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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, March 27, 2018**

**Chair**

**The Honourable Robert Nault**



# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Tuesday, March 27, 2018

• (1555)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.)):** I call the meeting to order.

Colleagues, I know we're running late and everybody's trying to get organized, but I think we should have respect for our witnesses who have been politely waiting for us.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing with our study of the provision of assistance to Canadians in difficulty abroad, better known as consular affairs.

Before us today, from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, is Heather Jeffrey. With her is David Drake, director general, counter-terrorism, crime and intelligence bureau.

As well, from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have James Malizia, assistant commissioner, national security and protective policing, federal policing.

Welcome to all of you, and again we offer our apologies. We can't do much about the way things are going in the House, but we can control this meeting.

With that, I'll turn the floor over to Ms. Jeffrey to begin her remarks, and then, colleagues, we'll get right into questions after that.

Go ahead, Ms. Jeffrey, please.

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey (Assistant Deputy Minister, Consular, Emergency Management and Security, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for welcoming us back to this committee during your hearings on consular services. I'll start with a few remarks on the work of the consular team, to update you since we last met in October. Then I'll pass it on to my colleague David Drake, the director general of the counter-terrorism, crime and intelligence bureau of Global Affairs, followed by James Malizia, assistant commissioner for national security and protective policing at the RCMP.

Since our last appearance, we've seen a continued increase in the number of new consular cases abroad. While the nature and breakdown of cases has remained stable, the total number of new consular cases opened in 2017 was 4% higher than that of 2016, an increase of over 11,000 cases.

[Translation]

The program remains committed to the process of consular modernization to meet the increasing demand. For example, we have conducted public opinion research with Canadian travellers to better understand their preparations for travel, what information they need and their expectations when it comes to consular services. While we are waiting on the full results, it is clear that Canadians continue to expect high standards of service that should be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[English]

Since we last met, we have continued to invest in training, including conducting introductory training courses for our new, dedicated consular officers abroad. We've delivered courses on mental illness and consular services, in response to trends we've seen, to approximately 80 consular officers at locations around the world, and we've ensured that our mid-career consular officers across Africa have participated in advanced training, including on arrest and detention issues. These initiatives help to maintain and reinforce the professionalism of our dedicated consular service, which is a separate stream of the foreign service category.

In rising to meet these expectations, we're going to rely in part on technology. Our Going Digital initiative will provide Canadians with the information that they need in real time through the mobile channels they are most comfortable using and will connect them ever more quickly to consular services when they need help.

We are improving assistance to Canadians with new services such as the digital Ask Travel initiative, which we discussed in October, and the Travel Smart app.

A new and improved case contact and emergency management system is also being rolled out by 2020. This more robust system will modernize our consular case record management system. It will facilitate the identification of consular trends and challenges and it will help us to better track service delivery to ensure continued consistency and high standards.

This investment in technology is just one part of the considerable resources that Global Affairs Canada is devoting to improving its ability to provide quality consular and emergency management services.

I should note in this regard that the cost of providing consular services continues to significantly exceed the revenues that are collected from the consular service fee. For example, in fiscal year 2016-17, the cost of consular services was \$131 million, of which \$105 million was collected through the consular services fee.

We will soon be conducting a regular review of our resourcing and costing methodology in order to update it and to continue to ensure effective, consistent levels of service and the appropriate allocation of our resources overseas.

● (1600)

[Translation]

Other aspects of our strategy are focused on international cooperation. Consular officials are meeting regularly with counterparts on a bilateral basis to resolve case-specific and systemic challenges and learn from best practices.

[English]

Additionally, our international work continues apace. Our hosting of the Secretariat of the Global Consular Forum means that we maintain excellent contacts with the consular services of over 40 countries, not only traditional like-minded allies but also new emerging partners. These initiatives are helping to facilitate our co-operation on consular matters and have resulted in new partnerships with direct benefit to Canadians, including, for example, targeted discussions this year on issues such as dual nationality, services to children, and other emerging challenges.

On the communications front, we're continuing to look at new ways to reach more Canadians. Every year the consular outreach team travels across Canada to meet travelling Canadians and travel industry representatives at industry events, fairs, and conferences, and they are also surveying arrivals at major airports. The team promotes timely travel advice, the importance of travel insurance, the Registration of Canadians Abroad service and its benefits, and key publications with relevant travel information on specific issues.

We are also reaching out to Canadians through public information campaigns, such as our recent spring break campaign, which included a technical briefing for the media, specific web pages, and a strong push on social media in an effort to highlight some of the key ways Canadians can ensure their own safety and security while travelling. We will shortly be launching a similar campaign that takes place annually in advance of hurricane season.

Finally, we'd like to thank the committee for its attention to consular services. We very much look forward to the results of this study, which will further contribute to the development of our consular modernization strategy.

I will be happy to respond to further questions after my colleagues have a chance to deliver their own opening remarks.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Drake, you're next.

[Translation]

**Mr. David Drake (Director General, Counter-Terrorism, Crime and Intelligence Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Good afternoon.

Thank you for the invitation to appear before the committee.

My name is David Drake, and I am the Director General of Global Affairs Canada's Counter-Terrorism, Crime and Intelligence Bureau. I have had direct responsibility for and operational oversight of the

Global Affairs Canada's response to terrorist hostage takings involving Canadian citizens since 2014.

My understanding is that the committee is seeking further information on interdepartmental coordination on hostage takings. As such, in my remarks today, I will speak to the Government of Canada's hostage response structure and Global Affairs Canada's role in supporting hostage families. I will then turn to my esteemed colleague Assistant Commissioner James Malizia from the RCMP, an agency with which Global Affairs Canada works exceptionally closely on these matters.

I will make every effort to be as open as possible and answer your questions fully. However, cabinet confidence and classification of information may restrict what I am able to share. More critically, I cannot reveal any information that could jeopardize current and future efforts and put the lives of future hostages and others at risk.

[English]

I can share with considerable relief that as of a short while ago, for the first time since 2007, we are not currently managing any active terrorist hostage case. This, of course, could change at any moment.

Hostage-taking is a tactic of choice of terrorist groups and individuals seeking to raise funds or to obtain concessions from governments. Incidents are common in states where authorities do not have effective control or capabilities and in conflict zones.

Most Canadians kidnapped abroad are victims of organized or individual crimes, or in some instances may be unlawfully detained by security authorities or militias in circumstances that resemble a hostage situation.

Generally these cases are managed by my colleagues in the consular branch in Global Affairs Canada, which is managed by Ms. Jeffrey. Terrorist hostage cases, however, are managed by a highly specialized unit in the department under my responsibility. You can imagine, of course, that we work very closely together.

● (1605)

[Translation]

This division of labour reflects the fact that terrorist hostage takings require a different toolkit, as well as specialized expertise and skills because of their national security implications.

Of course, the distinction between criminal and terrorist is not always so clear cut. There are elements of terrorist hostage takings that require distinct support from consular, and there are some consular cases that require the specialization of the critical incidents team.

National security implications or not, the Government of Canada treats the safety and security of all Canadians as a matter of fundamental importance.

Since 2005, the Government of Canada has responded to over 20 cases that qualify as terrorist hostage cases, either because a terrorist entity claimed responsibility or a Canadian citizen was taken hostage in an area where the sale or trade to a terrorist group appeared imminent.

[English]

For a terrorist hostage case, Global Affairs Canada coordinates the interdepartmental task force, the IDTF. This is a whole-of-government response that draws on the combined efforts of diplomatic, law enforcement, intelligence, and military spheres. This includes support from trained negotiators and investigators, as well as intelligence-gathering and assessment. Canada's approach to the management of these cases tracks very closely with our closest allies and partners, who also employ whole-of-government hostage response structures.

The primary responsibility for the response to a hostage case lies with the country in which they are taken hostage. This is often forgotten. In this case, Canada works closely with foreign authorities and allies at every level to free Canadians and bring them home. As such, the Government of Canada's response includes significant diplomatic efforts.

Family engagement remains an essential part of our response to these situations. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Global Affairs Canada provide advice and support to hostage families over the course of the case, mindful of Canadian law and Canada's international legal obligations.

A hostage-taking is a horrible and unimaginable ordeal for families and loved ones. Our family support officials strive to work as closely as they can with families to assist them during these trying ordeals. The RCMP's role in this regard will be addressed by my colleague, Assistant Commissioner Malizia.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada constantly reviews its practices and procedures in complex cases such as these with an eye to identifying areas for improvement.

Recent efforts have included interviews with family members who received direct support from officials during a case, as well as consultations with close international partners and other experts on best practices in supporting hostage families.

[English]

Hostage-takings are enormously complex. All are unique and therefore require highly varied responses. Nevertheless, we study each case in great detail to better understand the particularities and the commonalities. We compare and discuss cases with our counterpart hostage response structures in like-minded countries, and we meet and seek feedback from hostage families. Through these activities we continuously add to our best practices. The Government of Canada is actively applying these lessons learned.

I'll stop there and now turn the floor to my colleague, Assistant Commissioner James Malizia.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Assistant Commissioner Malizia, please go ahead.

**Assistant Commissioner James Malizia (Assistant Commissioner, National Security and Protective Policing, Federal Policing, Royal Canadian Mounted Police):** Mr. Chair, thank you for the invitation to appear before this committee on this important study.

I will focus my comments today on the role of the RCMP internationally, including coordination with relevant government departments in providing assistance to Canadians who find themselves in difficulty abroad. I will also briefly touch on our unique role with regard to high-risk travellers.

[Translation]

Let me start by providing you with an overview of our international footprint.

The RCMP has a broad and varied international presence, and is called upon to deal with situations that run the gambit from Canadians who have been arrested or detained abroad to more complex cases like Canadians kidnapped by terrorist organizations.

Supporting domestic and international criminal investigations, participating in international peacekeeping operations and capacity building, and working within the information sharing networks of INTERPOL and EUROPOL and, where appropriate, aiding Canadians abroad are all components of the RCMP's international policing program.

Underpinning this broad mandate, the fundamental objective of the RCMP is to combat global criminal activity and to provide for the safety and security of Canadians, including those located globally.

● (1610)

[English]

Fostering a robust international presence provides the RCMP with an invaluable means to advance Canada's policing interests by maintaining strong collaborative relationships with law enforcement agencies and organizations around the world. The RCMP has access to a global support network, which it can mobilize in urgent situations. For instance, in locations where the RCMP has less-established relationships, we can leverage the resources of our Five Eyes partners and other like-minded countries to expand our reach and influence.

As of March 2018, 39 liaison officers, four regional manager liaison officers, and 12 criminal intelligence analysts were posted to 26 strategic international locations. Our international footprint, global partnerships, and influence, however, fuel the belief that the RCMP has the ability to investigate crimes or assist Canadians in other countries without restrictions. This is simply not the case. Some key limitations to operating internationally include the fact that the RCMP has no jurisdiction to conduct investigations in a foreign country without the consent of the host country, and that the Criminal Code only allows for certain offences that have been committed abroad to be prosecuted in Canada.

However, once foreign jurisdictions consent, investigations are undertaken by the RCMP and conducted in co-operation with local authorities, and the gathering of evidence would be consistent with the Canadian law and charter standards.

[Translation]

I want to now focus on a couple of areas in which the RCMP has significant involvement. I will touch on the work that the RCMP undertakes in relation to internationally abducted and missing children and then turn your attention to the kidnapping of Canadians abroad by terrorist groups. In all of those situations, we work closely with our Government of Canada partners to ensure an effective whole-of-government approach.

The RCMP's National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains becomes involved when an abduction has or may have crossed national borders, and assists and coordinates in missing children cases. It also investigates child abduction cases, where it assists and supports Canadian law enforcement agencies.

Federal-level coordination is undertaken in the case of internationally abducted children. Once a criminal investigation is initiated, we work closely with foreign law enforcement agencies, as well as with our Canadian partners to identify, intercept and recover missing and abducted children.

[English]

Parental abduction is a criminal offence in Canada whether or not there is a custody agreement in place. The National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains assists investigations in an effort to return missing children to their parent or legal guardian. The centre plays a key role in international parental abductions through its links to all Canadian and U.S. police agencies and to most foreign law enforcement. Additionally, the centre has developed strong partnerships domestically and internationally with non-law enforcement entities, such as the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and the Missing Children Society of Canada.

Turning now to the issue of Canadians kidnapped for ransom, in conjunction with our Government of Canada partners the RCMP plays a role in responding to Canadians taken hostage abroad by terrorist organizations. Our primary goal in these investigations is to ensure the safe release of Canadian hostages. The RCMP must also gather and document evidence that would permit, whenever possible, the laying of charges and the successful prosecution of the perpetrators. The Criminal Code gives Canadian courts the jurisdiction to try certain criminal acts, such as terrorism and hostage-taking, that occur beyond our borders. These investigations are some of the most complex, lengthy, and resource-intensive that we conduct.

[Translation]

Hostage takings often occur in high-risk areas and in countries with questionable human rights records. As I have mentioned, the RCMP is dependent on the host country and must adhere to their legal requirements. We do this while trying to ensure the release of hostages and to gather necessary evidence that could be eventually utilized in a Canadian prosecution.

While these types of investigations may be challenging for the RCMP, they are nothing compared to the long-term difficulties faced

by the families and victims of terrorist hostage-takings. In concert with Global Affairs Canada, the RCMP provides as much support as possible to the victims of these crimes through family liaison officers. Their role is to keep families as well informed as possible on the situation, and on the Government of Canada's efforts to secure the release of their loved ones.

●(1615)

[English]

Family liaison officers and investigators also assist the families of victims through various investigative strategies, including, but not limited to, the collection of evidence that may be needed to advance the investigation and support an eventual prosecution. The efforts of the family liaison officers continue long after the resolution of the hostage-taking, as the victims and their families may also be called to relive their experiences before the courts.

Despite these challenges, we have had successes. You have heard from Ms. Lindhout herself about her terrible ordeal at the hands of her kidnappers. Our undercover operation, which lasted five years, resulted in the arrest, trial, and conviction of Ali Omar Ader for her hostage-taking.

I mention this case because it demonstrates that the RCMP can bring perpetrators of extraterritorial crimes to face justice in Canada. Our efforts may take years, perhaps decades, but our commitment is long term.

I also mention this case because, while the outcome was ultimately successful, there were lessons to be learned. We have recognized this and are taking these lessons to heart. By drawing from this experience and from the lessons gleaned from each hostage-taking incident that the Government of Canada has been involved in responding to, the RCMP strives to improve our efforts in the future.

I would also like to highlight briefly another area where the RCMP becomes significantly involved with Canadians abroad. In this case, however, it pertains to individuals who have travelled abroad to engage in terrorist activities. The RCMP has a dual role in both investigating and repatriating these individuals, known as high-risk travellers.

Leaving Canada to participate in the activity of a terrorist group is an offence under Canadian law. It is also an offence for any Canadian citizen or permanent resident to commit an act outside of Canada that would be considered a terrorism offence if committed in Canada. Therefore, investigations of a high-risk traveller's activities continue throughout their period abroad. We do this in order to collect the necessary evidence to charge them, even *in absentia*, but also to understand just what threat they may pose to Canada and to Canadians should they decide to return.

[Translation]

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees Canadians the right to return to Canada, despite what criminal activity they may have been involved in while abroad. However, repatriating citizens involved in terrorist activity can be challenging. For instance, they may no longer possess a valid passport, as it may have been revoked or destroyed in theatre. They may also be listed under the Secure Air Travel Act or the no-fly lists of our allies, which prevents them from boarding an airplane.

Therefore, Government of Canada partners work together to facilitate the repatriation of Canadians. The Managed Returns Committee, led by our Global Affairs Canada partners, helps us coordinate this collaborative effort by facilitating an interagency assessment of the risk a returnee may pose. Each individual case must be assessed and decisions made based on the evidence presented. This process allows us to collectively manage their return home and to assess and mitigate any threat they may pose during, and after, their repatriation.

[English]

The RCMP has a significant role to play throughout the process. For instance, we may deploy officers abroad and we may seek as well to take security measures in that regard.

Further, it's important to also note that not all returnees may continue to pose a threat. Some may now be disillusioned with the cause. In such cases, we will focus our investigative resources on those who continue to pose a threat, while leveraging countering radicalization to violence, or CRV, initiatives and our police of jurisdiction partners and community partners to work with those who may no longer be interested in violence.

Thank you for providing me an opportunity to speak to you today on this important subject. I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Assistant Commissioner Malizia.

Now we're going to go to questions.

We'll start with Mr. O'Toole, please.

• (1620)

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all our witnesses today. This is an important study, and we appreciate your contributions.

Assistant Commissioner, as well, I'd like to thank you and your team for the successful outcome in the Lindhout case. It's quite remarkable that someone could be brought to justice for that horrible crime, so congratulations.

Building upon that, you said specifically in your remarks that limits to international operations often depend upon the consent of the country you need to operate in. That would have been the case in the Lindhout case, but does that consent include both conducting investigations or working with their officials or militaries on rescue missions?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** The consent of the host country, if I can put it that way, is absolutely necessary for us to be able to deploy in-country and work with those other agencies.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** We've talked extensively about Prime Minister Trudeau's carte blanche approach to saying and urging other countries to not even negotiate in kidnapping situations, which is very different from the previous approach, which was just not commenting. Does the RCMP and/or the Canadian Armed Forces work collaboratively with military and paramilitary organizations with the consent of the host country?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** We certainly will work with our law enforcement counterparts in-country to do everything that we can to ensure the safe release of a Canadian hostage. I don't know if there's anything the other partner agencies would like to comment on.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** No, I'd prefer to stick with you, Assistant Commissioner.

Was your department involved in the Philippines kidnapping of Mr. Hall and Mr. Ridsdel and their tragic demise? Was your team involved in that hostage-taking situation?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** Yes, I can confirm my team was involved, but, as you can appreciate, we're not in a position to speak to specific cases here before the committee.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Certainly we know the outcome in that tragic case. Both lives were taken—

**A/Commr James Malizia:** Yes, it's very tragic.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** —by Abu Sayyaf, a terror organization. I've been informed there were proposals for a rescue mission that were turned down by the Prime Minister's Office around the same time he was saying there would be no discussions and no payments. Can you confirm that?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** Unfortunately, I can't comment on any specifics or operations on any kidnap case.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Fair enough. I won't put you under any additional pressure, but talking in generalities, leaving the Philippines case behind, your presentation suggested that the RCMP and other agencies could conduct investigations, even operations, with the consent of that country. Clearly that happened in the Lindhout case for the investigation and prosecution. Without naming specifics, have operational rescue missions been conducted with the consent of host countries?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** I can't speak to rescue missions, because that would fall outside of the remit of the RCMP.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Would that be under the Canadian Armed Forces?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** That would be more the Canadian Armed Forces.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Would the decision on whether to deploy such a rescue mission and the assets of the Canadian Armed Forces ultimately rest with the Minister of Public Safety, Foreign Affairs, or the Prime Minister?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** I can't confirm whether that would be through Global Affairs or with the Minister of National Defence or.... I can't comment.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** I don't want specifics on the case; I just want to know, if there were consent from the host countries to collaborate on a rescue mission, who the ultimate decision-maker would be within the Government of Canada to proceed.

**Mr. David Drake:** By principle, the senior decision-maker is the Prime Minister. That's the form of our government. Of course—again, I'm not talking about any particular case—these things are extremely complex, and there is a whole-of-government approach. They are not just a question of military, police, or foreign affairs. We work very much together on this, and there is a focus from all of us.

• (1625)

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** If I may, Mr. Drake, the Prime Minister's decision to deviate from past practice with respect to hostage situations has taken one tool out of the tool kit of whole-of-government approach. If there is no discussion of ransom payment or payments to third party facilitators, the issue of rescue missions becomes more important. Otherwise, families have no hope. The whole-of-government department would provide an opinion to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's Office on whether to proceed or not, based on the risk assessment.

Is that how it would work?

**Mr. David Drake:** That's right. We would provide a risk assessment to the Prime Minister—to any prime minister, of course.

I'm at a bit of a disadvantage here, because first of all, my job is not to defend the Prime Minister; my job is to testify to you as a public servant, and of course I am restricted on what I can say in terms of operational secrecy.

As an example that is more general and not connected to the case per se, let me talk about the Philippines, where large parts of the country are basically ungoverned or not under the control of the Philippine government. That is a major issue, and the consent of the government is not necessarily the issue.

What I can tell you, though, is that all options are always on the table. All options are on the table, and I don't think there is deviation on this from one government to another.

I'm trying to be helpful within the limits I have.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** I appreciate the position you're in. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. O'Toole.

We'll go to Mr. Levitt, please.

**Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.):** Thank you very much for your testimony. I think this question's going to be more for Ms. Jeffrey and Mr. Drake.

We heard from a previous witness, and it was echoed by some of the other witnesses, that the consular service fees collected from Canadians far outstrip the budget for consular services. I think the argument was being made that Canadians aren't getting their money's worth from the fees collected.

I've looked through the available documentation from the department and I don't see that reflected. Can you speak to the point and provide some clarity to the committee? Do you have recent figures that you can speak to? How do these things balance out?

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** Yes, I can speak to that.

Since 1995 there's been a consular service fee, as you know, collected as part of the passport fee. It's \$25 per passport. We're required by Treasury Board to report annually on the cost of consular service in relation to the fee, and the restriction, of course, is that the amount spent on services should never be less than the fee collected. If that were the case, we would have to look at the fee structure.

What we found, though, is that over the years the cost of delivering consular service actually exceeds significantly the amount that we collect. The balance of that is covered from the department's resources.

For example, in 2016-17 we collected \$105 million in fees; however, we spent \$131 million in delivering services. We foresee that trend continuing and that gap widening in the future.

There is no surplus in terms of what's been collected. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

**Mr. Michael Levitt:** Would you say there's been any difference in the way that's been handled or in the way that equation has balanced out between this government and the previous government's, or has this been more or less the operating structure related to fees since they started being collected?

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** The methodology has remained constant since the inception of the fees.

**Mr. Michael Levitt:** Thank you.

I want to switch topics a little bit and talk about Canadians on death row. An issue that's come up is what the government should be doing for them, how we treat that sort of a situation, and whether the government seeks clemency for Canadians on death row at all. We obviously don't have capital punishment in Canada, nor do we condone capital punishment.

Can you speak a little bit to what the government's policy is in terms of requesting clemency for Canadians abroad? Again, in the way the current government is dealing with the issue of seeking clemency, has there been any change or shift from the previous government's approach? Has there been any change in that policy?

• (1630)

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** Yes. In 2016, Minister Dion affirmed that Canada's policies do oppose the death penalty and that we will undertake consular interventions in all cases where Canadians are being subjected to the death penalty abroad. This includes active monitoring of cases, advocacy with local officials as appropriate, and consultations with legal representatives to ensure that Canadians' interests are represented on all those cases.

**Mr. Michael Levitt:** Mr. Drake, do you have anything to add on either of these points?



**Mr. David Drake:** It's not my area, so you have the right person here. Thank you.

**Mr. Michael Levitt:** Thank you.

I think I'll pass to one of my colleagues, if they would like to use the balance of the time.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** I would be happy to. Thank you, Mr. Levitt.

Assistant Commissioner Malizia, has your specialized unit ever engaged in negotiations around ransoms?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** The RCMP is structured to provide family liaison officer support, investigative liaison support, and ongoing advice through trained negotiators. The negotiators will work with family members who may have chosen to pursue a ransom request or who may be engaged by terrorists on the question of ransom. The RCMP will work with family members to help them navigate through that process.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj:** I see. You're saying that should a family choose to pay a ransom, the RCMP will help facilitate through this complicated process.

**A/Commr James Malizia:** We won't help them facilitate the payment of ransom, but what we will do is advise them on the risks associated.

For example, the person who is at the other end of the telephone may or may not be a legitimate third party interlocutor. If we're aware that this person is not, we will advise the family accordingly, because it could be a simple fraud. If there is anything we feel they could potentially say that would impact the safety of the hostage, then we'll advise the family accordingly and help them work through that.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj:** Just to have absolute clarity, because there is a legal prescription against providing ransoms to terrorist organizations—

**A/Commr James Malizia:** Yes.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj:** —and because our primary interest should and ought to be to save a Canadian's life, your specialized unit will help the families or other interlocutors in negotiations. After all, they were kidnapped for the purpose of a ransom. That's a critical component of negotiations. Your specialized unit will help facilitate in those negotiations.

**A/Commr James Malizia:** We will continue to work with family members who have been chosen as the main spokespersons in those situations to be able to navigate through the multiple conversations they would have with an individual or terrorist on the other side of the line.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj:** Concerns have been raised that there is an—

**The Chair:** Your time is up.

[Translation]

Ms. Laverdière, go ahead.

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

I want to thank the three of you for joining us today to testify and answer our questions.

I don't want to be abrupt, but I will ask my questions quickly, as I probably won't have the floor again.

When someone is kidnapped, how do you decide who will assume primary responsibility in the case—for example, Global Affairs Canada or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** The primary responsibility always belongs to Global Affairs Canada, which coordinates the process with all the other agencies. In the case of a kidnapping, the department determines what partners, or what other agencies, could help it, as appropriate.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Okay.

When kidnappings occur, do you collaborate with people on the ground. For example, if someone is kidnapped in Vietnam, do you work with local people other than those who are part of police or military forces, or intelligence services?

● (1635)

**Mr. David Drake:** That totally depends on the situation. There are a number of possible answers.

[English]

Truly, it really depends. So much depends on what we're actually facing. Are we facing a terrorist demand in which there are more than ransom issues at play? Do they want, for example, the freedom of captives or prisoners, or something like that? There are different things.

We quickly try to determine the essence of the issue. Of course, we will deal with any legitimate person on the spot as required, but it does require a very careful analysis. That's why we have specialized people on the consular side for the non-terrorist side and other specialized people who work very closely with them in my area who specialize in terrorist kidnappings, because they are different.

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Okay.

Thank you very much.

If you were unable to solve a kidnapping case and you decided to close the file, what kind of information do you give to the family so that it would not feel completely abandoned?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** The investigation follows its course, and the case remains open until it is solved. The role played by our liaison officers is important because they are the ones who stay in contact with families to keep them abreast of what is happening on the ground.

We learn lessons from every kidnapping case, as each of them is unique and cannot be compared to others. One of the things we have learned is that we have to communicate more with family members. We sometimes obtain from third parties or even other countries confidential information that we cannot disclose. We still have to find a way to communicate part of the content.

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** To what extent does the lack of diplomatic relations complicate your life, if only when it comes to dealing with current consular files or more difficult kidnapping cases?

[English]

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** I can answer that.

I think that with each case we look at all the potential avenues that are on the table. When we don't have a mission in the country, sometimes it's covered from a neighbouring country. Sometimes we work through our—

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** Pardon my interruption, but I'm talking about countries with which we have no diplomatic relations, and not about countries where we have not established a diplomatic mission.

[English]

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** In countries where we have closed our missions—for example, in North Korea or Iran—we work through protecting powers, through a like-minded state that's agreed to serve as our representative on the ground. We also work through many different avenues. For example, in relation to your previous question, when there are no local authorities on the ground or when we need to find alternative avenues of communication, we can work through international organizations or non-governmental organizations. As an example, the International Committee of the Red Cross is an effective advocate on behalf of those who are in detention.

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène Laverdière:** When victims of kidnapping are freed, are they and their family offered psychological support?

If so, who provides that support and in what form?

• (1640)

[English]

**Mr. David Drake:** It's a good question. In fact, that support is available at the provincial level. Of course, psychological services and so forth are provided in Canada at that level. What we do at the federal level is to connect up with the provincial level to make sure the right people are connected. That's our job, and we pay a lot of attention to that aspect.

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** I would just add that for all consular services, one aspect of consular modernization and in our approach that is different now from what it was 20 years ago is related to safe arrival back in Canada. When people return from traumatizing experiences abroad, whatever those might have been, it's very important when they arrive at an airport in Canada that they have appropriate links made with the local social services, such as welfare services, a shelter, or a network that they need. That's part of our handover and reception process back here at home.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Madame Laverdière.

Just to get some clarity for the question that Mr. Levitt asked, the number you're using is \$131 million for consular services. Does that include the RCMP's budget for the work they do, or is that separate? One of the things we're going to have to get our head around is that apparently there were 265,000 consular affairs cases opened this last fiscal year, or the previous fiscal year. That seems a lot of work for

\$131 million, but at the same time, is the uniqueness of what the RCMP does included in that number?

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** No, the RCMP's costs for those kinds of security investigations are accounted for separately. We're referring to the cost of what Global Affairs delivers through its platform abroad and its call centres here at headquarters, for example. The majority of the 278,000 cases are more routine in nature, such as 204,000 passport requests and 26,000 citizenship requests. There are about 6,400 a year of more complex cases of Canadians in distress, and those would occupy the more focused efforts of our team.

**The Chair:** Would it be possible, Deputy Commissioner, to get a number as to what it costs the RCMP for the work you do vis-à-vis the more critical hostage-taking and the like?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** Certainly, Mr. Chairman.

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

I'll go to Mr. Saini, please.

**Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Good afternoon, and thank you very much for being here today.

Some witnesses who appeared before the committee have raised concern about specific provisions in the Privacy Act that prevent the government from sharing information with lawyers who are trying to represent their clients. Can you comment on that, and is there any way that you feel we could maybe improve the legislation to allow the legal representatives the information they need?

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** I can speak to the privacy aspect. The Privacy Act obviously is designed to protect the interests of Canadians. We take our accountabilities very seriously under the act and we will not release without their consent information about the cases of individuals or their circumstances and how they're being served. That includes release to family members and can include in some cases release to their lawyers. The issue of the consent of the client is of overriding importance in the act, and that's what we respect.

**Mr. Raj Saini:** When you're talking about the client, you're talking about the person who has been kidnapped or the person who is not available or not in contact. I'm just trying to see whether there is a better way, where we can improve it, because we're talking about people who might not have the ability to provide consent, yet their family members are worried. We're getting into this legal limbo where you can't get the consent because the person has either been kidnapped or has been prevented from contacting someone. Do you know what I mean?

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** I'll let David respond to the kidnapping cases. For other kinds of consular cases, including people in detention and regular circumstances, we always try to obtain their consent, because in many cases they do not wish to have their cases discussed with members of their family or even with legal counsel, and that's something that can occur—

**Mr. Raj Saini:** How do you know that?

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** That's why we have to establish contact.

David, do you want to speak to how that's handled in cases when you aren't able to do so?

**Mr. David Drake:** Each case is different. It hasn't really been so much of a problem in the much smaller number of cases that we deal with. We do deal very carefully on a privacy basis with the families themselves.

As you say, when someone is kidnapped, we don't have a contact with them. We're not going to ask them in the family call whether they are going to concede to a legal nicety. However, we do make sure that we follow the privacy rules very carefully, and generally it works. We find ways of getting this done, but again, in my case we're talking about a much smaller number.

In your case, Heather, in most cases you were able to get some form of consent.

• (1645)

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** Yes. There are also provisions in the legislation whereby if the safety and security of the client, the Canadian who is at risk, is under imminent threat and their best interest is served by sharing information, then we do so. The act is structured for doing that, but the threshold is high in order to protect privacy.

**Mr. Raj Saini:** In cases in which Canadians have been accused of committing a crime, how do you interact with the local enforcement to make sure the evidence is based on fact? Obviously there are going to be certain legal jurisdictions with a more rigorous rule of law than others. How does that process work?

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** As consular officers operating in a foreign country, we don't have any ability to dictate or to implement the legal and prosecutorial processes that are under way.

We can advise Canadians on legal representation. We visit them to make sure their detention conditions are humane and in accordance with international standards. We advocate on their behalf. We can share knowledge about local contacts, circumstances, and different resources that might be of assistance to them, depending on their situation.

We're not an investigatory body, nor would we be in any position in a foreign jurisdiction to enter into the inner workings of an investigation.

**Mr. Raj Saini:** This question is to the assistant commissioner.

You mentioned in your opening remarks that you deal with a lot of organizations, whether they be the Five Eyes, Interpol, or Europol. My question is this. You're probably going to be dealing in states that are either broken, half broken, close to broken, fragile, or failed. In those specific countries, I don't think Interpol, Europol, or the Five Eyes will have much of a presence, or the ability to have a presence. How do you deal with that situation?

Mr. Drake mentioned that in the Philippines there were certain parts of the country that were not governable. If you go to even more extreme cases, where you have absolute failed states, how do you deal with that situation then?

I don't want you to give any kind of operational details, but to me it means you would have to deal with some local actors on the ground. You would have to determine and discern the legitimacy of

their actions and how legitimate they are in providing you with any assistance, in the absence of any kind of law enforcement or anything that's there.

**A/Commr James Malizia:** Certainly in countries or areas that have very little or no structure in place, it's extremely challenging and difficult.

We will always look to leverage either our own Canadian agencies—GAC or other agencies—to see if they have assets, or if not assets, if they have relationships. We'll do the same with our Five Eyes partners or other trusted allies to see whether they have ingress to a certain area or country, to see if there is something. However, effectively, if no one has any footprint or any ability to verify information and its credibility, then it does render our work extremely challenging.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Saini.

I'm going to go to Mr. Sidhu now, please.

**Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for your testimony today.

Ms. Jeffrey, you made a comment about reaching out to Canadians to register and get their insurance before they leave the country. I was wondering what kind of plan you have in mind. Is it going to be a mandatory...? Are you going to be reaching Canadians through the airlines, making sure the airlines take their information before they leave the country? Can you explore that, please?

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** Currently 220,000 Canadians are registered on our registration of Canadians abroad program. It's a voluntary program. Canadians provide details on where they're going to be, under strict privacy and security rules, so they're confident that their information isn't going to be misused by others and will only be used for consular purposes. We draw on that information to send out alerts when there are emergencies or security-related natural disaster circumstances in their destinations, to provide advice and establish contact and ensure their well-being. For example, this year about 650 emergency notifications went out.

However, we know that this number of 220,000 is a small percentage of the travelling public. In particular, many travellers go to destinations that they perceive as being low risk. Most Canadians are travelling to the United States. That is by far the foreign destination most people go to, and when people travel to the United States, they don't normally consider it useful to register on this kind of service. They expect their trip will be smooth.

Part of what we're doing is to reach out through social media channels. We have a Facebook and Twitter presence, which is growing quickly, and to incorporate them we also have new messaging apps to try to reach a greater percentage of the travelling public, in particular those groups and sectors that might not be as likely to research our websites or to actively seek out information. I think of young travellers in particular.

We also visit trade fairs and industry conferences, and we've undertaken a series of surveys of returning travelling Canadians at airports this year to get from them directly what kinds of sources they're more likely to use, the type of format and context they're looking for that would be of most use to them. We're working on a new, much more targeted communications strategy to try to reach out.

I'm not aware of any of our partners who have a mandatory registration. It would be pretty difficult, I think, to put in place, and I think that our strategy is to look at how we can ensure that more Canadians are aware of the potential value to them of having their coordinates on file with us so we can reach them quickly in case of emergency.

We've just come through one of the more intense Atlantic hurricane seasons we've seen, and that will help the travelling public's awareness this year. Our challenge is to make sure we can increase awareness without people having to go through those kinds of very difficult circumstances.

● (1650)

**Mr. Jati Sidhu:** I was looking for that word “mandatory”. Do you think we need that going forward? Would it help the consular services if we make it mandatory in the next five or 10 years?

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** I think that for us it's about finding ways to demonstrate the value to people of providing that information voluntarily.

**Mr. Jati Sidhu:** Okay.

I'm pretty sure my second question comes under your umbrella. It's about contingency plans for Canadian missions abroad to prepare for emergency services. There can be armed conflict, natural disasters, health epidemics, political destabilization. What kind of plans do we have at consular services?

**Ms. Heather Jeffrey:** All missions have their own emergency plans, of course, that deal with how they would respond to different forms of emergency situations in country. There are all the ones you enumerated.

There is an emergency coordinator at each mission. Those plans are developed and exercised in coordination with headquarters, where we have a 24-7 emergency watch and response centre that works with an incident command structure that can be stood up and exponentially increased through bringing in call centre staff—several hundred, for example, in the case of hurricanes—with rotating 24-hour service.

In each country, each mission's jurisdiction has a plan in place to cover the kinds of emergencies that are most likely to occur, and they differ from country to country. In some places it's seismic risks from earthquakes. In other places it's civil unrest, and in other places it might be another form of natural disaster. Those plans are exercised, and we have a really rigorous lessons-learned process from past events.

For example, we are already implementing and have implemented the lessons learned from the hurricanes, and that includes expanding the use of mobile platforms. We're seeing people branching out into new media and texting. People don't call as often. They want to communicate in other ways. That's just one example.

All the lessons from previous evacuations and responses, whether it was the Lebanon evacuation or others, get incorporated into the emergency plans, which are more finely honed each time. That discipline and emergency planning and response are very important, and we coordinate here in Ottawa with the Government Operations Centre to connect us to the broader range of services.

● (1655)

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

We'll go to Mr. Genuis, please.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

Mr. Malizia, since you raised the issue, there are a couple of questions I want to ask about returning Daesh fighters to Canada.

How many Daesh fighters have come back to Canada in the last two and a half years?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** I don't have any numbers to provide to the committee, but I believe a number was publicly stated by our colleagues from CSIS on the number of returnees to Canada some time ago.

That said, I think the issue of returnees requires the very close coordination that we've certainly undertaken with our partners.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** That's great. If you don't have a number here, I wonder if that's something you could provide to the committee in writing. I think the public and the committee would certainly be interested in knowing that.

I wonder if you can give the committee a sense of what proportion of those returnees in the last two and a half years have been charged.

**A/Commr James Malizia:** We've had a few charges, and I can get those details with respect to the number and types of charges for you as well. I don't have that information with me here.

We have not commented publicly on any numbers with respect to Daesh fighters returned here in Canada.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you very much.

I just think that in light of the testimony you gave about the process you follow in terms of identifying fighters and seeking to gather evidence for the sake of charging them, it would be helpful for the committee to know how many have returned in the last two and a half years, as well as how many of them have faced charges, and what kinds of charges. I totally understand that's not the primary focus of your testimony and that you maybe don't have those numbers, but I would appreciate your being able to provide those in writing to the committee at a later point, and we can share that information.

On a different vein, I'd like to—

**The Chair:** Before you ask that, Garnett, as I understand it, the officials have released this information. Roughly 180 individuals are currently fighting in conflict abroad, and about half of those are believed to be involved in some of the various conflicts. About 60 individuals have returned to Canada in recent years after fighting with terrorist groups abroad.

This comes from the RCMP.

**A/Commr James Malizia:** It comes from CSIS.

**The Chair:** It comes from CSIS, but was this during the testimony to the Senate?

I'm just trying, if it is public information—

**A/Commr James Malizia:** It's public. The information that was released by CSIS was made public a few years ago.

**The Chair:** Okay, so we'll make sure we make that available to Mr. Genuis.

**A/Commr James Malizia:** But I believe, as well, in the terrorism plan in the—

**Mr. David Drake:** If I may say so, I think there is an additional issue. Those are general figures, but if you are questioning us specifically about Daesh.... That's a figure that covers a wider number of people—not just Daesh fighters, but al Shabaab and others.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Fair enough. I think the committee would be very interested in whatever information you can provide in that respect.

Because of time, I want to move on.

In response to my colleague's question, you had used the phrase “all options are on the table”. I want to probe that a bit. There have been some public statements from the Prime Minister saying that under no circumstances will Canada pay ransom, or at least, from what I understood in his statements, engage in negotiations that envision the possibility of ransom. I understand the phrase “all options are on the table” to be a position from that distinct position.

If we can clarify, is the position of the Government of Canada at present that all options are on the table with respect to resolving these situations?

**Mr. David Drake:** My comments were specifically with regard to where the conversation was going at that point in terms of military intervention.

Of course, the government's position is clear about not paying ransom and not giving political compromises. That's very clear. In terms of how we deal with resolving the situation, all options are on the table, minus that, and that includes military operations if required. These are very serious matters that need to be discussed in great detail.

That was what I meant, and I apologize if I misled you.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** No problem. It is important for us to understand.

So essentially all options are on the table, minus the options that are not on the table. Is that fair?

● (1700)

**Mr. David Drake:** Minus what has been said and that has been made clear. Thank you.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay.

In the time I have remaining, I want to ask about some of the issues raised by the Joshua Boyle case. I appreciate that you don't want to comment on the particulars of an individual case, but when an individual travels to go hiking in Afghanistan, is this the sort of thing that might raise red flags or that you might approach in a different way than if the person were, let's say, not undertaking actions that immediately raise red flags?

**Mr. David Drake:** To start with, some of this is in retrospect. One need not comment on the individual case. In the end, we have to actually do our very best to get Canadians out. That becomes the issue. If there are other issues involved, obviously we're going to look at those as well in any case, and I understand you're not talking about a particular case.

First and foremost, we are focused on helping the Canadian, and then if there are other issues, we will deal with those as well. That's about as much as I can say. We are completely focused on trying to free our Canadian, and we will do whatever we can to do that. That's our job.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Malizia, the RCMP is also involved in the protection of public officials. Clearly, in the context of a consular situation, you would have had a variety of information on Mr. Boyle. He met with the Prime Minister on December 18 of last year. Hypothetically, if concerns had been flagged during that consular process or there were impending charges, I assume that information would have been shared with the Prime Minister's protective unit, which is also under your jurisdiction, right?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** Again, I won't be commenting on any specific case, but there are processes in place that allow us to verify individuals who are meeting with the Prime Minister. As you stated, in the interest of fulfilling our protective police mandate, those processes exist, and they are there for that reason.

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

We'll now go to Ms. Vandenbeld, please.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

I'd like to follow up on what my colleague, Mr. Wrzesnewskyj, was talking about in regard to families who may choose to pay ransoms.

You indicated that you would provide information in terms of whether it's legitimate or if there are security implications. Would you also advise the family that it is illegal and that they could face criminal charges if they were to pay ransoms, or, for instance, if somebody gave them the money for the ransom, that the person who gave them the money could face charges? Is that something you would say to the family?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** As we work with the families, we do of course explain the potential for criminal offences depending on what happens within a case. Let me say this: we're very clear to state that it is not and has never been in the public interest for us to pursue criminal charges—whether they be for terrorist financing or facilitation—with any family member, nor have we ever investigated or considered laying charges towards any family member.

The work we do is really in terms of ensuring that the family understands the risks associated with any types of negotiations and the impacts they are going to have on the safety of the hostage. Again, our primary focus is really the safety of the hostage.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Can you explain the concern around comfort letters?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** There is no concern around comfort letters.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Okay.

If we were to decriminalize the payment of ransoms by families, what ramifications would that have, first of all in terms of the larger picture, but also in terms of how you would engage those families?

• (1705)

**A/Commr James Malizia:** I don't think we would engage them any differently than we do now. We would continue to advise them as we do.

It would have to be a very particular case. You would have to have a situation in which a member of a family who is a spokesperson would decide to go above and beyond the negotiations for the release of the hostage and, let's say, would be willingly and knowingly supplying funds on a side track.

However, I really wouldn't see any difference in the approach.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** What about in terms of larger ramifications? If, let's say, this committee were to recommend decriminalizing in those limited kinds of cases, what would the larger ramifications be?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** I really don't see any major ramifications. At the end of the day, if there's an offence that's being committed outside of the actual negotiation for the release of a hostage, then we would pursue it, but that would be extremely rare, if it happened at all.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** That's very helpful. Thank you.

In terms of the information the RCMP or Global Affairs might have with regard to a case, if a family decides they wish to pursue a ransom payment or go outside of the RCMP, who owns that information? Does the family have a right to information about what's been done on the file or on the case with regard to contact and that kind of thing?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** I just want to make sure I understand your question.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** For instance, if a family were to look at an outside agency, to—

**A/Commr James Malizia:** Yes.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** —a third party agency to pay a ransom or insurance or something like that—or the employer, for that matter

—would they have the right to information that perhaps the RCMP had from working on the file regarding whatever kinds of engagements there had been up to that point?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** A private contractor would not have access to our criminal investigation holdings. What they would have access to is the same information the family has been privy to.

Let's remember that the family identifies a main negotiator. All of the information that has flowed between that family member and the hostage-takers will be, of course, disclosed by the family to this private contractor, but anything else that would be on a separate track, anything that would really deal with a criminal investigation, would not be released, no.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** In terms of the dual mandate, the primary mandate, as you said, is the safe return of the Canadian, but there's also a secondary mandate, which is to capture and prosecute the terrorists, the criminals. Is there ever a conflict between those two mandates?

**A/Commr James Malizia:** There is not a conflict between the two. It's a matter of ensuring there are parallel tracks that need to be paid attention to from the onset of the hostage-taking.

Right from day one we go to great lengths to ensure that the family is well aware that the primary focus in attention is the safe release of their loved ones, and then, at the same time, that if we do have an opportunity to lay charges and prosecute some of these individuals down the road, they would be potential witnesses.

There is an explanation with respect to the dual tracks, but they don't conflict with each other.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Okay.

How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You don't have any time, Madam Vandenberg, but thank you for asking.

Colleagues, that would probably take us to the end of our discussion over the last hour or so. We'll need about 20 minutes in camera to do a few other things.

I think this is an extremely important discussion. We're aware that the Senate has looked at this issue once and is apparently thinking of looking at it in a different way again, so there's a lot of interest in consular affairs.

I think that's because the world is becoming a much smaller place and there are a lot of people moving around. Obviously, Canadians who can afford to travel are travelling in larger numbers all the time, and I think the importance of the work you do is becoming more pronounced as we see what that means on the ground in particular parts of the world. For example, I spend a lot of time in South America, and that's becoming more of a destination as people see it as a place to go, but there are some issues that surround those kinds of regions and the countries there.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to spend some time with you.

I would like to have you answer one thing for the committee. There have been some witnesses who have talked about more formal processes and agreements with other states, other countries, vis-à-vis our abilities to go into those countries—and vice versa—to work with our agencies. They talked about looking at doing that in a more formal setting, versus an ad hoc approach whereby maybe we ask for permission to go in. I'd be very interested in knowing if consular affairs and Global Affairs are looking at other ways we can make it easier for you to do your job. I'd be interested in that kind of background information at some point.

Again, on behalf of the committee, thank you very much. I'm sure you'll look forward to our report, as Global Affairs and the RCMP always do. Thank you, and it's very much appreciated.

Colleagues, we'll take a short break and then go in camera. Thank you.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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