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Chair

Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): I'd like to welcome our guests who are continuing a discussion on the crisis in Ukraine. This conversation is obviously very important to this committee and to Canadians, so we're grateful for your presence and the opportunity to continue this discussion.

Today we have Ihor Kozak; Christian Leuprecht, professor in the department of political science at the Royal Military College of Canada; and Matt Schroeder, senior researcher for the Small Arms Survey, via video conference from Washington, D.C. I've been advised that Mr. Kozak will present first.

I'd like to remind you to do your very best to stay within your 10 minutes. The committee is very interested in asking questions, and staying on the timeline makes my job as chair a little easier.

Mr. Kozak, you have the floor.

Mr. Ihor Kozak (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Standing Committing on National Defence, for convening these important hearings and conducting the study on Canada and the crisis in Ukraine, and for the invitation to appear alongside such an impressive group of renowned experts with whom you have been consulting over the past few weeks.

I can clearly recall that five years ago I appeared before similar hearings convened by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. At those hearings, I emphasized that the authoritarian criminal regime of then-president of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych and Russia were the two major threats to the Euro-Atlantic future of Ukraine, as well as to the security and stability of the west.

While the Yanukovych regime is gone, Russia remains. It remains as more of a threat now than before when it sought to meddle in Ukraine's international affairs. Russia's invasion and its war, which is, to be clear, the armed aggression and military occupation of the sovereign Ukrainian land of Crimea and parts of the Donbass region, has created an unprecedented international crisis. The only other similar situation in modern history occurred when troops from Nazi Germany marched into Sudetenland. As we all know, the west's faint-hearted response at that time to the blatant military aggression in the heart of Europe spawned World War II.

Russia's war in the geopolitical centre of Europe is now in its fourth year with no real sign of ending any time soon. The general staff of the Ukrainian armed forces reports that in the last 48 hours, four Ukrainian soldiers were killed and six were wounded in action. During that time, the ceasefire violations by Russian terrorist forces significantly escalated as they fired on Ukrainian positions 80 times in total, including with heavy weapons. Russian terrorist forces also shelled residential areas near the village of Zalizne. One civilian was injured.

The consequences are a human tragedy that include over two million displaced persons, over 10,000 dead, many tens of thousands maimed, and massive destruction of the Donbass infrastructure and thus a large segment of the Ukrainian industrial base. If this is not enough, Russia is also deeply engaged in hybrid warfare aimed at destabilizing Ukraine from within. The extent of the Kremlin's efforts to undermine the Ukrainian government, to aggravate political disagreements in Parliament, to foment social unrest, to create conflicts among ethnic and religious groups, to spread disinformation, and to intimidate people through acts of terror is unprecedented in comparison to similar efforts over the course of Ukraine's 26 years of independence.

I am a retired officer from the Canadian Armed Forces. My current occupation is a consultant in the military-industrial sphere. I am engaged with many not-for-profit and charitable projects involving the war zone of eastern Ukraine. I have been to the Donbass many times, including to the furthest positions along the line of demarcation. I could elaborate on this topic for a long time and in much detail. Unfortunately, the time allotted to me is very limited. I believe it suffices to share one glaring example.

There are now almost 500 Russian tanks in the Donbass, a contingent larger than the entire armoured corps of the current German army, not to mention offensive battle groups located on Russian soil next to Ukraine's borders. The Ukrainian army is at a serious disadvantage, and would be hard pressed to stop a full Russian offensive, especially if modern weapons and technologies were used. This is the reason Ukraine has consistently been requesting the west to provide modern defensive weapons.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased that our government is finally moving forward with the process that would see Ukraine added to the automatic firearms country control list. This tangible action by Canada speaks louder than all the so-called assurances from many other Euro-Atlantic partners of Ukraine.

The Ukrainian government provided Canada and our allies with the list of necessary military equipment, and requested that Canada recommence provision of military-grade satellite imagery. Canada should respond positively to the Ukrainian government's requests, and should also encourage our allies to provide further non-lethal as well as lethal defensive weapons. The military aid should include those called for in Anders Rasmussen's excellent op-ed two days ago in *The Globe and Mail*, such as advanced night-vision goggles, signal-jamming equipment, and counter-battery radars, but also such defensive items as FGM-148 Javelin anti-tank missiles.

● (1535)

I also fully concur with Mr. Rasmussen's recommendation to confront Vladimir Putin on his United Nations peacekeeping proposal.

Canada, as you will recall, gave birth to the very concept of peacekeeping, and since the 1950s has participated in more peacekeeping missions than any other country in the world. As such, our country is uniquely positioned to lead a peacekeeping mission in the Donbass. For this to work, however, the UN needs to be brought into the process of establishing terms and conditions that are fair, equitable, and geared to the principal goal of restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, including Ukrainian control over the Russian boarder. The Kremlin should be offered an off-ramp back into Russia for its military and its surrogates. That is all. There should be no meddling with restoring complete Ukrainian sovereignty for the sake of some sort of face-saving concessions to Mr. Putin.

Ukrainians have risen to the challenge on both counts of the Kremlin aggression: a military war in eastern Ukraine and a hybrid war in the rest of the country. Moreover, Ukrainians also have gone forward in reforming their government, economy, and society. There is much more that needs to be done still. However, more has been achieved in the last three years than during the first 23 years of Ukraine's independence: transparent government procurement, mandatory electronic declarations for government officials, and a western model of police force—with our Canadian help, of course—just to name a few. Similarly, education, pension, and health care reforms are being tackled simultaneously at a time of war, in dire economic conditions, and with Russia's hybrid methods seeking to manipulate and to represent these efforts to the polity in the most negative ways.

From the very outset of Ukraine's independence in 1991, Canada responded with understanding and assistance to the Ukrainian people. Canada was the first western country to recognize Ukrainian independence. It was also the first to confront the authoritarian practices of the Yanukovych regime and its policies of distancing Ukraine from Europe. Hence, the very first trip by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper to Ukraine seven years ago this month took place during the very first year of Yanukovych's tenure.

Today, it is Canada once again and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that not only acknowledge Ukraine's right to defend itself, but also work on finalizing the process of adding Ukraine to the AFCC list. This is in addition to supplying Ukrainian forces with the much-needed non-lethal military equipment, starting in the summer of 2015 when it was needed most. I am certain that Mr. Bezan, present here, will never forget that flight on the CC-130J Hercules aircraft from CFB Trenton to Ukraine to deliver the first batch of that much-needed equipment right to the front lines. It is also in addition to Operation Unifier—which is a great success, and which, by the way, currently is being proudly led by my Royal Military College of Canada classmate and close friend, Lieutenant-Colonel Kris Reeves—as well as to Canada's steadfast support of Ukraine on political and economic fronts.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, the truth is that Ukraine remains the only real force standing between the Russian aggressors and the security and stability of Europe. Western leaders need to find wisdom and strength to adopt a far-sighted strategy for the free world. This, among other things, means doing more, not less, to support Ukraine at this critical time. The Canadian people and government have always been there to help the people of Ukraine. Today is no different. I am confident that we are ready to answer the call.

Thank you. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

● (1540)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kozak.

Mr. Leuprecht, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Christian Leuprecht (Professor, Department of Political Science, Royal Military College of Canada, As an Individual): Hello, ladies and gentlemen.

I will speak in English, but do not hesitate to ask questions in your preferred official language.

[*English*]

In 2015, I spent a week in Kiev teaching an executive-level seminar on civil security sector relations at the Ukraine defence university on behalf of the director of military training and co-operation within the assistant deputy minister of policy's office in DND at the behest of the Prime Minister's Office and the global engagement strategy. I've also twice been to Latvia in recent months at the invitation of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs.

I point this out because, of course, we need to consider that the region, and Russian actions in the region, are consuming considerable Canadian military resources if we look at the size of our mission to Ukraine, if we look at our deployment to Latvia, both the battle group and the headquarters deployment, plus our various forms of engagement throughout eastern and central Europe on a more ad hoc basis. I think there's an important question here for parliamentarians as to what sort of resources to allocate, and how to allocate scarce resources effectively and efficiently in the pursuit of Canadian interests. What we need to keep in mind here is a debate.

When Bill Clinton started to propagate NATO enlargement toward the east, George Kennan, the famed U.S. ambassador and strategist with regard to Russia, said that Bill Clinton was basically undoing his life's work. On one side are the people who want to respect what Russia considers its sphere of influence, and on the other side are folks, such as Clinton, who say that countries should be able to make sovereign decisions and should be able to enact the democratic will of their people. Canada, I think, is trying to navigate those two elements as best as it can.

If we think of the enhanced forward presence in Latvia, if we think of our deployment to Ukraine, eastern Europe, there's part of an important component of Canadian grand strategy here. We're not here to make the world a better place. This isn't altruistic. Europe is our second-most important strategic partner after the United States. Anything that compromises European borders, European stability, the cohesion and integrity of the European Union, of the Schengen entity, profoundly runs counter to Canadian interests. To some extent we can think of, for instance, what we're doing in Latvia, as a peacekeeping mission in a sort of conventional British bobby Sir Robert Peel policing sense. Ultimately, this is not a force that's going to stop the Russians, but it can provide a visibility and as a result, hopefully, a deterrent. I think that's also an important component that we forget. We always focus on the instrumental piece of what we're doing in Ukraine, but I think simply showing the flag has a certain deterrent effect.

We need to consider the context, though, of what's happening in Ukraine. This is a frozen conflict. Not much has really happened strategically in the last three years. Ukraine, I would contend, remains the most important strategic theatre for Russia today in the world. We're only going to see progress if either Russia or Ukraine concedes interests, and I don't see that happening. We're therefore likely going to have this frozen conflict stalemate for some time to come, and Canada needs to consider what it's going to do here.

What is this ultimately about? Ukraine is sort of considered a classic invasion route by the Russians, when they think of Napoleon, Charles XII of Sweden, of Hitler. Then also, of course, Europe has the same perspective, that this has been a way for Russia to compromise European interests over history. It's a classic invasion route because the geography is flat, and it's a very large country so it serves as a buffer.

Russia considers it important because it can thereby influence and control what's happening in Transnistria, the breakaway region within Moldova. It is concerned about the northern Black Sea coast and the ability to control that. I think that's what much of Crimea was about: ultimately Russia wants to control all of the Black Sea, and from Crimea you can get everywhere easily and readily. Within the Black Sea, you can control the Kerch Strait, which leads to the Sea of Azov. The Sea of Azov is key for Russia in terms of energy supplies and in terms of water routes. From there you reach the Don River, and if you can make your way up the Don River, Russia is deeply concerned about the potential detachment of the Caucasus region from the rest of Russia. From its perspective, it thinks back to the Crimean War where that was a real risk, of course.

● (1545)

Putin's hope and the gamble that the Putin regime has been dabbling in is that it will be able to parlay the gains in Syria into bargaining concessions from the west with regard to Ukraine. It hasn't been able to do that, and much of Russian meddling and involvement in conflicts—everything from providing intelligence and document support to the Taliban, to its statements in support of North Korea, to even now having a substantial diplomatic mission and effort in Libya—is all a way of trying to leverage these conflicts as a negotiation tool and parlay them into bargaining chips over Ukraine.

That Russian strategy so far has not borne out, because the west has blocked Russian initiatives, in particular around Syria. To the contrary, we've seen an increase in sanctions from the United States and we'll likely see a similar response from the European Union by year's end or early 2018 against Russian state companies.

Of course, we have the context of the Russian presidential elections, and I might remind you that we're going to have one more term of Putin, but what comes after that? Will he then manipulate the constitution or will he have another swap? Putin isn't going to be in charge forever, so we also need to hedge about possibilities of change and regime change in that regard.

Currently, we see the U.S. resorting to some delivery of lethal weapons and engaging in military exercises in Moldova and the south Caucasus regions. Both the west and Russia have key strategic imperatives. Russia is trying to leverage its conflict involvements, while the west is trying to block Russian initiatives as a way to disincentivize Russia from getting involved in all these other conflicts around the world and creating strategic challenges for the west there.

There are five things the committee needs to think about, going forward.

Does Canada want to buy into military manoeuvres outside of the traditional NATO realm when it comes to supporting some of the allies in the region, in particular Moldova and south Caucasus, or do we want to leave that up to the Americans?

Does Canada want to get involved in providing lethal weapons or things that can be subsequently parlayed into lethal force, such as satellite intelligence, and under what conditions?

Does Canada want to join the U.S. in ratcheting up the sanctions regime? We've already seen some of that response from Canada.

How can Canada best coordinate with the European Union and the United States in an effort to thwart these broader involvements by Russia, both in Ukraine and in other conflicts?

Finally, how can Canada actively discourage Russia from trying to meddle in many other places in the world? At the same time, we need to make sure we continue to work and co-operate with the Russians, because of course we have a number of strategic common interests, such as weapons of mass destruction.

In the context of Canadian grand strategy—where we want to make sure we keep all the NATO players onside and involved, as well as keeping the Americans in NATO and contributing to it—there are four key elements that Canada needs to think about. The first is how can Canada best support the Minsk II process? It's easy to talk about militarizing the conflict when you're in Ottawa and Washington, but if you're sitting in Berlin or Paris and you're only a few hundred kilometres away, that picture looks very different.

Canada needs to continue to incentivize the agreement and the process, however flawed they might be, to make sure Ukraine as a partner—in return for support—adheres to the commitments it has made, in particular with regard to decentralization, recognition, and some of the rights of the Russian-language minority. Ukraine is effectively a bilingual country, much more than Canada is. We're not going to be able to settle the issues if we can't get the political elites to recognize that and make some concessions around it. We need to work to continue to professionalize the armed forces of Ukraine. We've made some inroads in that regard, but there is a lot more heavy lifting to do.

We need to make sure we can continue to disincentivize corruption within the country. A lot of the effort that Canada has invested in transformation and transparency, with Europe as a key partner, is really important, because the regime that was set up is a spinoff of the Putinist authoritarian regime that is essentially structured around a rent-seeking elite. The way you keep the regime in place and stable is that everybody has an interest in the status quo, because they're all part of that rent-seeking elite and they're all heavily intertwined. Undoing that in Ukraine is going to take some time. It's going to be critical not just to transform Ukraine and provide a basis for the legitimacy of a democratic regime, but also to encourage economic development.

● (1550)

I want to end on that point. Ukraine faces significant challenges. It has gone from 50 million to 40 million people in the last 20 years, with a rapidly aging population. This has significant political implications for how people vote, for instance. What can we do to make sure that Canada can invest in a stable, long-term economic, social, and political development of Ukraine going forward?

I think some of the initiatives that the European Union has started in that regard are a good model for Canada to support and to join. As in many of these types of missions on the military side, our partners might be in the anglosphere, the U.K. and the United States. At the same time, Canada has been very good and strategic over the years in co-operating with the European Union on political, social, and economic reform. Striking a balance between those two will be key going forward.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your comments, Mr. Leuprecht.

Mr. Schroeder, thank you for your patience. You have the floor.

Mr. Matt Schroeder (Senior Researcher, Small Arms Survey, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

I want to begin by thanking the Standing Committee on National Defence for the opportunity to participate in today's discussion, which we view as very important.

As mentioned, I am a senior researcher with Small Arms Survey, a Geneva-based institute that conducts impartial, evidence-based research on all aspects of small arms and light weapons, including illicit proliferation in Ukraine, which is the focus of a study that we recently launched and hope to complete by early next year.

My statement today draws on some of the data we've collected so far, along with the findings from previous research conducted by colleagues and others.

The crisis in Ukraine is an exceedingly important topic, particularly for those of us who track the spread of small arms and light weapons. Since the outbreak of hostilities in 2014, Ukraine has become a hotbed of illicit weapons proliferation. Ukrainian authorities routinely seize arms caches containing dozens of small arms, light weapons, rounds of light weapons ammunition, and hundreds of rounds of small arms ammunition. These weapons range from antique firearms to third-generation portable missiles.

Among the most notable of these weapons are man-portable air defence systems, or MANPADS, dozens of which have been seized by Ukrainian authorities and spotted in the hands of pro-Russian militants in recent years. The vast majority of these missiles are second- and third-generation systems, which is unusual. In most countries, the majority of illicit MANPADS are aging first-generation missiles that are significantly less capable than their more modern counterparts.

In Ukraine, this ratio is turned on its head. The vast majority of illicit MANPADS appear to be second- and third-generation systems, with first-generation missiles comprising just a small percentage of illicit stocks. Given the vulnerability of commercial airliners to a MANPADS attack, and the ease with which missiles can be smuggled across borders and to attack sites, the loose missiles in Ukraine are worrisome, to say the least.

However, MANPADS are not the only illicit weapons of concern in Ukraine. Authorities have seized large quantities of, among other weapons, anti-personnel landmines, anti-tank guided missiles, shoulder-fired rockets, and hand grenades, the latter of which are now ubiquitous in Ukraine. In 2016, authorities seized 2,698 grenades, a 23-fold increase over 2013. These seizures are occurring throughout Ukraine, not just in the east.

These weapons play an important role in the conflict, but the threat that they pose is not limited to conflict zones. Hand grenades, for example, have been used in attacks on, among other targets, private homes, diplomatic compounds, government buildings, peaceful protests, parades, and even restaurants, in different parts of the country. Accidental explosions of illicit grenades and other light weapons have claimed additional lives, including those of children.

On July 4, 2016, three children in the Donetsk region were killed by a grenade they found the day before and brought home with them. This danger is not limited to eastern Ukraine. In May of this year, children playing in a playground in Kiev found a fused F1 hand grenade in a sandbox.

Illicit weapons in Ukraine are also a concern for authorities in other countries, including, but not limited to, neighbouring states. In 2016, a former UK customs official warned that loose weapons in Ukraine “will undoubtedly be trafficked into Europe”. These fears are underscored by recent reports of thwarted attempts to traffic firearms, ammunition, and other weapons to European countries, including an alleged scheme to smuggle RPG launchers, explosives, firearms, and other weapons into France. Security officials have also interdicted transcontinental arms shipments.

In January 2017, officials at Kiev International Airport discovered 17 boxes of undeclared goods in an aircraft bound for the Middle East. Three of the boxes contained launchers for portable anti-tank missile systems.

While our understanding of cross-border arms smuggling is incomplete, existing evidence suggests that such trafficking is currently relatively limited. That could change quickly, if and when the conflict in the east is resolved and demand for military small arms and light weapons decreases. We will continue to monitor illicit arms flows within, into, and from Ukraine, and we will flag any notable developments, including significant increases in cross-border arms trafficking or changes in the composition of illicit weapons in Ukraine.

Thank you.

● (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your testimony.

This particular panel will go until 4:45, at which point I'll suspend, and we will have another quick 45-minute panel afterwards.

Having said that, the first seven minutes for questions go to Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today to provide some insight into the topic we're currently studying.

Professor Leuprecht, thank you for coming from Kingston to be here with us today.

I want to ask you about what Canada's involvement can be in helping to eliminate the corruption that still exists within Ukraine. What I witnessed and I took away from our visit last month was something quite unique in that the revolution and the anti-corrupt movement really seems to be coming from the bottom up, in that it is a grassroots movement. What appeared to still have the most corruption embedded within it was at the top level: the government, the politicians, the department heads.

I asked a very interesting question when we were there, at least I thought it was interesting, about the number of individuals who had been charged. The response was, “We have investigated 800 people”, but they didn't tell me how many had been charged or actually convicted, I should say, because it's actually very few.

What can Canada's role be in helping with that? With everything else that's going on with the current conflict, at some point there must come a collision between this grassroots movement and the corruption that still exists. Where do you see that going, and where do you see Canada's role could be in helping with that?

● (1600)

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: The corruption issue is of course a symptom of this Putinist rent-seeking system that underlies it and that kept everybody in line. While we've had a change of the senior political elite, much of the rest of that state establishment is still very much in place. Changing that culture will be difficult, but the challenge is that the gains on democratization will be lost if the legitimacy of the regime and the bureaucracy and its impartiality are lost. It is a poignant question because it is ultimately what some of the deepest concerns are to the average Ukrainian.

There's a carrot and stick approach here. The support that Canada provides has to tie more explicitly into ensuring that Ukraine does the right thing. Whether prosecuting people necessarily is the right thing, I'm not sure, but certainly, I think, one of the quickest ways to move through the system is a renewal of the entire state structure. It's moving some of the senior levels out, retiring them out, because there are many very competent younger Ukrainians, including my colleague, who are willing to step into that fray, and the old senior folks are very much trying to protect their turf. We know what some of this looks like because we saw some of this, for instance—not entirely comparable—in Northern Ireland after the Good Friday Agreement, and what a complete renewal of much of the civil service looks like and how it can be done.

At the same time, it's the continued training, and Canada has a lot of expertise in this. We're, for instance, helping Mexico as it moves to a more adversarial system. Canada has a lot of training in the professionalization of the judiciary, of the independence of investigations. We'll never be able to do this by ourselves. These are not areas where Canada is ever going to go in and do something on its own, but there is real opportunity to do more with the European Union and to be a more aggressive part of the strategy that the European Union has devised in that regard. I would say the European Union has a very robust strategy. I would also submit that this strategy is readily saleable to Canadians, while the military mission will always be inherently controversial. Anti-corruption efforts and the broader strategy of engaging with the Ukrainian civil service is something that most Canadians would say is exactly what we should be doing, exactly where we have comparative advantage as a country that doesn't have an immediate ulterior motive.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I just need to jump in here because I will run out of time, and the chair is very quick at shutting me down.

You touched on something very interesting, which was changing some of that structure at the top. We went to a military base there and the current Ukrainian base commander had been in that position for 13 years. We're both very familiar with CFB Kingston. No commander lasts more than two years.

We saw a lot of the training that our military was doing there, but that doesn't strike me as something our military will be able to train. That is embedded within the structure.

Is Canada doing enough outside our military role, in our diplomatic role, to help those changes to occur?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I think for one thing it's important that this be led by Global Affairs. GAC has very few resources on the ground but ultimately, in terms of civil military relations, we want to make sure there is a coherent strategy. One of my concerns going to Latvia is that there isn't a strategy. We have an ambassador. We have a military commandant. We need to get people working together much more effectively on this. We're essentially changing the Ukrainian armed forces from a Russian force structure and officer structure to a western NATO-type structure. We're trying to do this in a very short period of time. We have lots of experience from eastern and central Europe but you observe a function that shows there is not as much buy-in as we would like, and I think we can provide more incentives for the Ukrainian armed forces' security and bureaucracy to buy into that by tying some of our support to those changes.

● (1605)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here this afternoon.

I have two streams of questions because I'm curious on a couple of levels.

Mr. Schroeder, you talked about light arms. You said they were for pro-Russian forces. Is that correct?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: The Russian militants have access to a lot of different small arms and weapons.

Mr. Randy Hoback: These small arms are coming out of Russia. Is that fair to say?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: That is a good question. There is anecdotal evidence linking them to Russia. But a lot more study needs to be done in part because a lot of the weapons listed that we've seen are early-generation, Soviet-designed systems that were widely exported in the region and were stockpiled by Ukraine. There are exceptions and I can talk about those exceptions, but a more systematic analysis is needed.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Okay, so like the rocket launchers, that type of stuff is more sophisticated, and they obviously would have to come from Russia, would they not?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: No, not necessarily. Some of the rocket launchers, yes, but not all of them. The man-portable air defence systems are pretty widely proliferated.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Kozak, I want to talk a little about hybrid warfare. I know it almost looks like two battlefields. You have the actual battlefield itself. I'll call it that for lack of a better word. Then you also have cyber-attacks, the whole undermining of the Ukrainian government and economy. I'll use the example of power outages where there was a cyber-threat and malware went into the Ukrainian power grid, the power went off and everybody blamed the Ukrainian government for being unable to manage the power system. Yet we find in North America some of that malware is showing up in our power grids. I'm concerned that when we talk about cybersecurity are we doing enough? Does more need to be done? There are also some theories out there that Ukraine is a test place for Russian cyber-attacks. Would you have any comments on that?

Mr. Ihor Kozak: I believe you are correct in that there is a threat when we are talking about Russian aggression and specifically hybrid warfare. You're not talking about a threat to Ukraine itself but also to European and global stability and security here in the west. The key example is that, allegedly, the Russians got involved in the U.S. presidential elections. If they can do that, they can probably tell you they can get involved in other aspects as well. Talking to my American colleagues and folks on the ground in Ukraine—and I'm there often—it's amazing to see the extent of hybrid warfare. They are providing agents of influence, spending a lot of money to destabilize the situation among various communities there. They are engaging in cyberwarfare as you said, and so, absolutely, I don't believe you're doing enough here. I don't believe we are protected here. Russian propaganda is very prevalent in Canada. RT, Russia Today television, is spreading a lot of propaganda. At the same time, I'm certain that a Russian agent would influence and secure the services of working in Canada as well, and I'm pretty sure they are working in the cybersecurity area too, so we absolutely need to do more, not less.

Mr. Randy Hoback: We're not part of that special committee that's working on cybersecurity in Ukraine. Do you think we should be part of that group?

Mr. Ihor Kozak: Absolutely. I think obviously for the sake of supporting our Ukrainian partners but, at the same time, more importantly for our own good. For example, the training mission that we have in Ukraine right now, yes, Canada is doing a lot to train Ukrainian troops and it saves lives and does all that good stuff. But at the same time we as Canadians are benefiting as much, learning about new Russian tactics, new Russian weaponry from those troops who are on the front line, engaged with the Russians day in and day out. We as Canadians are learning a lot and we are benefiting a lot. I would rather see us learning from Ukrainian troops in western Ukraine as opposed to learning, God forbid, two or three years from now having Latvia on the battlefield with Russia.

I think the same analogy can be applied here to cybersecurity. I think we should get engaged, we should help Ukrainians with the technologies and the capabilities and experience we have. But we should also jump on this bandwagon and learn as much as we can as quickly as we can so we can do some preventive actions here in Canada, also with our NATO allies.

● (1610)

Mr. Randy Hoback: It's interesting. I went to numerous governors' conferences this past summer down in the U.S. At every one of them they talked about cybersecurity.

Mr. Ihor Kozak: Absolutely.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Everyone talked about the importance of getting people trained up so they could fill the vacancies in regard to cybersecurity. Is that something we need to be looking at more closely in Canada?

Again, it still has a Ukrainian context. If they are the test ground, the location where everything is being tried and experimented on, shouldn't we be there to learn as much as we can?

Mr. Ihor Kozak: I fully agree with you, sir. We should be there, and we should be spending a lot of time and effort helping them out, and also learning and implementing those solutions here in Canada and with our NATO partners.

Mr. Randy Hoback: As far as defensive weapons are concerned, the types of weapons you mentioned, you think we should actually be more aggressive in regard to the types of weapons we allow them to purchase from Canada. Can you give some examples of what they would be used for, and what types of weapons they are?

Mr. Ihor Kozak: I don't want to repeat myself. In my opening statement, I was talking about the counter-battery radars and Javelin missiles. There are a number of items that the Ukrainian government has asked for. The list is very long. It has been officially submitted, from what I understand, from the Ukrainian government to the Canadian government, so I'm sure you can request that.

The problem is not that Ukraine doesn't have enough weapons and ammunition—it sure does—but that it doesn't have access to the newest technologies. Russians, or the Russian proxy forces, are certainly receiving a lot of new equipment and new weapons from the Russian Federation, and they are using these. Ukraine is at a disadvantage even as it wages this standstill war right now.

If, God forbid, it came to the point where there is a full-blown Russian aggression and offensive on Ukraine, Ukraine would be hard pressed to stop the advance of the Russian offensive forces right now at the border and the Donbass. Although right now there is a so-called frozen conflict, nobody knows what is in the head of Mr. Putin, so one has to prepare for the worst. If they had advanced weapons, such as Javelin missiles, the Russians would definitely think twice before advancing, because of the casualties they could incur on their side as well.

In this particular case, when dealing with Mr. Putin and his team in the Kremlin, strength deters aggression, while weakness provokes it. When dealing with Mr. Putin and the Russian aggression, we certainly should be strong.

Mr. Randy Hoback: You've been on the ground in Ukraine. We've heard Mr. Schroeder talk about light arms, light artillery, and different types of weapons coming in. Of course, you can't nail it down. There is no smoking gun on where they are coming from. Do you have any speculation on where they are coming from? Do you have any comments you'd like to make in regard to that?

Mr. Ihor Kozak: Well, sir, I have no doubt that the majority of them are actually coming from Russia. It's very simple math. The war has been going on for four years. The so-called LNR and DNR are self-proclaimed, unrecognized Russian proxy republics. They have factories producing this ammunition and weapons. Clearly, the Ukrainian government is not providing them to their enemies.

When I was travelling across the front lines, many times I could see clearly.... As an ex-military officer, I can tell you that they are not saving their ammunition. They are firing day in and day out on various civilian objects. I think they have no shortage of weapons. They have to receive them from somewhere.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Garrison, go ahead.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

I think the committee knows I'm very interested in ways to strengthen Canada-Ukraine relations, but I want to focus my questions on Mr. Schroeder today, because we've had relatively limited testimony about weapons flows in Ukraine.

You've described a situation, if I understand it correctly, where there is very little capacity of the government to manage the trade of small weapons and light weapons, and that includes everything up to, as I think you said, grenade launchers and multiple rocket systems. Could you comment a little more on the capacity of the Ukrainian government to monitor what's going on with those systems in Ukraine?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: Sure. I would just preface my comment by saying that it is a Herculean task for any government to monitor small arms and light weapons in its territory, especially when some of the territory is not controlled by its forces.

The Ukrainian government has been very aggressive in countering illicit weapons. Seizures occur on a daily basis. There is enough public information that you can see how they are doing it. They are doing it professionally. They are documenting it. They're taking down serial numbers and the information necessary for intelligence. They are destroying in situ some of the more dangerous weapons. It's obvious that they are taking this problem very seriously.

Whether they have the necessary resources to really get on top of that problem, that is a question for the Ukrainian government. That's something the Government of Canada might want to explore with them.

Mr. Randall Garrison: In a report from one of your colleagues in April of this year, you said very clearly that the Ukrainian government doesn't require licences for the transfer of small weapons and light weapons within the country. In other words, the trade in weapons is not officially regulated. Is that correct?

● (1615)

Mr. Matt Schroeder: That's not my report, but my interpretation of that report is that there is some ambiguity in the law regarding licensing, but that would only apply to certain types of firearms, when we're talking about rocket-propelled grenades, when we're talking about hand grenades. All of that is prohibited from civilian use, from what I understand. I think the ambiguity refers only to certain types of firearms. That's just a small subgroup of the larger universe of small arms and light weapons that we see circulating illicitly in Ukraine.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Once again, is it more a question of capacity than it is a gap in the law?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: Yes, again, I didn't do this research, but my understanding is that there is some ambiguity that has legal implications, but when you look at the weapons that are of greatest concern, at least from my viewpoint, it has less to do with legal procedures and more to do with law enforcement capacity and border monitoring and, eventually, when this conflict is resolved, disposing properly of the surplus small arms, light weapons, and munitions that are available in large quantities in Ukraine.

Mr. Randall Garrison: You mentioned earlier incidents of the export or re-export of weapons and weapon systems from Ukraine and the attempts to send them to both western Europe and the Middle East. Could you tell us a little about the scope of those transfers and what knowledge we have of who is involved in those kinds of transfers? Who is trying to do those kinds of things?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: I would just say that data is very sparse. What we have are summaries of seizures, and most of those summaries do not have a lot of detail. Illicit movement within the country appears to be perpetrated by different types of traffickers. There are some reports of online trafficking, including dark web trafficking, but the smuggling outside of the borders is, so far, surprisingly limited, at least as far publicly available information suggests. I would just preface all of these comments by saying that the data is limited.

Mr. Randall Garrison: There have been both allegations, and allegations that the allegations are disinformation, about the export of weapons from Ukraine legally. Is your organization compiling information about legal exports of small arms and light weapon systems from Ukraine?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: We have some data on exports of small arms and light weapons from Ukraine. The Ukrainians are very good about reporting on those exports, at least those that are authorized. That's available through the UN register of conventional arms and other sources.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Do you know where the arms are principally being shipped from Ukraine?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: They're listed in the UN registry. There has been a steep decline in exports since the beginning of the war, as in an order of magnitude decrease. The exports are less frequent, which is not surprising. They probably need them for themselves at this point.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Do you have any comments that you would make on the addition of additional lethal weapons to the conflict in Ukraine? If Canada were to decide to authorize the purchase of additional weapons by Ukraine, do you have any comments on the impacts of that on the conflict?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: I'm not a miliary expert, so I can't comment on the impact. I would just say that exports themselves are not problematic necessarily. The control measures that are put in place on those exports are what is important.

Canada is generally very good about this. It's proper licensing, it's no re-transfers without express permission from the Canadian government, and then it's also post-shipment end use monitoring, which is something that fewer governments have embraced, but it is the most effective way to ensure that weapons are not being diverted.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Do you believe that there is a capacity that exists for post-delivery control like end use monitoring if Canada were exporting weapons to Ukraine? Whose responsibility would that be?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: I don't know which government agency would be responsible for that. What is realistic depends on the type of weapon. If they are parts for small arms, there's very little that you can do necessarily. If they're Javelin missiles, if you follow the U.S. lead, for example, with Stinger missiles, the shoulder-fired, surface-to-air missile, they do 100% physical inventory by serial number of every single exported missile ever. They do that annually.

● (1620)

Mr. Randall Garrison: So the United States government is responsible for going into the country these weapons have been exported to and taking an inventory to see if they're still there. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: Exactly. That's reserved only for the most sensitive weapons, and most governments won't do that. But there is middle ground that some governments embrace.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Would you describe it as a best practice if Canada were to authorize lethal weapons exports that Canada should do monitoring of the end use of the more sophisticated weapons?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: Yes, I would.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you, gentlemen, for being here, or being here virtually.

Professor Leuprecht, Mr. Kozak spoke a little bit about the UN peacekeeping mission, or a possible peacekeeping mission, and what might need to be done. I'm interested in your thoughts. Russia holds a seat on the Security Council. Ukraine doesn't. Canada normally would have a role in peacekeeping, but we can't really because we're involved in that. I'm interested in your thoughts on what needs to be done by Russia and Ukraine to get to a place where we can have a true peacekeeping mission.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I think the shorter answer here is to defer to the OSCE. I think the OSCE is doing what it can, but if we want to decrease the violations of the ceasefire, then we're going to need to have the OSCE out at night. Basically it's calm during the day and then at night everybody shoots at each other, because at night it's very difficult to ascertain who started it.

Thinking of a peacekeeping mission is thinking several steps too far. Let's just work with the monitoring regime we have in place and what we can do to shore up the OSCE and that monitoring regime. The OSCE is important because we have Russia as part of the effort going forward.

I've argued that this is also in Canada's strategic interest in places like Syria. Eventually people are going to stop shooting. If all the major powers are involved, somebody with leadership at headquarters is going to have to step up. This has been true of some of the contributions we've made in the Golan Heights and in Israel for over the past four decades. Canada will want to tread carefully, though, because everybody is so involved in the Ukrainian conflict that we don't know who is going to step up if that call comes. Anything that reduces the conflict and the tension is clearly in Canada's strategic interest.

Mr. Darren Fisher: We've heard military numbers of the massive buildup of Ukrainian soldiers—new soldiers, untrained soldiers—somewhere near a quarter of a million. We're over there training these soldiers. Are we providing enough resources? Did we anticipate that level of growth of the Ukrainian military to somewhere around a quarter of a million? Do we need to do more? Are we doing enough of what's needed to help with that huge proliferation of bodies?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I'm less concerned about the rank and file than I am about the officer corps. As your colleague Mr. Garrison pointed out, how members of the officer corps conduct themselves is ultimately going to determine our ability to rein folks in.

With some of our partners in Kurdistan, we can see that people don't always use their training in ways that Canada might like. We should be committed to remaining engaged with the mid-level officer corps, training the officer corps, professionalizing the officer corps, and teaching the officer corps how to interact with local communities. Making sure that we don't have atrocities by Ukrainian armed forces is going to be key to the legitimacy of the Ukrainian military.

In Russia, we have high policing by the military. It's there to keep the regime in place and to defend the interests of an elite. What we need to do in Ukraine is try to transform a military that used to be there to defend the interests of the elite and the regime into a military engaged in low policing, a military that is seen as defending the interests of the people. That's where this transformation of the officer corps is absolutely instrumental. We have lots of experience in how to do it well, and lots of experience in how to do it poorly.

● (1625)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you.

Mr. Kozak, you mentioned RT and Russian propaganda. We have heard testimony that Joe Public in Russia seems to think that Ukrainians want to be taken over by the Russians. That doesn't seem to be working. In fact, it's going the other way. Do you have any feelings about how Russian propaganda and things like RT are working on Ukrainians?

Mr. Ihor Kozak: I think the fact is that the Russian propaganda is working to a certain extent because Mr. Putin has been in power for so long. They've been changing constitutions, and he plans to stay in power. There has been some minimal protest, I suppose, but by and large his power is unchallenged. Clearly, the Russian propaganda and disinformation works to a large extent within Russia.

In Ukraine, the Kremlin is operating by different means. They're not directly trying to impact Ukrainian media and the population because it would be so blunt and people would see through that propaganda. They're trying to do it through the Russian-controlled oligarchs. For example, channel 112 and channel ICTV are owned by Ukrainian oligarchs who have direct links to Russia. They're trying to approach it in a more subtle way in that they're taking a certain amount of truth, for example, the issue of corruption in Ukraine on the social level, the economic level and so on, and they are trying to put a spin on it, calling for example, for a new Revolution of Dignity, a new Euromaidan, so to speak, to have an impact on the unity of Ukraine and to disintegrate the Ukrainian government.

In that respect, is it working? It hasn't worked yet because Ukraine is still functioning as a country, by and large, but you have seen over the past couple of days there are protests in Ukraine against the current Ukrainian government. They're legitimate claims to expedite the reforms, fight corruption further, and so on and so forth, but the danger is that the Russian agents of influence and the Russian-controlled media and certain politicians will use these legitimate claims to their advantage to manipulate this.

I think the same, to a certain extent, is happening here in the west. We obviously don't see the blunt Russian propaganda here because you wouldn't buy it but there is a certain stretch of the truth here and there that is impacting people. I'm spending a lot of time in Washington, D.C., and even in talking with certain think tanks and media over there quite often they are taking RT reports, Russian reports, at their face value while in reality the truth has been manipulated.

There is a real danger from the Russian propaganda. It's fairly sophisticated. I was born and grew up in the Soviet Union and remember that Soviet propaganda was pretty simplistic in nature, pretty blunt and primitive. It was easy to recognize it, even for a young child like me. What I'm seeing now on the RT, what I'm seeing now in Ukraine or on Russian television and newspapers, is actually a pretty sophisticated operation. I think we have to be very careful that we don't approach it from some sort of a simplistic way, but we do a proper analysis and recognize it as the threat that it is to Ukraine, but most importantly to our Canadian and western interests and values.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you.

The Chair: We have about 15 minutes left so that will be three more questions. We'll go to five minute rounds now.

Ms. Alleslev, you have the floor.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Thank you for being here.

I think that Dr. Leuprecht summed it up quite effectively when he said that it is a stalemate and that we Canadians have scarce resources.

The question that I'd like to pose to all of you is, what should we be doing? Our job is to advise the government and make recommendations on what the course of action should be. Should we be maintaining the status quo? Should we be looking at direct engagement by allowing us to send weapons or military intelligence, or actively participating in manoeuvres, like you said, outside the sphere of NATO? Should we be looking at more indirect means in terms of increased sanctions or helping to professionalize the military or mitigate corruption, or should we continue to do what we do but look at being part of the peacekeeping when and if that comes?

I have Russian Canadians and Ukrainian Canadians in my riding, and they're conflicted about which approach to take. I'd like to know what your opinion is. How do we prioritize not only our scarce resources but our strategic considerations? What would your recommendation to the Canadian government be?

Anyone can answer.

● (1630)

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I think we need to ask ourselves where we have a comparative advantage. My argument would be, on cyber, for instance, we don't have a comparative advantage relative to what some of our allies can contribute. On lethal weapons, I'm not sure we have a comparative advantage. I think both of those would also be publicly controversial. I think where we do have a comparative advantage is that by not being a traditional quasi sort of superpower with ulterior motives, what we've done well is the stuff that's less visible—the training and transformation of the officer corps of the civil service. This is something that, for instance, we've been doing in francophone Africa, something we've been doing in Central America and South America. We have lots of years of experience with this and I think it's going to require some more aggressive intervention as the Europeans are also proposing, in terms of, we actually need to put some of our bureaucrats in the actual ministries in order to disincent some of the behaviour.

I think that's going to generate much more positive change than loading up the country with more weapons. There's perhaps a discussion to be had about strategic intelligence, because there is a lack of some strategic intelligence.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Excellent.

Mr. Kozak.

Mr. Ihor Kozak: I agree with my colleague in that we do have limited resources. As the Canadian government, I think you should put an emphasis on two aspects.

The first aspect is that we should do what we do best. A couple of things that we just talked about are training and peacekeeping. As Canadians, we are renowned around the world for doing that well. When you're talking about training, and I'm sure Madam Sinclair will elaborate on the effectiveness of that training, it's not only training of the soldiers, the officer corps, but it's also reforming the entire structure of the Ukrainian military, as was discussed earlier. By doing so, not only are we changing the structure of the Ukrainian military, but we are factually fighting corruption. We are moving those elements within the Ukrainian military that are from the Soviet time when they were prone to corruption. Restructuring, providing more transparency and accountability, I think, is very, very important. Peacekeeping is another such example. We are so credible. We also have know-how, how to do it, how to work with our allies, with the United Nations, and so on.

The second aspect is that although we have limited resources, I believe we can take certain actions that cost us very little or cost us next to nothing. For example, expediting the process of adding Ukraine to the AFCC list is going to allow Ukraine to actually purchase from Canada the necessary state-of-the-art modern equipment and isn't going to cost the Canadian taxpayer any money. As a matter of fact, it's probably going to have a positive impact on the Canadian economy to a certain extent.

At the same time, there's the provision of lethal weapons. Yes, we are not the United States of America. We are not the Pentagon. We don't have the resources they do. But providing a limited number of defensive weapons, I think, is going to first of all be very symbolic in nature. It's going to show Mr. Putin, in that process I proposed before that strains the terrorists' weakness and proves that we mean business, that we stand by Ukraine not only in words but in actual meaning. It's also going to give an example to our friends and allies south of the border that they should do more for our friends and allies in NATO.

Within those two parameters, I think we shouldn't be limiting ourselves by looking at the global picture and saying how much it is going to cost and how much we can we actually afford. I think there are so many different ways, as Canadians, we can continue doing what we're doing, but we can actually do more and we should do more.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Schroeder.

The Chair: I'm sorry, your time has expired.

I give the floor over to Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be splitting my time with Mr. Yurdiga.

I want to thank all our witnesses for being here. I want to thank Mr. Kozak in particular for his service to Canada as an air force officer and an intelligence officer, and for taking such an interest in giving back to Ukraine during this very difficult time.

Twice now, Professor Leuprecht, you talked about expanding the officer corps and training that officer corps. The thing that we heard over in Ukraine, especially when we talked to our Canadian Armed Forces members who were there, is that there seems to be a real underdevelopment and lack of middle management in the non-commissioned officers. How do we get more master corporals? How do we get more sergeants, sergeant majors, and warrant officers? That, I think, might be the sweet spot in some of the training we do.

If you can answer that quickly, I know that Mr. Yurdiga has a bunch of questions.

Mr. Kozak, I know you have visited almost all our forces at all the different bases where they're training in Ukraine. Can you talk about the military police training that we're doing and how well that's working in fighting corruption within the Ukrainian military?

● (1635)

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: We need to train the trainers so that the trainers can then translate that to the rest of the troops. I think this is partially an area where more connectivity between the Canadian Armed Forces and the Ukrainian armed forces would be quite helpful. I think you rightly pointed out that while we've invested a good deal in the officer corps, the people who actually operationalize much of the leadership on the ground in terms of the warrant officers have probably not received the attention, in part because it's not as sexy to invest in as it is to invest in training for the middle civil service. I think this is ultimately where we're going to see the greatest payoff, making sure we start with the junior level ranks that are going to end up in five years in the professional development scheme.

Mr. Ihor Kozak: To respond to the first question, as we know, in the Soviet military system, the backbone was centralized command, centralized execution, and the backbone of that system was the officer corps, especially senior officers.

In our NATO system, the backbone obviously is officer corps as well, but even to a larger extent, I would say, as you said, Mr. Bezan, that the senior NCMs are playing a critical role.

As we are training Ukrainian troops, as we are conducting reforms —as Madam Sinclair is overseeing and advising—I think it's crucial that we actually train that new backbone in the NATO way of the senior NCMs who will close that gap right now and will move completely. It's already happening from the centralized command and centralized execution to the NATO way of doing things, with the centralized command and centralized execution giving more power to the commanders on the ground to make the decisions and react quickly. It would be a much more effective way to do it, and I think we need to emphasize this type of senior NCM training much more.

To answer your second question, Mr. Bezan, about the effectiveness of the training that Canada has done for the Ukrainian police, I will not use statistics but just give you a personal example. As I told you, I was born and raised in Ukraine, and as a kid and as a teenager, I was taught to always stay away from the cops because there were some—without exaggeration—who were the most corrupt people in the country. Even as I was going to Ukraine under the previous regimes—the Kuchma regime, the Yanukovych regime—with a Canadian passport, even with a military diplomatic passport, I was staying away from them because they could stop you for no reason on the highway because they needed to receive their bribe as part of the whole corrupt system.

I can tell you that going to Ukraine now is like day versus night. I'm not saying it's all perfect, but I would say it's 98% a different police force. It gives you a clear example that we, as Canadians, through the limited resources we invested in this training, can make a difference. That police success story.... The western, Canadian, model of police force is a clear success story. This is one of the success stories, and we're going to build on this. They're going to build on this as Ukrainians, and I think we can continue this way. It just takes time. You can have 70 years of the Soviet regime, 20-odd years of the corrupt regimes, and you cannot change everything in three years, especially with the war going on, the economic crisis, and so on. But it's been very effective.

The Chair: You have a little over 35 seconds left.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): I'm afraid we're not doing enough. We always talk about the cost.

If Ukraine were ultimately destabilized and overtaken by Russia, what would that cost be? It would potentially destabilize the whole region, and the cost to our western society would be huge. Can you comment on that, briefly, in two seconds or less?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Two seconds or less? Fine.

Someone—

Mr. Ihor Kozak: Yes, absolutely it would destabilize.

Ukraine is right in the heart of Europe, the crossroads of civilizations. It's the frontier of the European Union and NATO, and therefore a collapse of Ukraine—as Mr. Putin would like to see, a failed state—would mean all kinds of issues.

I'm out of time here, but I could continue listing all the negative impacts it would have on Ukraine, Europe, and the entire free world. I think it's in Canada's and NATO's best interests to ensure that this doesn't happen—for Ukrainian interests, but I keep emphasizing, for our own interests as well.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: Can I give you two quick points?

One is that small arms are already showing up in Europe from the conflict in Ukraine, especially in the weapons markets in Belgium, and are being used by people who we consider as terrorists. So there would be the proliferation of small arms, if we had that sort of collapse.

The other is the proliferation of dual-use nuclear weapons technology. We already know that liquid fuel rocket engines from a company in Ukraine are very likely finding their way to North Korea, because there's only one company in the world that makes the engines that are projecting some of the missiles of the North Korean regime.

If we want to avoid that, we want to avoid the collapse of Ukraine, but we also need to make sure that the Ukrainian government plays by the rules. It says it knows nothing about this, but I think this is something on which Canada needs to press Ukraine much harder. We can't have people indirectly having dual-use technology, having it show up in North Korea.

● (1640)

The Chair: The last question for this panel goes to Mr. Robillard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for Mr. Leuprecht.

What are Russia's main interests in the Donbass region? How large a role do demographics and national identity play? What is Russia's long-term objective for the Donbass region? To what extent is Russia's intervention in the Donbass region part of a broader ambition to expand its territory?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: Every day, 5,000 Slavs are added to the Russian population of this region. As a result of demographic decline, the Russians are worried about the decline of the Slavic identity. I think this plays an important role in the region's demographic strategy and in Russia's identification with the region.

Strategically, Russia will try to control the region, either explicitly or implicitly, in order to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO. Earlier I mentioned the Russians' strategic reasons, both historical and current. The two sides are equal as regards the Donbass region, which is at the heart of the conflict.

[*English*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: My next question will be for Mr. Schroeder.

What is the status of the border between Ukraine and Russia? Is it porous? How is it so?

Mr. Matt Schroeder: That question is extremely hard to answer, in part because of the lack of data, so I'm going to take a pass on that one because I feel I cannot answer it competently.

Mr. Ihor Kozak: I can answer the question, sir, if you want.

If you look at the occupied territories—and I wish I had my map here—a significant portion of the Ukrainian territory, or the border that used to be the Ukrainian border with Russia, right now is not controlled by Ukrainian forces at all. It is under the control of the Russian forces and the Russian proxy forces.

To answer your question, no, it is not porous; it is completely open. Equipment, troops, FSB agents, or whoever, are being moved freely back and forth between the occupied territories and Russia. Ukraine has no control over those border lengths in the occupied regions whatsoever.

The Chair: Thank you, gentlemen, for appearing today.

This is obviously a very important conversation. It also helps to quell the misinformation, disinformation, and fake news we're hearing from the Russian side of this discussion or on the Internet and TV. It's hopefully giving us a more informed view of what's actually happening in the region versus what is being told to the public through various means, so it's important. It will also help this committee make very informed recommendations moving forward, as we finalize our report and make recommendations to the Government of Canada. Those will be debated, but this helps us get to where we need to go.

Thank you very much.

I will suspend for just two minutes, to say our goodbyes and welcome our next panel.

● (1640)

(Pause)

● (1645)

The Chair: I'd like to welcome Jill Sinclair, Canadian representative on the Ukrainian Defence Reform Advisory Board.

Thank you very much for taking the time to appear today. I would like to give you the floor for your opening remarks.

Ms. Jill Sinclair (Canadian representative, Ukrainian Defence Reform Advisory Board, Department of National Defence):

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for the invitation to appear before you today. I was very sorry to have missed you during your recent visit to the region, but I understand you had a terrific series of engagements. I've heard a little of it here, and I am looking forward to discussing your impressions and of course addressing any questions you have.

I'll keep my introductory comments brief.

[*Translation*]

As you know, I work with Ukraine as a member of the Defence Reform Advisory Board, or DRAB. This board was created about a year ago. It is an initiative by the Ukrainian minister of defence, General Stepan Poltorak, to implement an ambitious program of reform.

The minister asked six countries to appoint high-level experts to serve on a small advisory board, which would give advice to him, the chief of the general staff, senior Ukrainian government officials, and the members of the Verkhovna Rada, in order to help Ukraine in its efforts to implement reforms and live up to Euro-Atlantic standards and principles.

Like Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, Lithuania and Poland were invited to send experts. Canada was one of the first countries to respond. The DRAB works both as a group and individually.

[*English*]

In the case of Canada, I have been fortunate enough to travel just about every month to Ukraine, to build relationships and provide support and advice to the minister and to our Ukrainian partners in the reform effort.

I'm proud to be a part of Canada's broad, whole-of-defence team and whole-of-government effort in Ukraine. I work very closely with our head of mission in Kiev, Roman Waschuk, and the entirety of our defence team, from our task force commander and incredible team in Yavoriv—and again, I know you visited with them—to my partners in the Canadian Armed Forces, DND, and other government departments.

[*Translation*]

As you know, the issue of reform is the focus of our work in Ukraine. I am involved in the efforts to help Ukraine maintain its territorial integrity, its sovereignty, and its prosperity. With the inspiration and determination of Ukrainian society, and with the momentum and strength of the revolution of dignity, my role is to help Ukraine achieve its vision of an independent, stable, and democratic country.

● (1650)

[*English*]

The focus of the Defence Reform Advisory Board—in English known as the DRAB, but in name only, we say—and my work is framed by Ukraine's own carefully developed road map for reform in the security and defence sector, the "Strategic Defence Bulletin". The SDB is a comprehensive document in scope and scale. It seeks to totally reform the defence ministry and the Ukrainian armed forces and other elements of the security sector, from planning, budget, and personnel management through to creating a civilian minister of defence and ensuring civilian oversight of the armed forces. I work very closely with other members of the international community, including most particularly NATO.

Reform is a long and complex process, particularly in defence, and particularly in the midst of the conflict. I'm going to close my opening comments, because you had a lot about the context, about the conflict in the east. It is a major part of the context for Ukraine's current challenges. It's the backdrop against which it is carrying out its reform program. While there are many challenges and there is still much to be accomplished, Ukraine has made and is making progress.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss the issues.

[*Translation*]

I will be very pleased to answer your questions.

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Our first seven-minute round of questions is going to Ms. Alleslev. You have the floor.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you very much.

Thank you very much for being here.

What exciting, interesting, and important work.

My question for you is, how are you measuring progress? How is the Ukraine government measuring progress? As the Defence Reform Advisory Board, how are we measuring progress?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Thank you very much for that question.

The "Strategic Defence Bulletin" is arranged across five pillars. It has in totality about 162 objectives. Much as we would do it, they have established a reform committee that looks across the five pillars, that has working groups under each one of them. Much as we would do it, some of those committees are highly effective and some of them aren't.

There is a process by which we are trying to put in place metrics to say not simply what's the quantitative output, but what's the qualitative change. Getting to program management and using proper analytics is something that Canada, the United Kingdom, and other countries are trying to support the Ukrainians in putting in place. The way the Ukrainians measure it and the way we measure it from inside the defence ministry is about the same in trying to put in place those metrics.

The other measure, of course, is how the Ukrainian public feels about reform. Interestingly, in the last quarter of 2016 polling, defence reform in Ukraine was seen as one of the most visible and most positive aspects of reform. There is a sense that there is change happening for the good in the Ukrainian public, also.

From the Defence Reform Advisory Board's perspective, how are we measuring it? There are six of us. We have each taken a pillar of the "Strategic Defence Bulletin", and we are starting to drill down very systematically now that we're a year into our work. What are the actual detailed key performance indicators that we need? Where is there change? Where do we need to focus our efforts? I won't pretend it's a science, because as you know, it's more alchemy and art, but there is a method in our madness.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Outstanding.

Give us a feel for the time frame.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: What's interesting about this process of reform is that the "Strategic Defence Bulletin" is a Ukrainian document. They drafted it. It came out of a RAND report, a first draft, about a year ago. It was promulgated as a totally Ukrainian document. It has clear timelines for everything.

The "Strategic Defence Bulletin" goes out to 2020, by which time Ukraine's aspiration is to be interoperable with NATO. But there are a whole bunch of deadlines and timelines that come before that including, by the end of 2018, Ukraine is to have moved to a civilian minister of defence.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: By when?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: By 2018. A civilian minister of defence.

Ukraine is to have moved to full civilian control and oversight of the armed forces by 2020. For every one of these benchmarks, they have a timeline associated with it.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Give us a feel for how they're doing against that timeline.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: You know—

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Any kind of change is challenging, so how are they doing?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I have to say that I think they're doing extremely well, given the context, given the scope of the challenge.

Again, let me just step back. The context here is not just conflict. This is a country that has decided to reform everything, and that was only three and a half years ago. That's everything: economy, land, judiciary, health, education. I'm not trying to sugar-coat this. There is a lot that needs to be done—

● (1655)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Fantastic.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: —but I think it's the momentum, and for me it's about the trajectory.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: How would you characterize the three leading challenges, and what would you say are the three things that Canada might be and should be doing to help them even more on that path?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: With regard to the three challenges and perhaps the three action areas, I think that there may be some confluence between them in a way. You heard a little bit from the previous speakers. One of the challenges is legacy systems, and that, for me, captures a whole bunch of stuff. The systems can be culture and thinking, or the communications system. There is so much legacy. There is a legacy of Soviet, there is legacy of corrupt Ukrainian governments. We have to overcome those legacy systems, and the culture is a big part of that.

I think we need to move to focus.... One of the big challenges is governance, governance across Ukraine. Again, a lot is being done, and it's being done by the IMF, NATO, and the EU. Everybody is trying to pull in the same direction, but the governance systems, for reasons of capacity, knowledge, and just capability, aren't there yet, and so they don't have—

Ms. Leona Alleslev: You mean governance outside of defence, even. Just governance, like—

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I mean governance writ large because the minute you start to talk about defence, what you find, or what I found in my work, is that all roads lead to the strategic level.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Yes.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: That governance needs to start at the top. It needs to be the legal framework. It needs to be an empowered parliament. It's all of that stuff, but it also is the habits and practices of government that just don't exist—see my first point, legacy systems. This isn't because of a lack of will. It's just reality, so it's going to take time to get through this.

My last piece would be capacity building, and I hope that doesn't sound self-serving just because Canada has an extraordinary training mission in Yavoriv. It's about capacity building, and it's about focusing it at the right levels. It's top down, but as I heard from many around the table, it's bottom up, too, because there's a massive wealth of experience in the dynamism of civil society in Ukraine that needs to be tapped into.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: What would you recommend that we do to help, more than what we're doing?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I think we need to stay the course. This requires, to quote others, strategic patience. We cannot get impatient. We have to remember that this effort is only going into its fourth year, so this takes time. We need to stay the course and keep the investment. We also need to give ourselves the flexibility to not just go for change, but to go for reform. I actually think we've done this through our training mission and our other investments—I'm talking from Global Affairs, Public Safety, and all the players that are involved in the Canadian effort. This means we have to train trainers, we have to mentor, and we have to stay alongside our partners and let them take the ownership to go the next bound. This is extremely important.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Are we in the governance sphere? Are we helping?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Yes, we are.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Do we need to provide more resources, maybe judicial?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: We actually do have a good program training judges. There definitely needs to be more on the judicial side.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Outstanding. Thank you.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

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

Ms. Sinclair, it's always great to see you.

I notice that on the committee there are a bunch of retired generals and you as a former ambassador, diplomat, and policy lead over at National Defence. How is that working for you, dealing with a bunch of generals? You're trying to develop civilian oversight—

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Yes.

Mr. James Bezan: —and these are all military guys.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I think it's working extremely well. Maybe it's my good training over at National Defence in working with the Canadian Armed Forces.

Interestingly, with regard to the countries that I'm dealing with, these are very experienced military officers. They defer to me as the civilian; I defer to them for their military expertise. They understand intrinsically what it means to have, not so much civilian control, but what I prefer to call democratic accountability of the armed forces. We have a very good relationship. It works well, and I think we present well to the Ukrainians in terms of a model of how it should be.

Mr. James Bezan: I'm glad to hear that.

You have mentioned that 2018 is the time for the change in minister of defence. How is General Poltorak preparing for that? He was in great spirits when we met with him when we were in Kiev. Is he going to retire as a general and continue on as minister, or is he just going to stay in the military until it's time to cash it all in?

● (1700)

Ms. Jill Sinclair: That's a very good question.

I think this gets back a little bit to the legacy and just trying to get people's heads around what it means to be a civilian minister of defence. A number of wonderful countries have examples of military people becoming ministers of defence, so we know it can be done and can be done successfully.

One of the keys, I think, is that you have the governance around you. You have the institutions, the habits, the practices, and the transparency. The accountability is clear. You know what your responsibility is in your role.

A lot of that is still lacking in the Ukrainian system, particularly with the ministry of defence, where the civilian side is very underdeveloped and the general staff side is very highly developed.

Again, it's legacy. We have to help them understand that it isn't just about taking off a uniform and putting on a skirt or a suit.

Mr. James Bezan: One group we met with was the defence committee from the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian parliament. Are you also providing advice to legislators about the role they can play as part of that civilian oversight to the minister, as we have here in Canada?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Thank you for that question.

Indeed, I failed to touch on one area I wanted to raise, which is that I do work closely with the Verkhovna Rada and with Oksana Syroyid, whom you met, and her committee members. One of the commitments under the "Strategic Defence Bulletin" and pillar one, which is the pillar I am actually working on most closely, is improving the relationship with the Rada. At the moment, it doesn't work as well as it should.

Certainly, I think the Verkhovna Rada needs some help from our parliamentarians in the sense of mentoring, to understand what it means to run a committee like this, to prepare a witness, to prepare the documentation, and to have the staff. It gets back to the capacity again. I think that strengthening the Rada's ability to do the oversight function is essential to challenging the ministry and the organization to step up to the plate, to do the right thing, and to have the right engagement.

There is capacity building there that needs to be done.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

I want to turn over the rest of my time to Mr. Yurdiga.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Thank you.

We have heard a lot about the corruption within the Ukraine armed forces. I am curious. Has the Ukrainian Defence Reform Advisory Board developed a strategy to address the current and future corruption?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Thank you for the question.

Corruption is an ongoing issue, and if any of you follow the news from Ukraine, you know that recently one of the deputy ministers of the defence department was arrested on charges of corruption. Corruption is one of the lines that permeates the "Strategic Defence Bulletin". The Ukrainians have in place some anti-corruption offices within the defence ministry. These need to be strengthened very much. The United Kingdom is doing a lot of work focusing on this.

The United States is doing work in helping them think through how they analyze the defence budget and track dollars. At the moment, there is no way to measure, identify, or track where a dollar coming into the system gets spent and comes out the other end. There is no FTE measure, if you are familiar with that.

Some of it is basic accounting principles, but we are very conscious of the corruption piece. Again, transparency, governance, and processes to bring some habits of governance to the ministry are extremely important.

Mr. David Yurdiga: I understand that at all levels, including in the military, there's a lot of corruption. However, with this strategy going forward, who is going to police all these levels of government? Should it be an international committee? Should it be internally developed by a civilian organization? I'm not sure if we're going to succeed. The strategy is one thing, but implementing it and making it work is another.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: You are absolutely right, sir. It's all about the implementation.

There is a Ukrainian anti-corruption office, and indeed it was this office that actually arrested the gentleman last week.

I think it's a mater of figuring out how to more effectively bring together the international effort. You also have the International Monetary Fund, which has made the anti-corruption efforts of the Ukrainian government key in terms of releasing the funding they need. The EU is doing the same thing. There are a lot of international instruments that are focused on corruption, because it is fundamental to the legitimacy of the state. At the moment that's still a little bit under challenge, and in the minds of some, it's highly questionable.

Mr. David Yurdiga: We all understand that to make things work we need a budget. Is there any number that has been thrown around? How much money do we need to implement a policing of this corruption? Has there been any discussion on what cost would be associated with ensuring that all levels of government are playing by the rules?

● (1705)

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I'm afraid I can't answer that. I don't know if there has been a dollar figure put on it. I think that the dollar figure is extremely important. I think the mindset and the accountability mechanisms are equally important. That would be getting back to sort of an effective parliamentary oversight, an engaged civil society that could call the government to account, not just at election time, and making sure that all of the international efforts focused on corruption—and there are many—are coherent, so that we have our arms around it in a coherent sort of way.

Mr. David Yurdiga: How much time do I have left?

The Chair: You're actually just over the allotted time.

Mr. David Yurdiga: That's good timing. I'm okay with that.

The Chair: These guys probably wouldn't be.

I'm going to give the floor to Randall Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I really do appreciate your making yourself available for this today. I always ask about the diverse military, and I'm going to ask a different kind of diverse military question. Given the presence of a large Russian-speaking population in Ukraine, in terms of reforming the military, has there been attention given to making not only Ukrainian speakers but Russian speakers also welcome in the military? I ask that in the sense that, if there is eventual success in resolving the conflict, there will be a big demobilization challenge.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Thank you for that question.

I don't know the detailed demographics of the Ukrainian armed forces, which do number about 250,000, but the interesting thing about Ukraine is that many Ukrainians speak Russian and it may even be their mother tongue, because of this transition period.

My understanding is that the concurrency between Russian speaking and then sort of Russian proclivity, that is, feeling more part of Russia versus part of Ukraine, is not quite aligned that way. Russian is used everywhere. It's used around all the tables that I sit at. But your broader issue is about social cohesion and inclusion going forward. There are challenges there.

I think the Ukrainian armed forces are probably much more socially cohesive than some other elements in Ukraine, but that is an issue, and that's on the minds of the most thoughtful people in Ukraine, for sure.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Now I'll return to my more traditional diverse questions. In terms of women serving in the military, certainly on the anecdotal observation level, we didn't see high-level women in any of the meetings we were at in the Ukrainian military. I wonder again, in terms of building a modern military going forward, if that's part of the reform.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: In the minds of the Canadian training mission, absolutely. Again, leading by example, so having women on our teams—women mentors, women trainers—is part of the cultural legacy. There are women within the Ukrainian military. They tend to be in the traditional services.

We all speak with the chief of the general staff and with the minister about how it actually is possible to have women doing absolutely everything. This is going to take time. They have said that they're open to this. I know that when President Poroshenko was here, he spoke about how he welcomed Canada's kind of feminist foreign policy and saw the role for women. Again, if you look at the civil society activists that made everything possible at the time of Maidan, women were present everywhere.

In the volunteer organizations, including within the defence ministry—the reform office that is staffed by volunteers embedded in the defence ministry—many, many women are sitting at the tables with the chief of the general staff saying, “This is how you have to reform your medical system; this is what you need to do as logistics.”

It's a work in progress.

Mr. Randall Garrison: In your opening remarks you mentioned that the Defence Reform Advisory Board is not just about reforming the military, but you spoke about the larger security sector. Can you tell us about what other areas are covered in this reform program?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: In the “Strategic Defence Bulletin”, the Ukrainian armed forces, ministry of defence, national guard, and the border guard are all covered. The Defence Reform Advisory Board is focusing—by definition, because we're at the invitation of the defence minister—more on the defence side of things, but a lot of these issues are cross-sectoral. The national guard works very closely with the Ukrainian armed forces, so if you're going to try to make change in the UAF you want to do it in the national guard or vice versa.

We're conscious of these other players and try to bring them into the space, but the Ukrainian armed forces is the biggest moving piece in this effort.

● (1710)

Mr. Randall Garrison: I raise that because one person—and it may just have been by chance—raised with me whether the reform efforts were actually extending to the national guard and the border guard or whether they had really started in those areas.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Canada's efforts certainly include the national guard. We have been working with the national guard on their reform efforts. They are a much smaller entity. They are also newly re-created. In many ways, they are leading the reform effort, including how they engage with their non-commissioned members and how they do their procurement practices, which are much more transparent.

We're trying to say, “Well, Ukrainian armed forces, look a little bit to your own models. You're not going to look just to NATO, but look to your own model of what better can look like.”

Mr. Randall Garrison: When they say border guard, would that be the equivalent of customs officials? What is really meant by border guard?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: It's like the Canada Border Services Agency. It's customs and border control.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Given the concern about trafficking of arms and other kinds of trafficking going on allegedly through Ukraine, reform of the border guard would seem to be extremely important.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I think it is. I can't comment on that element of things because I don't have the details, but being able to manage your borders is extremely important.

I would note that Ukraine was just made visa-free in July by the EU. They are now part of the Schengen area. Certainly, if you had been in Ukraine prior to that and then travelled after that, you would really have seen a difference in the professionalism. This is anecdotal as opposed to a professional judgment. It's just my having gone through the border controls.

Thank you.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Great.

Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Gerretsen.

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

Thank you for coming today, Ms. Sinclair.

I think that the work you're doing is quite remarkable and interesting. I think there are some real challenges there. At least that's what I saw when we were in Ukraine.

You touched on young people who were part of the volunteers and advisory group helping to advise the reform of defence in Ukraine. We saw some of that. We saw and heard from some of those people. We heard the passion and the progressive ideas that they have.

One thing we also saw was the entrenched former Soviet Union ways of running the military, which is still alive and well. We also heard about Canadians asking those former Soviet Union types, “Why don't you meet up with these people and follow some of their recommendations?” It seemed as though the response that they were getting was, “No, they don't understand. They don't know what it's about. They don't really understand defence the way we do. We've been doing this forever.”

I can't help but wonder, when you try to break down this corruption.... I asked about this of the former panel; I'm not sure if you were in the room. Is part of that entrenched upper echelon of the defence sector really genuine about their attempts to reform? Are they doing it more out of appeasement, due to the fact that the allies who are there really want it and they know they have to appease them?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: That's a great question and comment, which I think you partially answered yourself, but let me have a go at it.

First of all, these entrenched ways, that's the legacy system. I sometimes call it a crust. There is a crust there that needs to be poked through. The crust is there for a whole bunch of reasons. Some of those folks are staying around because they don't want the change to happen. Some of them are fearful of change. Some know nothing else, but what they're doing and there's nowhere for them to go. It gets you into things such as, “Well, how do you have retirement programs that help to ease people out?”

If you spoke to our folks in Yavoriv, they were the first to observe that you have these extraordinarily well-trained young people. You have these extraordinary people coming back from the anti-terrorist operation, the ATO, with innovative, creative, new ways of doing stuff. They come back to headquarters or to their unit and smash. They run up against a wall. How do you deal with that?

That's a senior-level political decision, to say, “Actually, we've decided that we need massive reform, so we'd like some of you to move on and there's a package for you”, or there isn't. That's been done in other countries. I know that in Hungary—

● (1715)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Is that happening there now?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: No, it isn't and I don't know why. Is it because they're in the middle of a war? Is it because there's other stuff going on?

As I say, Hungary had that sort of approach. They said, “Either you meet these criteria and stay or you get out.”

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I'm just trying to get your ideas on this. In your opinion, is it worthwhile that Canada take a more formidable approach in that they have to start doing some of this stuff?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I would say that they are doing some of this stuff. I've seen change in some of those senior folks. Whether it's appeasement or it's that they've recognized that resistance is futile because that's the way things are going, if people do the right thing for the wrong reasons, man, I'll take it, right?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Yes—

Ms. Jill Sinclair: That's okay. I'll question their motives later, but I'll take that, and we'll get on with it anyhow.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: —as long as it stays after we're gone.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: It's about the sustainability, exactly.

I would just revert almost to point one, which I always remind myself. Unlike in many other places where we've tried reform, this is our helping Ukraine implement the reform that it has said it wants. Its president, its Rada, has said that their aspiration is Euro-Atlantic standards and principles, that it is NATO interoperability. I'm not telling some senior general who's served for goodness knows how long, “You have to change. Your government has said...and that's why your folks got out and did Euromaidan.” It's not my coming in, it's not a bunch of western do-gooders. It is intrinsically Ukrainian, and I think that's a really important point of departure, for me, anyway.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

I promised the parliamentary secretary, Sherry Romanado, that I would give her the remaining two minutes.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Is there any time?

The Chair: One minute and 55 seconds.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you.

We heard a lot about hybrid warfare and the difficulties we're seeing in the region regarding Russian disinformation campaigns and so on.

In looking at some of the statistics in terms of Ukraine, there are 2.4 million TV subscribers, and close to half the population, 21 million, are Internet users. What media are Russian disinformation campaigns using? We've heard a little bit about television, that they're trying to be subtle about some of the misinformation they're sending out there. In terms of capabilities for cyber and social media networks, with only 12.6% of Ukrainians using Facebook, I know that in May 2017 a presidential decree prevented access to three Russian social networks, two social media networks, and a search engine, Yandex.

What is it that Canada can be doing in terms of helping Ukraine prevent or try to combat cyberwarfare? I know Canada does not have a strong cyber capability. We're still working on it. We're building the plane at the same time as we're flying it. What is it we can be doing in terms of helping them against that disinformation campaign, using those various channels? Could you elaborate?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I can give you a couple of thoughts, but this does go a little bit outside of my remit.

Are we out of time?

The Chair: No, you have 30 seconds.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Okay. It's a little bit beyond my remit. It's simply as somebody who goes back and forth and keeps her eyes open a little bit.

Russia uses every available...it doesn't matter what. It could be by post. They use everything. The Ukraine government is conscious and Ukrainians are conscious, I think, to a certain extent that this permeates their environment. It may be subtle in some places and it may be more obvious in others.

What can Canada do to help Ukraine? Here I'll revert a little bit to the defence perspective. In terms of some of the work that we are doing through NATO, Canada is co-leading with Germany and the United Kingdom an effort on command and control and computers. We're putting quite a bit of money into that. This is a place where you can deal with the cyber-threat quite explicitly. Also, in our training, we are making people conscious of that threat, just as our trainers are conscious of that threat.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm sorry to go over.

The Chair: That's okay.

Ms. Young.

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here and to ask you questions. Thank you very much for appearing before the committee. I'll share some of my time.

An hon. member: No, I'm good.

Ms. Kate Young: You're good. Okay.

You mentioned earlier very positive comments about how far they've come in a very short time. You did say that you thought it essential that we stay the course, and that we can't get impatient. But I think history has shown us that doesn't always work all the time, that time isn't always on our side. Is there any concern that the progress you, we, and the Ukrainian people have made in the last three years will be scuttled in the face of the conflict they're facing?

● (1720)

Ms. Jill Sinclair: I am concerned about time, although not so much because of the conflict, I must say. I'm concerned about time because we are running into the Ukrainian electoral cycle, and that will have its own dynamics, as you all know. I'm concerned about time because governments tend not to have a lot of patience. We move on to the next crisis. I'm concerned also because the Ukrainian public is becoming impatient. You saw some of these demonstrations.

So yes, I am concerned. That's why it's really important for us to have...almost pilots, and proofs of concept. The big pieces are going to take so long to move, and they are so interrelated. Defence is related to justice, and so on, but we need to make small changes. That's why things in the defence field, like trying to professionalize the non-commissioned officer corps, where a lot of work has been done thanks to Canada.... Those are people who are serving in the military, who have gone from being conscripts to being what are called contract soldiers, where they have better pay and provisions, and they're better equipped. They go home to their villages, and people say, “Ah, change is possible.”

I don't want to sound like Pollyanna here, but I really believe in the demonstration effect. It's extremely important, and it will give us hopefully a bit more of the time we need to get the strategic institutional change that's required.

Ms. Kate Young: Do you discuss the what-ifs, the questions that need to be asked: if this happens, we'll go to this course; if this happens, we'll change courses? Do you discuss that? When you say “stay the course”, are you focused on what you hope to achieve, understanding the political ramifications right now, or are you opening it up?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: It's an interesting question because we are an advisory board to the Ukrainian minister of defence. The extent to which there are what-ifs that he needs to look at as he looks out.... We discuss everything from the conflict to what if certain things don't go right within the reform process: how do you mitigate, how do you regroup, or what do you need to do? Yes, we discuss those what-ifs.

As a board we try to stay quite agile. Part of our role as a board, I think at least, is to help the minister and Ukraine stay a few steps ahead of where stuff is going, because we have a bit of experience and we have the ability to look out because we're not trying to run the country.

Ms. Kate Young: One of our previous witnesses talked about training the trainer and how important that was. Could I get your comments on that, and whether that's something we are already working on, or whether you think we need to be more robust in that area?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Yes, we've moved to training the trainer, and this is one of the things Canadians do so well. We move quite quickly within our task force—our 200 folks who are doing the training—to training the trainers. Actually, we have formal authority to move up what I call the value chain. It's great to train the recruits, but what you want to do is train the next level up, and then you want to get into the institutions, where you have much greater reach.

The United States training mission doesn't do this, and the British don't do it. Canada is doing this, so we are moving much more from plain training into mentoring and advisory roles.

Also, as I think one of the previous witnesses said, we need to embed in the ministries. We're embedding in the ministries. We are learning the lessons. We've gone to the Ukrainians and we know there is a lot on hybrid and cyber and other things that we can learn from them. It's this reciprocal space where, by learning from them, we can help them better understand what they're going through. We take back what we can, but we help them move to the next level, too. We are deliberately moving up the value chain in our training.

Ms. Kate Young: Okay.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

The last questioner is Randy Hoback.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Thank you, Chair.

Ms. Sinclair, thank you for the work you do. It's very honourable, what you're doing and the process you're going through, and you definitely are going to be changing lives, not only now but into the future. It's very important.

Ms. Romanado touched on cybersecurity and I'm curious: have we seen the Russians use cybersecurity, or fake news, or items like that to undermine Ukraine's process in regard to doing the things you would like to see them move forward with? Have you seen any examples where what you're seeing on television and in the news isn't actual, yet it's undermining their process in moving closer to NATO?

● (1725)

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Yes, we see this. In terms of Russian misinformation and disinformation, just about every positive development has a counter-narrative. It can be done subtly or less subtly, to suggest to Ukrainians that it isn't quite as it seems, or in fact the Ukrainian armed forces are not training well, or they're committing abuses, or whatever it is. There is a deliberate effort, not so much focused around the DRAB specifically—although it may well be now; who knows?—but definitely to try to counter that narrative of progress and exploit opportunities where they exist. Because the system is so flawed, there are opportunities.

Mr. Randy Hoback: How do you get through that? How do you sort out the fake news or the fake information that you may come upon, that in actual fact it is something that's been planted just to make it an uncomfortable interaction between us and the Ukrainian military?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: That's a great question.

I rely very heavily on a whole network of Ukrainian players from civil society, around the think tanks, parliamentarians, everybody, to try to get ground truth. Also, the international communities stay pretty close with one another in the sense of being able to verify, counter-verify, challenge what we've heard to say, “Okay, so what really is the situation here?”

I have to say things are a bit murky sometimes in Ukraine and it's hard to get to the truth, but I think we have the relationships of trust and the access to be able to ask people. If I'm really concerned about something, I can go to the minister and ask him what is the situation.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Get it straight from the horse's mouth.

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

In the last minute that we have, one of the things that happened when the war broke out is that a lot of militias were stood up; a lot of them were privately funded. Some of them were funded through different mayors and oblasts. How has the unification worked out? How have all those, I guess, personal interests and regional interests that were involved in standing up the military after Crimea and the invasion in Donbass worked out? Are those militias now part of the 250,000-strong armed forces in a unified manner?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Thank you for that question.

Some of the militias are fully integrated and some of them aren't. It gets a little to what some of the other witnesses said. There are still personal and private interests at play where people are kind of funding these militias for all sorts of different reasons. They may be good reasons and bad reasons. This issue of unification, of governance, of really getting your arms around a professional armed service, what that means, what is the doctrine, what is the ethical basis. This is something that still needs focusing on and it's certainly something we talked to the Ukrainians about.

Mr. James Bezan: There's also the issue that border security and the national guard are kind of separate. It's under a different ministry is it not?

Ms. Jill Sinclair: The national guard, yes, they report in slightly different ways. When the national guard is operating in defence of the country, it is actually chopped. It comes under the Ukrainian armed forces, so there is more unity of command there.

On the issue of how all these security services relate to each other, which relates to an earlier question, there is a draft national security law that is under way right now. It's still in draft. It needs a lot of work. It's extremely important for that law.... I don't know if you heard about it when you were with your parliamentary colleagues, but that law needs to be settled, because it is not clear who has the roles and responsibilities and where you need it to be in a democratic country.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

The Chair: That was good timing, because there is the bell for a vote.

Thank you very much for coming to see us today. You mentioned you worked directly with the ministers, so when you see General Poltorak again, please send him our regards. He was really the one who got this particular committee and this Parliament involved. We want to send our warm regards, please.

● (1730)

Ms. Jill Sinclair: Great, thank you.

Thank you, chair.

The Chair: Thank you for coming.