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**Wednesday, November 8, 2006**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Rick Casson**

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• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC)):** I call to order meeting number 22 of the Standing Committee on National Defence, pursuant to our study on Afghanistan.

We'd certainly like to welcome General Gauthier here today, commander of the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command.

Sir, the usual process is that you have some time to make a presentation. Did I see a handout as well from you? Yes, speaking points have been handed out in both official languages, I hope?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier (Commander, Canadian Expeditionary Force Command, Department of National Defence):** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** That's good. After you're finished—take the time you need, this is a two-hour session—we'll start into our regular round of questions and see how that flows.

So, sir, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Honourable members, good afternoon.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak with you about our Canadian Forces' mission in Afghanistan.

[English]

What you should have in front of you is the text of my opening remarks, as well as some slides, five or six graphics, which I will walk through as I go along and refer to at the appropriate time.

As commander of Canadian Expeditionary Force Command, I'm responsible to the CDS for all our forces deployed on international missions. I was appointed to this new command position in September of last year, and my headquarters was formally stood up and assumed control of international operations on February 1 of this year.

Boiled down to its essence, my job is about two things: first of all, exercising effective command and control of international operations on behalf of the Chief of Defence Staff; and, just as important, from my perspective, ensuring that the men and women deployed on these missions have the support they need to be successful—in other words, setting the conditions for mission success.

[Translation]

As Commander of Canadian Expeditionary Force Command, CEFC, and a member of the Canadian Forces, I'm extremely proud of what we have accomplished since we first began conducting ground operations in Afghanistan in 2002.

I know you have already had a number of Canadian Forces and Department of National Defence representatives appear before you concerning the mission in Afghanistan, and among these, most recently, Brigadier-General Howard who provided you with a very good factual update on where the mission currently stands.

In my prepared remarks, I would like to offer my perspective on the whole-of-government approach to the mission and its military component, and the progress that has been achieved along the different lines of operation since Canada's move into the south of Afghanistan.

I will be pleased to answer your questions following my remarks.

• (1535)

[English]

First of all, let me say a few words about our whole-of-government approach as viewed from a Canadian Forces perspective. If I could ask you to refer to the first graphic, please, our efforts in Afghanistan are guided by a military campaign plan that was developed in full consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs, CIDA, the RCMP, and our other partners, and it is fully congruent with the Government of Canada country strategy for Afghanistan.

Contrary to some recent assertions, this is not exclusively a combat mission. Far from it. We are focused above all on helping the people of Afghanistan and giving them hope for a brighter future. Our priorities and objectives are based largely on those found in the Afghan national development strategy, as unveiled at the London conference in January of this year, and our benchmarks and measures of success mirror those in the Afghan Compact, which is the agreement between the Government of Afghanistan and the international donor community on goals to be achieved between now and 2011.

All of these are also linked to NATO operational plans. From a Canadian perspective, this is very much a whole-of-government effort. In Afghanistan, these efforts come together at the provincial reconstruction team level in Kandahar within the Canadian joint task force headquarters, where the military commander has both policy and development advisers, and at the national level through the embassy in Kabul, where, again, all the key players are present.

There is always room for improvement, but I believe we're doing this better right now in a three-D, whole-of-government context than we've done at any time since the end of the cold war.

[Translation]

As illustrated in the right side of the slide, of course, this isn't simply a Canadian effort. Until recently our forces were under the operational control of the U.S.-led coalition.

As of July 31, we are now functioning under the command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Beyond the military coalition, we also engage and work closely, at multiple levels, with many international partners including national entities, International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations.

Finally, and most importantly, there is the Afghan context to consider. We have said all along that this is all about helping Afghans to help themselves, and our deployed personnel understand this well.

[English]

This next graphic, slide 2, shows the main lines of effort or lines of operation we are following, all of which are closely aligned with the Afghan national development strategy and ISAF's plan to assist the government of Afghanistan.

With respect to governance, the military plays a supporting and enabling role to other departments in achieving governance objectives. From our perspective, this is about building capacity and supporting the extension of the authority, credibility, and legitimacy of the Government of Afghanistan, from Kabul down through the provincial level to the districts and villages where people need their help.

Our role in development and reconstruction objectives is also supportive to other departments. These objectives are focused on helping to reduce poverty, create a viable economy, and address the infrastructure and social priorities of government authorities at all levels.

The security line of operation is obviously our core business in the military. It's principally about two things: maintaining a stable and secure environment on the one hand, which in turn will facilitate progress along the first two lines of operation; and second, assisting in the building of capacity of Afghan national security forces, principally the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police, to be able to stand on their own two feet.

Because the security challenges in the southern and eastern reaches of Afghanistan have been so significant, making progress along all three lines of operation has been challenging. We must win the confidence of the Afghan people so they can help us with security. However, this confidence will not be won through security operations alone. The Afghan government and the international community have to improve the quality of people's lives if they are to earn their loyalty and support and, by extension, their help in security matters.

[Translation]

Reflecting on the progress Canada has made to date in Afghanistan, it is important to consider that we have only had a

significant concentration of forces in the South since late February of this year. At the time of our arrival in Kandahar, operations were being conducted under the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom, with coalition manoeuvre units present in just two of the six southern provinces.

Last week, after almost nine months in command, Canada's Brigadier-General David Fraser handed over Command of Regional Command (South) to Major-General Ton Van Loon of the Netherlands.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Brigadier-General Fraser's outstanding accomplishments over this period. His exceptional leadership of a dynamic multinational force under the most trying of circumstances has earned him the highest praise from all levels of both the NATO and U.S. chains of command, as well as the Afghan government.

● (1540)

[English]

We will now move to slide 3.

During his command, General Fraser was responsible for overseeing the critical and successful transition of international forces from U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom to NATO's International Security Assistance Force, which took place absolutely seamlessly on 31 July of this year. His efforts and leadership also helped set the conditions for the expansion of ISAF into Regional Command East in early October, thereby completing the transfer of authority for the whole of Afghanistan from U.S. leadership to NATO leadership.

During this period, Canadian Forces were instrumental in supporting the inflow of key major NATO troop-contributing countries in RC south: the Netherlands in Oruzgan; the U.K. in Helmand province; and the Romanians in Zabol province. There's now a battle group and a PRT in each of the four major provinces in the south, more than doubling the coalition presence in this region of Afghanistan from earlier Operation Enduring Freedom days.

The media has covered Canadian Forces actions in the face of armed opposition throughout Kandahar province as we've extended our presence into regions that until recently were considered safe havens for the Taliban. In doing so, we've disrupted them, weakened their operational capability, and extended the reach of Afghan authorities in these areas.

Through Operations Mountain Thrust and Medusa, international forces, and Canadians in particular, defeated the Taliban's much heralded spring and summer offensive and forcefully demonstrated the resolve of ISAF. Earlier in the year, the Taliban publicly claimed that its troops would take back Kandahar and that U.S. and NATO soldiers would be on the run.

As Brigadier General Fraser pointed out recently, we are still there, stronger and more determined than ever. We hold the Pashmul and Panjwai districts—heartland of the old Taliban regime—and Kandahar is no longer under direct threat from Taliban fighters.

As General James Jones, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, said very recently, "The insurgents chose to test Canada and Canada responded magnificently."

But we're under no illusions about what this all means. Having failed in more conventional operations in August and September, the Taliban will revert to their traditional intimidation tactics: terrorizing and victimizing innocent Afghan men, women, and children.

The challenge ahead is to turn these tactical victories of recent months into longer-term gains for the Afghan people, to offer them hope where the Taliban offer hatred.

We certainly recognize that this won't be achieved by military means alone.

[*Translation*]

As I said earlier, our efforts are intended to be balanced between maintaining a secure and stable environment in Kandahar and building the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces. Much progress has been made by the international community in helping to raise a professional Afghan National Army over the past three years; but this is a mammoth undertaking, and it is unrealistic to think that sustainable results will be achieved overnight.

The same applies to the Afghan National Police forces. The latter are particularly critical to security at the district and village levels and much remains to be done to improve the quality and quantity of these forces. The Canadian Forces and the whole-of-government team are actively engaged in building capacity within the Afghan National Security Forces.

At the national level, we have a number of Canadian Forces staff officers, led by Brigadier-General Gary O'Brien, embedded in and playing a key role with the U.S.-led Combined Security and Training Command in Kabul. This headquarters manages a multi-billion dollar program aimed at organizing, training and equipping the Afghan National Army and reforming and building the Afghan National Police. A number of RCMP officers will also be joining this group in the weeks ahead.

We'll also have 15 Canadian Forces personnel functioning as a training team working directly with the Afghan National Army soldiers at the Kabul Military Training Centre. This training cadre mentors Afghan trainers and soldiers in small unit tactics and skills as the final step in their basic training prior to their operational deployment with Afghan military units across the country.

Our soldiers have a well-deserved reputation as excellent trainers, and the impact of this relatively small group of Canadians on literally thousands of Afghan soldiers on their way out the training door is important.

• (1545)

[*English*]

In Kandahar province, our security capacity-building efforts have also been significant, and these are growing by the day. We recently completed the deployment of a 64-person operational mentor and liaison team, affectionately referred to as OMLTs, that will be embedded in and work closely with an Afghan National Army infantry battalion in Kandahar and various headquarters elements. The intention here is to have Canadians mentor, train, and support Afghan army units that will be working alongside Canadian Forces units in the province. If we're successful over time, there will be a

gradual reduction in our combat forces and a corresponding increase in our mentoring and training contribution.

The Kandahar provincial reconstruction team also has been very much focused on capacity building. An important and successful initiative has been the creation of a joint or provincial coordination centre, comprised of Canadian Forces members and Afghan National Police, located in the heart of the city by the Governor's Palace. The Joint Coordination Centre plays a key role in providing information about incidents and accidents and helps to coordinate quick emergency response between Afghan and ISAF forces.

PRT members attend numerous security meetings with representatives of all major ANSF elements to discuss coordinated efforts to resolve issues such as security, resources, operations, and intelligence sharing.

[*Translation*]

The PRT Military Police Platoon together with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and civilian police representatives work closely with the Afghan National Police leadership to develop their policing capacity. Both elements have been engaged in a variety of training activities at Camp Nathan Smith, including the handling of Improvised Explosive Devices, patrolling, suspect searching and vehicle checkpoint procedures, in an effort to professionalize law enforcement agencies. RCMP and Military Police have also played an important role in the more recent initiative to recruit and train an Auxiliary Police Force for Kandahar province.

I should also note that a substantial element of the reconstruction effort funded by the Department of National Defence is focused on Afghan National Police equipment and infrastructure.

[*English*]

As I indicated earlier, from a Canadian Forces military perspective, we see this challenge of supporting the development of professional, credible, and trusted Afghan national security forces as our most important line of work. The challenge in the near term is to increase the presence of both Afghan National Army and police forces in Kandahar province, such that we are supporting them rather than the other way around.

Now, a few words about our progress in governance, reconstruction, and development. You've had an opportunity to hear from Colonel Mike Capstick about the role of the strategic advisory team in support of various government ministries, so I will not dwell on this particular success story. I'll simply say that the feedback I've received from Afghans in Kabul is that this team is respected, trusted, and very much contributing to building governance and development capacity at the national level in Kabul.

In Kandahar, our PRT is also making great progress. The essential challenge for our three-D team is to build a firm foundation for the longer-term future of Afghanistan—something that CIDA is highly respected for and does very well—and at the same time achieve near-term, visible results that will win the confidence and trust of the local population.

In an active war zone, this is hard work. In fact, in many ways it's counterintuitive. Our team, led by CIDA, has devoted considerable energy on the ground to building the consultative and decision-making processes at the provincial, district, and community levels to ensure that what the PRT delivers, where, and according to what priority is consistent with Afghan needs and wishes. This emphasis on process doesn't necessarily brief well, as I tell my staff regularly, but it really is key to achieving the sustainable results that build trust and confidence.

In addition to process issues, we are in the midst of reinforcing the PRT with additional security forces and project engineers and managers who will, before long, have a pretty dramatic effect on what the PRT is able to deliver.

This is certainly not to say for a minute that there hasn't been progress in the past several months. In his departing remarks last week, General Fraser made reference to the 146 kilometres of new roads that have been built in Kandahar province alone and the over 100,000 metres of irrigation canals and the more than 1,000 wells that have been dug.

•(1550)

[*Translation*]

I understand that Brigadier-General Howard has agreed to submit to you a list of on-going and completed projects, so I will not go into individual project detail.

I will say that today, the efforts of the Provincial Reconstruction Team are very much focused on capitalizing on the recent success of Operation Medusa to permit the local population in the Panjwayi and Zharey districts—who had been terrorized by the Taliban over a period of several months—to return to some level of normality.

The PRT has been working closely with the Provincial Disaster Management Committee, the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, UNAMA, the World Food Program, and other International and Non-Governmental Organizations to assist in returning these people to their land and homes and providing them immediate humanitarian relief. At the same time, a selection of Quick Impact Projects is currently being submitted to local authorities for their approval.

[*English*]

If you'd refer to slides 5 and 6, the other main project, about which you've already heard something, is the ongoing construction of Route Summit, which is a newly constructed paved road that runs right through the Zharey district and connects with the Panjwai district. This was, of course, the main battleground during Operation Medusa.

The German government has agreed to fund the paving of a large part of this road, and the contract between the German government and ISAF has already been concluded. Canadian Forces engineers are heavily involved in the planning and execution of this project. The significance of this road is that it links the Zharey and Panjwai districts to the main access road in Kandahar province, Highway 1, and once complete, it will certainly help to stimulate commerce and help the movement of the local population.

I should add that not included in your notes is the fact that the southern portion of that route actually will be funded and built by Canadians, enabled in the early going by Canadian Forces engineers. We expect that work to begin literally in the next two or three days.

To conclude this topic, I would simply say that the provincial reconstruction team is very much the focal point for our three-D effort in Kandahar province. Both CIDA and the RCMP have increased their presence in the PRT over the past several months, and the Canadian Forces component will likewise see significant augmentation over the next month.

I have to say that in my 33 years of service, with lots of time spent on international operations, I have never seen better cooperation between government departments. It is not perfect, but this is in many ways unfamiliar territory, and we are all learning every day. An awful lot of excellent work has been going on, and I would hope this will become more obvious to you and to all Canadians in the coming months.

Let me give a few words on the way ahead. On the first of November, Brigadier-General Tim Grant took over command of the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan from Brigadier-General David Fraser. Since the multinational command role has passed from Canadians to the Dutch, General Grant will be able to focus more sharply on effects and outcomes in Kandahar province specifically, while retaining overall command of all Canadian Forces personnel in Afghanistan.

He will have three main components under his command: a substantially enhanced provincial reconstruction team with a more robust security force, leading to greater autonomy to operate across the province, as well as a stronger technical capacity to support project identification, management, and delivery; a battle group that's been reinforced with tanks and other capabilities to enhance its mobility, fire power, and protection and thereby have the agility it needs to conduct security operations when and where needed by Afghan authorities and the local population; and third, operational mentor and liaison teams, fully embedded in Afghan National Army units, whose sole focus is on building Afghan capacity.

To conclude, I've personally been directly and continuously engaged in the Canadian effort in Afghanistan since early 2002: initially when I commanded Operation Apollo, which was the Canadian Forces contribution to Operation Enduring Freedom in its early days; subsequently as the chief of defence intelligence for three years, where my main focus was Afghanistan; and more recently as commander of CEFCON.

Critics might find fault wherever they wish. The fact remains that the progress Afghanistan has made since 2002 has been dramatic, and Canada's contribution has been and continues to be an important fact.

•(1555)

[*Translation*]

Canada's earlier contribution to the International Security Assistance Force, between 2003 and 2005, and the leadership role it played in the early days of NATO involvement with the Force, was both meaningful and highly successful in terms of its impact on the Government of Afghanistan and the people of Kabul.

[English]

Given that Canada has only been engaged in the south for a relatively brief period, it's still too early to be able to report practical, visible results of our collective efforts. Much of the progress has been about capacity building and governance, which will allow for sustainable progress in the south, not concepts that play well in the media.

Nonetheless, we have made an impact. Our presence in Kandahar province—the first ever coalition presence in many Taliban sanctuary areas—has sparked the expected reactions from the Taliban and other opposing forces. This paints an awkward picture of success, in that our advances in stability and security are demonstrated by increasing attacks by opposing forces.

I can recall in late February, as Canadians were assuming command in Kandahar, Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry, the Operation Enduring Freedom coalition commander, stated publicly that he fully expected insurgent activity to grow through the spring and early summer of 2006. This is precisely what we've seen over the past months.

Kandahar and the southern region were the heart of the Taliban movement in pre-2001 Afghanistan. The insurgency today remains intent on overthrowing the legitimate, democratically elected national government. Since we're there to help this government and its people, we will continue to be targeted by insurgents who have shown their disregard for the civilian population by their indiscriminate attacks and methods. All this means that progress in the south as well as in the east of Afghanistan will be slow.

I personally believe the multi-disciplinary approach that Canada and the Canadian Forces are taking in Afghanistan, founded in a fundamental sense on working with legitimate Afghan authorities, NATO, and the international community, is sound.

From a purely military perspective, we certainly aren't resting on our laurels. There's good communication through all levels of the chain of command, and horizontally with our three-D and international partners, and we're all engaged in evaluating this very dynamic, complex mission and its progress on a daily basis. The force structure and capabilities have evolved, and we will continue to shape them as circumstances dictate over time.

I have visited our troops in Afghanistan five times in the past eight months, most recently two weeks ago, and have spoken with several hundred of our soldiers over there during each of these visits. Most have experienced combat. Outside the wire they eat, sleep, live, and operate under conditions that most Canadians would find difficult to imagine. Despite the challenges they face, they're determined to succeed, and they remain positive about what they're accomplishing. They have what I consider to be a very well-developed understanding of their mission and what needs to be done to help Afghanistan with its recovery, and they believe in what they're doing. I hear that time and time again.

[Translation]

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I look forward to your questions.

[English]

Mr. Chair, I apologize for going on for some time. I am now open to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that. We'll go through our first round. I think they're seven minutes.

Mr. Cannis, you start.

• (1600)

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I am short of that time, Mr. McTeague will take whatever time I have left over.

General Gauthier, welcome to the committee. Thank you for a very in-depth presentation. Before I go on, I just want to ask your view on a comment you made. Critics might find fault.

How do you see it when an individual or an organization or a group constructively comments or constructively criticizes or expresses an opinion about our mission in Afghanistan? Do you see it as not being supportive of our men and women and as being unpatriotic? I'd like just a quick comment on that.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I certainly wouldn't characterize it as being unpatriotic, and far be it from me to challenge anybody's right in Canada to say whatever they want about the mission. There is the classic line about what the military role is in a democracy, and it's all about defending people's right to express themselves. I'm crystal clear on that.

I would simply say that from the perspective of the troops overseas, depending on the tone or tenor of comments, in some cases it might erode their confidence to a certain degree. That, of course, is absolutely counterbalanced by such activities as the "red Friday" rallies that we see here in Canada.

I don't take issue at all, I can assure you, with any criticism that is thrown.

**Mr. John Cannis:** I sense that you believe in democracy, and I appreciate that.

You talked about the Taliban and how they are terrorizing and victimizing innocent Afghans, if I may quote you. It's known, or we've been told and have read, that President Karzai is speaking or negotiating or exchanging with the Taliban. Now, on this side of the battle, here in our country and in other parts, I know our country has expressed, and certain individuals have expressed, that we don't deal with the enemy. We don't talk with the enemy; we will never talk with the enemy.

The question I have to you is, how do you see this engagement between President Karzai and the Taliban unfolding? Does it not put in jeopardy our Canadian men and women and other members of the NATO forces wherever they find themselves in Afghanistan?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I could answer that in a number of ways. I will say, first of all, that there has been a program under way—and I think the CDS made reference to this in previous testimony—called PTS. “Peace through strength”, I believe, is what that stands for. It’s clearly an Afghan government program that ISAF and Canadians have no specific role to play in, but it is one under which Afghan people who might have had affiliations or ties to the Taliban and who wish to renounce those ties are encouraged to do so. There’s an actual program that is managed from the national, through the provincial, down to the district level to encourage support for the Government of Afghanistan.

As far as negotiations go with the Taliban, we are there to support the Government of Afghanistan. We certainly are not negotiating with the Taliban. What President Karzai chooses to do, and what his officials and authorities choose to do, is obviously up to them.

**Mr. John Cannis:** It is, and I respect that, but on the one hand, General, we’re there trying to fight insurgents, and Canadian blood has been shed. On the other hand, we have President Karzai, as we’ve been informed, negotiating with the same people who are killing Canadian men and women, and others as well.

Has there been any movement to sit with the legitimate Government of Afghanistan, as you described them, and say, let’s map out a strategy of how to continue, if we are to continue engaging with these people? It has been suggested by other politicians as well—not I—that we should be speaking with these people. I reserve my comment on that, but it is happening.

Is there any kind of initiative to say, let’s put a plan together; we either engage with them or we don’t?

May I have your comments on that, from your 33 years of experience?

• (1605)

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** My comment on that, as a simple soldier who is focused on the military realm and the security realm, is that I don’t have a comment on it, quite frankly. There might be a Government of Canada view. You’d have to speak to the Department of Foreign Affairs about that.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Okay. I appreciate the honesty there, sir.

President Karzai also said on television, when he visited us here in Canada, that this year, 200,000 fewer children are attending school than in the previous year. He obviously outlined that reconstruction, etc., is very important. We’ve also heard from other witnesses and seen in comments we’ve read that the reconstruction aspect of it is not moving as it should, because funds have not been flowing as they should be flowing, for reasons of whatever obstacles are before them—I don’t know; you might enlighten us.

It seems, from some of these comments made by President Karzai, that we’re going backward and not forward. The Taliban seems to be in a very aggressive, proactive combat mode, preventing and terrorizing Afghans and of course not allowing young men and women to attend classes. Also, as infrastructures go up, so quickly, I hear, do they come down.

How do you say we’re making progress in this?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I was in the centre section of the House of Commons when President Karzai spoke to all of you about the progress that was being made in Afghanistan. I did not get the sense from those comments that he felt that Afghanistan was regressing, sir, with all due respect.

**Mr. John Cannis:** I know, because his questioning...I will then refer you to.... It is on tape. He spoke with Don Newman, and the tapes are there. That’s where I got that comment. If he misled Don Newman, he misled me and the Canadian audience that was, I believe, watching at that time. This is not something I just simply pulled out of a hat.

I’ll end there, Mr. Chairman. Whatever time is....

**The Chair:** You have nine seconds, so maybe we’ll just move on.

**Mr. John Cannis:** There you go.

**The Chair:** It’s nice to see you, Dan.

We’ll go to Mr. Bachand.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to welcome the general.

General, first, when it comes to the military hierarchy, I’ve seen stars and maple leaves before. You have three, and I think General Fraser has two. Is that correct? He only had one.

So, that means you are two ranks above him. The third rank is when one becomes the Chief of the Defence Staff. Is that correct?

Based on my reading of the documents, you are the person who basically determines the predeployment and rules of engagement training. Is that actually your responsibility?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** To some extent, yes.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** And as far as the rules of engagement are concerned?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** They’re not entirely left up to me. The rules of engagement are the responsibility of the Chief—

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** They are the purview of the Chief of the Defence Staff.

So, you have a certain number of responsibilities, and others lie with the Chief of the Defence Staff.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** That’s correct.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Someone in the theatre of operation, such as General Fraser, gets his orders from various people, and must follow them.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** General Fraser gets his orders from one person, and one person alone.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Does he get them from you?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** That’s correct. Exactly.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** I see, but does he receive the rules of engagement from you?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Yes.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** He gets them from you.



General Hillier gives them to you, and then you forward them on.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** That's correct. Yes.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** I see.

If I were to say that since the day troops arrived in Kandahar, the mission has become far too military and defence-focused, as opposed to focused on development and diplomacy — one might refer also to the 3D —, would you agree with me?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I would ask the question: focused in what sense?

We have a campaign plan, with three pillars — or three lines — of operation, two of which are to provide military support in the areas of reconstruction, governance, capacity building, etc. The reality out in the field in southern Afghanistan is such that, first and foremost, we must conduct our operations with a view to providing a safe environment in which reconstruction agencies and components can function.

•(1610)

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** So, the protection you're providing today is above and beyond that which you provided the first day you arrived in Kandahar.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I would say so.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** You would say so. Perhaps that's the reason we are now sending 20 tanks and why we just deployed personnel from the 22nd Royal Regiment in order to protect the Provincial Reconstruction Team in question. Is that correct?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** As it turns out, the purpose of the Royal 22nd Regiment Company is to provide support in restoring security and governance so that the Provincial Reconstruction Team is able to engage in districts and villages all throughout the province.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** I see. So, that means that the 2,000 or 2,200 additional soldiers are really there to hunt the Taliban.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I wouldn't say that, no.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Excuse me?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** No.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Why wouldn't you say that? Where are they then?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** They provide support, obviously for the...

How do you say *air field*, in French, Mr. Bachand?

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Airport.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I am referring to the Operational Mr. Speaker, Mentor and Liaison team which we refer to in English as OMLT.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** You mean the 13 people?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** No, there are 64 people, Mr. Bachand, as I said a few moments ago. But, it's true, the vast majority of Canada's operational force in Afghanistan today is there to provide security in order to pave the way for reconstruction and development.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Sure, but there are many ways of safeguarding security. I've seen your troops in action, they set up security perimeters. Such control zones are intended to be a

defensive measure, but I think that in your mind, they mean more than that. In your opinion, ensuring security, also means going on the offensive and cleaning up Taliban's pockets. Is this a good interpretation of what you believe?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** No. Control zones are the top priority, you have to establish a military presence. This military presence doesn't necessarily need to be Canadian. It may take the form of the Afghan military or police. So, we're not exclusively talking about the military.

When I refer to the progress made since February 2006, I have in mind the way things were when we first arrived in the Kandahar province that month. At that time, an American force based exclusively at Kandahar Airport was deployed. Today, there are forces spread out across several regions of the province of Kandahar. This is progress. I'm not saying that there is fighting going on everywhere, rather, we are restoring security to many of these areas.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Canada is contributing to the autonomy of the Afghan army by providing it with trainers. Didn't you say earlier that there were 15 trainers?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** We have 15 trainers at the Kabul Military Training Centre. Recruits receive their core military training at the centre before being transferred to Kandahar, to the south, the east, the north or the west of the country. It's at this point that the our famous OMLT start working with these soldiers.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Is that it, Mr. Chairman?

[English]

**The Chair:** You're right on time.

Ms. Black, and then Mr. Hiebert.

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Thank you very much.

Thank you, General Gauthier, for spending the time with us today and for your very thorough presentation.

I have a few questions that I would like to ask you. One of them you touched on a bit in your presentation, in that Canadians originally went in with Operation Enduring Freedom and now we're with ISAF. I'm wondering how, or if, we are still in contact with OEF. Is there any way that we are? Are they operating in the same area? Do we interact with them in any way, or do we conduct any operations jointly with OEF?

•(1615)

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Without getting into specific operational details, if you'll permit me that, Madam, the Afghan national security force capacity-building piece of the U.S. contribution is also part of Operation Enduring Freedom. The 15-person training detachment that we have at the Kabul military training centre is actually operating under Operation Enduring Freedom.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** But not in Kandahar.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** It's not an ISAF function.

We have a number of embedded individuals in this command, Combined Security Transition Command, which is investing billions of dollars in building the Afghan National Army and building the Afghan National Police. We have Canadian military involved in that headquarters, and we will soon have some RCMP officers who will be part of that also. Technically, they will be part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** Are we doing combat operations with Operation Enduring Freedom?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** In the south of Afghanistan and in the east of Afghanistan there are Operation Enduring Freedom elements who are conducting operations that could be outside of the ISAF mandate. Those are being done with full visibility, full coordination, with commanders down the chain of command. Cooperation is actually very good.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** I have some questions around the provincial reconstruction teams, the PRTs. In Kandahar, do they have any interaction with international NGOs?

I've been told that many of the NGOs have left the area, that they don't want to operate in Kandahar. They have a number of concerns, not only security concerns, but also the NGOs have told me they have a concern around the militarization of aid and development. So I want to know whether we have any connections with any NGOs there.

Does our PRT team connect with the larger network of PRT teams in other provinces in Afghanistan?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** There is a provincial reconstruction team, to answer your last question first. There is a management structure, a management framework for provincial reconstruction teams with Afghan involvement. It used to be Operation Enduring Freedom involvement. Quite frankly, they might not be directly involved any more. Certainly there is ISAF involvement. All are at the table, with representatives of the PRTs regularly participating in meetings. So Afghans and those involved in the PRTs are converging or operating on converging access.

Your question about non-governmental organizations, international and otherwise—because there's a difference there also; there is local versus international. I will give you a superficial yes to that. I can't name the specific non-governmental organizations we are working with, but certainly we are working with NGOs.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** Could you give that information to us later?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I suggest that would be a good question for you to ask when you get to Afghanistan and meet with the people from the PRT. They'll give you a very clear picture of that.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** We know that today the World Food Programme was again begging for money for Afghanistan. The hunger situation there and the lack of food getting through is a very serious problem.

Also, in talking to people who have been working on the ground in Afghanistan in other ways, they tell me that without improvement in the local economy and the opportunity for people to have a small business to improve their lives...they see that as the key thing in terms of building peace and security in Afghanistan.

You talked about something called quick impact projects. I am wondering what they are. You said they're going for approval. I am wondering if they have an economic base.

The other part of this question is.... The other thing I've been told by people in Afghanistan, and particularly in Kandahar province, is that there is favouritism or corruption even from the local authorities there and the local government in terms of who does get electricity through the diesel project, who gets the on and off electricity. That kind of thing is happening, not only in the delivery of electricity but in other ways.

I'm wondering what our role is in ensuring that there is a reduction in the corruption of delivery of services from the local government.

● (1620)

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Those are all good questions to put to CIDA. They're issues that I certainly have spent hours on various visits discussing with the CIDA representative and others inside the PRT.

But that is part of CIDA's core business. We're focused on security. They do development in a sustainable long-term sense—

**Ms. Dawn Black:** But you made your presentation in a three-D kind of way, so I thought—

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** But that's why I'm saying I'm confident they're going down the right track. They are concerned about corruption. They are concerned about building processes that are sustainable over time. That's a large part of what they do.

With respect to the World Food Programme and working with them, I can tell you that in the post-Operation Medusa timeframe, the PRT was directly involved with the World Food Programme. I can cite statistics, if you've not seen them previously. The PRT issued 10,388 family food packs in Zharey and Panjwai. This is in concert with the World Food Programme—542 of them in the week of October 22 alone.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** But we're told there are 100,000 displaced people in Afghanistan not getting food—

**The Chair:** Ms. Black, your time is up.

Mr. Hiebert, seven minutes.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Defence, I want to congratulate you on your recent appointment to the Order of Military Merit, which was created to recognize meritorious service and devotion to duty. You must be very proud of what you've accomplished, and we are very proud of what you've accomplished. I know that my colleagues congratulate you and thank you for your service to Canada.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Thank you.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert:** My first question has to do with what we've accomplished during Operation Medusa. In broad terms, could you just outline for us what we've achieved in that particular mission?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Pre-Operation Medusa, we had a situation where many of those opposed to the Government of Afghanistan and determined in growing numbers to wrench power from legitimate authorities began to appear in the Panjwai-Zharey area. Through the early days, as we saw that evolving, our forces came under attack.

As you have heard already, there was evidence of a significant presence, to the point where a very large number of Taliban adopted a more conventional approach as compared with the earlier insurgent tactics they had adopted. They effectively, forcefully, evicted thousands of residents of the area and left them homeless, to fend for themselves. The situation deteriorated to the point where, from a military perspective, from a coalition perspective, and from an Afghan national perspective, something had to be done: (a) to demonstrate ISAF resolve, and (b) to demonstrate to the people of Afghanistan that we were prepared to fight on their behalf to support them. The results of Operation Medusa, from a military perspective, have been well-reported in the media.

Since then, what we have seen certainly through a particular sector is a large swath in which there are now Canadian Forces personnel and Afghanistan national security forces. There is a humanitarian focus; there is the possibility of reconstruction. I could cite the same figures I cited earlier—100,000 metres of irrigation ditches cleaned and done. There's Route Summit, which will open the region to commerce. What you should see in the coming weeks and months, I would hope, is the PRT and Region South reporting very positively on concrete projects and results they have been able to achieve as a result of the successes in Operation Medusa.

• (1625)

**Mr. Russ Hiebert:** All right.

A second and final question from me, and then I'll pass the remainder of my time to my colleague. What are the biggest challenges you're facing in the field in terms of being able to achieve the strategic objectives?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** What are the biggest challenges we are facing? I think the first challenge actually is from a Canadian whole-of-government perspective. This is our first experience collectively, the Department of Foreign Affairs, CIDA, police forces, the RCMP, and there are other government departments involved as well, engaged in a concerted, relatively coherent approach to stabilizing, securing, reconstructing, and developing in an active war zone, which is effectively what we have in the south of Afghanistan right now.

There are many challenges with that. We learn with every day that passes. We learn about each other to speak the same language. We've learned about the bridge that needs to be built between longer-term development requirements and nearer-term reconstruction requirements, and the connection between both of those and the need for a secure environment.

From a three-D perspective or a whole-of-government perspective, there are challenges, but I think there are honestly more opportunities than there are challenges. What we're doing right now in Afghanistan, what we're experiencing in Afghanistan, is trail blazing, and it will serve us well in the future wherever else the

Government of Canada chooses to project its influence and its forces around the world.

One of the significant challenges we face there in the near term, because of where we have come from in the last four years, with a new nation and what Afghanistan has been through over the last four years, is we need to be focused on capacity building. At the same time as we're building capacity, we need to be able to do; we need to conduct our own security operations at the same time as we're trying to build an Afghan National Army and an Afghan National Police.

You can call it a challenge. We would tend to find it frustrating that those national institutions aren't progressing as quickly as we would like, but if you turn that around and consider where they were three years ago, the progress they've made is remarkable. But it is a challenge for us to, on the one hand, be focused on building capacity and, by the same token, be doing it ourselves. We would hope that over time we will see that balance shift in favour of the capacity building, less doing and more capacity building.

**The Chair:** There are only ten seconds left, Mr. Hawn. We'll have to carry on with you later.

That ends our first round. We move on to five-minute rounds now, starting with Mr. McGuire.

**Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think it's appropriate in this week in particular to see how well we're taking care of our soldiers when they leave or before they leave Afghanistan.

What is put in place in the way of medical services of the mind and body before they leave and once they get back? We are told by some of the caregivers that the service is not as adequate as it could be. Could you give an opinion on that and tell us just what is put in place in Afghanistan before they leave and what is here for them when they get back?

• (1630)

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** What is in place in Afghanistan before they leave?

**Hon. Joe McGuire:** Yes, before they leave.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** There are actually few things I am more proud of than the way we are able to look after our men and women in Afghanistan when they fall victim to an ambush, or an IED strike, or whatever else it might be.

It starts with having trained an appropriate number of soldiers—not medics, but soldiers—in tactical combat casualty care, which actually has proven to be life-saving. It has saved lives of soldiers. This is one soldier saving another soldier's life by virtue of the training he's had. You hear these stories when you go over to visit and have so-and-so pointed out who's done this.

We call it a role 3 facility, which is effectively the first line of surgical intervention and life-saving and which is Canadian-led at the airfield in Kandahar. It is certainly something you should see when you visit, because it brings a tear to your eye, in a positive sense—it really does—when you see those men and women. I've seen the same folks over there over a number of visits, in some cases in very tense, very stressful situations, because something's just happened and the patients are coming in. I would qualify it as a world-class facility in its own right at the airfield in Kandahar.

With the medical evacuation capabilities in this, we're part of a coalition. Coalition forces have in place the necessary medical evacuation capabilities to get the wounded immediately into the hospital, and lives have been saved in that hospital.

The next leg in the journey, if I can put it that way, for those who have been stabilized but are not well enough to stay in theatre and require further treatment, is a facility in Landstuhl, which I believe you've heard about, which again is absolutely world-class.

I had an opportunity to visit there about three or four weeks ago. This is the hub, from a U.S. military perspective, for both Afghanistan and Iraq, and there probably isn't a better facility of its kind in the world. When I say world-class, I really do mean world-class.

To a man and to a woman, our soldiers deployed overseas have complete confidence that if they fall, they will be looked after.

**Hon. Joe McGuire:** You're saying, sir, in your presentation that "Outside the wire, they eat, sleep, and live under conditions that most Canadians would find difficult to imagine." When they come inside the wire and before they come home, not just with physical wounds, do we have a team of psychologists or mental health people?

They're under this constant stress. I can just imagine what it might be like—or maybe I can't imagine what it might be like. But when they come back in, with the relief they might feel or whatever scars they might bring with them when they come back inside the wire, what kind of support do we have, or what kind of diagnosticians do we have there who would provide for them, to find out the things we can't see?

**The Chair:** Make it a short response, please.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** A short response? I was hoping to give a long one.

On two or three visits overseas, on the day I landed there was a situation where Canadians were either killed or seriously wounded. I had an opportunity to go, literally within hours, to the place where it happened and talk with soldiers, to see how they react and how they reacted to what are extremely traumatic incidents. Time and time again, over the last eight or nine months now, I've been so impressed with how they are able to cope with these challenges.

It's about leadership. It's also about training. It's about talking about these things before deploying overseas. It's about not having a fear of talking about them immediately after the incidents. That's at the sergeant or master corporal level, getting together with their soldiers after an incident like that.

The proof, I suppose, will be in the pudding, and we won't know for some time just how serious or not this issue might be in terms of mental health and critical incident stress and so on. It's an issue that from a force employer perspective I discuss regularly with my command surgeon, as recently as in the last week.

You need to talk to the director general of health services and the surgeon general about this when they appear before you—I think they will be speaking to you—but the early indications, from the first rotation who have just returned to Edmonton, are not causing any alarm bells to sound at this stage.

• (1635)

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir. We'll move on, and we will be in Edmonton tomorrow—

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** There you go.

**The Chair:** —so we'll be able to follow up on that. Thank you.

Ms. Gallant is next, and then Mr. Bouchard.

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

General Gauthier, at some point the U.S. will commence the orderly withdrawal of troops from Iraq. If they do so before the job is done, what impact, if any, will the perceived retreat have on our efforts to quell insurgents in Afghanistan?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** That's an interesting question. I would have to think about that one a little bit, because to be perfectly honest, in my day-to-day job I'm just not that focused on Iraq, but on Afghanistan and the other 19 missions we have around the world—3,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen and airwomen deployed around the world.

I'm not sure you can draw a direct connection between the two. They are quite different operations, and we as military view them, obviously, as military operations. They're completely different circumstances, and what we tend to do in a pure military context is to pay careful attention to lessons learned that from a military perspective we can apply from one theatre to another theatre. That includes, from an intelligence perspective, watching threat trends to see if something that has popped up here might begin to find its way into Afghanistan.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** So there's not a concern, then, that Iraq-based al-Qaeda members would redirect their efforts or attention toward Afghanistan?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I suppose it's possible. It's not something that I honestly have watched that closely, and therefore I can't give you a really helpful answer to it.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** NATO has plans to stand up rapid response battalions in each of its member countries. Has Canada assigned a unit to carry out this mission or this role yet?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** No.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Okay.

Several weeks ago, there were MPs who actually compared our soldiers to terrorists. What kind of impact on morale in Afghanistan did those comments have?

**An hon. member:** Could you repeat that?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I missed the last part of what you said.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** What impact is that having on our soldiers overseas?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I'm not aware of something like that being said, but clearly if it was, I think from a soldier's perspective they would just ignore it, quite frankly.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Okay. We've had witnesses here—

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Gallant, just a second.

She posed a question and the gentleman has answered it, I think quite adequately.

There is a point of order.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Chairman, in my presentation, when I referred to a conversation or comment of President Karzai, I pointed out the source. I would kindly ask that the honourable member also point out the source of her statement.

**The Chair:** Is the honourable member willing to point out a source for those comments?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** I only have the party affiliation. I don't have the exact name. I'd want to double-check it, but I will. I shall do that.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** It's a reflection on all parliamentarians.

**The Chair:** If you could follow up with that, that would be great.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** I shall.

We've had witnesses here who encouraged the Afghan farmers to grow poppies instead of food, yet they complain in the same breath that the Afghans are starving. How does the promotion of the opium industry by groups such as Senlis, for example, impact on our efforts in Afghanistan?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I think, irrespective of your view of what the specific solution might be to the narcotics problem in Afghanistan, everyone will agree that it is a huge problem. It's a huge challenge.

You're talking to a soldier, again, and I will try to stay in my lane as a soldier and say to you that we do not get directly involved in eradication operations and so on. There is a possibility of *in extremis* support to forces that are involved in counter-narcotics activities, should they need our assistance—not with eradication, but assistance, because they're at risk somehow or their lives are in danger. Beyond that, we might play a role in sharing information and intelligence with government authorities, should they need it.

Other than that, the military does not have a role to play in what is a very significant challenge for the Government of Afghanistan and the international community.

● (1640)

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

We'll go to Mr. Bouchard, and then Mr. Calkins.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you Lieutenant-General Gauthier for your presentation.

In your presentation you indicated that our focus was first and foremost on assisting the Afghan people. You also stated you were attempting to give the Afghan people hope. So, you're working on rebuilding Afghanistan. You also indicated that the Taliban have publicly stated their intention early in the year to take back Kandahar. This is a military-style message, one of war.

I get the sense that the Canadian Forces' mission has a more military rather than humanitarian focus, and that this really isn't a reconstruction mission.

Do you foresee any difficulties in refocussing this mission which, if I am to go by your presentation, should be more reconstruction-orientated?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** You're suggesting that reconstruction and security are mutually exclusive. I don't agree with you there; I think that they are quite complementary. Our conceptualization of the mission is based on the complementary nature of reconstruction, capacity building and security. We are servicemen and women, soldiers; that's what we do. Of course we have a focus on security, but not security for security's sake, nor to wipe out the Taliban, but rather, to support the Afghan government and authorities.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** You also stated that the Canadian Forces were working with a government team. Your intention is to build the Afghan security forces' capacity. On a number of occasions, you used the word "challenge". This reconstruction process seems to be a challenge.

What is being your perception, in concrete terms, of the way the Afghan people have reacted to you taking charge in this way? How have they demonstrated their support for such action?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** General David Richards, Commander of the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF, explained — and I think the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Minister of National Defence basically said the same thing — that there may be as much as 60 per cent of the Afghan population, especially in the South, which still hasn't decided if it will support the government or the insurgents. It's not a matter of whether or not they are opposed to the Canadian Forces or to the coalition, but rather, whether or not, they are going to support the Afghan government. They haven't made up their minds. We're there to help the Afghan government win the Afghan people's trust, and we won't get there simply by way of our security operations. We really must win the Afghan people's confidence through our efforts in the area of governance in order to wipe out corruption so that Afghani people can learn to trust their legitimate authorities. The same is true when it comes to reconstruction.

● (1645)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Right on time. Thank you.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I must have heard the bell was about to ring.

**The Chair:** You're getting good at that.

Mr. Calkins for five minutes, and then over to McTeague.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General, for coming today.

I want to pick up on something my colleague pointed out earlier in his original line of questioning about the loss of 200,000 school seats that President Karzai pointed out when he was here. If we check the entire text of his speech in the House of Commons, you'll find that he actually said there were six million more children going to school compared to 700,000 when the Taliban was there, which is a net of—

**Mr. John Cannis:** A point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** On a point of order.

**Mr. John Cannis:** I clarified it was not in the speech he made. The general asked the question that he did not hear it in the House of Commons, and I agreed with him. I clearly pointed out those comments were made during his interview with Don Newman after his presentation in the House of Commons.

**The Chair:** Thanks for that clarification.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** I'll continue with this.

The net difference is 5.3 million more students going to school. With the 200,000 loss we had, which is more in the southern region, we're still roughly 26 steps ahead for every step back we've taken. That's fairly positive. You mentioned some of the other numerous achievements that have happened so far with the 146 kilometres of road that have been built, and development. I'm wondering, from that perspective, in your opinion, is the three-D approach working?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I think it is.

Do I have a few minutes here, Mr. Chair, to give a longer answer?

**The Chair:** Three and a half minutes.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** One of our challenges is internal. I will say candidly, it is communication and the flow of information, so we get visibility and we're able to give visibility to all the amazing work going on at ground level.

I'd like to share with you a piece that appeared in the *Moncton Times & Transcript* today, which was a letter written by an officer, a Major Blair Baker, who just came back from Afghanistan. He commanded the Airspace Co-ordination Centre of the Multi-National Brigade Headquarters. I'm going to have to get this guy working for me. The facts he was able to pull together and the way in which he was able to communicate this was just spot on, and it tells us we need to do a better job of communicating.

He refers to things like...427 community development councils have been created in the province of Kandahar, 106 of these for women, all of which enable Afghan communities to organize and implement development projects. These councils have completed 700 projects, improved the quality of drinking water, sanitation, irrigation, infrastructure development, income generation, and health clinics. Canada has provided significant assistance to agriculture, irrigation, and rural development in Kandahar province, over 10 kilometres of canals have been built, 14 kilometres of drainage

systems, 150 kilometres of roads, four bridges, 50 kilometres of power lines, 10 transformers, 42 power generators, 1,000 wells, 800 hand pumps. I could go on and on with the many good things that have been accomplished.

If I could go on for just another minute....

**The Chair:** We won't cut you off.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** "Throughout Afghanistan", and this is at the Kandahar level and the regional level...this is Major Blair Baker:

...there have been five million refugees repatriated and over five million children are now enrolled in primary schools, many of whom are girls.

The efforts and sacrifices

—and these are the poignant parts of what he says—

made by Canadian soldiers and aid agencies on the international stage in the province of Kandahar has led to significant contribution of funds from several nations to assist in many projects that aid in development and are improving the life of the Afghan citizen.

Since February, Canada has lost 34 soldiers. They are all heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice. Today is a better day in Afghanistan than February—

—and this is from a person who was there in February and has seen it over those nine months—

—and every day is getting better. The development of infrastructure and government institutions is a slow process and can easily be assured through the security provided by soldiers—today it is Canadian soldiers, in the future it will be the Afghan National Army when they are able to stand on their feet.

Credit to Major Blair Baker for saying that so well. He's right in everything he said.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. McTeague.

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair, and I join with Mr. Hiebert, the parliamentary secretary, in congratulating you as well, General, on your recent accomplishment.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Thank you.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** There appears to be evidence around suggesting that the success of the international community, certainly in context with what you've said, is increasingly in doubt. An example, of course, I would cite would be comments made earlier this year, this past fall, by the NATO commander in Afghanistan, General Richards, when he said that NATO must take advantage of recent military victories and do as much reconstruction and development work as possible.

I am citing his comments here. He said that if we do not take advantage of this in the next six months, then we could pour in an additional 10,000 troops in the next year and we still would not succeed because we would have lost by then the consent of the people. Added to that would be the Senlis Council, an NGO working in southern Afghanistan, which has raised alarm bells over the possibility of the urgent need for reconstruction, development, and humanitarian aid.

The CIA has found that an increasing number of Afghans think that the Afghan government and police are corrupt, have not provided enough reconstruction, and can't protect their people from the Taliban. American officials have also publicly decried what they described as dire warnings about the situation, and the International Crisis Group has produced a very pessimistic assessment of the situation.

I don't want to counter what you've said, but considering what these many groups, bodies, and agencies have said, separate from each other, do you agree that these are very worrying and troubling analyses of the situation in Afghanistan, or is NATO's top commander in Afghanistan, the Senlis Council, the CIA, and the International Crisis Group all wrong?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I don't think you can link all of those. I don't agree with the linkage you're making between each of those groups. Each is quite different, and the foundation upon which their observations and analysis is based is also quite different, written from a different perspective.

I can't comment on Senlis. I can't comment on the International Crisis Group. Really, I've not read their reports. I read the *New York Times* piece that made reference to the CIA report. I've not read the CIA report.

• (1655)

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** But you're prepared to say there was a link?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** On General Richards, I can say that I discussed his comment with him in his office two weeks ago, and his perspective was not that this is going to fail in the next six months. His perspective was that we need to show signs of progress, and it gets back to the issue of winning the confidence of the people. He has been saying for some time there's this 70% to 80% segment that could go one way or the other way.

I take issue with six months. I don't agree with the six-month perspective. Why six months rather than twelve months? The fact is, from our perspective—I will tell you my personal assessment—it will be difficult for the next twelve months. We need to be prepared for that. It will be difficult beyond the twelve months, but from a security perspective, it will continue to be difficult for the next six months.

Stepping back from that, if you look at where Afghanistan was in 2001 and compare where it is today, I don't see how you can be negative. I personally am positive about the incredible progress that's been made.

The other aspect is that our focus now is in the toughest place in all of Afghanistan, so that's the frame of reference we have now, whereas there's been lots of progress elsewhere in Afghanistan, especially in the north and the west. But to get back to my perspective, we are making progress. Nobody said it was going to be easy. Certainly we would not have said at the beginning of this that it was going to be easy.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** Hopefully, the committee will have a chance to go there and witness first-hand. I must say I look forward to that, and I think my colleagues might.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** You certainly will, if I have anything to say about it.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** I want to shift gears very quickly to an issue that I think has slipped off the radar screen. You made a point of asking us where Landstuhl was, and many of us here do know exactly where that is. We know the conditions in which our soldiers find themselves, regrettably, if they have to go there in transit on their way back to hospitals in Canada.

You said that if they fall they will be looked after. Has there been any progress on the commitment by the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence, and the Chief of Defence Staff when they said they would work very quickly to ensure that wounded soldiers would be compensated to the same level, including their tax benefits? As I understand it, as of this very moment, there has been absolutely no compensation announced. I know there was a committee of the whole that discussed this last evening, and I know it's really busy in Parliament these days, so it's tough to get questions forward.

I would like to know your opinion on that and whether or not you can give the same reassurance as to when this is going to happen.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I'm not directly involved. I have heard what the CDS has had to say publicly and privately about this, and I have every confidence that we will look after our soldiers. We will.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Hawn, and then Mr. Cannis.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Chair, and welcome, General.

We've cleared up one misconception, about the numbers of school children, and that's a good thing.

There's another persistent misconception or perception about the number of troops who are engaged in which activity and that we have 2,400 people who are out there chasing the Taliban around the hills of Afghanistan.

Can you briefly cover the tooth-to-tail ratio of the 2,400 or so folks—I'm talking about Kandahar, and never mind Kabul, because it's a small number—with the number of people in the battle group who are actually doing combat, whether searching out Taliban or defending certain groups, the PRT, and the support logistics portion of the 2,400?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I don't have those specific numbers in front of me.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Is the battle group 800 people or so?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** We can certainly....

In fact, I may have that somewhere here, if you'll permit me to refer to my papers.

There is a danger in taking the battle group as the teeth part. This is what I tried to make clear in my comments. The new commander, General Grant, has three big pieces. They are different sizes, but in terms of effects, he has the reconstruction piece—the PRT, which, from my perspective, is the most important in the longer term—he has the battle group, and he has the “omelette”, which is the capacity building piece of this.

When we talk of “teeth”, it's not just the battle group. The strategic advisory team working in Kabul is part of the teeth.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** I understand that, but the point of my question, or what I was trying to get to, is that there are not 2,400 Canadian soldiers chasing the Taliban around the hills of Afghanistan.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I am making the same point. That is exactly right.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** The numbers can change. Some of them are staff.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I don't know that the specific numbers are that relevant. The reality is that to have an effective battle group consumes a large number of people, but that doesn't mean that's the only thing we're doing there. Absolutely.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** No, not at all.

You talked about signs of progress, and you, of course, have just covered what Major Baker said. Are those the kinds of signs of progress we should be paying attention to?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** They're not only the kinds of signs of progress we should be paying attention to, they're the kinds of progress we need to be able to communicate to Canadians, and we've not done that as well as we need to.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Exactly.

There has been some suggestion that the mission is unbalanced, and so on. Given the fact that we are in a coalition of 36 countries and that we're talking about the entire country of Afghanistan, which is 34 provinces, and we're concentrated in the toughest province in the land—the six provinces in the south are the toughest area—what kind of impact would it have on the mission in the toughest part of the country, and on the overall mission in Afghanistan, if somehow Canada were to change its role and try to step away from the security side and put everybody who's there on the reconstruction side or the governance side?

• (1700)

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** It would be very difficult for us to do that. In the near term, if we chose to do it, there's a requirement in Kandahar province: someone has to do this. Canada has signed up for this through to early 2009.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Is it fair to say, looking at this as a coalition of 36 countries, and Afghanistan being a much larger country than the area we're operating in, that the mission in the entire country, across the entire coalition, is in fact balanced between security, reconstruction, and governance?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I would say that even from a pure Canadian perspective, I don't agree with the assertion that the mission is unbalanced right now. If you look at the component parts of this joint task force compared with what we've deployed to Bosnia over a period of years, there is more reconstruction capability, there is more planning capability, there is more capacity-building capability than we've ever deployed on any mission in the past.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** I'm going to lead you with the question, but is it an oversimplification to say we have so many people doing this and so much money doing that, and just take that proportion of people and money and say we must be doing the same proportion of

security versus reconstruction versus governance? A dollar in one or a person in one can make a much bigger impact or less impact than the same thing—

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Yes, it's tough for me to agree with the conclusion that there's imbalance, but at the end of the day, the government will decide how it will spend its money. The reality is that to deploy a military contingent costs a lot of money.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Yes, but you can't say that if we put a third of the people in security, a third in reconstruction, and a third in governance, we'd be in a balanced mission.

**The Chair:** We'll have to come back to that question. Your time is up, but thanks for that.

Mr. Cannis will end the second round.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, I also want to echo what you said, that since 2001 we've made tremendous—I'll use the word “tremendous”—progress, given what was and what is today. There's no question about that.

Aside from terrorism, one of the main issues that the international community went into Afghanistan to address was the poppy growing situation. As has been well documented, we know very well that is pretty well their main, if not their only, source of revenue. Has there been any effort to address this problem?

On that issue, which I believe my colleague Cheryl Gallant was referring to, other countries have commented that they could look at the poppy growth and take that product and apply it towards medical research. This will alleviate part of why these people and these farmers need to grow this crop.

Are you aware of any initiative under way to address this problem? If we cut their funds, this will address part of the problem we're trying to solve in Afghanistan. Are you aware of anything happening in this area?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Sir, you're asking me to step way outside my lane to comment on that.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Okay, I understand.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** From the Government of Canada's perspective, there is support for the counter-narcotics strategy, the Afghan strategy. As citizens of the international community, we're working collectively with partners.

**Mr. John Cannis:** But we do know, and I'm sure you're well aware, that this is one of the areas that at some point in time needs to be addressed from a professional point of view, from—

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** The narcotics challenge?

**Mr. John Cannis:** Yes.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Absolutely.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Great.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** There's no question that this is the key to the progress in Afghanistan.

**Mr. John Cannis:** If I may close with this, I haven't been there, but God willing, some day I will have the opportunity to visit. When we're putting up these infrastructures, is there any Canadian identity, a Canadian flag, a Canadian symbol, that, hey, this is—



**Hon. Dan McTeague:** Blankets.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Blankets, whatever. Is there anything like that? I've never been there; I don't know. Other colleagues might have been. Is there anything like that there?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** There certainly will be.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Okay, "will be". Good.

Mr. Chairman, that's it for me.

**The Chair:** You still have a couple of minutes.

Does anybody want to fill in?

**Mr. John Cannis:** Nothing.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I'll do this, and then we'll give the next one to Dawn, if the committee is willing.

I've been getting conflicting information on whether every soldier who comes back from the theatre is tested for post-traumatic stress disorder. Whether or not they have signs or symptoms, or whether they say, "I'm okay", is every single returning soldier screened?

• (1705)

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** That depends on what you mean by tested and screened.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** A mental status...an actual screening for post-traumatic stress.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** My superficial answer would be yes, absolutely. Certainly each individual is screened.

You can discuss the degree of rigour in that screening process with the Canadian Forces Surgeon General.

We go through quite a process to make sure they are healthy, mentally and otherwise, before deployment and on their way back. We also have a decompression process—third-location decompression, which you may have heard about—that has proven very effective and is very much appreciated by the soldiers. This was the initial feedback for the first wave who came back from this.

The decompression is not exclusively about blowing off steam, although I suppose that's a part of it. It's about connecting with health care professionals and others to help them prepare for and adjust to the world back in Canada.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I don't know what the process is, but can you, or can the clerk, let the surgeon general know that I would like to see the screening process for testing for post-traumatic disorder on re-entry, meaning not just a tick-off sheet as to whether you feel fine or not?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Certainly. You can have that explained to you also in Edmonton.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** That's where they told me it wasn't happening when I was on the base in Edmonton.

**The Chair:** Very good. That ends the first round. The order for the final round is the official opposition, the government, the Bloc, the government, the official opposition, the government, the official opposition, and then the New Democratic Party.

So, Liberal Party, it's your kick at the cat here.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** We had asked whether the committee was willing for the New Democratic Party to move up. I'm giving up my slot for her now.

**The Chair:** The order of asking questions was set up when we had our organization meeting, and a lot of time and effort went into making it fair. Are you asking for unanimous consent?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I am.

**The Chair:** Does the member have unanimous consent to give up this slot to the New Democratic Party?

**Mr. John Cannis:** She's asking for unanimous consent.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** No.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We heard no.

Okay. Who wants to go for the Liberal Party. Is there anyone?

Mr. McTeague, five minutes.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** Thank you.

General, I want to go back to the issue of Landstuhl, Germany, and the answer you gave is an interesting one as far as wounded soldiers are concerned. I must say I've heard that from many others, and I respect the fact that you don't ultimately make the decision here.

It seems to me that since soldiers who are in theatre are not really paid until the end of the first month, some who have been injured in that first month may very well be looking at the possibility of having very little in the way of any support and anticipation of money. Has there been any discussion that you can reveal to us as to what form compensation might take? Are you at liberty to say that or comment on it?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** All I can say on that issue, again, is that the minister and the CDS are both absolutely committed to making sure that soldiers are not disadvantaged by virtue of having been wounded in action in a theatre of operation. They're committed to that, and I'm sure the CDS has provided direction to the chief of military personnel and others to find a way to make sure that our soldiers are properly compensated.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** On a bit of a personal bias, I have a cousin whose son was badly injured a few weeks ago in Panjwai province, and one of the experiences has been the excellent treatment he received. I did comment to both the CDS and the minister on the good treatment he's received. But it seemed to me, having had another friend who was also hurt...when they're in the hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, they're basically looking at four blank walls. They're of course given attention that is extremely good—it's an American facility—but then a blanket is put on them that says "U.S. Army", or it might say something with an American perception or American resources.

Is there any way—and I'm not referring to what you said to John Cannis—we can provide a little more support for our soldiers when they're in hospital in Landstuhl, Germany? I don't just mean the resources to make them better, but the resources that give them the feeling that actually the Canadian government is there, and is there with a very tangible presence.

• (1710)

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I've been to Landstuhl and I've spoken to wounded soldiers in Landstuhl and I've spoken to parents of wounded soldiers while they were there in Landstuhl experiencing seeing their son in a shocking state to them. It's traumatic for the parents. I will tell you the parents and the wounded universally are positive about the support they are receiving, not just from Landstuhl but from the Canadian Forces and from the Government of Canada effectively. They are very positive.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** General, yes, that may be the case for what they're receiving in terms of treatment, but I've also heard—

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** That's not just treatment.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** I've heard the contrary as well, that more can be done to show a Canadian presence—books that might be from Canada, video games, a blanket that says Canada on it.

I don't want to belabour the point, but I think it's extremely essential for us, if we're going to have a number of troops going through there who are wounded, unfortunately, that there is a greater Canadian presence. I really do want to emphasize that, because I know of at least three occasions in Toronto where we're now raising funds to do just that.

I've had to personally go to some people I know and ask them for a couple of thousand bucks to give to a particular person over there, so that we have more of a Canadian presence there, as opposed to an American presence, inside the four walls of those hospitals.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** By “Canadian presence”, do you mean Canadian flags and physical, visible demonstrations?

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** If you're going to be there for a week or two, it would be nice to show Tim Hortons or something along that line. But I am more serious than that.

I just want to get one point on this. I will move on to that. I don't know how much time I have left.

It seems to me that perhaps you could enlighten the committee on the bigger question, and I had this discussion with some of my colleagues before. If we are about to suggest the purchase of new second-generation Leopard tanks and Germany is sitting on several thousand of them, why can't we, as part of our relationship in the alliance, borrow those? Why do we have to spend tens of millions of dollars committing to where we are in one of the most difficult parts of the country?

Caveats expressed by certain European nations aside, it seems to me we're going well beyond what we need to do. Why don't we just ask the Germans to lend us a few of their tanks, rather than having to spend millions of dollars bringing the first-generation tanks, which are 25 years old, over to Afghanistan? As my colleague pointed out, this is a NATO effort. We do share, and we are sharing in that burden. If we are not going to share in the burden of committing our troops to the front lines, at least we should be sharing resources.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** We are doing that. We do that every day.

I won't get into all the details, but we have loaned equipment to other nations in Afghanistan. We supported at least one other nation with airlift in a very substantial way. We received support from other nations with respect to different kinds of airlift. We have received support from other nations.

In equipment areas, we have borrowed and we will borrow again; we are undertaking arrangements to borrow equipment from other nations where it is required. It is a coalition; it is cooperative. We are working with each other.

It's a good idea and it's something we are doing.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Hawn is next, and then Mr. Bachand.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It has been suggested that with the change in the leadership with the Dutch general, there might somehow be some change in the tactics or focus of the mission. Do you see any change as a result of that change in leadership?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I think every commander wants to put his stamp on a particular endeavour, whether it is in Afghanistan or training in Canada, or wherever it might be. I would not want to take that away from the individual. It is just as General Fraser did when he came in and put his personal stamp on the approach, but whether it is General Fraser or General Van Loon, they are working to a commander, COMISAF. He is working to a superior commander also. I've not seen an indication at the NATO level of an intent to change the approach in a substantive way. There's a concept, an Afghan development zone concept; it is on the books and is being prosecuted. The devil is in the details, I suppose, but I wouldn't expect a major shift.

• (1715)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** The change would be in leadership style, rather than in tactics and strategy.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** It may even be tactics. Tactics may change from day to day and week to week at various levels, but the basic concept of operations and of the campaign is guided by the ISAF level in Kabul, and there is no indication that I'm aware of that it will change in an appreciable way, unless circumstances dictate that it should.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** That leads me to another question, and it may take a little bit longer.

Strategy, obviously, is at the national level or theatre level. We're talking about tactics, and tactics can change, as you say, because of different circumstances. What kind of thing would drive a change in tactics in southern Afghanistan, and how would you manage that as a commander of CEFCON in terms of NDHQ's and your input, ISAF's input, and the battle group's input?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** That's a complex question, because it goes to the relationship between individual nations in this partnership with ISAF and the role of national commanders in relation to the broader effort.

The best answer I can provide is that it is absolutely cooperative.

You almost asked two questions. One is to do with ISAF and where it might go in the near term, and the other is on how we might shape things from our perspective nationally.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** It's really just who—

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I suppose the point is that the two really go hand in hand.

We have a national commander, General Tim Grant, who has the responsibility to manage the campaign and command operations in theatre. He is under the operational control of a NATO commander, and from a national perspective, there is a three-D effort, which has to be complementary to the NATO approach to operations.

It's my job and General Grant's job to make sure that those efforts are complementary and that they match the requirements, as dictated by the situation on the ground. We do that regularly, on a day-to-day, week-to-week basis.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** We probably don't have a whole lot of time, but I have one quick question related to tanks.

They haven't been there that long, and I think we have only five or six on the ground. Has there been any feedback on the experience so far, with respect to their utility, and so on?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I don't want to get into a lot of detail. I'm not going to tell the committee exactly how we plan to employ the tanks, because that would be telling many others how we plan to employ the tanks.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Are we doing with them what we intended to do, and are we happy with it?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** We've not used them yet. They weren't intended to reach final or full operating capability until just about now, so in the coming days....

We have used the armoured engineer vehicles. I saw them in action over there. There was a well-protected bulldozer doing reconstruction work.

The tanks are just about all there, and I have no doubt they will be used in the coming weeks and months.

**The Chair:** Very good. Thank you.

Right on cue, Mr. Bachand.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** First, I'd like to apologize to my NDP colleague. I didn't understand what was being suggested. I thought you were giving him the go ahead to speak. That would have cut into our time, and I was afraid I wouldn't get the chance to speak.

So I'd like to say something now quickly and, with the committee's consent, I'll give whatever time I have left to my NDP colleague.

Do I need to seek unanimous consent?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, you would.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Therefore, I am asking for unanimous consent so that I can give my colleague my remaining time.

[*English*]

**Ms. Dawn Black:** I just have one question.

**The Chair:** Okay. Do you have consent to do that?

**Ms. Dawn Black:** It's one question. I appreciate—

**The Chair:** You're a gentleman, Mr. Bachand, a gentleman.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** I know I am.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** I appreciate the opportunity to question, and I'll be very brief, so that I don't take more of your time than necessary.

Listening to the discussion and the presentation you made today, there's this nagging thing at the back of my head, and I just have to get it out. That is the whole issue of the border with Pakistan and the information, which we were given, that members of the Taliban are living and organizing in Pakistan and then coming across the border in some ways like an invading force. They're not all insurgents from within Afghanistan.

In terms of ever ending this, if we don't get cooperation from Pakistan, if they're not able to secure that border, can we actually achieve what we're stating we want to achieve?

● (1720)

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I think the committee has a reasonable understanding of the extent of the challenge there. It's been explained by others, so I won't reiterate it. It is a challenge and a concern for us there.

From our perspective, the short answer to your question is that Pakistan must be part of the solution. We are cooperating with Pakistan, the Government of Canada is cooperating with Pakistan, NATO is cooperating with Pakistan, and others are cooperating with Pakistan. They—

**Ms. Dawn Black:** Are they cooperating with us?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** We're cooperating with each other. They have their challenges also, but they need to be part of the solution. If they aren't part of the solution, then we will have a huge challenge, so we need to continue to work with them, and that's what we're doing.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** Thank you again.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bachand, you still have two and a half minutes, half of the time.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** You were probably asked this question when you appeared before the Senate committee. The National Defence Policy Statement sets out eight criteria which must be met before any international deployment. I'm not in a position to list these eight requirements. However, there are two requirements about which I am sure and on which I'd like your opinion. It is common practice before any deployment takes place for a number of criteria to be met, which was undoubtedly the case for you in the past when you have had to comply with the National Defence policy.

Once such requirement is a well-defined *end state*, as you say in English —, the other, a clear exit strategy.

Could you tell me whether these two criteria were taken into consideration prior to deployment? This is something I'd like to know.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** From a purely military standpoint, our military campaign plan laid out a desirable end state. It doesn't necessarily apply to the Canadian Forces, but indicates, rather, at what stage the international forces may step down. The criterion specifically refers to the extent to which the Afghan National Security Forces become self-sufficient. From a military standpoint, as soon as the Afghan Army and the Afghan National Police Force are able to ensure the safety of their Afghan citizens, the international forces — not Canada, but the international forces — may leave Afghanistan.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** There's a problem there. The policy statement I'm referring to is the Canadian Policy Statement. I really doubt there would be a reference to eight international criteria in the Canadian Policy Statement. Rather, it would be eight Canadian criteria.

General, are these criteria public? Can the committee get its hands on them? Can you forward them to us or give us a hard copy? Can we have them? Do you need to call General Hillier first?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Probably, yes.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Okay. Would you call him for us?

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Yes, we'll do so.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bachand.

The rotation goes over to the Conservatives. I understand there's nobody there.

We'll go to the Liberal Party. Mr. Cannis.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General, I just want to access your 33 years of service and experience in the military. You've obviously participated in other NATO initiatives. Am I correct?

• (1725)

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Yes, sir, I have.

**Mr. John Cannis:** We had the former Yugoslavia issue, and NATO was very active there. We didn't have interruptions or the questions that are being asked today.

I want to ask you, when we initially committed, under the three-D policy, two years of services—do you agree with me there? Canada committed to a two-year program. We committed our troops for two years.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Correct.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Correct.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I believe that's correct.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Yes, I believe it's correct as well.

In less than two or three months, we made the decision to extend it for two years. Can you recall, in your 33 years of experience, anything similar to that happening in other theatres that we have engaged in? That is under NATO, of course.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** In all other operations I've been involved in, I've been at the deployed end, and I have concerned myself with the six-month window in which I was involved in the operation.

It's funny you should mention Yugoslavia, because I led the very first unit into Croatia on March 13, 1992. I remember it well. And we still have forces there—not to draw any parallels between one and the other.

I could not tell you one way or the other whether this is.... I would have to go back and look.

**Mr. John Cannis:** But when you led—

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** Governments make these decisions, so you're asking a soldier, again, to comment on whether the two-year horizon is or is not correct. I'm not in a position to comment on that.

**Mr. John Cannis:** What I'm driving at, actually, General, is that NATO makes long-term plans. Let's be frank with each other. They don't plan what's going to happen tomorrow and address tomorrow what they're going to do in the future. We know very well, based on what little I know from these engagements, that commitments are made for the future.

We, as a country, made that commitment for two years. Would it not be an accurate statement for me to say that upon completion of our two years, there had to be a plan for somebody else to come in and fill in after we completed our two years? Would you not think that would be an accurate statement?

**Mr. Russ Hiebert:** Mr. Chairman, I have a point of order.

**The Chair:** A point of order.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert:** I think the guest has already indicated that this is a policy question, which is beyond his purview. I would ask that the member stick to questions that are within the realm of his expertise.

**Mr. John Cannis:** I'm accessing, Mr. Chair, his expertise on how NATO works.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert:** No, you're not. It's a policy question.

**The Chair:** I appreciate the point of order, and your experience somewhat—

**Mr. John Cannis:** That's the drive of my question.

**The Chair:** I'll leave it up to the witness.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I will say, from a purely military perspective, that whether it's from a national or an international perspective, predictability is important. It's important for partners working with each other to have some understanding that they are able to count on other partners for the longer the period the better.

**Mr. John Cannis:** That answers my question.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** So longer-term commitments from a military perspective are better than shorter-term commitments, but that's not always possible from a policy perspective.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Thank you, General. That's really what I was looking for, that key word, "predictability". And in order to have predictability, this long-term planning is really important.

I want to thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Very good. That brings us to one or two minutes left, if the committee will allow me just a little bit of time.

We need to confirm with Mr. Hawn the travel arrangements. Could you speak to the clerk for a second?

General, we are going to be in Edmonton tomorrow, at CFB Edmonton, and we'll be talking to the troops who have come back, just to see how they're being dealt with.

Also, I'm very appreciative of your comments about the committee travelling to Afghanistan and the fact that you will cooperate, and have cooperated, and we know that.

Remembrance Day is coming up here pretty quickly. If you could, on behalf of this committee, please relay to our men and women in uniform in Afghanistan that we appreciate what they're doing.

**LGen J.C.M. Gauthier:** I thank you very much for that, and it will be my pleasure to do that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Cannis.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Chairman, actually, before we recess, I think we are still hoping to get the reference our colleague referred to in terms of his statement.

**The Chair:** Yes, that's been asked for.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Will that be forthcoming?

**The Chair:** Yes.

The meeting is adjourned.

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