HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

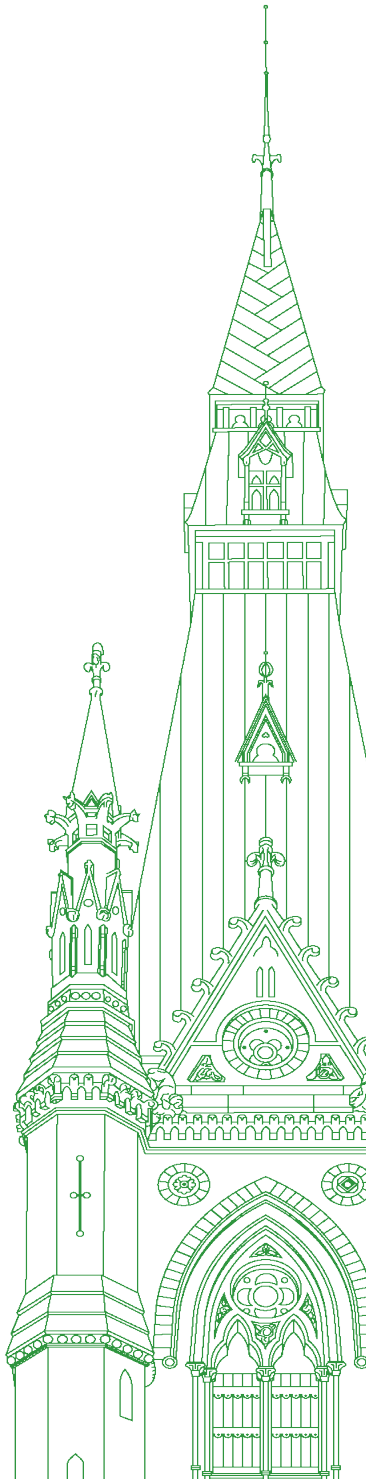
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on National Defence

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 056

Friday, April 21, 2023



Chair: The Honourable John McKay

Standing Committee on National Defence

Friday, April 21, 2023

● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

We have two items of business before we get to our witnesses, colleagues. The subcommittee report was distributed to you yesterday. Can I have someone move it?

An hon. member: I so move.

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We also need a short budget for this meeting, which may or may not go over to a second meeting.

Can I have somebody move that study budget?

An hon. member: I so move.

The Chair: Is there any discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: With that, we will deal with items of business. At the end of the second hour, I want to bring you up to date on where we are with a variety of small issues, so I may pause the meeting about five minutes early.

With that, we have witnesses who have become quite familiar to this committee, and we're very thankful for them. We appreciate all of you making yourselves available to the committee.

Kerry Buck is a senior fellow of the Canadian Forces College and the University of Ottawa graduate school of international affairs, and is the former ambassador to NATO.

From the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, we have Ihor Michalchyshyn, as well as Orest Zakydalsky, who is senior policy adviser.

All of you are familiar with this committee, so I don't need to give you any instructions. We'll start with Ms. Buck for five minutes.

Go ahead, please.

Ms. Kerry Buck (As an Individual): Thank you very much, Chair.

I thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before this committee in person, which is a novelty for me now.

I'm appearing as an individual and I'll speak to you entirely from a personal perspective and provide a personal analysis based on my 30 years of experience in international security.

I'll focus on two aspects of the war: first, how the war has evolved over the past year and where I think we are now, and second, what the challenges or the risks are in months ahead for Ukraine, NATO and NATO allies like Canada.

The past 14 months of the war have been a surprise in many ways. Many commentators, myself included, were surprised that President Putin would choose to launch a full-scale war against Ukraine. I could not understand why it was in Russia's self-interest to do so. I do think that one of the reasons Putin launched the war was that he thought NATO was weakened and that the west would have neither a strong nor a unified response. Putin was surprised. The reaction of NATO has been more robust, more coherent and more supportive of Ukraine than Putin expected and than I hoped for.

The war on Ukraine, as wars go, is still relatively young. Let me walk through how I see the evolution of the war since it first began in February 2022. It's been through a few phases.

The initial phase, as we know, when Putin and many western commentators thought Russia would do well militarily, do it rapidly and even be able to replace President Zelenskyy's government very quickly, was short-lived, which was another welcome surprise, and I'm glad.

The next phase was marked by a period of Ukrainian successes and rapid gains made possible by the resolve of Ukrainian troops, the inspirational Ukrainian leadership and the mobilization of Ukrainian citizens. Without taking anything away from Ukraine's extraordinary effort, western support was also a crucial part of the successful outcome. In particular, the training effort after 2014 by Canada, the U.K. and others was key, as was the early policy shift to provide lethal weaponry.

The third phase of the war started around 10 months ago, and we're still in it. Russia started to concentrate its troops and artillery to the south and east of the country, focusing on consolidating and expanding its control of the Donbass and on creating a buffer around Crimea.

At the time, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said he expected the war to last a very long time, and I'm afraid he was right.

Here we are today, 14 months after a brutal Russian attempt to invade all of Ukraine, with millions of Ukrainians displaced, tens of thousands of casualties and umpteen thousands of civilians murdered. Ukrainian critical infrastructure and cultural heritage have been destroyed, countless war crimes have been committed, and Russia has been under heavy sanctions, which are, in a way, some of the heaviest ones imposed on any country since World War II.

The fighting continues, and a new counteroffensive is being launched in what promises to be a grinding ground war, I think, along a 600-mile front. It looks like this conflict will last a long time.

Where do I think the international community, NATO and allies such as Canada need to focus in the months ahead? There are a few areas.

First, the maintenance of international support for Ukraine will be crucial, both in terms of political support as well as logistics. From my perspective, President Putin has more people to throw at the war in Ukraine and less to lose. He's shown a disregard for the fate of Russian soldiers and a propensity to use them as cannon fodder. A long, grinding war of attrition is in Russia's interest and in fact may be their strategy. They've said as much publicly, hoping to see support from the west start to crumble.

What do NATO and NATO allies need to do? NATO needs to put in place a longer-term strategic plan to provide weaponry and other support to Ukraine. For the past year, the rhythm of support to Ukraine has been marked by President Zelenskyy asking for something specific and then allies moving—sometimes quickly, sometimes more slowly—to find what is needed, to provide the training and to get it into theatre. This is different from a strategic plan that ensures a steady flow of predictable support. To achieve this allied defence, production and procurement need to be stepped up. Ukraine is burning through ammunition and weaponry faster than the west can provide it.

Most crucial, Ukraine's military needs to meet NATO standards. It provides a significant deterrent to Russia going forward. During the war and after the war, we need to work to wean Ukraine away from Soviet-era equipment and toward full NATO interoperability.

● (0850)

In terms of political support for Ukraine, I'll just say that this will take a lot of continuing diplomacy. We're already starting to see some NATO allies put positions on the table that are different—Hungary and Turkey—but it's not just about NATO; it's about creating broader worldwide cross-regional support not only to isolate Russia but to put pressure on Russia. That will involve talking to some countries whose positioning is perhaps less palatable to us, but they will be useful interlocutors with Russia.

Finally, another question that I expect will be high in the agenda of the Vilnius NATO summit is Ukraine's future relationship with NATO. There, what I expect is a very vigorous debate but no final conclusions. Will Ukraine be offered formal security guarantees? Will there be a clear path to NATO membership, with concrete steps, or will it be something interim until allies see where the war ends up?

I'll leave it at that point. In the question-and-answer period, we can look at some of the other areas in security and defence where Canada could help.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

From the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, do we have Mr. Michalchyshyn?

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky (Senior Policy Advisor, Ukrainian Canadian Congress): Thank you. I'll split my time with my colleague, but I'll begin.

Again, thank you for the invitation to be here before this committee. As you know, the UCC is the voice of Canada's Ukrainian community. When we talk about the war, I think that, as you know, it's important to understand that the war and the invasion started in 2014 and that we are in many ways just talking about the escalation and the full-scale invasion that started just more than a year ago.

We do want to point out, as you know, the tremendous generosity and kindness of Canadians in supporting the Ukrainian refugees who fled and who have come to Canada, and the support for those who have ended up in Europe as refugees.

We're here to talk about the latest human rights violations, which we feel are coming out as the next step in the evolution of this full-scale invasion. As you've seen in the media, no doubt, Russian human rights organizations have been posting video testimony from mercenaries from the Wagner Group that is fighting in eastern Ukraine.

The videos are very disturbing. I have quotes from them in the transcript, but I don't really want to read them to you. You know that they involve the murder of children, the murder of civilians and testimony that these people have gone in and murdered everybody in households, apartments, etc. There also has been a very gruesome video posted of beheadings and of other acts of violence on Ukrainian prisoners of war, and the Office of the General Prosecutor of Ukraine says they have over 80,000 examples of war crimes and crimes against humanity being committed by the invading Russian army.

Mass rape, torture, murder, forced deportation and mass abduction of children are some among the litany of crimes that Russia has committed and is committing every day in its war against Ukraine. Our point is to say that these are not rogue actions of rogue soldiers. They are not random. They are deliberate, systemic and planned. We believe that Russia is a criminal state that should be isolated further from the international community. In keeping with the direction of the Parliament on unanimous action to recognize Russia's acts in Ukraine as an act of genocide and to list the Wagner Group as a terrorist entity, we urge your support as we continue to argue that Russia must be designated as a state sponsor of terrorism and that Russian diplomats must be expelled from Canada.

● (0855)

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn (Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, Ukrainian Canadian Congress): I'm going to talk a little bit about the things that Canada and allies should be and can be providing to Ukraine to help Ukraine win this war.

The aid provided to Ukraine by Canada and allies has indeed been impressive. Coupled with the Ukrainian people's incredible courage and fierce resistance to Russia's genocidal war, the aid has allowed the Ukrainian armed forces to first stop the Russian advances, reverse many of the early Russian gains and then liberate hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens.

However, as Ukraine plans a spring and summer counteroffensive, it's crucial that both the military and economic support being delivered to Ukraine be increased substantially.

First, Ukraine needs more heavy weapons than we and our allies are providing right now. These are tanks, armoured personnel carriers, air defence systems, longer-range missile systems, naval defence systems, artillery and the ammunition for these systems.

Next, Ukraine needs fighter jets to protect its skies and continue to deny Russia air superiority. Several of our allies—for example, Poland and Slovakia—are delivering MiGs to Ukraine. Canada can play a key role in assisting with training Ukrainian pilots on NATO jets and in convincing allies of the need to supply Ukraine with more fighter jets.

Finally, the security of Canada, our European allies and Ukraine requires a sustained commitment to increasing production and procurement of weapons and ammunition. We need to make multi-year investments to make sure we have the stocks to deal with current and future Russian aggression. Once Ukraine defeats Russia in this war, Russia will remain an enemy of Ukraine, an adversary to NATO and a threat to peace in Europe. We need to be prepared.

Finally, I want to stress the urgency of what we believe Canada needs to do. The longer we and our allies wait to deliver to Ukraine the tools the Ukrainians need for victory, the more Ukrainian soldiers and civilians will be killed, wounded or injured and the larger the price the Ukrainians must pay.

The Ukrainian Defense Contact Group, which is the defence ministers of some 50 countries supporting Ukraine, is meeting at Ramstein Air Base in Germany today to discuss the next steps in supporting Ukraine's defence of freedom. It is our fervent hope that Ukraine's allies, with Canada key among them, will deliver to Ukraine the tools that are needed to win.

I will stop there. We are pleased to take any questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bezan, you have six minutes, please.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Good morning, and welcome to all of our witnesses. It's great to see all of you again.

I want to dig in a little bit more, because both of you touched on the procurement situation.

There was an announcement this morning of 40 sniper rifles being purchased to be supplied to Ukraine, which are coming out of Winnipeg from PGW. I can tell you that this sniper rifle procurement was asked for last year by the Ukrainian government. The procurement was completed by the company and the rifles were completely built and purpose-ready by the end of last summer. Here we are almost a year later before it has finally been announced that the rifles are going to be moving.

When we look at procurement in general.... Ambassador Buck touched on the need for more ammunition. In terms of the facilities and capabilities here in Canada, we have General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems just outside of Montreal, which can build purpose-ready ammunition, including the 155-millimetre rounds to go into our M777 howitzers. Ukraine has four of them, as well as M777s from other allies.

Do you think we need to actually start moving a little quicker on getting this procurement fixed?

What's the big holdup, from the standpoint of the former NATO ambassador and the community of the UCC? What are some of the impediments to actually getting ammunition, sniper rifles and other military materials procured for Ukraine?

● (0900)

The Chair: Go ahead, Ambassador Buck or Mr. Michalchyshyn.

Ms. Kerry Buck: Absolutely.

I know that Jens Stoltenberg and other NATO allies have recognized, coming out of NATO meetings, that production absolutely needs to be ramped up and it needs to be sped up.

The challenge is, as I've said, that Ukraine has been, for very good reasons, burning through ammunition and weaponry faster than it can be supplied. What's happening now is that gaps in the defence production sector have been identified.

For procurement, again I'm speaking to this personally and from outside. I've seen procurement work and I've seen procurement work very badly. In my personal wish list, I would love to see a review of procurement processes. We need a full-on, bipartisan review so that we don't have reversals of decisions, which I've seen personally over the last couple of decades.

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: Just quickly, we agree that the current system isn't good enough. We've heard that industry is looking for multi-year commitments, so that's something to look at. We were in Kyiv in May and June, and the Ukrainian defence minister was pleading with us to go and speak with you as parliamentarians in the Canadian government. Kyiv is littered with burnt-out Russian tanks. You can see the scale of the equipment that is being destroyed every day by the Ukrainians and by the Russians, and it's well beyond anything that we could imagine. I think we just have to....

Again, I don't know the solution to procurement, but the current system is not fast enough, and it cannot be acceptable that it takes a year to get these kinds of things to Ukraine when soldiers are dying every day.

Mr. James Bezan: I have another question for the UCC.

We know that there is very little in the federal budget in 2023 for Ukraine from a defence standpoint. There is $200 million that was announced for the Canadian Armed Forces, supposedly to help replace the Leopard tanks that were donated.

Was the UCC and the rest of the Ukrainian community as disappointed in this last budget as I was?

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: We were concerned and surprised about the amount that is in the budget for defence in Ukraine, which is, as you said, $200 million for the Leopard tanks that had been previously announced.

We had submitted—and we're happy to share it with the committee—our pre-budget submission, which, as Mr. Zakydalsky outlined, was the significant need for systems, and large numbers of systems, for Ukraine.

We are hopeful that our commentary following the budget and in the defence review process will illuminate the point further. We are hearing that there is the possibility of more being announced beyond the budget, as it was last year, but we are concerned that the budget didn't send the signal of strong support for Ukraine in the year ahead.

Mr. James Bezan: When we look at this letter that came out from a number of leading Canadians, including former cabinet ministers, retired military leaders and academics, we see that they talk about how bad defence spending has gotten in Canada, how we aren't able to step up and do the task at hand. Then you can combine that with the leaked Pentagon documents on the Discord app.

We know that back-channel discussions have been taking place, especially at the NATO level among diplomats, so my question is to former ambassador Buck. Based upon your time in Brussels and the discussions that are taking place today with a lot of your former colleagues, would you say that the comments made in the Pentagon documents are reflective of what you're hearing in diplomatic circles here in Ottawa today?

● (0905)

Ms. Kerry Buck: The challenge is that I haven't seen those documents. However, from what I understand is in them, I agree with some of the criticism and I really disagree with some of the other criticism.

The first main message is that Canada really is a strong NATO ally. We have enormous respect there. We've contributed in one way or another to every NATO operation, and I believe in that.

The second thing is that over decades of underinvestment through successive governments, we aren't keeping up our end of the NATO defence spending bargain. We're getting close to the bottom of the barrel and we need to do more.

I signed that letter too.

The Chair: Madam Lambropoulos, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to begin by thanking our witnesses for taking the time to be with us today.

My questions are primarily for Ms. Buck.

You've recently written that as the war drags on, western unity and resolve may falter along the way as we go forward. I'm wondering what some of the fault lines are that you've noticed emerging in the western alliance and what role Canada can play in helping to maintain unity.

Ms. Kerry Buck: I think that NATO unity has been rock-solid from the beginning, but there are some fault lines showing, as you mentioned. Some allies like Turkey and Hungary are starting to take positions that could harm NATO unity and could harm NATO unity on Ukraine, and I think that quiet, constant pressure inside NATO is needed to stay the course. Sometimes that will break out into public pressure.

I think it will be very important to see when Turkey reverses its position and allows Sweden into the alliance. I am convinced that it will happen, but it has not happened soon enough for my liking.

It is a question of quiet diplomacy, honestly, and we have been successful at that at NATO over the years, but there is some more diplomacy that is needed. As I said, international political support for Ukraine is about cross-regional global support, and I really have to applaud the work by Ambassador Rae on our diplomatic missions around the world. They have been convincing states from all regions of the world to vote at the UN General Assembly, for instance, to isolate Russia, and a smaller number have agreed to put and maintain sanctions on Russia, but this is going to need constant care and feeding, so whenever I call for more defence spending, I also call for more spending and more investment in our international diplomatic and civilian security tools as well, because that is part of the bookend to maintaining support.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

In a way you answered it, but just in case there is anything else you see, are there weaknesses in the alliance's ability to address the conflict going forward? You mentioned that it could potentially be a very long war and that it will continue for a long time, so what are some of the weaknesses you see going forward on the alliance's side?

Ms. Kerry Buck: I think the primary weakness is a practical, logistical one right now around provision of weaponry and support to Ukraine. I am less worried about maintaining political support; I am more worried about keeping the steady flow of the right weaponry into Ukraine, so I would hope that the Vilnius summit will come out with a strategic plan that has a longer-term approach to providing a predictable supply of weaponry rather than that kind of stop and start we have seen over the last year. I think that is going to happen at the summit; at least there are some indications from public pronouncements from the Secretary General.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

To the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, I appreciate your interventions today and I understand that the community here is most likely living a very difficult moment and has been for the last year and a half or so.

You've mentioned a few of the areas where you would like Canada to do more, and that includes training Ukrainians on Canadian and NATO jets. Can you maybe be a little more specific on what role you would like Canada to play in this war going forward?

● (0910)

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: As we said, I think that there are two areas. One is the increased supply of weapons and the other is increased training.

As Ambassador Buck mentioned, Ukraine is moving to a NATO-standard army, and Canada is very well suited to train Ukrainians. It has been doing so since 2015. Over 30,000 Ukrainian troops have been trained, and frankly, that has made an enormous difference for Ukraine's army, so anything we can do to increase that would be helpful. However, right now, in the next weeks and months, the supply of weapons is crucial. We stress the urgency of that. There are millions of Ukrainian citizens suffering under Russian occupation who need to be liberated, and the Ukrainians can do it, but they need the weapons from us.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have 45 seconds.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

You've both spoken a lot about the new offensive that is going to be taking place in the spring and summer, and I am sure that Ukraine feels strong going into this and has been feeling a momentum going forward.

Do you think that it will be a successful offensive? Do you think that they are going to gain back some of what they've lost? What can you say about what you believe may happen in the next coming months?

The Chair: Again, that's an important question, but Ms. Lambropoulos has run out of time. I'm sure that question will weave itself through the balance of the morning here.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, welcome to the committee. You have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for your presence here today, which is much appreciated.

I was noticing this week that Jens Stoltenberg, the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, was in Kiev. There is increasing talk of Ukraine joining NATO soon or in the future, perhaps if it wins. Understandably, this will not happen in the very short term.

Ms. Buck, what does this NATO membership mean for Ukrainians? What does it mean for current NATO members? I know this may raise security questions or fears for some allies.

Ms. Kerry Buck: In 2008, at the Bucharest Summit, the allies agreed on a rather important sentence in the final declaration. I don't remember the French translation, so I'll tell you in English.

[*English*]

It was that Georgia and Ukraine “will become members of NATO.”

However, since then there have been no concrete technical steps along the path to membership. That became more complicated in 2014, when Russia took part of Ukraine and illegally annexed Crimea, because the argument from some inside NATO was that this would create an immediate article 5 situation.

What do I mean about that? Article 5 is what I call "The Three Musketeers clause" of NATO—all for one and one for all. If a NATO ally is attacked, other allies are meant to come to that nation's defence. It complicated it politically, and yet that language stayed about Ukraine becoming a member of NATO. What NATO allies have done consistently since 2008, and even more since 2014, is provide a very significant program of support for Ukrainian military security, and also, outside of NATO, there has been a lot of support on the civilian front.

What will happen in Vilnius? As I said, I don't expect an answer to that question about Ukrainian membership, but I do find it really significant that Jens Stoltenberg said yesterday that Ukraine's rightful place is in the Euro-Atlantic family and that its rightful place is in NATO over time.

The debate at the Vilnius summit will be crucial. I don't expect answers at that time unless something miraculous happens with the course of the war between now and Vilnius.

● (0915)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

Gentlemen of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, do you have anything to add?

[*English*]

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky: There's a great meme going around that says nobody has done more to increase support for Ukraine's membership than Vladimir Putin. It is very clear that Ukraine has decided that its future is going to be in the European Union, in the Euro-Atlantic alliance in some form, immediately and long term. With the ascension of Finland and the potential for other countries to join NATO, Ukraine sees a path for itself as part of the alliance. As we know, Ukraine has close working relationships with Canada and others bilaterally, and then with international groups on the training front.

It remains an open question, as the ambassador said, but we see public support in Ukraine moving very strongly in that direction.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you very much.

You were talking earlier about what to expect from Canada in terms of help going forward. You were talking a lot about weapons and training. We know that Canada is present in Latvia. Is this presence sufficient at this time? We know that the Canadian Armed Forces have resource problems and a shortage of personnel. Can the transition from battalion to brigade be made despite these challenges? Should the focus be on training, whether in Latvia or elsewhere?

[*English*]

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: I think the issue we have with our capacity to increase training is the same issue we have with our capacity to increase the production of weapons. It's a matter of the government making it a priority and investing the necessary funds in it.

In terms of what is available right now to augment these missions, I think we do have some capacity to increase training missions for Ukraine now, but certainly that is a long-term commitment and a long-term issue, and I think we need to be making those investments in our defence now.

Ms. Kerry Buck: At the last NATO summit, there was agreement by all allies that the size of the existing battle groups that were created in 2017 would be increased and that new battle groups would be put in place. That commitment is there across all allies, and Canada has to meet that commitment.

I can't speak to the stage of preparedness now, but I'll go back to the letter that I and others signed about the need to invest more. One of the main gaps in the CAF right now is people, so they're working as hard as they can to increase recruitment and retention. It's something that needs a lot of care and feeding, but the government is committed to increasing its size and presence in Latvia, and that's vitally important to NATO deterrence. I know that was the rationale. I was there when we made the decision to take on that battle group and I know the Canadian policy has been that deterrence has to be sufficiently robust.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

[*English*]

Madam Mathyssen, go ahead for six minutes, please.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you.

Thanks to all the witnesses today for appearing.

London has provided the LAV out of GDLS, General Dynamics Land Systems. When I was speaking to the Ukrainian ambassador to Canada, there was a lot of frustration in terms of the delay on that. Could you give us an update in terms of what you've heard, if anything, on the delay on the delivery of those LAVs and the use of those LAVs?

● (0920)

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky: I don't have the details. I know they were focusing on the ones that were nearly built or that were being built very close to the time of the announcement, as opposed to just sort of being started from scratch. It's been a matter of media speculation, and I think that for operational reasons, the Ukrainians and the Canadians are not revealing exactly where they're at. I do understand that the fact that they were not in place as soon as they were supposed to be is within the scope of the procurement issues that have been described before.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Then you don't have any other ground updates?

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky: I don't.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Okay.

As you know, I like to talk about London all the time. In my riding, there's an international test pilot school. They're world renowned. They've trained allied fighter pilots, as I said, from around the world. They learn to train with those jets and they use flight simulators. There have been numerous conversations about ensuring that Ukrainian pilots come to test at this facility and, as I think Orest said, there's this transition to NATO equipment and NATO weaponry, so that kind of training by NATO allies is key.

There have been, unfortunately, a lot of barriers that each side has come up against, so I'd really love it if you would talk again about that specific training and increasing the training. I know that Operation Unifier has been an incredible resource for troops in Ukraine, but I mean in all the different ways that Canada can train troops for Ukraine.

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: One of the most important things to remember about training is that our Canadian army is also learning from the Ukrainians. To the extent that we can enlarge any of these missions and move towards training fighter pilots, we're going to do it eventually anyway, so we might as well do it now. In these missions, there is always a large benefit to our military as well, and I think we need to look at it not just as our helping the Ukrainians but as the Ukrainians helping us as well.

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky: If I can I just chime in on the support programs, I was at the Invictus event last night with some of the members here, and it's beyond just the training of the test pilots. I think there is a real scope....

Ukraine is a country of veterans and of families of survivors of those both injured and killed. I think there is a whole-of-society need in Ukraine for broad mental health support and supports for veterans, and for entrepreneurship, now and after the war.

We have certainly had a flood of people come to our office with proposals of every kind for each of those spheres on what Canada can do as Canadian business, as Canadian government, as a non-profit sector and as community. I don't think there is any lack of ideas or support. Sometimes it's a matter of funding and finding the right partner.

At this point, I think Ukraine is eager to take on partnerships with any kind of partner that will help it to this victory in the nearest time. However, we also need to be thinking about those men and women who are serving, and their families, in the midst of this.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Ms. Buck, you talked about Canada increasing many different types of spending.

I want you to potentially expand on what you were talking about in terms of that diplomatic spending, what Canada is not doing, and where we need to go on that diplomatic side.

Ms. Kerry Buck: It's about presence, skills and diplomatic initiative. It's not always about investing more money in our foreign ministries to get the product, but it is about investing some more money.

I won't go through the world and list where I think we shouldn't have shut down missions and where we should establish missions. It's probably beyond the scope of this committee and the scope of my notes, which I have to do myself now that I've retired, and it's a real challenge. However, I have seen what I find is a real diminution of our capacity internationally, our knowledge base internationally and our skill set internationally, on some issues, and we need to rebuild it. When we're faced with a conflict like Ukraine, you need a whole-of-Canada effort to work and build support with our key allies, our like-minded partners, to maintain support for Ukraine. As I said, I give kudos to Ambassador Rae and his team in our missions around the world, but it's going to take constant care and feeding.

The other thing is that we have to talk to some of the countries that have leverage with Russia. That is going to be key to bringing about some kind of peace at some point, when President Zelenskyy calls the time for a peace settlement. We need China experts and people who are close to India and other places who can help to apply some pressure to Russia. You need a full-court press to convince President Putin that it's time to either lay down arms and come to a table or.... I can't even start to guess where this war will go in its next steps.

It's diplomacy, capacity and expertise, and links to talk to the bad guys and to the good guys to build up that support.

● (0925)

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

Colleagues, we will move on to the next round.

I'm going to let it go as a full round. Our next panel is one witness, and we may be able to make up some time there.

Ms. Gallant, you have five minutes, please.

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

To our former NATO ambassador, the NATO Secretary General indicated that the 2% of GDP aspirational goal for defence spending will become the minimum expenditure. What are the most immediate and effective measures that Canada can take to both bolster Ukraine and their defence forces and shed our reputation in NATO as a freeloader?

Ms. Kerry Buck: I think that our reputation in NATO is pretty good, but the 2% goal—and it is a goal, and Canada has been clear that it is a goal and non-binding to governments now—is a very important political standard, a very important political measure that is becoming more important. It's becoming more important because of the war, but for us it's also because all of our allies are climbing higher and higher, and we're not. Part of it is because our GDP is doing a bit better than that of some of our allies, so that's good news, but the percentage is dropping. Part of it is because of underinvestment over successive governments that's coming home to roost now.

What happened in 2017 with “Strong, Secure, Engaged” was that they had a plan for a 73% hike in spending, which is impressive, but that 73% hike in spending, which is the most significant hike in defence spending that we've seen in decades, hasn't quite come to fruition because of not enough people, procurement processes being too slow, etc.

We have a lot to do, and our stats at NATO are bad. In 2022, we were 25th among the allies in terms of percentage of GDP spent on defence, and in terms of percentage of defence spending that is spent on equipment, we were second to last, and that's not great. We need to do more, and thus came about the letter that I signed, as I said.

In terms of support for Ukraine, it's weapons, weapons, weapons and training, training, training. When the war does come to an end, I think that we could have a really useful role in helping the Ukrainian military transition to a peacetime footing, and we'll learn a lot from them too from their war experience and help them move up to that NATO interoperability standard and maintain it.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: It sounds like we're just aspiring to the 2% rather than recognizing that it will become the floor. They need to move forward on it becoming the floor, because nobody is really ever getting to that 2%; they just get closer to it. It's like the law of diminishing returns.

With respect to that, how would you say that we could strategize? What should be the strategy to move forward for Ukraine and help win this war in Ukraine in our role as support?

Ms. Kerry Buck: To win the war, I'll go back to weapons and ammunition, bandaged together.

We're at a really critical point right now. I think that NATO has done admirably in supplying Ukraine, but there's a need to do more and do it faster, absolutely.

● (0930)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We know that there are charges that can be raised for war crimes. What about the people who influence and encourage the genocide in Ukraine? Are there any international laws that could hold the people who are doing this to account?

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky: There are several processes going on that are led by Ukraine and that Canada has been supporting.

First is the war crimes and genocide prosecution through the International Criminal Court. The second process that Ukraine is pursuing, which I'm sure many of you have heard about, is the prosecution for a war of aggression. That's where there is still ongoing discussion on how Ukraine can lead that process, but through an international criminal prosecution process. It's part of the investigations that are happening. We know that many countries have sent investigators—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Will the influencers be charged as well as the people committing the crimes?

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky: I hope so. I mean, I think that the evidence is there from speeches and from a media perspective in terms of who was encouraging, supporting and boosting the committing of these crimes and how they're being portrayed as great Russian victories.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll move on to Mr. May for five minutes.

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

Thank you all for being here and sharing your time with us this morning.

Madam Buck, during your intervention, I was reflecting on how we've come to where we are from the early days before the war even started, and all the speculation as to what was going to happen. There were three theories that were quite prevalent that were shared with us and were also present throughout the media.

The first was that nothing was going to happen. A lot of that actually came from within Ukraine. This was just sabre-rattling. The second was that it was going to be similar to Crimea, in that they would blitz in, redraw the border around the two Donbass provinces and call it a day. The third was that it would be over in a week. They'd drive right through Ukraine as liberators, and it would be over within a matter of days.

Obviously, none of that happened. Nobody that I heard of was talking about a protracted war.

My question to you, and to the panel as a whole, is to ask how our thinking has changed in terms of the intelligence-gathering around Russia's capabilities and, as importantly, Ukraine's capabilities, now that it's being supported so heavily by NATO.

Is there a different strategy for how we're thinking about this? I know the question of what's to come has been asked already. I know no one has a crystal ball, but over a year ago, everyone seemed to have a crystal ball and had very strong opinions on what was going to happen. I'm curious. Everyone we've talked to has been very quiet about speculating.

I'm going to put you guys on the spot and ask how this is going to resolve, or is it going to continue for many years to come?

We'll start with Madam Buck.

Ms. Kerry Buck: How has our thinking changed?

The orthodoxy when I was at NATO was that Russia had invested significantly in revamping and modernizing its military since 2008 and that they would be one of the more impressive fighting forces in the world. We discovered that wasn't as true as we had thought. They were substandard. They were incapable of mounting that kind of complex and robust invasion of a country.

Part of the reason I thought it didn't make any sense for Vladimir Putin to choose this was the question of how he was going to hold Ukraine afterward. I don't understand the calculus, unless it's only and all about maintaining his power at home and being afraid of a prosperous democracy that's improving economically right next door in Ukraine in a way that he hasn't been delivering to his own citizens, and can't. It kind of makes sense then.

How have we shifted in thinking about Russia's capabilities? The other thing that's happened is that he started some limited conscription that didn't go well politically for him, so now they have a charm offensive. They're trying to have quotas and they're going to regions outside Moscow to get more and more soldiers to throw at the problem. They're clearing out prisons.

He doesn't care if his soldiers die. At some point, that'll come home to roost for him politically, but it hasn't yet. He can keep throwing young Russian men's bodies at this problem for quite a long time to come, which is too bad. It's too bad for the Russians.

Where it will end? There are different scenarios. I don't see many scenarios in which he is ousted from power. Whatever scenario it is, we'll have to collectively deal with Russia somehow, in a way that recognizes that they're right next door to Ukraine and will be forever, and that they're part of Europe. At some point, peace talks will have to happen, but I firmly believe it has to be President Zelenskyy's call when the time is right, and it can only happen when Ukraine has had such sufficient territorial gains that Putin is forced to the table.

● (0935)

Mr. Bryan May: Gentlemen, we've left you about 30 seconds or less, I think.

I don't know if you have any thoughts on that.

Mr. Ihor Michalchyshyn: I'll just say that the course of the war, in large measure, depends on what we are capable of providing to the Ukrainians. If they run out of artillery, they can't fire artillery.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. May.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're talking a lot about Ukraine and how Canada can help. Russia really didn't expect such a robust response from Ukraine, and the war has been going on for more than 14 months, although, as has been mentioned, this conflict started long before that, back in 2014. So I wonder how the Russian troops are doing, if they are running out of steam, and if they are having supply problems.

Ms. Buck, you mentioned that this situation would probably last a long time, but I am wondering how, to your knowledge, things are going on the Russian side.

[*English*]

Ms. Kerry Buck: We all saw the pictures of the Russian tanks and other vehicles mired in mud because they hadn't bothered to change the tires in the two years in storage before they deployed. I think it's worse on the personnel front. As I said, with a combination of the Wagner Group and others, they're really stretching their conscription efforts into places that aren't sustainable for them, so they're doing very, very badly, but they are a very large country with a lot of people. They have a lot of weapons in reserve. They're not good weapons, and they'll be running out of cruise missiles at some point, but they have enough stuff to keep grinding for a while in a grinding ground war of attrition in the south. That will cause very much damage to Ukraine and a little less damage to Russia, because Putin is a dictator and doesn't bear the political costs of doing that as much as other leaders might.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky: As incompetent and ill-equipped as they are, they are still a significant fighting force that we should not take lightly. As I was relating to you earlier, the brutality and the scale of the impact in Ukraine of the Russian forces, whether it's Wagner or the Russian army, should not be forgotten in the stories of their technical incompetence.

It's the scale. It's the continued, relentless dispatch of these people, of these soldiers, and, as we said, the emptying of jails to create Russian brigades. These people are not professional soldiers, and they are murdering Ukrainian civilians. That is their instruction. That is an explicit strategy by the Russian military.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Michaud.

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

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Throughout the war, Russia has used food as a destabilizing weapon. Can you talk about the impact on the ground on food stability and on Ukraine's food supply chains?

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky: Sure. As you know, there have been several attempts to have these grain deals brokered by the United Nations and others. Ukraine's role as the supplier of the global south, particularly the Middle East and African countries, for wheat, sunflower oil and other essential—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. We are no longer receiving the French interpretation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Have we lost interpretation?

Interpretation says it's okay. It's back on.

● (0940)

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky: Ukraine's role as a supplier of essential agriculture for the global south has I think been illuminated by this latest invasion. What can Canada do to help there? Ukraine is trying to engage these allies in the global south, but that's a difficult task to do in the middle of fighting a war.

Again, in talking to countries that have been affected by the war, countries where food prices and shortages come up, we need to make that non-linear argument and connect the dots for people that prices are going up because of this war.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Exactly as Ms. Buck was talking about in terms of finding those maybe potentially difficult allies or tougher allies and convincing them of this overall, it would be a really good connect in that way. Using food stability would be a good way to connect.

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky: Yes. I think many people didn't realize how dependent they were on Ukrainian agriculture to ensure their stability and prosperity. I think rebuilding global security starts with supporting Ukrainian agriculture.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: I saw a lot of nods there, so I'll give the rest of my time to you to add to that.

Ms. Kerry Buck: I'm just in wild agreement.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Kerry Buck: If you think about food shortages and the impact on food prices around the world and on grain supply, you don't think of it, but Rome FAO, our mission in Rome, would have been actively lobbying at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to talk about how we stabilize food prices and how we help the poor. We would have been doing that through a lot of our development assistance as well.

All arms of Canadian government international intervention, development assistance and diplomacy have to kick in to do that. Then we also have to be equipped to counter Russian disinformation, because as soon as that started, they were out there with disinformation saying that this was the result of X, Y and Z, not the result of what they'd done in Ukraine, so our capacity to diplomatically and in Canada rebut that disinformation and propaganda is really key.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathyssen.

Ms. Mathyssen and I were exposed to a very sophisticated response to misinformation and disinformation while we were in Taiwan. I think we would both agree that there's much to be learned from how they deal with it.

With that, we have Mr. Kelly for five minutes, please.

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

Ms. Buck, I would like to take you back to the line of questions that Mr. Bezan was getting to as part of his opening round.

The 2% aspirational goal, if I understand correctly, was set in 2014. There was over a 10-year period to meet that aspirational goal. I'm not sure I could agree that successive governments over a long period of time have not dealt with what was really a specific goal set out in 2014. We had a leak that alleges that our Prime Minister had explicitly, in contradiction of stated policy, said that Canada will not meet that goal.

Are you concerned that this statement undermines our commitment to NATO at a time when this war is explicitly testing the unity of this alliance?

Ms. Kerry Buck: Just to be clear, my intervention was about underinvestment in defence by successive governments. In a way, it goes back to about the 1970s. It's coming to roost now.

To be fair, in the last two governments, there's been more focus on defence. As I said, the defence policy of “Strong, Secure, Engaged” was the most significant planned increase in defence spending.

Does this have a diplomatic impact on us, the fact that we're getting farther away from the 2% goal? Absolutely. Does it have a reputational impact? It absolutely has a reputational impact, and that can be filled through doing more.

In my heart of hearts, I would like to see a path to 2%, or a path to a path to 2%, if that's possible. I would like to see specific investments in defence, security and diplomacy. I'd love to see an integrated policy. You can't do defence policy in a vacuum, without our foreign policy priorities being set. Have it fully integrated like the U.K. does. Have more investment in CAF people. Have more investment on North American defence—not just NORAD, but air and land, submarines, cyber, and above all, people. We can step up and do more as it's needed.

NATO has to do a lot more now with the war against Ukraine. All allies need to step up.

● (0945)

Mr. Pat Kelly: You mentioned the announced spending in “Strong, Secure, Engaged”, yet the announcements are not being fulfilled. You mentioned some of the reasons and ways in which those goals are not being met through problems with procurement and personnel.

Can you expand on what needs to change in order to actually fulfill the commitments that were announced? It's easy to announce, but the follow-through is what counts.

Ms. Kerry Buck: I'm sitting outside of government now. I'm not really privy to the steps that are being taken and the hurdles inside. From outside, part of it is a capacity issue. As I said, if you don't have the people, you can't stabilize the Canadian Armed Forces enough to have the procurement experts, etc.

On procurement, as I said, I'd love to see a review. We've been stumbling in a way on procurement for far too long, and we don't get the stuff.

Mr. Pat Kelly: We sure have.

I've been given the signal that I have a minute left.

There's one specific item. I was reviewing an order paper answer to a question that was tabled by our colleague Mr. May last June. It said, for example, that there were 62 LAV-II Coyotes that were in repairable condition. They were surplus and repairable. They would need 220 days to be repaired and shipped, according to the statement that was tabled. That was 305 days ago. We have no word or announcement on whether these repairs are happening and whether these vehicles will be sent. This is the type of disconnect between announcing and actually following through with the capacity to do what has been announced.

Ms. Kerry Buck: There are some areas, like the Leopards. They were decisive in Afghanistan, but have we kept them up since Afghanistan? No. We cut air defence in 2012. There are all sorts of areas.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelly.

The final five minutes go to Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ambassador, you went through the timelines over the last number of years to provide Russia's justification for invading Crimea and now subsequently all of Ukraine.

Mr. Michalchyshyn, you reminded us that it's actually having the opposite effect. It has actually strengthened NATO's resolve, which is great. It has also created some geopolitical alliances, though, for Russia—economic alliances—and that's also worrisome.

What I'm curious about is the Russian people themselves. Ambassador, you talked a little bit about that. The uprising doesn't seem to be occurring in Russia. We need to see that in order to reaffirm that what Russia is doing is being the aggressor. Of course, they're not hearing that. However, many Russians are dying, as you pointed out, and much of Russia's resources are being utilized to support this war, which then gives me pause with regard to the economic alliances they may be having elsewhere.

We've heard testimony before this committee in regard to Russia's disinformation campaign and we've heard that "the Kremlin's anti-Ukrainian narratives aim to erode public support for Ukraine and to intimidate and dehumanize Canadians of Ukrainian heritage." That was Marcus Kolga back in February of 2023.

My question then is, to the UCC specifically, what have you observed on this front with respect to Russia's disinformation campaign and how have these efforts evolved over the course of the conflict?

Mr. Orest Zakydalsky: Thank you.

Unfortunately, the statistics coming out of Russia are that 70% of the Russian population support the war, and despite the reality of the numbers of those who have been killed, we see that the number isn't going down. As you mentioned, they have strong disinformation being put forth by their ambassador to Canada. We don't understand why he is here and regularly featured in Canadian media. He has called us terrible names. He's called many of the people in this room terrible names, and he slurs our community on a daily basis, as he does the Canadian government.

That is baffling to us. I think we need to remember that Russia is Canada's northern neighbour whether we like it or not, and we need to take that very seriously and up our game in terms of what our expectations are with respect to what's coming at us. I think there was some naïveté and some hope that perhaps this could all be resolved in different ways, but we're seeing the reality of it now. Individual Canadians, individual Ukrainian-Canadians, are bearing the brunt of it in terms of the acts of hate and vandalism that are happening across Canada that we're hearing about and documenting every day.

I would love to share with you our social media feed and the slurs that are coming at our community from Russian bots every day. I think it is a serious issue that we as a society might have been naive about.

● (0950)

Mr. Charles Sousa: Ambassador, how do we combat that? What do we do? It's one thing for us to now fight that disinformation within Canada, but what are we doing in terms of propaganda? What are we doing to inform the Russian people as well?

Ms. Kerry Buck: First, on propaganda, I think that requires a whole-of-society response, and as you said, Mr. Chair, we can learn a lot from countries like Estonia and Taiwan, which sit next to very powerful countries that engage very well in disinformation. They're better at it than we are. Part of it is that they have whole-of-society responses.

In Finland, for instance, they teach kids in school how to recognize disinformation so they can weed out on social media what's false and what's true. We need a better security culture, I think, at all levels—provincial, federal and even municipal sometimes—so that we can understand when our citizens are being attacked by disinformation.

That means civilian investment in cyber and also in building some of what I call the other building blocks of democracy, like independent media, free media, electoral systems, etc. We're pretty good on that front, but we still need to do more.

On the Russian people, there are polls and then there are polls. It's a little dangerous in Russia to answer the wrong way, so I take the polls with a grain of salt, but if you look at some of the more credible polling in Russia, it's showing the same numbers that were just given.

Part of it is that if you've been under that kind of czarist dictator's approach to governing, it takes an awful lot before there's an uprising. There have been uprisings in Russian history, but I don't think that Russians are anywhere near the point of rising up, and the thing is that Vladimir Putin has gotten rid of any of his potential rivals through a series of defenestrations, "suiciding" of people and poisonings.

I won't dare to predict what will happen there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sousa.

Unfortunately, that brings our time to an end. I say "unfortunately", because all of you have been absolutely superb witnesses.

You'll be interested to know that just prior to your witnessing, we adopted the intention to study procurement. Given the testimony that you've all come forward with, we may reach out to you again for your thoughts on it. This process is very exasperating, so we hope to bring some enlightenment.

With that, I'm going to suspend. We will change panels as quickly as we can.

Again, on behalf of the committee members, thank you.

● (0950)

_____(Pause)_____

● (0955)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

We have with us Dr. Jack Watling, senior research fellow for land warfare, Royal United Services Institute.

Dr. Watling, thank you for coming.

You're welcome to your first five-minute intervention. We look forward to what you have to say, and then we'll go to rounds of questions.

Thank you, sir.

Dr. Jack Watling (Senior Research Fellow for Land Warfare, As an Individual): Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My background in connection with this topic is that I have been working on the ground in Ukraine throughout the war, essentially in every other month. I've been largely working with the Ukrainian military, conducting assessments.

There are critical points that I want to get across to you in the opening remarks. The first is that the consequences of this conflict should not be and cannot be understated. The outcome of this war will not only determine the future of European security but will also determine the rules by which the international order functions, and whether or not those states that are more powerful are deemed to be able to exert control and influence over their neighbours in spheres of influence.

Second, and perhaps critically, NATO's ability to demonstrate that it can rise to this challenge is not just important in protecting us from Russia and Russian aggression but also in signalling to other potential adversaries whether or not we are able to deliver on our security commitments. If we are not able to rise to this challenge, then we will face serious security threats in other theatres.

When the war started, as was mentioned in the previous session, there were quite a lot of emphatic predictions made. My experience throughout the conflict is that it has never been on a very clear trajectory. We have been working in one direction and then another as we have solved operational problems.

The really important thing to bear in mind there, I think, is that the outcome is absolutely not set or fixed; it is determined by what we do. We have a huge amount of agency collectively in determining whether the Ukrainian armed forces are able to successfully achieve their military objectives or not.

Second is something that I think we have been much weaker on. While we have a clear military strategy at this point, we have a much less coherent political strategy. The reality of the situation is that Ukraine could achieve all of its military objectives on the ground to push Russian forces out of the country and Russia could still blockade Odessa, could still strike Ukrainian cities on a semi-regular basis with long-range missiles, and could keep Ukrainian airspace closed, essentially denying Ukraine's ability to have an economy.

Unless we have a political strategy that forces the Russian government to believe that it will gain more by negotiating in earnest, then there isn't an easy end to this problem. We need to be working very closely as allies in that goal.

I think that brings me to the final point I want to make in my opening remarks, which is that while logistics, the defence industry and our military are at the forefront of this effort, ultimately there are many levers of power that have to be pulled that are not controlled by the military. Canada's decision very recently, along with a number of its allies, to increase enrichment of nuclear fuels is a good example of how bolstering the alliance's energy security is critical to underpinning the political will to continue the struggle.

This is the time when a lot of the talk about processes in interagency and intergovernmental departments working well, which has been at the forefront of national defence strategies, is going to be put to the test.

I'm very happy to answer any of your questions on military considerations, which is my area of expertise, and looking at the Russian military in particular. I will conclude my opening remarks there and look forward to your questions.

● (1000)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Watling. Your economy of speech is appreciated. I don't know if it will be reciprocated by my colleagues.

We'll go to six-minute round with Mr. Kelly.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Thank you, Dr. Watling.

Could you give us some specifics about the challenges—or perhaps even the crisis, if that's the right word—around munition productions within the NATO alliance, or at least the accessible industrial capacity of Ukraine and NATO allies?

Dr. Jack Watling: Certainly.

The Ukrainians are having to fire approximately 90,000 to 140,000 rounds of 155-millimetre ammunition per month. The United States previously was able to produce fewer than 20,000 rounds per month. It is looking to significantly increase that capacity. However, by the end of the year, in public reporting, we're still looking at a capacity of around 40,000 rounds per month. In the U.K., in public reporting, the entire national stockpile of 155-millimetre ammunition prior to this conflict was lower than 44,000 rounds, and our ability to manufacture 155-millimetre ammunition is at the rate of about 5,000 rounds per year. There are plans to push that to 40,000 rounds per year, but as you can see—and I could go country by country—when you add them up, the entire alliance's capacity is not meeting the requirement for monthly consumption rates of ammunition.

My experience with this conflict is that if you do not have firepower, you cannot manoeuvre. You will be fixed in place and you'll be destroyed. A lack of firepower is a recipe for very high casualties and a sure path to defeat. Therefore, it is very important we generate that industrial capacity.

The fact the United States does have significant stockpiles in reserve means that we do have time to resolve this issue, but it is a complicated problem, because you need to expand production of explosive energetics; you need to expand the ability to cast shells and produce primers; and then you need to be able to handle those explosive energetics and have the facilities to be able to fill those shells and cool the explosive energetics in them. That means that government departments that deal with planning permission, for example, are critical if this is to happen quickly.

There are international supply chain challenges. There are also regulatory challenges that ministries of defence cannot solve by themselves. It's really important that the alliance co-operate to close that gap.

● (1005)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Okay. How is Canada doing in this? How can Canada be of meaningful assistance? Do you know Canada's capacity for production and what Canada would need to do to increase this production?

Dr. Jack Watling: I'm not familiar specifically with the numbers in terms of Canada's production, but I would note that Canada is integral to the U.S. effort to expand production. In the supply chain for U.S. munitions, very often those munitions go back and forth between the U.S. and Canada. That reflects a number of specific manufacturing capabilities that you have, but also Canada's ability to generate raw materials for explosive energetics that other countries don't necessarily have access to. Canada is actually quite important in this role.

I would also commend the work of one of your former ambassadors, Wendy Gilmour, who is an assistant secretary at NATO. She is playing a leading role in trying to cohere these efforts across the alliance, so Canada has made a significant contribution, I think, to the diplomacy to unlock some of these challenges.

Mr. Pat Kelly: We're about to undertake a procurement study in this committee. Canada has a very long history of astonishingly slow military procurement. That has to change in order to give us the agility to respond to a crisis like this. Are you aware or do you think that Canada, even as part of a North American supply chain, is taking the steps that need to be taken in order to eliminate this gap between expenditure and production that will surely at some point result in the Ukrainian army running out of ammunition if we don't bridge the gap?

Dr. Jack Watling: I think there has been a problem across the alliance of many governments, particularly outside of defence, in thinking about this as a peacetime problem and following traditional processes. Certainly in the U.K., we are not seeing a rapid acceleration in process, partly because it does require buy-in from other bits of government. The Ministry of Defence does not own all of the levers to unlock planning permissions for a munitions factory, for example.

It is really important that you have centralized government authority directing all of those other constituents and contributors to this process to make sure there isn't an acceleration in the signing of defence contracts, for example, but no acceleration in the ability to find and set up appropriate facilities to produce more munitions. I've observed that there is a sense of urgency in the ministries of defence around NATO, but very often that doesn't translate across government.

The Chair: Thank you. I owe you 15 seconds.

Dr. Watling, what I heard about how a 155-millimetre shell is made and the number of times it might cross the border just to be made in North America is maybe an interesting contribution to our study on procurement. If you have other information that you wish to share on that point, that would be informative to us. If you'd forward it to the clerk, that would be helpful.

Madam O'Connell, you have six minutes, please.

● (1010)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Dr. Watling, for being here.

To start with, in your opening remarks you spoke about the importance of Ukraine winning this war, but the sustained winning of this war. The implications that you mentioned for the future of European communities in demonstrating NATO strength is something that all members understand, certainly in our House, as well as in this committee particularly, which has been looking at it.

I want to ask whether you can elaborate on this further. There will start to be political pressures. I sometimes hear even in my own constituency, “You're spending all that money in Ukraine. What about this country? What about that conflict?”

In the U.K., they have gone back into double-digit inflation rates. There are going to start to be pressures. The eurozone is at 6.9% inflation. There are going to be some financial pressures on other countries.

Can you elaborate on that argument about the importance, and even the economic importance, in the long term of not continuing to support Ukraine?

Dr. Jack Watling: I think there are plenty of examples of how the war in Ukraine is disrupting industry and doing economic harm to us. Ending it more quickly is important for producing economic stability. A good example would be what the outpouring of grain into Romania is doing in Europe at the moment.

There's another side to this, which is that we keep framing this as money being sent to Ukraine. It's not, right? If we're sensible about it, this is money we are spending to create jobs and to rejuvenate complex industry in our own countries in order to achieve our security goals.

I will give you an example. In the U.K., we don't produce artillery barrels anymore. We should, because there aren't enough barrel machines across Europe. There is an opportunity there to level up, in the British government's terminology, by spending money on establishing complex manufacturing and metal forging in the U.K. The outcome of that is to make Ukrainian artillery more sustainable, but where that money is being invested is into deprived communities in the U.K.

If we were more joined up about this, then I think we could shift the narrative.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you. I appreciate that answer.

I think that is something we have to speak more about here at home, and in a coordinated approach with NATO and our allies. It's important, from a political perspective, to make sure that our communities and our country as a whole understand the full picture and the importance of continuing to be a strong ally for Ukraine.

My next question is in regard to NATO's response and coordination.

Do you have opinions on some of the strengths that maybe surprised Russia? We've heard a lot of testimony to that fact. However, moving forward, where can Canada be involved in making sure that any weaknesses or gaps are filled within the NATO system and in that coordination?

Dr. Jack Watling: In terms of weaknesses, I think a major one is the distinction I made between a military strategy, which NATO has the muscle memory and the mechanisms to develop, versus a political strategy. NATO can be a coordination body for that strategy, and the military strategy has to align with the political strategy, but ultimately NATO doesn't have the same authorities in that space. My observation would be that a number of different countries in the alliance have a different vision of what the outcome that we would like looks like.

There are good reasons that this debate shouldn't be had in public. However, I think constructive convening, whether that be by Canada or others who in some ways don't antagonize the different opinions in the alliance on that particular topic, could be very constructive in hosting and building a common understanding of where the alliance is trying to get to, not just what the alliance is trying to prevent in the short term.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

To follow up on your comments about the political strategy, is this part of the conversation about Ukraine's future in NATO, or is this more just coordination, in your view, in terms of NATO's strength moving forward and ensuring readiness? Frankly, NATO needs to always be ready and coordinated in case something like this occurs, but are your political strategy comments also in relation to the future of Ukraine in NATO or the future of NATO in general, where perhaps more work or more coordination needs to be done?

● (1015)

Dr. Jack Watling: I think it's more in relation to Russia. If we think about Russia's position, Russia has burned all of its soft power. It is in a conflict, and in Russia's terms, it is fighting NATO—not militarily, but that's how the Kremlin talks about this conflict.

Now, irrespective of where the line of control is in Ukraine, that leaves a live, very dangerous relationship between NATO and Russia. We need Russia, ultimately, to come to the negotiating table, not thinking that it's going to get everything that it wants but being prepared to make concessions, which also means the Russians need to fear the alternative, right? They need to think that the alternative to not negotiating and not making concessions is less positive for their vision of where the world is going—

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

Dr. Jack Watling: —which may mean we need to make it more uncomfortable.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave it there.

Thank you.

Dr. Jack Watling: Sorry.

The Chair: That's all right.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Watling, thank you for agreeing to testify and answer our questions.

Earlier, I asked other speakers how things are going for the Russian troops. As we know, there has been a leak of secret U.S. documents containing several pieces of information related to the U.S. view on the conflict.

In your opinion, did this have a negative impact on the morale of Ukrainian troops or on military strategy? Did it have a positive impact on Russia or did they choose to ignore these documents since it could have been an allied tactic or strategy? What can you tell us about this document leak?

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Watling: I'm afraid, for legal reasons, I can't comment on the content of the leak specifically, but I can comment on the consequences of it.

I think there's been a long process of building up trust with Ukraine, which has been very important in making sure that we provide the right support, because there are a lot of things that aren't necessarily as helpful as others. There can be no doubt that this will have restricted access to some of the information-sharing arrangements and potentially damaged that trust. That can be rebuilt, but it does add friction to things. There is very much goodwill on both sides to make sure that it doesn't cause problems, so I think it's not insurmountable. It just will add friction.

On the Russian side, what was exposed would certainly provide very useful information to the Russian military that it could use to try to counter what Ukraine is trying to do in its operations over the next few months.

Now, obviously, those slides relate to information that is earlier in the year. Some of those problems may have been resolved or, because of the dates outlined in them, the slides may no longer reflect the position, but certainly the shortage of air defence munitions, which has been widely discussed, is a very critical problem that has to be overcome. If the Russian air force can bomb from medium altitude, then that will inflict a very serious level of damage on Ukrainian forces, so making sure that this problem is overcome is now a critical priority.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

Earlier, I asked the witnesses about Russia's supply problems. Essentially, I was told that there may indeed be some problems, but that Russia is such a large and populous country that it is not likely, in the long run, to be such a big problem for Russian troops.

As we know, Putin finds himself in an increasingly difficult situation: he must maintain public support while increasing the war effort. Recently, Russia passed a law allowing mobilization orders to be sent electronically.

Do you agree with the witnesses we heard earlier? Do you think the supply issues are not that serious in the long run? Do you think there are some things that are beneficial to the Ukrainian troops?

● (1020)

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Watling: Russia does face some severe supply challenges, in particular for some of its complex weapons. Their weapons are dependent on components that are manufactured in Europe, the U.S. and South Korea, etc., the access to which we can potentially disrupt, so we have some agency there in making it harder for them.

However, the Russians, up until towards the end of last year, had primarily stepped up the tempo of their defence production. They had not started cannibalizing or militarizing their civilian industry. From the beginning of this year, we've observed them starting to shift civilian industries into military production, and that opens up a very significant amount of industrial capacity for their military.

There is also the potential that they will receive more support in terms of workers and technician support from China, and *matériel* support through Iran and other countries that will allow them to expand access to things like explosive energetics, which is a bottleneck for the Russians too.

At the moment, Russian industry is lagging behind their requirements quite significantly, but depending on how competently they stitch together the aspects of their industry that they are mobilizing, they could start getting on a much more favourable trajectory in terms of production later in this year. There will be a lag, but the trajectory is increasing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you.

We've heard that since the war began or thereabouts, Ukrainian children have been adopted by Russian families. According to what the Institute for the Study of War said recently, the Wagner group is training Ukrainian children for combat. Do you have any information on this? If so, do you know what we can do to protect Ukrainian children from this phenomenon?

[*English*]

The Chair: Please answer very briefly.

Dr. Jack Watling: The critical protection is to prevent the Russians occupying any more territory and to try to negotiate for the return of children who have already been seized. I've been in areas that were occupied and have been through the records in some of those areas. It's clear that many children were taken into Russia by the Russian armed forces. This is something that has happened across the areas that they've occupied, and it's obviously a great concern for the Ukrainians, because the process of filtration that was set up separated those children from their families.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Michaud.

Madam Mathyssen, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Thank you, Dr. Watling, for appearing with us today.

Many members of this committee visited Taiwan last week. We spoke to some really incredible representatives about how they battle misinformation and disinformation campaigns from China and about that intense relationship they have. We learned that they were very proactive about it in their education systems. We heard in the last panel as well that other countries are better at it.

Could you talk to us about the impact of Russian misinformation campaigns on the U.K. and what they're doing to defend against them?

Dr. Jack Watling: Sure. I think that for the last few years there has been an obsession with misinformation on social media and that kind of thing as though that were the primary issue. While the Russians do exacerbate those problems, and it's useful to them, what they are actually doing is manufacturing constituencies that elites can then use.

The target for Russian information operations is actually elites in certain countries, people like yourselves. What we are observing is that the Russians have set up a series of “centres of special influence”, as they call them, for command and control, and are targeting a number of countries, including the U.K., Germany, France and the U.S., where they are conducting active measures and ultimately trying to shift policy through pushing targeted narratives at elites.

In the U.S., for example, those narratives include the argument that every dollar spent defending Ukraine is a dollar making you weaker in the Indo-Pacific, essentially exacerbating policy debates there about prioritization. Pushing the argument that money should be spent to support domestic needs and fight inflation rather than support Ukraine is another one, even though Russia is the cause of a lot of that inflation through its energy campaign and economic warfare.

The really critical thing, to my mind, is being much more proactive in identifying the individuals who engage with elite communities and try to seed these ideas in our policy debates. It's about combing through and identifying individuals who are not participating politically in good faith.

● (1025)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: In terms of the weeding out of those individuals, are there countries that are doing that well? Does the U.K. have a specific strategy? Could you give us examples?

Dr. Jack Watling: I think Estonia has done a very good job of going through that process. It's taken them a period of time to acknowledge that it was a problem and to build the domestic political support for doing that.

In other countries, it is happening. You will see a steady trickle of arrests. In the U.S., there are certainly individuals. We are seeing indictments come out on a semi-regular basis.

One of the challenges with this process is that it's almost always politically contentious, because the way the Russians work is that they target organizations that give the people they recruit political legitimacy, protection. It looks like enforcement is going after the legitimate political debates that are surrounding the organization the person is attached to rather than going after the individual.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: I want to expand on one of the conversations we had in the other panel with Ms. Buck, the former Canadian ambassador to NATO. She spoke about targeting lesser allies and making them stronger allies by talking about things like food security and the impacts that have been seen around the world as a result of what has happened with Ukraine's production of food.

Could you expand a bit on that in terms of how Canada participates and how NATO countries and the U.K. could participate to strengthen those lesser allies to make them stronger so that they have a greater impact on Russia in those diplomatic formats?

Dr. Jack Watling: I'm going to interpret your question as partners rather than allies. I presume you mean countries outside of the alliance that we have relationships with.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Yes.

Dr. Jack Watling: The issue there is that while we have focused very directly on our own ecosystem and a lot of our information affects English language sources or European media and that ecosystem, the Russians are extremely active across Africa and South America. If you go onto elite WhatsApp groups between MPs and that kind of thing, in those countries you will very quickly observe a lot of translated Russian material that is in circulation among those groups, because there simply isn't an alternative narrative that is being actively promoted.

In Canada, given that you have significant numbers of personnel with both information warfare expertise and French language skills, there are audiences that have much more capacity to understand how the Russians are operating in those environments. Engage and counter. Make sure that there is an alternative narrative present.

It's partly about appreciating that from Russia's point of view, this is a global effort.

The Chair: Colleagues, we have 15 minutes of time left and 25 minutes' worth of questions. It doesn't work, so we're down to rounds of three minutes. It's three, three, one, one, three and three.

With that, Ms. Gallant, you have three minutes, please.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

What's the greatest vulnerability that Russia faces that could perhaps be exploited?

Dr. Jack Watling: It's the low morale and poor training quality of its soldiers. Ultimately, Russia lacks leverage, because it is losing ground and losing people on the battlefield. That is the thing that we have to make sure continues. We cannot let them have a ceasefire when they could put their mobilized troops through deliberate training and therefore improve their capabilities. We also cannot let them start to grind away at the Ukrainians in traditional fighting, because the Ukrainians lack the firepower to hold them back.

That is the critical point of leverage we have that will always keep the Russians on their back foot.

● (1030)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What capabilities do you see as being vital to ensuring that Ukraine is victorious in the war that haven't been provided to Ukraine yet?

Dr. Jack Watling: It's boring, but there are hundreds and hundreds of different, very small spare parts for which the Ukrainians don't have the intellectual property rights and therefore the CAD drawings to be able to produce them. They don't know the heat treatment or the tolerances of a lot of their Soviet legacy equipment that is breaking down. Equipment that's being provided by the international community is also breaking down.

At the moment, Ukrainian commanders are having to decide between sending a howitzer back to Poland and not knowing when it's going to come back to them, and therefore losing the capability completely, or continuing to operate it even though part of it is damaged, which then leads to the system becoming broken in a much more serious way.

Working through that complex maintenance and support process for the equipment we have already provided, as well as ammunition and barrels, is the very kind of underappreciated aspect that we are struggling to follow through on.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Is there a legislative instrument that could be put forth to be able to mobilize production using the civilian industrial complex more quickly than we are?

Dr. Jack Watling: I'm not a lawyer, and I'm certainly not a lawyer in Canada, so I'm afraid.... I'm a military analyst. I don't know, but such a law would probably be quite useful.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: There's not a policy you see that other countries have that we don't—some sort of standing order to flip the switch, so to speak, and have the civilian industries—

Dr. Jack Watling: The U.S. has such legislation to enable the President to requisition industry and direct it to produce war materials, yes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay, I'm done. I'm sorry.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Fisher, you have three minutes.

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

Thank you, Doctor, for being here. It's absolutely fascinating testimony. I hate the fact that I have only three minutes, so I'm going to speak really quickly and get my preamble done as soon as I can and leave the time for you to give your amazing answers.

In early days, we heard about this in the news. It was on the news 24-7 in the early days of the war, and we're not seeing that as much now.

I think the world was surprised. I was surprised. I think Canadians were surprised at the early successes that the Ukrainians had. I think we believed the hype that the big bear would come in and take right over, and it would be three or four days. Someone in your position probably didn't believe that, but I think we were surprised and impressed.

Now it's not on the news 24-7. We're not seeing it every single day, so I thought maybe someone with your expertise would be able to fill us in on some of the latest developments, the conclusions you can draw from some of these latest developments and how you see the conflict developing in the next few months.

Dr. Jack Watling: The next few months are going to be absolutely critical, because if the Ukrainians are able to get the Russians moving backward, the Russian command and control system is likely to make that a very chaotic process. The headquarters are 120 kilometres from the front. If that can happen, then we might start seeing quite a rapid breakdown of the Russian defensive positions.

Conversely, if the Ukrainians are not able to breach those obstacle belts that the Russians are building and they lose or suffer attrition in the units that have the skills to do opposed obstacle breaching, this could become a very protracted, attritional fight.

We need to make sure that it goes one way rather than the other, but which way it goes will probably determine the trajectory of the war. If it becomes protracted, it becomes increasingly focused on infantry, and Russia can regenerate those units, whereas Ukraine will increasingly need a qualitative edge to combat Russian mass.

Mr. Darren Fisher: What are your thoughts, then—and I only have about 45 seconds—on China as a friend and an ally to Russia and whether they're actually providing anything or willing to provide anything, or in the future months may consider providing something?

Dr. Jack Watling: China offered to provide microelectronics and other components and machine tooling for Russian industry in the very early days of the war. They've also been very important in providing finance, although they extract a lot of concessions for that. They also provide advice and engage with the Russian military in that way. There's ongoing joint training, I believe.

What we haven't yet seen is whether the Chinese will set up production in Russia, building factories in Russia and moving personnel and technicians to run them. That is a major risk. I think that is much more likely than directly supplying munitions, because the Chinese want to appear to be uninvolved. Nonetheless, their position is supportive of Russia, even if it's at arm's length.

● (1035)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for one minute.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we know, Ukrainian grain destined for foreign countries has been transiting through the European Union since the traditional export route through the Black Sea was blocked by the Russian invasion. One can imagine that this has had an impact on delivery times, for example, as well as costs.

Russia is threatening to suspend the agreement on Ukrainian grain exports if the west does not lift its restrictions on the Russian agricultural sector. If so, what kind of impact might this have on countries that receive this grain, including Canada?

[*English*]

Dr. Jack Watling: I think the most significant effect would be in countries like Lebanon, Yemen and Egypt, where those grains have been absolutely critical for the food security of the local population. That is also one of the reasons the Russians are cautious, I think, or prepared to negotiate on this particular issue, because if they can frame starvation or malnutrition in those countries as being caused by NATO, that is something they are potentially willing to bring about.

If it is instead perceived in those countries as something that is being caused by the Russian blockade of Ukraine, that undermines their relationship with countries with which, in the case of Egypt, they have much more co-operation than others. In the case of Syria, they are actually a security guarantor to the Assad government.

I think that's an area where there is plenty of scope for diplomacy and in which we have some leverage, but it would be a humanitarian tragedy.

The Chair: I'm sorry to keep cutting you off.

Madam Mathyssen, you have one minute.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Actually, I want to just build off one of the questions Ms. Gallant previously asked you. She asked about Russia's biggest weakness, and your response was about training, morale and so on. We've heard from others that the biggest weakness is the fact that they're a dictatorship and that the use of sanctions against oligarchs is key in that situation.

Although you said it was not the biggest, would you agree that this is effective? ALso, are Canada and the world using sanctions effectively? Are there ways we can better do that?

Dr. Jack Watling: The sanctions are fine. We're not very proactive at actually shutting down these businesses. A number of times I've seen an oligarch get sanctioned and set up a front company that takes on the assets. They then have a non-public agreement with someone to hold it in their name, and they are able to essentially continue doing their business. This is really concerning.

We have a big project here that tracks the smuggling of military-grade equipment out of our countries to Russia, and in the last few months of last year, we saw month-on-month increases [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The Chair: I think Dr. Watling just froze. It's either that or he's very steady.

He's gone. The Russians....

He knew that Mr. Bezan was going to ask a really sharp question, and that's why he left.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Could we do our committee business part? Then we can go back.

The Chair: That would be terribly efficient.

A voice: He's back.

● (1040)

Dr. Jack Watling: I'm sorry, but I have no idea what happened there.

The Chair: It was either the Chinese or the Russians—one or the other—who got you.

Mr. Bezan has three minutes' worth of questions.

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

I will be very quick, and hopefully we don't have any Russian information operations undermine Dr. Watling's testimony.

Dr. Watling, you mentioned the issue around the war of attrition we're facing, and in particular you looked at the bloody battle of Bakhmut. I am wondering about some comments that were made yesterday by the Wagner owner, Prigozhin, that this should be the end of it and that Russia should accept what it has gained and hold onto that territory. He isn't calling for any more advances.

War atrocities have been committed by the Wagner Group, not just in Ukraine but in Syria and elsewhere. What do you think the logic is behind those, which continue to put Prigozhin offside with Putin?

Second, could you talk about the resilience of the Ukrainians themselves, both in the battle for Bakhmut and elsewhere, and in their ability to make use of some rather archaic military equipment while continuing to surprise everyone with their effectiveness?

Dr. Jack Watling: Over the winter the Russian military wanted to reduce attrition in its own units, so it allowed Wagner to take control of a large number of mobilized prisoners to basically continue the pressure on the Ukrainians without pushing that attrition onto them. As a result, they were receiving a lot of equipment provided by the GRU through the Russian Ministry of Defence. That was removed once the Russian military got back in the driving seat. Prigozhin has fairly consistently been used as a critic, not of Putin but of the defence minister, Shoigu, and General Gerasimov, the chief of the general staff. He is doing that as an outrider for a different faction within the Kremlin. I could go into the details of who they are, but it is probably too specific for this committee. However, there is a certain amount of infighting and politics—

Mr. James Bezan: It would be interesting if you could send a written reply back to committee to provide that information on who he's working for and how he's being used as a proxy. I think it's something we're all actually very interested in, but time won't permit you here.

Dr. Jack Watling: In the interest of time, I'm happy to follow up with the clerk and provide some written comments.

The Chair: In the interest of time, we're going to have to cut it there.

Colleagues, I'm sure the conversations were very important, but they weren't nearly as important as the conversation between Mr. Bezan and Dr. Watling, so perhaps we can keep the conversations down to a dull roar.

For the final three minutes, we have Madam Lambropoulos.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Dr. Watling, for being here with us.

You spoke about NATO's need for Ukraine to win this war in order to prevent potential threats in the future, and that the outcome still very much depends on what we do at this point. The next few months will be critical, and NATO has to help Ukraine avoid a protracted fight, in which Russia would eventually get the upper hand.

If you were in a room with NATO's decision-makers today, what is that one message you would be giving them that they need to do in order to help Ukraine push the Russians back in the next few months?

Dr. Jack Watling: I would tell them that we don't need large political statements anymore. This is not about getting ministers to sign off on new equipment; it's about the detailed, dull drudgery of working through all of the contracts to make sure that the equipment we've already provided can be maintained. There should be dedicated training for things like brigade and battalion staff so that the Ukrainians can integrate all of the different capabilities they're being given. We need to ensure the pipeline of training is coherent between Operation Interflex in the U.K., where we do basic training, and the company and battalion training across Europe, so that the Ukrainians have an assured pipeline for generating units that would be more capable than their adversaries.

It's the same thing with the supply chains in terms of our industrial base. This is not about big-ticket items; it's about very detailed work that just has to be lined up, racked and stacked. It's about discipline and follow-through.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

I'll leave it there. I appreciate your testimony, and you've taught us a lot today.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Watling.

I regret having to bring this meeting to a conclusion. I'm sure we could go on for several hours of further questions, but we are not able to.

On behalf of the committee, thank you.

Colleagues, before we go, I have a couple of housekeeping items that are more for information than anything else.

We passed the report of the subcommittee, and the anticipation was that we would start with the health study on Tuesday. The anticipation on the anticipation was that we would have officials, but the officials are not available, so we may have a hybrid study on Tuesday. If the health witnesses that will get us started are not available or not fully available, we may add in an American person with respect to the Ukrainian threat analysis. Stay tuned, as we're kind of scrambling on the study for Tuesday.

Minister Anand has agreed to be here on May 2 for the estimates. May 5 will be cancelled because of the Liberal convention. May 19 will be cancelled because of the Bloc convention.

May 9, 12, and 16 are reserved for the health and transition services study. Prior to June 1, you will receive an invitation from the French embassy for supper. On May 8, the deputy Polish minister is available, but can only meet members at 1:15. If you could indicate to me who might be available, the clerk will make some arrangements.

Go ahead, Mrs. Gallant.

● (1045)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

At some point, if we are completely devoid of witnesses, could we put the ambassador from Taiwan to Canada on notice that he may be called on short notice to present an update of the situation in the Indo-Pacific, specifically with respect to Taiwan? This would only be if we find ourselves in the situation we appear to be facing next week.

Thank you.

The Chair: You certainly won't get any objection from the chair on that. I'll bear that in mind. We'll see how we scramble for Tuesday. Ideally, we would stay within what we've already agreed to, but if there's a looming gap, we will....

Is there any other...?

With that, the meeting is adjourned.