



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 038

Tuesday, June 1, 2021

Chair: Mr. Sven Spengemann



Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Tuesday, June 1, 2021

• (1535)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.)): Good afternoon, colleagues.

Welcome to the 38th meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

[English]

We're meeting this afternoon under Standing Order 108(2) and the motion we adopted on May 6, 2021, to receive a briefing on the current situation in Ukraine.

Members, you'll recall that we had agreed to a joint meeting with the Standing Committee on National Defence. The national defence committee currently has a meeting that is suspended, and parliamentary procedure does not allow for a committee to hold two meetings simultaneously. For that reason, the official joint meeting is not able to take place. However, we most certainly and warmly welcome members of the Standing Committee on National Defence to join us this afternoon and to take part in this meeting as guests.

[Translation]

To ensure an orderly meeting, I encourage all participants to mute their microphones when they're not speaking. When you have 30 seconds remaining in your allotted time, I will signal you with a piece of paper. As always, interpretation services are available through the globe icon at the bottom of your screens.

[English]

I will now welcome our witnesses from the Embassy of Ukraine in Canada.

We have with us this afternoon His Excellency Andriy Shevchenko, Ambassador of Ukraine to Canada; Colonel Viktor Siromakha, defence, naval and air attaché; and Mr. Oleksii Liashenko, political counsellor.

Ambassador Shevchenko, it's a pleasure to give you the floor for your opening remarks of seven minutes, if you please, and then we'll go to questions from members of the two committees.

Please go ahead, Ambassador. The floor is yours.

His Excellency Andriy Shevchenko (Ambassador of Ukraine to Canada, Embassy of Ukraine): Good afternoon, honourable Chair and all the members.

I greatly appreciate your deep interest in the recent alarming events in Ukraine and the neighbourhood. We were impressed with

the swift Canadian reaction to the escalation by Russia. We truly felt this overwhelming support across the party lines, from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and from the wider Canadian public. These events will have a direct impact on the national security of Canada; therefore, it is in the interest of the Canadian public that you and other Canadian decision-makers are well informed on the matter.

To kick off the conversation, I want to share with you just three thoughts.

First, the Russian military buildup along the Ukrainian border is not over. Even after the Russians said they would pull out the troops, a significant portion of the deployment stayed. They have weaponry. Thousands of tanks and armoured vehicles stayed as well. Officially, all of that will stay for Zapad-2021, or West-2021, which is a major military drill scheduled for September. However, it is an immediate threat to us at this very moment.

We see no changes for the better along the border in the occupied territories of Donbass, where the Russians have two army corps ready to use. Of course, as we speak, the Russians continue to turn the Crimean peninsula into a huge military base, which is supposed to boost Moscow's capabilities in the Black Sea and in the Mediterranean.

Again, we're witnessing the biggest military buildup by the Russians against Ukraine since the invasion of 2015, and it is very far from being over.

My second thought is about the wider context. In fact, nothing between Russia and any given neighbour is bilateral. There is always a wider geography behind every aggressive move that Putin makes. This is why we should also watch closely all the unfriendly actions towards the Baltic nations, Moldova—which is struggling desperately to get out of the Russian group—and Belarus.

It was very important that Canada was not a bystander in the situation with the forced landing of the Ryanair flight. We see increasing Russian military activity in the European skies and a major military buildup in the Arctic. Let's also not overlook the cyber-attacks in the United States.

To summarize, we should see this as a massive, dangerous, multi-level, anti-western operation with many technical goals and ways to challenge the free world and with one strategic purpose, which is to deconstruct the existing international order.

This is why—and this is my third comment—Canada and its NATO allies should rethink, upgrade and boost their response to the aggressive Russian actions.

We are pleased to see Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary General, identifying Russia as a major threat to the alliance in the next 10 years. We are looking forward to the upcoming NATO summit. We believe this is the time we should finally lay down a clear path for Ukraine to become a NATO member.

We thank Canada for its commitment to the 2008 decision by the Bucharest summit to go ahead with the membership action plan for Ukraine and Georgia. Today, 13 years later, we must finally start moving forward. We want NATO to utilize our defence and intelligence capabilities, our experience, our soft power influence across the region and our readiness to stand up for the free world.

I truly believe that Canada is in a perfect position to discuss with its NATO allies the benefits of having Ukraine in NATO. We want Canada's voice to be heard at the Brussels summit and in all the conversations and decisions about the future of the security system in Europe.

As a former parliamentarian myself, I know that time is a very hard currency in the parliamentary setting. It can possibly be beaten in value only by this undivided attention that I'm very privileged to have, so I'm going to save the rest of my time for the benefit of a free conversation.

I would like to brainstorm together on what Canada and Ukraine can do to secure peace and order. I'll be happy to talk in detail about Operation Unifier and sanctions against the aggressor, about defence assistance and intelligence exchange, about the Crimean platform and about the recent developments in Belarus and the wider neighbourhood.

Honourable Chair, I am looking forward to this meaningful and very timely conversation. Thank you.

• (1540)

The Chair: Ambassador, thank you so much for your opening remarks. We will now go to round one of questions. These are six-minute segments that go to members of Parliament, and leading us off this afternoon will be Mr. Chong. The floor is yours, please.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank Ambassador Shevchenko and the delegation from the Embassy of Ukraine for joining our committee today. It's good to see you again, Ambassador.

Canada and Ukraine have historic ties. As you know, over a million Canadians trace their roots back to Ukraine. On December 2, 1991, Prime Minister Mulroney recognized Ukraine's independence and Canada became the first western country to do so.

Under Prime Minister Harper, Canada strongly condemned Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and interference in Ukraine, and commenced Operation Unifier. The current government, led by Prime Minister Trudeau, continues to support Ukraine with the continuance of Operation Unifier, the Canadian training-led mission in Ukraine. We strongly support Ukraine's independence and its terri-

torial integrity, and so we thank you for taking the time to appear in front of our committee today.

Ambassador, a year and a half ago, our two countries were tied together in tragedy with the shooting down of Ukrainian Airlines flight 752 by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which killed 85 Canadians and many Canadian residents. The families of those victims are still seeking justice. Recently the Ontario Superior Court concluded that the IRGC committed a terrorist act. We've been calling on the government to list the IRGC as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code.

Does Ukraine consider the downing of flight 752 to be a terrorist act? What is its position on the shooting down of this airliner?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Thank you very much.

First of all, I should say that we share this pain about this very tragic incident, and I feel that it's extremely important for Canada and Ukraine to closely co-operate on this matter. This means proper investigation, which is not happening right now. It means fair financial compensation for the families of the victims, and it also means that we should find proper ways to hold responsible those people who were responsible for the downing of the plane.

At the moment we are considering different scenarios for how we can move forward. Probably you know that, as we speak, an Iranian delegation is in Kiev, Ukraine, to continue negotiations with Ukraine. Ukraine speaks on behalf of all five countries involved, and I would like to reassure you that Iran won't be able to split us. We will speak with one voice, and this is the way to move forward.

Following on from the question, yes, we are considering all the possible scenarios and options.

Hon. Michael Chong: Ukraine borders Belarus. A week ago President Lukashenko ordered a MiG-29 to force down Ryanair flight 4978. Like Ukraine Airlines flight 752 and Malaysia Airlines flight 17—a flight that was downed over Ukraine, killing hundreds of Dutch citizens—that forcing down of Ryanair flight 4978 could have ended in disaster.

We believe that Alexander Lukashenko must be held responsible for this violation of international air transport rules.

What is Ukraine's position on the forcing down of this Ryanair flight? What action is Ukraine taking in international fora such as the ICAO, seeing that three flights in the last seven years connected to Ukraine have been affected by authoritarian states?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: We share your view of this situation. We see this as a forced landing. I think Canada did the right thing with its swift reaction to this situation. Ukraine has banned flights to and from Belarus, and we co-operate with our European and international allies with further sanctions against Belarus.

I have one more thought on this. We all should realize that it would be very difficult to imagine that Lukashenko made the decision without having President Putin behind him. We see Belarus becoming integrated into the Russian military and political decisions, and this is the way we should see it.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Ambassador.

I have a final question. As you know, Canada is helping Ukraine fight corruption and strengthen the rule of law. Mr. Michael Yurkovich, a Canadian, has built 54 megawatts of power projects in Ukraine, investing a total of \$65 million. One of those projects is a 10.5-megawatt solar project in Nikopol. However, the project appears to have been blocked by Ihor Kolomoisky, a Ukrainian billionaire, and Ukraine's courts do not appear to be upholding the rule of law.

I have two questions. First, has the Canadian government made any representation to you on this issue? Second, what is your government doing to address this situation?

• (1545)

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: We are closely following the situation, and I should tell you that we greatly cherish this very important Canadian investment in the Ukrainian economy, specifically because it's about renewable energy, so it's a very important one.

Yes, this issue has been raised across party lines by the Canadian officials and by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. This is a good sign that we should take the situation very seriously, and this is the way the Ukrainian government treats it. It's in the courts; we hope there will be a good solution.

Hon. Michael Chong: I have a very quick question, seeing that I have a few seconds left.

What is Ukraine's position on the \$15-billion canal that Turkey wants to build between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: I wouldn't be able to comment on that today, but I should tell you that we think all the interests should be taken into account when major decisions are taken.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Thank you, Ambassador.

We will now go to the next member of Parliament, Mr. Fonseca, for six minutes, please.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Ambassador Shevchenko, and your colleagues. It's wonderful to have you here. The last time we spoke, of course, was through our Canada-Ukraine parliamentary friendship group, and having our chair, Yvan Baker, here is terrific. At that time, we had an opportunity to speak about our relations. Of course, Canada stands firmly behind our friends in Ukraine and has led successive operations to help Ukraine—as well as providing funds. Since the illegal occupation of Crimea—in 2014, I believe—Canada has assisted Ukraine with over \$800 million through different programs.

You brought up in your remarks how you want to bolster these actions and sanctions on Russia. Since 2014, the United States, Canada and the EU have imposed targeted sanctions on certain Russian and Ukrainian individuals associated with the Russian intervention in the Donbass region and Crimea, and against certain sectors of the Russian economy.

I want to ask you this: What effect have these sanctions had so far on the conflict in the Donbass region and Crimea? I also want to ask you this: In terms of bolstering those actions, should we put more people on that list? Do you have a list of other individuals to provide to us in relation to the further retaliatory actions and the amassing of these troops now in the area? Should we be putting more people on that list?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Thank you, Mr. Fonseca.

First of all, the sanctions work. There are very strong and convincing studies that actually calculate the damage that was done to the Russian economy by the sanctions. This means it has slowed down economic growth for Russia. In very practical terms, this means they have much less money to spend on waging war against Ukraine and on waging other clear, aggressive actions against the free world, so sanctions work.

There are several avenues for our consideration for the future. First is the Magnitsky legislation. It was a very important decision by the Canadian Parliament, and we would like to see it working against those Russian individuals who are responsible for corruption and for human rights violations. Second is sectoral sanctions. I think we should think about SWIFT and everything that goes with that. Also, I think we should pay attention to how Russia deals with its sovereign debt. We should make sure the Russians do not have an easy walk finding money in international markets to cover their sovereign debt. One final comment is that we should look into Black Sea activities and we should probably punish Russia and its ships for violating international rules.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Okay. That's excellent.

Would you be able to provide us with a list of the actions you would like to see, as well as other individuals—I believe the list I see here is at about 440 Russian and Ukrainian individuals—and entities that should be added to that list to strengthen the actions and sanctions on Russia?

Ambassador, the question I have now is more a domestic one, but it's very important in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville. We have a large diaspora community here in Mississauga. We have one of the biggest Ukrainian churches here in Mississauga East—Cooksville, and many constituents come to me and want their relatives to be able to visit. There could be a new birth in the family or something else that has happened in terms of a milestone, and it has sometimes been difficult for Ukrainians to get a visa to be able to visit.

I know that visa was waived within Europe, and Ukrainians are able to travel throughout Europe. It has been gone for a number of years and things have worked well.

What does Canada need to do to get that visa waived so that Ukrainians will be able travel without that visa restriction?

• (1550)

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: A visa-free regime for our citizens is a major goal that we have and we are very committed to working towards that. That is why Ukraine has cancelled visas for Canadian citizens. Any Canadian citizen can come to Ukraine for up to six months without a visa. I can report to you that we were very happy to see our two countries launch the mobility working group, which should specifically help our two governments explore how we can make sure our people can travel freely from one country to another.

Yes, as you so rightly said, we have started our visa-free regime with the European Union, with the Schengen countries. It has been working extremely well, and this is our goal. We should make sure we can benefit from this free exchange of people and ideas. It's good for business, and between our two countries, I'm absolutely sure this is the right way to move forward.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: I couldn't agree with you more, and I hope we can do that as quickly as possible.

I see the chair is putting up the signal that I have 30 seconds remaining.

You brought up NATO. What has been Russia's reaction to NATO's support and involvement in the reforms in Ukraine? Could you just quickly, in 30 seconds, let us know?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: They are trying to split the NATO countries on this issue. That's why we need countries such as Canada to be very vocal, and we would like Canada to talk more to its partners across NATO, to make sure they know what Canada knows about Ukraine.

[Translation]

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

Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Your Excellency. My regards to the people who are with you.

I would like to extend my regards not only to my colleagues from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, but also those from the Standing Committee on National Defence who are with us as observers.

Your Excellency, we know that Russia has announced the withdrawal of its troops, who were supposed to return to their barracks on May 1. However, a number of indications, including from the United States, suggest that troops are still massed on the border of Ukraine or, at the very least, still maintain a significant amount of equipment there. Your comments also seemed to confirm this.

What explains this conflict in discourse between the announcement of the opening of the border and the withdrawal of troops, and the reality that troops and a considerable amount of equipment remain on the border with Ukraine?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Thank you very much for your question. It is an important one.

[English]

I would refer you to some of the visuals that we shared with the members of the committee. You might want to look at the first slides. They give you some data with numbers as to what we have along the Ukrainian border.

What exactly is happening? Most of the mass military movement of equipment to the border of Ukraine happened in March and April, and there was only a partial withdrawal of troops. The vast majority of the equipment still remains in position. In preparation for Zapad-2021, this major drill, Russians have created logistics bases in Belarus, and some western military analysts believe these bases will become permanent. That did not happen in previous Zapad exercises, so this leaves us with the very clear understanding that it's a very new context, a new situation, and that's why we should take it very seriously.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: According to your interpretation of the situation and the intelligence information that you have received, what explains this concentration of troops and equipment on the border?

Is it the prospect of Ukraine joining NATO in the near future or is it the desire for a new attack on Donbass, for example?

[English]

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: We can assume that the Russians have considered several military options. First, they gathered this massive amount of force around the city of Drohobych, posing a direct threat to our major city of Kharkiv.

Second, there is this vulnerable direction towards the city of Mariupol, along the Azov Sea. The Russians have been dreaming for quite a long time of creating a land bridge from the Russian mainland to occupied Crimea.

Finally, there are plenty of options with the expansion of the occupation zone into wider Donbass. There can be a lot of possible reasons the Russians want to try to do that, and we can explore it further, but one way or another, they are testing our reactions. They have been testing the reactions of the west, and I think they have badly miscalculated the response.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: We know that, in this context of extreme tensions between Ukraine and Russia, President Zelenskyy has put forward the idea of a platform in order to take a number of areas back into Ukraine. He also hoped to have the platform launched in August 2021, so that it would coincide with the 30th anniversary of Ukraine's independence.

Do you think that this platform has any chance of success, given Russia's somewhat aggressive posture right now?

[English]

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: I strongly believe that, yes.

What Monsieur Bergeron refers to is the Crimean platform, which should be presented in August later this year. It will be a club of like-minded countries that will work together to make sure that we can restore the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

I can give you one historical example. It's what happened to the Baltic nations. The west never recognized the occupation of the Baltic nations by the Soviet Union, by Russia, and eventually that approach proved to be the right one.

For Canada to join the Crimean platform is to be on the right side of history, especially in that you are already in the position when you strongly support Ukraine in that specific matter.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: You talk about like-minded nations. We know that Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany are negotiating to try to resolve the issue. But we know that President Zelenskyy has expressed the wish that the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada join the initiatives to reach a peace agreement.

Do you think that Russia would be willing to have the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada join in these efforts?

[English]

The Chair: Could that be just a brief answer, Ambassador, please?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: I believe this would be a very right thing to do, because Canada has very unique knowledge of the situation in Ukraine, and also because of the extraordinary reputation Canada has in the international community. We would be very glad to see Canada as a major participant in the peace process.

[Translation]

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

[English]

Thank you very much, Ambassador.

We now go to our final questioner in this first round, and it's Mr. Harris for six minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador Shevchenko and the other representatives from the embassy. Welcome to our committee.

I note from the briefing we have received from the panellists that Canada's contribution to the Ukraine since 2014, in terms of military support, is the training of 25,000 military personnel and another 2,500 under the military training and co-operation program, plus a significant amount of financial support as well. The friendship between Ukraine and Canada has been noted, with more than one million Ukrainian Canadians.

Have you received similar support from other countries, as well as Canada?

• (1600)

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Yes, we have some other partners who help us, but I think it would be fair to say that Canada is in a very special position because of the amount of your support and be-

cause of the decisions that were made and the areas that were picked by Canada to help us with.

Mr. Jack Harris: I'm glad that's appreciated. I know many Canadians have affection for Ukraine and Ukrainian people.

I wanted to follow up on Mr. Bergeron's question about the Crimean platform, which you mentioned. As well, I'm reading about the announcement back in March of support by President Zelenskyy for the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, calling for diplomatic, military, economic and other actions to allow Ukraine to recover and reintegrate the Crimean territory. That seems to be tied to some extent to the Crimean platform.

Is there any relationship between these announcements and the Russian build-up that took place in March and April of this year, or are these totally independent actions?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Yes and no. Yes, of course the Russian military op is a very natural reason for us to increase our efforts in all directions, and no in the sense that we should have done this much earlier.

Crimea is not cowed by the Normandy process. In many senses, Russia is trying to turn Crimea into a tribal land when it comes to human rights situations, from the persecution of the Crimean Tatars to all the other terrible things that have happened. There are not too many things that can be done if we don't change anything.

The Crimean platform is about very practical steps that we can co-operate on. It's about how we can coordinate our sanctions policies. It's about how we can monitor the human rights situation. It's about how we can discuss the security options, and this is how we can get the situation back on the right track.

Mr. Jack Harris: Do you have concerns that the international community's solidarity with respect to the non-recognition of Crimea as part of Russia is not strong?

Canada is certainly fully committed to not ever recognizing that and continuing with sanctions against Russia.

Is that a concern of yours, or is this something that you feel is strong and will not waiver?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: We are quite confident about this support. Actually, Canada has been one of the true leaders of this international coalition. We feel that this non-recognition approach has been followed by the vast majority of countries in the free world. This is the right way to move forward. Our concern is how we can monetize this consensus into very practical steps that we can take together.

Mr. Jack Harris: In the case of your Crimea plan, the Crimea platform, what would you hope that Canada would do if it were to participate in that plan?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: First, we hope that Canada will be represented appropriately at the inaugural summit in August of 2021. There will also be a parliamentary segment or parliamentary dimension of this initiative, and I think that in the months we have left before the event, we should explore how we can get Canadian parliamentarians involved.

There are certain areas where Canada is a true leader in this coalition. The first is the sanctions policy. The second is the human-rights issues. Canada has been known for its very strong position in support of the Crimean Tatars and so on, so we want Canada to have a strong voice in that coalition. I'm absolutely sure it will be much appreciated and will have a huge impact.

● (1605)

Mr. Jack Harris: When you talk of the military plans—diplomatic, military and economic actions that Ukraine could take to reintegrate Crimea—can you give an example of the kinds of military actions, or are we talking about a military plan?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: I think our obvious priority is to find a diplomatic and political solution to the situation, and that refers to both occupied Crimea and the occupied territories of Donbass.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Thank you, Ambassador.

We will now go to round two.

Welcome, Mr. Bezan. You have the floor for five minutes.

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

Greetings, Ambassador Shevchenko. It's great to see you at the committee here. I appreciate your presentation and the information you circulated ahead of your appearance.

I want to drill down a bit into Operation Unifier. I know one of the concerns we've had for some time was the personal safety of Canadian troops being exposed to COVID-19. I know Ukraine is suffering a fairly big impact from the pandemic and that about 75% of members of the Canadian Armed Forces have already received their first and second doses of vaccine. I'm wondering how the health is of Ukrainian troops because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and whether or not that has impacted the training mission of Operation Unifier, not just by Canada, but also the Americans and the Brits, who are also helping train Ukrainian troops.

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Even as we speak, there are about 200 Canadians who train Ukrainian soldiers and officers, and I do not have enough words to express how grateful we are for that support. Even under these very difficult circumstances, Canada has managed to continue Unifier, so we have had to adjust some training plans, but overall we can see Unifier continuing to do its very important mission. As of this moment, more than 20,000 Ukrainian soldiers and officers have gone through the training. For obvious reasons, COVID does not stop the war from happening, and we need your support every day.

Mr. Bezan, I would use this opportunity to say that I think, together, we should explore some options as to how we can improve Unifier in the future, after 2022. One of the ways to improve it is to think of how we can go from platoon to brigade level. We can also think of what geographical decisions we should make; there is a lot of joint common interest in the further use of the Shyrokiy Lan training camp in the south of Ukraine, and there are some other things to do.

Overall, it's a major success. It's a two-way learning street, and we greatly appreciate it.

Mr. James Bezan: You took my second question, which is about what we can do to actually expand their role. I wanted to find out what that would entail, and also ask about making the mission more long term, because right now it is on an annual renewal and it seems to always get renewed at the last minute, which brings about some anxiety and unnecessary stress, in my opinion.

How does Operation Unifier with the Canadian Armed Forces compare to what the Americans are doing with Ukrainian troops?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: I think our men and women in uniform have created a very special spirit of camaraderie. That is not just in the training centres or at the Invictus Games; it's overall.

I had the pleasure of meeting Sarah Heer, who was the recent Unifier commander, and she told me the story of how, at a gas station in Ukraine, someone saw this Canadian chevron on their uniforms and people just rushed to them to try to hug them, because that's the way people wanted to show what we feel about Canada and Canadian support.

To be more serious about this, we have travelled a very impressive distance from the launch of Unifier to this day, and the level of trust is fantastic and incredible. Now we understand so much better how we can make the most use out of this co-operation. We hope to see Unifier troops under the Canadian flag during the Independence Day parade in downtown Kiev in August.

Mr. James Bezan: I appreciate that, Ambassador.

What I'm trying to get at is this. I know there are other countries there that are helping train Ukrainian forces as well. I know we're talking about changing Operation Unifier going forward. What are other countries and nations doing, such as the Americans, the British, and I think the Aussies are there and the Poles are helping? Are we seeing changes in their training missions as well, compared to what they've done in the past?

● (1610)

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: If it's okay, I will invite Colonel Siromakha to step in for a short moment.

Colonel Viktor Siromakha (Defence, Naval and Air Attaché, Embassy of Ukraine): Good afternoon, dear friends. My name is Colonel Viktor Siromakha.

Unifier is our best achievement. I would say that compared to Orbital, the U.K. mission in Ukraine, and JMTG-U—the U.S. guys—Ukraine Unifier has the exact capacity to bring to the Ukraine armed forces exactly what we need.

For instance, just recently, on April 14, we had a great session on political issues with Assistant Deputy Minister Peter Hammer-schmidt and Ukraine's deputy minister of defence, General Petrenko, on strategic dialogue, its pol-mil consultations regarding not only Unifier issues but helping Ukraine to come to NATO.

We have an extremely good presence of Canadians in Ukraine—Canadian Armed Forces men and women in uniform. They are training our soldiers on multiple levels. Let's say we started Unifier in 2015 as platoon-level training. Now it's already brigade-level training. I would say that's an extremely great achievement for us. We are training not only units, but professionals. For instance, in our training centre, Canadian snipers train Ukrainian snipers. At the same time, they get their professional experience and knowledge from the combat zone.

Also, we are talking not only about the training of officers or soldiers, but about cadets. For instance, now we are working on the future training of Ukrainian cadets on Canadian combat ships when they come to the Black Sea. We are working now in close proximity with the NATO policy department of DND, and we are working on these issues in order to understand how we get proper clearance to bring these cadets on board.

The Chair: Colonel Siromakha, I apologize. In the interest of time, let me pause you there.

There will be lots of time to revert to this point in subsequent sessions. In the interest of making sure everybody gets their round, I will have to pause you for the moment and give the floor to Mr. Baker.

Please go ahead, Mr. Baker. The floor is yours.

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thanks very much, Chair.

Ambassador Shevchenko, Colonel Siromakha and Mr. Liashenko, thank you for being here.

I want to thank the members and the chairs of both the foreign affairs committee and the committee on national defence for organizing this meeting today. I think this is incredibly productive, useful and important.

As chair of the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary friendship group, I see a lot of members of the friendship group and its executive here today. This is an all-party committee of MPs, from all four parties in the House of Commons, who support Ukraine and want to find ways for Canada and Ukraine to work more closely together. I'm proud to see so many of them here today, and I thank them all for their engagement, as well as the other MPs who aren't here today. Thank you for that.

Ambassador, I have had the privilege of travelling to Ukraine on a number of occasions. One of the most memorable moments was as an election observer in the last presidential election. I was posted to eastern Ukraine, in fact to Mariupol, and to election districts along the contact line, where the conflict is taking place. I had an opportunity to meet villagers in election polling stations in that region.

The people I met didn't know I was involved in politics, or in government at all, but many of them, when they found out I was

Canadian—because they saw a badge on my chest that had a maple leaf on it—would come up to me and say thank you for all that Canada is doing.

I share this story with you to say two things. One is, many times we hear from the Russian government, and from other propaganda sources, that people in eastern Ukraine want to be part of Russia. Having met those people in eastern Ukraine, I know that nothing is further from the truth. I also share this because I think it's a sign to all of us who are members of Parliament here today that the impact Canada is having is profound and that we need to continue our work.

Ambassador, my first question is for you.

You spoke about NATO integration and the importance of NATO integration for Ukraine. What measures can Canada take to help Ukraine realize its ambition to join NATO?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: I would like to refer all of you to slide number 44 in the presentation. It has an exact quote from the Bucharest 2008 decision on Ukraine and on Georgia. The direct quote from the summit decision says that the membership action plan is “the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership”. The summit actually asked the foreign ministers to make a first assessment of progress at their December 2008 meeting. The foreign ministers were meant to decide on the membership action plan applications for Ukraine and Georgia.

Thirteen years later, we still have not seen any progress on that, and I can tell you that probably if we had seen that swift action in 2008 we would not have seen the Russian aggression into Georgia and into Ukraine. That can be an argument for those who say that we probably should not provoke Russia with any decisions we make—it actually works the other way around.

This time, we want to see a very good and genuine conversation about future co-operation between Ukraine and NATO, and I think we should recognize that Canada is in a very special position for that specific conversation.

● (1615)

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Ambassador.

Ambassador, what are the implications of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline for our security, for the security of our allies and for Ukraine's security? What role should Canada play on this issue?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: When we talk about oil and gas and Russia, we know it's never just about oil and gas. It's a security issue and it's a geopolitical issue. That's the way President Putin and the Kremlin see that. Nord Stream 2 is the Russian way to make its influence in Europe concrete and to seal it for decades to come.

To make a long story short, if Canada is serious about the security situation in Europe and if Canada is serious about the future of the global energy market, Canada should pay very precise attention to the future of Nord Stream 2. We believe that this project should be stopped and can be stopped.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Ambassador.

I wanted to follow up on something Mr. Fonseca was asking about in his questions, and I only have about a minute left. He spoke to the fact that Canada has imposed a range of sanctions on a number of individuals who have been involved in the invasion of eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea.

You spoke to the fact that sanctions are necessary. You mentioned Magnitsky. You mentioned SWIFT. You talked about Russia's sovereign debt. For the members of the committee who may not be familiar with it, could you talk about what SWIFT is and what you mean when you refer to that?

The Chair: Give just a brief answer, Mr. Ambassador, please.

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: We just feel that the Russian economy, the Russian oligarchs and Putin's closest allies depend heavily on their financial assets and on their access to the western financial system. That tells us we should target that.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to continue the conversation that the ambassador and I were having earlier.

We clearly understand Ukraine's motivations with respect to the Crimean Platform. We also understand Ukraine's motivation to see Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States join France, Russia, Germany and Ukraine in the peace negotiations for the future. You have eloquently described why Canada would have a place in such a context.

However, the question remains: do you think Russia would be comfortable with the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada joining this group of countries looking for a way forward?

[English]

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: We are not going to have an answer to that until we try. I think the situation makes us creative and inventive, and we need to try different options.

When it comes to Canada, I can tell you that just last year Ukraine adopted its new national security strategy, and Canada was identified as one of the five countries of strategic importance for Ukraine, along with the U.S., the U.K., France and Germany. That reflects what we in our part of the world think and feel about Canada.

• (1620)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: It is certainly a reflection of what you think, but I doubt that it can be a reflection of what the Russians think.

I would also like to talk to you about the document you submitted to us, which includes various images of the Russian military build-up and the deployment of ships from the Caspian Flotilla. After those images, you ask, "Is it over?"

How would you answer that question?

[English]

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Are you asking if this escalation is over?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: It's the question you yourself asked in your document. After the pages on the deployment of Russian troops, you ask "Is it over?". So let me invite you to provide us with an answer.

In your opinion, is it over?

[English]

The Chair: Give just a brief answer, Ambassador, please.

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Not at all. Actually, just recently, I saw this CBC story from the city of Voronezh, where the CBC correspondent had a chance to see the Russian deployment that is stationed right next to Voronezh in very close proximity to the Ukrainian border. The short answer is, no, it's far from over, and the Russians are still exploring their options for what to do with these deployments.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

[English]

Mr. Harris, you're next. You have two and a half minutes, please. The floor is yours.

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

I'd like to further explore the NATO question that has arisen. Part of the accession to NATO, of course, is the membership action plan that was mentioned but hasn't happened yet, but it also—NATO's being a political and economic alliance—looks at questions of economic and political reform as part of this process. I note that it was mentioned by Secretary of State Blinken on a recent visit to Ukraine.

Can you tell us what progress has been made in terms of economic and political reforms since 2014, when part of this process started?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Ukraine is going through this very difficult process of modernizing the country, and Canada is a major part of that. Actually, your deep involvement in the Ukrainian reforms is part of the reason we feel that the Canadian voice should be very strong and vocal in the discussions about the future of Ukraine and NATO, because you know so well what is happening in Ukraine because of your heavy involvement in our national police reforms, in the decentralization reforms and in the anti-corruption reforms. We see it all as interconnected parts of the same decision.

Mr. Jack Harris: Would you give us some examples of the results that have been achieved by these reforms that have been implemented?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Absolutely. If you look at the national police, which has a very high level of trust, it's strikingly different from what it used to be, when the police were seen as a threat by citizens.

Then we see this world-class public procurement system called ProZorro. It's an award-winning software that helps us to fight corruption.

All of that has happened for two reasons. First is the very strong civil society in Ukraine, and second is the very committed western support for all these changes. We appreciate that a lot.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you very much.

I have 30 seconds left, so I don't know if I can get in a question and an answer in this time.

The MAP, or membership action plan, itself would take a long time, would it not? It can often do so. It doesn't seem that this would be a sudden step, even if the membership action plan was started right away. Is that correct?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: That's not the way we see it. When Poland and our Baltic brothers and sisters started their conversation with NATO about entering NATO, many people thought it would be a very long story. Actually, it wasn't. I think we're in a position to start moving forward, and we hope to do so.

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

Thank you, Ambassador.

We will now go to Mr. Diotte for five minutes, please.

• (1625)

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Ambassador, it's really good to see you. It's unfortunate that with COVID we can't be in person, but hopefully soon...all that good stuff.

I know Yvan was talking about having gone and observed the election. I did the same, and it really was one of the highlights of my career, especially seeing how Ukrainians really cherish democracy. There's a real lesson for Canadians in that whole thing.

As you know, we were both journalists, and you were probably more famous than I ever was. You actually worked very hard on the

movement against censorship. We're kind of working right now, as the official opposition, against Bill C-10, which is kind of a censorship bill. That's neither here nor there, but why is it that the world is not hearing more about what's going on at the border with Russia? It just seems like the media's not there. What can be done? What's happening?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Well, Mr. Diotte, I think if we tried to make a short list of big, huge problems that the world faces right now, it might not be such a short list. I think we can understand that.

Also, we should not neglect the fact that Russia has been working for many years trying to create myths and trying to split the west. Its propaganda machine has never stopped working.

During this major escalation, we also saw that this propaganda machine work full steam. First, they tried to present Ukraine as a country that was about to attack Russia. Second, we saw the narrative that it wasn't actually Ukraine that was trying to attack Russia, but rather it was NATO, including the U.S. and Canada, that was preparing this assault against Russia.

We should think about all these propaganda issues when we talk about hybrid wars and about this complicated world.

Mr. Kerry Diotte: What can we do about it? It's true that censorship and propaganda are real issues.

If you ask the average Canadian what's going on in Ukraine, there is not a story there, unfortunately. We know only because we are parliamentarians.

How do we get the word out? How do you deal with the disinformation and with the Russians spinning their tales? Where do we go? What can we do?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Mr. Diotte, I'll just say that we very much appreciate the support we already get from Canada, across party lines and from the wider public, but I would say that with the knowledge, the expertise and the resources that Canada has invested in Ukraine, your country should be a very strong voice in a conversation about Ukraine and the wider Europe, and specifically about NATO's deterrents to Russia and NATO's partnership with Ukraine.

We want people like the Operation Unifier commanders speaking in Brussels about the benefits and challenges of having Ukraine in NATO.

I can only encourage all of you to raise your voice on this issue.

Mr. Kerry Diotte: Just on that—and I know others have touched on this subject—what should Canada be doing? In your view, what more can we do? Obviously we are a strong ally of yours.

I know that you know I have many Ukrainian-Canadians in my riding. What more can we do? I think Ukraine is a very popular issue in the public context. We want to build a democracy. We want to help you, and we don't want to see bad things happen with the Russians.

What more should we be doing?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: You can find some of the steps that we suggest in the final slides of the presentation that was circulated among you, but I can just mention that the renewal of Operation Unifier until 2022 is very important. Sanctions against Russia using all different avenues are very important.

We have discussed NATO, and also we want Canada to use its reputation and its status in international organizations to work with other countries to consolidate this coalition in support of Ukraine. Whether it's with the OSCE, or whether it's through platforms like the G7 or NATO, we hope your voice will be very strong.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Diotte.

Thank you, Ambassador.

We will now go to the final questioner in this round, and that's Dr. Fry for five minutes.

Go ahead, please.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Ambassador, thank you very much for coming and spending this length of time with us.

I was really very glad you mentioned Russia's overall militarization of the Arctic and the threat to Baltic nations. I even wonder what you think about Russia's now being a protector within Armenia. It would seem to me that Russia is trying to regain the old USSR and become a power broker in that way.

I want to know what you think of Russia having gained incursion into Armenia, saying that it is a peacemaker there.

With regard to the other question I want to ask, you talked about bringing together like-minded nations. However, Russia has a whip that it holds over a lot of nations in Europe, and that's oil and its ability to give them energy. That prevents a lot of them from probably being as aggressive as they could be.

I wonder if you want to tell us what you think the endgame is for Russia and whether Canada should be speaking up about the militarization of the Arctic, because we are an Arctic nation.

I'll let you answer, but I want to say one thing. I have been to Ukraine many times, because I am with the OSCE PA. I have seen no more beautiful city than your city of Kiev. It is the most beautiful city in the world.

For me, the issue of what Canada is doing in Ukraine goes beyond sanctions, etc. It's about helping to form a police force that believes in democracy and in the protection of peoples. It's about training the military. It's about working with gender equality and

LGBT equality across Ukraine. I was there when your chief of police in Kiev had just come from being at the pride parade.

I want to congratulate you on the steps you have made, but to also ask whether you could give me the endgame for Russia, and how we can get like-minded nations to come on board to support you for NATO when they have this sword over their heads about energy and oil.

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Those are some very good questions. I'll start from the end.

There are many schools of thought on that, but I believe that Putin is not, in many ways, the source of the problems we see. In many ways, he is a reflection of the agenda of the Russian political class and he is a reflection of the state of Russian society. That means we'll probably have to deal with these aggressive politics and policy for many years—maybe for decades.

That is why we should take this very strategically and very seriously, and that's exactly why we should think thoroughly about the situation with Nord Stream 2. You have absolutely rightly pointed out that oil has always been and will be used as a way to influence some nations, including those nations in Europe that you mentioned.

Finally, with Armenia and Azerbaijan, we are watching the situation closely. I can tell you one thing: When you see Russian peacekeepers in the region, that's usually not a sign that peace is closer; usually it's a concern when you see Russian troops around. That is something that makes us follow the situation with a lot of concern.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Ambassador.

We'll then go into round three.

Ms. Gallant, welcome to the committee. The floor is yours for five minutes.

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

During the winter of 2014, a forum that Mr. Ambassador Shevchenko would be very familiar with, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, was [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] as the Afghanistan conflict was winding down. In fact, late in the afternoon, we were being told about the peace dividends we were about to enjoy. Well, the next morning, we woke up to reports of little green men having invaded Crimea. However, unlike the Middle East conflict, the asymmetric warfare we were seeing was being conducted by a state actor.

Since the pandemic hit, we haven't been able to gather. I am really interested in knowing what new types of hybrid warfare there are, or the trends you're seeing in Ukraine since the pandemic hit.

• (1635)

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: We have seen a lot of hostile activities in trying to use the pandemic situation in terms of propaganda and information wars. There is one country that tries to explain that all the vaccines are bad except for the Sputnik. There are some other ways that this country is trying to undermine our government's activities to fight the pandemic.

Also, I think on the broader scale, in these last several months they disclosed many other things. One of them is the situation with the explosion in the Czech Republic. There are clear signs of Russian intelligence operations behind that. That actually has contributed to this major change of context in eastern Europe.

Overall, I'll say that we are witnessing more and more new ways in which this one country is trying to challenge the free world and the international order. This is a good reason for us to coordinate.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: With the migration from the workplace and school to home, what new or unique cyber-aggressions have Ukrainians been experiencing, if any?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: It's our everyday routine to fight cyber-attacks from the aggressor. We are following very closely the developments in other countries, including those in the west. Obviously, the situation with the Colonial Pipeline was very alarming. That is another reason for us to work harder on our intel exchange and have closer co-operation between our armed forces and our security organizations.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: In what ways has Putin used artificial intelligence to sophisticate Russia's use of hybrid warfare?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: If the chair allows, I'll probably pass the floor to Colonel Siromakha on this.

The Chair: Of course.

Col Viktor Siromakha: Thank you, sir.

I'm not sure whether you have seen the parade on May 9 in Moscow. Russians demonstrated for first time in their history the robot platform, Uran-9. That's a combat platform with a robot that uses artificial intelligence. They are not only using artificial intelligence for peaceful means, for instance, like on the international space station, where they used a robot with artificial intelligence. His name is Fedor. It doesn't work properly, but...

They use these platforms on wheels and they demonstrated the robot in downtown Moscow on May 9, Victory Day. They are showing the achievements of their science.

If I may just come back to the trends we were discussing just a few minutes ago, let me bring you one example of how the Russians use opportunities. For instance, remember the situation in the Suez Canal, when the merchant ship blocked the canal for a few days. It actually created chaos within world logistics support. Russians started thinking about how to propose using a northern route instead of the Suez Canal, because if ships from Asia come to Europe it takes 14 days less to come to western Europe ports that way.

I would like to tell you that the Russians already established an Arctic command in 2014. We already have 13 new military airfields and 16 deepwater ports in the Arctic.

I would say, if you are talking about trends, that's definitely the climate.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Colonel Siromakha, and thank you, Mrs. Gallant.

We will now go to Mr. Baker for five minutes.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Ambassador, Mr. Diotte was speaking of the fact that many Canadians have connections to Ukraine through family, friends, businesses, etc., but I think there are other reasons Canada supports Ukraine.

Could you explain for those viewers out there who are watching—for Canadians who are watching—why it's important that Canada support Ukraine in defending its security and its territorial integrity?

• (1640)

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Indeed, we believe that Canada is very supportive of Ukraine, not just because of this wonderful Ukrainian-Canadian community but also because Canada believes that it is in its long-term interests to have a stable democratic country, as Ukraine is struggling to be.

Today, I think many people in Canada realize that Ukraine is fighting on behalf of the whole free world. We feel we are the de facto eastern flank of NATO.

Mr. Baker, I'll use this again to reinforce my statement. If there is one region on the planet where Canada is making a huge difference right now, and is already making a huge difference, it's eastern Europe and specifically Ukraine. It's because of this very much appreciated Canadian military deployment in Ukraine, this very unique cultural connection that Canada has throughout Ukraine and the region, and this massive footprint in the field of international assistance. In the case of Ukraine, it's Canada's very deep involvement in reforming the armed forces, the national police, the intelligence community, you name it.

If you're looking for one place on the planet where Canada can make a huge difference, a huge impact, I would start with Ukraine.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Ambassador.

Ambassador, one of the areas where Canada has made a significant contribution to help Ukraine reform is in the rule of law and reforming its judiciary. I believe, and many people believe, that if Ukraine is going to attract the foreign investment it needs to strengthen its economy, to offer the prosperity that it is hoping for, and to secure its sovereignty, the rule of law has to be reinforced and corruption has to be eliminated. I know some Canadian businesses who have invested in Ukraine have struggled with this.

Could you speak to the steps Ukraine is taking to address corruption and attract foreign investment, like the investments that have been made by Canadian investors?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Reform of the judiciary is of paramount importance. Fortunately, we do not have too many worrying situations now, but even one is one more than we should have.

It's very clear that we want to make sure that Canadian investors experience rule of law and fair judicial decisions. That is our goal. We also want to make sure that the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement is utilized full-scale. That is another reason we want to expand the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement into services and investments.

Our intention is to make sure that, in Ukraine, we have a very friendly space and a very comfortable space for Canadian businesses to operate. We have very strong pragmatic reasons for that. It's not just about creating jobs; it's about the exchange of best practices or good technologies. This is how both nations can strongly benefit.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's absolutely a win-win, and there's a lot of opportunity there. I completely agree with you, Ambassador.

I thank you for the work Ukraine's doing to undertake those reforms. I think those are very important.

Many members on both sides of the aisle here have spoken to some of the steps Canada has taken over the years to be supportive of Ukraine, whether through sanctions, the steps that have been taken to support Ukraine's integration into NATO, or Operation Unifier.

Canada has invested \$800 million in assistance to Ukraine since 2015, if I'm not mistaken, to support Ukraine's reform efforts, and, of course, repeated statements in support of Ukraine at the G7, and internationally, that Ukraine sovereignty isn't wavering.

In 30 seconds or less, Ambassador, what has been the impact of these measures, and what more can Canada do?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: When you see Ukraine succeeding in modernizing the country, you should be aware that this is happening because of the strong support we are getting from countries like Canada.

If Canada is serious about advancing its values, its approach to the international order and to domestic things, Ukraine is the right country to apply those efforts.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Baker and Mr. Ambassador.

I will now give the floor to Mr. Bergeron for two and a half minutes.

• (1645)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Is it two and a half minutes again? I thought this was the second round, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The time is the same for the second, third and fourth rounds.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Okay.

A few moments ago, Colonel Siromakha was talking about supply routes in the Arctic. Moreover, in the document you submitted to us, I found that a lot of emphasis was placed on the Arctic situation. I wondered whether there is a parallel between the fact that troops are massed on the Ukrainian border and the fact that, in a way, troops are also massed on the Canadian border in the Arctic. Or is Ukraine actually concerned about what is happening in the Arctic?

I think the colonel was giving us a good indication of what the real concerns are. Perhaps he would like to follow up on what he was saying a few moments ago.

Dr. Fry was also talking about the importance of the Arctic and what Russia is doing there.

[*English*]

Col Viktor Siromakha: Ambassador, if I may....

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for your question.

I would like to emphasize that the Arctic is the new theatre of operations for Russia. For example, at the moment, there are more than 90,000 troops on the border with Ukraine. Also, the Russian fleet is in the Arctic. On the border of Ukraine, the Russians have sent more than 54 battalions. In April 2019, the Russians sent all the ships in their northern fleet to the Arctic.

[*English*]

Simultaneously with the buildup on the frontier with Ukraine, we saw huge development in the Arctic. For instance, in the presentation you can see the nice picture of three Russian submarines at the northern pole. I would say that's a brilliant indication of how Russians have shown their capacity and the importance of their nuclear assets in the region. For instance, on April 19 they sent all their fleet assets from their respective bases to the respective areas in the Arctic Ocean.

For a brilliant explanation of what is going on in the Arctic, there's an article by Marcus Kolga called "Winter is coming to Canada's North". Maclean's magazine published this article recently. Mr. Kolga explained why Russian has started all these activities in the north, with the assessment that Foreign Minister Lavrov recently announced that all the oil and gas and minerals under the ice will now be the property of Russia. Definitely, at 200 nautical miles, that's the exclusive zone of Canada, but Russia's ambitions are at the edge of this zone, so this—

The Chair: Colonel Siromakha, I apologize. We will have to leave it there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bergeron, you will have the opportunity to ask more questions in the fourth round.

[*English*]

We will now go to Mr. Harris for two and a half minutes, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

I have a couple of questions for the ambassador.

President Zelenskyy has recently indicated some concern with the current Minsk agreement and would like to see some changes made. Could you indicate what the concerns are there, and what changes President Zelenskyy would like to make in that agreement?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: The Minsk agreement helped us to slow down the major escalation we witnessed in 2014 and 2015, but it never laid down a clear way on how we could move forward. It's well known that our view is that we should start with the ceasefire and de-escalation along the front line, and then proceed towards political settlement and eventually the election in the occupied territories. Again, the Russians try to present this differently. They would like to have an election first. It's very difficult to understand how you can have an election when there is no ceasefire.

In a way, I'm telling you this just to explain that the Minsk agreements and the Minsk process have never actually laid down a clear way for how we can get to a successful result in this process. The second strong argument to review the Minsk agreements is to remind ourselves that Crimea is not covered by the Normandy process and the Minsk agreements. One way or another, we should be open to some other options for peace talks.

Having said that, Ukraine is strongly committed to the existing Minsk agreements.

• (1650)

Mr. Jack Harris: Yes, the note provided to us indicated that there were meetings even as late as April of this year, during which both Ukraine and Russia offered their support and undertook to implement the provisions of that agreement.

You're looking for additional measures in it as well. What specific ones would you want to see?

The Chair: Would you give just a brief answer, Ambassador, please?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Imperative number one is a strong, reliable and sustainable ceasefire. That has never happened. We could start with that.

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

Thank you, Ambassador.

We have Mr. Bezan, please, for five minutes.

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

Ambassador, you were talking earlier about things that Ukraine needs, which include defence weapons.

What specific defence weapons does Ukraine want from Canada and other allies?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Mr. Chairman, if you would allow, I would invite Colonel Siromakha to start on that.

The Chair: Please go ahead, sir.

Col Viktor Siromakha: Since 2014, Ukraine has already received a lot from Canada, and it was timely and the exact assistance that we had been desperately waiting for.

Now the situation has completely changed, so we have already strong armed forces. What we face now is competition in intelligence and competition in modern, sophisticated assets.

For instance, on the border with Russia and within Ukrainian territory, we have Russian modern electronic warfare equipment, so modern and so powerful and successful that they even jammed a U.S. Global Hawk drone at the end of April this year, Forte 12. This drone was jammed by, let's say, unidentified assets within the territory of Ukraine, but I would say that it was Russian electronic warfare assets, even Krasukha-4 or something like this.

Mr. James Bezan: There are also reports of electronic warfare in the Black Sea. A U.S. destroyer has been destabilized by Russian assets in the region.

Col Viktor Siromakha: Absolutely, yes. A U.S. ship was overflown by a not-very-young Russian aircraft, a Su-24. I would say it is 25 years old, maybe even more, but the electronic warfare assets on board this aircraft were quite powerful. That's why, if we are talking about what more Canada can do, it is to help us with our ability to counteract Russian electronic warfare measures, and to better protect very sensitive areas in the Sea of Azov and the northern part of the Black Sea.

At the same time, on a technical level, we face severe casualties from snipers, because Russian sniper teams have been permanently deployed along the contact line. That's not only Russian armed forces snipers; that's also Russian special forces snipers, JFO snipers, FSB snipers. It's like a tour of duty for them to go to the contact line and work against our positions, our soldiers, our officers and our men and women in uniform.

I can tell you, as a military guy, I can't think about evil on a Friday night, but to start a competition to hit Ukrainian soldiers in the eye, I would say, is not a very friendly approach from our neighbours.

What do we need? For instance, in this particular case, it's telemeter sights, night vision devices, thermoscopes, laser designators. We have some lists, and we are sharing this list of requirements with our colleagues here in the Department of National Defence. I know there are some partial plans to provide Ukraine with, let's say, some nanosensors over the next period of time. DND knows about these plans and is working on this.

At the same time, if we are speaking about really good Canadian assistance to Ukraine, I would move slightly towards political support. For instance, you definitely know about our plans to work on the NATO-Ukraine Commission, and we definitely need Canadian support to unblock this commission because of the position of some member states.

As the ambassador said before, we are working on an enhanced security agreement between Ukraine and NATO, because we need to start an exchange of restricted information via secure channels.

Thank you.

• (1655)

Mr. James Bezan: Thanks, Colonel. I'm going to have to cut you off, because I see the 30 seconds coming up.

I just want to say this to you both, Ambassador Shevchenko and Colonel Siromakha. You mentioned that Ukrainian forces are holding the eastern flank to NATO, and I want to thank all those who have stood on the line. You are the front line against Russian aggression and the rest of Europe—and all of NATO for that matter. I know you've paid a terrible price in lives lost, in displaced people and in all the ongoing injuries, both visible and invisible, that have been suffered by Ukrainian forces. I want to pass on my gratitude and condolences to those who were lost and to the families that were victimized. Know that we will continue, as Conservatives, to stand with Ukrainians and united with Ukraine, and to ensure that some of the things you had that are no longer being provided, like RADARSAT imagery.... We'd love to restore that and work with you on providing the defensive weapons you require.

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

We'll pass it and take it as a message on behalf of all of Canada.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

Thank you, Ambassador.

We'll now go to Mr. Fonseca for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ambassador and Colonel.

I'm sure you're glad to have seen the Biden administration return to supporting a liberal, rules-based order—the UN, the WTO and other multilateral organizations that maybe the U.S. had gotten away from for a while.

Also, I want to bring up how we've all been affected—be it Europe, the United States, Canada—by some of these Russian aggressions. We've seen the poisoning in Russia of Alexei Navalny, and his imprisonment. We saw what happened in Belarus with Ryanair. We saw the elections interference in the United States and in other places around the world. We saw United States energy systems being attacked, not necessarily—I'm not sure—by the state of Russia, but by Russians who are attacking these states.

I say that because I want to ask: Through this targeted, Russian, political interference and these disinformation campaigns and cyber-incursions, should we exchange lessons learned from others, from yourselves, from everybody getting together with our respective experiences, and share best practices to combat these and other forms of Russian hybrid warfare? I really feel that this is where Russia is attacking the world, through this hybrid warfare, attacking our economic systems, our energy systems, our defence systems and, bigger than all of that, our democracy by interfering with our elections.

I would like to hear from you and the colonel.

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Mr. Fonseca, that's precisely the strategic approach that we encourage all of us to take on this. Let's speak, for example, about Canada and the U.S. You already do a lot to coordinate through the Five Eyes mechanisms. Also, both Canada and the U.S. are part of the Quint group, those five countries that the Ukrainian armed forces co-operate most closely with, and we expect to see even better co-operation.

I would also encourage the Canadian parliamentarians who follow the matter to reach out to their American counterparts. We need you to coordinate, to exchange what you know, and to come up with a good joint vision and plan on this. Yes, we expect the Biden administration to have a very strong position on this, and we are very encouraged by the first steps. In the visuals that we shared with you, you can find a slide that specifically refers to the American response to this Russian escalation. That is a good sign, but there are plenty more things we should do together.

• (1700)

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Colonel, if you would like to comment....

Col Viktor Siromakha: In this current reality, it's quite hard to start with a really good exchange of good visits of professionals, analysts and operators from Canada and from Ukraine. That's why we really need this reliable, secure channel of communication and a varied focus, especially on security and air defence situations in the areas of the Black Sea and Sea of Azov.

Hybrid threats are definitely a challenge, and we are now watching what is going on with Colonial Pipeline, SolarWinds and attacks on critical Ukrainian infrastructure objects in western Ukraine. So far, we are working on the development of our own capabilities, like cybersecurity centres. We would like to restart visits in the future in order to bring more Canadian specialists to Ukraine, to show them what we have in Kiev and, of course, to share knowledge with you here in Canada.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: These cyber-attacks we're hearing about are even affecting us here. They're affecting municipalities and businesses, where they're taking over, shutting them down, holding them for ransom and then bribing them. We don't even know how many this is happening to, because many are fearful of disclosing that this has happened to their businesses.

It is really imperative that we be transparent with this and find out where these are coming from. I know that Russia is one that has been isolated as to where some of these attacks are coming from—or from Russians—but there's also China and other parts of the world. I think we need to work together on this.

Col Viktor Siromakha: I absolutely agree with you on this issue, and I must commend you. In one assessment here in Canada, I saw that cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure objects like heating systems or water systems in Canada could be even worse with all the consequences of COVID-19. That's going to have a really targeted, focused impact.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Thank you, Colonel.

[*Translation*]

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

Thank you, Colonel Siromakha.

We will now begin the fourth round.

[*English*]

Colleagues, if we're disciplined in our time, we should be able to finish a complete fourth round. We have to finish at 5:30 because of House of Commons resource constraints tonight. Also, there has been a request from the ambassador's team to do a quick screenshot at the very end of our time together.

We will go right into our fourth round, and I would just encourage all of you, as you have done, to continue to respect the time limits.

We will have Mr. Bezan, please, for five minutes.

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

Earlier, we were talking about sanctions. Of course, Canada passed the Magnitsky act back in 2018, but unfortunately the government hasn't used it since.

Can you talk about how Magnitsky sanctions have worked to not just send a message to the Kremlin but to hold them accountable for their support of the war in Donbass and for the illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea? That's for Russia as well as other countries that have been corrupt and have abused human rights around the world.

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Mr. Bezan, as you know so well, we stand behind the procedures and mechanisms of the Magnitsky act, and thank you for your contribution to the passing of that very important piece of legislation. I would extend that to all members of Parliament who were involved.

We want the Magnitsky act to be applied specifically to those very demonstrative and very obvious cases of human rights violations in the occupied territories. I can give you one example. Just today, there was a so-called court decision in Russia to give six years in prison to Refat Chubarov, who is the leader of the Mejlis, which is the Crimean Tatar parliament.

That's one of the pieces of this major picture of political oppression against the Crimean Tatars. Those crimes have very clear names associated with them. We are talking about prosecutors, about lawyers, about judges and about those people in the government who are specifically responsible for these repressions, and we want those people to feel that the world is watching.

Again, I would like to assure you that no matter what the Russians say, or no matter what they might laugh about, the sanctions that already apply hurt. They hurt individuals on a very personal level, and they hurt Russia's abilities in general, so we strongly encourage Canada to explore how we can use the existing instruments, including the Magnitsky act, to deter Russia.

• (1705)

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you for that.

We look at what's happening today in Minsk, and there is no doubt that there are some parallels to be drawn with what was happening during Euromaidan, with people standing up against a corrupt government under Yanukovich. Do you think Russia will become even more aggressive and that Putin and his proxies may show up on the streets of Minsk as well, like they did in showing up as “little green men” in Crimea?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Yes, and we see that authoritarian regimes are really good at helping each other. They are really good at best practices exchange—or worst practices exchange.

There are very practical results of this close integration of Belarus into the Russian sphere of influence. One of the examples is that Lukashenko has finally let the Russians go ahead with establishing military air bases in Belarus. The Russians can now can freely use all the Belarusian facilities for their jets. That changes the situation in western Europe. I think there is a good chance that we'll see more escalation in the European skies. That creates new threats for Poland, for Slovakia and for our other neighbours.

I just want to leave you with one thought. What you see in Belarus now is the scenario that Putin had for Ukraine in 2014. This is exactly the scenario that Putin has for many other countries to come, and that is why we should see all of these as interconnected pieces.

Mr. James Bezan: Why do you think Putin so greatly fears these public protests by these people who are fighting for freedom of the press and for democracy, and who are standing up for human rights? Why does Putin and his kleptocracy in the Kremlin fear this catching hold in the region, and possibly in Moscow itself?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: There is an obvious reason. He is afraid that Russia and the Russian people will follow the case.

Putin has been relatively successful in blocking the civil society of Russia from becoming strong enough and vocal enough, but I think it's quite obvious it's going to be more difficult over the years. One day the refrigerator will win over the TV set. One day people will realize that there are ways to live better in their country. That will be the case with Russia, too, one day.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan, and thank you, Ambassador.

We go now to Ms. Sahota, please, for five minutes.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

This has been a very enjoyable session. Thank you to the ambassador for being here today.

I share the sentiments of many of my colleagues in the questions they've posed and the commitments they've made that we strongly stand with Ukraine. We want to do everything possible to make sure your region will continue to be a fair and free democracy.

On many different democracy indexes, the numbers have been rising. There have been many improvements in Ukraine. I want to congratulate you on the 2019 election. Some of my colleagues were there as observers. They stated that it was a great experience.

I wasn't able to go there, but I was involved in a parliamentary internship program here on Parliament Hill, which I think is a very valuable program. Hopefully, after COVID, we can have that program again. It gave me the opportunity to meet many young people from Ukraine. Although they are very proud of being Ukrainian and of the progress Ukraine has made, there are many concerns about transparency in the democratic process. When it comes to the election process, I think there have been many improvements, but there are still issues when it comes to political and economic corruption.

I read somewhere about a prominent anti-corruption agency created by the government that was then struck down by the Constitutional Court as being unconstitutional. They were investigating many judges at the time. Since Ukraine has taken on new measures of economic and political reforms, including anti-corruption reforms in 2014, what progress has been made thus far? In the areas where there is still more progress to make, what is the plan moving forward?

Perhaps you could highlight again some of the areas, like the rule of law, independent judiciary and even freedom of the press and LGBTQ rights. Those are still major concerns and issues, especially for civil society groups in Ukraine. Perhaps I could have your answer on those things.

Thank you.

• (1710)

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Thank you very much.

I think this, in many ways, reflects the agenda that the Ukrainian government has. Again, we co-operate with Canada on many of those directions.

I would like to refer specifically to this anti-corruption situation. You referred to one very specific episode, when the Constitutional Court decided that it was illegal to require public servants and politicians to declare their benefits and their expenditures. After that decision, the Ukrainian people literally took to the streets. The reaction of the public and across the political class was so strong and so powerful that this decision by the Constitutional Court was reviewed. Now any citizen of Ukraine can clearly see what money Ukrainian politicians and bureaucrats make, and how they spend it. That really shows you how the Ukrainian people feel about this; it makes me very optimistic about the Ukrainian reforms in the future.

At the moment, all our anti-corruption institutions work. That includes the anti-corruption court and especially the anti-corruption prosecutor's office. We hope they will show a very strong and visible result in the near future.

As one last sentence, I would like to acknowledge the success of the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary program. I know many of the parliamentarians here have had Ukrainian interns in their office. I want to reassure you that that's a major investment in a successful Ukraine. Those people have returned to Ukraine to become members of Parliament, ministers and influential civil society leaders. It's a wonderful program that we'd like to see continued.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: It's an absolutely wonderful program.

I know there has been some success in the banking sector. There's more transparency now as to ownership of banks and different corporations.

Could you speak a bit more about the freedom of the press issue?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: We strongly believe in a free press. Even in darker times, Ukraine was well known as a country with a very strong appetite for a free press and a very strong push against any signs of censorship. I hope it will stay that way.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Ms. Sahota.

Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Your Excellency, you have clearly demonstrated that the Normandy process and the Minsk agreements have no impact or effect on the situation in Crimea.

I assume that President Zelenskyy intends to unveil a Crimean platform in order to address that gap. It is supposed to be unveiled this summer, hopefully on August 1.

Of course, I am not asking you to reveal intimate secrets, but what is the plan with this platform in terms of diplomatic, military, economic and other actions, in order to have Crimea returned to the fold of Ukraine some day?

• (1715)

[English]

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Monsieur Bergeron, you have given a very good assessment of the reasons we want to go ahead with the Crimean platform.

I can give you a very practical example. It's about sanctions. At this moment, both the European Union and our major allies outside of the European Union have applied sanctions against Russia and those individuals responsible for the occupation and human rights violations.

However, the way we apply sanctions is so different. We assess the situation in different ways. We apply sanctions in different ways, and we have very different ways to monitor the implementation of the sanctions.

The coordination of this effort is long overdue. If we share our practices, if we bring our efforts together in monitoring the situation on the ground, and if we monitor together how the sanctions are implemented, they can have a much greater impact on the ground.

Canada will be a rock star among those nations, because you're quite good at actually following up on those policies.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Your Excellency, am I to understand, between the lines of your answer, that the core of this strategy, this international Crimean Platform, is that you would like to see coordinated measures taken by a large number of nations against Russia, to ensure that the impact is laser-focused, so to speak, and ultimately produces results, including Donbass and Crimea?

[English]

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: That is very fair, and that should be very efficient if we think about the different avenues of co-operation, security, human rights, economic policy and so on. We hope this will bring us closer to a good, successful, strategic vision.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron, and thank you, Ambassador.

Mr. Harris, please go ahead, for two and half minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

Ambassador, along with the rest of world, you have experienced this pandemic for the last year and a bit.

Could you tell us what the experience has been in Ukraine? How has it impacted your country? What are the circumstances like in Ukraine, particularly in the Donbass region? What do you have by way of a vaccine program? Is it working? Is there something the international community is doing, or can do, to help?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: It's a concern that all of us share, no matter which side of the ocean we live on.

Ukraine had a relatively good start in the beginning of the pandemic. We successfully delayed the first hit of the virus last year, and then the situation became much worse. It's still very troublesome.

In Ukraine, only about 5% of the population has been vaccinated so far. We are talking about the first dose—less than 5%—which means we still have so much work to do. We are struggling to find enough vaccines to go ahead with the vaccinations.

You very rightly asked me about the Donbass. That's the area we should be very concerned about. The medical infrastructure along the front line and in the occupied territories has been destroyed or is close to non-existent. There is a big risk that we might face a humanitarian catastrophe in that specific region.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that we co-operate with Canada on COVID-related issues. We share the Canadian approach that we should eliminate all barriers to the free flow of medical supplies and vaccines. We have taken our steps, when it was necessary, to remove the barriers, and we are going to co-operate in the future.

• (1720)

Mr. Jack Harris: For one brief second, are there COVAX circumstances? Is that plan of any help to Ukraine?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Yes, but as you can imagine, it's a very small amount that we're getting from there. It's not even close to enough to cover the demand.

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

We will now go to Ms. Stubbs.

Welcome to the committee. The floor is yours for five minutes.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Hello, Ambassador. I've had three Ukrainian interns in my office, and there's strong Ukrainian heritage—many families, communities, and two-sister cities with Ukraine—in Lakeland.

You may know that Vegreville, which is home to the world's largest free-standing pysanka, has hosted the Ukrainian chamber, sent councillors to Ukraine as election monitors and donated fire-fighting supplies and funds to Ukraine and to Crimea. I'm pleased to be here on behalf of Lakeland.

In Canada, there are many examples of Putin's government actively conducting misinformation campaigns on social media and elsewhere. I wonder to what extent that is that happening in Ukraine and what actions are being taken to combat it.

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Thank you very much.

I would specifically refer to the propaganda portion of the visual presentation that you have. If you look through those quotes from the Russian propaganda leaders, that pretty much tells you how seriously they have taken this situation. You might see this cartoon with NATO and with some very horrible, terrible death pictures.

For those of us who remember how the Soviet propaganda worked, this clearly reminded me of the old days of the Cold War, when the Soviet regime spent and invested huge resources in this propaganda effort against its key western opponents.

Finally, the Russians have spread something they call the list of the worst enemies of the Russian federation. There are 10 countries on that list. They include, of course, Ukraine and Canada. Russia has officially said it is considering the ways it's going to make our lives more difficult, so we'll see what is to come.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Can you comment on the pulse of the current public perception of the conflict there? Have Ukrainian perceptions changed or evolved?

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: I think we can see how the Kremlin can increase and decrease its activities when it comes to propaganda. For obvious reasons, they increased this propaganda activity against Ukraine and its allies this year.

There were two major avenues for their propaganda. First, they presented Ukraine to their public as a major threat to Russian security, so they would say that sooner or later Ukraine was going to invade Russia. Secondly, they also presented Ukraine as a puppet state in the hands of the United States, Canada and other countries, and they tried to scare the Russian public with this NATO invasion through Ukraine.

One way or another, it's obvious that one of the reasons Putin wanted to do this was to change the subject in the news. The Navalny protests were a major concern for the Russian government. Also, they have an upcoming parliamentary election this fall. Probably with all these escalation activities, one of the reasons Putin wanted to go ahead with that was to solve his domestic problems and get some domestic results.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: To follow up on a question asked earlier by Mr. Chong regarding the IRGC, I wonder if you could speak to the importance of the international community's acting in a coordinated way to condemn the IRGC's actions.

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: It's critically important. Let me say this: We cannot allow those criminals who shot down the plane to hide behind state secrets, and we cannot allow the Iranian government to hide the criminals from international prosecution. Going to the international court is one option.

Ukraine has a very impressive experience of dealing with such tragedies. I can refer you to the MH17 situation. In fact, in Ukraine, it's the same investigation team that is now dealing with PS752.

Going back to your question, it's very important that we speak with one voice. It's very important that together we get to the bottom of this terrible tragedy.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Stubbs. That's just about your time. Thank you very much for being with us.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: The final set of questions this afternoon goes to Dr. Fry.

Please go ahead.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you, Chair. I know I don't have five minutes, because we have to leave on the dot, but I just want to follow up with a simple question. It is about PS752. I know that many people in Canada, because Canada had the majority of people on that flight, are asking for Canada to go with like-minded people to the United Nations Security Council and to demand an independent investigation. I'd like to know what you think about that.

Before you answer, I told you what a beautiful city Kiev is, but I want to also take the opportunity to say that I was at both presidential elections, the run-off and then the main presidential election, and I was most impressed. What impressed me so much was what I saw.

The infrastructure, of course, in Ukraine, is terrible, but I saw 90-year-olds climbing 25 steps to go to vote. Although your voting system was extraordinary and you had the ability to go to their homes if they were elderly and arthritic, they wanted to go to vote. With your turnout, Canada could learn about that commitment to democracy, that commitment to free and fair elections, that desire that the Ukrainians have for really ensuring that they were able to vote and to make their vote count. I thought that was really important. I was impressed, and frankly, quite moved by it. I thought maybe we could get some Ukrainian seniors to come and tell Canadians about going to the ballots during their elections. I don't know if we could do that.

Anyway, I just want you to answer the question for me about PS752.

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: I'll just say briefly that we still have homework to do when it comes to co-operation among our own law enforcement agencies in investigating PS752. That's what we are determined to do. I'm not very enthusiastic about the United Nations and the Security Council as long as Russia has a veto right in the Security Council.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Yes.

H.E. Andriy Shevchenko: Again, we will always find ways to investigate and get to the bottom of this, together with Canada.

Chair, I feel that this is probably about the end of our conversation. I'd like to use this as an opportunity to say thank you to all the members of the committees. It was an extraordinary conversation and I hope it will help you make well-informed decisions in the interests of the Canadian public. Your support is very touching and is very important to us.

The Chair: Dr. Fry, unless you have another question, I thank you very much for that intervention—

Hon. Hedy Fry: No, I don't, but I was going to say how important it is for us to have had this discussion and to know that it would be so very important to have Ukraine as an eastern European democratic country committed to all the international rules and all the tenets of democracy. It would be such a pleasure to have you right there, being in that most important strategic position.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Fry.

Colleagues, that takes us to the end of our time with our witnesses this afternoon.

On our collective behalf, I would like to thank His Excellency Ambassador Shevchenko, Colonel Siromakha and Mr. Liashenko for their time.

This was about the friendship between our countries. This was about shared values. In great part, it was also about substance. We had a very fulsome discussion over the two hours, and we're extremely grateful for your time and your testimony this afternoon.

Ambassador, I understand that before we disconnect, your team has asked for a screenshot. I would like to encourage all members who would like to be in that screenshot to come on in.

I'm assuming we have somebody, or maybe multiple people from our team, who will take that shot. Can we get a signal from them once it's done?

I'm getting a thumbs-up from the clerk.

Everybody, just hold a smile and we will do our screenshots.

Brilliant. Colleagues, thank you so much.

This takes us to the end of our session. Please be safe.

We will adjourn until our next meeting.

Again, our sincere thanks to our witnesses.

Take care.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>