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Chair

Mr. Daryl Kramp

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC)): This is meeting number 32 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Today, as a result of a motion presented, this meeting is dedicated to discussing threats posed to Canada's national security by individuals returning to Canada from having been involved with terrorist entities abroad, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL. We have our witnesses gathered here today.

We thank you very much for attending.

Of course, we have with us the Honourable Steven Blaney, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. We also have, from the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, the deputy minister, Mr. François Guimont. From the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, we have Mr. Michel Coulombe, director. And from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Commissioner Bob Paulson.

Welcome, gentlemen. We certainly do appreciate your coming here today. As we do know, this is of global interest and, of course, of serious Canadian interest. We thank you for your appearance today.

Minister Blaney, I believe you have an opening statement.

You're on, sir.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I would like to thank the members of the committee for giving me the opportunity to speak about the important issue of terrorism.

[English]

Canada faces serious and—

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Easter.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Chair, it continues to puzzle me why a minister comes before a committee, has the full resources of the department, and does not come with a translated, prepared statement. He is going to be reading from notes. It benefits us as a committee to have that statement in front of us, so I'm asking, through you, Mr. Chair, if the minister has a statement that we could follow.

The Chair: I would just ask the minister, does he have a statement that could be translated, that we could prepare? If not, we will proceed today.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, I will give my statement in both official languages and we have excellent interpreters. Naturally, I might stray from the prepared text. I do not have a document to distribute to the committee members.

However, this afternoon, I would like to table, in both official languages, the 2014 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada, in which you will find the main elements of the presentation that I will give to the committee in both official languages. As a Quebecker and a Canadian, I am extremely proud to speak to you in French in this place on an issue of such importance.

[English]

The Chair: Fine. Thank you very much.

Thank you for the interjection, Mr. Easter.

You now have the floor to proceed, Mr. Blaney.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you.

Canada faces serious and significant threats associated with violent extremism.

[Translation]

In recent months, the situation in Iraq has continued to deteriorate. The militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant—which I will be referring to as the Islamic State this afternoon—have been carrying out acts of indescribable violence throughout the country.

The world is horrified by the brutality of this group of terrorists and its followers. Conflicts such as those raging in Syria and Iraq are extremely troubling, not just because of their violence, but also because of the instability they create in the region.

That is why we are taking action. Yesterday, on a confidence vote, our Parliament decided to approve humanitarian aid and a six-month combat mission, and to join 60 countries in the fight against terrorism.

[English]

We have spent a significant amount of time thinking about the barbaric atrocities committed by ISIL abroad. Today, I want and would like to focus on the threat they pose to Canadians in our streets and communities here in Canada.

[Translation]

Canada, like other countries, including some of our closest allies, has seen a small but notable number of its citizens travel abroad in order to take part in terrorist activities. The conflict in Syria in particular is attracting an increasing number of people. Some are joining terrorist groups, including the Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra, a group with ties to al Qaeda.

The Government of Canada is aware of at least 130 individuals with ties to Canada who are suspected of participating in terrorist activities such as training and fundraising for terrorist purposes, and also planning and carrying out terrorist operations.

[English]

Some have died. Some remain abroad. We know of about 80 who have returned to Canada.

Let me be clear that these individuals posing a threat to our security at home have violated Canadian law, as passed by this Parliament in the Combating Terrorism Act. These dangerous individuals, some skilled and desiring to commit terrorist activity, pose a serious threat to law-abiding Canadians. I can confirm for Canadians that, as we speak, the RCMP is investigating these individuals and will seek to put them behind bars where they belong.

We are taking concrete action to protect the safety and security of Canadians.

[Translation]

Canada's counterterrorism strategy continues to be the basis for a safer and more resilient Canada. The strategy has four key elements—prevent, detect, deny and respond—and guides our response to extremism.

• (1535)

[English]

Canadian security agencies are successful at uncovering and disrupting terrorist plots that would have had devastating consequences had they succeeded. Just last year, our national security agencies dealt with a plot to attack a passenger train en route from New York to Toronto and a plot to detonate a series of improvised explosive devices at the B.C. legislature during Canada Day celebrations.

[Translation]

I would like to state that, in this case, one of the suspects was studying engineering at Laval University, in Quebec City. He is now facing criminal charges.

[English]

The gravity of the loss of life that would have occurred had these hateful plans come to fruition should give us all pause as legislators and is a dire call for an appropriate response to the threat. That is why our government passed critical new tools for our security agencies to deal with those who hate our freedom and seek to cause us harm.

[Translation]

Under the Combating Terrorism Act, which went into effect in May 2013, leaving or attempting to leave Canada to participate in terrorist activities is now a criminal offence.

[English]

It gives our national security agencies new powers to investigate and prosecute terrorist travel-planning and to stop potential extremist travellers before they leave the country. We passed the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act to ensure that those who take up arms against the Canadian Armed Forces or those who are convicted of engaging in terrorist activities can no longer remain Canadian citizens.

[Translation]

The RCMP is heading an extremist travellers tactical group, which includes a number of departments and key national security organizations. The group will examine cases of extremist travellers and intervene in the most serious and urgent cases.

I would like to congratulate the RCMP for having recently charged Hasibullah Yusufzai, a British Columbia resident, with joining a terrorist organization. That is the first time charges have been laid under the Combating Terrorism Act. Those charges were laid in July of this year.

[English]

We recently have listed Jabhat al-Nusra as a terrorist entity, which means that it is a criminal offence to provide any sort of assistance or support to the group, either at home or abroad. Recently, our Conservative government announced the listing of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant—we call them the Islamic State—as a terrorist organization, in all its forms and identities, making it clear that joining or attempting to join this despicable group is a terrorist offence. Those who associate with this barbaric group should face the full extent of Canadian law.

As the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons this past Friday, in the coming weeks, we will bring forward additional measures to strengthen the ability of our security services, law enforcement, and national security organizations to monitor terrorists and those Canadians who have literally been brainwashed to take part in this evil cause.

Be assured, Mr. Chair, that they will face the full force of the law.

[Translation]

Of course, we continue to work with the United States and other countries in order to protect our border.

Some of the other methods we are using to counter terrorist threats include the Passenger Protect Program, which identifies individuals who may pose a threat to aviation security. Under the program, an individual may be prevented from boarding an aircraft. We can even revoke passports on national security grounds.

[English]

Mr. Chair, protecting Canadians from violent, barbaric terrorists who seek to harm us and our way of life is the first duty of any government. It is a responsibility that I know you take very seriously. It is a responsibility that I take very, very seriously.

We must take a strong stand, in no uncertain terms.

● (1540)

[Translation]

Barbarity is not a Canadian value and will never ever be one.

[English]

The Islamic State is a barbaric group of terrorists who despise us and our way of life. We will take any action necessary to keep Canadians safe from this evil entity.

That said, our action extends beyond enforcement. The first pillar of our counterterrorism strategy is prevention. Preventing violent extremism is an essential element of our response, and that is why some of the important work is being done in this regard as we speak. These events have helped us establish relationships and allow us to assure cultural communities that we are working with them to ensure that our youth do not become radicalized and that those seeking to radicalize them are stopped.

That's what the Kanishka project is all about. We are funding research that is studying the participation of western extremist travellers in the conflict in Syria: how they communicate and how they travel. This research will give us the building blocks that we can use to develop better strategies to stop radicalization before it ever manifests itself.

The most effective response to criminal activity of any kind, including violent extremism, is found in the partnerships that police officers build with the communities they serve.

[Translation]

These partnerships require police officers who are well informed, aware of the problems and who have a deep understanding of the dynamics on the ground, which allows them to recognize the warning signs and intervene before a crime takes place.

[English]

The RCMP counterterrorism information officer initiative provides front-line police officers and other first responders with essential terrorism awareness training. These counterterrorism officers are equipped both to inform and to educate others within their agencies so they can identify national security threats and violent extremist behaviour at the earliest possible stage.

More than 1,700 candidates have participated in the program since its establishment five years ago. In the last year alone, more than 325 people have been trained by the counterterrorism team.

How do we stop people who are radicalized but have not yet engaged in terrorist activity? Early intervention is key to a preventive approach to counter violent extremism. RCMP members are working with local agencies and community resources to develop intervention programming on violent extremists that is aimed primarily at young people at the periphery of violent extremist activity.

[Translation]

To conclude, Mr. Chair, I would like to reiterate how important it is that we continue to detect, prevent and thwart plots in our country as well as dissuade anyone who might be tempted to take such action or engage in terrorism or extremism.

[English]

Despite the successes, despite the unwavering vigilance of our intelligence and enforcement agencies, and despite the tremendous support that we receive from our communities, we remain acutely aware of this ongoing threat. We can never take the safety and security of our citizens for granted.

Addressing terrorism, addressing the related problems of radicalization to violence and extremist travel, requires the concerted effort of many partners. Together we must remain vigilant in this global fight and adapt to the changing nature of its threat. To this end, our government will not hesitate to continue to provide law enforcement with the tools they need to prevent further radicalization in this country and to arrest those who would seek to do us harm, as we already have.

As members of this very important committee, I count on your support to pass swiftly those important measures when tabled. I encourage members of all parties to put past stances behind them and to support our government's efforts to keep Canadians safe from barbaric organizations like the Islamic State and other terrorist entities here in Canada.

● (1545)

[Translation]

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

Are there any other opening comments? We're fine?

Thank you very much.

We will now go our rounds of questioning. The first round will be for seven minutes. We will start with the parliamentary secretary.

Ms. James, you have the floor.

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the committee, Minister, and other guests.

I remember when the Toronto 18 got mentioned in the news some time ago. I have to tell you, I was probably not alone in being shocked that this type of activity was going on here in Canada, with more and more information coming out about people who are travelling overseas to engage in terrorism and join ISIL and other groups. We've also heard stories in recent news about Australia and Britain being able to thwart attacks that were going happen in their country. Yet right now in Canada...and probably some members in the House believe that Canadians will be immune from terrorism and can somehow escape terrorism on Canadian soil if we hide in the darkest corners of Canada with the lights out.

Minister, can you please explain your opinion on this, on why that type of ideology is in fact dangerous and that we could become complacent and not react to the real threat it poses to all of us here in Canada?

Hon. Steven Blaney: I thank the parliamentary secretary for her question.

You are right, terrorism is a threat. This is a reality for our national security and law enforcement agencies. I was given the opportunity to meet with students in Bellechasse, and this afternoon I thought in particular about a young Quebecker, Annemarie Desloges, who was doing her shopping in Nairobi, Kenya, a little more than a year ago when she fell victim to a terrorist attack. So did a fellow Canadian from British Columbia. It happened in Nairobi, Kenya. It could also happen here.

We were successful, as I mentioned in my speech, in deterring two terrorist plots, one in Victoria, B.C., and the other one that planned to derail a train between Toronto and New York. Another one that we were successful in deterring was the Toronto 18. Now the Combating Terrorism Act legislation that we passed is enabling all of our law enforcement authorities to intervene before an attack occurs. That's how charges were laid against some terrorists.

Let me quote what a judge said about a terrorist who was sentenced to 10 years in jail for planning to join the Islamic jihadist group in Somalia. Ontario Superior Court Justice Deena Baltman said that he was the first Canadian to be convicted for attempting to join an overseas terrorist group, and as such required a sentence that might deter others: "Terrorists are the worst kinds of cowards because they deliberately target innocent members of the public who are not prepared for combat."

We have to send a strong signal, and she did it as a judge. As politicians, we have to do everything in our power and within the scope of the law and our rights to empower our law enforcement agencies so they are able to do their job, which is to protect us. That's our duty as politicians, from all parties, to support those reasonable measures that are put forward to increase our capability, and especially to track those travelling citizens who are willing to commit terrorist acts, whether here or abroad. The judge went on to add, "And despite being the recipient of a privileged Western education, with its emphasis on free thought, [this individual] aspired to join a terrorist group that seeks to annihilate those who think differently."

We cannot negotiate with those who want to cut off our heads. We are determined and resolved to tackle terrorism. That's why we need to move on with our strategy and bring forward tools that are needed by our law enforcement and national security community to tackle terrorism.

• (1550)

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you, Minister.

In your opening remarks you referred to ISIL, and used the term "barbaric atrocities". Also in your remarks you indicated that you had listed ISIL as a terrorist entity. Of course, we all know this, but how does listing ISIL as a terrorist entity impact the funding and the recruitment of individuals here in Canada?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you for your question.

As you know, as a country, like many western countries, we are moving forward with the listing of terrorist entities. The reason we are doing that is multi-purpose. Here I may let Mr. Coulombe comment.

The first one is clearly to deter and cut any source of funding, because some of those terrorist entities were using supposedly noble causes to channel funding to be used for terrorism purposes. We need to inform Canadians that those entities are terrorist, that they don't share Canadian values, and that they are willing to use violence to attain their means. So the listing of terrorist entities is cutting their funding and enabling our law enforcement to keep track of those involved in those activities. It also makes it an illegal and criminal offence to be involved in any way with those organizations.

That's why we've lately listed the Islamic State. They were coming somewhat out of another entity that was already listed, but we felt the need, since they were distinct, to list them separately. We also listed other entities.

Wherever there are terrorist entities, we are tracking them. In order to protect Canadians, we are always monitoring the groups that could represent a threat.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

Chair, can I ask how many more minutes I have?

The Chair: You are now finished. Thank you very kindly.

Now we will go to Mr. Scott, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, Minister, Commissioner, and Director.

Minister, I was wondering if I could go straight to what I see as the heart of the matter, but first of all, I should say that I'm really pleased that the government continues to emphasize the first step in the resilience report from 2011, which is prevention. It's not just about people coming back and then the criminal law taking over. Prevention would also kick in even when they're returning, as I would hope we would all agree.

My question is on where the rubber hits the road, which is with communities and particularly families. We all read in the newspapers often enough or see in the news that a parent says, "I didn't know", but just as often they say they knew, that they had started to see some signs. They say, "He was hanging out with the wrong people, becoming dogmatic in his views, he disappeared, then he did this, and I didn't know what to do."

In a recent article about the Edmonton Somali community, Mahamad Accord, the head of the Canadian Somali Congress of Western Canada, simply has this advice: "If you suspect your children are going to be recruited...go to the authorities. Save your child while you can."

My question, Minister—and with any assistance from your colleagues—is simply this: what exactly is triggered if a parent now goes to the authorities with these kinds of worries and suspicions? Do we have a proper system in place to know what to do? What do we do?

• (1555)

Hon. Steven Blaney: I thank you for your question.

There is a multi-level approach to prevention. At the political level, we have established a cross-cultural round table where we meet with leaders of communities. As I have indicated, we have our Kanishka program, which is looking at the ways in which recruiters are functioning. How do they recruit? How do they communicate? Also, how are they making use of social media? That's critical. It's very important.

Also, there's the outreach program of the RCMP. Maybe the commissioner can talk about it.

But I can tell you what is critical. We have seen successful operations that were rightly initiated by parents who were concerned by the behaviour of some individuals getting radicalized. I will turn to Commissioner Paulson, who has an important record on reaching out. You will see that the numbers are quite telling.

Commissioner Bob Paulson (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Minister.

I guess what I would say to your question is that there are two challenges in that fact pattern you're putting forward of a parent trying to reach out to communities to engage with and intercede on behalf of their family member.

The first challenge is getting family members to act early enough. The second challenge is getting our front-line officers—and it's not just the RCMP, but all of our partner police agencies across this country—to be able to recognize the importance of what's being referred to them and to engage the right sorts of resources in the communities.

That's what our counterterrorism information officer program does. It inserts in many front-line police forces and offices informed officers who know how to manage that. In the pre-criminal space, before we're into a criminal investigation, there is an opportunity for all sorts of people to come in and bring their expertise to bear.

The other thing we do, once we have a sense that the individual is heading down that path, is try to sort of hub the resources that are available from our partner agencies and from government and local government, and intervene with the family, so that we are able to act and prevent prior to the criminal investigation being launched.

Mr. Craig Scott: Thank you very much. I think that gets me on the right road for understanding that there at least is some kind of system in place, one that doesn't simply, say, create a dilemma for parents. I know that some parents would say that if they report, the state of the law is such that maybe their child will be arrested and charged. As long as the message gets out that in fact the police themselves are organized to approach it differently, in the way you've described, I think we're partway to an effective response. That's really good to hear.

Minister, we've heard a lot about Security Council Resolution 2178 of September 24, a very comprehensive resolution that details a whole bunch of response measures that all states are called upon to do with respect to radicalization mostly, and the foreign fighter phenomenon. I was wondering if I could ask you about it. My question is simple. Is new legislation being prepared or going to be prepared as a consequence of Security Council Resolution 2178?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Legislation is being prepared to adjust to the reality of the terrorist threat we are facing in this country, and this more broadly would take into account the resolution. So indirectly it does link to those resolutions.

Mr. Craig Scott: One reason I'm asking is that the resolution is quite broad, so I can imagine there are some features of our legal system that may not exactly respond to the resolution. A second direct question—I have two together actually—is whether Canada is considering or we will need to implement an exit control system as a consequence of the resolution.

Hon. Steven Blaney: No.

Mr. Craig Scott: Secondly, in testimony before the Senate on the combatting terrorism bill, Bill S-7, the former director of CSIS, I believe, testified that cabinet had before it some proposals to approach the no-fly list differently and to expand the list. I'm wondering whether or not, partly as a consequence of the Security Council resolution or in general, any decision has been taken on using no-fly lists differently from how they've been used in the past.

• (1600)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Let me be very clear that we are really not contemplating exit controls. We would leave that to a totalitarian state.

What we are contemplating—and this is part of the agreement between President Obama and Prime Minister Harper—is information exchange. As you know, we already have this in place for foreign nationals, and it is working very well. We are committed to expanding it as is clearly stated in the “beyond the border” plan. This is part of the tool we can provide our law enforcement agencies to have more information on the influx of people, especially those representing a threat.

So we are indeed working on information sharing. You may remember last week secretary Jeh Johnson was here and he reiterated his will to see us working in that direction. We are committed, and we are committed to working with other European countries as well in sharing information, basically the information you find on a passport, which is already shared with the country where you are going. This is something we are working on.

The Chair: Fine.

Thank you very much, Minister.

Now we will go to Mr. Norlock, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and through you I'd like to thank the witnesses for attending today.

My questions will be mainly for Commissioner Paulson.

One issue Canadians look at, which in the past has caused problems with regard to investigations, etc., is cross-jurisdictional cooperation and information sharing. I wonder if you could share with us the nature of your relationships with other jurisdictions such as municipal or provincial police and more importantly with CSIS. Is there a formal integrated program that you access, perhaps on a daily or frequent basis, to make sure there are basically no firewalls between jurisdictions that would cause information that could be important to not be received?

Commr Bob Paulson: Mr. Chairman, thank you for the question.

I would say first of all, with respect to the relationship with CSIS, that we've demonstrated that both CSIS and the RCMP have a highly tuned, sophisticated exchange of information, which has resulted in several successful arrests and prosecutions in recent years. So I would say that the relationship with CSIS has been refined to a point where it is highly reliable and functioning well.

With respect to other law-enforcement agencies in the country, there are a number of mechanisms we rely upon to ensure that we do have the timely flow of information and the ability to inform the law-enforcement community about trends and the nature of the evolving threat. As I mentioned earlier, the counterterrorism information officer program has certainly been subscribed to by all major police forces.

We co-chair the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police committee on counterterrorism, which is really the central hub of the policy development or practice and refinement of our practices. In our integrated national security enforcement teams, when we are in a big city like Toronto, which has quite an elaborate police force of its own, we are able to work with it, the Ontario Provincial Police, and others to accomplish what we need to accomplish.

I'm very comfortable with and confident in the nature of the relationships both within law enforcement and especially between the service and the RCMP.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

The other part, which I think my constituents and Canadians would like to know—and we don't always read about them, though we may read about specific cases—is how many terrorist-related offences the RCMP has made arrests in connection with. Without getting into specifics of possible investigations, are you currently involved in investigations that are worrisome to you, that appear to be perhaps bigger than you earlier anticipated? When I say “bigger”, I'm talking about the potential for significant harm to Canada.

• (1605)

Commr Bob Paulson: As the minister has indicated, and certainly as my colleagues all understand and I'm sure you do as well, the threat of terrorism is a real priority for law enforcement and for the government as well.

I would say with respect to our successful arrests and prosecutions, the record stands for itself. There have been numerous arrests and prosecutions. I would say now though—and I would include CSIS in this, because we are joined at the hip in how we manage a response to the threat, and I used to run national security at the RCMP—the pace and tempo of operations is fairly brisk. We're operating probably about 63 active national security investigations

on 90 individuals who are related to the travelling group—either people who intend to go or people who have returned and have been referred to us by the service—so the pace and tempo of operations is quite brisk.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

Commr Bob Paulson: I should add, as I meant to conclude, that it's nothing that Canadians need to be alarmed about. I think we are managing, through our collective efforts, with a response that is appropriate to the nature of these suspected offences, but it is at a brisk pace and tempo.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you. As a result of a couple of those statements, I'm going to switch over to Minister Blaney now.

Minister Blaney, having been on the public safety committee for some time and having worked with you as a minister recently, I wonder if you could tell Canadians about some of the balancing that governments have to do. We're dealing with serious threats such as terrorism and yet we want to maintain a society in which we respect the rights of Canadians while doing our best to protect their safety. Could you tell me about some of the concerns you have as a legislator working with your cabinet colleagues when you are trying to ensure that we protect Canadians while at the same time respecting their freedoms and how sometimes the two can somewhat clash?

Hon. Steven Blaney: I thank you for your question. We live in a state of law.

It is extremely important that we adopt legislation that clearly defines the authority, roles, and responsibilities of both our law enforcement agencies and our national security agencies so they can clearly operate within the scope of the law. That's why when we see a direct threat to Canada from terrorist organizations, and specifically from the Islamic State, we need to be able to table legislation that clearly defines the mandate and also enables the agencies to appropriately protect Canadians.

That being said, we have with us this afternoon two very critical agencies, including the department that is monitoring and overseeing many activities, but there are more than 20 government agencies involved in the terrorism strategy. They range from CBSA, for border controls, to Finance, to stop those who could be tempted to provide money to terrorists. They include Health Canada, regarding possible terrorist attacks. So it's a broad approach. They've been working together.

We have to remain vigilant, but there are mechanisms in place, and there's a broad government approach. Of course, prosecuting and gathering intelligence are critical. Another bridge that is critical is to convert this intelligence into evidence that can be laid in front of the courts. For this, I see that the RCMP is being successful as we see the number of cases and charges and sentences increasing, especially with the tools we are providing. As legislators, we need to provide them the tools and give them clear authority, so they can work within the scope of the law. That is our part of successfully countering terrorism.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Blaney. We're a little over the time now.

We will now go to Mr. Easter, please.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming, Minister, and thank you to the security and policing organization heads as well.

I don't think, Mr. Minister, that any objective observer would believe that a single meeting of this committee in any way constitutes a careful examination of this threat of radicalization in Canada. I don't think one single meeting is enough.

Mr. Chair, as you know, I have a motion on the floor that basically asks for a subcommittee of this committee to call the people who are here before us today to testify, but also to invite other interested and concerned stakeholders from across the country to testify on the extent and consequences of radicalization activities in Canada.

I believe, Mr. Minister, that you mentioned—I didn't catch the name—a group that is also doing some research and that I think that committee should also meet with. I would hope, Mr. Minister, that you would think it's definitely our duty as parliamentarians as well to look further into this issue, and I'd hope that you would encourage your colleagues.

Mr. Chair, I want to bring forward that motion which, I'll inform you now, will be at the start of the next meeting we hold.

I would hope that you could support us in that, Minister.

I will turn to an issue that I think you, Mr. Minister, and your parliamentary secretary have put in the news, and that is the Al Sunnah mosque, as I believe it's called, in Montreal. I have before me a document from the Department of Defence marked "Secret" that was leaked, but it has been in the public domain. It's about the imam who was there. I believe allegations were made that the mosque was a recruiting site.

Given that both you and the parliamentary secretary—and that's been in the public domain for some while through intelligence from the Five Eyes that we cooperate with—can you expand for this committee today on the threats related to that mosque, and secondly, what your has government done on that file?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you for your question.

This afternoon, I provided you with a report on the terrorist threat, in both official languages. I invite you to read through it. Canada has published a very detailed report on terrorist threats.

I want to draw your attention to the statement I made. I feel that the threat of terrorism is our top national security issue. That is why we, as legislators, must do everything we can to combat this terrorist threat. As parliamentarians, you know that I am very proud to have supported measures to revoke the citizenship of those who have dual citizenship and who are engaging in terrorist activities.

As a Canadian citizen, I don't want people using a Canadian passport for terrorist purposes. When people come here, adopt Canadian values, use a Canadian passport, take an oath of allegiance and then turn against the society that has welcomed them, I call that treason. The judge shares my opinion. As politicians, I think we need

to be tough and we need to equip ourselves with the tools to combat terrorism.

To respond to your question, when it comes to operational matters, we as politicians have the duty to provide guidance and develop tools but leave it up to law enforcement agencies to take the appropriate action with respect to prosecution and intervening in potentially illegal activities.

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Minister, I'm not asking you to explain again your number one priority. It's our number one priority, too, these terrorists and the radicalization that put at risk Canadians and others around the world. I'm asking you what action you're taking, because that issue has been in the news for some time. You've mentioned the mosque, your parliamentary secretary has mentioned the mosque, and I'd like to know what is behind that statement and what there is.

But let me turn, then, to another subject. You have mentioned that you arrested or charged one individual under the Anti-Terrorism Act. Now, as I understand it, the individual was charged on July 17. My question for you is, has the individual been arrested? He's been charged. My information tells me that in fact he left Canada six months earlier, and in spite of the fact of his being on a no-fly list, he left the country and was charged after the fact. Is that information correct? Has he been arrested and was he on the no-fly list?

• (1615)

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Easter, I would like to begin by responding to your first question, which touched on a specific issue.

As politicians, we have a responsibility. If we know that people are inciting hate speech or if we know that there are places where terrorism is being encouraged, we have a duty to formally distance ourselves. That is our number one responsibility as parliamentarians. We live in a democracy. We cannot tolerate people who promote ideas of terrorism and violence. That is unacceptable. That is our number one responsibility.

The second is to equip law enforcement agencies with the necessary tools so that they can neutralize these people and intervene to lay charges against those who might be tempted to recruit others or participate in acts of terrorism.

I want to be clear this afternoon. You yourself mentioned that we have a collective duty to combat terrorism. I hope that we can count on your support when it comes time for us, as elected officials, to take meaningful action to combat terrorism.

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter: How am I for time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have half a minute, Mr. Easter.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Okay. I'm still not getting many answers, Mr. Chair.

Yes, I know all about the issue; I signed some certificates myself, in a former life.

In any event, the head of CSIS mentioned before the national defence committee in the Senate the 130. You mentioned the 80 individuals who have returned to Canada. It's not only the 80 within Canada; anybody who holds a passport, we trust, who has become radicalized, whether it's British, United States, Australia, are a risk to this country, and they're a risk to the others as well.

My question is on those 80 individuals. Have any been arrested? Have any been charged? And how many passports have been detained?

The Chair: Very briefly, Minister.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Easter, you asked me to comment on operations of law enforcement agencies. I want to ask you this. Do you accept responsibility for ensuring that our law enforcement agencies have the tools they need? Do you agree that we should revoke the passports of citizens who want to commit acts of terrorism? Do you agree that we should revoke citizenship from people who have been convicted of terrorism? Do you agree that we should equip law enforcement agencies with additional tools?

Mr. Easter, we are politicians. Let's let police officers and those who gather intelligence do their work, but let's give them the tools. Are you ready to do that? Are you and the members of your party ready to distance yourselves from those who incite violence here at home?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Blaney.

Madame Michaud, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Minister.

Along the same vein as my colleague, I would like to continue on the theme of preventing radicalization. It is something that concerns all of us here on this committee. In light of the current context, where the government decided to engage us in a military intervention in Iraq, numerous experts have already spoken out publicly about the possibility that this mission could serve as a recruitment tool for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. I don't think the government can ignore that possibility.

I think that we need to enhance our cooperation with community groups and organizations throughout the country. With that in mind, can you tell me what steps are being taken right now to work with communities across the country to prevent radicalization?

I would ask you to be brief since I have some other questions to ask you.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Your question is very broad. Law enforcement agencies, including the RCMP, are engaged in many community outreach activities. Other agencies are engaging as well.

I'd like to briefly remind you that I'm part of the Cross-Cultural Round Table on Security. I have met with leaders from numerous communities. For example, I went to Toronto to meet with leaders of

the Somali community. I met with imams and spoke with them. Then, there are the dozens, if not hundreds, of meetings I have attended about this issue. The RCMP is in charge of this. If you don't mind, I'd like to ask Commissioner Paulson to describe the preventative measures that have been put in place.

• (1620)

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you, Minister.

As I have already said, we have programs in place but we have also met with communities throughout Canada with our policing partners.

We hold meetings with communities to tell them about the threat and what they should do if they have concerns about members of their community.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Paulson, but I'd like to refocus my question so that I can get a clearer response and hopefully get what I'm looking for.

All meetings aside, were any additional financial or material resources spent to help community leaders intervene when they sense that young people are at risk of being radicalized? The government's 2012 budget announced cuts of nearly \$688 million to the Department of Public Safety between now and 2015.

I have a lot of doubts about the possibility of truly reaching out to communities with at-risk youth and giving them tangible help.

Hon. Steven Blaney: We will dot the *i*'s and cross the *t*'s.

Like all federal agencies, we did an operational review but did not touch services. I want to be very clear about that. All of the operations that have been put in place—and there are a lot because these are federal resources that are being allocated—involve federal public servants, police officers and law enforcement agents who are going into the communities, looking after logistics and organizing meetings.

The list is impressive. Mr. Paulson, I've got to say that you're a bit too humble. I have seen the lists and the hundreds of meetings that have taken place across the country. And that doesn't include RCMP operations. One pillar of our strategy is prevention. That is extremely important. That is why we are dedicating considerable resources to it.

In my speech, I said that hundreds of RCMP officers are counter-terrorism experts. They provide training and are on the front lines to identify individuals who could potentially commit acts of terrorism.

Clearly, we're not going to skimp on the resources we need to combat the terrorist threat.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have half a minute left.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud: My colleagues will likely have a chance to follow up on that question.

You briefly spoke about working with other police organizations across the country. I would like to know a bit more about how provincials governments are working together to try and better understand the elements that lead young people to become radicalized.

Hon. Steven Blaney: From a policy standpoint, I am in constant communication with my provincial counterparts. The combatting terrorism strategy falls primarily to law enforcement and national security agencies.

Mr. Paulson could likely provide more details about what has been happening. He said there were talks with the Toronto police. I'll let the commissioner talk some more about the strategy.

[English]

The Chair: I'll have to interrupt here, Commissioner Paulson. We're well over the time. We'll hopefully get the response in another round or another question—either that or you can hold it to when it's convenient for you.

We will now go to Ms. James, please.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Do I have seven minutes or five?

The Chair: You have five.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

I'm just following up on some of the questions that Mr. Easter, my colleague across the way, asked regarding a mosque. I just came across another story on the leader of the Liberal Party, Justin Trudeau, visiting another mosque at the beginning of September. This was a different mosque from I think that Mr. Easter was speaking about. In fact, back in 2011 the imam at this mosque talked very favourably of following through with sharia law here in Canada. In some of the comments that are in this news story, he talks about stoning women, cutting hands off of thieves.

I thank Mr. Easter for bringing up that particular situation with the other mosque. Again, here's another one.

I'm just wondering, Minister, if you're aware of this particular story. Do Canadians need to be worried? Do we need to be alarmed? What is your reaction to this?

• (1625)

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Madam Parliamentary Secretary.

I have to say that I get shivers down my spine when I hear stories like that. Canada is a free country. Gender equality is a Canadian value. I think that we, as politicians, must do everything in our power to promote the Canadian values of gender equality and rule of law.

I find it troubling that Canadians or potential citizens are abusing our generosity and our tolerance by engaging in hate speech, which flies in the face of Canadian values. I believe that as politicians and citizens we should be outraged by those unacceptable statements and actions in a modern, contemporary society such as Canada.

Politicians must shoulder that responsibility more than others. We have a duty to distance ourselves, as much as we possibly can, from those statements because we should be proud of the progress women have made in Canadian society. We need to crack down on any threat to women's rights, and we must be uncompromising and steadfast. In Canada, we cannot let people say whatever they want if it could incite violence or impede the rights of other citizens.

As politicians, we need to distance ourselves from that. As politicians, we meet all kinds of people. However, when we meet certain people and are faced with certain problematic facts, it is our duty to clearly, unequivocally distance ourselves from those people.

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you, Minister.

Earlier in your testimony you talked about an individual who was sentenced to 10 years in prison. I'm wondering if you could mention any other cases where people have been charged or have received sentencing. I have a secondary question to that, if I have time, but I'll leave it at that question for now.

The Chair: You still have another minute and a half.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you.

Hon. Steven Blaney: So your question is...? I'm sorry.

Ms. Roxanne James: You talked about one individual who had been arrested and charged and a 10-year sentence. I'm just wondering if you could talk about any other individuals who have been charged under any of our terrorism legislation and laws.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Yes, I can.

I can tell you about Mr. Yusufzai. He was the first one who was charged under the new Combating Terrorism Act. The individual is known to have travelled to Syria to join Islamist fighters. He was using a false passport.

There are a lot of challenges with those individuals who are willing to travel abroad. They are sometimes using passports.... We have experts here who can tell us a lot about their whereabouts. We have many cases.

One thing that is also shocking is that sometimes those individuals are coming from all stripes of society. In particular, there was an individual who was studying technology in university.

It is very important to do everything in our capacity to detect those who are willing to undertake terrorist activities.

Hon. Wayne Easter: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Easter.

Hon. Wayne Easter: I wonder, based on this discussion, if the minister could get posted on his website those mosques and religious centres across the country that we, as politicians, should avoid. I travel the country. I could go into a religious centre and not realize it's a threat.

The Chair: Mr. Easter, excuse me. No. That question is not in order for this meeting today.

We will just carry on. *Pour cinq minutes*, we now have Madam Doré Lefebvre.

•(1630)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank Minister Blaney, Mr. Coulombe, Mr. Guimont and Mr. Paulson for being here today.

I think it is very important that we discuss these questions here in committee today. We really appreciate you being here to do that. If you don't mind, I would like to ask some budget-related questions. I want to talk about cuts to public safety budgets and terrorist attacks in Canada.

Minister, you talked about public safety cuts that would not affect services. However, when I look at the numbers, from the 2012 budget in particular, I can see that \$143 million was cut from the Canada Border Services Agency. A total of 100 positions were cut from the immigration intelligence branch. That is the branch that monitors terrorist activities and transmits information to our international partners.

What is happening there? Will money be put back into that branch so that people can be hired back? How will we be able to apply the principles in the UN resolution, in addition to what you have presented today, with those kinds of cuts to public safety?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you for your question.

As I indicated, it's important to allocate financial resources based on needs. I mentioned that nearly 20 agencies are involved in the fight against terrorism. As you saw this afternoon, the RCMP is working hard to combat terrorism. Resources are allocated based on needs. The Canada Border Services Agency plays an important role, and the agency needs to have access to tools. We invest heavily, in particular in the information exchange system.

Financial resources are important, but legislative tools and resources are just as important. As parliamentarians, one way in which we can help the Canada Border Services Agency combat terrorism is to develop tools to help Canada exchange information with its partners when Canadians travel.

I want to come back to the example I gave earlier. We are talking about information that is found in our passport, as well as the time and date we leave the country. This is unremarkable information, but in cases in which foreign terrorists want to travel through a third country—for example travelling through Turkey to get to Syria—this information becomes strategic. This information can provide context and and provide better ways to track terrorists.

With respect to the Canada Border Services Agency, we are talking about reallocating resources in several other agencies and about the fact that it's important for us, as parliamentarians, to give the agency means to help combat terrorism through the exchange of information.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Thank you.

Mr. Paulson, in this budget, \$195 million was cut from the RCMP.

Is the lack of resources as a result of this nearly \$200 million budget cut affecting your ability to combat terrorism?

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you for your question.

The answer is no. We've changed our way of managing our activities.

[*English*]

We changed how we prioritize our federal policing model, and consequently we're able to move resources into and out of national security cases to match the tempo and pace. So the cuts have not affected our operations.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Carmichael, please.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

I will direct my questions to you, Mr. Coulombe. You've been getting a bit of a pass this afternoon.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. John Carmichael: Mr. Coulombe, in spite of the media coverage, the extensive videos, and all the kinds of things we've been seeing of the horror of ISIL, there is still a feeling in Canada from some of the people I've heard from that we are not at risk in Canada, but rather that this is isolated to the Middle East and that region.

Would you please comment on how significant the threat of violent extremism is to Canadians?

•(1635)

Mr. Michel Coulombe (Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service): Thanks for the question.

Mr. Chair, if you bear with me, I'll just quote something:

If you can kill a disbelieving American or European—especially the spiteful and filthy French—or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever...waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be.

It goes on to say:

Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military—

That's from an audio speech by ISIL released this September.

In the same audio speech, ISIL is also urging its supporters to conduct attacks in their home countries, not in Iraq, not in Syria, but in their home countries.

In addition, if you go back to April, there was a video that you could see on YouTube, which said, "This is a message to Canada... We are coming and we will destroy you". That was a member of ISIL who is actually a Canadian citizen.

In addition, you have to remember—and this was talked about earlier—that it's not just Canadians who are joining ISIL but also all the other westerners from countries whose passports we trust. They could leave Iraq and Syria and enter Canada to conduct a terrorist attack here. At the same time—and you just have to look at what recently happened in Australia—there is the lone actor. The people who are there never went to Iraq and Syria but were actually inspired by the type of audio speech I've just quoted from and decided to do something in their home country. In Australia a young 18-year-old boy was killed after he tried to stab two police officers. That young boy was actually stopped from travelling and going to Iraq and Syria. A few days prior to that, over 20 Australian citizens were arrested because they were planning attacks, including against civilians whom they would kill and whose bodies they would cover with the ISIL black flag. The threat is real.

As Commissioner Paulson said earlier, we don't want to sound alarmist. We're telling people that they should go about their daily lives, but we have to be vigilant. It is not just a question of a threat here in Canada. It's Canadian interests and Canadian citizens abroad who are also targeted.

Mr. John Carmichael: Thank you. To call that truly alarming would be an understatement.

Commissioner Paulson spoke about the number of arrests that have been made. Obviously there are real threats to security in this nation. There are reports of some 80 returning foreign fighters who have come back to this country or who are in the process of coming back to this country. I wonder if you could talk about some of the measures that CSIS would take to investigate these types of threats to Canada's national security and what CSIS is actually doing to ensure Canadians' safety.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: I'd like to start by clarifying—

The Chair: You have one moment, Mr. Coulombe. I'm sorry.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Just to clarify one thing—and I did mention this when I appeared in February in front of the Senate committee—when we're talking about 80 returnees, we're not talking about 80 people who fought in Iraq and Syria, and we're not necessarily talking about people who are directly involved in planning terrorist activities. We're talking about people.... We have Canadians in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Lebanon, the Sahel region, and the Maghreb region, who are involved in terrorist activities, but those could be fundraising or propaganda. I don't want people to believe that we have 80 returnees who were hard fighters in Iraq and Syria, because that is not the picture we have at the moment, although we have somewhat—

Mr. John Carmichael: Are these purely radicalized extremists who would be a threat to our security?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: All of them could potentially be a threat, definitely.

The Chair: Fine. Thank you very much.

Now Mr. Scott, you have five minutes.

Mr. Craig Scott: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was wondering if I could touch on the question of those who have gone abroad who can't necessarily return. The terms of reference today deal more or less with those who have returned, but

the passports of some who've gone abroad are being revoked. I'm not questioning why that would actually be necessary, since it actually kind of locks them in and means they can't then travel to other countries like France or Germany, etc., but it also leaves them on site. If a Canadian's passport is revoked, by definition can that person not come back?

In that case, what happens to the stories we hear of some Canadians or others who go over and just haven't a clue what they've gotten themselves into? They've been radicalized and brainwashed. They get there and not so long after, they want to come back. Their passport has been revoked. How do we deal with that? Is there some kind of a plan for that?

• (1640)

Hon. Steven Blaney: I'm not sure I understand your question. What I can tell you about passports is that I would defer your question to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Could you rephrase your question, please?

Mr. Craig Scott: Yes.

The first premise is that the Minister of Immigration has indicated that some passports have been revoked for individuals who are currently abroad. So it's not a preventative measure to their going abroad, which is an important part of our tool chest. They're there. They can't come back. So by definition, we're not going to be dealing with them as returnees.

How do we deal with this issue? Once they've left, have we decided that those individuals are lost causes, are either going to be captured or killed or left in Syria or Iraq, or is there some idea about how some Canadians who have their passports revoked and have second thoughts can come back?

Hon. Steven Blaney: If I may, I would just bridge to.... I think the statement that was made by Mr. Coulombe was pretty clear. What I can appreciate this afternoon is that we can have this discussion about terrorism and also about the threat that represents to Canada. I might remark that those statements that were made by those terrorists were prior to the debate we had in the House of Commons a few days ago, prior to the vote we had yesterday.

Mr. Craig Scott: Right.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Actually, we are well aware that all parts of the coalition, whether they are humanitarian, combat, air strike, or boots on the ground, are all targeted.

[Translation]

In other words, Mr. Coulombe made it very clear that we cannot bow down to terrorism. This external threat needs to be combatted externally, but we also need to combat it internally. If individuals chose to leave the country in order to commit acts of terrorism, they represent a threat here and abroad, and we must do everything in our power to prevent them from acting. That could include revoking a passport or, if they are found guilty, revoking dual citizenship.

As I said, Citizenship and Immigration Canada is responsible for revoking passports, and this department would do so based on evidence provided by national security agencies and agencies responsible for enforcing the act.

[English]

Mr. Craig Scott: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

To the commissioner and then the director, with respect to the Minister of Immigration being the only one responsible, this is supposed to be an integrated approach, right? So maybe the public security minister isn't going to answer exactly about the passport issues, but with respect to the Passport Canada security bureau, the investigative agency that advises the minister about revocation, the simply question I have is whether or not CSIS and the RCMP are integrated into the decision-making process of that bureau. Is there at least that kind of integration to know that there is good intelligence flowing to the Minister of Immigration?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Mr. Chair, that's exactly what's happening. We do exchange information not just with Passport Canada and the RCMP, but there is that integration, coordination, and deconfliction, if not daily then at least weekly, on that very specific issue.

Mr. Craig Scott: That's good to know.

The Chair: That's it, Mr. Scott. Thank you.

Now we'll go to—

Commr Bob Paulson: Chair, I just wanted to add a little bit to that answer. I appreciate that we're short of time, so I'll be brief.

The Chair: Go ahead, and please do be brief.

Commr Bob Paulson: My colleague was referring to the information exchange. We have biweekly meetings among all of the affected agencies where we look for options to intervene with the high-risk travellers—folks who have not yet gone, folks who we've tried to work with, folks who maybe are approaching the criminal space and we haven't got enough evidence to charge.

We're looking for alternatives. We've been successful; CBSA and the Passport Bureau and the team have been successful in bringing charges against at least five individuals in respect of passport misuse, a criminal charge.

So we're looking for options within the existing framework of authorities to be able to intervene in accordance with our laws.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you for that clarification.

Ms. Ablonczy, you have the floor, please.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Thank you.

We're all aware, of course, that Britain just yesterday arrested another four individuals on strong suspicion of terrorist intent. The report in *The New York Times* of that arrest pointed out that in August, Britain raised their classification of the threat level of terrorists to their country to severe, the second-highest classification of threat.

Mr. Coulombe, how would you characterize the threat to Canada right now?

Hon. Steven Blaney: I may give you a few opening remarks and then let Mr. Coulombe comment.

That's an excellent question. The threat, as we can see, is real. The threat is there. As a country, we are constantly adjusting to the level of threat. That's why this afternoon I tabled the “2014 Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada”, which exemplifies the various terrorist entities throughout the world that represent a threat.

We are focusing at this point in time on the Islamic State, which has clearly represented a threat; I won't repeat what they have said or what has been said, but that is clear. That's why we, as law enforcement, need to make sure that we are providing the tools necessary to our law enforcement agency and to national security intelligence so they can adjust appropriately to the level of threats.

Monsieur Coulombe.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: I was just going to mention that in terms of what is the threat today, I'm not going to talk about the scale or... but what I can say is that, compared to the late 1990s and 2000s before 9/11, the threat is different. It's more diffused. It develops a lot more rapidly. With the use—and the sophisticated use—of social media, for example, radicalization can happen really quickly. The development of an attack actually can also happen really rapidly. There's the movement of people. The threat is different.

This phenomenon of what we call “foreign fighters”, especially in the developments in Iraq and Syria, I think is real, like I've mentioned. It does pose a real threat. Again, we have no information indicating an imminent attack, but we have to remain vigilant. The threat is real.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: A colleague shared with us recently that an extended family member of theirs was approached at work by someone trying to recruit them in saying that western values were not working, that there was a better way, and that ISIL was paying good money for people to join them. When this individual reported it to the supervisor, the would-be recruiter was simply moved.

Is there a way for people to report these incidents? Surely they shouldn't just be swept under the carpet and not acted upon.

Commr Bob Paulson: No, absolutely not. I think that's part of our outreach program: to be able to connect with Canadians and make sure they feel comfortable in being able to raise that information.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: But who would they raise it with?

Commr Bob Paulson: The local law enforcement jurisdiction, the police. We have a 1-800 number into our operations centre in the RCMP. You can be absolutely confident that we will get going on a call to local law enforcement. If a local law enforcement jurisdiction gets a call like that, we will make sure that gets investigated.

All of these investigations, the ones that I referred to earlier, are centrally overseen by a fairly crack team of experienced officers here in Ottawa. That's why it's so important that we're able to get front-line officers recognizing the significance of a call like that. I would encourage whoever is referring that to you to refer it to us, and we will intervene.

• (1650)

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Thank you for that. Other citizens may have similar experiences.

Director Coulombe, the minister mentioned the social media as a tool of recruitment and radicalization, and I see that brainwashing has been used. What measures do you think are going to be necessary to deal with the social media aspect of this issue?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: I think sensitizing people to the risks at all levels is crucial. What's that English expression? It's "whack-a-mole", where you try to stop something from somewhere.... You can close a website, but two are going to appear the next morning, and quite often the servers are not in this country. I'm not saying that nothing can be done in that arena, but I think it's a lot more important to sensitize people to the threat of risk and to try prevention.

Commissioner Paulson was talking about it from the police perspective, just to go back to your earlier question, with the service as a tip line, or with a telephone number across the country or public telephone numbers, so that if people come across this or have questions, they can phone us, use a tip line, or go to their local law enforcement. There's a number of ways in which that information can be passed. Again, I think it's just a question of people being sensitized to the issue and being aware that there is a way to bring that information to us.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Your time has expired.

Mr. Falk, please.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I'd like to thank the witnesses for attending and for their participation here.

I'd like to direct my comments to the minister.

When I travel around my constituency, which I've done the last couple of weeks attending various fall suppers, inevitably the discussion goes to the activities of ISIL and ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Of course my constituents are concerned. They become much more concerned when the threats are made against Canada.

How safe are we really? Should we feel comfortable or should we feel angst? I know you've discussed a little bit the interaction between the various departments. The sharing of information on a weekly basis is good. But we live in an instant society. We don't wait for our weekly meetings, and I'm sure terrorists don't either.

Can you expand on that a little bit? How much do your departments, the security agencies, the border patrol, the RCMP operate in silos? Is there a central database? Can you tell me a little bit about the fluidity and exchange of information?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Commissioner Paulson talked about, for example, weekly or biweekly meetings. That's just one way we're

exchanging information. I was a director general in the Quebec region, in Montreal, and I know things haven't changed; every day several meetings are taking place between, for example, the service and the RCMP, the service and the CBSA. It can be a bilateral meeting. It can be a trilateral meeting. It can be with local enforcement. It can be with the Sûreté du Québec, as it was when I was there. The same is happening across the country.

So I don't want you to think that we only meet weekly and chat then. Those meetings are possibly more strategic, but I can assure you that at the tactical level, in headquarters here in Ottawa and across the country, there are meetings all the time exchanging, deconflicting, and making sure that we're moving on each file with the best options possible.

Commr Bob Paulson: I would agree, obviously, with all of that. But I would also add that in this sort of climate, it's helpful to remind Canadians that this is everybody's business. Certainly we have many, many refined systems and processes to investigate, to respond, to arrest, to collect information, but we really count on the eyes and ears of Canadian citizens to recognize what is suspicious activity that should be reported.

I think we're seeing a trend that is improving, but it needs to be restated that terrorism, counterterrorism, is everybody's business.

• (1655)

Hon. Steven Blaney: I could not agree more with Commissioner Paulson. Building resilience, building awareness...and I would also add the boots on the ground. We in this country have every law enforcement officer, every police officer, involved, and reaching out is part of our counterterrorism strategy, but every Canadian is also part of it. I could not agree more with Commissioner Paulson.

That being said, it is critical that we as politicians make sure that we are enabling all law enforcement to adjust to this evolving threat. We've seen clearly this afternoon that a threat is evolving. Probably very few were aware of the existence of this terrorist entity a year ago, and now this is a direct threat to our society. We need to be able to adjust, to evolve.

That's why the Prime Minister clearly stated in his speech Friday that we need to tackle terrorism over there, joining the coalition. We need to provide, to those who are impacted by terrorism, humanitarian aid, but we also need to be, I would say, steadfast in our commitment here in Canada, as a government and as politicians and as parties, to support initiatives aimed at enabling our law enforcement to tackle this evolving threat.

Mr. Ted Falk: Thank you for the answers to those questions.

The Chair: Please be very quick, Mr. Falk.

Mr. Ted Falk: That's reassuring information that I can pass on to my constituents, that indeed there is good collaboration between all the law enforcement agencies that we have.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor.

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to get back to the question that my colleague Mr. Scott asked earlier and that went unanswered. It is important if we want to properly understand the legislation and the potential effects of the measures, for example of revoking the passport of a citizen involved in terrorist activities.

I will give a more concrete example to illustrate the question that was asked earlier.

Take a young man who is 17 or 18 years old and who unfortunately takes up with the wrong crowd. He becomes radicalized and makes the bad decision to go abroad, so his passport is revoked. I am not questioning the idea of revoking a passport. I understand the logic behind that. This young man goes abroad and participates in terrorist activities without being an active fighter. After a few days, a few weeks or a few months, he realizes that he has made the worst mistake of his life and questions his new radical beliefs. He would like to be able to return home and get back to his normal life.

Is there a way for him to make amends and return to the country? Is there something he can do, or does this mean that once he made the decision to go abroad, regardless of the circumstances or what happens in the future, this is definitive and he will be stuck in the country he decided to go to?

Hon. Steven Blaney: As parliamentarians, it's important for us to understand the scope of the terrorist threat. We need to understand how radicalized these people are and just how far they're prepared to go.

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: Excuse me for interrupting, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Steven Blaney: I'd like to say something about this.

I'm thinking about Karine Blais, from Les Méchins. She was a soldier from Quebec who was killed during the combat mission in Afghanistan against the Taliban. We're talking about people who are prepared to kill in order to stand up for their beliefs. We can't negotiate with terrorists. It's not complicated. There's no issue.

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: Based on what you're saying, the answer to my question is that this individual would be stuck there, period.

Hon. Steven Blaney: As Minister of Public Safety, I'm concerned about the safety of Canadians. If someone might represent a threat and could attack Canadians, I have a duty to do everything I can to prevent this person from killing Canadians. It doesn't seem complicated.

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: I understand what you're saying, but I wasn't questioning the idea of revoking a citizen's passport. I was trying to understand the impact of that decision. I don't know whether someone other than the minister could clarify this for me, because all I'm getting is a partisan answer that doesn't respond to my question.

If I understand correctly, once a passport has been revoked, this person will forever be considered a threat and will be confined to the country he or she had gone to. There would be no way to go back, even if there was concrete proof that this individual had reformed. I am not asking this for no reason.

I just want to clarify. Is my understanding correct?

● (1700)

Hon. Steven Blaney: I'll ask Mr. Coulombe to answer this question.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Mr. Chair, I'll comment on this question, but it won't fully answer the question.

CSIS's role is to collect information, analyze it and advise the government, in particular Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Passport Canada. If new information was brought to our attention, we would analyze that information and assess the threat. Then, in the case of the example you gave, we would inform Passport Canada.

CSIS would not have the final say over whether to reissue the passport. CSIS's duty is to constantly reassess the potential threat to Canadians' safety, whether we are talking about information that exacerbates the threat or information that shows that the individual in question doesn't pose the alleged threat or no longer poses that threat.

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: Thank you very much, Mr. Coulombe. You gave me a much more objective answer to my question. Thank you very much.

This is what I'd like to know.

Mr. Minister, you mentioned earlier that research is underway so that we can try to better understand how recruitment for terrorist organizations works and how these organizations work. Is research also being done so that we can better understand the factors that might lead young people to become radicalized?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Yes.

As I indicated in my speech, our government created a program in response to the Kanishka terrorist attack. Nearly \$10 million has been invested in research. We are looking to give the agencies responsible for enforcing the act the tools to look at how terrorists communicate, exchange information, use social media and travel. Resources have been allocated to that.

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: Do I have a bit of time left, Mr. Chair?

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry. Your time is over now.

Ms. James, go ahead, please.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be passing my time over to my colleague, Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much Mr. Chair, and once again, through you, I'd like to thank the witnesses.

My question will be for any of the witnesses, but we'll start with Monsieur Coulombe.

I was recently at an event in my riding. One of the people at this event has a young son in his early 20s, who is with the American armed forces. He's with the infantry and is serving in Afghanistan. He's at the end of his service there. They go through a nine-month rotation. Ours is six.

The father was telling me that many American families, including his, who are in Canada put on the front of their porch, when their children are serving—or a grandparent or whoever might do it—a sign that says, “proud military family”.

He said recently that people who display the sign have been asked by the authorities, by the armed forces, to take the signs down because their intelligence agencies have learned that these homes will be targeted.

I'm asking you this because many of my constituents, especially during our stint in Afghanistan, had lawn signs that said, “we support our military”.

I'm wondering if CSIS is aware of the U.S. situation and whether you have any reason to send the same message to Canadians, because quite frankly I found it very disturbing when I found that out. As is the case for Mr. Falk and Ms. Ablonczy, our constituents are asking us certain questions. I didn't respond to them, and I didn't comment. I just shook my head when you mentioned that.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: Specifically on that issue, you may remember several months ago the serviceman in Britain who was stabbed to death on the street while he was wearing his uniform. The service obviously will look at that kind of incident—and not just the service but ITAC also. It's part of their job to do the terrorist assessment. And we'll make an assessment in terms of potential threat against, in this case, military personnel.

As I mentioned, the role of the service is to advise the government. In this case, we would advise DND, and it would be up to National Defence to decide what kind of stance it had to take to mitigate that threat, whether there really was a threat, and what measures they needed to put in place.

• (1705)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

We've heard various questions this afternoon concerning prevention. As a former police officer, I always say prevention is always very good. Based on one of the things that Ms. Ablonczy mentioned, I'm wondering if we shouldn't start something like Crime Stoppers to make Canadians more aware about reporting terrorist threats, just as you would contact Crime Stoppers to report a crime.

I do truly believe we need these outreach programs such as cross-cultural round tables and our counterterrorism information, and we need to work with them.

Mr. Coulombe, you repeated a statement made by the radical Islamists. Do you think showing more love to people who want to do us harm and taking advantage of the freedoms will entice them to

understand us better and dissuade them from their terrorist ways, or whether that could affect even Canadians?

We have a multipronged approach, so feel free to talk further about your feelings—and any of the other witnesses can as well—towards these extremists and whether by showing them more love and understanding we will somehow dissuade them from doing what they are doing.

Hon. Steven Blaney: We are dealing with individuals who have deep beliefs and who are rejecting western values, western ways of thinking, and western ways of living. They are ready to use violence and in some cases to return what they got from this society. Unfortunately, we have seen recently in some videos some of those examples of hatred.

We have to be steadfast in our message to anyone who is willing to undertake terrorist activities, that these individuals will face the full force of the law, whether here or abroad. In no way can we compromise with individuals who are willing to attack and kill innocent victims. There is nothing that can prevent us from doing everything in our capability to intervene. What will they face? They will face the full force of the law. They will go to jail. They will benefit from our correctional services rehabilitation system, whereby they can give second thoughts to their beliefs.

But one thing is certain.

[*Translation*]

We can't have wild cards like this in Canadian society, jumping back and forth between fanaticism and terrorism. We can't allow that because they represent mobile threats. As a society, we need to do what we can to protect citizens so that they can continue to live their lives. We need to ensure that these people are charged and that they are punished. At that point they will be able to work on rehabilitation.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister Blaney.

Mr. Easter, please.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In all fairness, Mr. Minister, this “Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada” is not new information but what we read some time ago. But on page 14, we read, “The Government is aware of about 80 individuals who returned to Canada after travel abroad for a variety of suspected terrorism-related purposes.” It states specifically—because we're getting some confusion from the answers—“80 individuals who have returned to Canada”.

My question earlier was, how many have been charged? It's not looking at operational details. I know that CSIS and SIRC, the RCMP, and the Canada Border Services Agency are doing all they can, but specifically how many were charged?

There's another concern that I'll raise. Terrorism is a real threat. I will quote what the chairman of the United States House Committee on Homeland Security said, which is that these are people—13,000 according to the UN's statement following the Security Council meeting of September 24, 2014—with legitimate passports from any of 80 countries from which these foreign fighters have originated. There is no question that this is a real risk to Canada and to our allies, and I think we need to see someone respond with the fact that there is concrete, specific action being taken.

The second point that I want to mention, Mr. Chair, comes back to the mosque.

Mr. Minister, I'm not going to be political, but I do not think it does national security any good for you or your parliamentary secretary, in terms of whatever you may say about another leader in this country, to have the collateral damage happen to a mosque that may or may not be causing problems. If there are problems with individuals in a mosque, then take action against them. Don't make crazy statements out there about the leader of some party making statements; he may or may not know that he's in where he shouldn't be. I think that is risky business from the other side of the coin: that hate isn't set up against that mosque because of somebody's perception. I just raise that as a point.

I have a last point. This is for Mr. Paulson. You can answer all of these together.

I don't know your exact words, Mr. Paulson, but I recognize that you couldn't support the tone that was in this document, "United Against Terrorism", which was put together by the Islamic Social Services Association, the National Council of Canadian Muslims, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I wonder if you could you expand on that a little, because the document, at the end, says, "Together, we will build a secure, inclusive and just Canada".

I've read the RCMP's section 3 of that document, and I think there's tremendous information in there for parents on Internet safety, the root causes of terrorism, where to go for assistance, and so on. Could you expand on that? Because I think the wrong impression is being left since you withdrew your support for this document, which your name is now on and is in public circles.

That's two questions, really. I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, for being so long.

• (1710)

The Chair: Commissioner Paulson.

Commr Bob Paulson: Let's start with your first question first. We have charged Yusufzai. We are actively investigating many other criminal allegations. That's not by way of an excuse. This is complicated work and it's hard to get the evidence, but we're on it. As I said, the pace and tempo of investigations I think is brisk.

On your last question—and I think there were three of them, but I'll go to the last question with respect to the pamphlet—the chapter on the RCMP is quite good because we wrote it. I think what I took issue with was that all of our efforts that we're talking about here today are in this collaborative joint engagement with communities. There is a tone in some elements of the pamphlet that I think sets an adversarial tone between authorities and communities, and that's not what we're after. I stand by the RCMP's chapter, and I stand by our

commitment to continue to work with communities to provide the programs that we've discussed here today.

The Chair: That's five. Thank you very much.

Do you have a question, Madame Doré Lefebvre?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Yes.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Blaney, I'd like to talk about the Report on Plans and Priorities 2013-2014 from Public Safety Canada, which announced even more cuts to public safety.

I will read a quote in English, since I only have a copy of the English report.

• (1715)

[*English*]

"That the Government Operations Centre (GOC) infrastructure may be unable to support a coordinated response to large-scale or multiple significant events affecting the national interest."

[*Translation*]

Are we prepared, at the national level, to respond to a terrorist threat in Canada? According to this report, at the moment, we may not be able to do so within the country or at the multilateral level.

What's in place? How can we manage this? Can we truly manage this, since the report from Public Safety Canada seems to indicate that we can't?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you for the question.

As I mentioned in the beginning, in 2011, our government was the first to implement a strategy for combatting terrorism. Not only did we implement an intergovernmental strategy, but we also brought in legislative tools to combat terrorism. Unfortunately, our government did not have the support of your political party.

You have to walk the talk, as they say, and we need an integrated approach. We need the appropriate legislative tools and a strategy. That's what we're doing. Soon enough you'll have the opportunity to reaffirm your desire to combat terrorism with concrete measures to ensure that our national security agencies can protect us.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: You talk a lot about the legislative tools that are needed in order to take action. You often say during question period or during your speeches that we need concrete measures in order to take action.

In your answers, you said that the government would allocate resources based on needs. In light of the budget cuts that have been made to public safety, where will the resources to combat terrorism come from? Resources are needed in one area, so they'll have to be taken from another.

Hon. Steven Blaney: First of all, the role of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service is to protect us, especially against the terrorist threat. We are talking about very substantial resources.

This afternoon I mentioned in my speech the special training for RCMP officers assigned specifically to combating terrorism.

I would like to invite the commissioner to tell us about the RCMP's initiatives in that regard. There have been hundreds of activities and meetings with cultural communities. Prevention will be key to reducing the terrorist threat to Canada.

Commissioner, I would ask you to share with us everything that the RCMP is doing. If you like, you could submit that to the committee and it could just be translated.

I will give the floor to the commissioner. He is in a better position than I am to talk about these matters.

Commr Bob Paulson: Are you referring to the list of meetings?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Yes, you could talk about the strategies and considerable resources you have allocated to counterterrorism.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: I would really like you to tell me where you will get the resources given that there have been budget cuts at the RCMP as well.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Let us clarify things. The cuts were made during the 2008 economic downturn and all departments were affected. However, there were no cuts to front-line services.

Resources are currently being redistributed. For example, most of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service's budget covers the main priority of our strategy.

I would like the commissioner to talk to you about this strategy.
[English]

The Chair: Very briefly, as you have half a minute.

Commr Bob Paulson: Okay.

We're prioritizing our investigations. We're taking investigators and resources, and I think Public Safety in the crime prevention area gives us resources for outreach programs, as the minister was mentioning, for literally hundreds upon hundreds of community outreach events where we've gone into the community and engaged with local citizens. The resources are existing within our allocations.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Our deputy minister, Mr. Guimont, could also explain this to you.

Mr. François Guimont (Deputy Minister, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let us talk about the budget cuts to our department. I was going to say that, at times, it was like being put on a diet. Every organization has to have the right priorities. Not everything can always be a top priority. With any priority there are always less urgent aspects, and cuts help us somewhat to be more effective and create efficiencies.

That is probably why we can talk about cuts and attaining our objectives. We can say that we are equipped to meet needs, but, naturally, as they say,

• (1720)

[English]

the connective tissue has to be rebuilt. Efficiencies have to be created.

[Translation]

It has to be rebuilt. However, budget cuts and very effective systems are not mutually exclusive.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Carmichael, please.

Mr. John Carmichael: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to go back to you, Mr. Coulombe, and finish off my last question to you. I have two questions, if I could.

I should say that my colleagues have talked about meeting their constituents, and I've done likewise. My constituents are equally alarmed at the concerns of radical extremism that would affect us here at home. Obviously we took a step last night in our vote that would allow us to go into Iraq and to address that issue at that location, but Canadians are alarmed and concerned at home. So I'd like to ask you two questions.

First, have we identified how many Canadians are actually travelling abroad for the express purpose of joining extremist activities, be it with ISIL or others?

Second, to your point, and following up on Mr. Easter's question regarding this report, we talk about some 80 individuals who have been identified as returning home. I'd like to know how hard that 80 number is. Is it a guesstimate? Is it 150? Is it close to 80?

As well, do we know where they are? Do we know where they live? And have any charges been brought to bear on any of those individuals?

Mr. Michel Coulombe: I'll start with the last one in terms of charges, and will then turn to Commissioner Paulson.

In terms of whether or not we know the number of Canadians who are overseas involved in threat-related activities, be it in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and the list goes on, the number we're quoting—at the time, 130—by the time I leave this room will change. It's fluctuating all the time. It hasn't increased substantially since my appearance in February.

That number is the number that we can confirm in a nexus to Canada, and we can confirm that the individuals are involved in terrorist-related activities. That's the one we know.

Are there some that we are not aware of? Probably. I don't want to speculate. I've read in the media that it's probably up to 300. The service doesn't go there. We go with facts, and the fact is that we can confirm between 130 and 145. It's the same with the 80; that's not speculation, that's the one we can confirm. They were involved in terrorist-related activities overseas, they're now back in Canada. It's a firm number that we're aware of.

And yes, we know where they are.

Mr. John Carmichael: Thank you.

I have more, but go ahead, Minister, if you'd like to jump in on that.

Hon. Steven Blaney: No, no.

Mr. John Carmichael: To Commissioner Paulson, then, on the CTIO role, you talked about the training, the 300-and-some people who are actually trained and in the field today, with quite a number more in the process. You're putting them on the front line in police forces across Canada.

I wonder if you could talk to the role and what you're finding with that role now. I'm encouraged hearing that report. I'd like to know, are we seeing any success with it? Are we seeing or hearing anything that would give us comfort to know it's working?

Commr Bob Paulson: First of all, I think the number is much more. I think 300 was in the last fiscal year we trained, and I think we're up to about 1,500.

The role is to begin to I guess socialize our front-line police officers with this process and to look for indicators. They might go into a house or on a call, and they might see a young person who's exhibiting behaviours that they might ignore just because they're not in their frame of reference. The CTIO program has been particularly helpful at bringing those sensitivities to our front-line officers so that we can identify trends, intervene in the pre-criminal space, and start to try to bring resources from communities to bear on those kind of people. As well, there are resources for officers who want to know more.

So it's been highly successful, it's been highly useful, and we continue to support it.

• (1725)

Mr. John Carmichael: When we talk about the CTIO role, are these RCMP officers who are embedded, or are we actually training front-line police in local police forces across Canada?

Commr Bob Paulson: We're training in local police forces. We're training, obviously, the area that I have control over—a lot of RCMP detachments. They all have CTIOs. In a small detachment—we might have five or six officers there—they've got a lot of other things to do. So what we'll do is to have that officer trained to bring it back and bring it to the detachment. There are other police forces that are engaged. With our countering violent extremism program, we're in a unique partnership with Public Safety, the CSIS, and the Toronto Police Service, who have a tremendously effective network, one that is tried and demonstrated, into all the communities. So we're overlaying this sort of approach into their existing infrastructure and we're finding it to be very useful.

Mr. John Carmichael: Thank you.

The Chair: Now for a couple of minutes, Mr. Scott, please.

Mr. Craig Scott: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just have one question, and I hope I can direct it to Monsieur Coulombe.

In the Security Council's resolution of September 24, the council stated the following in the operative paragraph 9:

Calls upon Member States to require that airlines operating in their territories provide advance passenger information to the appropriate national authorities in order to detect the departure from their territories, or attempted entry into or transit through their territories, by means of civil aircraft, of individuals designated by...[various Security Council committees].

The reason I asked the earlier question of the minister about whether or not we needed to implement some kind of exit control system was this provision.

Earlier, your predecessor, Mr. Fadden, said two very interesting things in testimony before the Senate on Bill S-7. One, he said that because of changes that were coming forward in Bill S-7 there's going to need to be more cooperation with CATSA and with the CBSA in trying to be aware of who's leaving the country. In particular, he said:

The other complicating factor, I am sure as you well know, is that Canada has no system for controlling exits. We do not even have a system to be aware when people are leaving. This will involve more than the CBSA; it may well involve CATSA

He added:

I should not say much more because I will get myself into a situation I will not be able to get myself out of.

Finally, he noted:

The current structure of the no-fly list program is such that you have to be a threat to aviation...

Furthermore:

My understanding is that officials are preparing a series of proposals for ministers to try to make this list a little more subtle, but I do not know where they are on it.

I'd simply like to ask this: One way or other, has some kind of a cooperative framework evolved to have a de facto exit control system, and/or has the no-fly list been tweaked or changed as a result of cabinet having looked at these proposals?

The Chair: A brief response, please

Mr. Craig Scott: I'm asking Mr. Coulombe.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Guimont could comment very pertinently on that.

Mr. Craig Scott: I'd prefer Mr. Coulombe, please.

Mr. Michel Coulombe: In both cases, the no-fly list and entry/exit information, in terms of piloting changes to the no-fly list, it is not the service that has the responsibility of driving those files. It would be Public Safety.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Chair, maybe our deputy minister could respond.

François.

Mr. François Guimont: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Chair, actually, we don't call it a no-fly list. This program is called the passenger protect program, just to be accurate. We manage it in Public Safety.

Mr. Craig Scott: I've known the people who had that in their file.

Mr. François Guimont: The program has been in place since 2007 and it is operating on the same basis as it has been since that period of time.

Like any other program, we're always looking. But right now the program stands as it is, and it's not a NEXUS program.

The Chair: Fine, thank you very much, Mr. Guimont.

Just before we close off this meeting tonight, this obviously is a very, very, very serious topic that we have been discussing today, and certainly there are a number of messages that we can take from this committee and this testimony today. Maybe one of them, which I know the chair certainly heard loud and clear, is not to be alarmist. Mr. Paulson and Mr. Coulombe have said we need to be vigilant. I thank you very kindly for those words.

To my committee members, thank you very kindly for your considered and meaningful questions today.

To our witnesses, there's no greater responsibility that we have as parliamentarians, or you gentlemen have in fulfilling your responsibilities, than to protect the public. We thank you for your work not just before this committee, but certainly for the continued work you do on behalf of all Canadian.

Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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