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• (0815)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): Colleagues, let's get started. It's 8:15. We have our three witnesses in place.

I'm not interrupting anybody else's conversation, am I?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): No, we're paying attention, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: I'm glad. I appreciate that.

We have our witnesses in place. It's 8:15 and we have quorum.

I generally consider it disadvantageous to be coming in virtually, but if Marta Kepe is ready to go, then I will call upon her first.

I do also want to welcome Dominique Arel, chair of Ukrainian studies at University of Ottawa; and Stephen Saideman, Paterson chair in international affairs, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University.

I spent some pleasant time last night with your colleague, Stephanie Carvin.

Colleagues, we have these witnesses for two hours, and I hope to get through three rounds of questions. I propose to go through the first two rounds as is laid out here, and then to go to the second hour with the second set of questioners. That way everybody should be able to get in all of the questions they want to ask to these very excellent witnesses.

With that, we call upon Marta Kepe, the senior defence analyst for RAND.

You have five minutes. Go ahead, please.

Ms. Marta Kepe (Senior Defense Analyst, RAND, As an Individual): Thank you very much for inviting me to address the committee on the topic of security in the Baltic region.

The security environment in the Baltic region has degraded since Russia's full-scale invasion into Ukraine in February 2022. Since then, Russia's military forces have been focused on fighting in Ukraine, which has decimated its land capabilities previously located near the Baltic borders.

Having said that, Russia has announced plans to restructure its military districts on the borders of the Baltics and Finland, and these plans may be indicative of a trend towards a long-term confrontation between Russia and the west.

Russia also maintains capable and dense air defences in Kaliningrad and St. Petersburg, and coastal defence missiles in Kaliningrad, which could be a potential threat, as they are able to reach into the territories of the Baltic states, Finland and Poland and could interdict maritime commercial activity throughout the maritime area.

At the same time, Russia's hybrid activities in the region have intensified. This is what Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas called a "shadow war" against the west. This war is mainly waged through non-military actions such as disinformation, cyber-attacks, acts of sabotage, psychological pressure, weaponized migration and increased intelligence activities.

Some of these activities are not necessarily new. They're just being scaled up. Those include cyber-attacks and misinformation and disinformation campaigns. Some are more novel—let's put it like that—and these are, for example, attacks on undersea and land critical infrastructure, which have revealed a very important vulnerability: that seabed infrastructure is vitally important for modern economies and is also very poorly monitored and protected.

We also see an increase in low-level sabotage and vandalism activities in the Baltic states and elsewhere in what Lithuanian officials have called "political terrorism". These seemingly random acts of vandalism or sabotage are likely aimed at creating a sense of uncertainty about what is next and are probably also creating the appearance of growing opposition to support for Ukraine as well.

Russian jamming of global positioning system or GPS signals in the Baltic region has also intensified, disrupting air and sea navigation and affecting numerous commercial flights. Here, I have to admit that some of the more recent examples of GPS jamming in the Baltic region may actually be likely due to Russia simply turning up its anti-drone defences around key population centres in western Russia.

We also, then, have Russian violations of Baltic airspace, which have not only increased but actually, since September 7 of this year, have also diversified. You may have heard that on September 7 a Russian Shahed drone fell down in eastern Latvia.

In light of these events, the Baltic states and also NATO have made a lot of developments and changes. NATO Baltic states are among the top spenders across NATO in terms of defence investment and GDP. They have been investing in their armed forces with exercises and training as well. Finland and Sweden joining NATO has been a very important development for how we can think about the defence and security of the region. NATO now is able to think about the region in a more comprehensive manner and in a more joint manner as well.

In terms of military operations and military preparedness, I also want to highlight the fact that we have done a lot to improve military mobility. It is not completely solved, but it has become easier and faster. The Baltic states are boosting their capabilities through equipment procurements and, as I said, training, and also, in the case of Latvia, through a return to conscription.

Now, a continued allied presence—including Canadian military—will be vital for deterrence and for defence of the region. NATO and the Baltics do need to remain vigilant and to continue to develop the defence capabilities in the region. With time, Russia's measures in the region across NATO will likely adjust as it tailors them to new vulnerabilities. This means that Canada, the alliance and the Baltic states will need to closely monitor Russian attempts to shift red lines and exploit our vulnerabilities and boundaries.

• (0820)

As the Baltic states work on strengthening their defence capabilities, allied support will be crucial in key areas. These include air defence. In terms of addressing hybrid and grey zone threats, a lot of things the Baltic states can do are national responsibilities. However, external support will continue to be important.

I will stop here and answer any questions in the discussion.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Arel.

Dr. Dominique Arel (Chairholder, Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Good morning.

The increasing devastation of the war in Ukraine has brought a degree of clarity on three issues.

First, Ukraine cannot defend itself against glide bombs at or near the front lines, or against ballistic missiles aimed at its cities. It would need 25 Patriot-type air defence systems. It was promised seven and has thus far received even fewer, although we don't have the official number. It's secret.

Second, sanctions against the import of microprocessors, on which guided missiles and bombs are dependent, do not work, largely because China refuses to implement them.

Third, Ukraine cannot win Donbass attrition warfare because all NATO members put together cannot match Russia's annual artillery production, and because the huge Russian casualties are not impacting the stability of the Russian regime.

This dire military disadvantage has led Ukraine to conclude that the best defence is offence. The best protection against daily attacks is to hit at the source. Ukraine already does this with fast-develop-

ing attack drones against munition depots—we saw a case yesterday—oil refineries and military airports inside Russia.

However, it could do this with far greater impact if it were to receive permission from the United States to use the long-range missiles it already possesses but which are restricted to legal Ukrainian territories. The U.S. has refused due to a fear of escalation, we are told repeatedly. It would appear, however, that escalation is already upon us. Russia escalated before a decision was made regarding the use of these long-range missiles. Escalation is associated with the threat that Russia may resort to nuclear weapons. This threat is empty. Ukraine invaded a part of Kursk oblast, and Russia responded militarily through conventional means and politically by pretending that nothing serious happened.

A more credible threat is for Russia to break the taboo of nuclear proliferation by assisting Iran and North Korea. There are worrying signs that the latter may already be in motion—emphasis on “may”.

A second threat is Russia helping Iran target American assets in the Middle East. Iran just sent ballistic missiles to Russia in a “dramatic escalation”—in the words of U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The question is, what is Iran getting of great value in return? Once again, this escalation appears to precede the American decision over long-range missiles. Putin claimed last week that, since Ukrainians could not use these missiles on their own and has to rely on U.S. satellite data in particular, this would make NATO a direct party to the war, yet these missiles have long hit in and around Crimea, which Putin considers not only legal territory but eternal Russian territory. The response has been strictly conventional.

A third element of threat—my colleague Marta Kepe mentioned it at length in her presentation—is the threat of attacking communications, energy and military infrastructure in the west, and provocations over crossing through the air, as with Romania the other day.

• (0825)

The argument has been made that these long-range missiles will not be a game-changer. This is beside the point. What the missiles could do is considerably raise the Russian military cost of attacking Ukraine. Deterrence is ultimately the only way to provide Ukraine with security guarantees.

Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Saideman.

Dr. Stephen Saideman (Paterson Chair in International Affairs, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, As an Individual): Thank you for the invitation to be here.

I have to start with some caveats and a call for humility.

My work started out on international relations of ethnic conflict, so I know something about irredentism, which is, in part, driving what Russia is doing these days. I have moved on to alliances and civil-military relations. I am not a Russia, Ukraine or Baltics expert. I have been to Riga a couple of times in the past couple of years. I am more of a Canadian defence person.

When I was asked in 2022 how long Ukraine would last, I underestimated Ukraine's resolve, preparedness and leadership. I also overestimated Russia's military. I need to focus on what we got wrong and what we got right, on what has been consistent and what has been more fluid and more uncertain.

The greatest uncertainty we face in Ukraine, in Russia and in the Baltics is really in Washington, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and all those other places. Things will change quite remarkably, depending on the election. If Harris wins, we should expect the status quo to remain the same, depending in part on whether the Democrats pick up the House and keep the Senate. If Trump wins, the future is bleak everywhere, especially in Ukraine, as there is no substitute for the U.S.'s support. Similarly, if Trump wins, NATO either will cease to exist or will exist only formally. The commitment of article 5 would no longer be relevant. There is no Trump-proofing NATO. I can talk more about that in the Q and A.

That gets to a very important dynamic that I think has been underappreciated for the security situation in the Baltics and eastern Europe, which is that Russia, under Putin, has been engaged in all kinds of aggressive behaviour, as has been mentioned thus far, but there has not been one single conventional attack across the bright, shiny line that divides NATO from non-NATO countries. That matters a great deal to Putin. As long as the U.S. continues to be led by those who support the alliance, the Baltics' security is actually pretty good; although, the folks in the region will disagree with that.

Canada, along with much of NATO, has invested seriously for the long term. We used to dodge the idea of permanent basing, but we no longer are respecting the long-dead NATO-Russia founding act. We've moved from having enough forces in the region to deter the Russians to potentially defeat an attack upon the Baltics. We have learned much from the Ukraine war about our limitations—not nearly having enough artillery or ammunition for instance—and about Russia's limitations. Moreover, Russia's military is very much depleted, as the first speaker noted. We can have an argument about how quickly Russia can reconstitute its military, but right now, there are far fewer tanks, artillery and infantry on the other side of the border. To be sure, Russian air power and sea power, aside from the Black Sea fleet, is far less depleted by the war.

Where is Canada in all of this? Canada has made a huge contribution in training the Ukraine military before the second invasion. The effort in Latvia has been outstanding in terms of Canada's having the hardest job because we moved last, so we got the smallest contributions from many countries that were not the best militaries

in the alliance. The CAF has managed this quite well. The enlargement from battle groups to brigades has put even more pressure on Canada since it means a much bigger commitment, which, in turn, means more troops rotating through Latvia more frequently.

However, Swedish membership in NATO means many more high-quality troops in Latvia, potentially. It promised some troops. The question remains of how many troops can Canada sustain in Latvia. As I said, I've been to the battle group's HQ a couple of times. It is clear that the frequent rotations are stressing the force. It may make sense to have longer tours so that there are fewer people going back and forth, and to build infrastructure for them so that time can pass more easily.

We might want to think about the Cold War model of having families joining their troops in Latvia. That would be expensive with schools, day care and creative ways to keep the spouses employed, but it's not clear that having 1,500 troops come and go every six months is sustainable. For future reference, Canada and other democracies need to be more careful about the numbers we promise. Our army is simply not that big.

Speaking of limitations, our small military simply does not have that much stuff to give to Ukraine. We could consider what some other countries have done, which is to give away entire segments of their armed forces. We have repeatedly reconsidered whether we should have tanks over the past 20 or 30 years. We could, for instance, give all of our tanks, working and broken, to Ukraine and have it handle them, and we could realign our force. In the field right now, this has happened mostly at the battle group I saw in 2023 in Latvia, which was centred not around Canadian tanks but around those from our partners. However, given our own recruitment and retention crisis, and our slow procurement processes, it is unlikely for Canada to make that big decision.

One key underrated change in the region is that we are no longer participating in the rotation of air patrolling. We used to have six packs of six CF-18s rotate into and out of Romania and fly around the region. That was a major contribution to the air situation, and we're no longer doing that.

● (0830)

The one thing I want to point out that hasn't come up is the civil-military relations of the region, which is that we need to keep an eye on what Zelenskyy is doing with his officers, whether he's maintaining good civilian control of the military or whether he's appointing people that he likes for their political favours. That's just one challenge.

Another challenge which has come up is when the Russian military will mutiny. It is how the Russian involvement in World War I ended. Given the bloodshed they've suffered, that is one possibility that could be happening sometime, given the abuse that those soldiers have faced.

I'll cut it off now.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Saideman.

We'll go to our six-minute round. I have MPs Gallant, Lapointe, Normandin and Mathysen.

Mrs. Gallant, you have six minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: My first question is for Madam Kepe.

Minister Blair announced in February of this year \$46 million to acquire new counter-drone equipment for Latvia to defend against class-one drones. Is this new system sufficient to detect and destroy incoming Russian Lancet kamikaze drones?

Ms. Marta Kepe: I cannot tell you off the top of my head specifically what type of drone it will be effective against.

What I do want to say is that, in fact, when I spoke about the capabilities that Baltic states really need assistance with, they are working on counter-drone capabilities. Assistance in terms of counter-drone capabilities is very important. I mean counter-drones against a number of different types of drones, starting from very small ones, because those can be used, as we know, also to do attacks. We see plenty of examples of those from both sides in the war in Ukraine, all the way to much larger, much more sophisticated, complicated drones as well. The Shahed would be, let's say, a bigger one.

I would say the counter-drone capability is needed across the spectrum.

• (0835)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What kind of drone was recovered in Latvia? Was it a kamikaze or surveillance drone?

Ms. Marta Kepe: That would be the Iranian Shahed drone.

The Shahed drone is basically like a loitering munition type of unmanned aerial system. You may refer to it also as a kamikaze drone or as a suicide drone. It's basically an autonomous flying weapon. That is what was recovered in Latvia. The investigation is still ongoing, so we only know what has been in the media—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

Ms. Marta Kepe: —but we know that they have recovered it there.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

Mr. Arel, with the lack of ground-based, long-range anti-air capabilities like Patriot missiles or NASAMS for our troops, especially defending Latvia, vulnerable to the high-altitude aircraft like Tu-160 and Tu-95 bombers, cruise missiles and hypersonic missiles, how can we defend ourselves from these threats without any plan from our government to acquire long-range SAMs to counter these threats?

Dr. Dominique Arel: Is the question related to the Baltics or to Ukraine?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: It's related to Latvia.

Dr. Dominique Arel: I can't really address the Latvia situation. I'll leave that to my colleagues and address Ukraine.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: All right.

Would Mr. Saideman be able to address that?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I could try.

I would say that the Latvia situation is a multilateral effort, and we would be depending on our allies for the help in air defence. The United States has air defence capabilities in the region. The British and the Germans have some capabilities. The benefit of the Baltics region is that it's small, so the threats that are facing us are not only facing us but they're facing our allies in the region. We don't have the capability. They're currently trying to reinvest in that capability, but no, we don't have that ability ourselves at the moment.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: This question may be for Mr. Arel.

There's also the ground-based air defence project, GBAD, that claims to defeat threats posed by rockets, artillery, mortar munitions, air-to-surface missiles and drones with attack aircraft and helicopter relegated to second targets.

Why hasn't our government seen the need to counter threats from high-altitude bombers, given their ability to launch cruise missiles and, more worryingly, hypersonic missiles? That would apply to Canada as well as Latvia.

Dr. Dominique Arel: What I can say regarding Canada, from my Ukraine vantage point, is that I don't see a political will, really, to engage or to make major changes to what Canada can provide abroad and can produce for itself, as you referred to. Canada promised, 20 or 21 months ago, a system in the family of Patriot systems, and it has still not been delivered. There have been decisions or non-decisions regarding budget reallocations for the military. We are familiar with the problem. Canada is a laggard in the infamous 2% threshold, and that's been two and a half years' going.

From a Ukraine perspective, Canada's not alone. A lot of promises are made, but then the delivery is very slow. The reality right now is that Ukraine cannot defend itself against these systematic attacks. That's the escalation. The escalation is that Russia is doing more of these attacks on civilian targets, which is why the strategy in Ukraine now has to be dual—not just to think about how we can defend ourselves while we're being destroyed but to go on the offence.

• (0840)

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gallant.

Go ahead, Ms. Lapointe.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

My question is for Ms. Kepe. In your opening statement you talked about the “shadow war” against the west. Can you expand on that and provide this committee with further examples?

Ms. Marta Kepe: Prime Minister Kaja Kallas uses a really interesting way of talking about the shadow war and that is, exactly, something we put under what we normally talk about as activities under the threshold of war, grey-zone activities and also hybrid security risks.

There are a number of issues that are going on. There are attacks on infrastructure, and not only attacks on infrastructure but also the collection of intelligence and valuable information on critical infrastructure and vital services, which is something, through the accumulation of information, the adversary does to gain a lot of the valuable information they need to do what we refer to as “information preparation for the battlefield”, understanding the battlefield that you would fight in.

I actually advise against reading a lot about preparation for war in some of these activities that are happening in the Baltic Sea region in general. A lot of that can also be directed. The intention here can also be to sow uncertainty and intimidation, as well as to continue tactics to undermine cohesion and create this sense that maybe we have to live with Russia in our backyard and this is just how life is, so let's just work with them in a way that works for them.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

My next question for you is a two-part question. Speaking of cyber-threats, we've certainly seen an increase of cyber-threats from Russia against Ukraine, Europe and North America. What do you believe the NATO nations' main vulnerabilities are to cyber-threats from Russia?

The second part of the question is this: What types of scenarios should we realistically consider as potential imminent threats and where should we focus our mitigation efforts?

Ms. Marta Kepe: These are very difficult questions, I have to say.

The first one about cyber-threats, the main issue here is that what we see is.... We—in general, “we” as the west—have a lot of experience already with cyber-threats, not only Russian but from other actors as well, so the capability, skill and understanding of how to work and the procedures and processes are in place. However, processes and procedures can always be improved, especially when it comes to information and intelligence sharing, so that we can help our friends and neighbours across the west to be better at addressing the threat that's coming in. NATO created new channels to ensure that there can be help when needed. I believe it was a western Balkan country that was the first to use this new framework of assistance.

The other thing is the ability to respond to cyber-attacks and threats that are waged at scale. New technologies, automation systems, AI...what does it really do? It helps the adversary in creating a lot of attacks at the same time. That would be, probably, my main concern. It's definitely not the only concern at this time, but I highlight that.

I'm sorry, but the other is the main vulnerability in general...?

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Where should we focus our mitigation efforts against these threats?

Ms. Marta Kepe: We look at hybrid threats in total. The focus.... I'm talking about this focus because this is the area where, if we do have a vulnerability that is exploited, then it can have a lot of effect, a lot of bad consequences. That means really creating and building resilience in our critical infrastructure of vital services—our energy systems and our food and water systems—things that people need to survive. I would put a lot of focus on that.

Of course, many other things also need resilience building, information sharing, co-operation and best practices sharing. A lot of the how to do that, I would say, is really about informing and sharing best practices, because then countries, local governments, etc., can actually figure out how to do it and what the things are that would work best for them.

• (0845)

The Chair: You have 45 seconds.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Oh, goodness.

Mr. Saideman, you talked about how there's no Trump-proofing NATO. Can you expand on that in probably 30 seconds now?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: Sure. With respect to NATO, the challenge is that the heart of it is article 5, an attack upon one is equal to an attack upon all. He's made it very clear that he's not very concerned about that. He has talked about making it contingent on 2%, and now we have his VP candidate talking about it being contingent on other dynamics related to immigration and other strange things. It's clear they don't take NATO very seriously.

They spent a lot of time, the last time around, trying to educate Trump about NATO. He was pretty ruthless about not learning those lessons. He has a lot of resentment towards NATO, because he remembers not feeling very comfortable at all of the summits and not being a member of the club. He is a man animated almost entirely by resentment, so it doesn't portend well for the organization, and he was always.... I mean, his first campaign commitments in 2015 were about being anti-NATO.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lapointe.

Ms. Normandin will speak *en français*, so just adjust if need be.

[Translation]

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

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

Professor Saideman, I will come back a little later to the matter of Donald Trump and NATO.

Mr. Arel, you talked about the risk of escalation if long-range missiles were authorized. You said the risk of spillover into the Middle East was more significant than the fear of nuclear escalation.

Should we revise our narrative so that the public understands the real issues, that deterrence is happening in the right place when it comes to ultimately authorizing the use of long-range missiles? Should we completely revise our narrative in order to facilitate the authorization Ukraine is seeking, so that it can use long-range missiles?

Dr. Dominique Arel: That is an excellent question.

In fact, it is best to say nothing at all.

[English]

It's the fear of escalation.

[Translation]

According to the American side, 90% of bombers launching balloon bombs or supersonic missiles are out of range of ATACMS missiles in any case. It changes nothing. It is somewhat more empirical.

As for the rest, in the public debate at NATO, the United States lacks transparency about the risks of escalation. It is not much better in Europe. What are we talking about exactly?

Since Europe, Canada and the United States are democracies, that information will eventually leak. We must follow that closely. The general public is afraid of nuclear weapons and a third world war; I'll leave it there.

What seems clear to me from the outset is that barely veiled threats were made on the first day of the invasion, February 24, 2022. The reality remains one of conventional retaliation and increasingly conventional attacks against civilians. Ukrainian civilians are being targeted. That's the retaliation against Ukrainians. You talked about deterrence, but from a strategic point of view. And yet, the greatest danger is giving in to the fear of escalation in a context where, for the first time, a nuclear power is threatening to use its nuclear force as an act of aggression, not for defence.

If NATO, including Canada and the United States, give in to that fear, I think it will be the end of a fundamental standard on an international level. It will have consequences. In Europe, I think the general perception is that it will not stop at Ukraine if it were to fall, specifically because of the fear of escalation. If that happens, Ukraine will not be able to defend itself.

• (0850)

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

Mr. Saideman, on the issue of Donald Trump potentially winning the election, I'd like to hear you talk about other countries around Ukraine, where we have operations, enhanced forward presence and deterrence. I'm thinking in particular of Poland, where the U.S. has a strong presence. However, Poland has met the target of 2% of GDP for military spending; it has even exceeded it by a considerable amount.

What can we expect from these countries that have ultimately complied with what Donald Trump had asked them to do, which was to sort themselves out? Can we expect American support to continue?

[English]

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I would say that even those countries that spend 2% should not expect the support of Trump. He creates lots of uncertainty about everything, and the whole idea of NATO for 70 years was to try to create some certainty about the American commitment to Europe.

Perhaps the most controversial thing I can say about this is that, if Trump becomes president, I would expect Poland to seriously consider nuclear proliferation because they can't counter the American nuclear umbrella with a Trump presidency, and nobody's counting on the French or the British nuclear weapons to be extended to deter attacks upon the Baltics. They would be on their own to a certain degree.

The history of the European Union trying to develop significant international co-operation to be a replacement for NATO has failed. Now, maybe the impetus of having the United States no longer being a committed defender to eastern Europe would encourage that, but I think that if you talk to the people in the region, you'll hear that they don't have a lot of faith in the European Union standing up if NATO were to become less effective or become irrelevant.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

Ms. Kepe, I don't have much time left, but I would like to come back to you quickly on the issue of conscription. I wanted to ask that question before you brought it up.

What is the mindset in the various Baltic countries?

I think Estonia has not yet reintroduced conscription. Is it considering the possibility of doing so?

What is the public's perception of conscription? Is that perception changing as the conflict in Ukraine continues?

[English]

Ms. Marta Kepe: Thank you.

All three Baltic countries by now have conscription. Estonia never actually said goodbye to its conscription. It has had it since the early 1990s, when they regained independence. In fact, the Baltic states and also the Nordic countries all have some sort of total defence system or "whole of society" defence system, where the civilian contribution to national defence and security is paramount to those systems. Lithuania basically had a sort of hybrid conscription system. They also went back to a fuller type of conscription earlier.

In terms of population support for conscription or national service, which Latvia reintroduced a year or so ago, there always tends to be some sort of concern as to whether the population will be fine with it and whether people will actually be happy to serve. What they have done, and what we see also in some other countries that are trying to reintroduce conscription, is that at first there actually is a lot of interest—

The Chair: Unfortunately, Madame Normandin has gone way past her time.

Ms. Marta Kepe: I'm sorry.

The Chair: Next is Ms. Mathysen, who's very time sensitive.

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

I would like to get back to Trump. Actually, it's more about the connection to what we're seeing within NATO allies now and that movement, with the far right being specifically linked to very pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian sentiment. We're seeing it with America. We're seeing it with Hungary a bit now, which is concerning, of course.

Could you expand on that in terms of describing that link and why that exists?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: That's a really good question. There are a variety of links between the far right and the Russian government. The Russian government has engaged in significant disinformation efforts that have been facilitating the far right.

Why does the far right find Putin attractive? Part of the far right's endeavour is to delegitimize existing institutions. They're also proto-authoritarian, so they find Putin's efforts to be helpful and they find Putin to be a model. They want to have an authoritarian regime that's far right. They're anti-democratic.

Viktor Orbán has been at the forefront of this. Hungary has led the movement on democratic backsliding. He's been fond of talking about illiberal democracy. He's been very fond of using homophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred to mobilize support for his regime and to undermine his opponents and to do that in the neighbourhood as well.

That playbook has been imitated by far-right politicians in Europe and North America. It's not an accident these days that trans people are demonized. It's not an accident that anti-Semitism is rising. It's not an accident that Islamophobia is rising. All these things travel together. Putin's ideology is very similar to the ideology by the far-right political movements in the United States, Canada and Europe.

• (0855)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Does NATO have any sort of actual defence to that within its own internal structures?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: Yes and no, in that they have spent a fair amount of time thinking about disinformation. They have a strategic communications centre of excellence in Latvia. They've been talking about disinformation for quite some time. The problem is—I had a graduate student work on this—foreign election interference and that stuff depends crucially on domestic allies, so it really depends on the domestic politics of each member of NATO and whether the right-wing parties will fight against the far right or ally with them. We've seen mixtures of this one way or the other, and it makes a big difference which side the right-wing parties take on this stuff.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: This certainly isn't anything that's new to Canada as well. Even just last week we saw that far-right start-up called Tenet Media. It was a front for Putin propaganda. They've

been promoting very anti-Ukrainian messages. They do so about vaccines, residential schools and like you said, anti-LGBTQ+ attacks and anti-trans attacks. They're making videos. They're combining with Rebel media, which does the same, and True North, which does the same. That's part of that larger strategy.

What responsibility do we have here in Canada to defeat that internally as well? How do we do that in a nutshell, in a few minutes?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: In the 30 seconds I have left.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: You have more than that. I'll give you my time.

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I know, I'm just joking.

I think this is the central question of our day. There are political temptations by any party to criticize other parties for whatever stances they're taking. The challenge of our political system is that it's adversarial, so it's very hard to get all the parties on the same side about the fact that there are malevolent actors out there who are trying to use our divides against us. It requires the current government to be more transparent about what's been going on, and it requires the opposition parties to ask the right questions or ask good questions about the quality of government responses to these things, but also not to undermine, for instance, existing oversight bodies. NSICOP, NSIRA, those kinds of things are supposed to build faith in oversight of our intelligence apparatus, so we need to be more careful about playing politics with those organizations.

The question is how much our politicians can come together to talk about this stuff. We had a pretty good response in 2021 during that election about election interference, so the question is whether, in the next election, we can have the parties agree to rules about how to deal with outsiders trying to affect things.

We have some outsiders supporting Conservative candidates; we have some outsiders supporting Liberal candidates. It's not like any one party benefits or is hurt by foreign election interference—they're all hurt by it. It hurts our system, which decreases trust in the system, which then means far-right parties end up getting more support. Luckily, that hasn't really happened here yet, but it has to be that each party polices its own.

We also have to expect better efforts by the media not to legitimize the news stories that come out of far-right folks. We can't have this false equivalence where True North says this and the New York Times says that; therefore, the truth is somewhere in between. It's not. We need to be more careful about what we amplify and what we platform.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Do any of the political parties have those internal mechanisms adequately...? Is there a way to strengthen those internal mechanisms within any party? Do they have them to your knowledge?

• (0900)

The Chair: Respond very briefly, please. Ms. Mathysen is past her time.

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I don't know the internal machinery of any of the parties, so I don't know what they have. However, it's something they need to take seriously.

The Chair: Thank you.

Colleagues, we're on to our second round. I have at least six motions that have been properly tabled or made in time, and we may even want to debate them today. I propose that we at least get through one second round of questioning without motions. I hope that's good enough. Then at the third round, you indicate to me whether there are going to be motions, in which case we can manage the witnesses' time properly, so [*Technical difficulty*].

Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC): [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

Dr. Stephen Saideman: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

Mr. Don Stewart: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

Dr. Stephen Saideman: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The Chair: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

• (0900)

(Pause)

• (0910)

The Chair: Okay. We're bringing it back to order. I'm sorry about the technical issues.

We were with Mr. Stewart.

Mr. Stewart, I think we have around three minutes left for you.

Mr. Don Stewart: Thank you.

I want to talk about the general state of repair of our equipment in Latvia. It seems that in Canada a lot of things are broken. On the equipment we have in Latvia, can you comment on the general state of repair of that equipment?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I can't speak to the very specifics of it. I think that generally we send our best equipment to the field, and I would say that in my conversations that I've had with folks in the battle group, the reports about various things are a bit overstated in terms of the lack of resources.

I think the bigger challenge for our forces in Latvia is that they simply don't have as much ammunition to practise the art of war, and that's what they're really lacking. It's not really that their equipment is inferior.

Mr. Don Stewart: In that case, if we don't have inferior equipment, we're also able to repair it on our own and not rely on allies for that supply chain.

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I can't speak to the specifics of the supply chain, but again, the idea of the alliance is that we're supposed to be interoperable. We're supposed to be able to have our allies helping us do things.

The way the battle group is organized is that we don't have Canadians in every position because we have allies in some of these po-

sitions. Some of the maintenance of this stuff maybe is done through allied supply chains, and that's not a bad thing.

Mr. Don Stewart: Okay.

We talked about 1,500 troops every six months. That's 3,000 troops a year. Do we have the regular forces and the reservists to supplement that at a trained and ready condition?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I think we do in the short term. The challenge is that it becomes a recruiting and retention problem, because the troops want to have new and different experiences. People are now on their second, third and fourth tours. In the long run, this has become stressful.

We have enough bodies for this at the moment, but the challenge is this: How do we make the mission easier, more attractive and more engaging so that it becomes a recruitment tool as opposed to an impediment to recruitment?

• (0915)

Mr. Don Stewart: Right, and does that leave us vulnerable at home if all of our assets are directed towards one expeditionary mission?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: No, because our other adversary that we think of is China, and our army is not really designed to fight a war with China. It would not be called upon to send troops to China. Our air force and our navy are more positioned towards the Pacific, so I think the division of labour kind of makes sense. Our army is dedicated to the land war-to-be—a potential land war in Europe—and our navy and air force are mostly pointed elsewhere.

Mr. Don Stewart: Where do we stand versus other countries with respect to our contribution to the Ukraine war?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I don't have the latest statistics on this. I think we're probably in the middle of the pack.

There are lots of countries that made bigger promises than we did and haven't delivered. We've made a fair number of commitments. Is it proportional to our economy compared to the other folks? Probably we could be doing a bit more, but again, we're still recovering from the Afghanistan war in terms of preparing ourselves for a more peer-to-peer kind of war so—

Mr. Don Stewart: That one was 10 years ago.

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I understand that, but the challenge is that procurement takes time, and everybody is in the same line for Stingers and for anti-tank missiles and all the rest. We can't jump the line of every weapons procurement that is coming out of other countries, and we don't have the capability for making Stingers, for instance.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Lambropoulos, you have five minutes.

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

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here to answer questions on this important topic. My first question will be for Mr. Arel.

I'd like to ask if you can explain to Canadians, in terms that the average Canadian would understand, why it is important for Canada to continue helping out these war efforts for Ukraine.

Dr. Dominique Arel: Thank you.

Let me just say two things quickly.

I'm glad to meet you because I'm from the Saint-Laurent riding in Montreal.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Nice. You're my constituent.

Dr. Dominique Arel: Second, I won't say it now, but I'd like to have an opportunity at some point to say things about Trump, NATO and the far right in Russia, because I have an alternative, let's say, even on the drones.

On the question—it's an excellent question—we had the war in Donbass in 2014 and it was seen as bad, destabilizing, a violation of international law, etc., but the unsaid consensus in the west, so in Canada, the United States and among the NATO alliance, was that it was a regional conflict. It was illegal. Crimea was illegally annexed, but with no danger of spilling over. It had to be contained. The corollary was that we were not sending any weapons, due to fear of escalation. Then, there was the Minsk protocol. We had to find a diplomatic solution, and it didn't work.

The qualitative change in 2022, which has been very clear to NATO members, was that this is a threat. The full-scale invasion is a threat to international security. It's a threat to European security. Canada is part of the alliance. What that means in simple terms to the public is that Putin will not stop in Ukraine. He will not stop, so the idea is that we have to find a ceasefire. Just let's stop the war. The war will not stop. Maybe the shooting will stop for a while and then it will start again.

We could say, just ask the Poles. They were part of the Warsaw Pact. They had been occupied for 40 years. Just ask the Estonians. They used to be in the Soviet Union. They're emotional. Why don't we ask the Swedes, the Finns, the Danes, the Dutch and so forth? They have the realization. In the case of Finland and Sweden, they basically overnight put an end to, what, 75 and 200 years of neutrality, because they really fear Russian aggression. That would be my answer.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much for your response.

Would you like to weigh in as well?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I agree with the larger sentiment here. It has already impacted us. We've been having this debate about inflation for the past few years in Canada. Where did that inflation come from? It came from, partly, a spike in food prices because the Russians attacked the breadbasket of Ukraine, a major grain producer. There are economic implications of this that Canadians have been feeling for the past couple of years. Our foreign policy is aimed not only at our national security but our economic security. This war has been bad for us, just like if China attacked Taiwan, it would disrupt international trade and cause a dramatic challenge to our

economy. We're involved in the war, and in the world, to prevent these things from visiting us either indirectly or directly.

Part of the war, Putin's war, is also to test NATO. He is a bad strategist, because it has actually led to a strengthening of NATO. We need to support NATO. We've made a commitment to NATO and this is a threat. This war is not a direct, immediate, physical threat to Canada, but it is a direct, immediate, physical threat to the countries in the region. We have a commitment to NATO, as we belong to that alliance, and we continue to need to support it.

• (0920)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

Mr. Arel, you also mentioned that Russia has been working more closely with Iran and North Korea. I was wondering if you can speak a bit more to their involvement with Russia at this time.

Dr. Dominique Arel: North Korea has sent a ton of artillery—we're talking millions of shells—so clearly it has an impact on attrition in the war in Donbass. At some point the ratio of Russian versus Ukrainian artillery reached 10:1. Now it's down maybe to 5:1, but it's still a massive advantage. It has sent ballistic missiles. For the first time we have.... Forever the North Korean threat has been the nuclear threat, and now North Korea is sending ballistic missiles to Europe for a European country to attack another European country. In a sense, it's not World War III, but suddenly we have a war that is far beyond the European continent.

What's happening with Iran—now having also sent ballistic missiles, it's been confirmed—and the great danger is what, of course, Iran or North Korea are getting in return. What is the Russian role in these regions, so in the Middle East and southeast Asia, to destabilize the region? It can impact, in the case of North Korea, very much South Korean policies—

The Chair: We have to leave it there.

Dr. Dominique Arel: —and the South Korean policies vis-à-vis Ukraine.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

You have two and a half minutes, Madame Normandin.

[Translation]

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

Mr. Arel, I had another question for you, but I want to let you continue on what seemed to interest you with regard to Donald Trump and the right.

Dr. Dominique Arel: Obviously, the return of Donald Trump would be very worrisome, both for American democracy and, therefore, for all of us, certainly in Canada, as well as for NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I won't belabour the point.

However, I still want to say that, during last week's debate, he was asked twice, directly, whether he would defend Ukraine, whether he was for the defence of Ukraine. He refused to answer that question. That's pretty clear. In other words, the war must end on Russian terms. That's clear. J.D. Vance is adding another layer with his peace plan, which is essentially the Russian plan. Once again, it would involve a kind of surrender of Ukraine, which would be demilitarized.

What I mean is that, right now, within the Republican Party, Donald Trump seems to have sort of an impunity about what he can say, or at least about what he wants to do on virtually all issues, without any criticism from the Republicans themselves, except on one issue. That's empirical. In the last year, the only major issue that has divided the Republican Party has been aid to Ukraine. It was suspended for six months. There was a little political revolt within the Republican Party. However, what is remarkable is that it was the Republicans who finally reversed course, without Donald Trump speaking out publicly against the agreement.

On the very issue of missiles and whether the United States should allow the use of missiles, the Republicans are divided, and the officials, the chairs of the defence, security and foreign affairs committees in the House of Representatives, are all in favour of allowing Ukraine to conduct strikes. If Donald Trump comes back to power, there will obviously be chaos and uncertainty. It's not unlikely that the policy will change on this issue. That's what the Ukrainians are banking on. Mr. Zelenskyy will be meeting with Kamala Harris next week, but he will also be meeting with Donald Trump for the first time in person. They have never met, except hastily, once, at a United Nations meeting a few years ago.

That is my somewhat alternative vision, based on American political dynamics.

I don't have enough time to talk about the far right. Maybe I'll leave that for another time.

• (0925)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Normandin.

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

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: You talked earlier, Mr. Arel, about the power of deterrence.

Of course, we all understand it. As a parliamentarian on a committee of nuclear non-proliferation, I find this concerning. There's always this contemplation about where that balance lies. In any nail-biting action movie, it's always the president, at the end of the day, who says, "No, I'm going to stand down. I'm not going to push that button." At what point are we there? Who makes that decision

at the end of the day? Canada has the opportunity to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It hasn't yet.

Who is making those final decisions?

Dr. Dominique Arel: If there is evidence Russia is threatening to help Iran and North Korea technologically acquire the nuclear bomb, is that sufficient, then, for the United States to say, "Well, we can't now 'provoke' Russia for fear that it is doing that"? Is that your question?

Of course, I'm not privy to classified information, so I don't know the extent to which this may or may not already be happening—except that we know Russia, last spring, vetoed the renewal of the oversight security council-led committee to enforce sanctions vis-à-vis North Korea. Anything can go in and anything can go out, such as North Korea sending ballistic missiles to Russia—which is, of course, an enormous violation of the sanctions. However, Russia is not there anymore.

If the escalation has already occurred, a reaction like "we need to stand down" may actually fuel further escalation. This would be the counter-argument: Russia will continue doing what it's already doing and, seeing weakness, advance. Again, it's using the threat of nuclear for aggressive purposes, whereas, throughout the entire Cold War, the deterrence theory was that it was basically defensive—a last resort: "If the security of the state is at stake, we can resort to nuclear weapons."

Of course, Russia claims the war of aggression in Ukraine is a war of self-defence, which nobody buys—certainly not NATO. However, that's the claim, again using the official NATO-era doctrine but putting it upside-down.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Thank you.

Do I have five minutes?

The Chair: I have it split between you and Bezan.

Mr. Dean Allison: Okay. That sounds good. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To our witnesses, thanks for being here.

First I'm going to continue on that train of thought, but I want to get Ms. Kepe into the discussion.

I asked our witnesses on Tuesday what their thought process was when it came to nuclear threats. The ambassador said she wasn't concerned. The generals also said that. I'd just like your take, Ms. Kepe, in terms of what you think.

There's lots of disinformation coming from Russia. Is this just more sabre-rattling? Is there some point at which we should be concerned?

We have talked about weapons moving around. We can come back to that in a second, but I'd just love to have your thoughts on it.

Ms. Marta Kepe: I'll try to be very quick this time.

On the nuclear threat conversation, I'll be honest: I'm not a nuclear deterrence expert. I look at it from the sort of broader defence analytical perspective.

I do not see a very big nuclear risk at the moment. I think there is a lot of conversation. A nuclear threat is something that Russia likes to use every now and then when it wants to affect conversations, opinions and decisions, and we are again at that point.

I also want to caution against.... Really, you need to have a conversation about what it actually is to have.... Sometimes you talk about the use of a tactical nuclear weapon as a deterrent, but you actually have to think about what it means to use a tactical nuclear weapon. Where would it be used, how would it be detonated and what kind of impact would it have and where?

Then you really have the realistic understanding of whether that is going to work as a deterrent, as escalation or not. I think the part of the conversation that we sometimes forget about is what it actually means in practice.

• (0930)

Mr. Dean Allison: Thanks.

Dr. Arel, I'll go back to you because we have been talking about it. You mentioned that, as pieces move around the board, we may be concerned. I'd just love to have your final thoughts on that.

Dr. Dominique Arel: Is the issue on proliferation or the use of so-called tactical nuclear weapons?

Mr. Dean Allison: I mean on the use.

Dr. Dominique Arel: It's on the use of tactical weapons? Okay.

There's a military and an alliance component here. For the military component, it's not clear what Russia would even gain militarily by using a tactical nuclear weapon in terms of the situation on the battlefield.

The political effect of basically breaking the taboo for the first time since 1945 would be enormous. Now, enormous in terms of the reaction of NATO.... Radoslaw Sikorski has been very explicit about what NATO would apparently do. It's basically a complete, massive, conventional attack on any Russian positions in legal Ukrainian territory. Also, in terms of Russian alliances, there are not that many. They're relatively isolated.

The one thing that China has said that is not inclined towards Russia since the beginning of the war is "don't do it". They've said that publicly and it's on their peace plan that dates from February 2023. It's don't use nuclear weapons. Of course, they use different diplomatic language, but the message was very clear.

The military gain is questionable. The military cost might be huge coming from NATO. Then the diplomatic cost to that alliance and, therefore, also to supply chains—a lot is coming from China that has dual use—might be too high for the Russians.

That would be my understanding.

Mr. Dean Allison: Thanks.

Go ahead.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): I'll take Mr. Allison's last minute.

Professor Arel, you talked about how Russian artillery has outpaced all of NATO combined. We also know that they're getting munitions from North Korea, and drones and missiles from Iran.

How far back are NATO allies and how can Canada do more to help supplement that production of artillery shells and rockets?

Dr. Dominique Arel: The gap is considerable.

Mr. James Bezan: Do you have a number? Can you quantify it?

Dr. Dominique Arel: With all due respect, I don't see any shift in Canadian policy on that front—zero.

There have been shifts in Europe, but it takes time to restart that kind of production. It was kind of the peace benefit of the end of the Cold War. NATO prepared for a war that never happened, except it happened 25 years later—a high-intensity, conventional warfare—without that kind of capability.

We, the NATO coalition, never thought that a war that looks like World War II in terms of how it's conducted on the ground—minus the drones—would occur again.

What we see in Europe is a variation in the political will to really engage in the medium and long term, because in the short term it's really difficult to match the—we have to say—remarkable capabilities of Russian production.

The Chair: We're going to have to leave the question and answer there.

Finally, on this round, is Mr. Powlowski.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): You made an interesting statement. I may have written this down wrong, but you said, "when the Russian military will mutiny" or maybe you said, "will they?" It goes to the heart of the question: What evidence is there that this might happen? Prigozhin's march on Moscow, which was quite a surprise, was in fact a mutiny, but the Wagner force has been disbanded.

Certainly the Russian military command has shown a total disregard for their frontline troops, repeatedly throwing them into meat grinders to die, wave after wave. There's been talk of blocking troops on the Russian sides, preventing Russian troops from withdrawing. There are seemingly good reasons for the Russian troops to mutiny.

How likely do you think it could be and what evidence is there, other than what happened with the Wagner group, that it might happen?

• (0935)

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I think the Wagner group is a good example. The challenge of civil-military relations is that we very rarely know, right before something happens, that it will happen. When there's a coup attempt, you don't really know who's going to win because you don't know who's going to shoot and who's not willing to shoot. When it comes to mutinies, the challenge is that the Russian military is aware of the threat, so they put in place all kinds of systems to make sure that it doesn't happen.

Again, as you pointed out, the way the Russians are fighting this war is incredibly brutal on their own people. They have not provided them with adequate medical care, so the traditional ratios we're familiar with between killed and wounded in action are very different for them because they're not taking care of their wounded. When you send tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, of people into this environment, at some point it can cause a military to crack.

At what point? It's not clear. The longer this goes, the more likely it is, just because of the stresses it builds up. The more that people understand they are being misled, poorly led into battle, that your odds of... For some people it is, "Are my odds better running at the Ukrainians or turning my rifle around against my fellow commanders?" There have already been many stories of Russian tanks being driven over Russian commanders—things of that nature—so there have been small acts. The problem, in any kind of mutiny, is the collective action. How do you get everybody to do it all at the same time? We saw this in other wars.

I can't tell you that it's going to happen on March 15 or that I have 100% certainty it's going to happen sometime in the next year. It's just that this is a threat the Russians have to grapple with, and it does distract them from the front lines if they have to put troops behind the front lines to threaten to shoot the people on the front lines. It complicates their war-making.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: You mentioned the normal ratio between injured and dead, and that those numbers are different in the current conflict on the Russian side. Can you tell me what the numbers normally are, what they are now and where that those numbers come from?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I can't be hard and fast on the exact specifics, but I will say that traditionally the number has been 1:3. For every one person killed in battle three have been wounded. The Americans and our allies in Afghanistan were very good about medical care, so that ratio is 1:10. For one killed there were 10 wounded. I think, at one point, the statistics we were getting from the Russian side—what we were inferring from what we could see—was 1:1, which is that for every one wounded one Russian was getting killed.

Again, truth is the first casualty of warfare, so we don't really know. However, ironically, we have a better sense of the Russian casualties than we have the Ukrainian casualties.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: I note another thing you said, Mr. Saideman, which I found a bit shocking. You suggested that our deployment of 1,600 troops in Latvia is not sustainable. We're a country of 40 million people. I say, "What? With 1,600 people, we don't have the resources to sustain that?" You mentioned the possibility

of bringing over families and the fact that it isn't an attractive posting.

Do you want to comment more on our military readiness if we can't maintain 1,600 troops overseas?

The Chair: That's a very good question but, unfortunately, he gave you seven seconds to answer it. You could possibly work it into a response because I think everyone in the room is interested in it.

That brings to a close our second round.

I know there's some enthusiasm for motions. We have about 50 minutes, give or take. We can do another round for 25 minutes and leave the final 25 minutes for motions. Is that an attractive proposition?

Mr. James Bezan: We're done at 10:15—aren't we?

The Chair: I'm sorry, but yes, it's 10:15. Okay.

Assuming there's still the enthusiasm for motions, can we shrink this round to a three-minute round with three minutes each?

• (0940)

Mr. James Bezan: Three minutes...? Geez.

The Chair: You can talk quickly.

I don't want to abuse witnesses. That's why we're trying to manage the time here. I know you all love the expression of democracy in committee meetings, but watching it is something not entirely edifying.

Let's do a three-minute round—

Mr. James Bezan: Chair, it's three minutes including the Bloc—

The Chair: What's that?

Mr. James Bezan: —and the NDP or one minute each?

The Chair: They will get one minute each, yes.

Do you think you can you manage that? Okay.

Mr. Bezan, you have three minutes.

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

Just quickly, so Mr. Saideman, you talked about taking what we have, like tanks and armoured vehicles, and just giving them to Ukraine. Back in March of 2022, after the hot war broke out and the full-scale invasion, Conservatives called on the government to donate our surplus LAVs. Then we put in an Order Paper question. The government said it had 62 that were repairable and could be overhauled in 220 days and sent. It never happened. Now they announced, I think, 60-some LAVs are being sent for spare parts.

Wouldn't it have been better to send them two years ago, when they were still operational, than to leave them until they were completely unusable as fighting machines other than for spare parts for equipment they already have there? It would have saved lives—wouldn't it?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I can't speak to the specifics of those 62 LAVs. Obviously, more in the hands of the Ukrainians sooner is better.

Mr. James Bezan: You said take the old tanks we have. I think we're down to 56 that are still left here that can actually be trained on. A lot of them aren't fit for purpose anymore. You're saying donate them, let them use them, but you're not advocating that Canada get rid of its tanks—are you? One thing we've learned in Ukraine is that it's a tank war.

Dr. Stephen Saideman: I think some of our allies have made the decision that it would be better having them used to fight the Russians now than to fight the Russians later. The idea of giving them to the Ukrainians to win the war with Russia now is better than waiting five or 10 years for us to use them in Latvia. That is a difficult political calculation, but it's something we should take seriously.

I don't think it's going to happen, because it is a risky decision and it would make it difficult for us to train our tankers. Again, our military on a regular basis has revisited the tank decision of whether or not to have tanks. If our allies have tanks, is it that important for us to have them? It depends on how comfortable we are with relying on our allies. Allies can be more or less reliable. I've written a book about that. As long as we're fighting alongside the Americans, things are pretty good. If we're fighting alongside the Italians...

Mr. James Bezan: It's the case that historically Canada has always had the ability to pull out a full complement of armour, along with our army. It's the same as the howitzers, the M777s. Shouldn't we be replacing those and sending the rest we have to Ukraine and investing in new howitzers for Canada?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: The challenge is that everybody has learned how valuable these things are. As I'm sure you know, it takes a while to procure things. How long would the gap be from our shipping everything off? I can see why the army doesn't want to ship off everything, and then wait 10 years for the new tanks and the new howitzers. The problem is the production lines. Everybody wants the same stuff. Even if we made fast decisions, the stuff is not on a shelf somewhere in surplus.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. Collins, you have three minutes.

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Saideman, I want to pick up where Ms. Mathysen left off with some of her questions earlier around disinformation.

I was fascinated with your comments regarding Trump, and I've watched with some fascination what's happening around the world with disinformation.

Retired General Eyre warned our committee several times in his appearances here, sitting in the same chair you're sitting in, sir, about disinformation and its impact on our institutions, including not only the Canadian Armed Forces but also our democratic institutions and our allies' as well.

Russia has been very vocal and has bragged publicly about those efforts. Margarita Simonyan from RT Television has talked about how successful those campaigns have been. Of course, the Department of Justice, last week, outed three very influential right-wing social media personalities, in terms of having received \$10 million from Russia.

With all that said and with all the things you talked about with vice-president nominee Vance and former president Trump's efforts, they're having an impact. Those disinformation campaigns are having an impact. They sway and they influence public opinion, and then public opinion drives political characters to make different decisions. We're seeing that with MAGA. We're seeing that with the "make Canada great again" movement, with the leader of the official opposition, who's pulled his support for Ukraine, and we've seen it in the EU elections.

Therefore, if—and it's fifty-fifty right now—former president Trump is elected and that support is pulled from NATO because of, in part, those disinformation campaigns, where do we go from there, so to speak, in terms of combatting what we know is happening?

We haven't shone a lot of light on it, although the DOJ information last week was very revealing. How do we, as a society and as a government, deal with those efforts, knowing that they're having an impact on public opinion, and they're swaying political representatives to make some very crazy decisions?

• (0945)

Dr. Stephen Saideman: It's a really challenging problem. We've known this not for a week but for eight years, from that investigation into Trump's 2016 campaign. We know this about Brexit; there was Russian influence on that.

Again, as I said, it requires greater clarity from the media about where the information is coming from, being more careful about repeating false information. I'm as guilty as anyone on social media of reposting something that I see without really investigating it. We have to have better discipline about figuring out what these stories are and how we report them.

To give you an example, the Haitian immigrant story is entirely baseless. However, just talking about it helps to amplify it. How do we talk about the thing that's coming up and educate the public about it in ways that undermine the disinformation campaign?

Canada has invested in academics studying this stuff. Good friends of mine are disinformation experts. They faced lawsuits from the far right to silence them. The good news about the stuff last week is that the lawsuits are going to be harder to win by the folks who are suing them, because they can say that the exact people who were identified in network analysis of Twitter—

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

Dr. Stephen Saideman: This bit of last week's news helps to provide evidence that all these things we've been saying thus far are true.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Collins.

Don't believe anything about cats and dogs.

You have one minute, Madame Normandin.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Arel, what are the remaining obstacles to Ukraine's potential membership in NATO? You have already mentioned, among other things, that the judicial system needs to be overhauled, that Ukraine is a democracy, but not perfectly liberal.

What are the things to keep an eye on in the post-war future?

Dr. Dominique Arel: First, Ukraine's accession to NATO and the European Union is happening concurrently. Second, the weak rule of law is Ukraine's Achilles heel; it's the lack of institutional independence of the court of justice.

On the issue of corruption, prior to the 2022 war, allies worked very hard to help Ukrainians build anti-corruption systems. It was said that, since the judicial system was corrupt, a parallel anti-corruption court system had to be created to prevent everything from being covered.

Progress has been made. It must be said that the political system has been in a bit of abeyance for two or three years in Ukraine because of the war. What is quite remarkable, however, is that the oligarchs—those very powerful people who somewhat corrupted the system—have lost most of their powers. So a fundamental change has taken place.

That said, ultimately, a political decision must be made. It's not a matter of ticking all the boxes.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

Mr. Boulerice, you have one minute.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a question for you that is both brief and complex, so it may be complicated to answer in a minute.

Since Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, a lot of international efforts have been made, not only to isolate the Putin regime, but also to exclude it from certain international bodies.

In your opinion, has that had an impact? What more could be done to prevent him, in the longer term, from continuing the war and making it an international pariah?

• (0950)

Dr. Dominique Arel: This summer, we had a symbol demonstrating how much of a pariah Russia is: It was banned from the Olympic Games, which is an extraordinary event. A second country, Belarus, which is essentially Russia's vassal, was also completely banned. It was symbolic, but it hurt in Russia.

The decision to isolate Russia forces it to find allies who are themselves already isolated. China is trying to play both sides, and Turkey, a member of NATO, is doing the same. What's remarkable is that Russia has very few allies, but it has two allies that are clearly very dangerous and have decided to help it directly.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Boulerice.

Mr. Bezan, you have three minutes, please.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

I'm going to just ask a question of our RAND specialist, Ms. Kepe.

You are a specialist on the Baltics, and we see all the sabre-rattling. We talk about Russia, but we also know that Belarus has now taken on nuclear weapons from Russia and that they have their Zapad exercises that they've been doing extensively with Russian forces. As well, I believe there were Cuban forces last year that were part of those exercises along the Latvian and Polish borders.

What do you assess as the threat level of Belarus as a proxy for Russia to offset the threat environment in both the Baltics as well as in Ukraine?

Ms. Marta Kepe: In addition to the examples that you mentioned, a really important one is that, essentially, we are seeing a trend of Belarus and Russia integrating militaries closer and closer, and that has been supported by official agreements as well. From a defence planning and threat assessment point of view, I would treat Belarus and Russia together as a threat.

Really, we see it as a threat from the conventional military side but also as a similar sort of co-operative threat from the hybrid types of threats. We see that from the point of view of exercises, military integration and co-operation. We see that from the point of view of hybrid threats and the forced migration activities that have been going through Belarusian territory as well.

Mr. James Bezan: When we look at the Russian drone that ended up in Latvia, I'm sure the Russians are saying, "Oh, it just flew off course." Do you think that maybe it was done accidentally on purpose to test the response of NATO allies, and particularly the enhanced forward position that Canada leads in Latvia?

Ms. Marta Kepe: I haven't seen any Russian statements about what exactly happened. Investigation is still ongoing. Even the Baltic officials have different sorts of opinions on what really happened. I think no one really thinks that it was done on purpose. There are some conversations that it may have been that the drone was intended for Ukraine and that there was a really big targeting problem that happened. That is why it either crash-landed or landed in the territory of Latvia.

Let's say that I will wait for the investigation. It could have been a malfunction.

You cannot waste a good crisis, so it does serve as a way for Russia to see what is happening and what the reactions are on the political side but also on the tactics and procedures that the Baltics nationally and NATO use to respond to these threats.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

Mrs. Lalonde, you have three minutes.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Thank you to all our witnesses today. I have to say that this has been extremely relevant and informative. I would like to hear a perspective, and I'm not going to direct my question towards anyone in particular. Maybe it's to the three of you.

The ambassador of Ukraine was here during our last committee, and when we asked her, she talked about a path towards a NATO membership. That's been Ukraine's ask of all our allied countries.

Could you maybe tell us how you see this going forward and what that would look like with the possibility of a Trump presidency?

I would certainly appreciate hearing from the three of you.

• (0955)

Dr. Stephen Saideman: The challenge is that article 5 means an attack upon one equals an attack upon all, so NATO's position has been to not allow countries in that are currently at war.

In the membership processes of the 1990s and early 2000s, there was pressure for all aspirants to settle their border disputes. What's going on now is far more than a border dispute. The war has to end before Ukraine can become a member of NATO. When that happens, I think it will be a very short path, because we would like to avoid having a future war in Ukraine. There are all the other conditions, but, as my colleague suggested, the conditions themselves don't matter, really. The whole paper process is about whether the alliance can get consensus. Until the war is over, there will be no consensus.

Now, we're forgetting that Trump's first impeachment was about trying to extort Zelenskyy to get information on Biden, so I don't think a Trump-led government would agree to Ukrainian membership. Again, we need consensus. If the United States does not join the consensus, there is no consensus.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Dominique Arel: Okay.

May I answer in French?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Please do.

Dr. Dominique Arel: Okay. Thank you.

It's not dissimilar to what Stephen Saideman said.

However, the challenge is not related to NATO membership, but to NATO's ability to defend Ukraine. I am referring to the famous security guarantees. The first step is to establish a situation where Russia will no longer be able to attack Ukraine.

In the negotiations, which are still up in the air, there is still a stumbling block on this issue. It was the same issue in March 2022, in Istanbul.

When we talk about security guarantees, what does that mean? It means Ukraine can no longer be attacked by Russia. Russia can no longer attack not because Ukraine will be defended by American soldiers, but because Ukraine will already be equipped by NATO, among others, and by its own industry, as a result of which the consequences of an attack are too perilous for Russia. That is the most difficult step.

Once that is done, I think the issue that will follow—whether Ukraine will be able to join NATO—will become less difficult to resolve.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Lalonde. Unfortunately, that brings your three minutes to a close. I want to leave a few minutes for motions. Mr. Bezan's hand is waving in the breeze here.

I want to thank you all, but before I dismiss you, maybe I'll direct this to Mr. Saideman.

It seems to me that, after 9/11, Americans triggered article 5 of NATO. Is that correct?

Dr. Stephen Saideman: Actually, it was Canada and its allies that inflicted article 5 upon the Americans. At the time, the American administration was ambivalent about having article 5 invoked. It was Canadians and other NATO allies invoking article 5 for the first time—the only time.

The Chair: That's very interesting. Well, it seems to be a relevant historical precedent.

With that, I again want to thank each and every one of you for your contributions. This has been informative. I do wish, at some point, that Mr. Powlowski's question would get answered.

I'll dismiss you so poor old Mr. Bezan's right arm can take a rest now.

We'll go with one of your motions.

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

Again, thank you to the witnesses for being here today and helping us with their threat analyses.

I gave notice of the following motion last week on Friday, September 13:

That the committee invite the Minister of National Defence to appear before the committee for no less than two hours, within 14 days of the adoption of this motion, in relation to his priorities for the return of Parliament and his mandate.

I think, as we come back in what might be the last few weeks or months of this Parliament, that we should know what the minister's priorities are. We just heard about the ongoing aggression toward NATO and Ukraine, and that we need to be supporting them. We also know that our Canadian Armed Forces are still dealing with the recruitment crisis. We know procurement continues to lag. It's been a failure of this government.

We need to ensure that we hear from the minister on what his priorities are.

The Chair: Mrs. Lalonde.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I thank my colleague for bringing this motion to the floor. I think we would agree in principle. My only...

From the debate I heard from all of you, and certainly from Minister Blair.... Yesterday, our Minister of National Defence was very strong in his comments when he did his introduction of the second reading of Bill C-66, saying it is a priority. We need to find ways to collectively...and I think we have, hopefully, consensus to bring Bill C-66 here as early as possible and continue on the path of helping bring forward this legislation and get it to royal assent.

By this token, if Mr. Bezan would be comfortable doing a friendly amendment of “no less than two hours”—remove the “two hours” and put in “one hour, and one hour with officials”—I feel we could let it go.

• (1000)

The Chair: That is an amendment to the motion.

Mr. James Bezan: It's not friendly.

The Chair: Apparently, it's not friendly.

Mr. James Bezan: I'll speak to the amendment.

The Chair: Are there any other speakers on either the amendment or the motion?

Go ahead, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: The reason we want the minister here for two hours is that we're talking about the priorities of his leadership as the minister. I don't believe having the government officials here reflects the political priorities of the minister and of the government, so it has to be for two hours.

We're going to have the minister here, I'm sure, when we talk about Bill C-66, but that's going to be about the legislation. Our committee will be seized with that bill when we get it. It will take priority according to the procedures and House affairs requirements of Bosc and Gagnon. We need to be seized with it. We're going to have plenty of time to talk about Bill C-66 when we get the legislation from the House.

I would just say that we need the minister here for two hours because we have lots of questions around Ukraine. We have lots of questions about procurement. We have lots of questions around housing. We have lots of questions around recruitment and retention. He's announced the submarines. Why is it taking as long as it has to procure them?

We've also heard that a number of Order Paper questions have been answered and now we're seeing that the over-the-horizon

radar has been punted down the road until after 2040, yet in the next year or two, the radar constellation that we have in the north and the North Warning System will be obsolete.

What we need to hear from the minister is how he is going to protect Canada. How is he going to be a reliable ally? How is he addressing the shortfalls in the forces? That takes at least two hours.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Again, I don't want to sound overly partisan or political, but I'm quite shocked that this particular member is asking the minister to come and speak because when you look at some of the Conservative records on defence spending, it fell below 1%.

I just want to remind this particular member that he voted against a pay increase. He voted against supports for....

Mr. James Bezan: We voted against confidence in this government, and we will continue to vote against confidence in this government.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: For me, I would maintain my decision. I think we should have the minister come. He's always been extremely sensitive of our needs. Although he has a very big job to do right now, he's been coming every time.

We're just suggesting one hour plus one hour.

The Chair: Is there debate?

The first vote is on the amendment.

(Amendment agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We'll go to Madame Normandin's motion, which is in order and is timely.

Madam Normandin.

[*Translation*]

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

The motion was read on Tuesday, following a notice of motion. I will not reread it since it has been distributed to all members.

Its purpose is to call, among others, the person who was the Minister of National Defence when Kabul was evacuated in 2021. We learned from *The Globe and Mail* that the minister apparently gave what he claimed were non-coercive orders to prioritize evacuating Afghans of the Sikh faith, to the detriment of Canadians and allies of Canadian soldiers, including interpreters, leaving them behind since the resources to evacuate them were extremely limited. At best, this has led to questions, but especially to outrage.

We have suggested a list of witnesses to discuss this issue. It includes the current Minister of National Defence, since we would like to understand how orders to special forces in similar situations are sent and how the minister considers them to be perceived. We also included the Minister of Foreign Affairs because, at the time, lists of other priority evacuation options had been drafted and submitted. We would like to know what other groups were prioritized for evacuation and, ultimately, how the former minister analyzed them, if he did.

We would obviously like to hear from the former minister of defence for two hours so that he can explain the considerations that were taken into account in arriving at this decision with regard to other considerations concerning priority groups, but also with regard to Canadians and Canadian military allies in Afghanistan. We would like to know what he thought about limiting resources to evacuate everyone.

The chief of the defence staff at the time of the events, Jonathan Vance, is also on the list. We want to know, among other things, how the order was received. Of course, other questions will follow.

So we are talking about all the witnesses deemed necessary to conduct a proper study of this issue. So that's the essence of the motion.

• (1005)

[English]

The Chair: Is there any debate?

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: We have an amendment to the motion. I believe it has been circulated.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Andrew Wilson): Not yet, but it will be.

Mr. James Bezan: We printed it off. Just make sure everybody gets it here.

What we are suggesting is there. What is highlighted are additions. What is with a strikethrough is to be deleted. Once everybody has it, I'll speak to that motion because it is disturbing with the news reports that were out there. There's also been work that has been done on this in the previous part of this Parliament.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Chair, if I may, I see that the French and English versions of the motion are not identical. In English, part of the motion is deleted, but there is no equivalent in French.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan: Okay. Let me speak to it, and interpreters are looking for it as well.

The Chair: Can we get one to the interpreters?

[Translation]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: If you look carefully, Ms. Normandin, they just took that part out.

[English]

The Chair: Is everybody literally on the same page?

Go ahead, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: The first amendment would be to add “a special” before “evacuation operation”, and then delete from after “August 2021” to the end of “allied Afghans”. Delete that, and add, “that the Special Committee on Afghanistan's Report 1 - Honouring Canada's Legacy in Afghanistan: Responding to the Humanitarian Crisis and Helping People Reach Safety was tabled in June 2022 followed by a Government Response tabled in October 2022”.

Then in the next paragraph, after “the committee's questions”, add “on the implementation of the recommendations made in the above report and new information that came to light after the study”.

Those would be the additions. We'd remove everything between “August 21” and “allied Afghans”.

The Chair: Is there any debate?

Ms. Normandin.

[Translation]

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

Removing what seemed to be almost the minister's modus operandi concerning the evacuation makes me uncomfortable. What we understand from The Globe and Mail article is that a specific community was prioritized for evacuation to the detriment of other communities. That is what led to Canadians and Afghan allies being left behind. I think an attempt is being made to cloud the issue a bit. I would be curious to hear from the Conservatives on why they want to specifically remove what seemed to be the minister's motivation at the time of the events.

• (1010)

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bezan, you have the floor.

Mr. James Bezan: I say that it's redundant since you're referring to the article, in the first part of the preamble, from The Globe and Mail's story, and that was an order that was given by the Minister of National Defence at the time, Harjit Sajjan. That is covered in the motion because of the article in The Globe and Mail.

I don't think we need to reiterate that in the motion, and I also want to put in there that we have a report that was already done on that evacuation through the Special Committee on Afghanistan's report. Based on that story from The Globe and Mail, that is the new information that has come to light and that needs to be looked at, but we also want to know if the government has implemented those recommendations.

They responded to the report, but have they gone forward and implemented all those recommendations?

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame Normandin.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I reiterate my comments with an addition.

The Conservatives, generally speaking, are not known for being very timid about redundancy, on the one hand; on the other hand, they are not shy about quoting entire sections of newspaper articles in their motions, sometimes in a rather scathing way. I find them particularly timid, oddly enough, when it comes to this motion.

As I was saying, the crux of the problem is that it was known that one group was being evacuated as a priority over another, which was on the list of priorities. This is really at the heart of the matter. I believe that this group must be named in the motion if we really want to solve the problem and avoid giving priority to certain groups in the future for the wrong reasons. It was known that another list already existed.

I don't see how we can dismiss this by saying that, in any case, it was alluded to in an article.

[English]

The Chair: Is there further debate?

The first vote would be on the amendment, for want of a better term, the Bezan amendment or the Conservative amendment.

(Amendment negated [See Minutes of Proceedings])

The Chair: Who is in favour of the original motion as presented?

Do you want to debate that?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I hope it's not a debate. I would just like to again propose a small change to Madame Normandin's motion.

[Translation]

We propose to delete point a., which seeks to invite the Minister of National Defence, Bill Blair, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mélanie Joly, and officials for a minimum of two hours, as those ministers were not in office when the events reported by The Globe and Mail occurred. I would like my colleague to take that into consideration.

[English]

The Chair: Is there debate?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would be willing to accept the proposal as a friendly amendment, as long as point d. is kept—the one proposing to invite all the other witnesses the committee deems necessary. We may get additional information as we hear from other witnesses who may be considered more appropriate.

As for Minister Blair, as I mentioned, as the current minister, he can enlighten us on how orders are conveyed to the special forces in the context of an operation, for example, or on how he considers them to be perceived. However, these are questions that I will be able to ask him when he appears before the committee at another time.

As for Global Affairs Canada, perhaps we will ultimately consider it more important to hear from officials from that department, or officials from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, but we will know that as we hear testimony.

So as long as point d. remains, so that we can invite other witnesses during the study, I am prepared to drop point a.

[English]

The Chair: Are we fine with that?

(Amendment agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

(Motion as amended agreed to [See Minutes of Proceedings])

• (1015)

The Chair: I see Mr. Boulerice. Presumably he has a motion.

We have nine minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This motion was recently moved by my colleague Ms. Mathysen. I think we should have time to dispose of it, since it's not very controversial. This motion is for a study on current and legacy contamination sites and their impact on the health of members of the armed forces and Department of National Defence staff.

I can read it again, if necessary. This important topic is of concern to many veterans. It's about their health. We're talking about chemicals and carcinogens found in a number of places. It is important that this committee examine the issue and shed light on it.

The motion proposes six meetings for this study and a list of witnesses who could be invited, including veterans who currently have cancer. It's worth hearing from these people.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: We agree with this motion.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bezan, are you debating, or are you wanting to vote?

Mr. James Bezan: No, I have a quick comment on it.

We support the motion, but I just don't know if we can afford six meetings in the time that's left. Our committee has a big workload in front of us. I would suggest, based upon the draft reports that are still to come back and have to be tabled, based upon Bill C-66 coming here, based upon the estimates and everything else we have to deal with, the DPU study as well, which we've started, and the space study, this needs to be punted down the road until we get those wrapped up before we start another study.

This is an issue. This is a concern, especially for those at National Defence who are firefighters and veterans who were exposed. We do need to dive into this.

The Chair: You're suggesting that this government will last right through all its agenda? I just want to—

Mr. James Bezan: You never know—

The Chair: Yes, you never know.

Mr. James Bezan: —the way you guys are voting around the table here.

The Chair: Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: My comment is quite similar.

We already have a number of motions proposing very interesting substantive studies. It's a matter of timing. As I mentioned yesterday in the House, we have a lot more work to do than we have time to get it done. In that context, it would be a good idea for a subcommittee to manage the schedule.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: We agree.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Are we amending the six or are we not amending the six?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: No.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're not.

Okay. We'll vote on the motion.

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

The Chair: This brings our meeting to a close.

Thank you very much for blowing a hole in our agenda.

We're scheduled to do a DPU review on Tuesday, and the we have the chief of the defence staff on Thursday, along with representative Singh on the Indo-Pacific. Assuming that Bill C-66 is not referred to the committee by then, at this time next week we'll have to review our agenda and hopefully arrive at some sort of understanding about how to go forward. I may or may not reserve time for a subcommittee meeting around that time.

With that, thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

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