



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

FAAE • NUMBER 065 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, February 12, 2013

—
Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Tuesday, February 12, 2013

•(1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), our briefing on the situation in Mali will start.

I want to extend greetings to our witnesses today for being here and for once again coming on such short notice.

We have Mr. Chris Rosene, who is director of development programs, international, for the Canadian Red Cross.

Welcome, sir. You'll be starting off for us.

We also have Stéphane Michaud, senior manager of emergency response for international operations.

Welcome to you, sir, as well.

From the International Committee of the Red Cross, we have Robert Young, who is a senior delegate.

Mr. Young, welcome to you.

Last but not least, as an individual we have Mr. Robert Fowler, who is a senior fellow of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs of the University of Ottawa and a long-time member of our foreign service.

Welcome. I'm glad to have you here as well, sir.

Mr. Rosene, why don't we start with you?

I believe you have anywhere from eight to ten minutes for a presentation. We'll have all the presentations, and then we'll go back and forth to the witnesses over the next hour, for the members to ask questions.

Thank you once again for being here.

We'll turn the floor over to you, Mr. Rosene. We look forward to your testimony.

Mr. Chris Rosene (Director, Development Programs, International, Canadian Red Cross): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks very much for giving the Canadian Red Cross an opportunity to address the committee today.

My name is Chris Rosene, director for development programs in the international operations division of the Canadian Red Cross.

I'm here today with my colleague, Stéphane Michaud, who just returned from a four-month mission in Mali in September. Stéphane will be available to answer questions as well.

Before I turn it over to Robert Young of the International Committee of the Red Cross, I will focus on three key points: the importance of investing in long-term development activities; the unique capacity of the Mali Red Cross; and our plans moving forward.

Allow me to give committee members some background on our long-term development activities in Mali. We feel it is important to highlight these because the Canadian Red Cross has had a longstanding experience and history of working in Mali dating back to 1986, and a partnership with the Mali Red Cross. These programs are made possible thanks to the generosity of the Government of Canada and the Canadian public.

As the conflict unfolds in Mali, the Canadian Red Cross stands with our partner, the Mali Red Cross, during these difficult times, and we will be there to continue to support them when the conflict ends. It's important for us to keep in mind that this type of longer-term work will help us stay the course and will have an impact on saving lives, and hopefully reduce the humanitarian impact should further tensions arise.

Examples of the long-term work include development programs that improve the health of women and children, such as malaria prevention and vaccination campaigns. In 2007, the Canadian Red Cross, through support from the Canadian government and public donations, worked with the Mali Red Cross and the Mali Ministry of Health to deliver 1.8 million mosquito bed nets as part of an integrated child survival campaign that also provided measles and polio vaccinations and other medication to over 2.8 million children under five.

Core to our mandate of preparing for and responding to disasters, in 2009 we started a five-year program to build the capacity of the Mali Red Cross to respond to emergencies and to improve service delivery and community-based programs in four regions of Mali.

Since 2011, our work in Mali has continued to focus on maternal and child health programs through to 2014. These health programs will ensure that life-saving interventions are delivered to address critical childhood illness and will reach a further 875,000 people, including more than 150,000 children under five. These efforts continue to progress despite the conflict.

We are also responding to the current food security crisis that is taking place in parallel with the conflict in Mali and the other nations of the Sahel region. The Canadian Red Cross is supporting Canadian experts in-country to reinforce the Mali Red Cross management of the food crisis.

I would like to emphasize the important role of the Mali Red Cross during this current crisis. The Mali Red Cross was founded in 1965 by an act of its government as an auxiliary to the public authorities. It has been fulfilling this mandate particularly in the areas of disaster response and in training of nurses and first aid. It currently has a network of 7,500 volunteers, which allows it to have a vast reach across the country, including in the north, in transition areas like Mopti and Timbuktu. Responding to conflict and other parallel issues is not unlike the situation faced by other national societies in this same region, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire, who have all played crucial roles in times of crisis.

In addition, the Mali Red Cross will have a vital role to play post-conflict. It will be very important not to lose sight of the remaining needs once the conflict ends, be it in relation to food security or recovery activities to rebuild the country. The Canadian Red Cross stands ready to continue this capacity-building work with the Mali Red Cross.

To conclude, Mr. Chair, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement is able to have a wide range of coordinated activities in Mali and in the region. Canadian support has allowed for a building of local capacity, thus strengthening their ability to respond to multiple issues: conflict, food crises, and health needs.

Unfortunately, we anticipate that humanitarian needs will continue in the coming months. At the Canadian Red Cross it is our job to plan for the worst and be prepared for the unexpected. We have made contingency plans accordingly, including plans to support the Mali Red Cross in its current and post-conflict activities.

I'd now like to turn it over to Robert Young of the International Committee of the Canadian Red Cross before we take questions.

• (1105)

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Young.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Young (Senior Delegate, International Committee of the Red Cross): Mr. Chair, I want to start by thanking the committee for inviting the International Committee of the Red Cross, or ICRC, to appear.

[*English*]

I'm Robert Young, the ICRC's representative in Ottawa, part of our regional delegation for Canada and the U.S.

My remarks today will focus on the serious humanitarian situation in Mali in relation to the armed conflict and the ICRC's operational response as part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Within this movement, as you know, the ICRC is most active in situations of armed conflict and is closely associated with international human law, IHL, with our unique role recognized in the Geneva Conventions.

Let me first express the ICRC's sincere thanks to the Government of Canada for ongoing financial support for our work in Mali in particular, including the \$2 million announced recently in Addis Ababa. This kind of support allows the ICRC to carry out our mandate, entrusted to us by states as a neutral, impartial, and independent humanitarian actor in armed conflict and other situations of violence.

As you know, the structure of the conflict in Mali has changed significantly in recent weeks with the involvement of other countries. The Malian and allied armies to a great extent control the cities of Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal, where the ICRC continues to be present and operating. From the humanitarian and security standpoints, the situation is critical. The conflict is not over.

In all conflicts around the world where ICRC operates, we seek to establish dialogue with all of the parties involved. This includes confidential dialogue to promote respect for humanitarian law and to discuss alleged violations of IHL. This is the case in Mali, where the ICRC has been present since 1982, and where we've increased our operations over the last 30 months. Since the conflict began in January 2012, we've been explaining our strictly humanitarian mandate to government forces and armed groups alike throughout Mali. This dialogue has been essential to the acceptance of the ICRC by all of the various parties, helping to ensure our continued access through all regions of Mali. Today we have 100 staff across Mali, based in offices in Bamako, Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal, and Mopti.

Throughout the conflict, and to date, the ICRC has been granted access to all of these key centres, as well as to the remote rural areas around them, where few organizations have access. We have managed to maintain staff presence in the north, with some minor interruptions. This has ensured our access to the most vulnerable people in the Gao, Kidal, Timbuktu, and Mopti regions, providing them with food and other essential aid, in cooperation with the Mali Red Cross, with whom we work closely.

My colleague from the Canadian Red Cross has explained the important role of the Mali Red Cross, and I won't elaborate here.

Our own operations in Mali are backed by our regional delegation in Niamey, Niger, where we also work closely with the Niger Red Cross, which is also responding to the crisis in Mali.

Beyond the food assistance to more than 700,000 people we have provided to date, I'd like to give you a few snapshots of some of our ongoing action in Mali. Last year, we visited hundreds of persons detained in relation to the armed conflict in Mali. This included more than 150 people detained by the Malian security forces, as well as more than 80 government soldiers in the hands of various armed groups in the north. We carried out 41 prison visits to 20 detention places, where we met over 3,500 detainees. We facilitated humanitarian contacts between hundreds of family members separated by the conflict through Red Cross messages and through phone calls.

To promote humanitarian law, last year we briefed more than 600 members of armed forces and armed groups in Mali. We continue these activities with the international military forces who have arrived and are continuing to arrive for deployment in Mali. Last week, for example, we briefed Malian forces in Mopti, with over 200 soldiers and officers involved in military operations.

In the three main towns in the north, the ICRC is providing diesel to keep water pumping stations working and fresh water running. In Gao alone, thousands of kilograms of chlorine were supplied to the water treatment plant. Also in Gao, the ICRC is providing a seven-person medical and surgical team and medical supplies. We also support nine health centres in smaller centres in the north.

To conclude, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, including the ICRC, expects there will be pressing humanitarian needs in Mali in coming months. The ICRC, together with the Mali Red Cross, will respond to the assistance and protection needs of the population, especially in the north, where vulnerability is high. The ICRC will continue to seek access to all persons detained in the conflict on all sides of the conflict.

The ICRC and the Mali Red Cross will continue to closely coordinate our efforts within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and also with the UN and international community, to best respond to the needs of the people of Mali in their time of crisis.

Thank you.

•(1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Young.

We're now going to turn it over to Mr. Fowler.

Sir, you have 10 minutes.

Mr. Robert Fowler (Senior Fellow, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. What a pleasure it is to be here among you this morning.

I had sort of a dog-and-pony show to present to you, with maps, photographs, personalities, and video clips. When the House of Commons reaches the technical level of most Canadian high schools, then such things ought to be possible.

What I'm going to do instead is talk to you—now that I've figured out what I'm going to say—and at a couple of points I'd like to play the sound of the two video clips that I was going to show you. I understand that Miriam will make available to members the links to these clips so that you can see them live.

In order to explain why Canada ought to be significantly more engaged in the situation in Mali, and across the Sahel more generally—significantly more than we have been—I'm going to have to tell you a little about why I think that and what kind of a threat I think is happening in that region presents to Canada and to Europe, to our allies, and above all to our longstanding African friends.

Roughly half a billion Africans live in that upper half of Africa, and they are, I believe, in significant peril from the Islamist threat.

When I speak of these guys...I would show you pictures, but they.... I'm rather surprised to find pictures on the Internet of my

captors, principally the person you're going to hear from, "Omar One", the guy who grabbed Louis and me by the road outside of Niamey on December 14, 2008. He's now a big deal in AQIM and Ansar Dine, and you see him very often on the Internet.

He explains very clearly what are his objectives. They are the most focused group of individuals I've ever seen. Of course, I only met 31 of them. I spent nearly five months with 31 of them, but most of my time was spent talking to a very few of them.

They're not like any soldiers I've ever seen before. They're not like any western young men I've seen before. They are dressed in rags. They take great care of their rather ancient sixties-style Soviet weaponry. There's great talk about all the money they have earned from ransoms and from illegal activities, but I saw no sign of material interest or consumption. They're not wearing cool sunglasses or coveting MP3 players.

They are anxious to get to paradise as expeditiously as possible. Indeed, at one point deep into our saga we were stuck in the sand, and my captor of the moment stripped his AK off his shoulder, thrust it in my face, and said "Kill me now. I'm ready for paradise." They are a very focused people.

They believe, absolutely, that jihad is the sixth pillar of Islam, and that if they die fighting God's fight, they will get to paradise; they will be beside those rivers of milk and honey. That is where they want to be. They believe the Prophet told them that 99 out of 100 would not pass, but if they die in God's struggle, they will. And they don't care how long it takes. It is, for them, God's time. He will decide when victory will be theirs. But because it's His fight, it will be theirs. Whether it takes 20 years or 20,000 years, it doesn't matter. They will be beside those rivers of milk and honey.

The head of the unit of al-Qaeda that took us in the Islamic Maghreb, I found out after I got out, was Mokhtar Belmokhtar. He is, of course, the guy who perpetrated the horror at the In Amenas liquefied natural gas facility in Algeria two weeks ago, killing 37 foreign workers there. He is an extremely focused person. We will hear more from him over the coming weeks and months.

•(1115)

He has one eye. Louis and I gave names to them all. Belmokhtar became Jack, as in one-eyed jacks. Jack made it very clear that he was part of a much larger operation. He had been fighting for 20 years in Salafist outfits going back to 1992. They attacked targets in Algeria every week, sometimes many times a week. Eighteen months ago, they did 31 attacks in a period of six weeks. It is a constant thing. Two hundred thousand people have been killed in Algeria over that time.

There's big debate about whether they're bandits or hoods or Robin Hood. Belmokhtar is called the Marlboro Man. I am certain he indulges in all kinds of smuggling. But are they bandits flying a flag of Islamic convenience or rather are they latter-day Robin Hoods doing a little banditry to nourish the cause? There is no doubt in my mind it's the second. Are they linked up with other Salafist organizations, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Shabab in Somalia? Of course, they are linked up. One of my captors was a kid from Kano in northern Nigeria, and he was what we would call an exchange officer. Yes, they are linked up.

The Secretary-General of the UN was talking about Boko Haram fighters flowing into northern Mali last August. They have close connections with al-Shabab.

If I can work this, I'll see if I can have Omar tell you what their objectives are.

● (1120)

[*Translation*]

[*Transcription of video presentation*]

I am going to speak.

This message is for France, the United States and all NATO countries to tell them that the mujahedeen are ready to strike at any time. We are not here to control cities. We are here to wage jihad, to spread the word of the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah honour him and may peace be upon him. We came here without consulting them and we won't consult them when we leave. We came in the name of there is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God. We are ready to defend religion until our last breath. We are ready to fight France, the United States, all NATO countries.

We believe that all their might is but a spider web. How can they threaten us with a spider web? You threaten us with the other wish, martyrdom. We have to live as good Muslims, as good followers of the faith, or die as martyrs.

Today, they sent a surveillance and reconnaissance plan. It was flying at a low altitude, and we struck back. When we did, the plane flew off at a very high altitude. It circled the skies 14 times and came back. We are ready. We know they are spy planes, planes that are taking pictures.

But tell them we are on the ground. As soon as they come, we'll come out and wait for them on the ground. We aren't here for a comfortable life or air conditioning. We came to defend religion, Islam, and we will fight to our last breath. And even if they don't come here, as soon as we conquer France, we'll go to the United States, we'll go to London, we'll go to France. We will conquer the entire world. The flag of there is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God will be flown from dawn to dusk.

Peace be upon you and the mercy of God.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Fowler: That's the guy who captured us and those are his objectives.

They told us repeatedly that they wish to turn the region from Nouakchott in Mauritania to Mogadishu on the Indian Ocean in Somalia into one vast, chaotic, seething chaos. They believe that in that chaos their jihad will thrive. As you heard him say, "First that, then us", and they make that very clear.

In my belief, no Canadian in this zone is safe. No westerner in this zone is safe. They are extremely serious players. They have been given a taste of victory in Mali. They will prosecute it. The French have been very successful with their incredibly timely action. They have pushed them now into a sort of classic insurgency guerrilla warfare. We've seen them hitting in Gao and Kidal in the last couple of days, and they will continue to do that. Remember that time is on their side, and they will try to draw it all out and draw us into another Afghanistan. I don't think it is another Afghanistan as long as we make very certain that it isn't another Afghanistan and we don't make the same mistakes we made in Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that Canada has great friends in that region who we have nurtured over decades. We ought to be protecting and helping those friends and helping our French allies diminish this menace to the point that the Africans, the Malian army, and the African force can deal with them.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fowler.

We're going to turn it over to the opposition.

Mr. Dewar, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our guests for appearing before the committee today.

Mr. Fowler, I'm going to start with you. You have a lot of experience as a diplomat and you have unique experience on the ground in Mali and certainly in Niger. Has the government, Minister Baird or anyone, called you for a meeting to seek your advice?

● (1125)

Mr. Robert Fowler: Mr. Baird has not sought my advice. I have had chats with other people in the government, particularly shortly after I came back.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you.

You mentioned the regional context, and certainly that chilling audio you shared with us shows very clearly what their vision is. This is not just about Mali, as you have underlined; it's really about the region. When we're talking about how we deal with a situation as complex as this, do you believe we need to have a strong presence in the region?

Just to give people an understanding of what Canada's presence is right now, we have closed missions and embassies in Africa recently. Right now our coverage in Africa is less than 40% of the region. To give people a comparison, Brazil has more than 50% coverage in Africa, diplomatically speaking. The French have 90%.

When we talk about the long term, you're giving us a vision: this isn't going to be something we solve overnight. I believe that's what you're underscoring here. If we're going to help to stabilize and help the people in the region, if we're going to help our allies and the African people and build long-term peace and stability there, how will this reduction that we've seen in the diplomatic footprint and resources impact on our efforts to do that work?

In other words, in your opinion, should we reverse this trend of investment in diplomacy and resources on the ground in the region?

Mr. Robert Fowler: Mr. Dewar, I think you're asking a shoe salesman if he'd like to have more shoe stores.

Yes. I think the Brazilians had 11 embassies among the 54 countries of Africa 15 years ago, and today they have 31. What do they know that we don't know? I don't know. If you took that through many other countries, you'd find the same trend.

We're going in a counter-trend direction. I don't know why we are. I know life is tough and budgets are tight and we can do things smarter, but yes, I believe Canada has interests to protect and project. We haven't been doing much of that lately.

I hear constant stories about reduction in facilities, embassies, budgets, people. The last house I lived in as a diplomat was a lovely house in Rome that we bought for a song—not with our money. The Italians had to pay us reparations because we won and they didn't, and therefore we used that money to buy a residence. That residence was paid for with the blood of 6,000 Canadian soldiers. I'm told we're now selling that house. Does that make sense? Hell, no.

So, yes, I do think the budgets of the Department of Foreign Affairs ought to be restored. We have things to say in the world and we ought to be back saying them.

Mr. Paul Dewar: This decline didn't happen yesterday. We've seen the steady decline in the investment in Canadian diplomacy.

I'd like to get from you what you think we should be investing in strategically in this region. One of the things we are trying to do at this committee is to advise the government how to deal with this situation. We believe on this side that it's not something that you can do with drive-by diplomacy. You have to invest in it.

Strategically, what advice would you give government as to what they should be investing in, perhaps reinvesting in, when it comes to our diplomatic footprint in Africa?

Mr. Robert Fowler: First of all, we were big investors in Mali and have been for ages. Before the coup in Mali we were spending somewhat over \$100 million a year in development assistance. Understandably, we reduced that when confusion reigned in Bamako. A couple of weeks ago we pledged \$13 million to assist Mali, from a humanitarian point of view, in this crisis, which by my calculation was 2.8% of the moneys pledged in Addis Ababa at that conference. Do I think that's enough? No, of course, I don't think that's enough.

I also hope I made very clear in my testimony that I think we ought to be assisting militarily. I also cautioned about confusing the two—that is, development assistance and military assistance—because that's what we did in Afghanistan and that's what got us into all the trouble. What I think we should be doing.... There is nothing

to negotiate with these al-Qaeda guys—nothing. They will not negotiate, and I guarantee, Mr. Chairman, if they were sitting here they would agree with me. They don't want to negotiate; they want everything. If we're prepared to give them everything, they'll be satisfied. Anything short of that is not enough.

Therefore, we have to hurt them. We have to diminish them to the point that our African friends can deal with them militarily. When that is achieved, then I hope we resume our generous aid contribution to Mali and the entire region, because by God they will need it. We are facing the possibility of a massive Darfur across the widest part of Africa. My colleague and other witnesses here happily spoke about the humanitarian angle, so I didn't have to. It is extremely important, but it is also separate from dealing with al-Qaeda.

• (1130)

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Dewar and Mr. Fowler.

We'll move over to the government side, with Mr. Dechert for seven minutes.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here and sharing your expertise with us.

Mr. Fowler, I would like to begin with you. Just let me say at the outset that we're all very aware of the ordeal that you and Mr. Guay suffered in 2008-09. It's really good to see you here looking so well today.

I would like to ask you about an article you wrote recently in the *Globe and Mail*, where you said:

...we have to pay politically correct obeisance to the "African-led" bit, but everyone knows the Africans can't do what needs to be done on their own.

Could you elaborate on that position for us, and could you tell me if you think AFISMA is working?

Mr. Robert Fowler: Could you tell me the last part?

Mr. Bob Dechert: How is AFISMA, the African-led International Support Mission to Mali, working?

Mr. Robert Fowler: Let me start with the last part. It isn't working because it isn't there yet. If we had perhaps provided more than one plane for one week and then a little bit more, maybe they'd be there more. That would help.

Look, I did speak very frankly in that op-ed piece in the *Globe and Mail*, and I'm certainly one who will in different times and places pay a lot of attention to African obeisance. That said, when the UN Security Council just before Christmas, on December 20, passed Resolution 2085—Mr. Chairman, if you will forgive me for reading a direct, somewhat colourful quote into the record—the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, who almost became Secretary of State, is alleged to have called the UN plan “crap”. I kind of regret to say I think she was right. This was a three-legged plan that was being put together: first of all, build up the Malian army, then throw in AFISMA, and then finally, somewhat desperately, in paragraph 14 say, by the way, anybody else out there who can help, for heaven's sake, please do. That was sort of a Hail Mary play for a desperate situation. Unfortunately, the Security Council had failed to consult al-Qaeda on this, and they surged southwards, forcing the French reaction, and that reaction was remarkable. They moved from a standing start to fighting al-Qaeda within about 30 hours.

Mr. Bob Dechert: The French have asked us for the loan and assistance of the C-17 aircraft that has been making many sorties there, carrying the equipment necessary and the personnel necessary to combat the terrorists in Mali. What do you think Canadian troops ought to be doing in Mali today? Should we be sending people there with weapons to fight the terrorists and the people who captured you?

Mr. Robert Fowler: Definitely. In my view, if I may, because you've given me the perfect opportunity, I wish we would stop talking in binary fashion about boots on the ground or not boots on the ground. It isn't that simple. Do I think Canadian infantry battalions ought to be drawing a line north of Kidal in the desert? No, absolutely not. Do I think Canadian special forces could be helping French special forces deal with these guys? Do I think Canadian intelligence officers, logisticians, helicopters, and trucks could be helping (a) the Africans and (b) the French? I certainly do.

• (1135)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Do you believe the French armed forces have asked Canada for that assistance as of today?

Mr. Robert Fowler: I have no idea, but I know the UN has.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Let me ask you a question. You may have recently seen a report in the media, the Canadian Press, of a Harris/Decima survey sampling about 1,000 Canadians saying that fewer than one in five Canadians support sending troops to a landlocked African country to fight a violent insurgency. What's your view or comment on that?

Mr. Robert Fowler: I think Canadians are not terribly aware of what's going on in Africa generally, and in much of the world as well. I, frankly, would wish that Canadians were better educated about what is happening in the world, and that in our high schools they would learn more, not only about Canadian history but about world history and about the reality of what's happening on the ground in places like the Sahel region.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Fair enough.

You said in your opening remarks that no Canadian in the zone is safe; no westerner in the zone is safe. You may know that some people have suggested that the Canadian government, in support of the road map to return to democracy in Mali, ought to be sending civilian election observers. Is that something, given what happened

to you and Mr. Guay, that you would recommend we do in the next few months—send Canadian observers to observe that election?

Mr. Robert Fowler: I guess I would say not until there are conditions in which reasonable elections could be held. As long as there is a threat to election observers, there's a threat to a free and fair election, I would say.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Fair enough.

You mentioned that you thought Canada should be contributing more in terms of money, both militarily and perhaps on the humanitarian side. What's the number? What do you think we ought to be submitting?

Mr. Robert Fowler: A number of humanitarian...?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Yes. First of all, on the non-humanitarian side and on the humanitarian side—do you have a figure for us?

Mr. Robert Fowler: On the humanitarian side, until a year ago we were the second largest aid contributor to Mali. At Addis Ababa we were the lowest G-8 contributor to Mali and one of the lowest contributors in the world. So I think those two might be brought into better sync.

Mr. Bob Dechert: You do point out that we were the highest per capita contributor prior to the violence in Mali.

Mr. Robert Fowler: I guess we were the highest per capita. I hadn't worked it out per capita, but we were the second highest national contributor. Therefore, yes, I believe we can do more. Our friends in Mali deserve more.

Mr. Bob Dechert: On the military side, how much money would you suggest Canada should be contributing?

Mr. Robert Fowler: The military situation is in significant flux, as you've seen. Do I think—

Mr. Bob Dechert: Do you think the French are making progress against the terrorists in the north? How many terrorist fighters do you think there are in the north of Mali today?

Mr. Robert Fowler: Nobody knows the answer to that question, but if I had to guess, I would say between 2,000 and 3,000.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Okay. I think that's consistent with what the experts told us.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dechert. That's all the time we have.

We're going to move over to Mr. McKay for seven minutes.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to you all.

Ambassador Fowler, you seem to be very popular this morning. I'm going to continue with that popularity trend. It's a pity you're not more popular with the minister. I'm kind of disappointed, frankly, to learn that the minister hasn't called you into his office for a direct chat. You are, after all, probably Canada's foremost expert in this area, and your comments—whether one disagrees or agrees with them—are fairly pointed, and certainly intellectually and experientially based.

I want you to disaggregate, if you will, your phrase “significantly more engaged”. I want you to disaggregate it in three phases: diplomatically, militarily, and developmentally. You clearly state that militarily there will not be any negotiation with these people. We don't even understand their mindset.

The government heretofore has kind of expressed a certain reluctance to get involved in yet another African conflict. It therefore falls to you and your view to articulate not only why we should but how we should engage militarily. I think diplomatically that's a given, and aid-wise that's a given, but militarily, I think that's where the core resistance or reluctance is on the part of the government.

• (1140)

Mr. Robert Fowler: Thank you.

I've already given some indication of the direction I think we should go, but a bit of this is retrospective. I believe that as soon as the French were engaged and the whole situation had changed from that very messy, tentative UN plan, and we were in a much more active phase and were not waiting for something better to occur between now and October, we ought to have indicated to the French, in the first instance, a menu of things we could provide. The C-17s would have been a great start, and beyond that I think our special forces working with their special forces would have been a good idea.

Hon. John McKay: What should our goal have been militarily?

Mr. Robert Fowler: Our collective goal, the goal of the west militarily, should be to diminish the Salafist, Islamist, al-Qaeda threat to the point that the Africans can handle it, and that means diminishing it very significantly. I keep using words like “diminish” rather than “defeat”, because we're not going to defeat them. There's going to be no “mission accomplished” moment. This is an insurgency. This is going to be extremely difficult. Ask the Algerians. The Algerians have been fighting these guys for 20 years, more or less. We ought to be joining in that fight because it affects us and our friends.

There's more we could have done, logistically. There's more equipment we could have provided. I don't think infantry, big numbers of troops, ought to be considered, but I do think we have certain specific skills and we ought to be putting those skills to the task.

Hon. John McKay: We seem to be fumbling the ball, if you will, in the handoff to AFISMA. The French have expressed reluctance to be engaged on a long-term basis, and this government has the same issue. The sooner you get AFISMA up and running and capable, the better off we'll all be, we hope.

I'd be interested in your observations with respect to our..well, frankly, we haven't done anything with AFISMA. We haven't funded; we haven't done anything.

Mr. Robert Fowler: I was distressed to see at Addis Ababa that, in addition to an underwhelming humanitarian commitment, we had made no commitment to the two trust funds established to support the African-led force and the training of the Malian army. I think we should have done both of those things. To what level, I can't say, but I would have liked to have seen something significant.

I think, Mr. McKay, you asked me to comment on whether, beyond the pledging conference and the trust funds, we should be supporting AFISMA, and my answer is a tentative yes—as long as we understand, and I'm sorry to be so brutal here, that they're not going to do the job I've been talking about; they're not going to be doing the job of diminishing al-Qaeda.

Hon. John McKay: Then we end up in a Catch-22. We have a basic proposition that al-Qaeda should be degraded to the extent possible. We have some feel for what would be required to do this, but we have a partner that's not capable of moving up. This leads to a very real difficulty.

Mr. Robert Fowler: You're absolutely right, unless France and its very militarily capable allies do the job of diminishing first.

• (1145)

Hon. John McKay: The final point is with respect to this so-called road map to democracy. If in fact the UN resolution is only an appearance of a resolution, as opposed to a reality of a resolution, the road map to democracy seems to be filled with potholes.

I would like to have your views on the ironical effect of withdrawing funding from the Government of Mali, which is a dictatorship at this point, and the contribution that this makes to the ongoing instability of Mali.

The Chair: Since he's out of time, very quickly, Mr. Fowler, could you give just a quick response?

Mr. Robert Fowler: Mr. Chairman, you're asking me for a very quick response to the most complicated question I've had yet, and it is an extremely complicated question.

Look, Mr. McKay, I'm not a believer in democracy before everything else, all the time, everywhere. The political situation in Mali is at the moment impossibly complex. It isn't a dictatorship, nor is it a democracy. There are interim leaders, a president and prime minister, who are trying to make it work in the face of continuing obstruction from a group of younger army officers. The Malians have to work this out. I don't think the answer to that is that we can't do anything until there is a free and fair election in a country two-thirds of which is threatened by people who hate democracy, who hate freedom, who hate liberty, who hate equal rights and equality of any kind. That is a bit of a complex situation.

The Chair: Thank you. Well done for that short period of time.

We're going to start a second round, which will be five minutes. We have 15 minutes left, so we probably have time for the full round.

We're going to start with Ms. Brown for five minutes, please.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, thank you for being here.

I do want to give the Red Cross a little bit of time here to talk about some more of their programs.

And I'd like to dispel some of the myth that seems to be here about Canada leaving the Sahel region of Africa. Certainly Mali has been one of our countries of focus, and Mr. Fowler, you indicated that Canada has been the largest contributor: \$110 million a year going into that country. We've been working on governance issues. We've been working on maternal, newborn, and child health. We've been on education.

Contrary to what seems to be out here about Canada not investing in helping with military engagement, we have been on the ground working with ECOWAS and training in military and police capacities in Niger, in all of that region, to ensure that they are building capacity.

I've had the opportunity to visit the Kofi Annan centre in Ghana, and certainly Canada has been intimately engaged in that country and in that process. ECOWAS is invested in ensuring that all of the countries of the Sahel region are getting the training. When the Sahel crisis started to emerge, Canada was the first one on the ground with contributions for humanitarian endeavours to ensure that food security was going to be there for the people of the Sahel region. We've contributed some \$56 million, over and above the \$110 million that is going into Mali—\$56 million. We still have Senegal and we still have Ghana as countries of focus, so certainly we are engaged in the Sahel region.

I know you've talked about this amount of money that we contributed at the funders' conference. We've contributed \$13 million, and even if that is only 2% of what is being contributed, we heard last week that the EU is only contributing \$20 million. So the contribution that Canada has given per capita is punching way above our weight. We actually had the ambassador here last week from Mali, who said, and I quote...she's thanking Canada for the generous contribution that was announced at the funders' conference last week. So I just think that we need to dispel the myth that Canada is not engaged.

To the Red Cross, to both organizations, both Canada and the international, you've both indicated that you have a very long-term engagement with Mali. We talked first from Canada. You said that you've been engaged in Mali since 1986. That's 25 years' worth of programming.

I wonder if you could both expand on the programs you have there and how you are helping the Malian Red Cross build its own capacity so that they can take over at the right time.

• (1150)

Mr. Chris Rosene: Thank you very much.

Yes, as you pointed out, we have been involved for a number of years. We have not been physically present all those years. We've been participating with the Mali Red Cross, always trying to give them the lead in their programs and to support them in the strategies and the priorities they develop—but among their priorities are disaster response and emergency response.

In this latest crisis they have been working very closely with the ICRC, as pointed out by my colleague, Rob Young. They would not have been able to do that if they weren't there and already on the ground, with a presence in a wide area of the country and in the different regions. That presence is very important. We are working

with them in capacity-building to try to strengthen not only their ability to respond to emergencies, but also their ability to deliver services to their constituency.

One of those areas is health. A number of Red Cross societies are strong in the health area, as we are in Canada, in the Canadian Red Cross, and the maternal and child health program that we are conducting with the Mali Red Cross, with support from Canada, is at least a beginning. I would say that we need to do much more, because the scope, the range, and the period of that work are still a bit limited, but it is taking advantage of the fact that Red Cross volunteers have a basic training in first aid, and on top of that training in first aid they can be helped to deal with issues affecting child health at the community level.

We know that an investment in health generally is a good investment, for two reasons. We know it pays off economically—the studies show us that—and we also know that it builds resilience. In the communities that have to respond to some other kind of threat or crisis, if they have stronger health in their communities, especially for women and children, they are able to respond in a more resilient fashion, so we're building resilience.

The Chair: Thank you. That's all the time we have.

We've gone over a little bit, so we're going to move over to Madame Laverdière for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for your presentations. They were extremely insightful.

My questions are also for the Canadian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross officials.

Could you give us more details on the refugee situation? What are the most urgent needs? What is the most valuable contribution Canada could make to help the refugee situation?

Mr. Stéphane Michaud (Senior Manager, Emergency Response for International Operations, Canadian Red Cross): Thank you, madam.

The refugee situation in Mali is not due solely to the recent conflict. Refugees have been on the move since the farming crisis in 2011. So far, an estimated 371,000 refugees have been displaced, the food crisis being as much to blame as the conflict. Most of those people, some 227,000, have been displaced internally, within Mali.

Numerous agencies are assisting these displaced people, including the Red Cross's organizations in every country affected, especially Mauritania and Niger, as well as Mali. Following France's involvement in the conflict, the number of displaced people grew by 35,000. The needs of these people are tremendous. The Malian Red Cross is reviewing its operations, as well as its capacity, not only to help the displaced in the short term, but also to support the country's long-term recovery post-conflict.

I would say the best thing Canada can do is to keep supporting the Malian Red Cross and those agencies providing direct assistance to the refugees, be it the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees or the World Food Programme. Some needs will indeed persist once the conflict has ended.

The food crisis that preceded the military coup and the influx of extremists in northern Mali is still not over. When they return home, these people will return to a new reality—at least we hope so—but still need support.

• (1155)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much.

On the topic of assistance and financial support, I would like to know how much both of your organizations have received in terms of financial commitments to address the crisis in Mali. And what percentage of that money has actually been received from the various donors?

[English]

Mr. Robert Young: For the ICRC, our budget for operations in the region.... I can refer you in more detail to our emergency appeals and also more conveniently it's in electronic format.

I have to say that here in Canada we are very grateful, and that's not just platitudes from what I said at the beginning. In 2012, the Canadian government gave more than has been received in the past by the ICRC for our operations in that region. We asked for more and we got more.

Now the appeal for 2013 is open. It was recently launched just before the end of the year, and we're hoping that Canada will continue to keep us in mind. We need funds for food assistance, which has been mentioned in relation to IDPs, populations displaced because of the fighting, which is happening today. I was just reading a report about my colleagues on the very top corner on the Algerian border. Yesterday the ICRC and the Mali Red Cross were helping about 4,000 people being hosted inadequately by about 400 local families, who were doing their best in their traditions.

We certainly need funds not only for food assistance but for other sorts of operations, including, as was mentioned in your previous question, supporting the Mali Red Cross. This is one of our objectives, to ensure that when peace comes, the Mali Red Cross will be stronger than it was at the outset.

Thank you.

Mr. Stéphane Michaud: In addition to the Mali transfer from ICRC, we're very glad for a contribution of \$250,000 that was given to the Canadian Red Cross, so we could contribute to the federation in Mali. This constituted about 25% of the overall ask in Mali. The ask was more modest for the federation than the ICRC because it was tailored to the capacities of the Mali Red Cross, which is a very cost-effective agency and the main implementation partner of the World Food Programme in Mali as well. We're very thankful for that.

In addition to that contribution, the Canadian Red Cross itself was the first to mobilize and send a coordinator, not only for Mali, but for the whole of the Sahel, based from Dakar to Mauritania and to the Mali Red Cross, and we maintain that presence to this day. We're very involved in that region right now.

The Chair: Thank you. That's all the time we have.

Mr. Williamson, maybe one quick question before we wrap up.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): I'll do my best.

I'm going to direct this question to Mr. Fowler.

It's nice to see you here today. I've listened to you and read some of your work over the years. I appreciate your frankness. It's refreshing, particularly in the Canadian context.

I agree with your assessment on the ground that it's dangerous, it's evolving, and it could likely get worse before it gets better. We've used language today about diminishing al-Qaeda, degrading, but really what you're talking about is killing the enemy. I appreciate and I agree with your view. This is not a question of battalions and lines on a map, but more of an asymmetrical warfare, potentially.

I want to get a sense of what that means so that we're not just talking at an abstract level to effectively wage the campaign you're suggesting and, frankly, that I think would be needed. We see UPI referring to the northern part of Africa, or parts of it, or of Africa's Tora Bora, for example, to give a sense of what we're looking at here. Correct me if I missed a point here, but basically what you're talking about is a campaign that would be waged from the air, one that would involve special forces to ID targets, and then regular soldiers would be needed to back up and follow through on that. As well, there are logistics and the transportation to and from the theatre. That's a sizeable contribution, and I'm not sure it's one that Canada could even make on its own.

Mr. Robert Fowler: Indeed, we're very close in terms of our prescriptions. I never meant to suggest for an instant that Canada should do this on its own. In fact, were that the prospect, I would be getting cold feet. I'm suggesting we do it now in company with the French—make it easier for them. We have the kinds of assets they need. But so do other people. We need overhead intelligence assets. We probably need drones. We don't have them. We need small teams going in there to do the work that needs to be done, and for a while. I don't know how long “a while” is; it's not forever, not 10 years. But we have to leave it so that the slowly arriving, the very slowly being trained-up Malian army and the AFISMA force can hold the line. That is exactly what I'm suggesting.

Mr. Chairman, if I may just say to Ms. Brown, I don't want to get into a numbers war, but you did talk about a European contribution of \$20 million. That, of course, was the European aid agency. It wasn't individual European countries. The individual European countries—Germany, France, Britain—have all contributed vastly more than that amount.

Yes, I do think we need to do this, and we need to do it pretty quickly.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you.

To our witnesses, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Rosene, and Mr. Young, thank you very much for being here today.

We'll suspend the meeting for about five minutes.

• (1200) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

The Chair: We'll get started again.

I want to thank the ministers for taking time out of their busy schedules to be here today.

We have Mr. David Morrison, senior vice-president of the geographical programs branch with the Canadian International Development Agency.

We have Minister Julian Fantino, the Minister of International Cooperation.

We have Minister John Baird, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Joining him is Ms. Buck, who has been here before. Welcome back to the committee.

I believe both ministers have opening statements.

Why don't we start with you, Minister Fantino? We'll give you ten minutes to start, and then we'll move over to Mr. Baird. After that we'll go for some questions for the next hour.

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of International Cooperation):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the committee. Thank you for the invitation.

Our country has a long-standing history of cooperating closely with Mali, bilaterally, regionally, and then as part of la Francophonie on issues of development, good governance, and security. In fact, we have been one of its principal development partners, helping the country to stabilize its democracy and make concrete health and educational gains.

The crisis that Mali currently faces is multi-dimensional. The country has been in a particularly fragile state since fighting intensified in the north in early 2012, followed by the *coup d'état* last March. The humanitarian situation is also of grave concern, as Malians are still dealing with the consequences of the food and nutrition crisis that affected the Sahel region in 2012 and the impact of the conflict in the north.

Since the suspension of direct support to the Malian government following the *coup d'état*, the Canadian International Development Agency has continued to provide development and humanitarian assistance through multilateral and non-governmental organizations.

On the humanitarian front, with Canada's support, the United Nations World Food Programme has provided emergency food and nutrition assistance to an estimated 1.3 million people in Mali over the last 12 months. With our help, UNICEF has provided life-saving nutrition programming for the treatment of more than 39,000 Malian children suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Our support to CARE Canada is helping the organization implement cash transfer programming that is enabling 3,000 vulnerable households to meet their basic needs with dignity. CIDA has also provided regional

funding in response to calls for assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Red Cross movement.

The High Commissioner for Refugees has provided 142,000 Malian refugees with essential items such as blankets, kitchen sets, shelter, and sanitary supplies, while the Red Cross movement has distributed essential household items and hygiene kits as well as food to an estimated 600,000 people affected by the conflict.

Mali also benefited from the direct generosity of our citizens, who contributed \$6.9 million to registered Canadian charities through the Sahel crisis matching fund last August and September. The fund was established in response to the food and nutrition crisis that has affected Africa's wider Sahel region.

I should also add that at last month's donor pledging conference in Ethiopia, I announced, on behalf of the Canadian government, that Canada is providing an additional \$13 million for a number of initiatives aimed at addressing Mali's pressing humanitarian needs. These include delivering shelter, primary health care, and water and sanitation to some 150,000 Malian refugees in Niger, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso, and to more than 235,000 internally displaced people in Mali.

In regard to addressing longer-term needs, while CIDA has no ongoing development projects in any of Mali's unstable regions and is not currently working directly with the Mali government, Canada is still providing development assistance in the country's southern areas to ensure that populations there continue to receive critical health and educational services. This type of support is critical to avoiding social unrest in the south and to stabilizing the part of the country where the vast majority of the people live and where the interim government sits.

A stable south means more efforts can be concentrated on the security situation in the north. This is also important to ensuring continuity and progress in the good work that CIDA has done in Mali over the years. Up until the *coup d'état*, the agency's bilateral program had in fact delivered significant results. Canada's contributions to save the lives of mothers and children in Mali, for example, have helped increase the rate of assisted childbirths by 13% since 2003, and 92% of children under the age of one received essential immunization in 2010.

• (1210)

As part of a long-term strategy to reduce hunger and poverty, CIDA supports irrigation and agricultural development projects and promotes the use of new methods and techniques to increase food security and economic growth. This helps sustain farmers and increase their production both for their own consumption and for selling in local markets.

Also in 2010, primary school students received 1.2 million new textbooks for their learning. These are critical years in a child's academic and social development, years that cannot easily be made up. Ready access to quality textbooks is helping to keep children in school and ensure that they are in fact learning. CIDA also helped to establish the textbook repair industry in Mali. Working through the Malian government's Ministry of Education, nearly 120,000 textbooks lasted much longer, postponing the need to buy new books and saving the government money.

Another of the cornerstones of Canada's development program in Mali is promoting good governance. CIDA's support to the justice system helped the ministry of justice develop and implement automated procedures aimed at speeding up the court system.

For over a decade, CIDA has been active in democracy building in Mali where our interventions are based on the same principles that guide our efforts to advance democracy in other parts of Africa and elsewhere in the world, namely human rights, the rule of law, accountable public institutions, and freedom, including the right to freely participate in a fair and democratic electoral process.

It would be a shame if Mali's current fragility caused a backslide of any kind with respect to these significant gains. Canada's support for Mali builds on our strong and long-standing history and friendship with all the different regions in Africa, where we have a profound interest in advancing prosperity, stability, and democracy.

We are also actively engaged with our development partners from francophone Africa. Last October I accompanied our Prime Minister to the 14th Francophonie Summit in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where Canada announced support that will help prevent sexual violence against women and girls in the DRC and provide victims with much needed services and support.

I also travelled to the Sahel last fall to witness for myself the widespread suffering caused by the food and nutritional crises, and to Ethiopia last month to discuss the conflict in Mali and the financial, logistical, and capacity-building needs of both the Malian forces and the African-led international support mission in Mali.

Considering Canada's long-standing support and involvement in Africa, it really is no surprise that we would seek to support Mali during this difficult time. While our suspension of direct assistance to the Government of Mali remains in effect, the agency continues to work with partners to provide much-needed development assistance to address the needs of vulnerable Malians—assistance that will help to secure a safe, bright future for Malian children, assistance that addresses the needs for nutritional food, assistance that supports maternal, newborn, and child health, and assistance that supports the immediate needs of the population affected by the current conflict.

Mr. Chairman and members, development work is never easy, but it is particularly difficult in places that lack constitutional order, peace, and stability. The crisis in Mali can only be resolved through a collaborative approach between the various Malian, African, and international stakeholders. Canada wants to see a democratically elected government in place in Mali and stability restored.

Let me reiterate that Canada remains committed to a concentrated international approach to the crisis in the Sahel, to the re-

establishment of security and democracy for the people in Mali, and to overcome the humanitarian crises that plague the region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Fantino.

Minister Baird, the floor is yours, sir, for 10 minutes.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and colleagues. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be with you today.

I'd like to say at the outset that I have been following your recent meetings on the situation in Mali and am pleased with the level of interest that members of this committee, and indeed members of Parliament from all parties, have shown in this complex and important file.

[*Translation*]

Today's meeting represents just one aspect of our government's commitment to educate parliamentarians on Canada's response to the conflict in Mali. I hope we will be able to reach a consensus on this important issue. As members know, the Prime Minister and I made this commitment to the leaders and critics of the opposition parties. This issue transcends politics, as it should.

[*English*]

For the benefit of those joining us today, here is some context.

One of the poorest countries in the world, Mali covers a swath of west Africa that is roughly the size of the province of Quebec. The northern part of Mali, an area the size of Alberta, is the poorest area of the country. It is sparsely populated, with towns and villages dotting the desert terrain. Historically, it has not been under the central Malian government's close control, with one ethnic group in particular launching semi-regular rebellions against governments of the day.

In recent years, the situation in northern Mali has been compounded by the increasing presence of terrorists and radical Islamic extremist groups, as well as by the influx over time of arms illegally trafficked throughout the region.

Radical extremists ramped up the attacks against the Malian defence forces early in 2012. Then in late March a handful of junior officers caused a political crisis, when they successfully led a *coup d'état* just weeks before a planned election in which the incumbent president was not running.

I'm pleased to say that Canada reacted quickly and strongly to condemn the coup and to demand the return of constitutional rule. To underscore Canada's insistence that Mali again find its way back to democratic and representative governance, I, along with my colleague Julian, suspended direct bilateral aid transfers so as not in any way to support the illegitimate governance. We instead worked through NGOs to deliver humanitarian assistance, as my colleague has explained.

By June 2012 and over the months that followed, groups of Tuareg nationalists, Islamic extremists, and criminals occupied the entire north, oppressing local populations. Civilian men, women, and children saw their basic rights abused. Thousands were driven from their homes. Millions are now at risk of malnutrition.

I am providing you with this context to simply say that Canada was monitoring the situation and responding to it long before most people's attention turned to Mali in recent weeks, long before headlines began appearing almost daily.

[Translation]

Canada has been active in Mali for a long time. We have responded strongly to the many challenges that have arisen over the past year, and we will continue to take appropriate measures in cooperation with like-minded members of the international community.

[English]

On December 20 of last year, just days before Christmas, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2085, which wisely places emphasis on both the political track and the security track for resolving the situation in Mali, and which authorizes a one-year deployment of an African-led international support mission in Mali.

In January, at the request of the interim Malian government, France quickly launched a military operation to support the military in its efforts to drive back a sudden terrorist advance to the south that threatened the capital. Our government endorsed that initiative by providing a large-capacity C-17 aircraft. It has since transported almost one million pounds of equipment. This support and that of other countries has helped France and the French forces and other African forces push the extremist elements out of most of Mali's northern cities. The French have said that, conditions permitting, their forces would be withdrawn by the end of March.

We're looking at ways to help address the humanitarian crisis, and in Ottawa and in Bamako we are supporting the road map to democratic elections sometime later this year.

Colleagues, we are operating on three tracks to address the serious challenges that exist in the country, and we are looking at ways to effectively address the challenges of the broader region. We have been there, and will be there, for the people of Mali and, just as important, for its neighbours.

With that, I look forward to your questions and comments.

• (1220)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Baird.

We're going to start with the opposition.

Mr. Dewar, sir, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to our colleagues for their perspective and the point of view of the government.

I'll start with Minister Baird, Chair.

Just in terms of this mission—you have just outlined how long you've been following Mali and have been involved, but it has

changed and has been fluid—who is the lead minister when it comes to the file on Mali? Are you the lead minister, or is it someone else?

Hon. John Baird: As Minister of Foreign Affairs, obviously I take the lead on foreign policy. It's very much a team approach. I work very closely with my colleague, the Minister of International Cooperation, in this regard. I also work very closely with the Minister of National Defence. Obviously on issues of national security, the Prime Minister chairs that cabinet committee and gets the advice and counsel of everyone, from his national security advisor to the Chief of the Defence Staff.

Mr. Paul Dewar: So you're the lead, with help.

Hon. John Baird: With respect to policy, I would expect so, yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I ask that because there was some confusion at the beginning. I think you'll acknowledge that. There was the suggestion from Minister MacKay that we're going to have military training. Then you were suggesting not. Then there was the ask from the French for the lift capacity that you just mentioned and acknowledged we would sign on to.

For some of us, albeit we're the opposition, there was a concern that there was a lack of coherence as to what we were doing. It seems to be foreign policy, in this case, a little bit by drift at this point. We really want to see that coherence because we need to see that our government is on the ground and understanding what exactly the threats are. They are many. We've had witnesses here talk about the obvious threat from extremists. There's also what happened in the Sahel in terms of the food crisis. We have a regional crisis here, as you acknowledge.

Can you tell me how many Canadian embassies or missions have been closed in Africa in the last five years? If you don't have it, can you just provide it to the committee in writing?

Hon. John Baird: I know there was a CIDA office in Niger.

Mr. Paul Dewar: You can provide it to the committee.

Hon. John Baird: I didn't think—

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's Tunisia, yes.

Hon. John Baird: That's it.

Mr. Paul Dewar: And that's it. You've no other embassies in Africa that have been closed in the last five years.

Hon. John Baird: We'll get you the information.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'd appreciate that. It's important to have our infrastructure on the ground when we're dealing with this crisis, which will go on.

One of the things that surprised me today was about getting advice. Mr. Fowler was here at committee. I asked if you had asked him for his advice when it comes to what's happening on the ground. Could you share with us why you didn't ask Mr. Fowler for his advice? He's an experienced diplomat, and obviously he went through what he went through recently. Perhaps you're considering or acknowledging that maybe you should have sought his advice as to what's happening on the ground.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Fowler has certainly been very open to providing advice to the government and to all parliamentarians. He obviously has a distinguished record as a former diplomat and foreign service officer. I can tell you I have one better than that. I have the entire foreign service and diplomatic team at the Department of Foreign Affairs that I count on and rely on.

Mr. Paul Dewar: But why not just invite him in to ask his advice on what's happening on the ground? He's the foremost expert, I would argue, in the country right now.

• (1225)

Hon. John Baird: I'm not going to get into a debate with a former diplomat.

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's not a debate; it's about getting advice, and getting the best advice. I would encourage you to do so in the future. As he said, he's willing to share information. Perhaps we should do that.

Hon. John Baird: He's been quite free in sharing information with all of us.

Mr. Paul Dewar: As the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the lead on this, I think it's important that you get the best advice. We want that for our country.

Hon. John Baird: I want to tell you I am very pleased by the exceptional advice and counsel that I get from the officials at the department.

Mr. Paul Dewar: But more is better in this case, I would argue, Minister.

We are in a situation where the government has said it supports the road map, it supports development, but we haven't seen the dollars on the table. We have the \$13 million, roughly 2% of the ask. FISMA wasn't something the government contributed to. The road map, the government supports, we supported, but there's no money.

Institutionally speaking, we're at a loss, because Rights and Democracy no longer exists. On the institute for democratic development, the government announced it a couple of times and then it died. Is there any plan in the future for bringing forward this institute for democratic development? This is something that would have been very helpful obviously in this region and other regions.

Hon. John Baird: I met with Valerie Amos about two or three weeks ago. The request she gave me face to face was in the order of \$390 million for humanitarian aid, under both her offices and the UN World Food Programme. The minister virtually immediately responded with \$13 million, which is pretty close to the typical Canadian percentage, just under 4%.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Do you intend to provide money for the road map, specifically the \$3 million? Do you intend to go forward on the institute for democratic development, as you had promised in the past? All we have now is this office of religious freedom, which isn't up and running and there's no one leading it.

My question very specifically is this. Are you going to go forward on the institute and are you going to put money into the road map?

Hon. John Baird: With respect to the road map, it's just been brought forward. We're reflecting and considering that with our allies.

I don't take everything at face value in terms of what comes out of Bamako. As you know, you and I were supposed to visit Bamako, I believe, the day or two before the prime minister was arrested. These have not been trusted interlocutors when it comes to democracy and freedom.

With respect to financial asks, we'll carefully consider them. But we don't make the decisions.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Finally, Minister, if I may, you've stated in the past that the greatest threat you see to foreign affairs, global affairs, is extremism, terrorism. I think that's fine, and many would agree, and it's a threat to our collective existence. But when I see that we are shrinking our footprint in places like Africa, the hot spot right now, and when I see that we don't have the capacity or the tools in our tool kit—as I mentioned, the institute for democratic development, shutting down Rights and Democracy, and we have this office of religious freedom without anyone actually heading it—then it really begs the question: Is the government taking this seriously?

It seems to be drive-by diplomacy; our foreign policy is adrift. I need to know that we have a government that's serious about the capacity, because you have mentioned this threat we have and what we have to deal with.

Hon. John Baird: With respect to drive-by diplomacy, you, sir, in the first few hours of this engagement wanted to send Canadian troops to Mali, on the ground, and even your leader didn't stand up behind that within a matter of time. So don't talk about—

Mr. Paul Dewar: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: Order. That's all the time, Mr. Dewar. We're going to have to come back next round.

Mr. Paul Dewar: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

The Chair: Mr. Dewar, that's all the time we have for this one.

We're going to move over to the government side.

Ms. Brown, you have the floor for seven minutes, please.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ministers, thank you for being here today.

This has been a very important discussion for us over the last couple of weeks. I sincerely hope that Canadians who are watching our committee proceedings here are getting a sense of Canada's involvement, our concern for what's going on in Mali. As I said in committee last week, I have a vested interest. I have supported a little girl through World Vision for the last 10 years, and for Tolatta's sake, I want to see Mali get back to a situation where democracy thrives.

To both of you, if you would...as I said in our earlier hour, we have members on the other side who are trying to portray this myth that Canada has left Africa, that Canada has left the Sahel region. I wonder if each of you could speak to Canada's engagement there, in Africa in general if you want, but specifically in the Sahel region, and the things that we have done to help build governance, to help train security forces, specifically the Kofi Annan centre in Ghana. We're working with ECOWAS.

Could you speak to those issues?

Minister Baird, this discussion about AFISMA.... I was in Malawi two weeks ago and had the opportunity to speak with the general of the Malawian army, who talked about AFISMA. The solution in Mali needs to be an African-led solution. I wonder if you could speak to that as well.

• (1230)

Hon. Julian Fantino: Mr. Chair, I'll take the first item, if I may.

It's really important to understand.... This crisis is very troubling and certainly extremely disappointing, especially to Canada, because of our long-standing involvement in Mali, which goes back to the 1960s, actually. It became a country of focus in 2009.

I can enumerate for you the amount of Canadian taxpayer dollars that have been dedicated to Mali, which averages out at about \$100 million a year. Aside from all of that, going to the question about whether or not we have, as a Canadian government, forgotten about or diminished our concern or our involvement in Africa, nothing could be further from the truth.

Having visited there, as I know some of you have as well, there's a high degree of Canadian NGO involvement in that part of Africa. Last year, with the drought situation, we not only stood up the matching fund situation, which I believe averted a huge disaster, but we also visited the contiguous countries, receiving Malian displaced persons and so forth, and speaking with them as well. So we have a great appreciation.

I believe Minister Baird has been there five times. The Prime Minister was there last fall. I certainly visited. There has been, sincerely, a true, honest, and humanitarian commitment to Mali before, now, and it certainly will continue in the future.

Hon. John Baird: We have been very active in recent years, particularly in the Sahel region, and directly in Mali with respect to counterterrorism and capacity-building. We've spent millions on countries in the Sahel to strengthen their capacity in a number of areas: law enforcement, the military, intelligence capacity, legal regimes, and criminal justice, specifically targeting terrorism. Mali has been the most important beneficiary of our counterterrorism capacity-building program in that region since 2010.

Since 2010 we've provided more than \$7 million to fund and enhance the operational capacity of the country's security forces, as well as to strengthen its legal regime specifically against terrorism. This is in addition to the significant humanitarian resources that have gone in.

I have been particularly engaged on this file. I have met with representatives from Mali. Two days ago I spent some time with the ambassador from Mauritania. Obviously we have gotten together

with my counterparts in Nigeria. The chairman of the African Union and the President of Benin visited with us and gave us specific briefings on this.

Having said that, I am very cautious about sending in potentially thousands of Canadian troops to Malian soil, as has been called for by others, to what will and is already amounting to a counter-insurgency. We're not going to get into another Afghanistan in this region at the drop of a hat.

We do have an important responsibility as a country to be actively involved supporting the track back to democracy. We do have an obligation to support the fight against terrorism. That's why we're supporting a key ally, France, in this regard. We're providing substantial humanitarian support, and we are prepared to do more, as this problem will not be fixed immediately.

We have some important requests before the government with respect to support for regional organizations and before a mission in Mali. We'll reflect on those carefully before we come to any conclusions.

At the same time, some people are throwing around lines that we should immediately send hundreds of thousands of Canadian troops for peacekeeping. We have one side, a military government that took power in a coup last year, and another side, an al-Qaeda affiliate. I don't think they're going to sign on for a peacekeeping mission. It is very much going to be an insurgency on the ground, as we've seen in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Before we make some expeditious, quick decision to send in Canadian troops, we should look at the facts. That's why we have been very clear that that's not something we're looking at doing.

Does that mean that Canada won't be involved? No. We can support ECOWAS, the UN, and Mali's neighbours.

I think one of the things central to the December 20 resolution of the Security Council is that it be African-led, and we strongly support that. We've seen the success that can lead to, for example, in Somalia, where a substantial amount of Canadian resources have gone into having other African Union member forces provide support there. That's the strategy Canadians will get behind, not sending Canadian troops to Mali.

• (1235)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That's all the time we have.

We're going to move to Mr. McKay. Sir, you have seven minutes.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you both for coming.

It's disappointing, Minister, that you haven't had time to visit with Mr. Fowler over the last few months, and you're relying on what he says publicly rather than what he might say privately, because he's clearly one of Canada's most experienced and respected diplomats and is very knowledgeable about the area.

Relying on what Mr. Fowler has said publicly—and I'm sure your assistants have told you what he said today—his views are that Canada needs to be significantly more engaged in this conflict, not only for the stabilization of Mali, but for the larger region, and also internationally, and that you need to be very focused on what you're trying to accomplish when you engage in Mali.

Minister, what are Canada's military goals in Mali?

Hon. John Baird: Our only military goal in Mali at this point is to support a close friend, a close ally, France. France made the unilateral decision to undertake a military mission. They asked for Canada's support, and we considered it expeditiously and responded positively. Today, that is the only mission.

Others want us to send Canadian troops into Mali, and we have said no to boots on the ground.

Hon. John McKay: Have you been asked to extend the C-17 mission?

Hon. John Baird: Not at this time, but if they do—

Hon. John McKay: Friday is coming up in a few days.

Hon. John Baird: They requested a C-17 on a Saturday, and the Prime Minister consulted widely within the government. We reached out to both of the opposition leaders and announced it on the Monday. We've extended it at their request. If they ask again—

Hon. John McKay: So maybe by Thursday at midnight we'll know whether we're going to have a C-17 extension?

The second question has to do with the—

Hon. John Baird: So much for not making these issues political.

Hon. John McKay: —trainers who the EU are going to send. Is Canada going to participate in that?

Hon. John Baird: Can you repeat that? Sorry.

Hon. John McKay: The trainers.

Hon. John Baird: We've not made a decision on whether to provide training.

I would have some concern with providing training to a military that undertook a military coup and overthrew a democratically elected government weeks before an election, when the president wasn't even re-elected.

Hon. John McKay: Presumably, the trainers are for the African troops, to whom you and I both agree is where the hand-off should go. If, in fact, you're not assisting AFISMA and the EU, or the UN mission, how is it you therefore think that when France rightly withdraws, which you and I would agree to, they're going to be prepared for handling what is an insurgency, a terrorist force, a threat to the region, a threat to the EU, and a threat to the world?

Hon. John Baird: There was a request for financial assistance, there was a request for military training, and there was a request from some members of the committee that we send troops on the ground. We've said no to the latter and we'll reflect on the first two.

Hon. John McKay: When do you expect to make a decision with respect to financing? Is that imminent?

Hon. John Baird: We'll let you know when we do.

Hon. John McKay: I'm sure our partners would like to know sooner rather than later, so they too can prepare for whatever—

Hon. John Baird: Each country will make its own decisions in their own timeline. We'll take the time to thoughtfully consider where the financial assistance would go, who it would go to train, and what guarantees there would be that there would be values and ethics in terms of a military presence on the ground.

● (1240)

Hon. John McKay: I have a final question before I pass it over to my colleague.

What diplomatic pressure is Canada exerting on Mali to achieve what I would argue is a very optimistic goal of a democracy by July?

Hon. John Baird: We've been very outspoken and have used a significant amount of diplomatic pressure with the embassy here and on the ground through our mission in Bamako. We are pleased with the announcement of the road map and a commitment to go to elections by this summer. Having said that, I wouldn't take it to the bank.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, and I thank my colleague.

Thank you, Ministers, for coming.

Previously, some of your members on this committee alluded to polls that Canadians had about involvement in Mali, Africa. Minister, you alluded to your good people on the ground and in Foreign Affairs. I just hope that your government is not driven by polls on what we do in some of these areas and that you take advice from diplomats and people on the ground.

It's good to see Mr. Obhrai here. Mr. Obhrai and I travelled to Mali a few years ago. We had a good sense of the importance of Canada to Mali in how we've participated there right up to the present time. We had ambassadors here, and the ambassador from Mali was here. They were very concerned about the presence that Canada has on the ground. You alluded to how they dropped their CIDA office in Niger. There's no CIDA office in Mali.

There's a concern about going forward. Yes, humanitarian aid is all right now, but what happens...? Canada is so important to the future of Mali. Where are we going to be? What specifically will your government do to help them? We helped them a lot with funding for education, health, and various things like that, which we're not really funding right now. And what are your plans in helping them with long-term development? That was brought up with the Mali ambassador, that is, the concern that we don't have anybody on the ground.

When this so-called transition happens, there's a major concern that we're not going to be ready to fill that void that we always filled with the Malians before.

The Chair: Minister, we've got about a minute left, just to frame your answer.

Hon. Julian Fantino: Very quickly, Mr. Chairman, just as a correction of the record, we did have a CIDA office in Mali. Due to security and safety concerns we brought those people out, but we were on the ground. Our people are in close proximity and are still engaged in working through other NGOs and so forth. We're still plugged in, certainly on the humanitarian side.

In a broader sense, there are some conditions, expectations, and accountabilities that we want to see take place. Minister Baird alluded to the whole notion of stability, the renewal of democracy, and all those kinds of issues. Certainly, we're going to be there for the people. Certainly, we're there on the humanitarian front, and we are indeed committed to ensuring that Mali returns to the progress it was making towards democratic governance.

The Chair: Thank you.

That's all the time we have, Mr. Eyking.

We're going to move it over and start the second round for five minutes.

Mr. Dechert, five minutes, sir.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you, Ministers, for being here this morning.

Minister Baird, can you tell us about what progress the French have made? We've been hearing reports that they've made some pretty significant progress in recent days. Could you tell us the status of the French progress there, and also the status of the rebels, from your information?

Ms. Kerry Buck (Political Director and Assistant Deputy Minister, International Security, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you very much for your question.

The French push has not been a push alone by the French army. They've been working alongside the Malian army, with AFISMA troops coming in behind to control and keep those towns that have been liberated by the French and Malian forces. Right now all strategic towns in central and northern Mali are now secured. There hasn't been a major incident since February 10.

There are, as we discussed last week, indications that insurgents, Islamist extremists, are periodically coming back to try to engage the Malian military on the outskirts of some towns. This has not been particularly successful. We've seen a couple of suicide bombings. But as I said, there has been considerable progress undertaken by the French and Malian forces that has held over the last couple of weeks since the push started.

• (1245)

Mr. Bob Dechert: So things are looking pretty good at the moment, you would say?

Ms. Kerry Buck: Yes, they are.

Hon. John Baird: We should be very clear that while France, backed up by some of Mali's neighbours, has been very successful, what we are seeing is these al-Qaeda-backed rebels simply disappearing into parts of the country, going underground, going into a hole. We've already seen the beginning of an insurgency very similar to what happened in Iraq after the Americans invaded, very

similar to what happened in Afghanistan to all the coalition forces, and this is something that should be very concerning. This is not conventional warfare, where you have two sides with a beginning and an end. This is the new reality we're dealing with.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you.

Minister Baird, you mentioned the road map back to democracy earlier, and how important that was for Mali and for the restoration of Canadian assistance in Mali. You also said you wouldn't take it to the bank. Can you tell us what, in your view, are the particular challenges facing the Malian government in bringing forward these democratic elections in July?

Hon. John Baird: As I said, we support the road map generally. We're appreciative that those who engaged in a military coup have signalled they would like to return to democracy. When those who took democracy want to give it back, I think we should be rightly skeptical, but we'll do all we can to support democratic development and those institutions that will support that.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Baird, you know, and you've mentioned, that religious freedom is a key part of Canadian foreign policy. There have been reports of serious religious persecution in the northern part of Mali. Can you elaborate on the religious tensions that exist in Mali? In your opinion, have things gotten better or worse?

Hon. John Baird: This is not a new phenomenon, as I said in my remarks at the outset, but I'll ask Kerry Buck, our political director, to respond.

Ms. Kerry Buck: Thank you very much.

There have been religious tensions, but they were exacerbated—and that's a mild word. They were really brought to a point last year when we had Islamist extremist groups, many of whom come from outside Mali, coming in and bringing a very extreme form of Islam into the northern reaches of Mali. The Tuareg traditionally are more secular or have a more moderate form of Islam and a pretty tolerant approach to how they lived in northern Mali. So it's the importation of really extreme forms of Islam, with the Islamist groups that moved in last year, that has been the main cause of inter-religious strife. The whole idea is to see Mali return to that tolerant Mali that accommodated differences that we knew prior to last year's uprising.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Minister Baird, you met last week, I believe, with both the French and the Malian ambassadors. Could you tell us a bit about how that meeting went and what was discussed, what information they imparted to you?

Hon. John Baird: I think it was a good meeting. It was a good exchange of views. I got a clear update about what their agendas were and where they wanted to go. Having said that, it was about two or three weeks ago, and it's a rapidly changing situation by the day, so it's almost out of context at this stage. I did indicate our strong commitment to the people of Mali. I did underline, I think—and Canada has been one of the louder voices—the need to get back on the democratic track. Obviously we indicated our strong support to a friend and a key ally, France.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move over to Madame Laverdière for five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you everyone, and ministers, thanks to both of you for being here this morning.

Minister Fantino, you attended the meeting in Addis Ababa. Could you give us a sense of what you took away from that meeting, anything that struck you while you were there? Could you also tell us how much the international community committed, in total, at the meeting?

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino: A couple of things stood out, actually, primarily the concern that has been expressed by the international community with regard to what has transpired in Mali.

Everyone came there with an offer of some kind of assistance. In some cases it was basically an endorsement—moral support, if you will. Then, of course, you have heard about the contributions that were made—some were tentative, others were multifaceted—in multiple different areas. But I think I can say unequivocally that the United Nations secretary, who was also part of the discussions.... There was significant appreciation for the response that has gone forward.

The thing that struck me, frankly, is how fragile things are in that part of the world.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you, minister.

Let's discuss Canada's contribution specifically. Robert Fowler told us that, according to his calculations, Canada's contribution represented about 2.8% of the total amount pledged in Addis Ababa. Everyone knows, however, that figure is usually around 4%, so it is somewhat surprising. Many people are saying that our contribution is rather small given the fact that we are one of Mali's biggest partners. Japan contributed nearly 10 times what we did. We contributed the least of any G8 country.

When you consider our sizeable partnership with Mali, a country we have always worked with, how do you explain the fact that we are suddenly at the bottom of the list when it comes to providing urgent aid?

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino: I don't think you can take Canada's involvement, on the humanitarian front at least, in the abstract. I think you have to look at the history, the amount of involvement, and the amount of contribution that the Canadian government has made in regard to helping the people of Mali.

It may seem to some that \$13 million is not adequate. I can tell you that this is new money; it is not re-profiled money.

I can't speak for other nations, but I think the history, the involvement, and the support, which has been ongoing, are

exemplary. The Malian ambassador as much as stated that. I believe he did so in front of this body.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: It's "she".

Hon. Julian Fantino: She did. I'm sorry.

That said, we have to take it all in context. Canada has been a long-time, very dedicated, committed supporter. The \$13 million is new money, and that has to be looked upon with all the other programs, by the way, that are continued. We have not stopped humanitarian programs in Mali as we speak.

Hon. John Baird: I would like to jump in, because I think this is important.

People made commitments at Addis Ababa with respect to military support as well. We were very clear. Minister Fantino was there to listen, to be briefed, and to be able to report back to his cabinet colleagues so that we could reflect on what we would do.

I can tell you that I met with Valerie Amos, the UN coordinator of emergency relief, on the Friday. There was a \$390 million ask, and we responded literally within days with \$13 million of new support. I think, if you asked her, she'd say that Canada has been very generous, both in Syria and in Mali.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: But in fact countries in Addis Ababa pledged money for humanitarian assistance, for the military effort, but also for the political process.

Given the fact that Canada has been so much involved in good governance and democracy building in Mali, and given the fact that we share a language, the French language, do you see in the future that Canada could support the road map in some form or other?

The Chair: That's all the time we have. I would ask the minister to answer the question.

Hon. Julian Fantino: Very quickly, one of the things that I think people are looking at is Japan's contribution. That also included peacekeeping. It was a whole variety of issues that also included peacekeeping and other matters. Canada's \$13 million is a firm commitment for humanitarian aid.

Hon. John Baird: I would add as well, Madame Laverdière, that I have huge regard for you. You're smart. You do your homework. You're great. I enjoy your company as a colleague. I think you contribute a lot, but I'll be honest with you. Neither Julian nor I could compete with the amount of money you and your party would like to spend on this or anything.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to finish off with Mr. Van Kesteren for five minutes.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ministers, for appearing before us today.

I have a couple of questions. I want to give Minister Fantino an opportunity to talk about the review of the Crossroads funding in Uganda.

Could you take that now, please, sir?

Hon. Julian Fantino: Very quickly, the review by officials has shown that the organization delivers projects effectively, without discrimination, and has done so since 1999.

• (1255)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: You're pleased with the funding, the rules are being met, and we're seeing results.

Hon. Julian Fantino: On strictly that basis, they are delivering very positive results for the efforts that were undertaken. That's as much as I can say. We're engaging their efforts on the basis of results, and that's what they're doing.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Thank you, sir.

Hon. John Baird: Could I jump in? I think it's really important that we put on record one thing. The suggestion that anyone politically, or at the public service level, at CIDA, or at DFAIT would share or endorse the kind of offensive and mean-spirited statements that appeared on a website.... I want to categorically, on behalf of the government, say that we completely reject those sentiments. If there's any evidence that anyone receiving a grant from the Government of Canada is using that money to spread hateful, mean-spirited, or offensive practices, it will be put to an end immediately. Those are not the views of the government.

One of the most important responsibilities the Prime Minister has given Julian and me is to promote Canadian values. Canadian values are accepting; they're tolerant; they welcome diversity. One of the great gifts that Canada has is to promote pluralism around the world. We respect religious freedom. At the same time, Canadian taxpayers' dollars will not be used to spread hate or intolerance. That is completely unacceptable, would be un-Canadian, and would not back up the values that make this country great.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Thank you, Minister.

To you, last spring we saw ECOWAS brokering a deal, installing the interim government, UN Resolution 2085. In December, it led to the creation of an African-led international support mission in Mali.

How important is it for Africans in the region to take a leadership role?

Hon. John Baird: We learned a lot in Somalia, that African-led and African missions can be much more successful.

I could perhaps call on our political director.

Ms. Kerry Buck: We've seen it in past conflicts, and I think that Mali, in a way, is a high-water mark for the African unit for ECOWAS. Asserting that African leadership is very important. They are closer to the terrain and better able to marry up military effort with the political efforts needed for reconciliation. Again, it's been a very important signal from the African Union, and they've claimed that ownership.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Thank you.

Minister, one final thing that I find rather puzzling is the Liberals' approach to.... It must have been a Pauline conversion they had for military intervention. We saw that in Afghanistan when we sent our troops into battle without proper equipment, and that has been rectified. Suddenly we have this push to engage ourselves in Mali. There's a poll, and that was mentioned here this morning, of Canadians and their feelings about us getting involved in another military exercise.

I think what Canadians are asking—I know what I'm asking—in a particular case like this.... I know it's not a small force, but it's a force that there should be some containment.... Where are the rest of the European countries? Where's Germany? Norway has just said they're not going to get involved.

Hon. John Baird: There have been a good number of countries that France has asked for support that have responded favourably. I do remember, though, when I was first elected as an MP, the valiant fight of the official spokesperson for the Liberal Party, Denis Coderre. He stood up time and time again in the House, passionately promising that a Liberal government would cancel the contract to buy the C-17s. Thank goodness that didn't happen, and thank goodness our troops have that equipment and they're able to support the people of Mali and the fight against international terrorism. Thank goodness Gordon O'Connor's efforts to deliver those for Canada have been successful.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Very good. Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: To our witnesses, thank you very much for being here today.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>