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Chair

Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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● (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): Good morning, and welcome, everyone, to the defence committee.

I should have worn my skates to get here this morning. It was pretty slippery on the way in.

I'd like to welcome our guests today. I'm going to read from my sheet, because you're all very accomplished and I don't want to miss anything, and I'd like the record to reflect your appearance today.

We have Vice-Admiral (Retired) Denis Rouleau, former military representative to the North Atlantic Council from 2010 to 2012 and former vice-chief of the defence staff of Canada from 2008 to 2010. We have Mr. Richard Fadden, former national security adviser to the Prime Minister from 2015 to 2016. We have Robert McRae, former Canadian permanent representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization from 2007 to 2011.

Gentlemen, thank you very much. I believe you all have something to say, so I will start in the middle.

Mr. Fadden, you have the floor.

Mr. Richard Fadden (Former National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister (2015-16), As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate this opportunity to say a few words about what I think is a very important topic. If I may, I'd like to start with a couple of basics.

Canada belongs to two strategic alliances, NORAD and NATO, and I think sometimes we forget that NATO is as much about the defence of Canada as is NORAD. It's a two-way street. It's not just Canada protecting Europe. It's Europe contributing, if necessary, to the defence of Canada. By strategic alliance I mean to say that it's a mix of diplomatic, military, and economic issues. It's not purely, I think, anyway, a military alliance. I know this is the national defence committee, but I would urge upon you the view that the alliance's political responsibilities and aims are as important as the military ones. I'd like to come back to that a little bit later.

To answer a very basic question, why a country joins a military alliance, if you go back to the Cold War it was pretty obvious. The Soviet Union was out to defeat the rest of the planet. It was equally obvious that Canada could not defend against it alone, so we joined the alliance. That is a practice this country has followed for a very long time. If we can't do something on our own, we join an alliance. We make it a multilateral effort. That is something you need to consider when you think about NATO today. You don't join an alliance just for the sheer joy of it. You join it because it's in the national interest and because it allows the country to protect itself against threats from outside the country. We're not a superpower, and recognizing that is really important.

To my mind, it's beyond reasonable debate that Canada should or should not maintain its membership in NATO. I say this because, putting aside the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal and its desire to take over the entire world, the basis of a decision on what we do in NATO has to be the threat that Canada faces from the world today. Without going into excessive detail, I'd like to argue that the threat level we face today is at least as significant as during the Cold War. It's very different, but it's as significant as during the Cold War. What are these threats?

There are two clearly revisionist states on this planet, Russia and China. They don't like the way the world is organized, and they're constantly poking and prodding to try to increase their influence and change the balance of power on the planet.

We have a multiplicity of terrorist organizations with considerable geographic reach. It's not like the old days when you had a terrorist who only worried about his town or his province. Many terrorist organizations have a reach that extends to this continent.

There is a significant increase in the number of ungoverned spaces. You'll recall at the time of the Afghanistan conflict, it was partially because Afghanistan was an ungoverned space that we ended up with 9/11, so I think it is a real preoccupation, or should be, that we worry about the ungoverned spaces.

There are the issues with cyber, which are new and which we did not have to deal with during the Cold War. There is not just cyberwar but cyberterrorism, a really significant added complexity to the way the world has to deal with itself.

There is a significantly greater number of nuclear states. During the Cold War we basically worried about Russia, or the Soviet Union. Today there are at least a half dozen, and most of these are very unstable.

We live in a globalized world, which means that any security issue halfway around the world has the potential of affecting Canada, so retreating into a cocoon, I would argue, will not work. Most of the issues that occur around the planet affect us in one way or another.

The last threat that is considerably more significant than it was even a few years ago is the unpredictable world power balance. This is because the United States is shifting its view of what it does in the world; Europe is not what it used to be, not the powerhouse it used to be; China and Asia are changing significantly, and there is nothing like unpredictability to increase risk. So joining enthusiastically an alliance like NATO makes a lot of sense for a country like Canada.

All of these put together or individually cannot be dealt with by one state alone, and certainly not by Canada, so maintaining a relationship with NATO and enhancing it makes great sense. We have to be a full member of NATO diplomatically and militarily.

● (0850)

There's a lot of discussion these days about the 2% target for expenditures. I think, if we're being honest with one another, we have to admit that most states are not going to meet the 2%. They're just not going to. You gentlemen and ladies are the politicians and I am not, but I do not see our doubling our defence budget to $40 billion in order to attain our 2%.

If we're not going to do that, I think we have to demonstrate to the alliance that nevertheless we're on a steady course to slowly increase our budget. More to the point, we have to make sure that our contribution is as effective as it possibly can be.

I don't think it's likely that Russian tanks are going to be rolling westward through the plains of eastern Europe, which was the main preoccupation during the Cold War, so planning on that basis, to my mind, doesn't make a great deal of sense. We do need to have a standing military and make a contribution to NATO in that way, but I think we need to worry about the new threats that are emerging or that have emerged. Cyber is one of them. Space is another. The use of artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly of concern to the militaries around the world. As well, generally speaking, there is the issue of hybrid warfare. It's not the army, navy, and air force of the 1960s that we need for today. Fundamentally, we need to match the new threats with counter-threats, with counter-capacities. I think if we do that well, the effectiveness of our contribution will be increased.

The recent defence review pledged a significant amount of money over time to the defence portfolio. I think this is a good thing. The bad news is that most of it is dedicated to dealing with the capital deficit, and you cannot construct ships or aircraft overnight. Just opening a slight parenthesis, I think our greatest contribution to NATO would be to solve our defence procurement problems so that we could actually get things moving faster than they have been. I want to be clear that I'm not directing this to any particular government. It has been a problem for the last 25 years, if not longer. We simply haven't dealt effectively with the issue, I think, of defence procurement.

Doing that alone would enable us to have a more effective force available for other purposes, but also for NATO, sooner rather than later. All of that should occur at the same time as Canada is active diplomatically within the alliance, both to improve the effectiveness of the alliance—our treatment of Turkey, for example, over the course of the last decade or so is a good illustration of how we have not dealt as effectively as we could diplomatically with some of our NATO allies—and to deal diplomatically with the alliance, to deal with threats with the broader international community.

Let me summarize by saying I think it's the threats that we face that argue in favour of our continued and enhanced relationship with NATO. It's essential that we find the most effective way to make that contribution. It is not entirely by simply continuing what we have been doing over the last couple of decades but also by looking at new threats. If we don't do this, I think the level of threats that I talk about is going to increase, not decrease.

Thank you, Chairman. I'll stop there.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you for your opening comments.

Ambassador, I'll yield the floor to you.

Mr. Robert McRae (Former Canadian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the North AtlanticTreaty Organization (2007-11), As an Individual): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I agree, really, with everything that Dick Fadden has just said, but I'll look at these issues from the perspective of eight years altogether at NATO headquarters.

I was there as the deputy permanent representative from 1998 to 2002, which was during the Kosovo air campaign, but 9/11, of course, also occurred in that time, and article 5 was declared in consequence. Then I was there from 2007 to 2011, and of course Afghanistan loomed large during that time. I was also present for the Libya air campaign. Also during that time, in 2008, Russia invaded Georgia. There were significant concerns with regard to shipping lanes off the east coast of Africa.

There's no question, in my experience at NATO, that the uncertainty with regard to the nature of threats that the alliance is facing has increased since the end of the Cold War. That's for a variety of reasons. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union, NATO, and alliance structures were fairly static. The standoff was fairly clear, and there was an array of client states, in a sense, in support of each of these two power structures. After the Cold War, all of that changed, as you well know. The client states disappeared. Some states prospered and did well. Others became failing states where governance was an issue.

Technology has changed a lot of that threat perception, whether it be through cyberspace issues or what has come to be called “standoff war fighting”, war fighting at a distance where you don't have to put troops on the front line. You can achieve your military objectives in effect by staying at home and sending high-tech weapons abroad.

For me at NATO, the Canadian interest was always very clear. NATO is the classic transatlantic organization. There's no other like it in any field, whether in economic development, diplomacy, or the military. Canada has a particular stake, I would argue, unlike any other country, unlike the United States or even our European allies, in maintaining that transatlantic bond.

We do well as a country when there is a rules-based system to govern the behaviour of other states. We're not necessarily small, but we're clearly not one of the great powers. Rules-based international relations is the environment in which we will prosper and do best. NATO provides exactly that kind of a structure across the Atlantic.

My time coincided with a very high operational tempo, both with regard to the Balkans, and then with Afghanistan and Libya. One thing became absolutely clear to me as a consequence of that; NATO and its chain of command is a very effective means of achieving your political and military ends. The way in which the organization operates, the way in which it plans operations and assigns resources is effective and efficient. The chain of command is pre-existing. We don't have to reinvent the wheel for every operation overseas, so for Canada, it's a ready-made vehicle to achieve our international security objectives.

The fact that it works on the basis of consensus, which means that even Luxembourg can block an operation if it doesn't agree, is a good thing. The United States may not always be happy when the smaller countries step in, but I think even they would recognize that sometimes the United States' immediate instincts on a particular issue are better to be blocked, maybe for a day or two, or a week or two, while further thinking is made.

● (0900)

The consensus rule enables countries like Canada to influence decisions and influence the policies that govern those decisions and the execution. Coalitions of the willing, which we've also done as a country, don't give you that. In my experience, coalitions of the willing, usually led by the U.S., will listen to what we have to say, but at the end of the day, the big decisions are made in U.S. rooms in Washington, and we're not always present. That's the problem with coalitions of the willing, so NATO gives us a voice unlike other options in terms of action abroad.

One lesson that became clear—and I would just remind the committee of the wisdom of the Manley panel. I testified to the panel as others did, and many of the conclusions it arrived at are conclusions that are as relevant today as they were then in dealing with the Afghan mission. One of them is that if you commit to a combat role, bring the full spectrum of capability with you. Do not rely on others, including allies, to provide for the gaps in your capability including helicopters or UAV surveillance. It was a hard lesson to learn, but it's an important lesson going forward. For me, that was a turning point in the way in which we looked at these operations.

Again, with regard to Afghanistan but it's a broader point, there is the importance of training local forces as your exit strategy. We did it in Kosovo. We did it in Macedonia. We did it, of course, in Afghanistan. We would have done it in Libya if there had been an interlocutor on the other side with which to deal. There wasn't. There was effectively no government in Libya. Training is key to every foreign military involvement. This is how, at the end of the day, you ensure that the people you have gone to defend and protect can provide for their own defence. Of course, training is part of that broader comprehensive approach of diplomatic development and defence capabilities that is required.

I want to touch on something that Dick touched on, which is modernization and adaptation. NATO in my experience, better than many international organizations, has adapted extremely well to the changing international security context. It has not stood still. It has changed the way in which it perceives threats, and the way in which it responds to them.

Part of that response is on the collective defence side. NATO agreed, while I was there, to provide missile defence for our 26 or 27 European allies. Canada, along with all of the other allies, so 28 countries, is paying for that missile defence to protect our European allies. The United States has its own ballistic missile defence program. There is only one country that has decided it does not need missile defence despite the proliferation of missile technology and nuclear weapons, and that's Canada. I can tell you even today that the Canadian ambassador at NATO has to explain to the 27 other allies why we do not believe in missile defence even though we're paying for it for our European allies.

This is a policy issue that needs debate, in my view. I'm not going to take a side one way or the other—that's more for the political masters to do—but I do think there is a debate to be had, and I would highly commend the committee to look into this issue. I think it would serve us well.

I want to touch on a couple of issues to close, which are contemporary issues. The NATO meeting of defence ministers has wound up today in Brussels. General Mattis, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, is there, and the NATO Secretary General has given a press conference, as he always does at the end of the meeting of defence ministers, today. A couple of things came out of that, and they are worth pausing on.

● (0905)

The NATO command structure was traditionally sort of bipartite. You had the Europe command and then you had a command for transformation, based in Norfolk. The command structure has now been adapted and that transformation command has disappeared and there's now an Atlantic command. I suspect it will be in Norfolk, which historically has been responsible for Atlantic issues. This is good news for Canada because the Atlantic command is going to focus on transatlantic issues and the security that I mentioned of that, so one outcome I think very much supports our interests in NATO.

There's a focus on creating a more important cyber-command at NATO headquarters. That's clearly the right direction in which to go. It's a military issue, and our military command structure and the deployments need to be protected from cyber-attack.

Finally, there's a new subcommand on logistics, as you'll see, but particularly on mobility, and mobility is key. This leads me into the 2% issue. We can discuss this at greater length. I would have quite a bit to say on this.

2% is fine, but it doesn't guarantee quality defence, nor does it guarantee the commitment on the part of every ally to a collective defence. You need to be able to leave your own territory to assist another ally who has been attacked. Many countries that meet 2% would have a hard time leaving their own home territory to provide that assistance to another country. We can go into the details, but the 2% is a pretty rough and not very useful measure of capability and quality, I would argue.

However, what we've been hearing from President Trump about 2% should worry us all, because it's not just about 2%. It's not just about browbeating allies into spending more money. As a candidate, as president, he's made it clear repeatedly, and most recently in December of last year, that in his mind, there's a quid pro quo approach to collective defence. If you don't spend 2%, the U.S. may or may not come to your support if you are attacked. You may think that's an abrogation of the Washington treaty. If you read the Washington treaty, you'll find it's not. Article 5 says that nations will assist an ally attacked, on the basis of their own determination. I have the language here, but that's basically it: allies decide themselves how they will come to the defence of an ally that's attacked. There's a loophole; it is not as automatic as you might think. This is not all for one and one for all. When one hears the President of the United States saying that article 5 is conditional on the record of an ally's contribution to its defence budget, we should be worried.

This clearly, if anything, underscores the importance of Canada ensuring that it has a plan to increase its defence budget in a reasonable way. I wouldn't be concerned about the 2% business, but it should be in a way that demonstrates to all of our allies that we will be capable of fulfilling our commitments to NATO under the Washington treaty. I think we can do that. This is of paramount interest to Canada in terms of its role within NATO.

With that, I'll stop there.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you for your comments. They were very interesting. I'm sure there will be questions for you, as we go around the track afterwards.

Admiral, the floor is yours.

Vice-Admiral (Retired) Denis Rouleau (Former Military Representative to the North Atlantic Council (2010–12), and former Vice Chief of the Defence Staff of Canada (2008–10), Royal Canadian Navy, As an Individual): Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me here to offer some brief thoughts on NATO from the perspective of a practitioner with the alliance who was in uniform for 39 years.

I have had the opportunity to participate in NATO deployment exercises and operations at every rank from young sub-lieutenant to flag officer. I had the privilege to command the Standing NATO Maritime Group, the NATO fleet, back in 2006-07, as it was Canada's turn to assume command then. I also was the last Canadian commander to do so. Other countries, such as Denmark, Norway, and Spain, started to acquire command platforms to enter the command rotation. Unfortunately, we were busy decommissioning our command ships during the same period.

During that one year in command at sea, we transformed the role of the fleet to expand beyond a simple presence into countering human-, weapon-, and drug-smuggling operations from northern Norway to Cape Verde off the African coast, demonstrating the ability of the alliance to deploy out of traditional areas of operation, and indeed, very much in line with Canada's overseas deployability principle. The chairman of the NATO Military Committee at the time was General Ray Henault, also the last Canadian flag officer to hold that position.

The fleet went on the following year to circumnavigate Africa and later got directly involved in counter-piracy operations, as the threat was changing. Today, Canada alternates with Australia, a non-NATO member, in taking command of CTF 150 against piracy, a shore command position in the gulf.

My talks to the crews of the two Canadian flagships when I was in command were always focused on reminding them to do their job proudly as everybody else was watching them to see how to do it right. To this day, I firmly believe that is still the case.

Having attempted to retire in 2010, but failing, I was assigned to Brussels as Canada's military representative at the NATO Military Committee. Needless to say, it was a very busy time. Canada was completing its combat role, for which every allied force in the theatre had the highest respect, and transitioning into a very important training role for the Afghan forces.

Then came Libya and Colonel Gadhafi. Interestingly, the NATO operations were to be led by yet another Canadian, Lieutenant-General Charlie Bouchard. Canada was once again present on the water with a frigate and also in the air with a sizable air contingent. Although NATO has 28 nation members, only eight nations participated in the operation against Libya.

Our continued participation in the Balkans air policing rotation, as well as our current presence in Latvia, are strong indicators of our commitment to the alliance, and NATO knows that.

Every time I hear debates regarding the required 2% of GDP spending on defence, I always redirect the discussion to contributions to operations instead. No, we do not spend the stated 2%. That's true, but we're always there when the alliance requires us to be. What is the advantage for the alliance for a nation to spend their required 2% or more—some do spend more than 2%—but never deploy their capabilities? For many, the worst wear and tear comes from running their gear through the car wash at home.

A similar approach can be seen by nations imposing caveats so severe that their troops in theatre can perform patrols only inside the wire and by day only. While there were far more than 28 nations involved in Afghanistan, you don't need two hands to account for those involved in real combat operations. Canada does not impose caveats on our troops and their assets. We expect them to be used for what they've been trained to do.

Yes, during recent financial restraints, Canada pulled out of some programs such as AGS, the air ground surveillance system. During the same financial squeeze, it also pulled out of the AWACS program, which we had been a member of since its start. In fact, we pulled out of AGS only to initiate our own acquisition program so that, once required, we could deploy to the NATO operations. The fact that we pulled out of AWACS was not only due to financial restraints; there was also the fact that it took so long to deploy these assets in Afghanistan, despite the repeated operational commanders' requests. It is something that the alliance cannot be proud of. Hopefully, they have learned a lesson.

● (0910)

When it comes to people, in addition to those within the Canadian capability contribution—ship crews, air crews, and all this—we have a presence in NATO posts like Brussels, Naples, and everywhere around the world. The requests continue to be for more Canadians, but not just for more Canadians, they're looking for more Canadians instead of other nations' officers and staff. That's a very different ask.

To conclude, if we are to continue to be able and willing to answer the NATO call among other commitments, we will have to be serious about capability replacement. There used to be a plan called the SCR, “Strategic Capability Roadmap”. It probably exists under a different name now. It described the capability in hand, the planned obsolescence, but more importantly the planned replacement program start time to avoid capability gaps. I don't need to tell anybody on this committee that we've passed all those deadlines now.

I do hope that recently promulgated defence policy will be executed in a very efficient, and most importantly, timely manner, in order to allow Canada to continue to deserve the respect earned by so many over so many years within NATO.

Mr. Chair, I stand ready to answer questions at your discretion.

● (0915)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I noted your comment about NATO AWACS. I don't know if you saw the news yesterday, but the Government of Canada announced it will back contributing to NATO AWACS. We're all very, very happy about that.

Since we have the three of you here, sometimes questions will be asked by one person and then carried on by another. I don't like to interrupt our guests. I'm very comfortable interrupting my colleagues; that's not a problem. However, if you see me make a signal, that doesn't mean it's a hard stop; it just means you have 30 seconds to sum up your thoughts, please, so I can move on to the next person.

Having said that, I'm going to give the floor to Mark Gerretsen, for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you, gentlemen, for appearing before the committee.

My first question is for Mr. McRae.

Why was Canada chosen to lead the air campaign in Libya when the U.S. could have effectively done it?

Mr. Robert McRae: That's a good question.

The U.S. was initially reluctant to do anything in Libya. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said famously at the time that for the U.S. to involve itself in another Muslim country, it would have to have its head examined, so he was opposed. Secretary Clinton was in favour of involvement.

The debate was very much an internal U.S. debate. Eventually it went to the U.S. President, and participation in the mission was decided on the basis of a number of criteria. One of them was a UN Security Council resolution that set out very clearly the nature of the mission, which basically was the protection of civilians, but also the U.S. decided at that time that it would not lead the Libya air campaign. The U.S. decided it would provide logistical support, surveillance, air-to-air refuelling, but that it would not provide any of the strike capability.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I guess this is one of the times, as Mr. Rouleau was talking about, that Canada stepped up.

Mr. Robert McRae: Correct, and very few allies did. I think the number of those who did the strike was somewhere around seven or eight countries, something like that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Do you agree with Mr. Rouleau's assessment that Canada steps up? There a number of other NATO nations that might be spending the 2% that don't, that put heavy restrictions on when they can be engaged in different conflicts and what that engagement looks like; whereas Canada has a more holistic approach to helping the cause more globally, without restriction.

Mr. Robert McRae: Absolutely.

If I might, the air campaign in Kosovo was a mirror image of the Libya air campaign, to the extent that Canada was one of, I think, six countries that actually did the strike mission. After the U.S., Canada led most of the sorties in the Kosovo air campaign.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I know you said in your comments that you didn't think the 2% was a very useful gauge for contribution.

Mr. Robert McRae: Yes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It's interesting that you say that. I have brought this up at this committee a number of times, with a number of different witnesses, because I subscribed to the notion—in the beginning of this study, admittedly—that this 2% was a very easy way to quantify something. It was a hard measure, and was easily done. However, the more we have been exploring this, the more I've been changing my position in this.

In fact, when we were in.... The chair was here on Tuesday.

The Chair: Latvia.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Latvia, thank you.

When we were in Latvia, the chair of the defence committee said that when Canada got involved, all these other nations wanted to come and participate in the brigade that Canada was involved in.

That being said, and with what Mr. Rouleau said, and your comments, how do you measure that goodwill or that sense of willingness to want to get behind a nation? You can't quantify that. You can put 2% in, but if you don't have a reputation, as we've seen in Latvia, that all these other countries want to join and be under the Canadian brigade, how do you quantify that? How does NATO not quantify that in a way? Would you give a recommendation as to what we could recommend to the Government of Canada to further enhance our ability to have that as some kind of measure as well?

● (0920)

Mr. Robert McRae: I agree with that point.

The problem with the 2% is, what counts as defence spending? That's relatively elastic.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: We've been down that road many times—

Mr. Robert McRae: —so you know what that's all about.

In addition to that, is what you have deployable? You may spend the 2%, but if it can't leave your own territory, it's useless as an alliance commitment to collective defence, for instance.

Also, if you don't have the political will to deploy it.... You may have deployability and you may have the 2%, but if you don't do anything with it, if you don't go to Afghanistan, or you go to the safest part of Afghanistan, or you don't do the air strike, and so on.... Political will is an important factor here as well.

These factors need to be taken into account, in my view, in the way NATO measures allied contributions.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Rouleau, would you like to add to that in terms of measuring Canada's contribution to NATO outside of the monetary aspect of it?

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: Yes, but also on the first point about the command of the operation in Libya, General Bouchard happened to be the second-in-command of the Naples NATO command. He had just finished bringing his headquarters up to speed should something like that happen. He had just finished doing that in Norway, because this is where the school is, so he was the guy to take that command. He happened to be a Canadian, and in fact, the commander in Naples insisted on having a Canadian coming behind him when he was pulled to command the Libya operation. That's how the NATO chain of command was working towards that post.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I'm limited in my time.

I just want to know if you have any additional comments on quantifying Canada's role in NATO. Outside of the monetary, what can you recommend? We're about making recommendations to the government. What would you recommend Canada take as its position in this discrepancy between monetary contribution and other forms of contribution?

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: Participation and active contribution, without caveats, to NATO operations outpace the 2% by a long shot.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Those things should also be considered by NATO, in your opinion, when considering the contribution.

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: Absolutely, yes.

The Chair: Thank you, and right on time.

Mr. Bezan.

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

I want to thank our witnesses for appearing today. Also, I want to thank all three of you for your service to Canada in your role in uniform, and as diplomats and top public servants. You guys have been just amazing in the work you've done in protecting Canada and representing us on the world stage.

I'll leave aside the 2% and all the metrics that are there, although I do believe it is a metric that is an aspirational target that's been agreed to by all partners. It's something we need to aspire to and work towards, and we at least need to get our defence spending moving in the right direction.

We talk about procurement and how difficult it has been. Mr. Fadden, you were a deputy minister of defence. You know how this works and how slowly the wheels turn. How do we cut through some of these layers of bureaucracy and legalese, which make the bidding and selection processes so impossible and complicated? I look at what's happening in the U.K. and Australia, and they seem to have fixed it somewhat, but they're also facing challenges.

Could you talk about some of the ways we move forward on procurement?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I can try. To be honest, when I was the deputy at Defence, procurement was the one topic that regularly had me go home and hit my head against the wall.

More seriously, there are three elements to dealing with defence procurement reform. I think the biggest problem is that there's a policy conflict. Successive governments have said we have to have money on defence distributed across this country. There's a regional component. They have said that it has to be distributed for innovative purposes, for industrial development purposes. Somewhere in there, there's meeting the requirements of the military, then taking into account what our allies want. I think if there were some greater clarity in the policies that have to be applied, it would go a long way towards dealing with this issue.

I had the opportunity to sit in on cabinet discussions, for both Mr. Harper's cabinet and Mr. Trudeau's cabinet, and the same things came up again. Some people want to go out and get a turnkey purchase of a cruiser. Other people want to make sure that either Halifax or Vancouver can develop a shipbuilding program. I think part of the problem is that if we're going to have this multiplicity of policies, we have to have the capacity to say, in some instances, that we're going to forget regional development and we're just going to do it. In other cases we're going to say it's really important for the development of an industrial base, and we're going to do that. We have not had, I think, the honesty to admit to ourselves publicly that part of the problem is this conflict in policy.

The second issue, I think, is the requirements that are generated by the military. For entirely reasonable reasons, the military wants the best equipment it can get. It has to be interoperable. We used to joke in DND that if the admirals and the generals could get a gold-plated Cadillac in everything, they would. I understand why they would want that, but sometimes you have to look at whether or not giving them slightly less than they want would not be a bad thing. I think, in fact, the defence portfolio's gone some distance now towards improving on that front.

The third area is just bureaucratic public service fear and inertia over the years to deal with the requirements of whatever they're calling Public Works this week. They are afraid of the CITT. They are afraid of the Federal Court. They are so cautious they will not take the slightest chance in dealing with defence procurement. The Treasury Board is similar, and quite honestly, in Defence we've developed a similarly cautious approach to life. I think also, quite bluntly, since Afghanistan we have not had enough people working in procurement to be able to move the file. When you put all that together in a stew, you have a significant issue.

Having said that, I do recognize that you can't acquire a ship overnight, but we could significantly accelerate some—I don't mean all—of our defence procurement decisions if we simply said to ourselves—and I'm just picking an example—the French have a perfectly valid, reasonable frigate, and the navy—no offence to Denis—is going to have to accept that this door opens to the left as opposed to the right. I'm making a joke of it, but sometimes some of the change requirements that are imposed because of these requirements are not reasonable. Do a bit of this, and I think you could speed things up.

I think in order to really change defence procurement, the government is going to have to find a way to kick-start change. All of this is really deeply ingrained, both in the public service and in governments.

● (0925)

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

In the past year on this side of the table—not counting the NDP—the Conservatives have said it is time for us to join ballistic missile defence.

Mr. McRae, you talked about it. It is kind of contradictory that there is no participation by Canada in North American missile defence but we are in European missile defence. If we decide to join, what would that look like? What contributions do you think we need to make?

I will leave that with all of you to give feedback.

Mr. Richard Fadden: Maybe I can start, if you'll allow me. I think one thing we have to remember is that doing defence spending in a democracy is not easy. I don't need to tell you this: you have to go to explain it all to your constituents.

One issue we have in Canada is that we don't talk about this a lot. We don't talk about the threats, so when it comes to the point where we want to establish a BMD system, there's a real division within the population. I've worked with politicians long enough to know this doesn't make it easy for the government you were a part of or for the current government.

Another issue in dealing with BMD is that some people have this image in mind that you have to have a United States Air Force anti-missile battery in Coquitlam, British Columbia, and then one outside of Montreal, and another one in Halifax. Whereas potential contributions range from having a correct array of radar on our new surface ships to having some radar establishments in northern Canada to contributing to research and development to simply giving people a cheque to increasing our contribution to NATO.

Just to be up front, I think we should become involved in BMD, but I don't think we can do this unless we talk to the Canadian public and you talk amongst yourselves about the range of issues.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

● (0930)

Mr. James Bezan: He relishes cutting me off.

The Chair: You make it easy, James.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Heckling maybe limited his ability to get his questions in. I don't know if that's part of the normal protocol.

An hon. member: It is. It goes both ways.

The Chair: MP Garrison

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

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today. It's one of the greatest amounts of expertise we've ever seen at this table at the same time. I'm kind of daunted about how to get enough questions in, in the time available.

I'm going to start with Mr. Fadden because I have, in a different hat, in a different Parliament, asked questions of him when he was a civil servant. I look forward to hearing his expertise without any of the possible traces that may have been on him in the past. Others may guess from that that we maybe had testy exchanges in a previous Parliament.

I have always respected your expertise, and I certainly do on the question of threats. I want to ask you a bit more about the threat situation. In particular, as the members of the committee know, I've been concerned about the increasing nuclear threat, and not just through proliferation. Since the end of the Cold War, both the United States and Russia have developed the idea of battlefield or tactical nuclear weapons, which they tend to call low yield, which is not a backyard firecracker but something the size of Hiroshima.

I have concerns about both the security of those kinds of weapons in the field and also the drift of decision-making down the chain of command. I wonder whether you could comment on your views on this as an additional threat to peace and security.

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think it's a very reasonable thing to be concerned about. I don't worry in particular about what the major nuclear powers are going to do. I don't think France, England, and the United States are going to treat these matters easily. To take North Korea as an example, I don't think it would take a great deal for a match to be struck and something to happen there. North Korea has a number of tactical nuclear weapons, and I think that if it ever really felt threatened, it would use them. I think one of the things we need to remember is, whether they're tactical or strategic, the population at large doesn't really distinguish. It's going to scare the living daylights out of people. We need to be very careful about any thought of using tactical nuclear weapons. When the United States mentioned this as a possibility a while ago, it was really concerning.

Pakistan is a nuclear state, and it allegedly has some tactical nuclear weapons. I really worry about whether their security is as good as it could be. Pakistan goes to a considerable length to make sure that's the case, but that part of the world is very unstable. I was arguing earlier that NATO should have a diplomatic component as well as a military one. I think one really good area for Mr. McRae's successors and colleagues would be to push very hard for the elimination and greater control of tactical nuclear weapons. When one is used, it's going to be very hard to back away, because of the psychological impact, not necessarily the military impact.

I hope that's helpful.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Go ahead, Mr. McRae.

Mr. Robert McRae: I might add a little bit to that, on a couple of points. Tactical nuclear weapons have been a subject of U.S.–Russia negotiations for some time. It was to be the next stage of negotiations following the strategic agreement. The Russians have never wished to go down that road. They have about 4,000 tactical nuclear weapons deployed. NATO, at last count, had somewhere below 60 gravity bombs, which is very old technology. The main impediment is Russia on the negotiation of tactical nuclear weapons. The stocks it has are way out of proportion to whatever perceived threat it may have.

The second thing is that Russia is really effectively abrogating the INF treaty by developing a very high-speed cruise missile, faster than anything the United States has. Think of that. There are some very serious arms control issues with Russia that are unresolved and seem to be unresolvable. The Putin regime basically seems comfortable with abrogating various commitments it's made.

Finally, I would endorse fully what Dick said about Pakistan. It has the most active nuclear weapons production facility in the world. It's producing more nuclear weapons than any other country in the world. It's stockpile is increasing. It's developed suitcase bombs, where the core is fused. The traditional security protocols for these weapons don't exist. Its military doctrine governing the use of these weapons is scary. If it anticipates a threat from India, the doctrine has it putting them in the backs of trucks and distributing them around the countryside. Think of that.

I could go into more detail.

● (0935)

Mr. Randall Garrison: That's frightening enough.

Mr. Robert McRae: It's frightening. If I might, I'll just put a fine point on it.

It would take about a week for any of us, including the U.S., to know if one of those deployed weapons in the back of a truck went missing in a period of crisis. That's scary. Then, as Dick has said, there is North Korea. If there ever was a case for Canada to begin discussing missile defence, North Korea certainly is it.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Admiral Rouleau, do you have anything to add to this?

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: I support everything that was said there.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Okay.

Either one of you, Mr. Fadden or Ambassador McRae, do you think there is a role for NATO diplomatically in trying to address this question of tactical nuclear weapons outside of the U.S.-Russia relationship? If that's stalled, there's still a problem.

Mr. Robert McRae: It is an issue that was raised with Russia when there was a NATO-Russia council. Since the invasion and acquisition of Crimea, the first time since World War II that a European power has grabbed a piece of territory of another country, the NATO-Russia council doesn't exist anymore. That was a subject that factored into NATO's discussions with the Russians, and of course it was always an issue with the U.S. and Russia as well, that whole tactical nuclear weapons—

Mr. Randall Garrison: Is there a way that NATO, as an alliance, could play a role in the larger question of those other nuclear powers with tactical weapons? Is there a diplomatic role there?

Mr. Robert McRae: There's effectively no formal relationship between NATO and Pakistan. There have been ongoing discussions with Pakistan because of Afghanistan. Certainly, U.S. chiefs of defence staff have regularly met with their Pakistani counterparts, and the nuclear weapons issue was always a part of that conversation, but that aspect has not been a part of NATO's dialogue with Pakistan to date.

It's something that could be explored in the NATO council. I suspect there would not be unanimous agreement as to what NATO may do in terms of engaging with Pakistan. That's a very controversial subject right at the moment.

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

Mr. Spengemann is next, for seven minutes please.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank each of you for your highly distinguished record of service to our nation, and for being with us today and bringing your cumulative expertise to bear on the work of this committee.

Mr. Fadden, I'd like to start with you. You mentioned in your opening remarks the multiplicity of terrorist organizations with considerable reach—I think those were your words. I'd like to take you into Baghdad for my first question.

I had the privilege of serving in Baghdad as a civilian UN official from 2005 to 2012, and during that time NATO had a training mission in Baghdad, in the green zone. Ambassador McRae, you mentioned the value of training. This particular training mission was staffed to the complement of about 140 officers. Its function was to train the Iraqi officer core. It wasn't combat training. It was to train the nascent or renascent Iraqi army.

Could you circle back and tell us the value, as concretely as you can, of those kinds of missions, and whether you feel NATO should be doing more of this work?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I certainly think NATO should be doing more of that. If we're not doing it with NATO, we should do it bilaterally in some circumstances.

There are two issues in dealing with militaries like the Iraqis. The first is helping the government of the day to ensure their loyalty, which is easier said than done. It's been an ongoing problem with the Iraqis. The second is to provide them with what I call the staff capacity to function as a modern military. It's one thing to provide them with new guns and whatnot, and teach them how to shoot them, but I remember that when I was still working, there were constant requests to Canada for staff officers, because we have very, very able staff officers. If you don't have good staff officers, you're not very effective on the battlefield in most cases. Providing countries like Iraq with staff training that supports the military capacity behind the scenes is very important.

The other area where it's very important for us to provide training missions is in helping those countries integrate their military. You'll know as well or better than I that one of the characteristics of the Iraqi military was that there was the military, there were some people from Iran, there were some people from Kurdistan, there were some people from here, there, and everywhere, so their military was a bit of a hodgepodge, in stark contrast to the militaries of the west. To the extent that NATO countries, or Canada as a stand-alone, can go in there and teach them some modern operational principles, it's worth its weight in gold.

● (0940)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Just to close off that question, is it fair to say, then, that this is also about relationships, like small-p political operational relationships, that may endure for even years?

Mr. Richard Fadden: Absolutely.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you.

My second question is about post-conflict reconstruction. The UN just came out, literally 48 hours ago, with an announcement that the Iraqi post-Daesh reconstruction agenda is in the magnitude of $88 billion or more. That was their initial assessment, and the fear is that unless reconstruction happens progressively, there is a risk of backsliding on the gains against Daesh.

I want to ask you for your views on this particular issue but also more broadly on the role of the intersection of NATO's work with progressive post-conflict reconstruction work to avoid conflicts 2.0 or 3.0 later down the road.

Mr. Richard Fadden: I don't have a view on the amount that the United Nations is focused on, but I was in Iraq a couple of times, and that country, quite honestly, is falling to pieces. The conflict over the course of the last little while has left it devastated.

I think it was the Iraqi Prime Minister who declared victory not too long ago. I think that is a significant mistake. This is not a conflict like World War II where you can declare from one day to the next that you've won. I think large parts of the Iraqi territory if they are not still under the control of Daesh have elements there that are going underground, and they're going to revert from more or less traditional warfare to insurgency or terrorist activity.

While we work on development of one sort or another, we have to maintain a basic level of security. I don't think they have that yet. I think the UN's probably right that they need a massive investment of money, but to use the vernacular, it ain't going to work if we—NATO, Canada, the U.S., the coalition of the willing that Rob was talking about—don't somehow continue to help Iraq maintain some basic level, to use our expression, of peace, order, and good government, because they do not have that now.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Are the connections between NATO and the UN in a general sense strong enough and functional enough to incorporate or to conceptualize the work on post-conflict reconstruction from a NATO military perspective to enhance its value to ensure integration across the military-civilian line?

Mr. Richard Fadden: Go ahead.

Mr. Robert McRae: They're not strong enough. I'll just go right to the point.

NATO has a liaison office in New York, for instance. It's staffed at a very junior level. It's very modest. Certainly Afghanistan demonstrated that although NATO and the UN can work together effectively, those relationships are difficult.

There is, in UN headquarters—and I know because I've been there and I heard it when I was in office—a great suspicion of NATO in many of the corridors in the UN, and when the Security Council has turned to NATO to implement some of the UN Security Council mandates, there's been a degree of unhappiness about that at UN headquarters. So the UN is not instinctively turning to NATO, I would say, and therefore, although NATO has offered partnership with the UN in the past, it's not been taken up by the UN.

If I might just add one thing on training, NATO could do more in terms of setting up some kind of a subcommand on training. We've reinvented the wheel with every operation to do training in the Balkans and in Afghanistan. Why not institutionalize this, have institutional memory, and commit to training on a regular basis? That applies to Iraq. There's no reason that there could not be a special partnership arrangement between NATO and Iraq that would include security sector reform on the civilian side and training on the military side. This is within the realm of the doable if countries like Canada promote this around the table.

● (0945)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, I don't think I have enough time for my last question, but maybe I'll ask it in the next round.

The Chair: We'll have enough time to go around the track given the time available in the formal questions.

I'm going to turn the floor over to Mr. Fisher.

Go ahead for five minutes, please.

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

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. It's an incredible panel.

I want to go back to burden sharing for a little bit and the most recent comments by the United States actually calling out some member countries in the burden-sharing conversation. We heard in past testimony that there have been conversations about burden sharing amongst members for years, decades even.

Have the conversations changed? Is there a new discussion on burden sharing now since the most recent calling-out by the United States?

Mr. McRae.

Mr. Robert McRae: Well, the conversation has changed over the last year, because there is now an edge to it. As I said, there is a kind of quid pro quo: if you don't pay, you don't get the U.S. In a public statement in Pensacola in December, President Trump said, "I told the people of NATO standing right behind me while they were standing right behind me—they've been delinquent. They haven't been paying. I said, 'You gotta pay. You gotta pay. You gotta pay'—and now they've taken that in—because of that. And I guess I implied you don't pay we're out of there; right?"

That's pretty clear.

Mr. Richard Fadden: May I add a thought?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Absolutely.

Mr. Richard Fadden: I agree with what Rob has said, but I think the other edge that's been added to this debate is the fact that most of the Nordic and Baltic countries are scared beyond description. We've sent some troops to the Baltic countries. Sweden has just reinstituted some form of draft, and they want us to do more—never mind Mr. Trump—which I agree with entirely. The dynamic in terms of the fear and the concern level has also, I think, focused the minds of a good number of countries more than was the case, say, five or 10 years ago.

Mr. Robert McRae: The consequence of this public discussion about payment and collective defence is that it completely undermines deterrence. In the past, it was always assumed that there was a political commitment, let alone article 5, that if an ally was attacked, they would have the support of all the other allies combined. The fact that the U.S. has now opened up a loophole or wiggle room on this undermines deterrence. It undermines deterring a potential adversary from taking a run at the Baltics, for instance, in this case by Russia. We've undermined deterrence at a time when Mr. Putin has become a greater risk-taker than ever. Nobody thought he would take a run at Crimea—I have to say that on the intelligence side—prior to the event.

At a very time when Russia is more unpredictable, and Putin is going to be there for a long time, NATO has on its own, to Putin's delight, undermined its own deterrence. The combination of an adversary in Moscow and this kind of shooting-yourself-in-the-foot policy is extremely unhelpful and has led to exactly what Dick has said in terms of what those countries are facing.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Is there any sense that the United States is willing to look at the things we've talked about, the contribution and effectiveness of member countries, instead of just the dollar sign?

Mr. Robert McRae: Our best friend right now in Washington is General Mattis. He was the strategic commander in Norfolk when I was at NATO. I spent years on—

Mr. Darren Fisher: He sees contribution effectiveness and efficiency.

Mr. Robert McRae: He understands Canada, and he understands the quality of the Canadian contribution.

You'll notice that the sharp criticism which has gone to Germany has not necessarily come our way, and I would say this is in large part because of, as Denis has talked about, the quality of the Canadian contribution and General Mattis' understanding of Canada. We have a friend in court with whom we should be speaking regularly about our contribution, our defence spending, and so on, because he will listen and he understands us.

The Chair: There's a little bit of time, but not much time for a question and an answer.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Will you be circling back?

The Chair: I will be circling back.

Mr. Bezan.

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

You mentioned that you think Putin will be there for a long time. I'll just point out that the average lifespan of a male in Russia is 64. He is 66, so one can only hope. As everyone knows, I'm not a big fan of Putin. He banned me from Russia. How could I like the guy?

Admiral Rouleau, you talked about Canadians in command at NATO. I'm assuming that we still have great military leaders and that the opportunity still exists for generals and admirals to move up into command positions at the NATO level for different operations. From the maritime command standpoint, you also talked about our having the platform. I'm sure you're referring to our destroyers.

Will the new ships coming forward—we're talking about frigate-sized surface commands like heavy armoured frigates—have that command capability such that we can still go in and lead a battle group, whether it's with respect to piracy or Baltic policing on the sea?

● (0950)

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: Yes. The replacement of our current 12 frigates is a program under the national shipbuilding program. Some of those will have command capabilities on board, and by that I mean the extra communication equipment they need to carry and the extra space to carry staff on board. When you assume command, if you take the principle of the Canadian navy to go as a Canadian task group, it means, if you go on your own, you're self-sustaining, and you have your own tanker that brings you fuel, ammunition, and food with you, so you don't need to call somebody else to come and help you out. That is still the concept that the navy wants to move forward with.

Mr. James Bezan: They'll have that air destroyer capability that will still be required, versus the submarine capability.

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: Some of them will, yes.

Mr. James Bezan: Anti-submarine warfare....

Will they be big enough? I know we talked about BMD, and one of the things that is critical from an air defence standpoint is.... You look at the Americans and some of the other allies running Aegis systems. Are these hulls going to be big enough to carry an Aegis platform?

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: They will carry the necessary radar equipment to do that kind of job.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Fadden, in your opening comments you talked about Turkey, saying that we should have been intervening 10 years ago. Its recent behaviour is disturbing, to say the least, whether it is about conforming to NATO principles of democracy, the rule of law, or human rights.

What do we do now? When Ambassador Buck was here, she was very diplomatic and careful in her wording, but I'd be interested in hearing your comments, Mr. McRae and Mr. Fadden, on what we do about Turkey today.

Mr. Richard Fadden: Well, I think, Mr. Chairman, that's a very good question, but to some considerable degree, as the question implies, the barn door has been opened. Having said that, I think we engage them, and we engage them rather more than we have been over the last several years.

There has developed in Turkey now a political dynamic that I don't think we or NATO are going to change a great deal, but we have to recognize more directly that Turkey is a quite significant regional power, which we have not done systematically over the years. I don't know what they've said at the NATO council, but I do know enough about what went on between ministers and prime ministers that this was definitely not the mindset. We're not going to get it to change anything it's doing if we don't treat it like a significant power, but I would say that both NATO generally and we specifically should simply engage, engage, engage. If we're not happy with what it's doing, we should say so, mostly in private, but we must not allow it, however we do this, to develop a closer relationship with Russia. I don't think it's going to.

Mr. James Bezan: Well, they have a pretty close relationship now and Turkey's air defence system is a Russian system.

Mr. Richard Fadden: Well, they do, but I think they're doing it mostly to irritate people right now and to make a point with the Kurds and Syria, but if you look at Russia as it is as a country, and Turkey as it is, there are not a lot of similarities, and I don't think there's much convergence of their strategic interests. It's more short term.

My answer would be to just engage, engage, engage.

Ambassador McRae may have a different view.

Mr. Robert McRae: In fact, I don't have a different view.

I notice that General Mattis met with his Turkish counterpart on the margins of the meeting today in Brussels, and it was very much.... The U.S. approach is frankly exactly what Dick described, which is hold them as close as you can, say the hard things that need to be said in private, and be careful of public posturing because it's probably going to be counterproductive.

● (0955)

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

I'm going to give my last question to Mr. Viersen.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): That was precisely my question.

The Chair: Actually, I'm going to have to stop you. He's over time already, but there will be more time. I promise you that.

Mark Gerretsen, the floor is yours.

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

My question is for Mr. Fadden. I'm coming back to the discussion about Canada's membership in NATO and how to strengthen Canada's national security. We're making recommendations here back to the government, and I'm wondering if you can give us a recommendation on how you would see Canada strengthening that role, in helping to evolve global security through NATO.

What can we do specifically in terms of the Government of Canada?

Mr. Richard Fadden: There's an expression in French:

[*Translation*]

“Charity begins at home.”

[*English*]

In other words, you start by worrying about your own backyard.

I think the Arctic is an area of considerable concern. The Russians have spent hundreds of millions of rubles reinvigorating Cold War bases, and I think it would be to the general advantage of the alliance, not only Canada, if we got the alliance to focus a little more on northern defences. That would be a contribution to world security, I think, because it's an area where there is going to be a great deal of development over the course of the coming decades because of the northern route opening up.

Canada's contribution could be, diplomatically, to convince NATO to spend more time worrying about Canada's north as opposed to Norway's north. There's nothing wrong with worrying about Norway's north.

That would be one concrete example. I think that alone would help stabilize that part of the world. I would just mention in passing that China has just declared itself a near Arctic power. I have trouble with the concept, but it does mean that we should be prepared, along with our NATO—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: There's a lot of interest.

Mr. Richard Fadden: Yes, exactly. There should be a NATO interest in what they are up to in the Arctic.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Are you willing to offer any insight as to what you think specifically we should be doing in the Arctic?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think we should increase our intelligence capabilities, which have been allowed to weaken a little bit over time. I think we should have far more exercises in the north.

In the past, and Denis can correct me, but generally speaking, when NATO does exercises it involves the U.S. and Canada hauling themselves over to Europe. I think we need to have far more NATO exercises in northern Canada. We used to have more than we do now. I think it would send a powerful message if we started doing that again.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. McRae.

Mr. Robert McRae: I agree completely with that. Norway regularly seeks NATO exercises in and around its waters. You have to know that it's a long-standing Canadian policy not to have exercises anywhere near Canada's waters or territory, so it would require a policy shift on the part of the government of the day to invite NATO into our own backyard.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Do you see us doing that?

Mr. Robert McRae: We have refused even to refer to the Arctic or the north as a NATO area of preoccupation.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Basically we're inviting NATO to come and participate in exercises in Canada. I think the vast majority of Canadians accept the fact that we're in NATO, but they probably really don't know what it's all about. How do you think the public would perceive that?

If you don't feel that your qualified to answer that question....

Mr. Robert McRae: This is why we have not gone down this road. The prospect is to have British, French, Italian, and German frigates somewhere off our coast in the north in an exercise, and every government under which I've served has not wanted to go there. That's their judgment of public opinion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I have to share the rest of my time with Ms. Alleslev, but I would love to hear other people's comments on this.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): I would like to hear your thoughts, so please continue.

Mr. Richard Fadden: What I was going to add to what Rob said was that I think the Canadian public is generally ill-informed. I think that is in part because successive governments—I am not focusing on a particular government, neither the current one nor previous ones —have not commented on the level of threat we face.

Just speaking of the Arctic, as I mentioned a minute ago, they are spending hundreds of millions of rubles re-establishing their bases. They restarted, I think about 18 months ago, their long-range bomber runs down both coasts and in Europe. I think if the government authorized the public service to explain some of this, the understanding you're seeking would come.

● (1000)

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: We have to move beyond the simple visits of NATO squadrons to come across and go all the way up to Montreal, do exercises just outside Halifax, and then move south to off Norfolk. We have to make it more visible that we are a member of that organization. As for the north, as the ambassador has said, for a long time Canada would tell NATO that it is none of their business, that the north is not part of their worries. It should be.

The Chair: I'm going to yield the floor to MP Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you so much. It's a real honour to be here.

I won't name any names to start off, but should there be a process for removing a country from NATO if its behaviour is beyond the pale at a certain point? If so, what should that process be? Hypothetically, how would we undertake it?

Mr. Robert McRae: I'll take a run at that.

There's no provision for that in the Washington treaty. A country could in theory elect to leave, provide notice and so on, but there's no provision for other members of NATO to remove a country from the alliance.

With regard to Turkey, if I might, there is a current concern, and there has been for a number of years, in light of what's going on in Syria. The Turks have said on occasion that they would like to create a buffer zone inside Syria in order to protect their country. Other NATO allies have provided warnings in a sense, a yellow light to the Turks, which is that if their entanglement across the border leads to an attack on their territory from abroad, that's an article 5 event, and we would just as soon not become involved in their adventures. They wouldn't put it that way, but that's essentially what they'd mean.

There has already been a discussion with regard to one specific ally as to how their behaviour outside their borders could entangle NATO in a conflict in which it does not wish to become involved. This is, in a sense, heading down this path, which is why allies can call for a consultation on any specific issue. There have been consultations of this kind in the past. That's not removal of an ally; that's a sign from other allies that we are concerned about a specific military operation.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm curious to get the views of the other panellists on this point.

If I could follow up on that, Mr. McRae, so I understand how this would play out, let's suppose hypothetically that Turkey got itself into a conflict as a result, at least in large part, of its own aggressive intervention. Canada reasonably says that we're not going to participate, and most other NATO countries say that as well. Presumably it would be up to us to decide not to contribute under article 5. Article 5, as you mentioned, says that nations determine the way in which they contribute.

Doesn't that, as an effect, mean that the country has put itself outside of NATO in terms of operational significance? As much as it continues to be part of meetings, which maybe influence what can or cannot be discussed in those meetings, the operational implications are the same as if they had left. Is that fair?

Mr. Robert McRae: I agree. I mean, it would be very damaging.

However, I don't think it would actually get to declaration of article 5. The way this works is that a country comes to council and says their homeland has been attacked from abroad and here's the evidence. They then ask that the alliance declare article 5.

To declare article 5, you need the agreement of all 28 allies. I think in this specific instance, some allies would say that this is not an article 5 event and they are not going to therefore permit NATO to declare article 5. I think the thing would kind of grind to a halt before article 5 was declared.

Article 5 is not automatic just on the basis of an attack. It needs to be agreed to by all 28 allies.

● (1005)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: If that's the direction, then the remaining issue is that Turkey is at the table. That potentially has implications on what nations can discuss if there's somebody at the table that they're not totally sure about what kinds of other entanglements they have on the other side.

Mr. Fadden, do you have comments on this?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I would add that if Turkey's behaviour, or any other country's, became totally egregious, it would not be a matter for the North Atlantic Council. Heads of government and heads of state would decide there's a problem and they have to do something about it.

It's not just Turkey. There are a number of the former Soviet states as well. The gleam in Putin's eyes is that he can somehow drag them back from NATO into his orbit. I would worry as much about them as about anything else.

Mr. Chairman, with your leave, I'm going to have to leave in about five minutes. I hope that Ms. Kingston mentioned it.

The Chair: Thanks for the heads-up.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have one quick follow-up.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Garnett, but there's no more time. I'm going to have to give the time to Ms. Alleslev.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you very much.

I would like to go back to burden sharing. I know we have an ally in General Mattis. There is a perception around the fairness and the contribution. As part of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and as the chair of Canada's delegation, I go to these meetings a lot. What a government and NAC are saying is not what the other parliamentarians are saying directly to us. These are congressmen and, of course, members of Parliament from the U.K. There is significant pressure on us.

How do we talk about the perception of being at the table and the contribution? It's about what the other nations perceive as our stepping up as much as whatever it is.

What would you recommend? What do we say? How would you address that?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I'll just try to answer a little bit on that, and I'm sure Rob will have something to say.

I think one of the things we have to do is to be careful about being too self-congratulatory. I actually agree with my two colleagues that our contributions are very good. They're very effective—they're usually not without caveats—but we have to stop saying that the only reason we don't go to 2% is because we're so good. If other countries want to tell us that we're good, I think that's great. I think we continue to be excellent, but I was told by some of my colleagues when I was the NSA, “Enough is enough. We know you're good. We just want you to do a bit more.”

Having said that, I absolutely agree that we need a new formula in NATO that takes into account mobility, willingness, civilian contributions, and military contributions. There have been efforts over the year—Rob probably knows more about it than I do—to modify the formula.

To your point, a lot of people don't want to hear about it. They're worried and they want more of a contribution. I think the key for us is to demonstrate that while we're not at 2%, the graph line is going up, and then make a variety of other arguments.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Part of that is to be able to communicate to Canadians. As you said, the public is woefully uninformed—an incredible statement, and I think it's important.

We are the parliamentarians. Part of our responsibility is to inform Canadians. Do you agree? How do we now start to have a significant and realistic conversation about the threats?

Mr. Richard Fadden: It's a real problem for Canada, I think, because fundamentally, Canadians don't feel threatened. We have three oceans, and we have the United States.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: But we are.

Mr. Richard Fadden: We are.

I don't know if this committee went across Canada. One way to spread the word is to ask the House for permission to hold hearings across the country. It's for Parliament or for the government to provide additional funding to think tanks and academics so that there can be more discussions.

I'm not directing this at a particular government, but I argued until I was blue in the face when I was still working that sharing more information publicly is possible. Governments, generally speaking, don't like to talk about national security. That's not an irrational position, but I do think that sometimes if you aggregate what you're talking about up a level or two, we can be more open. I don't think your goal is going to be met unless we're willing to be a bit more open.

I'm not talking about operational secrets that would worry my two colleagues, but if people read the CSIS annual report, for example, they would see that there's a lot in there every year about the kinds of threats we're facing. Maybe we should ask the Department of National Defence to produce one on the military front—things of that nature.

I think it's going to have to be a multi-pronged effort with the things that I've talked about, and probably a whole raft of others, such as y'all—if I can use an Americanism—getting out on Sunday morning talk shows and talking more to the media about these things in a non-partisan way.

I've worked long enough with politicians to know that's not easy, but I would submit with great respect that when you deal with military and foreign policy, it should be easier. We haven't seen a lot of that. I think that if there's some way of developing a little more unity of language between the political parties, it would help a lot.

● (1010)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Can you add anything?

The Chair: If you could do it in about 30 seconds, it would be helpful.

Mr. Robert McRae: I fully endorse what Dick has just said.

I have a variety of ways you can come at this. One way that has been used in the past in the area of international security is to introduce some form of white paper or discussion paper. It used to be called a green paper, at one time.

It's something that the government of the day puts out, not necessarily as a position of the government but rather as a piece that describes the international security environment and the challenges and threats that we face as a country. It's a way of supporting debate, which could then be a prelude to broader discussions around the country, both on missile defence and on the kinds of threats in the Arctic that Dick described. These are new things that really do merit more public discussion.

The Chair: Thank you.

The last formal question is three minutes. I appreciate that you might have to leave. Can you hang in there for three?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I'll stay for three, and then I have to run.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. That's the question I was going to ask.

I want to ask about the national shipbuilding strategy, particularly Mr. Fadden because I know he has to go.

You talked about the problems of this regional aspect of invading procurement, I guess I would say, all the time. In the previous Parliament, we had all-party support for the national shipbuilding strategy, as an attempt to get around constantly re-doing things for regional benefit and also to build up a shipbuilding industry as a part of our national defence capacity in this country.

Do you think the shipbuilding strategy is achieving that goal? Has it improved things in that area or not?

Mr. Richard Fadden: It's a good question. In the short term, Irving shipyards in Halifax have done the refits of the frigates that the admiral talked about. They are working on, I believe, the Arctic vessels, or they're starting to work on them. They have the contract for the major service vessels. To the extent that they have that, and they know they'll have it, and presumably, funding will continue, I think is a good thing.

I'm not sure that, despite all of that, we are going to successfully compete with South Korea with shipbuilding writ large. I'm using them as an example. The success of the shipbuilding policy will depend to a considerable degree on the Government of Canada's ongoing commitments to spending money on shipbuilding on those shipyards in Canada. I just have trouble imagining that the French, for example, are going to use Irving or their colleagues on the west coast to build any of their destroyers.

I'm making a joke of it to some degree, but I think it has gone a long way towards providing stability. That's medium term. My worry would be the long term. I'm not sure about the long term without ongoing, significant investment on the part of the federal government, for the Coast Guard, the Mounties, DFO, and the military.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Of course, we have had New Zealand commissioning work from the west coast shipyards.

Mr. Richard Fadden: Yes, and they're very pleased. Yes, I know.

Mr. Randall Garrison: There may be other possibilities around the world.

Mr. Richard Fadden: I don't disagree. I'm just saying it's going to be an uphill battle, in my view. That's all I'm saying.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: I won't suspend, but I want to thank you, Mr. Fadden, for appearing today. This panel's been fantastic. We'll probably see you again; I know you're in Ottawa. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Richard Fadden: Thank you for having me.

The Chair: It was our pleasure.

To the rest of our witnesses, we have about 30 minutes left. I'll be, predictably, fair with the timing.

I'm going to take one question. I don't do it very often and I think the committee would like to hear this.

To the question of valued participation, of the 29 NATO countries, how many of those countries can integrate with NATO, or the U.S. for that matter, with land, air, sea, special forces and command? Would you put Canada on that list?

I'll start with Mr. McRae.

● (1015)

Mr. Robert McRae: Canada's definitely on that list. We've participated, I think, in pretty much every NATO operation, whether it's sea, air, or land, that I can recall. There have been a lot of operations since the end of the Cold War.

We're interoperable with the U.S., and that's what counts, by and large.

I have to say, and this is something Denis and I were discussing before the meeting, that there's really only a handful of countries at NATO that can make that claim. Often it's the same countries doing the same missions: us, the U.S., the U.K., France, the Netherlands, Belgium, on occasion. Countries like Germany often have the capability but politically are reluctant to participate; ditto, occasionally, the Italians and Spanish. The other countries of NATO, especially the newer countries, the newer members, clearly don't have the range of capabilities that would permit broad-spectrum participation in all operations in NATO. The list is fairly short. It's probably seven or eight countries.

Denis may have a military view on it.

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: I do.

In fact, Canada is definitely on that list. When NATO countries operate, go into a theatre of operation, they'll go under what is called NATO procedures and rules. Those seven or eight countries have the equipment, have the ability, have the knowledge to operate, and really, to come together with the rest of the nations. Canada even goes further than that when it comes to integrating with an American battle group. When an American battle group sails out of Norfolk, meaning an aircraft carrier sails out, she sails out with a series of escorts that come with her.

In the beginning, 10 years ago, we would add a Canadian ship to the battle group. Now the Canadian ship takes the place of an American ship into the battle group, fully integrated under American procedures, which, in many cases, will be different from NATO procedures when you're operating within the NATO environment. Canada is well positioned to do all that.

The Chair: Thank you. Those are very important answers for this committee.

I have Mr. Spengemann, Mr. Bezan, and Mr. Garrison. We'll go to five-minute rounds and there will still be more time.

Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, I'll split my time with Mr. Gerretsen and/or Mr. Fisher.

Thank you very much for your previous comments. Mr. Fadden had wanted to talk about the political component of NATO as being equally significant to the military component. You also mentioned the frictions between the United Nations and NATO, probably driven by perceptions that NATO's primarily military in nature. I wonder if you could elaborate on the politics of NATO, the political opportunity, and perhaps specifically through the lens of the current transformation in Iraq and the residual threats emanating from Daesh, or a potential successor to Daesh. What political work, what political opportunities...?

Mr. Robert McRae: I think one of the most important things to bear in mind is that the NATO council, 28 countries around the table, chaired by the secretary general, is all civilian at the top. The summits are our leaders, prime ministers, presidents, and so on. Ministers are on the next level, and then ambassadors. So there's civilian leadership of NATO. Our military colleagues have their military committee, other military subcommittees, and so on, which provide advice to the political leadership. The decisions as to whether or not to conduct an air campaign over Kosovo are made at the political level. These are political decisions. That's, in a sense, the most important thing.

Second, within NATO—and this happens in different forums—some of the formal NATO council and the ambassadors, for instance, meet informally at least once a week, often more. There are political discussions of the issues of the day. Prior to the Libya air campaign, there was a discussion in January of that year about what was happening in Libya, what the implications were for NATO, and the values that NATO stood for.

Interestingly, a lot of these operations, whether they were in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, or Libya, were effectively humanitarian operations. These were to protect civilians in situations of conflict. That's where the origin of these missions often began, through the political discussions around the kinds of values and rights that NATO espouses and—

● (1020)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Ambassador, I'm sorry to cut you off. This is important insight. I think there's lots of room for discussion, but thank you for that point. It's important.

I'm going to pass the remainder of my time to Mr. Gerretsen or Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you.

I'm scribbling notes down so fast here. There is so much testimony coming out. I think it was Mr. McRae who said it was important to bring the full spectrum and not let others have to fill the gap in missions. Have we, in the past, been able to do that? Are we anywhere near being able to provide that full spectrum now? Through our new defence policy, do you think we'll get to the point where, if we're not there now, we will be?

Mr. Robert McRae: I would ask Denis to follow up.

I have to say that Afghanistan was a bit of a wake-up call. The idea of pooling resources in a combat mission with our closest allies did not really pan out. I think that even today in NATO, when the secretary general, as a way of overcoming budget issues, encourages allies to pool resources and capabilities, Canada, certainly when I was there, would intervene by saying, “We understand the theory, but on the ground in a combat situation, pooling resources with allies does not always work out.” As close as those allies can be, including the U.S. and the U.K., by the way, when you need the helicopters for a medevac, when you need the UAVs to see where those IEDs are being planted, and our allies say, “Yes, we hear you, but we're busy; we have commitments of our own for our own troops”, and you don't have those ears and eyes, and you don't have the medevac when you need it, that's a wake-up call.

We've acquired the helicopters and UAV capability, and I think we're in a much better position today to understand that, when we go somewhere, we bring the whole kit we need, and if we don't have the kit, we don't go.

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: That's absolutely correct.

The Chair: Sorry, Admiral, but I'm going to have to stop it there. There'll be more time, and hopefully we can finish that thought.

I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Bezan or to anybody on his side who wants it.

Mr. James Bezan: I appreciate it. I'll be splitting my time with Mr. Viersen.

As you know, Ambassador, there have been some changes within the European construct on setting up PESCO, now that they have their permanent European security and co-operation organization. I've had some concern about whether that's being competitive or does that include capacity building? I'd like to get your ideas about it.

Just in the last few days, there has been a new centre of excellence established in Finland on hybrid warfare. We were talking about that earlier. It's open to European and NATO members. The signatories are Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the U.K., and the U.S.A. Canada is absent from that list, and I'm hearing through back channels that the Europeans aren't happy that we didn't come in to the original memorandum.

Do you think Canada should be a member of the centre of excellence on hybrid warfare?

Mr. Robert McRae: I think it's a good question. I don't have inside information as to what the debate in Canada was on this issue. Certainly, hybrid warfare, as we've discussed, is an important new issue that NATO needs to confront. On the surface of it, I would agree. I would suggest that this is something Canada can bring a contribution to, frankly.

More broadly on the European side, if the European Union wishes to do more on the defence side, we should encourage them to do so. There's no substitute for NATO because the U.S. is there around the table and they all know it, but if the Europeans are prepared to take up some of the slack and take on missions that maybe NATO would not, great. Let them fill that gap. They've often taken on policing missions in the past below the level of high-intensity combat. I think there's much to be gained in terms of encouraging Europeans to do more on their own in the defence capability.

● (1025)

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

Arnold.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I'd like to go back to the perhaps more diplomatic avenue that Mr. Fadden was mentioning in terms of our diplomacy, particularly with the case of Turkey and its aggression outside of its borders right now.

I don't understand much of what's going on there. Maybe you could comment on it. You talked about article 5. If Turkey was feeling threatened, could they not have come to NATO and asked NATO to help them out? They seem to be saying that they're being threatened, yet they're bombing in Afrin, Syria, right now. Could they not have gone with a NATO unit in that direction or do they feel that NATO is feckless and therefore they're not even going to show up and ask? I don't know.

Do you get what I'm trying to ask?

Mr. Robert McRae: I do, yes. It's a good question.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: If they don't even approach NATO to say they're being attacked from that area.... If they see it as a waste of time, they're not going to show up.

Mr. Robert McRae: I think it's a good question. NATO has made it clear that any armed attack on the territory of any member state would be met with a collective response. The secretary general I'm sure is reiterating that, including in the case of Turkey and, conceivably, Syria, which might take a run at the Turks for whatever reason. It's unlikely, therefore, that the Syrians would do that. I think the deterrence is still there in terms of deterring any armed attack on the mainland of Turkey.

Attacks on deployed forces are different. If troops are deployed outside your territory and they come under attack, that's not an article 5 event. For instance, in Afghanistan, our troops were attacked; this was not an article 5 event. The Turks deploying forces are using aircraft outside of their territory and inside Syria. If they get into trouble, in a way they're kind of on their own—

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Even if they pull out, if they disengage—

Mr. Robert McRae: If Syria or Russia, highly unlikely.... But if another country in response attacks Turkey, that would be an article 5 event. The Turks have come to the NATO council in the past, because this has been a long-standing issue with Syria, and they have asked for consultation around this. As you might imagine, at the same time, allies are pretty cautious vis-à-vis the Turks in terms of entangling themselves in something that might lead to an article 5 event.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: I think I have a pretty good understanding of that.

I'll give the time back to Mr. Bezan.

The Chair: The time's up, actually, and I'm going to give the floor to MP Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I have to do the lament of so much expertise and so little time. I don't want to have a distinguished admiral sitting before us and not give him a chance to talk about the shipbuilding strategy. Sometimes there's a tendency for people to say that the shipbuilding strategy has nothing to do with NATO. Your very presence here and your experience I think contradict that. I would like you to tell us a little more about Canada's naval contributions to NATO and the importance of those.

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: Well, as we've seen in recent operations, let's say in the Libyan operations, we had a frigate that was deployed and operated there immediately, under General Bouchard's command in Naples. More from a Canadian perspective, Canada's forces and the navy, as one of the services, always has the principle of operating under what they call the Canadian task group concept, which means you send out a command ship with two or three escorts, and you have your own supply ship with you.

That was the intent when we went to war in the gulf. We had that, and I remember everybody was flying a Canadian flag, and we were all self-sustained in our operation down there.

As we speak, we have recently reacquired the possibility of doing that with the recent supply ship that came out of Lauzon in Quebec City doing trials on the east coast. If the admiral was asked and if NATO was to say it would like to have a Canadian task group to go and do whatever the mission was, he could right now put together a Canadian task group.

Although we no longer have command destroyers or air defence for the group, some of those frigates have been upgraded to be able to assume the role of command ships, so they could actually go down there. One of them would be the command ship; that new supply ship could join them, and other frigates could join them as well. They could even have a submarine join them, as the ideal task group includes a submarine as well. It could go and join all under a Canadian flag, as opposed to going and joining, let's say, a NATO group that is multinational. It's possible.

In fact, this new AOR was not even part of the shipbuilding program. If we all recall, it was not part of the initial plan. This is something that came up after the fact. In fact, from a naval perspective, I say thank God, because I don't think we're going to see the JSS out of the shipyard on the west coast for quite a few years yet.

Here we are. We have that capability back in our hands now. The frigates have undergone a good revamping program. They'll be good for quite a few years, but they'll need replacing. They'll need those CSCs to come behind, and we know that as soon as Irving finishes with the AOPS in Halifax, this is what they're going to undertake. That's going to take time as well.

The ball is rolling out, and we've passed all the deadlines we had planned back in 2010, so that's already eight years ago. We have a few AOPS that are coming off the line soon out of Irving, but that's about all we have.

● (1030)

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Mr. Randall Garrison: It's not a lot of time, and I want to go back to Ambassador McRae.

First, I want to thank him for acknowledging, at least implicitly, that the missile defence argument has two sides. Sometimes we are presented with arguments that it doesn't have two sides. Again, as I've always said, we're having a debate about something no one's asking us to join, at an unknown cost, with unknown reliability.

In the international context, I want to ask you about the argument that it's always cheaper to build more offensive ballistic missiles than it is to build the defence system. Doesn't this really raise the danger of contributing to the nuclear arms race?

Mr. Robert McRae: In terms of missile defence, the defensive systems are oriented really towards one very specific threat, which is what we would have called a rogue state, with a limited number of missiles and weapons. In the current climate, that's a North Korea and potentially an Iran in the future, and possibly other countries.

The Russians have agreed to build a nuclear reactor in Egypt for some reason, so one has to wonder what the story will be there in the longer run. Other gulf states have been seeking nuclear energy capability for no particular reason as well.

What needs to be borne in mind with regard to missile defence is that we need this debate, and that's really the purpose of my comment. It's highly unlikely the U.S. would seek to put any kind of interceptor on Canadian territory—and probably no radar, or just one —so we're talking about a very limited request on the part of the U. S.

The Chair: Given the time available, we have enough for two more questions of five minutes each.

Ms. Alleslev, and then Mr. Genuis.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you very much.

I'd like to talk about our contribution around the senior leadership positions.

General Henault, General Bouchard, yourself, and many others have held senior leadership military officer positions in NATO programs. We've seen a decline in that. Could you give us a feel for why that senior leadership contribution matters as much as other contributions, and what we can do to change it?

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: When you have a Canadian general or admiral as the chair of the military committee, it brings a level of influence that you may not have otherwise. I'm not saying that you would do that, use it the wrong way. To have a Canadian in command of the operations in Libya, as General Bouchard was, also brought the Canadian flag higher. To maybe tone down what Mr. Fadden said, when it comes to...we know we're good. I didn't mention that from the perspective that we're good, that they're asking for a Canadian perspective, but that Canadians are there all the time. You do a mission in Libya, Canadians are there. The Balkans....

● (1035)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: But have we had those senior leadership positions to the same extent recently?

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: No. As I said, I was the last Canadian to command the NATO fleet.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: What year was that, just for the record?

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: It was 2006-07.

We have moved away. I mentioned the lack of command ships, and all that caused some of that to happen. Other nations building their own command ships that never used to be in the rotation for command also made that rotation a little longer. But we have been present in the gulf with task force 150, which is the counterterrorism operation. It's a shore position. It's no longer a command ship at sea with a multinational fleet, but there's presence there. But from a NATO perspective—

Ms. Leona Alleslev: In your mind, have our recent contributions been of the same magnitude as perhaps they were in that earlier time frame?

VAdm (Ret'd) Denis Rouleau: No.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you.

Mr. McRae, can we talk a little about the process of a country not being in NATO any longer? The reason I ask is that we're a democratic and political organization based on shared values as much as we are an alliance from a military perspective. If those shared values are undermined, considering when we're in a situation where we have changing states all over in world power shifts, do we need to have that conversation about whether a member should continue to be a member when the ideals are no longer shared?

Mr. Robert McRae: That's a very good question. We should be clear. As Mr. Fadden said, although we use Turkey as a hypothetical case with its involvement in Syria, the leaders of other member states of NATO seem to be closer to Mr. Putin than they are to the secretary general of NATO, so clearly there are issues. This is a new phenomenon.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: It's very new.

Mr. Robert McRae: To be absolutely frank, I don't think there would be much traction for this discussion around the NATO table because of that, because clearly some nations will feel they are the subject of this discussion.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: However, if not now, then when, and what's the consequence of not...? If there are no longer shared ideals about democracy and we're sharing critical strategic information that puts us all at risk, the basis is those shared ideals and values and way of life and rule of law: democratic principles.

Mr. Robert McRae: Again, I think this is a very important question.

If we are concerned, the first conversations and perhaps others in terms of what we do would be with our closest allies: our U.S. or U. K. counterparts.

There can be concerns about NATO allies sharing information with other countries which we may not wish the information to be shared with. It wouldn't be the first time. This is an ongoing question.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Is it the first time of the magnitude and scope—

The Chair: I'm going to have to end it there. I'm sorry, but I have to be fair to everybody here.

MP Genuis, you have the last question.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to ask about the potential Pacific role for NATO. It was mentioned in the beginning. Of course, Russia and China both being nations that are challenging the idea of an international rules-based order—this is maybe a bit out of its historic ambit—but what role can NATO play in issues in the South China Sea as well as other issues in the Asia Pacific?

Mr. Robert McRae: Thank you for the question.

It's not dissimilar to this issue around the Arctic. The Norwegians, Iceland, and others, including the U.S., have sought to have the Arctic as an area of interest of NATO in its public documents and statements, and so on. Canada has been the one country that's blocked that reference to have the Arctic as an area of interest for it. Just so you know, this is a line of government policy going back several governments. This is not one government's line. It's an issue that needs to be looked at.

● (1040)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sorry, but could I quickly jump in.

This is off the Asia topic, but why is that the case?

Mr. Robert McRae: It's because each government under which I've served has not wished to see NATO vessels in our Arctic. It's as simple as that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

Mr. Robert McRae: But it's not irrelevant to your question. NATO has developed partnerships with Japan, Australia, South Korea, and New Zealand. They were all active in ISAF in Afghanistan. Those four countries have been partners of NATO. We suggested, while I was at NATO, to those four partners that we should have a broader dialogue on security issues including in their area.

Those four countries, as much as they like NATO, more or less declined that proposal. They were concerned about the perception of closer ties between their countries—Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Japan—and NATO and the impact that would have on security in their area. In other words, the Chinese wouldn't like it. I think that is really what it comes down to. Therefore, they have been a bit standoffish in terms of that dialogue. We were suggesting to them that we would have a new category of NATO partnership called global partners, which would involve things beyond the transatlantic area, in the Euro-Atlantic area. We would have global partners. Canada was among those countries pushing for it, as you might imagine, particularly in the area of the Pacific, but we've not had the uptake on the other side of this equation that we would have wished for. NATO itself has been keen, I have to say, to launch that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Events are constantly changing, of course. Do you think that with a more and more assertive China, as well as with Japan's kind of shifting willingness to be more explicit about its military, there might be an increase in interest?

Mr. Robert McRae: I think there would be nothing wrong with the NATO secretary general pursuing this with these individual countries, these four in particular. It really comes down to their calculation as to whether having closer ties with NATO is a net positive for them in their security environment.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Very quickly, with regard to Canada's engagement with Pakistan, you mentioned concerns about NATO's engagement with Pakistan in general. Of course, there are a lot of concerns about the basic structure of the Pakistani state in terms of who is exerting control for what branches. That's obviously a major concern in light of what you talked about in terms of the nuclear situation there. What can NATO do to engage Pakistan or at least elements of the Pakistani state that are more likely to want to be engaged in trying to make improvements to the situation?

Mr. Robert McRae: Well, there is a debate about this, about engagement with Pakistan, including a debate in Washington right now. The debate has always been around whether we should cut them off, not talk with them anymore, cease providing any kind of technical assistance or support. My personal view is that the right way to proceed is to actually engage them more, as Mr. Fadden was saying. Get closer to them. Don't cut your assistance. Keep talking to the generals. Engage at the political level. You want to be there. You want to do what you can to bring them along, to professionalize their armed forces, and so on, and to create a space to have discussions about these concerns that we may have around the potential for proliferation and so on.

I think the right way to proceed is not to push them away, but frankly to engage these countries. The NATO secretary general is certainly in a position to do that. There would be nothing wrong with a visit to Islamabad. Certainly in terms of our government of the day, there would be nothing untoward to regularly engaging with the Pakistanis at the political level in the same way.

● (1045)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I understand that in “Strong, Secure, Engaged”, our most recent defence policy, it does make reference to exploring the Arctic, and also NATO's involvement in the Arctic.

The Chair: I was about to say that, but I see that members use points of order differently.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming. Thank you for your service to Canada in the various capacities. This was a fantastic panel. It was very informative to us and will help with our report moving forward.

Thank you for being here this morning.

The meeting is adjourned.

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