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**Wednesday, June 12, 2013**



**Chair**

**Mr. James Bezan**



## Standing Committee on National Defence

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• (1640)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC)):** I'll call this meeting to order. Sorry for the delay because of our in camera meeting dealing with committee business.

We are pleased to be able to have Lieutenant-General Stuart Beare joining us today to give us a briefing on our mission in Afghanistan. He is joined by Rear-Admiral Peter Ellis, who is the deputy commander, expeditionary, with the Canadian Joint Operations Command.

Also joining us is no stranger to committee. We have met with him down in Kingston at the base there. He is Major-General Jim Ferron, commander of the Canadian contribution to the training mission in Afghanistan.

General Beare, I understand that on behalf of the Canadian Joint Operations Command you will be making an opening statement. You have 10 minutes.

**Lieutenant-General Stuart Beare (Commander, Canadian Joint Operations Command, Department of National Defence):** Thank you, Chair.

[Translation]

Ladies and gentlemen members of the committee, I am happy to be here today to provide you with an update on Canada's contribution to the training mission in Afghanistan, known as Operation Attention.

[English]

In Afghanistan, the Canadian Armed Forces conducted the longest combat mission and civil military campaign in our military history since the Korean War. This was followed by the tremendous undertaking to close out the mission in Kandahar and transition to NATO's training and capacity-building mission centred around Kabul.

Under Operation Attention, we are supporting the NATO training mission to develop the Afghan national army, air force, special forces, and police in terms of their quantity, quality, and capacity, at the national level and across the country of Afghanistan, so that they are ready for transition to full security responsibility by the end of 2014. Significant progress has been and continues to be made.

When the NATO training mission in Afghanistan was established in 2009, the Afghan National Security Forces totalled some 190,000. Today, the combined army, air force, special forces, and Afghan

police are some 350,000 strong and are more capable and self-sufficient than ever.

In the span of three years, the 50-plus nation ISAF coalition and some 35 international NATO training mission partners have helped the Afghans to grow and professionalize their security forces by providing them with the necessary facilities, materiel, advisers, training, and expertise, and ultimately helping Afghans to build and sustain institutions capable of providing enduring security for Afghans by Afghans.

[Translation]

With its mandate set to expire in 2014—and as the Afghan forces develop ever greater institutional capacity, assuming the lead in more and more of their training institutions—the NATO training mission has already begun to reduce its footprint. Afghans are the dominant leaders in the defence and interior ministries, and security institutions, today.

In operations, Afghan forces have assumed lead security responsibility in the districts and provinces that are home to approximately 90% of the Afghan population. Throughout Afghanistan, Afghan forces are demonstrating that they are willing and increasingly able to operate autonomously and to conduct successful operations in this country of over 34 million people.

[English]

In Afghan training centres, 90% of instruction is conducted by professionally developed Afghan instructors. Located across the country, there are some 29 separate army training sites, 13 police training centres with roughly 20,579 soldiers, and some 6,000 police in training every single day.

Afghan trainers now conduct training on their own in areas such as leadership, logistics, field medicine, and intelligence. They have been leaders in the areas of recruiting and basic training for several years.

These are all positive signs that by the end of transition in 2014, the protection and security of Afghan people can be led, delivered, and sustained by Afghans for Afghans countrywide.

Challenges remain. Corruption undermines the rule of law and degrades the effectiveness of institutions. Canada and our international partners are continuously working with our Afghan partners to eliminate corruption by investing in systems and programs like electronic pay, literacy programs, and the like, which promote and enable transparency and accountability.

[Translation]

Literacy represents a significant challenge to the capability and effectiveness of Afghan security forces in operations and as institutions. For example, only some 15% of Afghans recruited to the army meet the international standard for literacy—grade three level.

Starting in 2010, the NATO training mission, and the ministries of defence and interior, imposed a mandatory literacy training and education program for all Afghan security forces trainees. To date, about 340,000 Afghan personnel have received some form of literacy training—grades one to three, or higher.

[English]

The biggest challenge of all for a coalition Afghan force, as well as for civilians, is the insurgency itself. Afghanistan remains a dangerous place. Afghanistan ISAF data show that insurgents cause roughly 85% to 95% of confirmed civilian casualties, both dead and wounded. Afghan forces are increasingly bearing the burden of protecting their own population from insurgents and are suffering significant numbers of killed and wounded in action themselves. While only a small percentage of insider threats are actually directed by the insurgency, insider attacks are a challenge for Afghan and NATO partners. NATO, Afghan security forces, the Canadian Armed Forces, and coalition partners are all taking steps to reduce the risks of such attacks, including improving vetting and screening of personnel, using counter-intelligence, and providing cultural awareness training for all parties.

This is the environment, both promising and challenging, in which the men and women of the Canadian Forces are working. Under Operation Attention there are currently about 900 Canadian Armed Forces men and women serving in Afghanistan. They serve as part of the NATO training mission command team and as advisors to Afghan ministerial officials, to military leaders, and to other staff in support functions. The greatest number are working as trainers, mentors, and advisors at various training and literacy centres and in other specialized schools.

● (1645)

Soon the final group of soldiers, largely from 1 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group in Land Force Western Area out west, including regular and reserve members from across Canada, will deploy as part of Operation Attention roto 3. These soldiers have the incredible task of carrying the mission forward and then transitioning the lead to Afghan partners, packing up our equipment and materiel, and finally returning home safely by the end of March 2014.

[Translation]

As the Afghan forces grow in capacity and increasingly take the lead for security and for their own development, the work of the NATO training mission and ISAF is changing, and the requirement for international forces is shrinking. The Canadian Armed Forces are proud of the role they have played in this process and will remain an important contributor to the training mission right up to the end of our mandate in March 2014.

Those of us who have been on multiple tours in Afghanistan have seen for ourselves that the progress is real. The challenges, of course, are also real.

[English]

We support the 350,000 brave men and women of the Afghan National Security Forces defending against those who have no positive vision of the future of their country, and we wholeheartedly want to see them succeed in taking over responsibility for their own security. We used to do it for them. Then we focused on doing it with them. Today, in institutions and in operations, it is being done and led by them.

Some 40,000 men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces will have served Canada and Canadians from within Afghanistan. Canada has made, and continues to make, a valued contribution to the NATO training mission. We do not and did not do it alone. We are incredibly indebted to our international partners, to the civilians we work with—including police, development workers, and diplomats—to our families, who enable us and share in the sacrifice of hard missions and long absences, to the home towns that support us, and to all Canadians who recognize our men and women and their selfless service to Canada and Canadians. Their support, as well as yours, is so important to us.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, General, We appreciate those last comments.

I can tell you that Canadians and parliamentarians really appreciate everything those 40,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces have done in carrying out their duties and responsibilities and bringing a better life for everybody in Afghanistan. I know that all of our military leadership has done a great job of putting people in position and keeping them as safe as possible in doing what they have had to do to make a better Afghanistan.

We're going to do five-minute rounds in the interest of time, knowing that we could be facing bells at the top of the hour.

Mr. Harris, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try to be brief, because I want to defer to Mr. Chisholm for a question.

I noted, gentlemen, that the forces are doing everything they can in terms of the training mission; however, we see from the International Crisis Group a less optimistic forecast of success. They talk about how attrition rates in the Afghan army continue to be high and literacy levels are extremely low. As well, they have serious concerns about operational capabilities. But we do carry on with our mission. You pointed out that it is to end specifically on March 31, 2014, and that during this current rotation coming up, the forces will begin a gradual drawdown of personnel.

Can you confirm that you have no other instructions, then, to complete that end date of March 31, 2014? I ask that because 10 days ago the President of the United States and Anders Fogh Rasmussen of NATO were talking about a post-combat training mission for NATO and about having a summit next year to discuss contributions to that. Have you been given any indication that there would be a contribution by Canada to that as part of this summit, or is it very clear that we are done, even in the face of comments by Obama that there's a requirement for burden-sharing on the part of all NATO members?

•(1650)

**LGen Stuart Beare:** The instructions to us are very clear that, as a Canadian contribution, there will be no further Canadian Forces efforts in Afghanistan post March 31, 2014. However, that doesn't signal the end of the international effort to continue to develop the Afghan National Security Forces and invest in their future, nor does it signal the end of the Government of Canada's contribution to the security and stability of Afghanistan through other means, including their contributions to resource security forces beyond 2014 and the ongoing efforts to the embassy and the development of organizations within that footprint.

I can't confirm. We have no instruction for anything beyond March 2014.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Thank you.

Given that a while ago the estimated cost of the earlier withdrawal of the combat troops and forces was close to a billion dollars, has there been an amount established as to what it costs to get out with the combat equipment and the troops? What is the estimated cost of the training mission from here to the end of March 2014?

**LGen Stuart Beare:** I can certainly declare that the costs of the entire mission of Operation Attention were accounted for in the initial planning for Operation Attention. The entry, the conduct, and the determination of the operation were all accounted for in the submission to the conduct of Operation ATTENTION. That number is roughly around \$520 million for the entire mission, including the full recovery of our people and materiel.

We will have concluded the mission by the end of March 2014 well under that number.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I will defer to Mr. Chisholm.

**The Chair:** Mr. Chisholm, you have a minute and a half.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

General, thank you very much for the work you're doing, and thanks to the men and women of the Canadian Forces who have been in Afghanistan and continue to be there. We certainly all look forward to a speedy and successful withdrawal at the end of 2014.

I have a couple of questions. I want to ask you what kind of military equipment, if any, Canada is giving to Afghanistan and what your expectations are in terms of how long that equipment is going to last and whether the Afghans are going to be able to maintain it. That's one question.

I want to ask you another one. Are the Afghans paying the salaries of their own personnel or is this cost still being covered by ISAF? If

it is ISAF, when do you believe the ANSF will be covering their own costs?

One final question: the immigration program set up to help Afghan translators ended with the combat mission last year. Do Canada and ISAF have any plans to provide protection for translators after our departure?

Again, thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Of course there are only 30 seconds left.

I'd ask, General, that you be as brief as possible.

**LGen Stuart Beare:** The short answer is that we're not providing any equipment through the auspices of Operation Attention. That would have concluded with our operations down south.

The equipping of the Afghan National Security Forces—and General Ferron could be more specific about how they're being equipped—is in an order that is sustainable through the NATO effort, resourced in the main by United States contributions.

More importantly, it's not equipment that we're providing people; it's human capital that we're investing in, individually, collectively, and culturally. That has been the main effort of this training investment, and it's delivering huge dividends.

In terms of salaries, I'll defer to General Ferron, and perhaps he could pick that up in the future.

There's an international fund regulated by our international partners to enable the Government of Afghanistan to pay for its security forces. Different nations have different contributions to those funds, both for army and police. The sustained effort that we're contributing to in terms of the ANSF resourcing beyond 2014 is based on the Government of Canada direction, and we'll contribute to those funds.

•(1655)

**The Chair:** General Ferron, do you need to make a short intervention at all?

**Major-General Jim Ferron (Commander, Canadian Contribution, Training Mission Afghanistan, Department of National Defence):** On the issue regarding pay, the Afghans are expected to pay \$500 million a year to their own security as of 2018, their contribution to the Afghan Security Forces Fund. Until then, there are the international donations through the ASFF, the Afghan Security Forces Fund.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mrs. Gallant, you have the floor.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Chairman, I will be sharing my time with Mr. Chisu.

During the spring conference of the NATO Parliamentary Association this year, we received briefings on the combat operations and the state on the ground. There was not insignificant concern amongst parliamentarians as to whether or not the army is going to be ready to take over when it comes time.

In this briefing we were told that the militaries of emerging democracies fail when the officers become politicized. Typically, the government fears a coup and then infiltrates the officer corps.

From what your soldiers on the ground are relaying back to you, is there any indication that the police in Afghanistan are being politicized?

**LGen Stuart Beare:** I'm going to defer to the man who just came home from a year in the mission to respond to that. I can certainly speak from my own experience, but I'll let him respond to that with his more recent experience.

Jim.

**MGen Jim Ferron:** Thank you very much for that question. It's always a point of discussion.

I would say that at the ministerial level, the two ministers themselves—Minister Patang, the Minister of Interior, and Minister of Defense Mohammadi—are politicized. Very clearly, they are political animals and they are running their own ministries accordingly.

However, in the police and the soldiers on the ground, I did not see what I would define as a politicization of their actions.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** You have three minutes.

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC):** General, first of all, I thank you for your testimony. I must mention that it was an honour to serve under your command in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Banja Luka in 2004.

I myself served in Afghanistan in Role 3 in 2007, in combat. Also, you had several senior deployments in Afghanistan. I cherish here today your effort to have as an end state for the civilian population a safe and secure environment for the future development of democracy.

After 10 years of our Canadian Armed Forces being in Afghanistan, what is the sentiment or general feeling coming from Afghans regarding the training mission? Do civilians have faith in their defence forces to uphold the law and to fight, if necessary, to defend their newly democratic state?

**LGen Stuart Beare:** I'll refer to General Ferron again, but I would say in simple terms that “yes, we can” is the first sentiment among Afghans because they're seeing that they can serve and defend themselves.

“Yes, we are”—they're actually seeing that, and the dominant delivery of the security effect in Afghanistan today is by uniformed Afghan army, police, and special forces.

“Yes, we will”—“will” is really the long game, to persist in the delivery of that development and the sustainment of that security capability, mindful of all the other natural needs and ambitions of the citizens of Afghanistan for stability, education, and economics that work for them, which are still aspirations that are yet to be fully realized.

So I'd say in simple terms that's what I perceive and what I perceived when I was in the country serving there myself.

Jim.

**MGen Jim Ferron:** It's very interesting, the word “confidence”. The leadership in Afghanistan right now views the development of

confidence in the Afghan National Security Forces as their centre of gravity, as their main effort.

In our work with the Afghans, in particular, in my experience, with the soldiers and the policemen and airmen who are working there, they're looking beyond the number of the insurgency who are killed on a daily basis. They are now looking at the comparison in the last 11 or 12 years, in terms of the extraordinary accomplishments, in terms of education and little girls going to school. We see that right across the country. I was fortunate enough to be able to travel across the country.

We see an economy that is beginning to flourish, not just in Kabul or in Mazar-e Sharif, but in other areas.

In their communications network there are 75 TV stations now, over 150 radio stations, and four Internet providers, two of them offering service that matches or is better than what I get at home.

When you look at the democratically elected government versus what was there 11 years ago, all of which is supported by 350,000-odd trained policemen and military, there is a burgeoning and a growing confidence in the Afghan people about their prosperity and their hope for a better future.

• (1700)

**The Chair:** Thank you. Your time has expired.

Mr. McKay, the last round of questions is to you.

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

Thank you to all three of you for coming.

General Beare, what is mission success?

**LGen Stuart Beare:** For Canada it is that our contribution has delivered the outcomes to which we have committed ourselves. Those outcomes, at the end of March 2014, in military terms, are the successful development within the time and the resources we have had to contribute to the overall capacity build of the Afghan security forces in the quantity, quality, and capacities that I referred to earlier.

**Hon. John McKay:** That sounds a little vague.

**LGen Stuart Beare:** Number two is that we will have transitioned the leadership of the functions we have been performing to the Afghans themselves.

Number three is that we will have taken care of our own people and for their own protection to make sure they get home safe and sound.

That will define mission success for the men and women we're sending into operations.

Mission success for the international community effort and the Afghans themselves will be the demonstrated transition of security to Afghan authorities over the course of what started two years ago through to the end of 2014, and the sustained leadership of Afghans in that particular role.

**Hon. John McKay:** We can clearly measure March 2014 as a leaving date, getting everybody home safe and sound, and your equipment, etc. That's an easy measurement. But the first two are exceedingly vague.

Do you have a metric established as to when you will say we have successfully transitioned the leadership, for instance?

**LGen Stuart Beare:** We've done that already.

General Ferron can certainly speak to some transitions that have already gone on, but I'll just speak to it in terms of the principle or the image that puts merit to the efforts we've taken and the sacrifices we've made through the lens of transition in 2011 in Panjwai district.

At the end of 2011, when General Milner and task force Afghanistan transitioned security in that district, they didn't transition it to an American force who was leading on the security front. They transitioned it to an Afghan brigade commander and his entire brigade. They had not even existed as a PowerPoint slide four years earlier, but they came into being and became real in terms of people, capability, and capacity to deliver for their own security in that district.

It's a powerful image to leave behind something better than when you got it, and in the hands of those who live there and own it.

**Hon. John McKay:** You haven't set it out in terms of "By 2013 we want to have this done, and by 2014 we want to have that done", or are there benchmarks by which you measure your success on your metric?

**LGen Stuart Beare:** Yes, sir. Thank you for that question.

The answer is, yes, it is the NATO measure and it is the NATO benchmark through the ISAF machinery within which we are delivering this effect. Canada on its own has not delivered a uniquely Canadian effect in this mission. Canada with its partners has delivered a combined effect of multinationals in this mission.

**Hon. John McKay:** Your metric of success is therefore the international metric of success rather than the Canadian metric of success. So the only sure thing with respect to the Canadian metric of success is that we're leaving March 14.

**LGen Stuart Beare:** No, I would say the measure of success is that we'll deliver our part of the transitions, which I'll ask General Ferron to speak to, and it will have made sense for the level of effort

we've invested in terms of the real capacity of the Afghans to deliver things that we used to do for them.

Jim.

**MGen Jim Ferron:** There are four areas that we have led on: the Kabul military training centre, the consolidated fielding centre, the regional military training centre in the north, in Mazar-e-Sharif, and the signals school. All of them have reached a capability milestone level one bravo, which in NATO terms means they are able to execute independent operations.

So from purely a Canadian perspective, it was mission success in those four areas in which we were entrusted with a leadership role.

●(1705)

**The Chair:** I'm going to have to intercede here. The bells are ringing.

You guys know the drill. Standing Order 115(5) says that if we want to continue to sit, I need consent.

Do we have consent?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** I have no consent, so we'll have to suspend.

It's a half-hour bell, which will take us beyond our time when we return. I'll thus be adjourning the meeting.

Before I do, I want to thank the leadership from Canadian Joint Operations Command and the training mission from Afghanistan: Lieutenant-General Stuart Beare, Major-General Jim Ferron, and Rear-Admiral Peter Ellis.

I want to thank all three of you for taking time out of your very hectic schedules to appear before committee. I wish we could have had more time, but we do appreciate your getting us up to date with your briefing today.

Thank you very much.

We're adjourned.

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