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Chair

The Honourable Peter Kent

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• (1540)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC)): Colleagues, welcome.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), today we will continue our study of the defence of North America.

We have one witness with us today, Rear-Admiral John Newton, commander of Maritime Forces Atlantic and Joint Task Force Atlantic.

Admiral, thank you for presenting yourself to us today.

Your opening remarks, please.

Rear-Admiral John Newton (Commander, Maritime Forces Atlantic and Joint Task Force Atlantic, Department of National Defence): Yes, sir.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Good afternoon, everyone.

[English]

It's truly an honour to be here today to describe Canada's naval forces in the Atlantic and their contribution to the defence of North America. I will also comment on the role of the marine security operations centre and provide some thoughts on search and rescue.

By way of background, since you didn't present it, sir, I am the commander of Maritime Forces Atlantic. I'm the commander of the Joint Task Force Atlantic. I'm the commander of the Halifax Search and Rescue region, and I'm the Maritime Component commander for naval operations around the world.

The Chair: Thank you for supplementing that information.

RAdm John Newton: Aye aye, sir.

Canada's naval forces on the Atlantic coast consist of the fleet, a diving unit, a ship repair unit, a logistics supply system, an intelligence and information fusion centre, and a naval headquarters.

My focus is always on preserving and increasing the operational readiness of these forces, ensuring excellence in operations and preserving the fine reputation of the Royal Canadian Navy as second to none in our circle of allies. The recent award of a Meritorious Unit Commendation to HMCS *Toronto* by the United States speaks directly to our single-minded intent.

Since naval power includes unique aviation capabilities, it bears noting that 12 Wing Shearwater is where the helicopters of the fleet are based. From 14 Wing Greenwood, long-range patrol aircraft provide targeting, tracking, and surveillance to our naval forces.

A foundation of infrastructure and services support the operational elements of naval power. These are formed under Canadian Forces Base Halifax, arguably the largest base in the Canadian Armed Forces.

[Translation]

The fleet comprises seven frigates of the Halifax class, the remaining destroyer of the Iroquois class, six coastal patrol vessels of the Kingston class, and presently one submarine of the Victoria class.

There are roughly 2,700 Regular Force Canadian Armed Forces members serving aboard ships of the fleet and another 1,500 ashore in readiness generation support activities of one kind or another.

In addition, 2,100 public service employees, mainly in technical and operational trades form an essential element of the defence team supporting the Atlantic Fleet.

[English]

Halifax class modernization is the main focus of activity, and the turning point of the project was the recent deployment of HMCS *Fredericton* to the NATO Reassurance mission. The ship's crew is flawlessly executing our maritime security mission in the Mediterranean Sea with NATO allies.

Aside from *Fredericton*, three other ships have been modernized at Irving Shipbuilding, and their readiness is building quickly, each available for tasking to some degree or another. Government, navy, and industry cooperation remains exceptional and contributes to the rapid return to readiness of these wonderfully capable and broadly useful warships. As the major ships return the fleet to operational utility, scheduling and readiness pressures are easing. Two modernized frigates are fully committed to aiding the Royal Canadian Air Force deliver the Cyclone helicopter, in and amongst their own readiness and continental defence activities.

[Translation]

It is important to note that naval operations are conducted as multi-ship endeavours, coordinated with submarines and air forces, informed by intelligence and information networks, and driven by command and control nodes. Consequently, major task group exercises need to be conceived nationally and with our allies in order to create operational readiness. No one ship, fleet or navy brings the total capability required to a complex maritime operation without helping each other.

[English]

In the case of the Atlantic fleet task group, exercises with the United States naval counterparts are underway in eastern seaboard waters involving HMCS *Montreal* and the flagship *Athabaskan*. The sharing of resources between the two navies in order to achieve the highest impact on learning possible is commonplace.

The recent retirement of the Protecteur class replenishment ship presents a challenge. However, relationships with allies are strong, and careful scheduling and fleet planning are ensuring that Canadian naval forces continue to receive the training required for difficult replenishment operations under way, while preserving to some degree our freedom of manoeuvre across the vast distances of the North Atlantic and in the European theatre.

The submarine *Windsor* is operating in and out of this east coast task group exercise as her own readiness validation proceeds. The technical and operational readiness of the submarine will peak this summer, and then she will stand ready to be employed in the Atlantic theatre, supported by deployed logistics, engineering, and operational support elements.

I am very pleased to report that the investment in the new submarine shelter in Halifax and the refurbishment of the associated Syncrolift dock allowed *Windsor* to have the defective diesel generator repaired quickly. Simultaneously, the navy ship repair workers installed a modernized sonar system of the same variety as is used in the nuclear attack submarines of the United States Navy. This success highlights the necessity of an effective and close relationship between the fleet and a strong repair capacity.

Our efforts in generating operational readiness are focused on maintaining a Canadian naval task group at high readiness, combining elements of the east and west coast fleets to sustain a rapidly deployable, logistically supported, and agile force capable of undertaking a broad range of defence and security tasks.

In the Caribbean sea, two patrol ships, *Shawinigan* and *Goose Bay*, and two more in the Pacific, *Nanaimo* and *Whitehorse*, are operating in support of the United States Coast Guard-led Joint Interagency Task Force South. Each ship carries aboard the United States Coast Guard law enforcement detachment under whose authority they conduct the drug interdictions. The important mission is taking drugs off the streets of Canada and the United States while impacting illegal revenues generated by the illicit trade that weakens South and Central American countries.

During these missions, our ships engage in capacity building with the navies of 14 partner states that contribute to the mission, supporting regional engagement. They stand ready in the event that there is a call for humanitarian aid or disaster relief.

● (1545)

[Translation]

In the Arctic, the Atlantic Fleet is a strong partner in the whole of government effort to exert and protect Canadian sovereignty. Our ships routinely join Op Nanook and are integral partners with Joint Task Force North, the Canadian Coast Guard, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Canadian Hydrographic Service, the Canada Border Services Agency, the RCMP and the Government of Nunavut, amongst others.

These vibrant relationships were demonstrated in the successful search for the lost ships of the Franklin Expedition in 2014.

[English]

The platform of collaboration created by the marine security operations centre facilitates very effective intergovernmental interactions to ensure that security partners can respond effectively and quickly to emerging threats. The behaviour is practised annually through exercise scenarios under my joint task force command mandate. I reach out to both federal and provincial authorities to ensure that partner agencies are networked and have a thorough understanding of the military capabilities that can be employed to help manage the consequences of crisis situations, natural disasters, and humanitarian arisings. The Canadian maritime response to the Ebola crisis, illegal drug importation, major marine disasters, and terrorism are cases in point where effective collaboration and cooperation are readily apparent.

Aside from these activities in the Arctic and in the Americas, and presently on NATO Reassurance, naval ships contribute to maritime domain awareness every day they are at sea. Moreover, a warship is committed to being the ready duty ship, ready to sail at eight hours notice every day of the year. While ships are active on the seas staff ashore work tirelessly to build and improve relationships with partners, with organizations like NORAD; in the international SAR cooperation; with the Tri-Party, which is the Joint Task Force Atlantic, the United States Coast Guard, and the United States Navy; and in theatre anti-submarine warfare.

In closing, I'd like to speak just for one brief moment on search and rescue and my command of the Halifax SAR region. It includes the land areas of the Atlantic provinces, Labrador, and half of Baffin Island, and the ocean areas of the western North Atlantic, Labrador Sea, and Davis Strait.

My mandate is the provision of aeronautical and marine SAR, employing air forces of the Royal Canadian Air Force and ships of the Canadian Coast Guard. Given the broad maritime domain, frequent extreme weather, winter icing, busy international shipping lanes, active domestic and international fisheries, tourism, and Canada's only offshore petroleum production fields, search and rescue in the region is busy and demanding. Despite this it is very successfully managed due to the expertise and professionalism of the rescue boat crews, the flight crews, and the search and rescue technicians. Constant liaison with the various SAR stakeholders, tactical and operational level exercises, and collaboration with provincial and territorial governments ensures that the system functions optimally.

Mesdames et messieurs, thank you for the opportunity to provide this broad overview of a complex and very wide defence and security mandate of the navy, Joint Task Force Atlantic, the marine security operations centre, and of search and rescue.

The Chair: Thank you, Admiral.

We'll proceed now to our first round of questioning of seven-minute segments.

Mr. Norlock, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and to the witness, thank you for attending today.

Since this is the study of the defence of North America and as you are a commander of the JTF Atlantic and Maritime Forces Atlantic, what do you perceive to be the greatest threat to Canada's Atlantic marine domain and what measures are you taking and are we taking so as to be able to reduce that threat?

• (1550)

RAdm John Newton: I think the greatest threat is just knowing what is happening in Canada's ocean areas of interest. Our ocean areas of interest are not defined by territorial seas or economic exclusion zones or even the enlarged shelf, it is the sea lanes that approach from everywhere around the world. The global economy floats on salt water. It is actually a truism that everything we buy and sell, resources, are marketed across the sea.

Having an understanding of those massive volumes of ship movements in the North Atlantic in particular is of great importance to me. These are the same vectors by which terrorism could penetrate our country if we don't monitor and track the shipping and understand the shipping intent. But also by following the shipping and understanding the movement and trends we can see what is going to happen in the Arctic and we can understand the intent of foreign national interests in science, energy exploitation, and even things like tourism.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

You noted monitoring commercial vessels and other vessels that are in the area, etc. You left out what I would consider an important component, and that would be how about navies, especially submarines, etc., might be plying our waters. Does that encompass some of your duties?

RAdm John Newton: Yes, sir, and why I paused at the beginning was just to put my.... You asked for the highest priority threat to me, which is the shipping plot.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Excuse me. Just so that our constituents understand what you're saying—I do, by the way—you're saying understanding the usage of the commercial shipping lanes and commercial shipping enterprises as well as vessels as a means by which to perform clandestine activities is one of your principal aims. Is that what you're saying?

RAdm John Newton: Yes, sir, exactly, and I'm saying just to monitor the intent of foreign government ships, which often have military nexus to their activities.

The naval menace on the seas clearly is foreign submarine fleets, should those countries that own them become adversarial to Canada's national interests. Therefore, on the long-term basis, as a theatre anti-submarine warfare commander responsible for the western North Atlantic, I participate with a series of colleagues and headquarters around the North Atlantic. It's headquartered out of Norfolk, Virginia, for the U.S. eastern seaboard; headquartered out of England for a large chunk of the Greenland-United Kingdom-Iceland gap; and all the way up the Norwegian coast we have interest as we watch the foreign submarine fleets come out of the Russian northern bases. This is a background activity in which I participate fully and to which I exercise and train an annual basis.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

One of the things we deal with as the country with the second-largest land mass in the world is, of course, the longest coastline in the world, and it presents some rather obvious challenges. How do you meet those challenges or attempt to overcome them in regard to keeping track of what's happening along part of the longest coastline in the world?

RAdm John Newton: That's actually the most enjoyable part of my job, participating in an enterprise called the marine security operations centre. This is a day-to-day capability commonly referred to as the MSOC. It is headquartered in my headquarters building. It is very close to the search and rescue centre, and it's just feet away from my joint operations centre from which I command military operations. The MSOC brings the partners—the RCMP, the border security agency, Transport Canada, CSIS, coast guard, and the navy—to a common table, much like this, and the operators at that table have formed trusted relationships, and information from their networks comes to the table. It is not communicated directly between services because there's a jurisdictional and legal boundary between our information flows. But when people perceive something is going wrong on the seas, whether it's the border services or immigration or a criminal act, they talk because they want to know where the possible maritime track is. They want to determine if there's a requirement for a collective maritime response from all the parties that have maritime resources. The team works out the nature of the threat, who the lead agency is, and what they're going to do about it. Sometimes that leads to a minister-to-minister talk, so that military resources are engaged to actually go after the surveillance of the track.

It's a very effective system, sir. The MSOC is looked at by countries around the world as a model of whole-of-government inter-agency cooperation. It is literally done on a cigarette pack, financially, and in the spirit of collaboration, and I cannot think of a better model. It's just done between people in departments who know that the ocean is a difficult environment and they have to work together to get to the bottom of the threats.

• (1555)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

On another track, you mentioned, of course, at the beginning of the meeting in your presentation to us, that there is a great degree, a good level of cooperation between the Maritime Forces Atlantic and our American allies and other international naval forces.

Could you expand on how this contributes to the overall defence of North America and complements what you are doing?

RAdm John Newton: A very strong bilateral relationship exists between Canada and the United States, between two navies with a long history of service and fighting together, with the background of NORAD and the permanent joint border defence behind them as the substance of the relationship.

My fleet and the fleet on the west coast have joined forces with the U.S. fleet forces, so I'm going to speak about my coast. The U.S. Fleet Forces Command is the American naval entity on the east coast. The United States Coast Guard, LANTAREA, which is their Atlantic-facing coast guard command, cooperates, collaborates, and plans our way through our annual activities with Joint Task Force Atlantic and with the Royal Canadian Navy.

Annually, we share the leadership of an exercise called Frontier Sentinel. It is a component of Determined Dragon and Vigilant Shield, which are a defence of North America. Using this bilateral relationship, we mimic the sort of cooperation you understand from your learning about NORAD. We do that on the maritime domain.

Last year's scenario was a terrorist or an individual with terrorist inclinations using a ship to import material to Canada and the United States. The year before it was a chemical precursor agent being imported through shipping containers. We use this platform of Frontier Sentinel and the collaboration of the three entities to ensure that our shipping plots are locked, and we're exercising to the maximum effect in the maritime domain.

The Chair: Thank you, that's your time, Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Harris, you have seven minutes, please.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Admiral, for joining us today.

If I have this right, you are commander of Maritime Forces Atlantic as well as Joint Task Force Atlantic, which is essentially two hats, the naval hat and the whole-of-operations hat. Am I right?

RAdm John Newton: Yes, sir.

Mr. Jack Harris: In terms of the naval aspect, you listed out the fleet, and you have seven frigates, one destroyer, six coastal patrol vessels, and one submarine. That's just for the Atlantic, I take it.

RAdm John Newton: Yes, sir.

Mr. Jack Harris: Given the size of Canada's coastline, as Mr. Norlock pointed out, the fact that we have three coasts, and the international operations you talked about, do you regard those 14 vessels as adequate for the domain that you have to deal with, as well as the responsibilities?

It seems a small fleet to me. I am speaking as a layman now, but I do know that there are some concerns that the senior service, the navy, is perhaps the neglected service in the armed forces of Canada.

Do you feel the need for more vessels, more coverage, and more equipment, or are you satisfied that you have enough to do the job?

RAdm John Newton: Sir, the size of the Canadian navy is established by governments, and it's a major policy decision above me. We provide them with guidance to determine what the optimal size is.

I would say this from my experience, sir: It isn't just about the navy. It is about the joint forces that work in the maritime domain: the beautiful, modern Cyclone helicopter; the enhanced and upgraded Block III Aurora fleet; the large fleet of the Canadian Coast Guard, which operates in the maritime domain with us in the Arctic; the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' science and policing fleet; the coastal vessels of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; the aircraft of Environment Canada; the aircraft of Transport Canada; and the surveillance aircraft of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

We work as an integrated maritime force that's been going on since the 1980s. I think it was the Osbaldeston Report that forced all the maritime authorities to collaborate and cooperate on the seas with the fleets we had, so that we didn't waste the resources of our country building individual fleets.

Could I add one more thing, sir?

• (1600)

Mr. Jack Harris: I think that probably covers the fact that there are others, other than your 14 ships, at work there.

Since 1992, Admiral, there has been a collaboration between the navy and the Marine Institute of Memorial University to train combat systems technicians as a joint venture and a two-year program. That program was up for renewal, and in fact tenders were called, but I'm told that it will not be continued, though some 900 people, according to the website of Memorial, have been training in this program.

You won't be training people in that program in the future, is that correct? If that's the case, how are you going to be able to provide trained sailors to do the work that's required?

RAdm John Newton: Sir, the Marine Institute provided a phenomenally high-quality graduate to the navy in both the combat systems and the marine engineering technical trades. I will give them that; they are a wonderful school. But they are one of about 60 schools across Canada that could do the same job.

So, while the navy had created this beautiful relationship with the Marine Institute that generated these sailors, and delivered about 90% of the navy's requirement in those technical trades, the Canadian Armed Forces, which is an integrated system with the chief of military personnel who's responsible for a good element of our education and programs, developed a more economical program using all of the colleges of Canada, called the non-commissioned member strategic education plan—or something like that. I only know it as NCM-SEP. The SEP was more economical for the Canadian Armed Forces to get into, so we moved from a very expensive, gold-plated program to a more economical, broad-based Canadian program.

I do not know, sir—and I'll have to get back to you and take it on note—whether we're cancelling the Marine Institute program. I do not know of it being cancelled. I know of it being reduced, but I can provide a more pointed answer to you.

Mr. Jack Harris: That would be helpful, sir, as we have been concerned about the effects of cutbacks to operations, training, and those sorts of things.

On SAR, and I don't know if I have enough time to ask one more question—

The Chair: Two minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Search and rescue has been an interest of mine since I was elected to Parliament in 2008. One of the major issues I've raised in this committee—and we did a study related to it—is the search and rescue response times. I understand from media reports that there's an evaluation taking place, and it's already been tested in Comox and Trenton, and it's now under way in the Halifax SAR region to test the operational efficiency of running a 30-minute response time 24/7, which is good news to my ears, sir.

Could you tell us a little bit more about that evaluation, when it's started, how long it is going to be taking, and what the results are so far?

RAdm John Newton: Right. There has been one news report on a change to the SAR posture in Atlantic Canada. The idea of the report was correct, but the substance of the report was totally wrong. We have 40 hours of 30-minute response time in the Maritimes, as we speak. After we get into this new trial starting on the May long weekend, we will still have 40 hours of 30-minute response time.

What we're doing is shifting when we're at the 30-minute response in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, P.E.I., and Newfoundland to the right slightly during the day to match up with the marine industry's use of the waters and the recreational boaters' use of the waters. So, statistically we can show that if we can move slightly to the right when we're at 30 minutes' notice during the week, and especially on weekends, we can capture more search and rescue incidents that arise.

Mr. Jack Harris: And you can confirm—

• (1605)

The Chair: Time, Mr. Harris. You'll have to revisit this in your next opportunity. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chisu, please. Seven minutes.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Admiral, for your presentation. It was very enlightening.

How is the rapidly changing international defence and security environment affecting Canada, the United States, and North America from a maritime perspective, especially in the Arctic—if you can elaborate—with Russia's ambitions in that?

RAdm John Newton: It's an excellent question, sir, and a very broad question.

There are several threats in the international realm right now, or several rapidly developing situations. One is the continuing unrest in several Arab countries and in the Middle East; the other is Russia's aggression in the Ukraine. Each of these is different. I don't know whether I can draw lines between Russia and the Arab Spring phenomenon, but Canada's government has shown a distinct policy intent to demonstrate forward presence using elements of the Canadian Armed Forces.

One of the elements chosen was the Royal Canadian Navy. We have been an active participant in the CTF-150, which is the Combined Task Force 150, in the northern Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. Right now, the Royal Canadian Navy has a commodore and 20 Canadians commanding the combined task force, which has ships of France, Britain, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the U.S., and the U.S. Coast Guard passing through the command from time to time.

Why are we there? We are there to demonstrate the interest of Canada in those important and strategic waterways that flow through the Strait of Hormuz, where the energy flows of the planet focus. We're there to learn about the Indian Ocean, to help like-minded states and states with a desire to move toward legitimate use of the seas and democratic ideals build capacity in their militaries. We're there to learn relationships among nations and to develop a trust for Canadian Armed Forces in the region.

We do not have a ship there. We've moved our ship from CTF-150 into the Mediterranean Sea to deal with that other adversarial situation with Russia, and to reassure our NATO allies, especially Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey—countries such as those—that NATO stands behind its article 5 statement of collective defence anywhere at any time. Our navy is doing what it can, forward-deployed with like-minded navies of the coalition and CTF-150, or with the NATO alliance.

In the Canadian Arctic, there is no doubt increased activity. It's mainly commercial; it's mainly tourism-related; it's mainly related to changes in the ice regime and climate. However, there are military phenomena in the north, but mainly reserved for my friends in NORAD to deal with. The Royal Canadian Navy continues to go to the Arctic as a full partner with all the other government departments to help in the management of consequences of oil spills, search and rescue, crashed airliners that are using the polar air routes, or even something military that might develop on land. But I wouldn't want to overstate here that there is aggression or a military threat in the Arctic.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much, Admiral.

Which state and non-state actors challenge Canada's maritime approaches, mostly in the Atlantic, and how frequently does it occur? I'm speaking about not only military, but fishing vessels that are trying to fish illegally in our waters, and so on.

RAdm John Newton: I think Canada has done a very good job, sir, of policing its 200-mile economic exclusion zone and working with the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization to bring jurisdiction and governance to waters far more distant than even the Flemish Cap and the tail and nose of the Grand Banks. Canada's navy has been a strong partner with Fisheries and Oceans to serve as the taxi for their peace officers at sea. We have a very tight relationship and we share the procedures, the tactics, and the intelligence on how to conduct those fisheries patrols to maximum effect. Over the years, we have worked the international fishing fleets, the rogue fleets, and nations that are a little bit more assertive in the fishing domain. We have pushed them back, and there is a considerable amount of international respect earned for Canada's legislation and jurisdiction and regulation of the fisheries of the North Atlantic.

I would not say that this is our principal threat, although you mentioned it in your introduction. The principal threat from non-state actors is the use of the sea lanes—the big-box traffic that comes in thousands of containers per ship and the importation of illicit cargoes. They could be arms, explosives, precursor chemicals; they could be drugs. I would say that right now the most prevalent cargo threatening Canada is drugs. And it's not just the drugs; it's the revenue from the drugs, which is a destabilizing influence. We tend to take that battle to the Caribbean Basin and deal with it in depth. We don't tend to deal with it here.

•(1610)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: We have a little border with France: Saint Pierre and Miquelon. How is France actually involved in, let's say, the Atlantic area?

RAdm John Newton: France is an enduring ally, sir.

It's a beautiful—

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Do you have exercises with France or something? Because—

RAdm John Newton: We do not do military exercises because of the location of Saint Pierre and Miquelon in our waters, but France is an enduring ally. They send their warships to Halifax, to Quebec City. They participate in Rendez-Vous Naval. They carried the Royal 22nd Regiment at sea on the *Mistral* last year. French submarines will exercise in passing our waters en route to work with the United States and other allies. The French will use a government ship called the *Fulmar* for the patrol of the fisheries fleets with us, so they will do the international part using their fishing ship in support of the North Atlantic fisheries observers. We provide search and rescue coverage to the waters of Saint Pierre and Miquelon.

I can only say it's a very strong and positive relationship. We'll actually support the yacht race that goes there every year.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chisu, that's time.

Ms. Murray for seven minutes, please.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Thank you, Rear admirable—I think that's a Freudian slip.

You've noted in your comments the fine reputation of the Royal Canadian Navy. I would certainly second that idea. I thank friends and naval cadets newly joined to the armed forces, the Royal Canadian Navy.

You mentioned that your focus is on preserving an increasing operational readiness. I'm wanting to understand the challenges that you face, given the steady decline in the RCN's ability to achieve required levels of readiness according to the December 2013 evaluation of naval forces. You talked in your remarks also about having to—or doing the best to—preserve some degree of freedom in your manoeuvre, given the lack of supply ships, so there are a lot of challenges that you face. The navy will be obliged to do less with less according to this review. I just wonder if you could give us a few words about what kinds of things you are having to put aside given the decrease in funding and the failure to replace ships in a timely way?

RAdm John Newton: Yes, ma'am. That's a big question.

The Canadian Atlantic fleet, or the Canadian fleet, is as ready and capable as it ever was, but there are challenges and there are resource pressures. Since the report of the chief review services—I think you're reading from it—from 2013, ships have been returning to the navy in a steady stream from the Halifax-class modernization. At 20 years old the fleet has been modernized.

In my fleet we have deployed *Fredericton*, fully modernized for the next 20 years of her life. It's an incredibly capable ship. She's followed by *Halifax* and *Montreal*, which are out there doing the business right now on the high seas helping deliver the Cyclone helicopter. Hot on the heels of that ship is HMCS *Charlottetown*, and *St. John's* will come back to the navy momentarily.

What has changed since that report is this steady flow of modernized warships back to the navy. By the same token, the submarine has risen to high readiness and is now preparing to fire her torpedoes with the United States Navy, and then we'll be ready for the government to signal their intent or not to deploy her.

•(1615)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Okay, thank you.

So in the *Strategic Outlook for Canada*, this very recent CDA Institute report, on page one it says:

...the Navy enters 2015 significantly weakened; the Government's deficit cutting has resulted in a 23% cut in the Navy's funding to keep what remains of the available fleet at sea.

Are you saying that this is inaccurate, or are there areas in which you are no longer engaged in order to protect the operational readiness in other aspects of your responsibility?

RAdm John Newton: I can't dress this up any differently. We did retire HMCS *Preserver* on the east coast and we did retire HMCS *Athabaskan*. Those decisions were taken to allow the navy to focus good dollars on the best and most highly useful ships of the fleet. We're incredibly proud of the two ships the navy asked to retire. They have done incredible service for our country, and there is a national shipbuilding procurement strategy to re-deliver capacities like those two classes of ships that have been retired. We will bridge to the arrival of those ships in time by compromising.

Ms. Joyce Murray: May I ask a bit about that, because we talked to Rear-Admiral Truelove about that, I think. He said something about there being a possibility of leasing, or there were some options being discussed, because the plan B, which had been to borrow the capacity of resupply from our partners, was not going to work, given how long it will be before they're replaced, thanks to the significant delays in this shipbuilding procurement strategy delivering.

RAdm John Newton: Yes, ma'am. That's my commander's business, to work with government to create a bridging strategy to the building of the joint support ship and to the Canadian surface combatant, to which the navy is fundamentally committed.

My job is to find ways, working with our allies, to increase the capacity of the fleet we have. So we very carefully now choose the highest impact exercises, like the Rim of the Pacific exercise, like Trident Juncture with NATO, like the task group exercise in which we are working with four major surface combatants of the United States navy and two nuclear submarines right as we speak, right now.

My job is to find those training opportunities so our navy comes up to the level of readiness despite the absence of those two classes of ship.

Ms. Joyce Murray: So it's somebody else who's figuring out the bridging; that's what I'm hearing.

RAdm John Newton: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Joyce Murray: I'm going to ask you about search and rescue.

One of my colleagues asked a question today about the squadron of long-range drones that had been announced repeatedly for 5 Wing Goose Bay, and according to a recent department document, it's indefinitely delayed. Can you give us some information as to why? Is that a casualty of all the funding cuts that the department has received, or are there other reasons? Does that influence or affect the ability to fully cover the area that those long-range drones would have helped with in terms of search?

RAdm John Newton: Ma'am, with all due respect, I have to refer that question to the air force, which would be working on the purchase of unmanned aerial vehicles, but I do control the surveillance mission for the eastern seaboard of Canada. It's called Op Leviathan, and right now and going into the near-term future, I have adequate forces at my disposal. I'm working with the integrated maritime partnership of chartered flights from provincial aerospace, long-range patrol aviation of the air force, using the upgraded Aurora, which has just been modernized. The capability of that aircraft does not allow a linear correlation of the past to the future.

These new aircraft, the Cyclone and the Block III Aurora, are so capable that you must accept that there are going to be changes in force outlays of fleets of aircraft. We have the Block III. We are

taking delivery of the Cyclone. We have a great relationship with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada, and Transport Canada, and we all fly surveillance aircraft to monitor Canada's maritime space.

The Chair: Your time is up, Ms. Murray.

We'll go to Mr. Williamson, beginning the five-minute segment round.

• (1620)

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Admiral, thank you for coming in today. We get to hear from the opposition, the opposition that cancelled the replacement of the Sea King helicopter, of course, when it was in office, and now continues to criticize the good work the government has done, particularly around the warships we will see coming on line over the next generation.

However, I digress.

Admiral Newton, I understand that in February of last year, you gave a talk at Dalhousie University in which you spoke about the Royal Canadian Navy's contribution to the strategic defence of North America, what we are studying here before us, and you included counterterrorism. Could you please elaborate on the counterterrorism measures undertaken by Canada's navy?

RAdm John Newton: Wow, did I say that?

The Combined Task Force 150, in the Arabian Sea, in sea lanes that reach all the way back to Africa, through the Suez Canal, into southern Europe, and actually flow drugs into the United States—the very thing that HMCS *Toronto* was just provided a meritorious unit commendation for—their mission is counterterrorism and maritime security. It's to prevent the seaways of the world from being used to move illicit cargoes and terrorists, and from being used for other activities, such as human smuggling and arms shipments. We're there to network with like-minded nations, with police services such as Interpol and the RCMP, to actually try to get into the undercurrent of these illegal activities.

In North America we do the same thing with the marine security operations centre. The partners there are CSIS, the RCMP, and the Border Services Agency. All of us have an interest in closing down the seaways, especially the big ships carrying containers, but also the ships under 300 tonnes that can actually slip underneath our radar coverage if we don't pay attention to them.

The platform that Canada has created and is running very effectively is the MSOC. Just to give you an idea of how effective this MSOC is, which normally looks out to sea, when the shootings occurred here on Parliament Hill and the tragic event happened at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, the partners of the MSOC turned inward in Halifax, called me up and said that the three police agencies of the country—CBSA, CSIS, and the RCMP—were actually looking at their defence partners and keeping our backs safe. That was from the partnership created looking outwards. They were able to give me the confidence that our soldiers were safe in Halifax while we were trying to understand the depth of the issues happening in Ottawa.

I would say that the relationship is very effective. It allows us to exercise a scenario such as we did last year in Pictou, Nova Scotia, where we actually ran a counterterrorism scenario.

The Special Operations Forces of Canada participate in the scenario. They're brought in to do strikes at sea using their own maritime capacities, which are married to the Royal Canadian Navy capabilities and married to the other agencies, such as the coast guard and their ships, and aircraft.

Then we brought in a decontamination capacity from the Canadian army to deal with the chemical agents that might be involved in a terrorist-type strike.

This is the kind of thinking military men and women do. We don't do it on our own. We have a whole-of-government agency behind us to allow all the elements of security to work in order to defeat the terrorist threat.

Mr. John Williamson: Very good.

I'm actually noticing a theme, coming back to your number one preoccupation, which is the sea lanes and monitoring them.

We're preparing this report for Parliament. It will be looked at by the government. What are the things that we as lawmakers should be considering to better understand this? What things would you impress upon us that are important to better understand the challenges around that focus you have? What could be done to make life a little easier for members of the Royal Canadian Navy in doing that job day in and day out?

RAdm John Newton: The marine security operations centre is not run by the navy, but we are participants in it. We are an equal to all of the other five security partners.

I think all the security partners of the MSOC would benefit from a greater public and a greater legislative understanding of the role of this marine centre.

I do a lot of peddling to the region of the east coast, telling the story to the provinces so that they understand who to phone and who to trust when issues happen in their provinces.

We do a lot of bridging of provincial and federal authorities so that in a crisis we will all know how to respond as a group.

The marine security operations centre has gone from a project and is moving very quickly to its full operational capability. There will be legislative requirements in due course in that shift to operations.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Admiral.

We're at time.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for five minutes.

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

Rear-Admiral Newton, thank you for your presentation.

Previously, in committee, there have been a lot of discussions on the various threats to Canada and North America in the Arctic, but what about the Atlantic? Could you elaborate on your assessment of the threats? How do you set your priorities in the Atlantic? Do you work with other organizations or other regional forces?

RAdm John Newton: If I understand correctly, you are asking me how we coordinate our operations and how we work with the other forces.

Ms. Éline Michaud: I am talking about other regional forces, in the Atlantic at least.

RAdm John Newton: As I have already explained a number of times, we must first work with the Marine Security Operations Centre.

Have I understood your question?

Ms. Éline Michaud: I don't think so. If I may, I have several other questions, so I will move on to the next one. Thank you.

We expect the Royal Canadian Navy to play a greater role in the Arctic once you finally receive—one day perhaps—the Arctic offshore patrol ships. We know that this program is way behind schedule, and it is no longer certain that the operational capabilities of the ships—whose current construction is delayed—will be enough to accomplish everything we want.

Regardless of that, if the Royal Canadian Navy were able to fully participate in the operations in the Arctic, what do you think its role would be? How will it collaborate with the Canadian Coast Guard or how will it complement the Coast Guard's work? Tasks should not end up overlapping either. These two entities should each have a specific role to play in the Arctic. How do you see the work with the Canadian Coast Guard?

RAdm John Newton: Okay, I understood the question.

[English]

We have a relationship second to none with the Canadian Coast Guard. The coast guard term, unfortunately, is a name of a service, the Canadian Coast Guard. The function of coast guarding is shared by many marine agencies, whether you're in Canada, United States, France, or anywhere. Some countries have the coast guard in the navy. In some countries, the coast guard is the navy. In Canada many of us share the coast guard function. I am a coast guard *fonctionnaire*. We have a very close relationship in guarding the coasts of the Canada with the Canadian Coast Guard. We plan our annual activities together. The navy plans its fuelling operations with the coast guard so we can reach way into the Arctic. We share platforms for fisheries patrol because the coast guard comes under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We help them crew the inshore rescue boats so we can learn small boat skills while providing boating safety with the coast guard in the recreational waters of Canada. The coast guard bases some of its inshore rescue stations at our naval reserve divisions.

[Translation]

Ms. Éloise Michaud: I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I don't have much time.

More specifically, how do you think you can complement the work in the Arctic?

[English]

RAdm John Newton: As we move to the Arctic, we plan the annual season. It's a very short navigation season from mid-July to mid-October. The coast guard goes in to break ice, to help resupply the communities and to patrol the corridors and do a lot of science. The navy goes in to support constabulary affairs in the north. We support the whole-of-government exercise in Nanook. We monitor the shipping of the north. We share the ice plot with the coast guard. We collaborate on community visits. In an amazing demonstration of intergovernmental capacity the coast guard, the navy, the ice service, the hydrographic service, and Parks Canada worked together to discover the Franklin lost ship, *HMS Erebus* and we will go back to rediscover the next ship. Why do we do it? It leads us to demonstrate Canadian technology. It helps us survey the channels of the central Arctic. And we're doing it as a team.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Ms. Éloise Michaud: Okay, thank you very much.

I have another question for you.

The Chair: Please be brief, Ms. Michaud.

Ms. Éloise Michaud: My goodness, how time flies.

What is your current relationship with the Mexican navy? We have heard a lot about the relations with the U.S. navy, but I would like to know more about our cooperation with the Mexican navy in protecting North America.

RAdm John Newton: That is a good question.

[English]

Op CARIBBE is our foundation of operations in the Caribbean. Op CARIBBE is an inter-agency task force that goes after illicit

trafficking especially in drugs. It is run by the department of defence while the U.S. Coast Guard actually does the interdictions. That is our main platform. In that platform there are 14 partner states that collaborate just like Canada does to effectively execute the mission. You can't help but be off Mexican waters when you're doing these missions. So, although Mexico is not a partner nation there is a tri-party relationship called the North American security initiative, NAMSI, which draws Mexico, United States, and Canada into a collaboration to help effect this counter-drug and North American border security mission. It is really a counter-drug mission.

The Chair: Thank you. That's time.

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Admiral Newton, thank you so much for taking time to be with us today and providing us with your words.

NORAD has expanded to include maritime defence. With all of the different hats you're wearing, what are your responsibilities in providing the NORAD component through maritime Joint Task Force Atlantic?

RAdm John Newton: Sir, it goes right to the heart of my mission. With my mission, one of my principle day-to-day jobs is to develop domain awareness.

Maritime domain awareness is more than just dots on a chart of the sea of positions of ships or ice. For every ship and every boat, it's an understanding of where that track is heading, who is the owner, agent, insurer, charterer, or broker, who's on that crew list, and what's in those cargoes. Maritime domain awareness is this very deep understanding of the intent of these tracks. Normally, 99.9% of everything is legitimate and legal, but in that very complex environment of shipping, where there are brokers and agents and owners and containers and insurers and product, you can lose a small detail.

Our job is to provide maritime domain awareness to NORAD, which is a client of the awareness. Their worry is that a submarine, cruise missile launching boat, ballistic missile launching ship, or an intelligence-gathering ship, like the one that is currently off the U.S. eastern seaboard, would do something damaging to the North American security enterprise.

Since 9/11, NORAD has adopted this role called "maritime warning"; it's an adjunct to the aerospace defence. We provide them with the information; they turn it into a warning.

It really comes to fruition when we do theatre anti-submarine warfare because cruise missiles launched from submarines are probably the biggest threat.

Mr. James Bezan: You've enhanced a couple of your capabilities recently, that being the Aurora, to do more of that tracking.

If you wouldn't mind, would you speak to some of the capabilities it has in anti-submarine surveillance? Secondly, having the Victoria-class submarines that are now in Atlantic waters with near complete operational status and high readiness, how does that enhance your ability to do your NORAD responsibilities?

RAdm John Newton: I don't do the NORAD responsibility piece per se; I work the theatre ASW with operational control authorities in the North Atlantic, like my colleagues, Commander, Task Force 84, in Norfolk.

Our job is to keep track of submarines that break into the North Atlantic from ports and oceans more distant than Europe. Our job, day to day, is to always determine where those submarines are. If they break out and are coming toward the North American continent, our job is to clean the ocean surface of all of those tracks—container ships, oil tankers, pleasure boats, and fishing ships—so you have a chance of determining where the underwater submarine is located. It's a very noisy environment, and ships are contributors to the noise of the sea. There are false tracks or they mix up the track information, because to hunt for the submarine you have to see past the ships and their noise.

One piece is the maritime domain awareness piece on the surface, and then we start the hunt under water. The hunt sometimes calls for Canadian Armed Forces assets, depending on the commander of the joint operations decision-making and the permission of government to deploy forces into the Atlantic. Generally, you'll go after a submarine with a long-range patrol aviation, or another submarine. Those are the two most useful tools: submarines and long-range patrol aviation. That's typically what we send forth.

We're at the point now of being able to send Victoria-class boats into these operations. That's the government's decision, and we'll wait to see what they say once I signal to the commander of the navy that HMCS *Windsor* is at high readiness.

•(1635)

Mr. James Bezan: I appreciated your earlier comments and candour in doing the threat assessment, and the concern not only of terrorist attacks, especially in shipping lanes as they approach Canada, but also in Arctic waters with Russia.

I know we always report on the increased activity from an aerial threat, but can you talk about what you're seeing from the standpoint of other foreign navies approaching Canadian waters in the Arctic?

RAdm John Newton: I'm going to have to be very circumspect.

Submarines generate an intense amount of confidential information because of the sources, and how we know what submarines are up to is a very compartmental type of information.

Suffice it to say, countries are building submarines. In the northern oceans new ballistic missile-carrying and new attack submarines have been built and are being trialled after a long lull in shipbuilding.

In the Indian Ocean new submarines have been imported from a submarine shipbuilder. One of our global competitors has been selling a certain type of submarine to foreign navies, and submarines are being used by these navies as area or access denial tools. They

are an incredible weapons system that own vast areas of ocean because they're hidden in it and you must assume, like a mine, that they are there somewhere. It gathers intelligence and it just forces everybody to stand back and take a far deeper breath when operating in that area.

The utility of submarines to our potential adversaries is quite clear to them, and they're good shipbuilders in this regard.

We work with an alliance and the power of the alliance of Britain, France, the United States, Norway, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, and all our NATO allies together creates a much stronger force than a single potential adversary.

The Chair: Thank you, Admiral. That is time.

[*Translation*]

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

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Rear-Admiral Newton, could you tell me what the consequences are on North-American defence of the changes in the initial training of the officers under your command, either as the commander of Maritime Forces Atlantic or as part of the Joint Task Force. The initial training was completely overhauled in 1995. In fact, the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean closed and so did the college that was focused more specifically on training naval officers in British Columbia.

What challenges did you have to face at that time?

Furthermore, you were in charge in 2013 when the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean reviewed the training needs of officers in Saint-Jean compared to those in Kingston.

What impact did that have on the training of naval officers specifically?

RAdm John Newton: I have no details about the issue you are describing.

•(1640)

[*English*]

The initial training of officers occurs at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu,

[*Translation*]

for the navy.

[*English*]

The detailed training of a mariner as soon as he comes out of the basic training at Saint-Jean is undertaken in Esquimalt. That's a very specific marine-based training using boats at sea, the patrol craft of our training system. It occurs in ocean waters so you can learn all the marine trades.

The reserves of the Royal Canadian Navy utilize a basic training system at Valcartier and the base at Quebec City. We don't use Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu for the reserve officers.

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: As commander of the Maritime Forces Atlantic, were you asked to share your views on the review that started in 2013 and whose report had to be submitted in the spring of 2014? In that instance, the goal was to assess the training needs in Saint-Jean compared to Kingston.

[English]

RAdm John Newton: I wasn't consulted. In the navy, one of the pieces that allows us to stay very competitive, very operationally focused is I was given the operational elements, the readiness elements of the navy, as a point of functional leadership. My colleague on the west coast, Admiral Truelove, was given the personnel and training domain. He would be the one reviewing the officer professional development study that's coming out of the chief of military personnel, all the elements of basic training that we receive at Saint-Jean, and how those might evolve with time.

As far as I'm concerned, having run the naval training system for three years, we're very happy with the product that comes out of Saint-Jean. Where we turn our attention is when we get the young officer, and we put him into the maritime environment in Esquimalt. We have given him the absolutely necessary elements of being a sailor, which you will get nowhere else in the country. We have retooled our training system to make it very streamlined and get those kids to the ships as quickly as possible.

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: This committee has visited that naval officers training school before, so we know what you are talking about.

[English]

RAdm John Newton: At Esquimalt?

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Yes.

[English]

RAdm John Newton: The Venture, the naval training school for officers, is a very historic and—

[Translation]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Absolutely, we have visited that base.

Let's talk about the second hat that you wear as commander of the Joint Task Force Atlantic. I have the same question about the officers who are not specifically in the navy and who therefore don't need this specific training that is provided at the Naval Officers Training Centre Venture, in Esquimalt.

Are the needs being reviewed right now?

RAdm John Newton: No, not at all, because the Joint Task Force Atlantic only has 15 middle-ranking or higher-ranking officers doing the work.

[English]

It's a latent force. It doesn't exist until a crisis occurs. Then the army, the air force, and the navy put in their operational elements to

the force and they're directed by the commander. I have very senior officers and I get the product of excellent training up to that point in their career.

The Chair: That's time, thank you.

Mr. Opitz, please, you have five minutes.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Admiral, thank you very much.

I can say something about the training system, having once been involved in it. Our sailors are trained not only to specific boat-driving skills and MARS officers and so forth, but they're jointly trained exceptionally well. I've seen a lot of silver and bronze anchors on a lot of reserve officers among the gold anchors they wear as well, which means they're getting a significant amount of sea time. That is a huge indicator of how well we're doing and how well both reserve and regular sides of the navy are going. So we're very proud of you guys for doing that.

Admiral, there's a difference right now in some of the new capabilities, the Halifax-class ships versus the last Iroquois-class destroyer. Can you describe some of the new capabilities aboard the Halifax-class ships right now?

• (1645)

RAdm John Newton: The ships were delivered starting in 1990 and they therefore had the technology of the 1990 to 2000 timeframe incorporated into the original build. It was a wonderfully capable technology in that era. You can imagine, though, the computers were fairly big and they ate up a lot of room and demanded a lot of air conditioning. That's just one piece that changes with modernization. There's a considerable amount of miniaturization and with it space and volume liberation in the ship. That volume liberation in a fairly large ship can go to other uses.

I'll give you three pieces of modernization that came with this technology change. One is liberation of space and so the four lead ships of the modernization can be made into flagships for the force so that we can bridge across the period where we don't have a Canadian surface combatant, where we don't have the Iroquois-class which gave us our task force command capabilities. So we've got volume and we added that volume to the operations room of the ship. We put in the command and control consoles and now we have a bridging capacity to the future.

Another element of modernization is in the old ship damage control. Keeping the ship afloat and fighting fire and flood was a separate capacity from running the engines, the auxiliary equipment, and the air conditioning. The fact is, in a warship that floats on the sea the two of them are actually one and the same. You want to fight against fire and flood at the same time that you operate your machinery. In fact, a lot of the machinery we operate contributes to the fighting of damage. We've incorporated in the modernization those two inherently related systems into one integrated platform management system. It is a wonderful interactive system where people stand in front of major computer screens that demand lots of electricity, but they can intuitively direct the battle against the debilitating damage of battle. Our job is to fight, survive the damage, and win the exchange.

The third element is we increased the sensor, radars, and weapons system functioning and capacities of the ship, especially in the above-water domain. We've upgraded a missile system, added a three-dimensional radar, have much more precise fire control radars, and modernized elements of the gun and electronic warfare system so that the ship can actually confront, survive, and win in an exchange with, let's say, fifth-generation missiles of potential adversaries. We're in the full-up development of this new combat suite right now.

Mr. Ted Opitz: In your overall readiness, how flexible is the fleet overall? We talked about submarines briefly and the capability of diesel submarines versus nuclear submarines. We've had previous testimony that diesel submarines, in particular in training with our allies that have nukes, are hugely important in that exercise because it allows the merging of both capabilities. Of course, the quietness of our submarines and the stealth capabilities, quite frankly, underwater are important, but so are some of the elements that you deal with in terms of the whole-of-government approach when you're working with DOM ops and when you're working with, of course, other elements in land and air capabilities.

I only have probably a minute to go. Can you just briefly describe the overall flexibility of the fleet and being able to deal with all of those elements at once?

RAdm John Newton: I admit that we are a general purpose navy. We don't want to be pigeonholed in any particular niche, so we are trying to develop an agile, responsive, multi-purpose, retoolable navy, depending on the mission scenario.

Our submarine, sir, introduces a very small submarine. It doesn't have the big underwater signature of a nuclear boat. It can get into shallow waters and it can survey coasts, bays, inlets, and the shelf waters that are prevalent around the world. It takes advantage of the way sound propagates in the ocean, and it can hide using sound channels and sea bottom features where a nuclear submarine would just not be the right tool to use. It's an adjunct or a complementary element to the big nuclear submarines of the blue water. It can be used in the blue water. In fact the submarine was made by the British for the Greenland-Iceland-U.K. gap, which is a very turbulent and a very cold and difficult body of water to hunt submarines in.

We know we have a good submarine. It's proving itself daily when it operates against the best submariners in the world, and they have a heck of a time dealing with it. I imagine our guys have a heck of a time dealing with those submarines too, but there's a mutual respect of two fundamentally different classes of ships.

On the second part of your question, we practise and we look for scenarios with foreign navies and countries to develop this broadly useful navy. We will go into major exercises, creating scenarios that make sure we're not pigeonholed into just anti-submarine warfare and that we are actually able to do escort, maritime interdiction operations, or counter-drug boardings.

At this time we're building a third generation of our naval boarding party capacity, which is like a SWAT team at sea. We're coming up to a level just underneath counterterrorist special operations forces, so we can be their support for maritime counterterrorism. We're continually looking for these areas to broaden the utility of our navy.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Admiral.

That's your time. Thank you, Mr. Opitz.

Ms. Gallant, go ahead please, for five minutes.

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

Would the admiral please advise this committee on what you've experienced, seen, or observed in terms of non-state actors in the maritime sector? For example, narcotics—what is involved there? Have you seen any evidence of terrorist activity in your sector?

RAdm John Newton: That's always a tough question, but I think I have a very recent example to illuminate what you're getting at, ma'am.

In the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, there are many states and many regional conflict centres. There are many competing issues, and none more so than the flow of massive amounts of energy to the world markets. But in that body of water we also have the Horn of Africa, and there was a piracy issue, which has been driven down to a fairly low level.

Fairly unknown to most people is the flow of drugs from Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan across the waterways in ships that are smuggling them. They're in Arab dhows, which is a fishing-style boat. Often the crews don't know they're carrying the drugs. They're smuggled into the hull and hidden in the woodwork of the boats. The drug shipments are occurring in east Africa, into Tanzania and Kenya, where they then make their way into a land bridge and into southern Europe. Some of those drugs actually reach North America.

But that's not the issue. We're in that mission by government mandate for counterterrorism and maritime security reasons. The linkage between those drugs and terrorism is that the funding of the drug shipments—the buys, the middlemen, the licensing to transport it out of Afghanistan or whatever—pays terrorist organizations their revenue. It's one of their key revenue-generation streams. By interdicting the drugs, we're denying a terrorist the financial backing he requires to hire and train his people, buy the ordnance and explosives, and to do his business.

That's a key element. That's what HMCS *Toronto* was recognized for by the chief of naval operations last week. They did eight major boardings involving more drugs than any police force in the world would take off the streets in a year. The amount of drugs that were taken out of the maritime seaways just dominates that by a hundredfold. That does hit at somebody's pocketbook and it does go back to terrorism.

That is a non-state linkage in which the navy has been participating. It's also the same one that's active in the Caribbean. The drug money in the Caribbean is destabilizing states like Mexico and other countries. It corrupts and co-opts, and it's not just about the drugs making it to our streets.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

I read a bit in the news that the Cyclones are currently being tested out. Can you tell us whether you have actually received any Cyclone helicopters, and if so, how are they working out?

RAdm John Newton: The Royal Canadian Navy has committed itself to being ready and available to deliver the Cyclone helicopter as fast as the Royal Canadian Air Force and the government elements of the program can deliver them to 12 Wing Shearwater.

Right now, HMCS *Halifax* is working with the Royal Canadian Air Force and the contractor, Sikorsky, to go through the tests of the flight deck and the helicopter performance—the wind that comes off the ship and how it responds in rough weather. That's my level of interaction with that helicopter. This is a Royal Canadian Air Force project.

It seems to be moving very quickly in the right direction. It's a big helicopter. If it's anything like its predecessor, the helicopter we've operated for 50 years, my statement would be this: if we get the statement of requirements correct now, we will have another fine helicopter for 50 years. I think we're in that initial stage of a relationship with an excellent company.

•(1655)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

Could you tell us the role of reservists in the ships of the navy?

RAdm John Newton: The reservists augment the regular force crew. There is no reserve navy or regular force navy. We have moved to a "one navy" model and a "one navy" motto. We used to have the Kingston class completely crewed by reservists. We're moving away from that model, because it's unsustainable. It worked beautifully, but we burned ourselves out doing it. So we're going to a one navy model of reserves augmenting the regular force.

On those ships, 60% of the crews are reservists and 40% are going to be regular force. By this means we have gone from having three Kingston-class available on each coast to having five available. We're in the position of having four right now and are moving toward five.

This was one of our bridging techniques to get us by this capacity or readiness hole we've in as we modernize the main fleet. We're giving more tasks and more of the duty of the old reserve ship—but it's actually a one navy ship—in patrols in the Arctic. They were the ones that participated in the Franklin search, and four of them are in the counter-drug mission in the Caribbean right now. So we're putting more on the back of what used to be a reserve ship, but we're pairing the reservists with the regular force.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gallant. The time is up.

We'll now go into the third and final round of questions, of five minutes, beginning with Mr. Harris, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

Just to follow up on the last question with Ms. Gallant, does this mean that you're actually cutting back the number of reservists in the naval reserve?

RAdm John Newton: No, sir, we're actually trying to increase them. The reserves are managed in three different blocks: Class A, Class B, and Class C reserves. Class A reserves are the foundational element of the reserves; they are the majority of our reservists. These are the citizen-soldiers who parade once a week in their units; then they come to training events periodically throughout the year and they often gain summer employment as Class B reservists during the summer.

Sir, we are trying to increase the Class As and diminish the Class Bs.

Mr. Jack Harris: All right. Please keep your answers a little short, because I only have five minutes here, and I have a few other questions. Thank you.

You talked about the MSOC operations as being very important for domain awareness. Is it the operation that provides domain awareness to NORAD, or is that a different operation?

RAdm John Newton: It helps populate the military picture—

Mr. Jack Harris: This defence committee, in the last Parliament, visited Halifax and went to an operations centre through a locked door and vacuum lock and all sorts of security to get into the main operations centre, where a lot of that activity took place. I can't recall whether that was the MSOC area, but I know it was the biggest and most elaborate domain awareness—

RAdm John Newton: Yes, we will take the military element of the overall picture and provide it to NORAD. NORAD is always vacuuming up the picture through the United States Navy, through the U.S. Coast Guard, and through an agency called MIFC LANT. We contribute to that continental picture. We certainly don't give away RCMP, CBSA, and Transport Canada confidential information.

Mr. Jack Harris: But that's the same centre that we're talking about.

RAdm John Newton: Yes, sir. It's a combination of two centres. It's the MSOC paired with the joint operations centre which is my headquarters' watch floor.

Mr. Jack Harris: So you're the liaison with NORAD with respect to that part of NORAD's activities.

RAdm John Newton: Yes, sir.

Mr. Jack Harris: But this is purely domain awareness. There is no operational side to that?

RAdm John Newton: Well, there's the whole-of-government. There's the Canadian sovereignty piece—

Mr. Jack Harris: No, I get that.

RAdm John Newton: —that is at play.

Mr. Jack Harris: No, no, I understand that. But in terms of the NORAD central command, you're not a part of that. You're feeding into NORAD, the domain awareness piece—

RAdm John Newton: Yes, sir.

Mr. Jack Harris: —if I can use that inelegant term. But that part goes off to NORAD.

In terms of operations from NORAD, you're part of the Canadian command. Whatever response there might be, that comes from somewhere else.

• (1700)

RAdm John Newton: Yes, sir. I am taking several million data points of information and resolving them down to about 2,000 ships on the sea, and then I give that shipping plot to NORAD. Do I know if somebody at the other end is looking at the shipping plot or do they actually wake up when there's an incident? I think it's more the latter. But I'm feeding the shipping plot into the United States Coast Guard, the United States Navy, and Homeland Security-type enterprise.

Mr. Jack Harris: Okay, thank you.

If I may go back to some questions that Ms. Murray was alluding to, we've got a recorded statement from Vice-Admiral Norman back in December 2013 regarding the 2014-2017 business plans and concerns about competing priorities testing the ability to do your mandate. Also, the chief of review services in what I would consider strong language for an internal document, stating that the navy would be obliged to do less with less.

I'm wondering if you could tell us what less have you ended up doing as a result of the lesser amount of resources available to the navy?

RAdm John Newton: Just for a way of a reference point, the sea days of the navy have not decreased, but sea days are only one measure of our readiness. I have reduced the number of major ship exercises down to two major ship exercises every year instead of three. But in doing that, I make the major multi-ship exercises better exercises. I put more resources into those events. That's one thing I've done, if there was ever a translation from going to something less. I can't deny again that I do not have a replenishment ship and I do not have one of the command platforms, HMCS *Iroquois*. I continue to operate HMCS *Athabasca* until 2017 to help generate helicopter pilots for the air force, to do the continental and homeland mission, and to do patrols like the fisheries patrols or a counter-drug intercept, if required.

So sea days have stayed the same. I've taken the number of major multi-ship exercises and I've reduced them to two but I've made them bigger. I go looking much more assertively for big exercises with allies around the world to get the missing pieces that I could have generated had I had *Preserver* still operating. That's why I'm in Virginia operating—and commanding—we are commanding an American naval force to help them generate their readiness as all navies look to a smart defence with their allies to generate more in a period of less.

The Chair: It's time, Mr. Harris. We were generous.

Yes, it did fly by.

Mr. Opitz, please.

Mr. Ted Opitz: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In fairness to what Mr. Harris said, Admiral, I'm finding it hard that we don't have enough resources to do what we're doing because we have, I think, committed a significant amount of resources and dollars in the fact that we've been upgrading our ships, upgrading our platforms, and getting a lot of new capability on the Halifax. Of course, we're working on the Cyclones and will be coming online.

All those new capabilities obviously cost a lot of money and take a lot of time and effort to put in place. From my perspective I think we have done a great deal in making sure that our readiness and our capabilities are there. Just like any navy, just like any piece of equipment, whether it's a lab, ship or an airplane, they eventually do wear out. And our supply ships clearly have had some issues, and we're working on that.

Can you make some comment on the resources that you have received from this government to be able to keep you at a readiness state?

RAdm John Newton: Oh, we're thrilled to death with the Halifax class modernization. It is moving very quickly toward full-up success in so many different ways. The capacities of new technology undoubtedly give you more capability than you had in older systems.

The number of ships is a quality in its own right, and we will see the number of our ships repair fairly quickly with the delivery of a whole new class of ships called the arctic offshore patrol ships or the Harry DeWolf class. This is going to push the Canadian navy fully as a partner into the Arctic domain.

We've come through a period of difficult sailing with our submarine fleet, and we are well on our way to operating three submarines, because we've committed the resources, talent, and intellect in our training with allies to generate them to high readiness.

Regrettably, we've laid up three of our ships which thrilled the heck out of us in our operational life over 40-plus years, and we couldn't have asked them to do more. We are sad for the sailors who put so much into them, but our navy is transitioning very quickly to the modernized Halifax class, working with a modernized air force. We can see in the front windshield the Cyclone coming at us. We believe in our submarines like nobody else, and we are being asked to participate in international operations because we still have effect and relevance.

I would say, sir, that we've taken the back end of the business and given it a strong shaking. We call it "evolving the business of our business". We've emptied out all the ways we've done business. We've thrown all the Scrabble pieces on the floor, and we've rewritten doctrine, policy, and planning in the Royal Canadian Navy to always prioritize the generation of the fleet. Maybe we've kicked ourselves about the way we used to do things in our schoolhouses, the way we ran our governance, and how we had different people doing the same thing, and we got it down to as lean as we can to bridge to this period of the modernized fleet.

● (1705)

Mr. Ted Opitz: Now, in Operation Nanook, the JTF commander was saying that the Fleet Diving Unit Atlantic and the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre were the overall participants. Can you describe how these elements interacted with one another overall, and how successful it was, in particular the lessons learned that were gained as a result?

RAdm John Newton: Sir, the navy is pretty proud of the fact that it has a long heritage operating in the north and leading the rest of government to solve Arctic problems.

HMCS *Labrador* was a navy ship in 1954. It cruised the Northwest Passage, helped build the DEW line, and put Canada in the north in a particular period in time when sovereignty was in our highest demand, and there was a full-blown Cold War. All through the seventies and eighties we led science missions and universities to the north on our ships. We returned to the north with a vengeance after a 10-year gap in 2001, the year of 9/11. We are the ones who put joint task force exercises on the map in the north with Operation Narwhal, or Exercise Narwhal at the time, which has evolved into Nanook.

To us, the Arctic is a maritime domain. It's an archipelago, an inland sea, the Arctic Ocean, Baffin Bay, Davis Strait, and the Beaufort Sea. We have been a good partner there. We just need to expand the period of time when we can be the partner in that maritime domain, and that's what AOPS is going to give us.

If it comes down to search and rescue, you are probably going to have a maritime component, because the aboriginal peoples use the water to move in the Arctic. If it's going to be a loss of a helicopter or an airline crash in the north, dime to dozen it's going to find water and it's going to have a diving component. If it's increased shipping, there could be an accident. There could be casualties and evacuees, and that was the scenario of Nanook last year. Also, there could be an environmental element in our pristine north, which is something the coast guard and Transport Canada are focusing on.

The navy is well situated. It was well situated. It will be exceptionally well situated with the arctic offshore patrol ship. It's a big ship, long-range, high-volume, and multi-purpose. It's the perfect element of support—arms support, constabulary support—toward the other federal departments. We've already built the teamwork to be a whole-of-government presence in the north.

The Chair: Thank you, Admiral. You're out of time, Mr. Opitz.

Ms. Murray, please. You have the final five minutes.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Thank you, and thank you for your frank answer to the question that my colleague, Jack Harris, asked.

I think it's important for the listeners and the viewers of this committee to know that there are members of Parliament who are holding the government to account for having said one thing and done another and that we are asking how this actually affects the Canadian Armed Forces. And, frankly, I think that it's fine for the government-side members to preen their feathers about how great the government is doing, but the reality is that there have been significant budget cuts and somebody called it, "...a snarled, impossible mess, riven with intra-governmental factionalism and disputes, with no relief in sight...", in terms of procurement. That does affect the operations of the forces, so I think these are fair questions, and Canadians deserve to ask them, so thank you for your respectful answers.

I've got four quick questions, and we only have time for quick answers.

One is, when you talked about "we've laid up three of our ships", from your perspective, if you were involved with this decision at all, was it about the reductions of Royal Canadian Navy personnel, or was it the reductions in the budget that caused them to be laid up so much earlier than planned?

Two, with respect to the Cyclone, we're celebrating the idea of them, but they were claimed to be delivered in 2009 by this government, and there are still none. So my question is, how have these massive delays actually affected the Maritime Atlantic operations and joint task force operations from Atlantic?

Three is the Auroras, one of the many failures to deliver. They were to be replaced by 2020. According to Professor Sloan, the delays up to 2035 appeared to be monetary—in other words, budget cutting for the election. So my question is, if only 10 Auroras from the original 18 are being modernized, is that sufficient for surveillance and reconnaissance over Canada's vast maritime areas?

Lastly, a briefing note talks about hundreds of arrangements the military has with allies to share facilities, and services are being called into question because of a whole layer of bureaucracy that the government has put into place. Has that affected any of your sharing arrangements with your allies in terms of joint operations or joint facilities?

● (1710)

RAdm John Newton: All right, I'm going to have to be quick, right?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

RAdm John Newton: The navy, I think, led the decision making on the retirement of our aging classes of ships. We saw what our fixed-budget envelopes are. We saw the very aging infrastructure of those platforms that were built in another era with different damage control systems, engine configurations, and automation. When the fire occurred in *Protecteur*, of course the admirals circled the wagons, looked each other in the eye, took our 35 years of naval experience, and made a decision that it's not good use of Canadian taxpayers' money to fire good money after bad on a ship that we can no longer pour enough money in to keep going. That's not a political discussion. That was very much the navy admirals knowing we couldn't take our budget dollars and put them there when they should have been used somewhere else. It was a never-ending pouring of money into the aging class. It comes at the end of a class's life when the investment rises very high in maintenance.

The second question is—

Ms. Joyce Murray: So it was in operations rather than personnel cuts, is what you just said.

RAdm John Newton: They were very operational-minded decisions. There were no personnel issues. In fact, I've disappointed a lot of sailors.

On Cyclones, all I'll say, ma'am, is that one is flying from the back of a Royal Canadian Navy ship now. We're thrilled with what we see. Things accelerate very quickly once you start working with the project and the live aircraft or the live ship, whether it's the modernization, whether it's the AOPS, or whether it's going to be the Cyclone. Put it in the sailors' or the airmen's hands, and the project will accelerate quickly. We're starting to see that. I would say that the Sea King in the interim period has never let us down. Okay? It's a 50-year Sikorsky helicopter. I had one break on operations, and the air force used the C-17 to bring a new one in literally days, so capabilities cannot be isolated from the whole picture. The C-17 married with the old aircraft of the helicopter actually allowed us to bridge from a defect into operations right away.

The third question was, there's a lot of technology shifting going on as we modernize platforms. I tried to explain this previously. On the Block III Aurora, I can't get into the number of aircraft, but when we fly a Block III Aurora, it generates far more acoustic pictures of the ocean to far higher fidelity. So do I have to fly three aircraft, or do I fly one?

Going back to that comment I made about smart defence, we work as teams with our allies. The P-8 American aircraft flies side by side with the modernized Aurora Block III. We get a lot of ocean area covered in these modern aircraft capabilities.

The Chair: Ms. Murray, the time has almost expired. Please give the admiral his final—

Ms. Joyce Murray: You make do with what you have and find innovative ways to—

RAdm John Newton: Yes, ma'am. We try to bridge any defects or deficiencies we come across with capabilities.

The final answer—I think it's about using shared services—is that it has not impacted our relationships with allies. The Royal Canadian

Navy wants to be a partner to enable shared services to execute their leadership of the information management and information technology domain, especially with the big unclassified networks. We are trying to enable them to success.

• (1715)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Admiral, for your time with us today.

Colleagues, when we return on Monday, March 9, we have two witnesses: Lieutenant-General Parent, Royal Canadian Air Force, who is the deputy commander, NORAD; and the deputy commander of Canadian Special Operations Forces Command, CANSOFCOM.

This meeting is adjourn—

Oh, is there a point of order?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Yes, a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I find that things are slipping right now. The members opposite are increasingly using obstruction to take away the speaking time from one of the members of this committee. Sometimes they knowingly raise points of order that are not. I don't know which Standing Order applies here, but I think each committee member has a right to express himself or herself.

If they want to argue, they can do so when it is their turn to speak. In addition, it is insulting to the witnesses we receive here. It is disrespectful to them. That is why I think you should take action and call to order the members playing this game. This gives a bad impression of how this committee works. It was not the case when I was a member in 2011. This obstruction technique was not used then. I urge you to take control of the situation, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brahmi.

There were in fact today no points of order. This committee—I say this having sat on a number of committees—is generally among the better behaved all around.

I saw your hand in the air, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: To that point of order, I wouldn't say there is anything here that was done in obstruction or in disrespect to Admiral Newton and the excellent testimony that he gave today.

There may have been a few moans and groans coming from our side when Ms. Murray was asking her questions. We just ask that when we're talking about smart defence we have intelligent questions coming forward as well.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I think the admiral acquitted himself exceptionally well and is capable of responding to questions from all perspectives.

This meeting is adjourned.

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