not recognize the value and the importance of a comprehensive approach. In fact, it's NATO doctrine, and it's Canadian doctrine. I think we all recognize that it is useful to consider operations in the full spectrum of both time and energy, not just the military piece.

I will end on this point. If there is a desire, it has to be expressed by the government of the day, with the resources that are available, with a view to the likelihood of success and the reasonableness of entering into operations, where you would try to put together a comprehensive approach. Some operations are best left strictly to setting a quick military condition and leaving, in cases where it's a clear and present danger that needs to be dealt with. It's a national decision, not a military decision, to go into what would be considered a stabilization phase.

I would say that Canada doesn't do this alone. It's not whether Canada is in or out. There are many other international organizations, NGOs, the United Nations, and others that attempt to participate in the resurrection of failed or failing states, with or without military intervention by the international community.

• (1220)

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** Would it be fair to say, General Vance, that the Canadian Armed Forces could do a great deal to keep a space open in which humanitarian relief can be offered and political dialogue can take place?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** Okay, thank you for that.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** In fact, I would say that one of the best uses of a military is to set conditions for something more enduring to materialize after the strict military phase.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor.

[Translation]

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

General Vance, once you have your earpiece, I will go back to Operation IMPACT.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Okay.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Good afternoon, General Vance. I want to welcome you here today.

Let me go back to Operation IMPACT.

Right now, there are a lot of discussions about our intervention in Iraq. There is a lot of wordsmithing on this issue. At the beginning of the meeting, my colleague asked a question about the specific work that is being done there.

If we go back to the original idea behind Operation IMPACT and its initial mandate, overall, there were the F-18 fighters bombing targets and our special forces that really had an advise-and-assist role. That was quite clear. There was no ambiguity. Afterwards, at the new government's request, the F-18s were pulled out so that our Canadian Forces no longer had a combat mission. So the goal was to maintain one force on the ground to train the peshmerga of the Iraqi army.

Before going any further, let me point out that I fully understand the secret nature of the work the special forces do. I don't want to know where our troops are. I don't want to know where they are on the ground since I don't want to undermine their safety. However, we are now at another stage. The special forces are used to travelling in very secret conditions, and I respect that. However, we are now part of an international coalition. We are now conducting an offensive on Mosul. Everyone knows about the offensive. The international press knows what we are doing. There is no secret about that right now.

I would like confirmation from you. You said that our forces on the ground continue to provide advice, assistance and training, but they don't have an accompanying role. I think there is a lot of wordsmithing going on, because it has been confirmed that the Canadian troops were in contact with ISIS fighters and attacked them directly. They are not just there to defend the Iraqi forces or the peshmerga. They have really attacked targets on the ground. Those events did happen, so it's not a secret.

Are you able to confirm that the Canadian troops on the ground have taken offensive action against the enemy, instead of simply ensuring security and protection?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Thank you for the question. I will answer it in English.

[English]

I can confirm to you unequivocally that the use of force by our soldiers on this operation—armed force, lethal force—has only been used in a defensive mode to ensure that our partners were not subject to an attack that they couldn't deal with.

The only part of the assist function that I think may hold some confusion for others is that as we assist—help—a battalion commander or a divisional commander marshal their forces effectively to get them into the right spot by day or by night, to make certain that they are going in the right direction, with the right battle plans, and with the right fire support in place, and to put all of that together so they are most effective, that is where we are with that commander as they are moving forward, but his forces are well ahead and doing the fighting.

If you're suggesting that our forces have been manoeuvring so as to provide offensive fire, thereby taking the fight to the enemy, then you are wrong. We have responded with fire only to provocation by Daesh, where, either by surprise or by the intensity of the force that

they would bring to bear, like a vehicle-borne IED that could not be stopped by any other means, we've dealt with it. I need to be as unequivocal on that as possible.

Yes, sir, there's all sorts of speculation about this, and there's all sorts of wordsmithing going on all over the place. The fact is that we have a very firm mandate, and that mandate is being very carefully and properly commanded by people I trust in the field, who are responding effectively and appropriately to the orders, my orders, and the intent of this government.

I can't make it any clearer than that.

• (1225)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Thank you.

I appreciate your clarifications since it is important for Canadians and for the entire population to know exactly what type of work our Canadian Forces are doing on the ground.

In terms of the role of the special forces—there are forces like the 430 Squadron in Valcartier that are not special forces, but regular forces deployed in support of the special forces—the fact remains that our troops are an integral part of our combat forces. Even if they do not necessarily open fire, they are still part of the fighters on the ground. Can you confirm that?

[English]

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I can absolutely confirm that we are conducting operations at a role 2 medical facility. We are conducting flight operations out of Kuwait, and with our rotary-wing helicopters. We are conducting train, advise, and assist mentoring tasks with our partners, and we are conducting additional training to Iraqi security forces, as we have been all along. I can absolutely commit to that, yes. And it is being done in a theatre of operations where those whom we are assisting are in an existential fight for their country.

**The Chair:** Mr. Rioux, you have the floor.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.):** General Vance, thank you for being here with us today and for your presentation in both official languages.

The Minister of National Defence announced the return of university training at the military college in Saint Jean. The training will be in social sciences and humanities. This is in line with the review of the defence policy. In addition, Mr. Dion recently pointed out the lack of francophone soldiers in Africa. He was referring to soldiers not just from Canada, but also from all the francophone countries. Only 20% of the troops there are francophone.

Will the deadline for the return of bilingual training, but especially French-language training at the Collège Militaire de Saint-Jean be met?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Thank you for the question.

The decision to reinstate the four-year university level program and perhaps another year for CEGEP at the Collège Militaire de Saint-Jean will be carried out. That's what I know about the situation right now.

It is absolutely necessary to continue to have a good level of bilingualism within the Canadian Armed Forces for a number of reasons. Our country is bilingual and we have bilingual soldiers, as well as francophone and anglophone soldiers. We have to be constantly ready to command and manage our forces effectively, regardless of the language the soldiers speak.

• (1230)

**Mr. Jean Rioux:** The constituents of Saint Jean will appreciate your answer.

I will now come back to a more sensitive issue that my colleague Mr. Garrison raised.

President Obama came here to Ottawa and made a speech full of praise for the government's actions. However, he kept going back to one aspect in his speech. He asked Canada for a contribution of 2% in military spending in relation to our GDP, which is the standard asked of NATO member countries. We noticed that Australia has reached that level. Next week, some of our committee members will be at the NATO meeting in Turkey. A number of countries are contributing as much as 2%.

I will try to ask you the question so that you can answer it. Those were Mr. Obama's remarks. Now, Mr. Trump has been elected as president and he was quite clear. He will be asking all the countries to contribute their fair share. Canada is the United States' closest partner, which is commendable. To a certain extent, wouldn't it be a question of fairness and equity for Canada to reach the 2% of the GDP?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Thank you for the question.

I will answer the question in English because it's a somewhat sensitive matter.

[English]

It is entirely the decision of the Government of Canada, taking all factors into account, to decide how much it spends on defence. I think, though, that it would be premature at this point in time to make any conclusions about where the U.S. will be in the days and months ahead. I think there's still some ground to go.

Canada has a proud history of deploying and supporting NATO at the budget level that we're at. We are unequivocally valued as a partner, and I think we will continue to be so.

I think there is sometimes an overreliance on a strictly numeric figure. I'm not saying for a minute that I wouldn't support increasing defence funding. Every chief of the defence staff would, of course, but to take a figure and somehow parlay that into the only metric that you use to determine your worth in an alliance, I think, is shallow and false.

There is a great deal of difference between nations as to what they include and what they do not include in their percentage figures. There's a great deal of difference between nations as to how much they contribute when called by NATO to do something extra. There are lots of nations that are spending 2% of their GDP on defence but are not doing the same level of effort that Canada is. There are lots of nations, I think, that are at or approaching 2% GDP that are not part of the enhanced forward presence, for example, but Canada is. In fact, we're not only doing it, we're the leadership of one of them.

I would just caution, from a military perspective, that the metric is not the only metric that can be used and if it is, then it can provide a very skewed and perhaps incorrect view of the value of a country in an alliance.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean Rioux:** I am sure that your answer will reassure Canadians.

[English]

**The Chair:** That's your time, thanks.

Mr. Bezan.

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

General Vance, it's great to see you again. I would ask that you pass on our deepest appreciation and gratitude to everyone who serves under your command. They make Canada proud and they're doing great work.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Thank you, sir.

• (1235)

**Mr. James Bezan:** I also appreciate your comments about putting people first in everything that you do as commander of the Canadian Armed Forces. I know when we did our defence policy review consultations, we had over 50 round tables, and we heard loud and clear that the DPR has to be people-centric, that always our troops come first, and that we support them in recruiting, training, retention, and, of course, as they transition out back into civilian life when they leave the armed forces.

I have a lot of questions and, as the country song says, we've got a long way to go and a short time to get there, so I'm going to bounce around a bit with the different questions that I have and that I want to touch on.

I'm going to go back to what Mr. Garrison said about those who are currently deployed on Operation Impact in Iraq and Kuwait. It has been brought to my attention that there are some Canadian troops who are serving with U.S. command at Camp Arifjan who aren't getting the same pay and benefits as those who are stationed at other Kuwaiti bases as part of the Royal Canadian Air Force. I did send a letter to the Minister of National Defence last week on this issue, so I just wanted to make sure that you're aware of it as well, to ensure that they are treated the same way as all the rest of our troops are who are involved in this great mission.

We had General Hood here back in April when we were looking at air defence, and he told us in April that the current life extension program for our CF-18s means that we have a plane that will be able to serve our needs until 2025. Do you agree with that statement?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** The ELE right now, should it fully come to pass, should, with reasonable confidence, keep the CF-18 fleet flying as is until 2025.

**Mr. James Bezan:** So there is going to be no capability gap that we'll need to cover until 2025 when we get the first planes to replace them into service?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** No. That is a false deduction, sir.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I want to move on to Operation Unifier in Ukraine. Again, our troops are doing great work there in training and assisting the Ukrainian forces to deal with Russian aggression.

That agreement with that training program comes to an end in March 2017. What's going to happen after that? Do you expect it to be renewed, extended, or are we bringing our guys home?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I will bring forward options for the government to decide, to consider the way ahead after that. Right now there are no plans for the mission to come to an end.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I appreciate that.

On NATO reassurance measures, we're going to be commanding the battalion in Latvia. What is the timeline of getting that up and running? Can you give us a little detail as to who our partners are, what they are going to be doing, and what we're going to be doing in this coalition?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** We would intend to have everybody deployed in June or July of 2017, with the battle group we would consider operationally capable later, in September or October.

**Mr. James Bezan:** And we'll be going over with all the military kit we need to do the job that we're being asked to do?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Yes, sir.

We are the nucleus of the command and control in the various enabling functions of the battle group. We are also providing a LAV-equipped rifle company in the battle group.

They've announced our partners: Poland and Italy, with Slovenia providing a small part, and together the battle group rounds out. Other nations are considering joining, Albania certainly.

The battle group will round out with our 450 to 455 people and should come in just under 1,000 and it can be augmented by other NATO assets should it be required for exercises, training, and operations.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I'll be very quick.

In your opening comments on the potential African missions under UN command you said you're going to maintain some control. Of course that's been a concern of the official opposition. Who is in command of our troops and how do we prevent what happened in Rwanda repeating itself?

We heard this in our defence policy review consultations as our veterans and some of your predecessors have been quite vocal about putting Canadian troops under UN command again.

How are we going to mitigate the problems with the much lighter bureaucracy within the United Nations with keeping our troops safe, as well as allowing them to do the job we're sending them there to do?

•(1240)

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** That's a great question. I've answered this for the Senate committee as well.

I never relinquish national command of our troops. In so doing I will put in place the command and control capacity and the leadership to ensure I can exercise that command. That command

allows us to take actions, extraordinary or otherwise, to ensure the safety and effectiveness of our troops in operations.

I think perhaps in the translation, some might have come out as perhaps an inappropriate way of describing it. It is true that the forces there will respond to UN tasks to do things, which is perfectly legitimate, and this is on any sort of generic operation. You allow your forces to be tasked by a chain of command, but at all times you understand what those taskings are. We can assure ourselves that those taskings are valid and legitimate, and will aid the mission overall.

As for our ability to protect ourselves, we've learned a lot since Rwanda, and I will make certain that the troops have the rules of engagement they need to be able to defend themselves and those they work with. They'll have the rules of engagement they need in a chapter VII operation—if it is a chapter VII operation—to be able to effectively contribute to that mission to the extent that we decide, as a country, to contribute.

We will take steps that have been learned in the last 15 years about how to best manage operations, be it from a medical service support or theatre management level. This we will do on any deployed force, and we do that now.

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

Ms. Romanado, you have the floor.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.):** Thank you, General, for being here today. It's a real pleasure to see you again.

I'd like to start my comments on something my colleague Mr. Garrison started. He has been a huge supporter of me and my two sons who are currently serving and the families.

As you know, my older son lost some classmates this year at RMC. I have been in contact with some of the families affected by this. I know we recently announced the SSAV that's now under way at RMC.

Could you provide us with an update on that initiative? I'm not sure you're able to at this early stage.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Thank you for your question, and thank you for your sons' service.

The question of why, or whether, to launch a senior staff assistance visit to RMC was one that I brought to the minister. We discussed it, and we moved ahead on it. I ordered it because there were a sufficient number of irregularities that happened in a relatively small student population. As a commander...and this is a premium institution for education and training, and it is the principal avenue by which we turn highly motivated young Canadians into great officers in the armed forces. We don't want anything to go wrong there.

Perhaps I was over-sensitive to that fact, given my concern with how we treat people, with Operation Honour, and with concerns about suicide, mental health, and the excellence of our institution. When I saw enough irregularities, I decided that we needed to act. I brought that to the minister. He absolutely concurred, and here we are.

I don't believe that at this juncture we're going to find anything really dramatic. I need to make certain that the Royal Military College continues to be a good unit in the Canadian Armed Forces, as it has been, and that the environment is appropriate for turning out young Canadians into officers. It's an institution that does a lot of things, but it does them all together to turn out educated young men and women as officers in the Canadian Armed Forces. We can't lose sight of that. It's not just a university. It's not just a unit. It does a lot of things. I had to make certain that it's working.

We had a recent spate of suicides, which will undergo their own investigations with boards of inquiry, and as we find those details out, those details will come to me, and I will put it all together in a mosaic of what we will discover about the Royal Military College. Like any institution in the armed forces, I want it to be superb in every respect. This particular staff assistance visit is to help us find out why there may be some challenges there, if there are.

I don't have anything. They haven't reported back to me. I'm not seeking any interim reports to say something that we would have to act on quickly to preserve the institution as we think it needs to be. I think this will be longer term, and probably in the range of effective investment and effective selection of leadership at all levels. It needs reaffirmation of its purpose to make certain that it remains an institution of excellence on the university scene in Canada, but also as a unit in the armed forces.

● (1245)

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** I thank you on behalf of the military families for doing this.

I'm going to switch gears a little. We visited NORAD in the spring, and we met with Admiral Gortney who was talking to us a bit about a possible binational C2 command structure with multi-domain capabilities. I can't know what's going to happen to our friends south of the border now that there's been a change in government.

What are your thoughts on this possible route?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** To tell you the truth, we already have it. We are a binational command structure. NORAD, I think, is 58 and going on 59 years old, and is our oldest permanent alliance. It is unique in the world. It's binational. Canada and the United States both own it.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** General, is it true that we don't have—

**The Chair:** I'm afraid we'll have to move on.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Maybe I'll get another shot.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Sorry about that.

Mr. Garrison, you have the floor.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Thank you very much.

I want to turn to questions related to budget. I'm not asking you to get into the budget. At current funding levels, what we've seen is several studies that have estimated there's a very large amount of deferred maintenance in the military, and it appears that because of budget limitations, things that we need to maintain our capacities haven't been done as regularly as they should have been done.

I'm worried that's going to lead to some capability gaps. We have, I guess they call it a capital deficit not just on new equipment, but on the bases and facilities, such as in my riding, where we have some very old buildings with asbestos that need to be replaced.

My question comes back, without asking you to speculate on budget, do you see this problem of deferred maintenance and facilities as affecting our capabilities going forward?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I think the short answer to your question is absolutely. We've already experienced it once with the inability to put to sea a ship that can support our navy. Whether it is in deferred maintenance or in deferred capital, I take your point that we absolutely want to make certain that we don't defer maintenance and that we don't take risks with our operational capability into the future, particularly with those things that we are fundamentally relying upon.

I take your point as well about infrastructure. Infrastructure can sometimes fuel the challenges of deferred investment. I don't know what the number is, but there is a sort of old standard for what you need to reinvest in recapitalizing your infrastructure, and we have an ambition to try to achieve it.

Some good things have been done about this. We have put under the stewardship of our assistant deputy minister for infrastructure and environment the management of our estate. I think this will go a long way toward making it more efficient and effective and keeping the funds flowing.

As it relates to capability by capability, platform by platform, I concur: we need to be very cautious when we defer investment in required maintenance, so as to not lose capability. Generally speaking, we do not. My experience has been, certainly since I've been CDS, that it's on our mind, and we seek to invest appropriately to ensure that we don't lose the capabilities we have.

● (1250)

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** I guess I've expressed my concern before that the shipbuilding strategy has slipped from being a floor to being a ceiling. When it was originally put forward it specified the minimum capabilities we needed; now it's come to be considered as the maximum we could possibly get.

Do you have a brief comment on what's happening with the attitude towards our shipbuilding strategy?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** The way we've approached shipbuilding has identified the basic requirement of the Canadian Armed Forces in the Royal Canadian Navy to achieve the tasks that are before them. As I've said many times, depending on the spending level that is ultimately decided concerning how many ships will be produced, I am convinced that not only will it match the policy basis for what we would do with those ships and the reason we need them, but that if we need more because the country needs us to do more, we would, I'm certain, have more.

I would say it's probably premature right now. The program is in its early phases. I know the commander of the Royal Canadian Navy and others have spoken on this extensively. I think we need to see how it goes when we get into the build of the CSC.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That ends the formal rounds of questioning.

We have about nine minutes left. I'd like to give each party a two-minute or less question and an answer. I believe there's a motion that the Liberals want to put on the floor at some point before the time ends.

Having said that, I'll give the floor to Ms. Gallant for a two-minute question and response, please.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** *The Globe and Mail* has recently put forth a series called "The Unremembered", which profiles soldiers who've died as a consequence of suicide. One issue that has been raised around this is that there is a break in care between the medical release.... When they're medically released, they don't get continuity of care. The military ombudsman has recommended that the benefits and care be in place prior to release of the soldier.

Do you see how important that is?

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** I do.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** With that, Mr. Chairman, I would like to move:

That the government of Canada immediately begin to take the measures necessary for the full implementation and of all the recommendations in the two reports of the National Defence and Canadian Forces ombudsman tabled in 2016; that the Government implement all of these recommendations as a best way forward to support the Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans, particularly those in transition; and that the Office of Military Ombudsman provide progress reports to the Committee on a monthly basis.

**The Chair:** It's off topic, so—

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Actually, my question had just been on the issue of the care of the ill and injured, specifically the topic of continuity of care between the time that a person is injured and the time they're medically released. It's this gap in medical care that is being cited as part of the reason that soldiers may be resorting to this.

With this, I would like to see it moved. I believe it is in order.

**The Chair:** Given the nature of the request, the expert opinion is that it doesn't fit the criteria for what we're doing today. If you give us formal notice, the committee would probably hear from that on a further notice.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I have a point of order.

• (1255)

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Chair, this motion is in order. It relates to a question that was just asked of the chief of the defence staff, which he answered, so it's on topic because it is relevant to the business and to the hearing that we have today. The chief of the defence staff just said that he agreed with the military ombudsman about how to move forward with the transition of our current serving members as they complete service and become veterans, especially those who are being medically released. It is essential that we deal with this motion right now and I'd ask that you call the question.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** May I speak, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Gerretsen.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I think you're accepting feedback to it now because Mr. Bezan provided some, so I would just like to say that I think that this motion is very worthy of our consideration. It would be beneficial for the committee if the mover would table it as a notice of motion, so that we could then deal with it in just two days from now. That will give it the current formal notice and it won't have to put the clerk at odds with another member and the chair. I think it would just better serve the committee if we could do it that way. I think that this warrants a good discussion. The problem is that we have four minutes left in this meeting. Therefore, I would respectfully ask that the mover just table it and then we can deal with it on Thursday.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, I did table a motion asking that the committee recommend that the government adopt and accept these recommendations from the military ombudsman. However, the government members subsequently watered the motion down, so that it didn't mean anything. We're talking about soldiers' lives on the line and it is imperative that the recommendations be implemented. Each and every day, we risk losing another person who has served with distinction in our armed forces and for that reason, I'm not willing to table it. I'd like to see you call the question. We've already had a similar debate.

**The Chair:** This is what we'll do. I'll call the question—to be conciliatory—and if people over on the other side want more time, there's a way they can handle it too. To be fair, I will put the question as tabled by—

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** On a point of order, you can't call a question until we've exhausted debate.

**The Chair:** We'll move on it then and it's open for debate. Go ahead.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Just to come back to that, I'm open to having a full discussion on this. What I'm really concerned about, Mr. Chair, with all due respect, is the fact that you've received advice from the clerk, who is the expert on this in terms of procedural matters. He is advising the chair. Another member of the committee is raising a point of order which is essentially challenging the recommendation that you've received from the clerk and I think that is not really healthy for the committee because obviously the chair is going to take the advice of the clerk. In the interests of being conciliatory on this and trying to work together, I give you my commitment that I will entertain this motion on Thursday and have a discussion about it when we can allocate more time to do that. I'm pleading once again to the member to submit this as a notice of motion, so that we can properly deliberate on it.

**The Chair:** The advice to me is advice and, obviously, I get to make a decision. I've decided to be conciliatory to allow this debate to happen. That's fair enough, but to be fair, open, and honest here, you guys also have tools in your tool box. If you don't want to deal with this right now, you have ways to deal with that. That's up to you guys.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Chairman, I will be unable to participate on Thursday and it could be some time before we get to this again, so again, I ask the chair to call the question.

**The Chair:** I can't call the question until debate is complete, so we're going to debate this. The floor is open for debate.

Go ahead, Mr. Gerretsen, and then, Ms. Romanado.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** In that case, Mr. Chair, I move:

That we adjourn debate on this motion.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I would like a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

**The Chair:** The debate is adjourned.

We still have a little bit of time. Is there another motion that somebody wanted to put on the table before we close for the day?

Go ahead, Ms. Romanado.

• (1300)

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Before your point of order, Mr. Bezan, I had the floor. I would like to move the motion regarding the travel that was submitted last week that this committee needs to consider, given our timelines.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I have a point of order, Mr. Chair, you had not recognized Ms. Romanado when I moved a motion that the meeting be adjourned.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** He had recognized me.

**Mr. James Bezan:** No, he didn't call your name.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Yes, he did.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Are you sure?

**The Chair:** I believe I did. I'll check the blues.

Mr. Gerretsen is saying I did.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** That's why I spoke, and that's why my mike was on.

**The Chair:** Okay, let's move on.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Mr. Chairman, I'd like to put forward:

That, in relation to the study of Canada and the Defence of North America, the Committee travel to Washington DC, United States of America, in the winter-spring of 2017; that the Committee be accompanied by the necessary staff; and that the proposed budget in the amount of \$65,293.13, for the Committee's travel, be adopted.

**The Chair:** Is there debate or discussion?

**Mr. James Bezan:** I move that the meeting be adjourned.

(Motion negated [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Okay, we will continue discussion on the travel request put forward by Ms. Romanado.

Ms. Gallant.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** The level is \$65,000. Is there any way, without eliminating participation of any MPs, to reduce that amount?

**The Chair:** I don't think so. The clerk could give us further details on it. We worked on this together. The money is always an issue, but I don't think that is possible, no.

Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I want to consider the same thing, just on costs. I want to make sure that if we do this, we do it after the new Congress is brought into place and that we take the time to not just meet with our Congressional leaders but also to spend quite a bit of time over in the Pentagon. In the past, when this committee has travelled down there, those have been the most valuable meetings we've had.

I would ask that we try to find a way to save some money, but I see that even though we're down to seven members on this budget, it would be valuable if every member could be there. When we went to NORAD in Colorado Springs, all of us were able to attend, and if we want to do our jobs effectively as committee members, we need to be in attendance. I'm wondering if there's a way we can balance this off. We have actually more staff travelling than we have members.

**The Chair:** This has been a long-standing discussion at SBLLI, and I will do what I can. I understand the importance, so I will do what I can to make sure we all get an opportunity to go, but I can't answer that right now.

Mr. Gerretsen, then Mr. Paul-Hus.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I agree with Mr. Bezan that the timing for when we go is important. We have to wait until things are in place and we can properly establish those relationships. I didn't know if he was going to put forward an amendment to the motion to that effect. I was willing to support that if it was the case, but I didn't hear that. I agree with him on—

**The Chair:** Let's not over-complicate it. I think we agree that the timing is important, as is the full membership, but there's enough room to manoeuvre and I think we can handle that after. Given the time that's available, we can all discuss the finite details. I have to get this approved through SBLLI very soon.

Mr. Paul-Hus.



[*Translation*]

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

Right now, I have some discomfort about the fact that there is room for seven members of Parliament and for seven analysts and interpreters. So there are three MPs who will not be able to take part in the event while seven public servants will be present. If I don't go as a francophone MP, there will be no need for interpreters. So I'm in a delicate position since, if I say that I don't need interpreters, my anglophone colleagues will not understand if I speak French.

On that note, I would not want to be in the position of not going just because then there won't be a need for interpreters and vice versa. I just wanted to make sure that everyone will be there.

I can manage in the other official language. I can understand English, but sometimes I'm not as fluent when I speak it. I'm not sure how Mr. Rioux feels about that, but I don't want us to miss out on opportunities or to feel clearly like a minority.

• (1305)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The timing is important. The membership of the committee is important. I have an undertaking to make sure we do the best we can to get all of us down there. I don't know if I can do it, but I'm going to try to do it, and there's no scenario where there's no.... There will be a level of translation for French speakers on this trip. Those are the rules, and it will happen, regardless.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** It's not for French speakers; it's for all members of the committee.

**The Chair:** It's for those people wishing to use the second official language.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** No. Sorry, with respect, Mr. Chair, that's not what it is.

Translation and interpretation services are available to all members of the committee. People can present to us in French if they like, and then we can make use of the services.

I really do resent what's happening in this committee in terms of our bilingualism culture. This is not about extra service for francophones. It's about the bilingual nature of the country and the ability of people to participate in the language of their choice, whether as members or as witnesses.

**The Chair:** That's fair enough.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Chair, can you release the witness, if you would, please?

**The Chair:** Yes, I can. I don't know. Maybe he's enjoying it, though.

General Vance, thank you very much for coming. You did have one undertaking for us, before I let you go, for the mefloquine. If you could please report back to the committee with regard to mefloquine, we would very much appreciate it.

Thank you for your service. Thank you for your time.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Thank you.

**Mr. James Bezan:** On tasking, I think we wanted to get the ratio, as well, of doctors to....

**The Chair:** Yes, and if you could provide specifically the ratio of Canadian doctors to Canadian troops in theatre at this point, that would be helpful.

Thank you very much.

**Gen Jonathan Vance:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** All right. Let's finish up this discussion, or debate. Let me rephrase what I said.

There is and there will be a level of French language translation so we can do our business in French if we want to.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** May I, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** It's not even a choice. It's tasked by the Library of Parliament. It's not a choice.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Absolutely. I think we can vote on it.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Just for clarification, when I made my comment, it wasn't about.... If we're going to send down seven staff members for seven MPs, I would rather see us send the whole complement of members of Parliament along with the seven staff.

**The Chair:** I'm going to let the clerk wade in here, because he sits through these meetings.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Philippe Grenier-Michaud):** In terms of the participants, SBLI adopted a motion earlier during the session, stating that it won't accept budget proposals with more than seven members.

That's why there are seven members on the list; and in terms of seven staff, that's basically the maximum we could bring for that specific travel. It doesn't mean that we'll send seven members. A decision will be made based on the program and the needs for the travel. It's just that, if we include seven staff in the budget, if the need is to send seven members of the staff, we'll have the money without having to use the cushion, and so on.

That's why you see seven staff. Again, I would say that if seven staff are needed, seven will be sent regardless of the number of members travelling. It could be seven for four members, seven for 20 members. It's just to have the money if the needs are there.

**The Chair:** Is there any more discussion on this?

All right. All in favour of the motion as put forward by Ms. Romanado? Opposed?

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.





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