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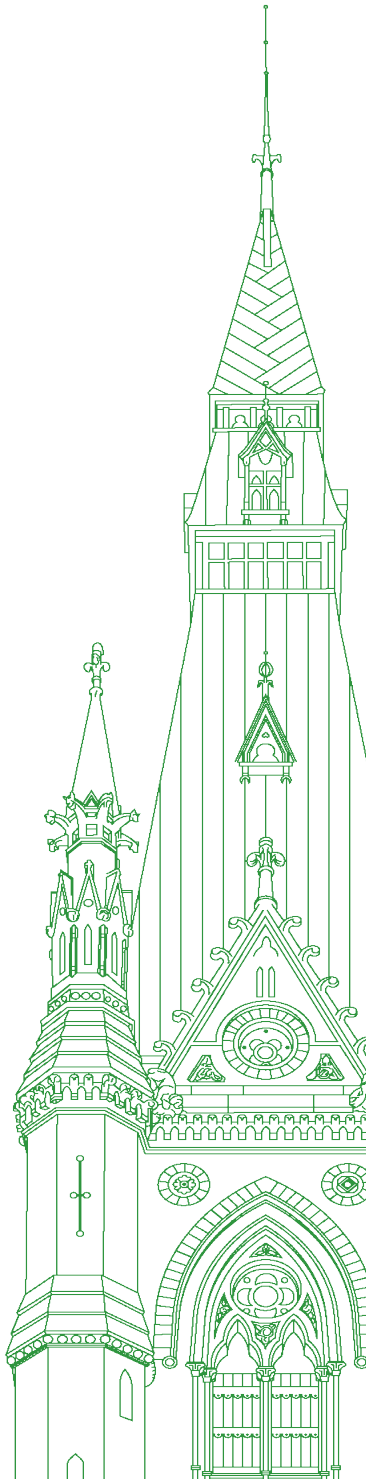

Chair: The Honourable John McKay

Standing Committee on National Defence

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● (1105)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): Having resolved our technical issues, I bring this meeting to order.

This is the 38th meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence.

We have with us today Dr. Lajeunesse from St. Francis Xavier University, and Dr. David Perry, who is here in person, from the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

Both of you are familiar with the procedures of the defence committee. Each of you will have five minutes for your opening statement.

We'll start with Dr. Lajeunesse.

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse (Associate Professor, St. Francis Xavier University, As an Individual): Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here to take part in these important discussions.

My research and expertise lie in the field of Arctic defence and policy, and it's in that area that I'd like to offer some comments. However, I can answer questions on a broader array of northern security issues, including China's evolving role in the region, which I've written on extensively.

To begin with, the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has obviously upended Canada's understanding of global security and great power competition. The concern has naturally extended into the Arctic, where we are neighbours with Russia across the Arctic Ocean. Canada is reconsidering its defence policy, and I suspect its Arctic policy as well, which has not had a clear policy refresh in over a decade.

I'd like to offer some advice on better ways to frame our thinking on Arctic defence in this new geopolitical environment.

Both Canada and the United States have long approached northern security with a sense of insecurity. This is apparent in the academic literature, in the media and from many politicians, frankly. Russia and even China increasingly exist in our security paradigm as serious threats that outclass us in every respect. The Russian icebreaker fleet, its array of northern bases and sophisticated air and sea defence spread across Siberia are constantly cited in the media and by politicians as a peril that threatens Canada, with our own and even American assets in the north paling in comparison.

This narrative, which could have been written in Moscow and in fact is one of the most common stories told by Russian state media and proxy news sites, is to highlight its own strength and western weakness. The problem is that this narrative is rubbish. We're buying into it, and it's impacting our strategic thinking.

Let me offer a different and, I think, more realistic framing for our policy. Russia is not strong or confident in the Arctic. It is terribly insecure and vulnerable. Russia has over 24,000 kilometres of Arctic coastline that it has to defend, and based on its recent national and service policies, it places a very high value on that defence.

That makes sense. The Russian Arctic holds that country's future. That's where the largest and newest natural gas and oil deposits are, the development of which is existential to the future of the Russian state as it currently is constructed. The Russian Arctic is home to much of the country's strategic nuclear capability, fast mining operations and a strategic sea route.

Russia's northern military deployments are rooted not in confident visions of power projection, but rather in a terrible sense of insecurity that these vulnerable resources and industries are at risk. Indeed, a quick look at the systems the Russians have deployed into the north shows that defensive mindset.

The North American Arctic is not a strategic centre of gravity. From a military and economic perspective, there is simply nothing there that, struck by the Russians, would cripple or do serious damage to Canada or the United States, or to our economies or our ability to wage war. Canada and North America more broadly are not vulnerable to Russian attack in the Arctic. Russia is vulnerable, and the government in Moscow is well aware of that.

To put it simply, Russia has very little capability to project power into the North American Arctic in a manner that would not be swiftly defeated or contained. NATO strikes against the Russian Arctic would be devastating. Highlighting Canadian weakness or NATO inferiority in the region not only is a misinterpretation but also supports Russian narratives. Canadian policy should not exaggerate Russia's ability to project power across the Arctic or underestimate NATO forces in that same region.

We might also look at Russian Arctic deployments from a different perspective in the future. The far north is a difficult and expensive place to deploy. It is also, for the most part, isolated. It may seem counterintuitive, but I would argue that Russian deployment of high-end military hardware into the north should be tacitly encouraged by Canada and its allies. The Russian defence budget is not infinite, and its stock of advanced precision-guided munitions is dwindling, as we know. It is in the west's interest that an insecure Russia is forced to place these assets in coastal Siberia rather than in Ukraine or western Russia, close to our NATO allies.

Messaging is therefore important. Canada must stop pretending that Russia dominates the Arctic, and if there is anything we can do to exacerbate existing Russian insecurities over its own safety, those efforts may pay strategic dividends.

Thank you. I'd be happy to take any questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Lajeunesse.

Dr. Perry, you have five minutes, please.

Dr. David Perry (President, Canadian Global Affairs Institute, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for the invitation to speak to you today about Arctic security.

I would also place the discussion today against the backdrop of Russia's brutal war against Ukraine, which is demonstrating to me in a very real manner the implications of the return to great power competition identified in the 2017 “Strong, Secure, Engaged” defence policy. Both Russia and China continue to invest in military modernization programs, and they employ those modernized armed forces in concert with other elements of state power in ways that threaten western and Canadian interests.

Given both those countries' demonstrated and expressed interest in the Arctic and their increasing capability to take military action, either through the Arctic against targets in the rest of Canada or North America or against targets in the Canadian Arctic itself, Canada needs to act with an urgency that it is not demonstrating yet to strengthen its Arctic defences.

The announcement this summer of a package of investments supporting NORAD modernization is a good start to bolstering our Arctic defences, but we should look to build on those investments in defence infrastructure and aerospace assets by adding subsurface naval capabilities and integrated air and missile defences to improve our ability both to understand what is happening in our coastal waters and to defend Canada against missile threats.

However, unless substantial changes are made, we can expect that those investments could take between two and three decades to actually produce operationally employable defence assets.

Let me cite a few somewhat depressing examples to illustrate how glacial the pace of our Arctic defence investments has been recently. The Nanisivik naval refuelling station was launched as a government initiative in 2006, but after repeated delays, the last information I could find was that it is not slated to open until 2023.

Of the five projects intended to renew the Canadian Armed Forces core equipment platforms in the 2008 “Canada First” defence strategy, three of them—the replacement of our frigates and destroyers, new fighter aircraft and maritime patrol planes—would meaningfully improve our Arctic defences. None of the three projects that I just cited has yet resulted in the delivery of a single plane or ship. Under current schedules, they won't until between 2025 and the mid-2030s.

The observations I would make relevant to the committee's study about our demonstrated very slow ability to improve Arctic defence capability are twofold. First, we need to spend at least as much time and effort on improving our ability to implement the defence policies and funded investments that we have today as we do on considering additional future plans and investments. Second, when taking decisions today about the future, we need to account for our ability to respond to possible future changes in our security environment in the decades to come, not just our assessment of the world around us right now, given the time it takes to implement these types of decisions.

With respect to my first observation, I'd encourage the committee to focus throughout its study on what the Government of Canada collectively is doing to improve its ability to actually deliver more Arctic-focused information management, information technology infrastructure and equipment investments.

With respect to my second observation, I'd encourage the committee to think about the practical implications of how long it takes us to improve our Arctic defences and the impact of that on how we should assess military threats to the Canadian Arctic. When people talk about potential military threats, they're generally assessing the military capabilities that countries like Russia and China possess, how they could be employed to threaten Canada's Arctic, and whether or not they actually will be employed. In other words, they're evaluating a combination of the military capabilities that already exist right now with the potential hostile intent to use them.

As we're seeing today in Ukraine, autocratic great powers can and do use the military capabilities they develop with hostile intent when they deem it important. They do so in ways many of us in the West have difficulty understanding. Since those great powers have already developed the military capability to threaten Canada's Arctic and their intent to do so could change in a matter of days or weeks, the fact that it would take us decades to do anything about it should cause us some significant concern.

We need to start acting with significantly increased urgency to improve our Arctic defences today and start planning for the future on the assumption that the threats to our north are already real now and will worsen over time.

Thank you.

● (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Perry. We seem to have a divergence of views, which is very helpful, actually.

With that, we go to our six-minute round, and Mr. Kelly.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Thank you.

Dr. Perry, I'd like to talk about lapsed funding. Public accounts show $2.5 billion in lapsed funding. You spoke of delay. Maybe explain and get on the record the effect of lapsed funding and how that impacts our ability, in this case, to defend the Arctic.

Dr. David Perry: Lapsed funding effectively means the money that was allocated, which was drawn through the estimates, that doesn't actually get spent on whatever it was intended to purchase.

I'm not sure specifically. I haven't seen the explanation for exactly why the number last year amounted to $2.5 billion, but the net result of that is $2.5 billion that didn't go to whatever it was supposed to acquire and produce in terms of military capability.

Mr. Pat Kelly: You're saying $2.5 billion was approved by Parliament, allocated through the estimates and not spent. We're not even spending the money we've agreed to spend, let alone the additional commitments that would be necessary to adequately fulfill the requirements you've outlined. Is that correct?

Dr. David Perry: Yes. I'd say it's actually worse than that, because there's also an additional amount over and above what Parliament allocated and what was approved through the estimates, compared to the amount that was intended to be spent and set aside in the fiscal framework under “Strong, Secure, Engaged”. That additional amount is about $2 billion to $3 billion over and above the amount that was called for in the estimates and then lapsed.

The real delta between execution and the available funding is probably closer to $4 billion or $5 billion when you add the lapse that was in the estimates and then include the amount that wasn't even drawn on but could have been.

● (1115)

Mr. Pat Kelly: The government announced money that was then not authorized by Parliament or included in the estimates, and the money that was allocated by Parliament has not been spent. Okay, thank you.

You spoke about the need for subsurface capability in the Arctic. What kind of priority would you ascribe to replacing the Victoria class submarines? How quickly does that need to happen? What is the current state of subsurface defence capability?

Dr. David Perry: I don't think the current state is nearly as good as it should be. Our existing submarine fleet doesn't have nearly as many operational days at sea as I think are warranted given the current circumstance.

We need to broadly be looking at replacing those submarines with either new submarines themselves or a system of underwater vehicles that could be operated remotely—perhaps working in conjunction—as well as additional sensing capability to be able to detect other people's submarines that could be working in Canadian coastal waters and approaches.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Carry on with the importance of that. Describe some of the threats we're trying to deal with.

Dr. David Perry: Essentially, without improving that significantly, we don't know who's in our waters. We might be able to get some of that information from some of our allies if they're there, but if we don't have our own submarines there, we don't have a good understanding of what's happening within our coastal waters.

Given the modernization of the Russian forces in particular, they have sophisticated new submarine capability that I think can pose a significant threat to both Canada and wider North American interests.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Was the funding announced by Minister Anand for the modernization of NORAD sufficient?

Dr. David Perry: I don't think it's sufficient, in the sense that it basically is restricted, as far as I understand it, to only a set of infrastructure and aerospace investments. It doesn't include money for any of that naval capability that I just discussed, so in that sense, no.

Mr. Pat Kelly: The current announced modernization of NORAD is not adequate to Canada's defence needs.

Dr. David Perry: That would be my assessment, yes.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Thank you.

Going back to the issue of lapsed funding, what needs to change in order that we don't have lapsed funding? This is not the only department that has significant lapsed funding. It would be one thing if the government would say that in the name of economy, they have decided to not undertake something. That would be one thing. We could have an argument about whether that's wise or not in any particular policy area, but when Parliament has actually authorized an expenditure and the government can't get the money out the door and fulfill the objectives it has stated, this has extraordinary implications for our own security in this area.

Can you talk about the procurement process? What are the problems the government has with getting money that's been authorized by Parliament out the door to fulfill the needs for which it was authorized?

Dr. David Perry: I'd say that the fact that this has been happening since the late 2000s indicates a series of systemic issues in addition to some that are more localized in the last couple of years.

The implications of the pandemic on supply chains and workforce issues would have some immediate effects, I would imagine, on the amount of money that lapsed in the last fiscal year specifically. Beyond that, we don't have enough capacity in our procurement system to move the money that's earmarked as fast as we want to. There aren't enough people. They don't have enough specific preparation and training.

Given the mismatch between capacity and intent, there's not enough prioritization, I don't think, on which projects need to move as a matter of priority. There's also a need to have a better central focus from the entire Government of Canada, from the cabinet level on down, to really drive this if it's an important priority for the Government of Canada.

There are a number of other things, but those are three that I'd focus on.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. May.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to thank both of the witnesses for being here today.

We've been very lucky, I think, to get so many amazing witnesses on this study and, as the chair said earlier, very divergent opinions. There doesn't seem to be a single, clear path on a number of the issues regarding the north.

My questions are going to be for Dr. Perry, and this may be one of those issues on which we hear different opinions.

Earlier in this study, the chief of the defence staff stated that "policies related to ballistic missile defence are becoming less and less relevant"—I believe that was his quote—and that "[i]ntegrated air and missile defence is the concept of the future."

Mr. Perry, I would like your thoughts on this. Do you agree? Can you elaborate on these concepts and provide any recommendations with respect to missile defence?

● (1120)

Dr. David Perry: Sure. I would say, basically, two broad things. We are facing a broader array of missile threats than we did 20 years ago. Ballistic missiles are one part of that, but advanced cruise missiles and hypersonics are additional evolving components of that. To say there's a specific need to focus on just one type of those, I think, is an incomplete answer at best, because there's a range of possible scenarios that we need to improve our defences against.

With regard to the integrated component of that, the way to think about it, as we're seeing play out in some cases in Ukraine right now, is that the best defence is to have a layered, integrated set of systems that can defend against a range of incoming missiles rather than having individual, disaggregated systems that have to look, identify and basically assess an individual type of incoming missile and then make a determination about whether or not it's something you want to be able to, effectively, shoot down. A system that can deal with a broad array of different missile threats in a way that is cohesive and integrated, that doesn't have to rely on distinct sets of pieces of technology being cobbled together but was designed to be integrated from the beginning, I think, would be an ideal scenario.

Mr. Bryan May: Given our current situation, our current status with this, what would be the first couple of steps Canada needs to take to get to that scenario?

Dr. David Perry: We need to build off the investments committed to this summer and actually make some investments in additional sensing/warning that could feed into those missile systems, as well as some actual mechanisms to potentially shoot down a missile if we wanted to.

For example, we're building ships that I think are going to have a capability to play some role there, but it's not clear whether or not they're being designed in a way that would allow them to explicitly be integrated into a wider North American system of missile defence, which would include things that are being done by the Missile Defence Agency in the United States, as well as by the United States Air Force and the United States Navy.

Mr. Bryan May: Given its history and, of course, geography, Canada has a range of military obligations. We have seen pressures involving multiple fronts, including Europe, the Indo-Pacific and, of course, the north, as well as aid to civil authority, which we just finished an entire study on.

In your opinion, can Canada significantly contribute to security in all of those areas? How can it successfully balance its efforts?

Dr. David Perry: We absolutely can if we want to. We're a rich country. If we would like to make the investments across a wide range of areas, then we could absolutely make very significant contributions in a number of those areas, and we already do today.

The difficulty we face right now is that our resource commitments and the ability to execute the resources that have been committed don't align with a broad array of those pressures, from the domestic responses you touched on to the continental ones and ones abroad. If we want to try to keep pace and keep a commensurate level of engagement to what we have had historically even, we need to be looking to increase our ability to commit and spend more resources across a broad array of fronts. Fundamentally, though, if we can't commit and spend those resources, then I think we're going to be making choices, either by default or by design, picking and choosing which of those areas we're going to focus efforts on.

Mr. Bryan May: Given the amount of time I have, I would simply ask this again: In that regard, when it comes to balancing those priorities, what should be the focus? What need to be the priorities for Canada moving forward?

Dr. David Perry: If we're in a situation in which we need to make a decision, then we need to concentrate on our own country and our own backyard. We need to concentrate more on continental defence and North American defence specifically. Then we look abroad beyond that.

That's not how we've tended to approach those issues historically.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. May.

Madame Normandin, you have six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to thank the two witnesses.

I'll take advantage of Professor Lajeunesse's presence, as his viewpoint clashes to some extent with what we sometimes hear in committee.

You mentioned that Russia considers itself to be at risk in the north. I'm curious about why Russia believes it is at risk.

What is the threat to Russia?

I just want to understand what's going on in a potential adversary's mind.

● (1125)

[*English*]

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: Yes, absolutely. Russia has considered itself to be at risk in the north since the 1960s. This is nothing particularly new.

At first blush, it would make very little sense, I think, to most westerners. The notion that there may be a NATO attack on Russia in the Arctic or elsewhere seems preposterous—and I would argue it is preposterous—but that is not always the way it is viewed in Russia.

You don't need to take my word for that or the word of any academic expert. You can simply look at what Russia is deploying in the north. It's billions of dollars of high-end anti-shipping and anti-air defence weapons, most of which have a fairly limited range. These are not weapons that can reach out into the Arctic Ocean much beyond the Russian coasts. By definition, these are defensive weapons.

It makes sense that Russia would feel slightly insecure about its Arctic. This is a region that produces a very good chunk of the Russian GDP. Most of Russia's hard currency earnings come from oil and gas, and a lot of that comes from the Arctic.

Looking forward 20 or 30 years, we can see that the future of Russian oil and gas production is going to be predominantly in the Arctic.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Does Russia consider China to be a threat?

[*English*]

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: The Russian-Chinese relationship in the Arctic, and very generally, is extremely complex.

The short answer is no, Russia does not see China as a threat—or at least publicly it does not see China as a threat.

Predating Ukraine, and even more so following the invasion of Ukraine 2022, China has become Russia's only major consumer of oil and gas, and the only customer for a lot of Russian goods. This is, of course, developing as western sanctions continue to be applied.

Looking forward, Russia recognizes that it needs China in many different ways—as a source of technology, as a customer and as a source of hard currency.

China's role in Russian foreign policy is only going to increase. China's role in the Russian Arctic is also going to increase, because many of these investments that we talked about, which are tens of billions of dollars, are required to build these oil and gas projects. It's not coming from the west anymore. It can really only come from China.

Looking forward, the linchpin of the Russian-Chinese relationship in the Arctic is going to be the investment in developing all those new resource projects.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

I'll continue with you, Mr. Perry.

My colleague Mr. Kelly spoke about allocated funds that remain unspent, and that end up accomplishing nothing.

As part of its commitment to NATO, Canada spends 2% of its GDP on defence. Is this percentage calculated on the basis of funds that are allocated or funds that are actually spent?

[*English*]

Dr. David Perry: My understanding is that it's calculated based on what we actually spend, not on what's committed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

The procurement issue is something you're familiar with. On this committee, we tend to misunderstand how things work in procurement, which is often dealt with by another committee.

I'd like to hear what you have to say about how the committee ought to have a better understanding of how procurement works, and in particular its long-term repercussions. Recently, the Parliamentary Budget Officer mentioned that the costs of the Davie contract were going to explode because it has been dragging on.

I'd like you to tell us a little more about why it's important for the committee to have a better understanding of this area.

[*English*]

Dr. David Perry: I'd say a couple of things.

I would situate it within a wider program of public administration. The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces have a range of very serious personnel issues right now, in terms of not only all the culture issues but also the massive quantitative problem they have right now, a huge recruiting and retention issue that needs urgent action. I would situate procurement within another kind of broader framework of public administration and implementation. We basically don't have a system that moves nearly as fast as we want it to and as fast we we've committed money. There's a range of different reasons for that, but I think systematically there hasn't been enough attention focused on calibrating the system to buy things as fast as we think we need them. There hasn't been a lot of improvement evident in that over the last 15 or 20 years.

I first started observing that the department was lapsing significant amounts of money on capital spending back in 2007-08. That went away for a very brief period of time a few years ago, but there is now another problem. As I was suggesting earlier, more money has been allocated under the new accounting rules that's over and above what gets thrown into the estimates, which still isn't going out the door.

There are various different ways that's manifested, from an accounting point of view, but the bottom line is we can't move money nearly as fast as we should. Given the current situation with inflation, that's becoming an increasingly severe problem. Defence inflation has always run 6% to 7% higher than inflation in the civil sector. Now that inflation in the civil sector is at a multidecade high, the Department of National Defence, I would imagine, is losing several tens of billions of dollars' worth of purchasing power with the various delays in purchasing things on time.

● (1130)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

David, as I recollect, you wrote your Ph.D. on lapsed funding.

Can you just move up a little closer to the mike? Apparently your voice is trailing off.

Ms. Mathyssen, you have six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you to both witnesses today.

Dr. Lajeunesse, I'd like to ask you something.

You wrote a policy paper entitled “Arctic Perils: Emerging Threats in the Arctic Maritime Environment”, which I'm hoping you can submit to this committee as well, if that's okay.

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: Yes, I'm happy to.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Great. Thank you.

In it you talk about much of what you've said today in terms of the Arctic presenting “an enticing opportunity for China to feign strategic interest and bait Arctic states to over-invest in or overcommit capabilities to that region rather than elsewhere in the world.”

You said this is misguided and isn't what Canada should be focusing on. My concern, of course—and I've expressed it before in this committee—is that this would further escalate tensions in the region.

Can you speak to that or expand on that?

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: I apologize. There's a bit of echo here. Could you repeat the very last part of that question?

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Certainly.

It's just in terms of that misguided idea of putting far more emphasis on the heavy investment in missile defence, and how that would escalate tensions in the Arctic.

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: What I have long argued is that we need to look at Arctic defence in a much more nuanced way. I think it's a bit of a misunderstanding to say that David Perry and I have a very different opinion on this. In fact, Arctic security and defence are very important, and we need to make serious investments, but we need to zero in on what exactly the threat environment is. What I have argued is that we are not seeing, and are not likely to see, a great power threat to the Arctic. Through the Arctic, yes, perhaps there may be a threat, and that is why we have NORAD modernization and the requirement for those investments. I'm arguing that it would be a waste of money and an inefficient use of our resources to build the Arctic defences in such a way as to gear them towards Russia or China. It would be simply an inefficient use of very scarce resources.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: A lot of the folks from the military we heard from, and General Eyre as well, spoke in those terms: staying the course, going along those modernization lines but not expanding greatly, looking at Russia as a longer-term issue. In the shorter term, we focus on what we can do to ensure we're not—and I think you spoke a little to this, so expand on this maybe as well—pushing the isolation of Russia further into, maybe, China's wheelhouse of financing and so on. That was more where that conversation was leading. Could you expand on that as well?

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: I hope so. That is a problem that has certainly been identified. The more isolated Russia becomes from the west politically and financially, the further it is pushed into Chinese arms, and we risk a scenario in which Russia, if it becomes weak enough, actually becomes something of a satellite of China.

It's difficult to see a way around that, however. The west is not going to open up financing again to Russia, barring some significant break and a change in Russian behaviour. The west is not going to re-engage with Russia politically to the point where Russia will disengage more with China.

That is a problem we acknowledge. That is recognized. We do not want to drive Russia and China closer together, but there's not an obvious avenue of approach to prevent that from happening.

Over the long run, what might prevent Russia from falling too deeply into the Chinese camp is the persistent and remaining suspicion within Russia itself of China. Russia does not want to become a satellite of China. Both the Russian government and the Russian people, I suspect, are going to think very poorly of the relationship developing in that way, but that's conjecture at this point.

I'm afraid I have no obvious answer.

● (1135)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Okay.

In a previous meeting we heard from Professor Lackenbauer and he was specifically talking about our need to think about the Arctic in, through and to, and the threats in that set.

You spoke about the through, but in terms of the threats in the Arctic, a lot of our conversations have been around climate change, the lack of infrastructure.

Are you able to expand in terms of whether Canada would even have, in an infrastructure sense, the capacity to expand on this idea of weaponry versus going along that status quo of modernization, and the difference?

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: Yes. Canada does face serious threats in the Arctic, predominantly non-conventional threats. What we're talking about is illegal fishing, pollution prevention, trespassing. Some of those may be non-state actors, and some of them may be state actors. Chinese scientific research, for instance, is a serious concern developing dual-use technologies.

For those threats, we are developing the right capabilities, such as the Arctic offshore patrol ships, surveillance and, as Dr. Perry mentioned, we need that increased situational awareness as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathyssen.

Colleagues, we again are in the situation where we have 25 minutes' worth of questions and a lot less time.

I'm proposing that we do a full round of questions in this hour, because the next hour we will have only one witness and we may be a little more efficient. We will go to full five-minute rounds, and that will probably take us past the 12 o'clock point, if that's all right with everyone.

Ms. Gallant, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Dr. Perry, will the $3 billion that Minister Anand announced be enough to modernize NORAD and the North Warning System to the capabilities required now and into the future?

Dr. David Perry: It's hard to say without knowing how fast that money can be spent. On a cash basis it's more like $87 billion. That is what the DND CFO said at a conference we hosted last week, but part of that depends on how quickly the money can get out the door.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: With respect to funding for subsurface surveillance, be it submarines or drones, given that we don't have the capability to get our surface ships built, let alone in the water, should we consider buying subs and drones from an ally with a demonstrated ability to complete the project on time and on budget?

Dr. David Perry: We should very seriously look at that.

My understanding is that would basically require a government to take a policy exception to the current policy around acquiring Canadian ships in Canada, which I believe would include submarines. Given that additional technical complexity of building submarines versus just surface ships, which we have struggled with quite significantly, I think we should quite seriously look at the potential for taking a purchase like that offshore. We should weigh the pros and cons.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay. We haven't put an order in or made a contract with any company in Canada.

Dr. David Perry: No.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: How vulnerable would our low-earth orbit satellites be, given the capability of countries that pose a threat?

Dr. David Perry: That's beyond my area of expertise.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay. I thought we mentioned low-earth orbit satellites with respect to the whole North Warning System. Do we know whether or not they could be shot down?

● (1140)

Dr. David Perry: I think that's a potential risk, but it's not something I have particular expertise in.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: President Xi has pledged to make the PRC the country with the largest icebreaking fleet in the world.

Are Canada's current plans for Arctic security sufficient to counter potential Chinese aggression in the future?

Dr. David Perry: I don't think they are at present. Part of that is fielding a fleet of new icebreakers. It's taken a very long time to not yet be at the point where we have a contract in place to replace new icebreakers. I would hope to see that move a lot faster from this point forward than it has, as well as the new Canadian Coast Guard icebreaking fleet being able to work in a more integrated fashion with the Canadian Navy going forward.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What do you make of President Putin's call yesterday to modernize Russia's military weapons? Is that sabre-rattling, or is it something we should be concerned about?

Dr. David Perry: I would say that the previous calls over the last 10 or 20 years to modernize Russian military capability actually resulted in modernized Russian military capability. I would not take it as sabre-rattling if he is talking about either conventional or nuclear forces. They have put a lot of money into those investments and delivered them.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: How important are the F-35s to the security of our nation, and particularly to our responsibilities to NORAD?

Dr. David Perry: They're incredibly important and long overdue.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: They're long overdue.

Given our shortage of pilots, are you concerned that the delay in the F-35 procurement is without consequence, since at present we don't have the people to fly them?

Dr. David Perry: Both of those issues, the planes and the people to fly them, are very serious problems. I would like to see more action more swiftly on fixing both of those issues.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Are there any other maritime capabilities we need, which haven't already been covered in this meeting with respect to Arctic sovereignty, that we should be talking about?

Dr. David Perry: Underwater sensors would be an area that I think we should focus on, so likely acoustical devices. Basically, it's something you can put in the water at a place where you want to listen that's a key piece of real estate, to have an idea of who is operating there, even if you don't have your own ship or submarine in place.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Are there any different types of vessels that are not part of the SSE that we should be looking at, in addition to the submarines and drones you mentioned?

Dr. David Perry: Within a wider network of sensors, there could be additional investments there, for both maritime assets in particular, but beyond that would be an integrated air and missile defence that would be able to cover a broad range of potential launch mechanisms.

Basically, we have some assets that could deal with some threats at sea with our new ships, prospectively, and we're going to have some ability to deal with cruise missiles with F-35s, once we acquire them.

We don't have a well-defined, integrated system to deal with a broad array of different missile threats.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Gallant.

Madam Lambropoulos, you have five minutes, please.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to both of our witnesses for being with us this morning to answer our questions.

I too was listening in and heard the divergence in opinion of the two witnesses. In this study, I also feel that many different people have different views, so it's really interesting to learn about the different perspectives that exist on this issue.

My first question will be for Dr. Lajeunesse.

You mentioned that the Arctic is not necessarily under threat by Russia, and you don't see a potential threat to our Arctic in the near future. However, at the same time you mentioned that its Arctic is something Russia values very much. A lot of its resources come from this area, so economically, it definitely is an area Russia focuses on.

You also referred to the fact that if we invested in our Arctic and improved our military capability in that region, it would perhaps force the Russians to shift their focus to their Arctic as well, because they may feel under threat.

Can you elaborate a little on this and explain more where you're coming from? Other witnesses we've heard from in previous panels have talked about the military capability of Russia to attack our Arctic, either through air or under water. Can you elaborate a bit on that and clear up your perspective?

● (1145)

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: To begin with, what I have advocated is not necessarily an increase in military capability in the Canadian Arctic in order to create this threat for Russia. I have suggested that in future policy statements, in the way we comport ourselves, in the way politicians speak and in the way we announce our intentions in the Arctic, we at least keep in mind this Russian insecurity and perhaps stop acting as though the Canadian Arctic is in quite so much peril.

When we talk about that peril—the danger that Russia poses to our Arctic—I would always ask someone who says it is in danger to game that out and to move one step beyond to say what exactly that danger is.

What exactly is a Russian submarine going to do in the Canadian Arctic? Quite frankly, there is nothing of strategic value for that Russian submarine to attack.

What exactly is a Russian airborne company going to do in the Canadian Arctic? There's not a whole lot for it to do.

When we talk about Arctic security, we really need to separate the different Arctics. The Russian threat to the Arctic is in Scandinavia. It's in the Barents Sea. It's much closer to home. That's always been the case.

There isn't a strategic threat from Russia to the Canadian Arctic, unless you are talking about a through-threat, as Dr. Lackenbauer said. Those threats would simply go through the Arctic toward the rest of North America. In that case, it's not an Arctic threat per se; it's a global threat.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Do you still believe there should be investments made in the Arctic? Should our military capabilities be improved in that area? What are the benefits of doing so?

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: Absolutely. As I mentioned very briefly, there are very serious threats to the Arctic. We just need to be clear-eyed about what they are. We're not talking about submarines and paratroopers per se. What we're most likely going to look at over the next 10, 20 or 30 years in terms of threats are hybrid or unconventional threats, such as Chinese fishing fleets, trespassing, illegal shipping and poaching.

Just last year, we had a Chinese adventurer coming through on a sailboat. This was a man supported by Chinese state media, who has a history of personal freedom of navigation voyages. The political ramifications of his moving through without our permission could have been very significant. He was stopped only by the ice.

Those kinds of hybrid safety and security threats are going to be very real, and they're going to increase as more activity moves north and as more fish move north. We are going to need more capabilities and situational awareness. We are going to need constabulary and naval capabilities like the AOPS and new coast guards to manage these threats.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Lambropoulos.

For two and a half minutes, we have Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Professor Perry, I'd like you to talk about the politicization of procurement. I'm thinking, among other things, of the F-35s. In 2015 we were told that there was a need for everything except F-35s, and then we heard otherwise.

I'm also thinking of the industrial and technological impacts. People in the field have told us that the criteria applied are often disconnected from the needs.

And in some ridings, defence enterprises receive more or fewer contracts, depending on election outcomes.

Is the military procurement system too politicized?

[*English*]

Dr. David Perry: In my opinion, the question of politicization is vastly overstated. There have absolutely been a few key programs in which negative political involvement slowed down the process of acquiring something. However, if you look across the whole basket of hundreds of different projects that national defence is trying to advance, I would imagine that most of the members on this committee couldn't name 90% of them. I don't know that I could name more than 50 or 60 if you forced me to do it.

Across the board, the impacts of politicization are vastly overstated. They've been very important and key on a couple of different projects, but there tends to be a lot more consensus around these things than we think. I just don't know that there's been enough consensus to collectively act to buy these things faster than we have in recent decades.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Could more neutral outside resources be used to support a more consensual decision? I'm thinking for example of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. It would lead to smoother military procurement decision-making for the various political parties.

● (1150)

[*English*]

Dr. David Perry: I'm not sure I caught the entire translation, but I think that bodies of Parliament, like the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the Auditor General of Canada, play a critical function. I think it's a good and needed thing that they are conducting regular studies on some of these big files. I don't know that the folks at National Defence always appreciate the extra scrutiny, but as an example, the Canadian surface combatant project is the single most expensive thing the Government of Canada is attempting to do, as far as I can tell, so I think it's entirely reasonable to review the budget and the costing for that every year or two.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Normandin.

We have Ms. Mathyssen for a very generous two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Lajeunesse, at the end of the last round I had, you were talking about the further investment or the welcome investment in terms of the Arctic and offshore patrol ships. We've heard before from committee witnesses that the increase in traffic, the increase in potential commercial tourism with the opening of the Arctic, is one of the issues the Arctic will have to deal with.

Could you comment in terms of investments in our coast guard and, when we think about the policing of that, whether we have what's adequate? I'm referring to the policing and international laws, as opposed to the militarization of it.

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: What is unique about the Arctic and offshore patrol vessels is that they are not warships per se. They're not frontline combatants. They were designed from the very beginning to be very versatile ships with an understanding that, in the Arctic, the navy is not going to be the lead actor; it's going to be a supporting actor.

What the AOPS bring to the table is a platform, a platform that can move around Fisheries and Oceans personnel, RCMP, Transport Canada or border services agents. These are large, capable, versatile ships that can serve as platforms for other government departments to do their jobs.

At the same time, they serve as our eyes and ears on the Arctic waters. They are able to access pretty much any area where any other ship, apart from heavy icebreakers, can go. As that activity you mentioned increases, the need for more situational awareness and the need to have more capability to respond in the event of an emergency are going to increase.

They are a good solution married up with increased aerial surveillance, satellite surveillance and potentially, down the road, subsurface surveillance as well.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathyssen.

Ms. Kramp-Neuman, you have five minutes, please.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Thank you.

I have several different questions in different directions. I'm going to start with Dr. Perry.

With regard to submarines, deterrence and protecting our northern approach, could you speak a bit more on that with regard to what you mentioned earlier, that if we don't have submarines, then we don't know who is in our waters?

Could you elaborate on that a little?

Dr. David Perry: Sure, and I'll use the opportunity to disagree with Dr. Lajeunesse a little about what they could do.

In our own north, we have a signals intelligence facility at Alert. We have a radar installation that provides the early warning for continental North America about inbound air threats through the North Warning System, and we have several forward operating locations for our fighter aircraft. Every one of those locations is a potential military target for any particular type of missile that could be fired against a target on land.

The Russians have advanced cruise missiles that can be deployed from either planes, surface ships or submarines, so a submarine could be in our waters doing various things. Among the things it could do would be trying to strike one of those military installations.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Next, we recognize that threats are real and worsen over time. You noted that earlier. With regard to upgrades for our NORAD North Warning System, we know it's a shared effort between Canada and the U.S., sixty-forty.

What are some of the factors you see that would go into the funding formula and negotiations, and do they help Canada's position when we are seen as a laggard on defence and when, as noted earlier, we have billions in lapsed spending? We're experiencing a personnel crisis, and we're failing to pull our weight in NATO and NORAD.

Going back to the question, what are some of the factors you see that could go into the funding formula?

● (1155)

Dr. David Perry: Okay, there's a lot in that.

From my understanding, that's been a historical cost-share, but it's not being considered today. My understanding is that the announcement this summer of upwards of $80 billion is all Canadian money. I'm not clear about exactly what in the American DOD investment space maps against that, so you could come up with some kind of ratio for what Canada is doing versus what the Americans are doing.

I think—as I was trying to enumerate earlier—there are a lot of great, Canadian-specific reasons for wanting to invest more in the defence of our country, our north individually as a country and in the context of North America. However, I definitely think there's an increasing allied focus on this, with our allies wanting to see us actually able to at least defend our own backyard better and, in a North American context, do so with our American allies.

There's an imperative for us to not just commit this money, but to spend it and get it out the door. I think you could point to various comments that have been made by the American ambassador to Canada, that they are looking to see what we can actually spend and buy, not just commit.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: That's perfect.

My last question is this. With regard to the F-35, we know we're in desperate need of modern fighter jets to contribute meaningfully to NORAD defence. After years of dragging out the competition, the government finally selected F-35s, but the contract still hasn't been signed.

We've heard from the commander of the air force that the RCAF added just one fighter pilot since 2020, so the numbers show that the personnel crisis extends to fighter pilots and maintainers. As a result, we're almost certainly lacking experienced fighter pilots to fly the F-35s, if and when we finally get them. It puts us at a serious disadvantage, in my opinion, in NORAD defence.

From your viewpoint, your perspective, what is it going to take to reconstitute our fighter jet personnel when we have pilots leaving for the private sector after receiving several years of expensive training?

Dr. David Perry: First, I'd say the fact that the commander of the air force said they got only one additional pilot in the last two years indicates to me that there's an existential crisis. It's a crisis if you can get only one pilot in at a time when the commercial aviation sector has experienced the worst collapse in its entire existence. I'm not sure how much more conducive an environment you could have to get new people in to fly military airplanes.

At this point the situation—not just with pilots but across the board with personnel at National Defence—is at such a crisis level that they need to rethink everything. The current intake time, as I understand it, between showing up at a recruiting centre and getting a job is months north of a year, which is an insane time frame given the current labour market.

I think there's a whole number of components, both in recruiting and initial training, as well as on a retention front, that need to be fundamentally rethought, because the system we have right now is not fit for purpose.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. That was a great question.

Mr. Fisher, you have the final five minutes.

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

Dr. Lajeunesse, I want to ask you a question about a paper you co-wrote, but before I do, I just want to get a little clarity. We talked a lot today about conflicting testimony, and I don't want to put words in your mouth.

You mentioned that Canada and NATO countries are not so vulnerable in the Arctic, that it's actually Russia that's vulnerable, and that anyone who is saying that Canada is vulnerable in the Arctic is playing into Russian narratives. Can you clarify if that's what you said and meant, and maybe provide a little elaboration of your thoughts in those comments?

I apologize if I didn't get them word for word.

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: Absolutely, and it is a different way of framing the issue.

To begin, Russia's vulnerability stems primarily from what it has in the Arctic. Unlike North America, Russia's economy is very closely tied to assets that are located in the Arctic. This goes back generations, and it's where that Russian insecurity stems from. The fact that it has a lot of very valuable, very vulnerable assets in the north is where that insecurity comes from.

The reason I'm saying North America is not as vulnerable is that simply put, there is no strategic centre of gravity in the North American Arctic. As Dr. Perry mentioned, there are several important targets in the Arctic, but their removal or their destruction would not fundamentally alter the Canadian economy or our ability to make war.

NATO's strength in the Arctic is also very commonly downplayed or underestimated. NATO's submarine fleets, which are the main vehicle for projecting power in the Arctic waters, are significant. They're large. They're technologically advanced. They're well trained. The Americans and the British never stopped going under the Arctic ice during the 1990s and 2000s, so that capability is very real.

NATO's aerospace power projection in the north is also, obviously, very significant, and as Finland and Sweden join the alliance, NATO's capability in the north, to my mind, will significantly outshine Russia's.

Another element we can't ignore is the fact that over the last 20 years, our assessment of Russian capability in the Arctic has been based on paper strength: what the Russians say they have, what we've seen there. As we've seen in Ukraine, so much of that paper strength is just not there. The Russian army and the Russian air force have been nowhere near as effective as we always expected they would be.

I question why we put so much stock in the Russian state narratives, which hold up Russia's Arctic power as this considerable dominating force, when every other element of its military has been shown to be something of a Potemkin village. I would just suggest we keep that in mind when we talk about the Arctic.

● (1200)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much. It's certainly very conflicting. I find it fascinating.

Let's go back to the article that you co-wrote, “Why China Is Not a Peer Competitor in the Arctic”, which you wrote with Ryan Dean and a previous witness, Dr. Lackenbauer. You wrote, “Arctic states rebuffed what Western commentators saw as an initial Chinese push to internationalize the circumpolar North in the late 2000s.”

Given the evolving relationship between Russia and China right now, how do you think they would co-operate or conflict on matters relating to the Arctic?

Dr. Adam Lajeunesse: There is no single framework that we can talk about. I think that's going to be on a case-by-case basis, whether it's governance or economic development. Russia does not want China further ingrained in Arctic governance. It has never wanted that, and it's going to continue to push back.

What Russia wants is a case-by-case, bilateral investment arrangement whereby China funds Russian resource projects. That is where Russia wants increased Chinese engagement, not in broader questions of governance or rule-making.

The Chair: That brings our second round of questioning to a close.

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank both of you for engaging, because this has been quite a stimulating back and forth. I think it informs us for this study in a way that we should be informed, namely that there are no monolithic opinions about how we should be dealing with our north.

I'm going to suspend for a moment or two while we invite our current guests to leave and we empanel our next guests.

With that, we're suspended.

● (1200)

_____(Pause)_____

● (1205)

The Chair: Okay, colleagues. We're back.

We have with us Brigadier-General Denis Boucher, director, general defence security, and I have an unwelcome call about duct cleaning as we speak.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I think I should put them on....

A voice: Tell them that your ducks are clean but your goose is dirty.

The Chair: That's what my brother says. He says, “I don't have problems with ducks; I have problems with geese.”

Anyway, this is a great way to introduce you, General Boucher.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: With that, we'll look forward to your five-minute statement, which hopefully will not involve either ducks or geese.

Thank you.

Brigadier-General Denis Boucher (Director General, Defence Security, Department of National Defence): Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thanks for the opportunity to speak with you today. I completely understand that call. I get the duct-cleaning advertisement on a regular basis, so you're not the only one, and I would be happy to speak about geese when we talk about hunting on a weekend, but that's not for today.

Sir and members of the panel, my name is Brigadier-General Denis Boucher. I am the director general of defence security and the chief security officer for the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence.

I have several responsibilities. I was appointed as a chief security officer by the deputy minister and the chief of the defence staff. As such, I am responsible for ensuring the security of the information, assets and members of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.

As the director general of defence security, I exercise overall responsibility for the leadership, development and management of the defence security program, and I am accountable to the vice chief of the defence staff, to the deputy minister and to the chief of the defence staff for the integrated management of the defence security program.

● (1210)

[*Translation*]

National Defence's security program includes elements of security management, planning, security-related risk management, monitoring and compliance, performance measurement and evaluation, in addition to integration with other departments.

Under the program, the Department of National Defence has policies and guidelines based on Treasury Board directives, and these govern the program. These cover the eight mandatory checks in the Treasury Board directive on security management.

Thank you once again, Mr. Chair, for having given me this opportunity to speak to the committee. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

We'll turn to Mr. Bezan.

Go ahead for six minutes.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and thank you, General Boucher, for joining us today.

We invited you here to discuss the story coming out of the U.K., that Canadian fighter pilots who have retired are being employed by a South African company that is directly training pilots from the People's Liberation Army in Beijing. Can you speak to that story and to what steps should have been taken by your staff in investigating that possibility?

BGen Denis Boucher: We are aware of the allegations, and obviously this matter is very concerning to us, because we take all matters with regard to security very seriously. We're aware of the allegations, but we know these are post-employment activities. These are former members of the Canadian Forces, so they don't fall within the jurisdiction of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Mr. James Bezan: Can you confirm that there are Canadian trainers or former RCAF fighter pilots working, as has been alleged?

BGen Denis Boucher: I can confirm that I have read media reports to that effect. I am not privy to any specifics with respect to who the individuals are, and I can't confirm those details with regard to the company. I'm not aware of the company in question, but we are aware of these allegations. We have referred the matter to our federal partners, and we'll make sure they receive the support they require should they wish to investigate these matters further.

Mr. James Bezan: With respect to retired fighter pilots and other personnel within the Canadian Armed Forces, you mentioned provisions under the National Defence Act. Are they also bound by the Security of Information Act?

BGen Denis Boucher: Members of the Canadian Armed Forces, while in service, are obviously bound by the National Defence Act as well as the Security of Information Act. In retirement, they are still bound by the provisions of the Security of Information Act; however, jurisdiction over that falls to our federal partners. The Canadian Forces and the Department of National Defence no longer have jurisdiction over retired members.

Mr. James Bezan: Do people of that level of training and know-how, with respect to warfare fighting and the tactics we as Canadians and members of NORAD and NATO employ, ever sign non-disclosure agreements?

BGen Denis Boucher: While in service, when a member is granted a security clearance, there are absolutely forms that they sign, acknowledging the responsibilities with regard to the Security of Information Act and the possible repercussions of any issue that could occur or any disclosure of that kind of information that would be not authorized.

They have to acknowledge those responsibilities under the Security of Information Act when they are granted a security clearance. Prior to release, they have to sign a disclosure form again. That reminds them of their obligations under the Security of Information Act. That is the last time we would have any jurisdiction over them.

Mr. James Bezan: If any former member of the Canadian Armed Forces that had that level of security clearance signed those non-disclosure agreements but then went out and trained the forces of our adversaries, would you, in your mind, see that as a breach of their obligations, both under legislation as well as under legal documents like non-disclosure agreements?

BGen Denis Boucher: I think it's sort of a speculative question. I don't know the details with regard to the type of employment these members may have had. Again, these are allegations. I haven't seen anything specific with regard to that.

If there is anything that would come to light in that they would have disclosed any classified information, again, that falls to our federal partners to investigate and follow up on. It's very difficult to know what kind of information they could have shared, and it would be totally speculative on my part.

● (1215)

Mr. James Bezan: Okay.

Do you believe that fighter pilots we have currently serving and those who formerly served are targets by malign foreign actors as individuals that they've tried to hire away—as you know, in a lot of cases, money talks—to advance their own interests?

BGen Denis Boucher: Again, this would be a bit of a speculative question from my perspective. It definitely does not fall within the purview of my office. I would have to speculate on whether or not it would be of interest. I would think that any former military member potentially could be of interest, but that doesn't necessarily mean people will be hired.

We trust our members, the Canadian Forces, certainly while they're serving, in their obligations. One would like to think that when they retire, some of that loyalty remains with them.

As a 34-year member of the Canadian Forces, I can tell you that once I retire I'm not about to turn my back on Canada for money. I would like to think a lot of our members would do the same thing.

Mr. James Bezan: You talk about “federal partners” for investigating those who may have been lured away, as we've seen in the media reports. Who are those federal partners? What type of role do you think they're playing, if these individuals are located out of the country?

BGen Denis Boucher: I don't necessarily speak with the federal partners personally, based on my role, but the federal partners we are in contact with would be the Department of Justice. They would have to look at the investigation, presumably from the RCMP perspective. That's where we would be going. That's all I can speak to on this point.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. May, you have six minutes.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the witness for being here.

I'm listening very closely to Mr. Bezan's questions, and I think this is going to get really repetitive really quickly, but I have a few maybe more elaborative questions here to allow you to speak in more detail to some of these questions.

Can you speak to how the Security of Information Act, the National Defence Act and the code of service discipline apply to members of the armed forces in terms of the security of information?

BGen Denis Boucher: That's a fairly broad question. I will not try to delve into the details of the legal aspect of the legislation that governs our protection of this information.

What I can tell you is that as we have members recruited into the Canadian Forces, we go through a reliability screening as the first element of their recruiting, and that does the background check. We do things like credit checks, criminal record checks and the like. As we move through, depending on the type of employment they will have and the requirements for security clearances, we also do a security clearance verification, which delves further into their background and will start looking into elements such as loyalty.

That's how we screen our members. That's how we end up giving them security clearances over time, and those security clearances evolve throughout the duration of their career, based on the needs of their employment. That falls within my purview as the director general of defence security. We look at all personnel security issues. The application of those acts and the obligations of members are understood by members, as they have to sign that disclosure agreement, as was mentioned earlier.

Mr. Bryan May: Again, what obligations carry over after a member of CAF is released? How is compliance monitored following release? Is compliance monitored following release?

BGen Denis Boucher: The obligations under the Security of Information Act carry over after release. You are not allowed to disclose classified information to anyone who has not been authorized to be in possession of that information. This being said, they are no longer within the jurisdiction of the Canadian Armed Forces, so we, the Canadian Forces, cannot follow up with or investigate those members.

As allegations come to light, obviously, we are concerned. We look into these things, but with our federal partners.

● (1220)

Mr. Bryan May: You mentioned in your opening remarks that the defence security program includes elements of security governance, planning, management of security risks and integration with other government departments.

Can you elaborate on how the Canadian Armed Forces—DND, specifically—work with those other government departments to manage security risk, particularly with respect to the security of information?

BGen Denis Boucher: Certainly.

As the director general of defence security and the chief security officer, I am in regular contact with chief security officers of other government departments. Every government department has a CSO who is designated, and we're all largely responsible for similar types of responsibilities internal to our own government departments. Some departments, such as defence, are much larger than others.

We share information with regard to personnel security screening, because members of the public service can transfer between departments, and members of the Canadian Armed Forces can leave the forces and be hired as public servants elsewhere. We'll exchange information there. We're integrated with the RCMP, for example, from a criminal records check perspective, and we exchange information as required there.

Those kinds of things would be areas. I don't know if that answers your question.

Mr. Bryan May: It does.

You talked a bit about the federal partners you would work with in this scenario. I think you mentioned justice. For the record, the Department of National Defence would not be the agency conducting any of these investigations. Is that fair to say?

BGen Denis Boucher: Yes. That is correct.

Members of the Canadian Forces are under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Forces and the Department of National Defence only until such time as they retire. Once they retire, they're Canadian citizens. They're civilians, as much as any other Canadian citizen would be, and they are no longer under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Armed Forces.

The only exception that could potentially happen is if somebody had caused an offence or had been investigated for and charged with an offence for a time when they were in uniform. You're responsible for as long as you are in uniform. Post-retirement, you could potentially be investigated for any activity that would have taken place before you retired, and there would be room there.

In this case, I would suggest, based on these allegations, that these are members who had retired and who were sought for employment after the fact. That would not have been something internal to defence, and we would not have jurisdiction.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. May.

Madame Normandin, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much for coming to this committee meeting, Brigadier-General Boucher.

I'd like to expand on my colleague Mr. May's questions.

You mentioned that when pilots retired from the army, you no longer had any authority over them. But they still had all the information obtained when they were soldiers. I have several questions for you.

As responsibility for the investigation lies more with CSIS and the RCMP, isn't it more difficult, in a way, to spot a real risk that these pilots might, for example, have given military information to the Chinese authorities?

Would it have been appropriate to include defence in the investigation to have a better understanding of how a similar situation could become a threat, rather than simply try to find culprits?

BGen Denis Boucher: Thank you for your question.

It's true that the agencies conducting the investigation will benefit from what we know. That's why we're working with them. We are not conducting the investigation as such. If our partners need information from us, then of course we'll be co-operative.

At the Department of National Defence, and within the Canadian Armed Forces, we take security very seriously. We naturally see to security for our members, and we take our responsibilities for the defence of Canada very seriously. We are prepared to collaborate with our partners in other federal departments to assess the risk to our information, our members and our defence.

That said, a pilot receives all kinds of information, some more sensitive than others. I would say that knowledge about flying an aircraft is not necessarily sensitive information. What might become sensitive would be things like tactics that a pilot could use.

I'm not a pilot, so I'm only speculating, but there are lots of possibilities.

● (1225)

Ms. Christine Normandin: In connection with these tactics, is there a risk, or at least, do you assess potential risks that military strategies other than Canada's, such as NATO's, might have been disclosed to Chinese pilots?

BGen Denis Boucher: There are always risks of that kind. Our pilots often co-operate with our NATO allies, whether within a Canadian unit, on an exchange, or with other allies. We share our allies' concerns about these allegations. There is always the possibility that information can be disclosed. Some of the tactics and measures we use with our allies, however, are published on the Internet and anyone can access them.

In any event, once again, before leaving the forces, all members of the Canadian Forces must make a solemn declaration concerning their obligations under the Security of Information Act.

Former members are aware of these obligations and know they may be investigated and sanctioned if they do not comply.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

You mentioned that pilots had information about how to fly an aircraft, but also information that in some instances might be more important. For example, they are aware of standard operating procedures. Some newspaper articles mentioned that this could be a gold mine for Chinese pilots. Could you talk to us about that?

Is there information that could be extremely useful to Chinese pilots?

BGen Denis Boucher: All I can do is speculate, because I'm obviously not an expert in this field. My expertise right now is in administering the National Defence security program.

However, we place our trust in our members, including those who have retired, and believe they will continue to comply with their obligations under the Security of Information Act. We are hoping that the former pilots in question protected the information. Once the investigation being carried out by our federal partners has been completed, we'll know what they may have disclosed.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

You mentioned that there was already some information available online. However, there are also manuals handed out to military personnel, such as B-GL documents.

To your knowledge, has strategic military information of this kind ever been acquired by the Russians and the Chinese other than from pilots?

BGen Denis Boucher: I can only speculate.

Many of the documents you mentioned, such as B-GL manuals on tactics and military doctrine, are freely available online.

However, when members leave the Canadian Armed Forces and have made a solemn declaration concerning their obligations under the Security of Information Act, they also return any documents that may contain sensitive or secret information. They are required to confirm on the form that all information of this kind in their possession has been returned. Of course,we're not allowed to keep secret documents at home, and are only allowed to have access to such published documents in our working environment.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

[*English*]

Ms. Mathyssen, you have six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Thank you so much, Brigadier-General, for appearing today.

I'm hoping you can provide a bit more context. You already spoke about the variety of Canadian acts and laws that are supposed to provide for the protection of military information sharing by retired forces members.

Can you compare those with what the U.K. has in place?

● (1230)

BGen Denis Boucher: I'm not aware of all the policies the U.K. or the U.S. would have in place. We are in regular contact, and we compare policies and procedures with our allied partners, because it is best practice to do so and to constantly revise our practices.

We have a number of policies in place. The U.K. has a number of policies in place for protection of information that I am aware of. I am not aware of the details there. I'm sorry.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Is there a comparison to be made, because it has been verified that there are U.K. pilots involved with this company? Is there any way to make comparisons in terms of that legal obligation after military service?

BGen Denis Boucher: I would say there are ways the obligations could be compared, but I think that becomes a question that is a bit outside of my area of expertise. When we're starting to talk about the actual detail, the legal detail of the Security of Information Act, which is a legislative document, I would tend to want to refer that to legal authorities. I certainly am far from a legal authority myself.

I suspect those countries' policies and laws governing the secrecy or security of their information would be very similar to ours. We tend to protect information along the same lines, and that's why we're in such close partnerships with those countries in particular.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Thank you so much.

If I could just shift, there's been a suggestion, of course, that a lot of this is about money and the seeking of very advantageous contracts. I guess this falls more under Veterans Affairs and maybe is less directly relevant to DND and the CAF, but do you ultimately believe that if we were to try to provide far more programming, far more opportunities for veterans to exit out into the private sector or after service employment...? Are we doing a good enough job in that as the Government of Canada? Should we be focusing more on veterans' pensions?

What are your thoughts on that?

BGen Denis Boucher: This is, I think, a bit of a speculative question. I will speak as an individual who is at 34 years of service, and thus clearly much closer to retirement than to my recruitment, thus it's obviously something that's near and dear to my heart. I think it's really important, from our perspective, to be able to offer employment opportunities to former Canadian Forces members.

I'm not going to speak to services that Veterans Affairs offers, because at present I'm thankfully not in receipt of those services, but our country is one that I believe respects greatly the service of its members. We are certainly in a better position today in terms of services offered to our members by Veterans Affairs. I would suggest that we could always benefit from increased services, but everybody will always ask for more. I think there are lots of opportunities for employment, and any assistance we can get in terms of offering employment to our veterans is certainly well received from both those in uniform and those who previously wore the uniform.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: As for how we move forward from what potential military information or skills information has been leaked or divulged, is there consideration in our future procurement and the contracts—I think of the F-35, for example, as it relates to the pilots that we need to be in consideration of—as we negotiate that final contract?

BGen Denis Boucher: We're constantly looking at the policies we have in place and updating those policies to ensure that we have best practices, in concert with other federal departments and also with our allies, and to ensure that we protect that information.

With regard to the F-35, we are obviously interested in finding out whether or not we will acquire that aircraft for the Canadian Forces. We have a number of allied partners who are already operators of those aircraft, and there are specific security considerations around those aircraft that will speak to and contribute to the strengthening of certain policies, or to examining our policies to see if there are gaps anywhere that need to be filled to ensure that we can protect that information as well as possible.

● (1235)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathyssen.

We're about to embark on the second round. Colleagues, I'll just remind you that the motion that was adopted was that the committee undertake a study into reports that former RCAF pilots have undertaken employment to train members of the People's Liberation Army Air Force. We are wandering a fair bit afield here. I'm not going to call relevance, but it is a narrow casting of a study.

With that, five minutes go to Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Brigadier-General Boucher.

Here is my first question. Can you speak to the 50% reduction in experienced fighter pilots that we've had since 2015?

BGen Denis Boucher: I'm afraid I cannot speak to that at all. It's outside of my area of expertise, and that's probably the first time I have heard that number.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: That's fair enough.

With regard to your earlier testimony, my concern is that we can't have it both ways. On the one hand, I understand you're taking this issue seriously, but on the other, you're referring to the Department of Justice for investigations. It seems as though it's a double-edged sword. Can you speak to that?

BGen Denis Boucher: Certainly.

The challenge we have in this space is that obviously these are retired Canadian Armed Forces members. We take our security obligations incredibly seriously within defence. Obviously that is my role in terms of reinforcing the security program: training, awareness and obligations of members under the Security of Information Act. These are things that are important to us. We need to consider how we can best protect our obligations to ensure the defence of Canada and the security of our members.

When members retire from the Canadian Armed Forces, they become civilians, like any other Canadian civilian. They fall under the jurisdiction of those federal partners.

This being said, if the federal partners decide they want to investigate any allegations that are out there, and they come to us to find out any information that could assist them with their investigation, we will of course work with those federal partners to ensure that they can best investigate and inform their investigation to determine what next steps would be taken.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you.

Here is my next question. Can you confirm if you are aware that the Canadian Armed Forces have court-martialled retired generals in the past?

BGen Denis Boucher: I am not personally aware of that at all, no. It definitely does not fall within my purview, so I am not aware of that.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you.

To my next question, considering the clearly obvious personnel catastrophe that we have in the military right now, do you understand or believe that the DND has the resources to monitor the threats we're speaking about at this committee right now?

BGen Denis Boucher: It's a bit of a speculative question. We don't monitor retired members, per se. That is not the purview of the Canadian Forces. We do not watch over Canadian citizens. It's not our purview to do so. Collection of information on Canadian citizens is not our purview.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you very much for that.

BGen Denis Boucher: From my perspective as the DGDS, I'm responsible for ensuring we have a security program in place to protect our information, protect our members and protect Canada.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you.

I'm going to split my time with Mr. Bezan.

The Chair: You have a little over a minute.

Mr. James Bezan: The name of the company that is training the Chinese pilots and allegedly also has Canadians training Chinese pilots from the People's Liberation Army Air Force is the Test Flying Academy of South Africa. In a statement they've put out, they highlight that their training "is also available from other civilian contractors including organisations based in the United States, Canada, and European jurisdictions."

Knowing they are training pilots from the People's Liberation Army Air Force, knowing there's the story of Canadians providing that training, would you be aware of which Canadian organization would be subcontracted to provide that training to the Test Flying Academy of South Africa?

● (1240)

BGen Denis Boucher: I am not aware of the name of any Canadian company that would potentially be providing that training. It's certainly not within my area of expertise, and as an army officer, I'm certainly not—

Mr. James Bezan: General, you said that you have responsibility for the enforcement under the National Defence Act of the sections that applied to the security of information and making sure members who are currently serving—and it applies to those who formerly have served—honour those commitments to ensure that their classifications and the information they know aren't shared with adversaries.

BGen Denis Boucher: I did indicate that I have responsibilities with regard to that. I have responsibilities with regard to that for serving members. As members retire, they are just Canadian citizens, and National Defence has no jurisdiction over those members. That jurisdiction then falls to our federal partners, and it is up to them.

On your question related to a specific Canadian company, I don't know that company at all. You asked if I did, and I do not.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

Madam Lambropoulos, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank General Boucher for being with us today to answer some of our questions. I know a lot of them are quite repetitive. There's only so much you can say, and there's only so much that the armed forces have jurisdiction over, from what I understand, in terms of retired soldiers.

This is one of my questions. Of course, loyalty plays a really big role here, the fact that it is each person's responsibility, really, to make sure they don't divulge information that was protected information.

Can you tell us a bit about the process that exists to educate CAF members about their obligations both during and after their service? Is it known to them that, once they retire, this is not supposed to be something they do? Of course it should be common sense, but is there a specific process in place, and can you speak to that?

BGen Denis Boucher: I can absolutely speak to that. What I can tell you is that throughout a member's service, right from the start of basic training, we start to inculcate those values that are important not only to Canadian society but also to the Canadian Armed Forces, in terms of our values and ethics.

We speak to the integrity and security of information with respect to what we deal with, and it's a bit of a lifelong or career-long effort to continue to reinforce those values, to reinforce our obligations for security as members gradually work their way through different areas of responsibility and as they're afforded security clearances and the opportunity to treat and handle information that may be classified to different levels.

Members are informed of their obligations under the Security of Information Act. They're reminded of that as we renew security clearances periodically over time. A clearance lasts a certain number of years based on what kind it is. As those security clearances are updated or upgraded, again we have opportunities to disclose their obligations under the Security of Information Act and again, as I mentioned earlier, when members release, we have them fill out a specific form that requires them to acknowledge their obligations under the Security of Information Act as they retire. That's the final reminder, before they become regular Canadian citizens, that they must protect this information because it's important not only for the security of our members of the Canadian Forces but also for the security of Canada.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: That's right, and because it's so important to the security of Canada, of course, do you think—and I'm not sure you are able to give us your own opinions on such things—or is there anything you see, given that you know the system quite well, that could be improved in order to make sure the allegations we are hearing about don't happen in the future?

I understand that your jurisdiction ends once they retire, and that then you work with your federal partners, including the justice department. What else do you think could be done after the fact, once they have retired, to ensure that the information is protected?

● (1245)

BGen Denis Boucher: Throughout our careers, we have this repeated to us. The great thing about military training is that you never get it only once; you tend to get it multiple times throughout your career. These are the kinds of things we're trying to ensure we have in terms of values.

Loyalty is obviously a critical value for the Canadian Forces. We regularly have professional development sessions and different courses, throughout the different ranks, that will reinforce the values we hold dear. Those values are informed by Canadian society. They're the values we subscribe to as members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and security of information is one of those things that obviously we take very seriously.

From my perspective—I mean, you're asking for a bit of an opinion—I'm a member of the Canadian Forces and have been for 34 years. It is the kind of thing that has been effectively repeated to me for those 34 years.

I'm a proud Canadian citizen, and obviously I would not want to do anything that would potentially harm Canada and our citizens. We're incredibly fortunate to live in this country. I'd like to think that the messages we continue to push to our members, as we discuss and have opportunities to exchange with regard to those values and our obligations, bring that sense of belonging, that vocation. The loyalty is drilled in so that members would never want, even outside of uniform, to potentially harm Canada.

This being said, our policies and our procedures and our training are all in place, and we constantly look to update those things to ensure we keep repeating those messages. These are the kinds of things that, based on these allegations, we will probably continue to repeat, to ensure that members understand those obligations.

The Chair: We have to leave it there.

Ms. Normandin, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Once more, thank you very much Brigadier-General Boucher.

You mentioned that the defence department was collaborating with the authorities handling the investigation. I'm wondering whether this investigation also works in the other direction with a view to protecting our current pilots.

I'll give you an example of something I have thought of and would like to put it to you as a question.

Could the investigators give you information about the Canadian pilots who are training Chinese pilots? For example, they might inform you about how long they served in the armed forces, what kinds of aircraft they flew, and their knowledge of shortcomings in certain types of aircraft, with a view to protecting current pilots. They could be told what information the Chinese have in their possession, asked to put things right, or even make a number of strategy changes to protect pilots currently serving in the armed forces.

Is this the kind of collaboration you have?

BGen Denis Boucher: Thank you for your question, Ms. Normandin.

I believe that all we have at the moment are allegations. I don't know what kind of information the investigation will turn up, or even whether it will reveal details of this kind.

That kind of information would certainly be useful to us. Once we knew the names of these members, or their previous activities, we could determine how they can be protected, and whether our pilots are being exposed to any risks.

We are always concerned about the security of every one of our members, in addition to the security of Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence information.

We are working closely with our federal partners to protect the security of Canadians.

Ms. Christine Normandin: I don't know if I have enough time to ask my question.

Without knowing any specific details about the nature of the training Canadian pilots could be giving to Chinese pilots, have any steps already been taken by the Department of National Defence to protect current pilots?

BGen Denis Boucher: Thank you for your question, Ms. Normandin.

As it happens, we don't know much about the allegations or the preliminary investigation.

However, the security and protection of our members is a top priority in the armed forces.

Our measures are already very robust in terms of security for our members, security checks on the information they have, their knowledge and their ongoing loyalty to the Canadian Forces. So I don't think we will be asked to strengthen our measures at this time.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there.

Ms. Mathyssen, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Looking at the larger picture on this, do you believe we are doing enough to combat the right-wing radicalization of some former military members? We heard, unfortunately, that there were potentially some links between former military members and the convoy that attacked Ottawa this past winter.

Do you think the government needs to focus more on preventing a lot of that radicalization?

● (1250)

The Chair: We are really straying from the motion and the reason General Boucher was invited here.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: It's my time, though.

The Chair: You are inviting him into a realm of speculation—

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: The whole motion is a realm of speculation.

The Chair: —that is very interesting. I'd be interested in his answer, but I feel that it is a bit beyond....

Where I'm going to leave it, General Boucher, is that you're invited to answer, but I will understand it if you decline.

BGen Denis Boucher: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would have to agree with your comment. It's definitely a speculative answer that I would have to give. It's nowhere near where I should be straying at this point. I believe it's not within my purview to answer that.

The Chair: It was a great question.

Go ahead.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: That was my only question.

The Chair: That was your only question. Okay.

We're finally with Ms. Gallant.

You have five minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

General, on what date did you refer the news story to your security partners for investigation?

BGen Denis Boucher: I'm afraid I don't know what date that would have been referred to security partners. That's not within the purview of my responsibilities as director general of defence security.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Would you please follow up with this committee regarding the date it was referred?

Have any of the security agencies come to the defence department for more information?

BGen Denis Boucher: Yes, we will return to you with a date. Absolutely.

I can't speak to what agencies have currently contacted us at present, if that's the question. I'm not sure when that would have taken place. That's not within my purview per se, but I know that we have been in contact.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Would you kindly provide us with the answer to the question of which security agencies have come to the defence department for more information?

Which is the lead agency on this investigation?

BGen Denis Boucher: I'm not sure which is the lead agency on the investigation. It falls within the purview of the Department of Justice. Again, I'm not aware of who would be the lead investigator for that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Is it the RCMP, or is it CSIS? Who is investigating this? Which agency is it?

BGen Denis Boucher: I'm afraid it would be speculation on my part to say who it is. I would assume it is the RCMP, but I do not know that for certain. It's outside of my area of expertise.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We know soldiers have trained members of the PRC on Arctic warfare at Base Petawawa. Has our air force participated in any exercises with the PRC pilots present at the exercises?

BGen Denis Boucher: I'm not aware of whether or not we've had pilots present during those exercises. In fact, I was not aware that we had done Arctic training with them before this week.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Would you find out the answer to that question, please, and provide it to the committee?

In October 2019, members of the CAF participated in the world military games in Wuhan. Did any members of the air force compete?

BGen Denis Boucher: I do not know if any members of the air force.... I would assume they probably did, because the Canadian Armed Forces sent a team, but I do not know for certain. We can check and confirm that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What safeguards would have been put in place to ensure that our competitors in that games event were shielded from incursions into the information and electronics that our military would be carrying to those games?

BGen Denis Boucher: At this point, it would be a bit of speculation on my part, because I don't know what measures were taken. I would expect that the measures were briefings on the intelligence concerns around being in the People's Republic of China, and that would—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: General, I'm wondering what was done to shield them from incursions by the PRC, given that they were in one of their camps.

● (1255)

BGen Denis Boucher: Right. As I was trying to say, the briefings that normally take place will inform them about their obligations to protect their information, if they're....

For the most part, when we travel to China, even as a member who is on leave.... If you're going there as a tourist, you tend to be discouraged from bringing your electronic devices, because of the potential risk that is there. I've even seen in open source media that members should be careful when they bring their telephone to China.

That would have taken place, but there wouldn't necessarily have been any specific shielding. There would have been information sessions. There wouldn't necessarily have been members bringing any of their work communications devices. It would have been only personal communications devices, but there would have been security briefings to that effect.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Employees from other departments are subject to the official secrets act for life. Are there any members or any ranks of the Canadian Armed Forces that are also subject to the terms of the official secrets act for life?

BGen Denis Boucher: The provisions of the Security of Information Act continue. Your obligations to the Security of Information Act continue as a military member even in retirement. It's just a matter of the jurisdiction thereof.

All members of the Canadian Forces are subject to the Security of Information Act, and we remain subject to the provisions of the Security of Information Act even in retirement, but again, our jurisdiction as the Canadian Armed Forces ends with retirement.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gallant.

Mr. Fisher, you have the final five minutes.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much, General.

General, you talked about loyalty—loyalty built over decades. You spoke about your 34 years. I can hear the pride in your voice, and I want to thank you for your service.

I also want to say that I—and Canadians, I think—certainly have an absolute trust in our Canadian Armed Forces, and I suspect that follows through to Canadian veterans as well.

We've used the word “speculative” a lot today. We don't know of an individual. We don't know if this is actually happening. We know that we saw it in a report, and this committee takes it seriously because there's a report out there, but we really don't know. We don't have the answers.

I appreciate your being here today. You're kind of thrown in front of the wolves because you don't have the answers to a media report that has or has not been proven.

With respect to Ms. Mathyssen's question about radicalization, I actually do think it's relevant. Why else would a Canadian veteran—if it even occurred—consider training a Chinese pilot with Canadian intelligence? I actually think it's relevant, and I want to know if the Canadian Armed Forces is looking at radicalization within its members.

The Chair: If I've said that Ms. Mathyssen's question is not relevant and that it is a realm of speculation from Ms. Mathyssen, it is similarly speculation for Mr. Fisher, although I think his phrasing might have been a little more elegant.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: You're invited to answer the question.

BGen Denis Boucher: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Would you like me to take a crack at that or just deny—

Voices: Oh, oh!

BGen Denis Boucher: [*Inaudible—Editor*] answer that one as well.

The Chair: That's why you're the Brigadier-General. You get to decide.

BGen Denis Boucher: That's outstanding, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

What I can tell you is that inside of defence it has always been the case that we are looking in terms of the security of Canadian Forces members and Canadian society at large. That is our role—to defend Canadian citizens and Canada—so any concerns with regard to radicalization are of concern.

There obviously have been reports out there that speak to the potential for members to have been radicalized inside, but all of you are also certainly aware of the significant efforts inside defence to ensure that we root out any potential for concerns around this space while trying to ensure that we espouse the values of the Canadian Forces to the greatest extent possible.

Mr. Darren Fisher: With my final time, General, thank you for that answer. I know these questions are all sort of touching on the same topics, and you're phrasing your responses a bit differently for each of us, but can you elaborate for our committee on procedures that are in place to protect sensitive CAF information?

BGen Denis Boucher: Certainly.

In terms of procedures, we have a number of policies in place with regard to all manner of security, whether that be industrial security, physical security, personnel security or the security of information, information technology and information management. All of those come into play. Depending on the type of information you're dealing with, or the type of security in particular that you're dealing with, there are different measures in place.

Training is primordial here. It's about ensuring people understand the sensitivity of the information or the equipment they're dealing with and their obligations under the Security of Information Act, because in the end, regardless of the type of security we're dealing with, it has to do with information. As members leave the Canadian Forces, they don't leave with hard copies of the information that is out there, so it's really what resides within their memory banks, their internal memory banks, if you will, with regard to how they do that.

Ensuring that we train them appropriately with regard to how sensitive it is to protect the information, that's where we go in terms of protecting that information, and we remind them of those obligations throughout their career. Then, in the very last days of their career, as they actually retire, they have an obligation to fill out disclosure forms that remind them of their obligations under the Security of Information Act.

I'm not sure if that answers your question.

● (1300)

Mr. Darren Fisher: It provides a level of comfort. [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

BGen Denis Boucher: I'm sorry, but that was cut off there.

Mr. Darren Fisher: It provides us with a bit of comfort in this committee. I want to thank you again for your 30 years of service and your loyalty to the Canadian Armed Forces.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

I see a waving hand from Mr. Bezan, so before I ask General Boucher to leave, Mr. Bezan, go ahead.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, based upon today's testimony and also information that's been coming to light today, including from the Sunday Guardian, which is suggesting that there are also Canadian companies in Canada training fighter pilots from the People's Liberation Army, I'd like to move the following motion:

That in our current study of former Royal Canadian Air Force pilots having undertaken employment to train members of the People's Liberation Army Air Force, we invite CANLink Aviation, which operates Moncton Flight College, and other flight schools in Canada that may be training pilots from the People's Liberation Army, to appear at committee.

The Chair: Okay. The motion, in my judgment, is properly on the floor. It relates to the subject matter that is on the floor. We are, however, running out of time. I'll recognize Ms. Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: You saw me coming, Mr. Chair.

I'd like a copy of the motion in French, please.

[*English*]

The Chair: I missed what you said.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: All I want is a copy of the motion in French.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, we'll need a copy in French, please.

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: As we know by the rules, Mr. Chair, we can move motions during committee if they are relevant to the subject matter at hand. That is what I have done. It's not a written motion. It's an oral motion, and I would hope that interpretation would have caught it.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. May.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you.

I appreciate the motion that's been brought forward. However, I, and I'm sure most of us, have not seen the information that Mr. Bezan may have. It's hard for me to vote on a motion based on information that we haven't had a chance to review.

I'm wondering if maybe we can discuss this in a committee-business situation.

The Chair: We can. I'm running up against the clock here.

The motion is properly before us. It is a debatable motion. It doesn't have to be about official languages at this point, because it's not a written motion.

Having said that, I would entertain a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Bryan May: We can save it for another time.

The Chair: I know, but we could...

Mr. James Bezan: I'd be more than happy to defer debate on this until the next committee meeting.

The Chair: That's fine. Is everyone good with that?

With that, I want to thank General Boucher again for this unusual hour. We appreciate your contribution to the committee's study.

With that, colleagues, we are adjourned.