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Chair

Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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• (0845)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): Good morning, everyone. Welcome to defence committee this morning and to the first meeting of our study on Canada's contribution to international peacekeeping.

From Global Affairs we have Mark Gwozdecky, assistant deputy minister, international security and political affairs; we also have Jeff Senior, deputy director, peace operations, stabilization, and conflict policy division. From the Department of Defence we have Lieutenant-General Bowes, commander, Canadian Joint Operations Command; Major-General Meinzing, director of staff, strategic joint staff—congratulations on your upcoming appointment to chief of the air staff—and Major-General Derek Joyce, director general of international security policy.

We also will have in the back a whole bunch of folks. They're coming from security, but I want to mention them now because we'll be getting into the meeting. We have some folks who will be coming to observe from the parliamentary officers' study program. There are probably 12 or 13 of these from 12 different countries. Maybe on the way out we could recognize them and say hello.

We have a big panel today. What ends up happening is that people like to jump in on individual questions, which is great and fine, but then I start to lose control; it just goes like that.

This is the white flag of graceful dismount. If you see the signal I am showing, it means that you have 30 seconds to sum up and I have to give the time to the next member so that all can get all their questions in. If you would just look at me every once in a while so that I can manage this, I would very much appreciate it.

Having said that, I believe we have two speakers for opening remarks. I'm going to yield the floor to Mark Gwozdecky.

Sir, you have the floor.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky (Assistant Deputy Minister, International Security and Political Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to be with you here today to speak about Canada's involvement in peacekeeping. Though my presentation will include some historical context, I'll try to concentrate on what has changed from conventional peacekeeping and how Canada is working to contribute to a new consensus on the way peacekeeping is done in an era of change.

The fundamental question regarding Canadian involvement in peacekeeping is, why do we do it?

There are three main considerations at play here. Firstly, we support peacekeeping operations for reasons of national interest; secondly, as an expression of our values as Canadians; and thirdly, to be a responsible, burden-sharing member of a rules-based international order.

Today's conflicts, even in remote places, have an effect on all Canadians by allowing extremism and violent crime to take root and by creating ungoverned spaces, which generate flows of refugees or displaced persons and disrupt human and economic development. All nations have an interest in the existence of an effective, multilateral response to conflict, and this means that individual nations have to share responsibilities and shoulder parts of the burden. The UN has embarked upon a period of reflection and renewal in this area, which makes it a particularly important time for Canada to be engaged.

[*Translation*]

The nature of peacekeeping has evolved considerably over the years. Early missions were characterized by interventions in which combatants were clearly identifiable. In general, the parties agreed to the intervention of a neutral force, while diplomatic talks sought to resolve the conflict.

Today's peacekeeping missions take place in a much different context. Belligerents can be numerous and varied, including not only political actors but also criminals and terrorists who have little interest in peace. Consequently, rather than monitoring a ceasefire or peace agreement, peacekeepers often play the role of a stabilization force, with tasks focused on protecting civilians and helping to create the conditions for peace to emerge. The conditions and objectives of peacekeeping today are thus significantly different from those of previous generations, and the tools for dealing with this constant change have not adequately kept pace.

As the Prime Minister remarked:

Discrete offerings and one-off commitments have gotten us this far, but we won't be able to deliver true, transformative change without a real institutional change. Canada is prepared to help lead that charge.

• (0850)

[English]

I will speak later about how Canada's new approach responds to the evolution of peacekeeping and our goal of transformative change.

Right now, I'd like to speak about how the UN itself has commissioned a series of high-level reports in recent years. These reports highlight the need to improve peacekeeping skills and readiness in the face of increasing demands and financial pressures. We have also consistently underscored the point that UN interventions should facilitate political solutions to conflict.

With these findings in mind, the UN Secretary-General has launched an ambitious agenda on peace and security reform, which includes a proposal to restructure the UN peace and security architecture and to shift more resources and efforts in the direction of prevention. This agenda reflects the view that peacekeeping does not operate in a silo. It's part of a continuum of actions that includes peace-building and conflict prevention.

In an effort to assist the UN's efforts to reform and rethink how peacekeeping missions are undertaken, Canada hosted a defence ministerial meeting on UN peacekeeping in Vancouver in November 2017. This was the fifth such meeting since 2014, focusing on efforts to fill critical capability gaps in UN peacekeeping missions and to discuss peacekeeping in francophone environments. The background of this initiative is increasing demands on UN peace operations, with deployments doubling in the past 15 years and upwards of 100,000 uniformed UN personnel currently deployed.

Frankly, the UN is struggling to keep up. The conflicts with which it is confronted and mission mandates issued by the Security Council are increasingly complex, requiring a wider range of skills, assets, and new technology to get the job done in difficult environments. At the same time, the UN is facing pressure for reform, cost savings, and efficiencies in its operations.

In this context, discussions in Vancouver were focused on performance, partnerships, and effectiveness. Canada's theme for the meeting was "doing peacekeeping differently", that is, encouraging increasing effectiveness of UN peace operations through support for reform, innovation, and smart pledges. Canada announced its new peacekeeping strategy in Vancouver and here are the highlights and a synopsis of what we've accomplished since then.

In Vancouver we launched the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, which is now endorsed by 63 countries. Work will begin soon on a Vancouver principles handbook in order to help individual states to develop tailored national training and doctrine, and ultimately, operational guidance on addressing child soldiers in the context of peace operations missions.

Consultations among stakeholders have started regarding another element of our strategy, the Elsie initiative on women in peace operations. Through this initiative, Canada will work with the UN and other member states to develop innovative approaches to overcome barriers to the meaningful participation of women in uniform in UN peace operations. This will include tailored technical

assistance packages for one or two police and troop contributing countries. Also included is assistance to select UN missions to which these partner countries deploy to create a receptive environment. Additionally, we're examining a financial mechanism to support the deployment of women peacekeepers. Also, we want to highlight the research, monitoring, and evaluation components to ensure that the components of the pilot initiative are well designed, monitored and evaluated, and adjusted as needed. Canada expects to announce the one or two troop and police contributing countries with which we will be partnering by June of this year.

In Vancouver, the government also announced its intention to support UN operations through the provision, over a five-year time period, of a number of high-value military capabilities as well as through innovative training initiatives. The head of the Canadian Joint Operations Command, Lieutenant-General Bowes, is here with us today and is well placed to elaborate on the nature of these capabilities and their potential uses in a peacekeeping context.

Allow me to set the stage for his remarks by recalling what our government has pledged and by offering some comments about the broader objectives at play. With respect to military capabilities, in Vancouver our government helped to champion a new way of doing business in the provision of military assets for peacekeeping, a smart pledging approach, which means that member states work more closely together to establish a rotation of key enablers, such as aircraft, or to meet collectively a UN training need or an operational requirement. This is meant to improve predictability and planning.

Within this new and evolving construct, Canada specifically offered to provide the following. One is an air task force comprised of armed and utility helicopters and associated personnel. The government announced, on March 19, that it's prepared to deploy this air task force to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, otherwise known as MINUSMA, for a period of 12 months. Tactical airlift support is the second element that was announced. This involves one or two transport aircraft for up to 12 months to the UN's regional service centre in Entebbe, Uganda. Canada has also pledged a unit of approximately 200 personnel and accompanying equipment as part of a quick reaction force. The timing and location of this contribution remains to be determined.

Beyond a provision of specific military capabilities, the government also committed to offer new forms of innovative training, the main objective of which is to meet some of the UN's systemic and specialized training needs, including efforts to augment the role that women play in UN operations. The long-term goal will be to provide training to support the UN, the African Union, and other partner countries including through the use of mobile training teams that can focus on specialized needs in a responsive manner.

● (0855)

Through the Canadian training and advisory team, Canada pledged to work with one or two partner countries before and during a deployment to enhance their contributions to UN peace operations. This will be linked to Canada's Elsie initiative, which, as I mentioned, is designed to overcome the barriers to women's participation in peace operations.

Opportunities to incorporate policing experts into all these activities are also being explored and additional deployments of Canadian police to peacekeeping missions are being examined.

By way of conclusion I'd emphasize several general points about the commitments announced in Vancouver. First, the new Canadian strategy on peacekeeping or peace operations, as it is now more commonly referred to, is about doing things differently, doing things better, and doing things together. All the elements of the Canadian approach respond directly to the findings from high-level reports commissioned by the United Nations.

Second, the pledges made in Vancouver are meant to be mutually reinforcing. We're delivering a number of highly effective operational capabilities to support UN missions, but at the same time we're promoting change in how UN peace operations are conducted, with a particular focus on the participation of women and the issue of child soldiers. Our hope is that Canada's credibility as a direct contributor to UN missions will help to amplify our efforts to shape the evolving norms and practices of peace operations.

Third, Canada's contributions fit with broader international trends in the evolution of peacekeeping, with a greater focus today from nations like Canada on contributions that capitalize on national strengths in relation to what the UN needs as peacekeeping evolves. The days when Canadian peacekeeping was viewed as boots on the ground have largely passed, in part because the UN has been successful in recruiting a broad range of new countries, largely from the global south and China. In part because of the changing nature of conflicts, UN mandates and mission requirements call for a broader range of new capabilities well beyond the boots on the ground.

The strategy and pledges announced in Vancouver reflect and respond to these evolving needs and open a new chapter in Canada's peacekeeping history. The result is both a sophisticated and a pragmatic response to new challenges, and we look forward to continuing to work with the UN and its member states to improve the success of peacekeeping operations.

Thank you.

● (0900)

The Chair: Thank you.

Lieutenant-General Bowes, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Lieutenant-General Stephen Bowes (Commander, Canadian Joint Operations Command, Department of National Defence): Mr. Chair and committee members, good morning.

My name is Lieutenant-General Stephen Bowes, commander of the Canadian Joint Operations Command, and it is my pleasure to be

here today to discuss Canadian Armed Forces contributions to international peace support operations.

As commander of the Canadian Joint Operations Command, I am responsible for the preparation and conduct of Canadian Armed Forces operations, both in the defence of Canada and around the world. I am accompanied today by MGen Al Meininger, director of staff for the Strategic Joint Staff, and MGen Derek Joyce, director general of International Security Policy.

These general officers are respectively responsible for the strategic military and policy dimensions of the planning and sustainment of all Canadian Armed Forces operations, including peace support operations.

[*English*]

My colleague Mr. Gwozdecky has described the complexities associated with modern peace operations and the efforts under way at the UN to meet these challenges.

Unlike the traditional missions of the past, today's peace support operations are multi-dimensional, with broad mandates that can range from supporting political and electoral processes, to protecting civilians, promoting human rights, and assisting and restoring the rule of law. These missions require not only well-trained personnel but also critical enabling capabilities to ensure they are able to carry out their complex mandates, such as strategic and tactical airlift, specialized engineering capabilities, field hospitals, communications, and information systems.

Today though there are approximately 120 Canadian Armed Forces members deployed on these complex operations across the globe, including both UN missions and those led by other organizations. Canadian military personnel participating in UN missions in Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and the Middle East serve vital functions in the domains of logistics planning, military liaison, and training, as well as surveillance and monitoring of demilitarized zones. Canada also participates in non-UN operations that make equally important contributions to regional peace and security, including the multinational force and observers in the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt, the Office of the United States Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and the NATO Kosovo Force.

The Government of Canada has recently announced initiatives aimed at further enhancing UN peace support operations. This effort is consistent with Canada's defence policy "Strong, Secure, Engaged", which states that the Canadian Armed Forces will be prepared to make concrete contributions to Canada's role as a responsible international actor, particularly through participation in UN peace operations.

[Translation]

As my colleague has described to you, Canada made a series of military pledges at the Vancouver UN peacekeeping ministerial last November, in addition to the two key pledges on the Elsie Initiative and the Vancouver Principles. These pledges look to leverage the expertise and enabling capabilities of the Canadian Armed Forces, and include pledges for a specialized training initiative and a Canadian training and advisory team, the deployment of a quick reaction force, a planned contribution of tactical airlift support for the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, and the deployment of an air task force in Mali in response to a request from the UN.

[English]

Canada announced its intent to deploy an air task force to MINUSMA last month in response to a request from the UN. Work to implement this operation is under way and will continue to move very quickly in order to replace the German contingent this summer for a period of approximately one year. The task force, which will consist of Chinook and Griffon helicopters to be located in Gao, northern Mali, will provide MINUSMA with a critical capability for tasks such as forward aeromedical evacuation, transportation, and logistical support. We are currently planning on the basis of up to four Griffon and two Chinook helicopters, as well as approximately 250 Canadian Armed Forces personnel. The details, such as the number of personnel and capabilities for the deployment, will be refined as our planning evolves and our discussions with the UN on its requirements proceed.

As mentioned earlier, today's peace support operations are multifaceted and frequently call on missions to serve as a stabilization force in order to help set the conditions for political settlements. MINUSMA falls into this category. It's a chapter VII mission, which authorizes the use of armed force to protect civilians and address threats to and breaches of the peace and acts of aggression. Challenges to the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Mali have made it a safe haven for transnational threat actors, and this certainly increases the risk to the mission. Risks can come from other sources as well, such as the physical environment in which the Canadian Armed Forces are operating, and this is also the case in Mali.

The Canadian Armed Forces are accustomed to operating in high-risk environments, which makes risk management and risk mitigation critical to the military planning process at all levels. We do this in a number of ways, including by ensuring our personnel are highly trained for the mission and are enabled by the right capabilities, that they are given the appropriate rules of engagement in order to defend themselves, and that they are supported by the necessary arrangements with the UN and our partners. As we prepare to deploy to MINUSMA, as we do with every Canadian Armed Forces operation, we will take each and every step to mitigate the level of risk to the men and women deploying.

I've spoken about the upcoming deployment in Mali in greater detail given it is our current focus for future planning. However, I believe it is important to recognize the many contributions the Canadian Armed Forces already make to increase peace and stability around the world. Earlier in my remarks, I mentioned a number of UN and related operations. In addition, our members are deployed in

operations designed to help build capacity in the armed forces in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Niger to maintain stability within their countries and regions. We are doing this bilaterally, in coalitions, and as NATO allies, through activities ranging from instruction on how to counter improvised explosive devices in Iraq to providing winter-capable patrol equipment to the Lebanese Armed Forces. In the Sahel region, Canadian Armed Forces members are already providing capacity-enhancing instruction to forces in Niger, in niche areas such as marksmanship, effective patrolling, and combat first aid, thereby increasing their ability to independently, and in coordination with the G5 Sahel *force conjointe*, effectively control their borders and combat the ever-increasing threat of violence of extremist organizations. These efforts, combined with our current and future contributions to UN peace operations and the initiatives we will conduct with our government partners on child soldiers and women in peace operations, leverage the expertise and the effective capabilities Canada can bring to bear.

●(0905)

[Translation]

In conclusion, the Canadian Armed Forces are working as part of an integrated, whole of government approach to deliver on Canada's commitment to increase its support for UN peace support operations, and help the UN respond to the complex and broad challenges it is facing in its missions around the world.

Thank you for inviting me to appear today, and I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

MP Spengemann, the floor is yours for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Gentlemen, thank you for being with us this morning, and thank you for your service. I have many questions, any one of which will gobble up the time very quickly, so I'll try to be as succinct as possible and then look forward to the remainder of the discussion.

I think one thing that both opening statements made reference to is the complexity of the subject matter at hand. I think that's one aspect in which this committee could add tremendous value.

Just to give you a bit of a flavour of my own perspective, I had the privilege of serving in the UN mission in Iraq from 2005 to 2012 at a time when there were still active coalition combat operations going on. The complexity inside the green zone involved the coordination of multiple fragmented government departments within the Iraqi apparatus, dozens of UN agencies that all had very different interests in the reconstruction and development agenda, and dozens of UN member states that had their own interests, political, economic, and otherwise. That exercise alone, of coordinating the complexity of interests, was monumental and explains in some respects the outcome we saw in Iraq.

I wanted to start with Mr. Gwozdecky. Just to add another layer of complexity, you spoke about the values. We're doing this from a Canadian perspective because of national interests, our core values, and our interests in burden-sharing. What I'm concerned about are your views and those of colleagues on the panel on what I see as an emerging fragmentation of values internationally that would even get us to an effective starting point in peacekeeping operations.

You mentioned the challenges the UN is facing, and I'm wondering if you could elaborate on your views on what the current constellation of values is with respect to peacekeeping globally.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Let me begin by saying that, while you were in Iraq, I was ambassador to Iraq in 2010 to 2013, and I certainly noticed the same dynamic, the political complexity that you referred to. This reminds me, and I would like to make the point to the committee that, fundamentally, all of these peace missions live or die, succeed or fail, based on the political dialogue and the political peace processes that are at play. They do not depend on the kinds of military inputs. Military inputs are very important in terms of providing an opportunity to create a space and enough stability for these political processes to move forward, but ultimately, these are political challenges and not military ones.

In terms of values, if we use Iraq as example again, this is not a case of Canada trying to impose on another country values that are foreign to it. In fact, as you will recall, in Iraq there's a firm appreciation of the need to build an inclusive, pluralistic, democratic, free society. We, as a country that also embraces those values, are well equipped to support it, particularly as it is a country with a number of regions that each want to see their own autonomy reflected in an ultimate political arrangement.

As I say, we have our values. We think our values are shared around the world, particularly in places where we will be deployed, and our job is to try to support countries as they seek to embed those values in their political arrangements.

• (0910)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you very much; that's extremely helpful.

I'll stay with that theme but extend it to domestic politics and the interests on the part of the Canadian voter or any voter whose country is involved in a coalition to sustain the effort—to expend continued blood and treasure, as the phrasing sometimes goes—to see a peacekeeping operation through but also to engage in the tail ends of post-conflict reconstruction and to not withdraw too early.

You'll have been part of the deliberations and the decision ultimately reached by the lead member of the coalition, the Obama administration, to withdraw the troops at the end of 2011. In the minds of some, looking backwards, that may have been too early.

How do we decide when to withdraw peacekeeping equipment and capacity, and then how do we devolve onto an emerging nascent rebuilt society that can then carry that apparatus on its own?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Well, first let me say that our commitment to a country like Mali or Iraq isn't defined by a period of time when we may have military or police deployed. Our commitment stands a much longer period of time, and in the case of Mali, we've been a major development assistance contributor for a number of years. I think we're the second largest. We also contribute all kinds of other supports through capacity-building, training, and now through our military contribution.

That commitment, a partnership, will be an ongoing one. There is a period of time when military contributions, peace operations, are required to stabilize it as it goes through a peace process, but that is almost always longer than most countries would like it to be, because these processes are complex. I would say this is one of the virtues of this smart pledging concept that the United Nations is asking us to adopt. The smart pledging allows us to give the United Nations, over a longer period of time, a rotation of these assets that allows them to sustain their peace operations. Even when individual countries may decide that they will cease their contributions, others will be allowed to step in, in an organized and predictable manner.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you very much.

In my remaining minute, Mr. Chair, I would like to open the discussion on the military side to Lieutenant-General Bowes, perhaps, and colleagues. I'm sure colleagues will pick up as it continues.

Non-state actors threaten peace across multiple nation-states. What is the challenge there? What's different very specifically with respect to Daesh and potential future iterations of it, and how has our response changed to those kinds of threats?

LGen Stephen Bowes: In asking that question, sir, you are asking beyond the context of the mission in Mali—

• (0915)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Yes, absolutely.

LGen Stephen Bowes: —and you're looking at other regional...

There is no doubt that the mission itself in Mali is a complex operating environment, and you can extend that to the Sahel. Geopolitical developments of the last half-dozen or 10 years have certainly changed the equation in terms of the variety of radical groups that are operating in the region, and that part is very clear. What it speaks to is the internationalization of every effort going forward. Mr. Gwozdecky talked about the multi-year coordination and commitment.

For me, even being part of the military is recognizing the prominence and the importance of an intergovernmental, international approach to the region sustained over time; it's not focusing on one unique capability just because we are there. Success will be in defeating these organizations. If we look in the context of Iraq, much attention has been given to the activities of the coalition wearing the uniform.

I tell you that I continue to be impressed by the other agencies that were part of the coalition, that were interdicting the flow of foreign fighters both ways, counter-financing, counter-messaging, and all of those critical capabilities as well as what the UN team is doing on the ground in Iraq. It's very impressive. Those are the areas that need to be highlighted going forward, and it's more than just one organization like the UN. It's a broader international effort.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you.

The Chair: MP Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): I want to thank our witnesses for being here.

It's always good having General Bowes at the table. When I sat in your seat, Mr. Chair, he reached out to the committee to make sure we were engaged in understanding military doctrine. Getting out to Wainwright and watching our troops train has always been a great asset the committee here.

I appreciate all the work, and I wish you the best of luck as you move forward in your career over at Veterans Affairs. I know that appointment is going to be a challenging one in itself in providing assistance that's needed.

I also want to extend our congratulations to General Meininger in taking over as commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force. We're wishing you great success in carrying out that command going forward.

I want to get down into our experience with the UN missions, particularly in Africa. Mr. Gwozdecky talked about the challenges that are there, but have we learned from our past experiences in places like Rwanda and Somalia? Have things like the UN chain of command and the rules of engagement improved enough that we can have confidence that our troops will be used appropriately? Every mission has its risks, but how do we properly mitigate those risks, especially with the multiple players we'll be dealing with in an adversarial fashion?

General Bowes.

LGen Stephen Bowes: We have certainly learned over the 20 years. It's one of our great sources of pride. From our time in our engagements a few years ago, I was leading for the army the organization that was fundamentally responsible for taking those lessons learned and kicking them back into the system.

The thing, though, that we need to remember about risk mitigation is that the chief of defence never relinquishes full command of our forces. I have a responsibility to the chief of defence as we deploy into any theatre to address risk. It is the first thing I think about in the morning when I get up, and it is the last thing I think about when I go to bed at night.

We look and work very hard at the array of challenges that face our people, and we alone are responsible. They will get Canadian rules of engagement. They will have the authority to defend themselves, and we work within the context of a coalition of MINUSMA.

In this particular case in MINUSMA, we are flying helicopters. We will be judged against the aeromedical task logistics and sustainment. We take the matters, everything ranging from flight safety, which General Meininger will be responsible for very soon, all the way through the threat environment that we'll be dealing with in Mali to the environmental. It's a harsher environment than we have previously experienced.

Mr. James Bezan: I understand that the environment's been responsible for a couple of helicopter crashes already.

LGen Stephen Bowes: I'm only tracking one incident, but...

Mr. James Bezan: When we're looking at the rules of engagement, the chain of command, are we allowed to have caveats in place when we deploy troops on UN missions? I thought the UN didn't allow any member-states to have any caveats.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: The UN discourages it. In fact, our policy is to discourage caveats. We are allowed to have them, and we do from time to time insist on them.

I'd like to add one more thing. One of the important things we've learned has to do with child soldiers. One of the most challenging things any Canadian or other UN uniformed peacekeeper faces is coming face to face with a 14-year-old carrying a weapon, and knowing what to do. That's one of the reasons why we're rolling out this Vancouver principles doctrine: to try to engage an international coalition of countries to better address those issues.

Mr. James Bezan: We've talked about the counterterrorism operations there, that there were multiple terrorist groups at play in Mali, and that it's kind of narrowed down to two players. As stated in the UN report at the end of March here on MINUSMA, on January 15 the Islamic State and the Greater Sahara issued a threat that they'd work jointly with al Qaeda in the Maghreb to counter the deployment of the G5 Sahel joint force. We also know that in the UN Security Council resolution from December 8, resolution 2391, paragraph 13, essentially the UN Secretary-General can assign UN assets, especially for medevac and casevac, for the G5 Sahel in operations in Mali. Our guys could potentially be going into hot conflict. Will we have the right force protection and the ability to defend ourselves as we go into those dangerous situations?

• (0920)

LGen Stephen Bowes: The mission is primarily for our aviation task force. Think about it that way: air medical evacuation, logistic support, and transportation. The Canadian task force commander still works for the chief of the defence staff, and we accept missions that are consistent with the UN mandate. The force commander has the authority to ask Canada to fly helicopters in support of the MINUSMA mission, so long as those missions and those tasks are consistent with the mandate of MINUSMA.

Mr. James Bezan: But the G5 Sahel has nothing to do with MINUSMA.

LGen Stephen Bowes: Yes, I said MINUSMA. But MINUS-MA.... The United Nations has agreed by the Security Council resolution that MINUSMA can provide support to the G5 Sahel.

Mr. James Bezan: Then are we confident that our troops, when they're going into these war zones with counterterrorism operations on the ground, plus ISIS and al Qaeda operatives fighting back...? And they've been extremely bold. In the last month, there have been three attacks, killing four UN peacekeepers, on UN bases. We're not just talking about out in theatre. They're coming right in to the bases and bringing the fight to us. Are we confident that close combat support operations, the security on the bases, are there to protect our troops when they may not necessarily be on mission?

LGen Stephen Bowes: I think that if you look at the details of the attacks, you're certainly quite accurate to point out that they've become more bold. However, there have been some effective responses to those as well. The French mission, Operation Barkhane, is a counterterrorism-focused mission, so the UN focus is stabilization. In the context of our mission overseas, we can't reduce the risk to zero in Mali. We can't reduce the risk to zero in any of our missions. What we can do is identify the risk across all domains, and work to mitigate that risk. We have rules of engagement, and we have the means to defend ourselves and to conduct ourselves in a way that reduces the risk, but you can't bring risk down to zero.

Mr. James Bezan: Will our troops be armed on base?

LGen Stephen Bowes: Yes, absolutely.

The Chair: Thanks.

MP Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I too want to extend my congratulations to General Bowes and General Meinzinger on their upcoming appointments.

As Mr. Spengemann suggested, this is our first session on peacekeeping, and there's a tendency to run off in all directions, I think, among all of us.

I guess I would say to the chair that this is a motion that I moved almost a year and a half ago. At that time I wrote it relatively broadly, because we didn't know where we were going. We might have written the motion a little differently, given where we are.

I'm wondering whether we will have the opportunity to talk to the minister specifically about the Mali mission as part of these hearings. I just put that on the table for the committee. There are sometimes things that involve political decisions and are better asked to the minister than to those who are in front of us today.

Mr. Gwozdecky, you have described the new situation that Canada is taking on, the new tasks and the new approach. I in no way want to criticize those tasks as being unimportant, but it seems to me it's a step down from our traditional role in peacekeeping, whereby Canada provided very high-level leadership. It's not just boots on the ground that we provided, but high-level leadership, not only in missions that had Canadian troops but in other missions of the United Nations with both civilian and military officials. We also provided very high-level training, which was organized in this country by the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. I'm wondering whether

there's any sense—and this is one of those questions that may be unfair to you—in which we have actually stepped down to a more technical approach to peacekeeping from that leadership role that we have traditionally played.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Let me address both elements of your question.

One is in terms of leadership. We do not exclude a Canadian taking over the leadership of a UN operation if such an opportunity were to present itself and if it were an opportunity for Canada to make a difference.

Our approach, I would say, is actually more ambitious than you would suggest. Our approach is to try to make a difference in the way the UN runs its peace operations across the board, not just in an operation to which Canada might make a discrete contribution. We have 100,000 peacekeepers in the field. Canada's 600, contributed here or there, is not going to make a transformative difference to UN peace operations.

That's why our approach is to ask, can we fix the systemic issues in the UN, which include its under-representation of women at all levels? Can we fix the training gaps that you have identified, which are really important? We think that's one area in which Canada can bring real value in terms of the kinds of training we can provide and have provided in such places as Afghanistan, which have really had an impact. If we can train the troop-contributing countries better, so that when they go into the field they're making a bigger and a more positive difference, we think we can have an impact more widely across the UN system.

• (0925)

Mr. Randall Garrison: As I said, I'm not in any way saying that this is not an important initiative.

Given the limits of time, I want to turn to the Department of National Defence.

We get many requests from the United Nations and other groups for Canadian troops. General Bowes touched on it a bit in his presentation. Why is it that Canadian troops are popular? What's the value added that we bring to these missions?

Major-General A. D. Meinzinger (Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence): Having deployed on two UN missions that were mandated under the United Nations, I fully believe that we bring well-trained, competent, professional airmen, airwomen, soldiers, and sailors into those sorts of deployments. I think there's a high degree of agility.

Thinking back to my experiences as the wing commander in Afghanistan, I recall I would brag frequently in front of guests using the fighter analogy: we have a turning radius inside our allies, meaning that we're able to respond to short-notice requests and are able to be flexible, but we do so and are so in a very professional way. That's an air force example, but it pervades, I would argue, all of our elements.

As well, looking at the quality of the members of the Canadian Armed Forces—you talked about leadership—I look at the mission in Mali and whom we've identified to be the air task force commander. He has commanded the Chinook squadron in Afghanistan; he is an “A-plus-plus” leader, but he is so because of his experiences operationally.

I think Canadians, more broadly speaking, based on our experience and what we've done, bring that experience to future missions. It's a characteristic that I think is worth noting.

LGen Stephen Bowes: If I can provide one additional context, it is that many of the nations that contribute forces are contributing conscripts; we have a professional military, a volunteer force. We do have a rigorous professional development system, but in all my travels it keeps coming back to one thing: our values-based system. In that sense we may wear a uniform, but we're Canadian and it's about what we bring onto the international stage as Canadian values. Notwithstanding the professionalism of our military, from a military perspective, Canadian values are in demand.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I know I have very little time, but as one of the members of the committee who spent some time in the conflict zones in both East Timor and Afghanistan, I am very interested in the discussion of a rapid deployment force. While it was some time ago, I was co-coordinator of a human rights observer mission in East Timor when we were calling for a UN force ready to intervene if the independence vote went as we thought it would. The force arrived much too late, 10,000 people died, and the infrastructure of the country was destroyed. Canadians made a large effort in rebuilding it.

Where do we stand with this rapid deployment force that Mr. Gwozdecky talked about? How large a force are we talking about, and what circumstances?

LGen Stephen Bowes: In this context, are you talking about the quick reaction force?

• (0930)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Yes.

LGen Stephen Bowes: The government will still have to go through a selection process with the United Nations as to where and when this force deploys. Then from our perspective, the environment that we go into in the country will determine how that force will be composed.

You would understand that even from military requirements, certain countries would lend themselves to a land-based or a vehicle-based response force, and in other areas it would have to be aviation-based, based on geography, the lack of roads, rail, infrastructure, and the like.

From a quick reaction force perspective, we're still a long way away in having detailed military planning at my level, because I'm not involved in some others.

I'll turn it over to colleagues on both sides as to how the government will go through the selection process and the chief of the defence staff.

The Chair: Unfortunately I'm going to hold it there, but there will be more time and I'm sure we can come back to that.

I'm going to yield the floor to MP Robillard.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Since the March 19 announcement by Minister Freeland and Minister Sajjan about the deployment of an air task force with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the MINUSMA, have discussions been held with Mali, the partner countries and the UN to prepare for the arrival of Canada's contribution?

To that end, what are the next major steps in deploying this mission?

[*English*]

LGen Stephen Bowes: Since the government announced the decision, at the strategic level the team has engaged our United Nations partners with the kind of military and operational planning that we would need to take the mission forward.

In addition, we conducted a reconnaissance mission—what the UN calls a site survey—into Mali to talk to partners. Concurrently, we also had teams in Europe as recently as two weeks ago, talking with major partners about how we would conduct our entry into the theatre at the same time as other nations would be coming out.

Just last week I was in Europe talking with all my European colleagues, a European Union representative, and allies involved in Africa, including the French forces and the United Nations planners, about the sequence going forward in the next little while. In the next two weeks we will conduct a more detailed reconnaissance and site survey with regard to sustainment of our mission or approach that we will use to go in, and we are working closely with Germany—the nation that we are replacing—from an aviation task force perspective.

As German helicopters come out of the mission, Canadian helicopters go in, and it's not all at the same time. It's a phased approach. We're not talking about international airports, we're talking of some very small airfields and facilities, so as a helicopter comes out, another one goes in; we sequence this.

This is a normal tempo that occurs with every mission, even if it's a Canadian rotation. That's the lie ahead in the next few months, with a view that we'll activate this theatre some time in June. Our forces will flow in, the main bodies will flow in some time in July, and in the third week of July we will see Germany's helicopters come out in the final sense, and Canada's will be on the ground and will be operational in early August.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you.

MGen A. D. Meininger: If I may add one more point, from the strategic level, in terms of the activity ongoing, next week, we will have a small delegation in the UN. We're continuing to work towards the establishment of an MOU. This is a normal protocol with the UN. It's a product of some of the consequences of the knowledge that we've gained from the reconnaissance, so it's a full on, all-team effort as a priority to line us up for this deployment as General Bowes has indicated.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard: During a high-level thematic debate organized by the United Nations General Assembly, in May 2016, the commitment of francophone states in peacekeeping operations had been reaffirmed.

What do you think the contribution is of Canadian and francophone troops in peacekeeping missions like the one in Mali?

[English]

Mr. Jeff Senior (Deputy Director, Peace Operations, Stabilization and Conflict Policy Division, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you for the question. It's a very good one. I will just offer a very general observation.

I had the honour and pleasure to serve in Mali for several years in our mission there, as the UN mission was being set up and as the peace agreement was being concluded. The linguistic capabilities of Canada are among the reasons our participation has been sought. In a number of instances, we have witnessed first-hand some linguistic divides within the UN mission itself between, say, English-speaking groups in a particular sector, who don't have the ability in French, and other sectors where you may have French or other troops operating or French-speaking troops operating.

Among the many other competencies that have been outlined, I think the linguistic abilities are among the reasons that Canada's participation has been actively solicited in this part of the world.

• (0935)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Following our government's March 19 announcement about this new peacekeeping strategy, how would you describe the reaction of Canada's allies and foreign partners?

[English]

LGen Stephen Bowes: Sir, that's quite possible. As a military, our reputation is one that, although we're a small force, we're very agile and very professional. The reaction that I got last week when working with colleagues was very similar to the reaction I have seen over my three years in this position. Similar to when we went into Ukraine, we were working with other nations in Ukraine, which is very similar to Latvia. It's great to have Canadian military personnel that are part of the team.

At a strategic military and political level, I also think this resonates as well that this is a commitment of a professional capability that is coming into play. It has been received most positively.

The Chair: You can have one more quick question and a response.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard: During a visit to Canada, the President of Ukraine expressed a desire to see Canada contribute to a UN peace mission in Ukraine. If one were to emerge, would such a contribution be ruled out now that the government has committed to a deployment to Mali?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: We have been exploring this concept and Minister Freeland has personally discussed it with President

Poroshenko, the Prime Minister of Ukraine, the Secretary of State of the United States, and many others to determine how a peacekeeping mission could support our overarching objective. Our overarching objective is to support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Our approach is to determine whether we can negotiate a peacekeeping mandate that would support those objectives. If so, we would be very much supportive of it. However, I think that there are significant question marks around whether some of the other partners that are essential would be willing to accept such a mission.

The Chair: We will go on to five-minute questions now.

Go ahead, MP Alleslev.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you very much. I would like to echo my congratulations, of course, to General Bowes and to General Meininger, someone who I had the privilege of serving with. I can't think of anyone more fit for the position and we're lucky to have you.

MGen A. D. Meininger: That was a few years ago.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Yes. I served under you back then.

Thank you and congratulations.

Peacekeeping is part of who we are as Canadians. It's very much how we define ourselves. However, I think that peacekeeping, in the context of how Canadians see it and define it, perhaps no longer exists, but whether it does or not, it certainly has fundamentally changed.

With NATO missions and with UN peacekeeping missions, even to the extent of this one, which is a chapter VII and therefore allows for the use of armed forces, to coalitions of the willing, and to non-UN missions, the very nature of conflict or war and peace has fundamentally changed.

Could you help us explain to Canadians what that looks like in today's context, particularly in light of non-state actors? How would you characterize the different missions that the Canadian military engages in and how would you help Canadians to understand the differences between them?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: You've hit on the fundamental challenge that modern peace operations face, and I use the term "peace operations" because we're no longer peacekeeping. In these missions, there isn't a peace to keep. There is real conflict. There's instability, so we use the term "peace operations" more commonly.

What do we face? How do we explain it to Canadians? There's more complexity than we've ever seen before.

The second point is that these situations of conflict and instability have arisen from political issues, and the solutions are political, so our peace missions—

• (0940)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Is that not true of war?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: The point I'm trying to make is that the peace operation is not designed to be the solution. The solution must come from the people of the state. In the case of Mali, it's the Malians who have to bring their peace process forward together. The UN mission is there to help bring stability, and to create a space where that political dialogue and diplomacy can take place.

Really, it's a political mission with military support and complexity like we've never seen before, which is why we need very well-trained people who can go into an environment like that and be supported by information that helps them understand who the players are, what their motivations are, and how best to respond to them. This is something we haven't faced before, but in the case of Mali you have a myriad of groups, not just terrorist groups, but also transnational criminal groups and tribal communities. All of these need to be understood before we can make an appropriate intervention.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Pragmatically, how would we characterize the difference? We look at the NATO mission in Latvia, which one could argue is perhaps a safer mission or a different level of risk from Mali, but Mali is a UN peace operation, whereas our enhanced forward presence in NATO is not, in terms of its characterization. How do we explain to Canadians the fundamental differences between those categories?

MGen A. D. Meinzinger: I'm just going to interject. There was a senior leader who used to describe the world in a way that I thought was quite profound. He would say that the world's on fire, trying to convey to Canadians that there's a tremendous amount of volatility, complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity that is prevalent in many of the regions that we have interests in and that we operate in.

The one flavour that is quite unique in what we're doing today, which perhaps is distinctly different from the past and is reflected as one of our missions in our defence policy, is that of capacity building. When you look at the Ukraine; when you look at the NATO contribution we're making in Bismayah, just outside of Baghdad, training ISF in counter-IED skills; when you look at what we're doing in places like Niger, with our conventional forces, and with our special forces in Tunisia.... We're essentially working shoulder to shoulder with some of these allies to help strengthen their military forces, because we recognize, as Mr. Gwozdecky indicated, the nature of transnational effects. Crime and violent extremism spread beyond borders, so we have to build shoulders of strength around the globe, and we do that uniquely today in our capacity-building mission set.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and my questions will be directed to General Bowes.

General, exactly how many Canadian troops will be deployed to Mali?

LGen Stephen Bowes: Approximately 250.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

Our soldiers will be doing much of the work in helicopters. How will they be prepared against the presence of MANPADS—that is, man-portable air-defence systems?

LGen Stephen Bowes: We haven't seen any evidence of the utilization of MANPADS in the Mali theatre since 2011, when we started tracking. Our helicopters come with an array of defensive capabilities, and when it comes to tactics, techniques, and procedures, there are rules of engagement that are not something we talk about.

There is an expert here beside me who's just chomping at the bit to jump in, I can tell. Go ahead.

MGen A. D. Meinzinger: Yes, certainly.

Our approach to this mission from an aviation perspective will be very akin to the way we operated in Afghanistan. It's a very disciplined approach to how we accept missions at the front end, and then pre-execution we have a very disciplined way of considering all the potential threats, from the weather to the fatigue level of the crews to the threats you're describing. The decision-making around that will be done in a very disciplined manner.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: When was the last time Canada trained together with troops from Chad, Niger, Bangladesh, or China? They will be on the ground with those troops.

• (0945)

MGen A. D. Meinzinger: We're certainly training with Niger today. We have the Canadian Army running a program of instruction. We have had participation in that country, iteratively. I don't have the specifics on when we may have last trained with Chad. I would have to look into that for you.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: How trustworthy are these other forces? There are reports that when the Chinese were in Sudan and came under fire, they dropped their guns and left. Are they going to be alongside our troops?

MGen A. D. Meinzinger: I would highlight that our contribution in Mali is an aviation task force. We'll be operating principally out of a camp in Gao that will be configured with allies such as the Germans. The Germans are being tremendously supportive. As the current nation providing the helicopters, they are essentially leaving everything they have, about 500 troops, in that camp, less their helicopter crews. Our day-to-day reality, frankly, will be inside that camp. We will not be out on the grounds with the current contributing nations.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I could add to that if you would like.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: No, that's good.

What is the anticipated full cost of the deployment of Canadian troops to Mali?

LGen Stephen Bowes: The cost still has to be worked out.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The cost of the total deployment.

LGen Stephen Bowes: The total deployment within Mali has to fit the envelope for the government's decision on how much it wishes to support peace support operations over several years. The cost can vary based on our deployment, our sustainment, and how we get into the country. Those costs are being worked out.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

What is the exact date of the deployment of Canadian troops to Mali?

LGen Stephen Bowes: I answered that question earlier.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

Exactly how long will Canadian forces be active in Mali?

LGen Stephen Bowes: Approximately one year—with the aviation task force.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You mentioned that they will be armed. Will they be armed with side arms?

LGen Stephen Bowes: They carry small arms. I'm not going to specify side arms. It depends on the nature of the task and whether a pilot carries a particular weapon or whether the tactical air security officers carry....

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Fair enough.

Is Mali a war zone?

LGen Stephen Bowes: It's not a term. It's a complex conflict zone.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Will Canadian troops assist counter-terrorism operations in any way?

LGen Stephen Bowes: Through air medical evacuation, sustainment in transportation of personnel in support of the MINUSMA mandate and the G5 Sahel.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

Now, in terms of the activity there, under what circumstances will our troops be allowed to use force in Mali?

LGen Stephen Bowes: I'm not prepared to discuss rules of engagement.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay, so no rules of engagement.

LGen Stephen Bowes: Well, they have rules of engagement, but I'm not telling you....

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Will they ever be forced to take orders from a UN official without the prior consultation...?

LGen Stephen Bowes: No matter where we are on the planet, the chief of defence retains full command of our forces, and within the context of a laid-out matrix of responsibilities, that aviation task force commander is responsible to me. He can accept tasks from the force commander based on the parameters that we have put in place.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

Will they ever...?

The Chair: That's your time.

MP Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Bowes, our mission here is to make recommendations to the government on what Canada's role should be as it pertains to peacekeeping, not in one area in particular. I want to start by trying to get a sense of where we've been and how we've gotten to where we are. The briefing that we were provided by the Library of Parliament noted there has been a gradual decline in Canada's contributions to peacekeeping since the 1970s; I think we would all

agree on this. Looking at the data, it suggests that a decay in the support has taken place under both Conservative and Liberal governments, so this isn't a politically motivated question by any means, but it does hint at a shift in national priorities between the 1970s and today. I'm wondering if you would say that this is a shift in Canadian foreign policy and security priorities since the 1970s. Would you agree with that, for starters?

LGen Stephen Bowes: You're asking me policy questions, so Mr. Gwozdecky is....

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I would say that, under this new strategy, you will see a gradual increase in Canadians deployed abroad, whether....

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Yes, that's this policy.... I'm trying to get a sense as to where we've come from. Have we seen a decline? Would you agree that there has been a decline, and is it as a result of shifts in our foreign policy and security priorities?

• (0950)

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: No, I wouldn't say the decline is the result of a shift in policy. I think the policy has taken some time to be put in place, and now that the policy is in place, you will see an augmentation across the board.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: How do you make sense of that decay over the last several decades?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I'm not sure I want to answer in a short period of time what's happened over several decades. I would go back to my statement, in which I tried to make clear that the number of Canadian boots on the ground isn't where we're trying to make a difference. We're trying to make a system-wide difference by affecting 100,000 UN peacekeepers deployed around the world, as opposed to a difference through the use of any 600 Canadian Armed Forces members. We think we can make a bigger difference by moving the dial on the whole UN system.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay. I guess that's the kind of answer I was looking for. Perhaps we were focused more on the military perspective before, whereas now we recognize that there is a lot more to it than just the military component.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Yes, but we also realize that Canada's discreet contribution to this mission or that is much less impactful than if we can make a difference by training some of the countries that contribute thousands upon thousands of troops. In making them better and more professional in terms of undertaking their tasks, we'll have a bigger impact across the system.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: How would you say other countries compare to Canada as historical contributors to peacekeeping? Would they have also experienced similar decreases?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I think it's fair to say that yes, western developed countries, in overall numbers, have all gone down over time, because the global south and China have become more and more prominent in terms of contributing the so-called boots on the ground. What has emerged as a consensus is that we can complement each other. The global south contributes the big numbers, the boots on the ground, and the advanced nations contribute those enabling technologies and very specialized capabilities, such as helicopters, that very few countries have. We can make a difference that way.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: How have other countries reacted to Canada's re-engagement in peacekeeping since 2016-17?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: As General Bowes mentioned, very positively. Countries are very eager to have more of Canada: more Canadian Armed Forces, more police, more diplomats, and more civilians.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: General Bowes, maybe this is a good question for you. We just finished a NATO study that focused a lot on interoperability, highlighting the importance of that interoperability. How does interoperability affect the context of international peacekeeping missions? Is it just as important, as we would have learned with NATO? What's the status of that?

LGen Stephen Bowes: Interoperability would be a greater challenge in the dynamic of a UN operation, because many of the forces involved don't have the density of professional military that we do. Interoperability is fundamentally about people. It's not technical. The technical dimension is absolutely important, but it's about the interoperability of people.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Explain that, because that's a little bit different than....

LGen Stephen Bowes: I can be part of a Five Eyes conversation with colleagues who speak English as a primary language. We can use the same word and have five different understandings of what that word means and have five different cultural orientations towards problem-solving or a planning challenge. As we go forward, communication is an essential requirement. In the context of the mission we have within the ATF in Mali, it's less of a concern.

You talked about the proliferation of non-state actors. The traditional approach is not going to be as effective, because you're going to have to work across state frontiers. It has to be more global.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Yurdiga.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Thank you to the witnesses for testifying before us today.

These are very good questions. A lot of the questions I was going to ask were addressed in some manner.

Currently the top contributors to peacekeeping are Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Rwanda. There was an internal UN study in 2014 that found that "peacekeeping missions routinely avoid using force to protect civilians who are under attack, intervening in only 20 percent of cases despite being authorized to do so by the U. N. Security Council". Do you believe that this is a result of inadequate training of UN peacekeepers, or is this a result of a communication breakdown?

● (0955)

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I think the answer is both. We certainly have noticed that some of the troop-contributing countries deploy people and battalions in the field that aren't ready to take on these kinds of challenges because they're not properly trained to do so. That's why our strategy includes adopting one or two of these major troop-contributing countries and giving them the kind of professional training and equipment that they need in order to go into those operations, so they do not sit in the barracks, but actually get out there and take on the challenges in a way that will ensure their safety but also address the mission objectives.

Mr. David Yurdiga: The UN has a program before these soldiers or peacekeepers are deployed in a peacekeeping mission. Is there an actual program out there where they have to meet certain criteria? If so, it seems to be failing.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: This is one of the areas of the UN that we are trying to address to raise their game in terms of the kinds of training that the troop-contributing countries will receive before they go into the field.

MGen A. D. Meinzinger: Yes, if I may add, certainly I think this is very much in the space of UN reform. I was down in the UN about nine months ago, and I think the Secretary-General's initiative to elevate the level of training, standards.... In fact, what we experienced recently as part of the process to deploy is in the context of our C-130 Hercules detachment announcement to Entebbe, Uganda. They actually came up and visited our 463 Squadron in Trenton, and it's part of their confirmation process.

I think they're trying to create a more coherent enterprise in terms of how they mount UN forces. It's going to be a combination of a lot of things, including training, as Mr. Gwozdecky indicated, which is really at the core.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: May I add that Canada has taken over responsibility for a three-year training program in support of the United Nations. It's called the UN Leaders Programme, and it's in that program that we take in senior-level officials and military representatives from countries around the world, and we provide them with the kind of training that will allow them to become leaders in peace operations anywhere around the world.

That's one component of how we're trying to improve the UN's ability to deliver highly trained individuals, in this case, leaders, but it also will take place at the level of the troop-contributing country.

MGen A. D. Meinzinger: I would point to our peace support training centre in Kingston as well, where we invite nations to take instructions, to take instructor courses, so I think we're contributing to that in a broad way.

Major-General Derek Joyce (Director General, International Security Policy, Department of National Defence): I have something quickly on that. You talked about the UN. The UN has identified these communications and the mandate, understanding weaknesses within the system. There are two reports that I would recommend to the panel to review, the HIPPO report and the Cruz report. They're both very useful and enlightening about the weaknesses in UN operations and what they're doing to focus on improving those.

Mr. David Yurdiga: Over the past few months I've been talking to veterans right across my riding. They were actually in the peacekeeping mission at one time and they're now veterans, and their concern is this. When we go on a peacekeeping mission, we don't have the certainty that they're playing the same game as we are. They're unsure that the people on the ground, who are supposed to be the support, are actually going to be there for support, because we have seen some horrible failures over the 70-plus peacekeeping missions.

How are we going to address that to ensure that when our men and women go out there, they know somebody, on ground support or wherever it may be, has their back?

MGen A. D. Meinzinger: As the staff officer who reports to the chief of the defence staff on a regular basis, I would say to you that this is his number one focus, and I think General Bowes touched on it previously. On the force protection of our troops internationally, if it's not something that the UN would provide, then the Canadian Armed Forces, through the advice of the chief of the defence staff, would have set conditions in place that would require enablers to support our troops. I think of things such as medical support, close air protection. There are a number of examples you could pull from, but certainly for General Vance, when he contemplates the deployment of forces abroad through his commander of operations command, these are the priorities first and foremost in his mind.

• (1000)

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. Thank you to some of you for being here multiple times.

I want to go to you, Mark, if I could. You mentioned our new Canadian strategy and you used the term “real institutional change”. You basically said that gone are the days of the one-off decisions. Then you also mentioned Canada's credibility.

Does this new Canadian strategy add to our credibility?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: It adds to our credibility when we take on tough assignments, such as the helicopter deployment in Mali, when we're doing some of the so-called heavy lifting, as well as some of the attempts to do institutional change.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Will our position or our high level of credibility allow us to shape a way forward for the UN? You mentioned that the UN is struggling to keep up with challenges, costs, and budgets. Mind you, you also said that the UN is now able to draw from countries that maybe wouldn't have been seen as traditional countries that would provide help.

I know we're only speaking from a Canadian perspective, but from our perspective, what's the way forward? Do you have a suggestion on a way forward? How do we find the balance between the needs, the challenges, the expectations, and the realities; and will our position and our credibility have an impact on a way forward for the UN?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Let me answer by saying that how we're doing some of the elements of our strategy is very innovative. What we're doing derives exactly from these various high-level reports that

have been done on UN peacekeeping. Our strategy is responding to these independent reports about what the UN needs most in terms of doing a better job: more women, better training, these kinds of things. That's where our strategy focuses.

Mr. Darren Fisher: You mentioned Canada's connections to Mali. We know all these missions are dangerous. There's no such thing as a mission that's not dangerous. Why Mali? Why Africa? In your opinion, is it a good fit?

I'm not sure if anyone else wants to chime in on it as well.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Well, why Africa? Close to 70% of the UN's peace operations missions are in Africa. Invariably, if you want to make a difference in peace operations, you're more than likely going to have to do it in Africa.

Secondly, why Mali? Mali is where our requirements, our specialized capabilities that we agreed as a government to make available, correspond with the need. The match was there. Of course, there are additional considerations that make Mali conducive to Canada, given our long tradition, our ongoing very fulsome kinds of development assistance and other kinds of support, and our linguistic capabilities, all of which lend themselves to making Mali a place suitable for what we have to offer.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I would assume the UN would ask us for help on all missions, or many missions. Are the reasons you just outlined be the ones for which we would have chosen to move in that direction and to assist in that way?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: As I said, I think it was a match. The government decided on what it felt was Canada's value added, the kind of capabilities that were badly needed to make a difference. The UN decides on its gaps and its requirements. It just happened that, in Mali, one major gap was opening up this coming August in terms of the aviation task force requirement, and Canada had the capability to fill that gap.

• (1005)

Mr. Darren Fisher: How do we transition that vision of what people perceive peacekeeping to be, to how an actual mission plays out now? Leona and I were chatting about this earlier. We picture people walking around. It's not the way it once was. How do we get that vision in Canadians' minds, of what peacekeeping, or what was once peacekeeping, looks like now?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: If there was one thing I wish Canadians would understand about our strategy, it would be that it's not all about sending some helicopters to Mali. As important as that is, the focus of our effort is to try to make a difference system-wide by impacting the number of women participating in peace operations, and by improving the capabilities of major troop-contributing countries to do their jobs more professionally.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Perfect.

General Meinzinger, I have 10 seconds left.

Leafs or Bruins?

Leafs.

The Chair: The last question in the first round will go to MP Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Going back to the training question, I'm going to give maybe too long an example, but before I went to Afghanistan, I did a high-level personal security training course that the British military offered, because I worked for a British NGO. Part of that was how to get through a non-state actor roadblock. I also did a Pearson Peacekeeping Centre course. Part of that course was how to get the roadblock removed. Both of those were essential skills that I used in Afghanistan.

I'm looking for where the focus is, if I can use that analogy, right now. The Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, when I did the course, had military people and civilian people in the same course working on that. The same thing was true in the British military course. We had both working together on those same things, but it was a different level of training that we were working at in those two cases.

If that analogy works at all, where is our focus of training now?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Could I just start by saying that among the lessons we learned along the way in places like Afghanistan was that training can take place in a number of different environments. Sometimes it's suitable to bring people to Canada. Very often it's more beneficial to do it in the field on the ground and our CTAT mission, which I think our colleagues could speak to, is a very effective concept that we perfected, I would say, in Afghanistan and that we're trying to apply in local environments.

And by the way, Mr. Fisher, it's not Bruins, it's Jets.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I like the Jets.

MGen A. D. Meinzinger: I'll just park the CTAT discussion for a moment, but I was going to respond in that we have a very disciplined way that we prepare folks to deploy on missions. There are two modules. The first is a basic itemized list of training series that individuals need to go through. They have to have medicals done. They need to have their immunizations. Then we move into what we call theatre mission-specific training, and that is run through General Bowes' team.

In my view, it's very well done. It includes such things as exposure to the child soldier phenomenon based on the environments that we are anticipating our troops will be in.

I recall that when I deployed to Haiti in 1995 we had a gentleman come in from CIDA at that time and he was providing us some cultural perspective. I recall him describing to me that it's not appropriate in Haiti to put your hand on the top of a child's head and sort of acknowledge the child. This is not something that's seen in a positive way. From the basic training to the theatre mission-specific training, that enterprise is a well-proven one that we're currently in the process of, for the deployment to Mali.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I'm back to whether we need a Pearson Peacekeeping Centre or not. I would say that one of Canada's contributions has always been that high-level training, that second level of training, and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre certainly did a lot of their courses in Africa on site. They didn't do them all here. I'm hoping we are looking toward—if not a revitalized version of that centre—recreating those capacities and making them available because I think that is one of Canadian strengths, our training model.

MGen Derek Joyce: If I may, without necessarily referring back to the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, I can say that we're using all the

tools we have at hand. We have mentioned the CTAT and the fact that we're taking this capability internationally to conduct that type of training.

We conduct our own type of training here in Kingston and we're going to be conducting training for children in armed conflict, and women, peace and security, and those are all going to be done internationally and domestically. We also have a tool called the military training and co-operation program in which we—in Canada and outside Canada—bring in members of the program and conduct different types of training, everywhere from UN logistics training, women, peace and security, and probably soon, children in armed conflict.

• (1010)

The Chair: Thank you.

We have some time left. I'm going to need 10 minutes at the end for some committee business that was a late-minute addition just the other night when it was added by members.

I have Mr. Spengemann, Mr. Bezan, Mr. Garrison, and before we go around, if you have a question, just get my attention and I'll get you on the list.

I do have one question. We're taking over from the Germans. The Germans took over from the Dutch, as I understand. If it's the same type of operation, the Germans had Tiger attack helicopters. The Dutch had Apache helicopters. We're going to have our Griffon helicopters. Will the Griffon serve in the same capacity as those others and how will it be configured to do that job, because it's a utility helicopter?

LGen Stephen Bowes: I'll open up and then I'll provide.... We don't have attack helicopters. Ours are armed escorts, and there is a big distinction to be made, but just let's be clear that just because the allies had attack helicopters in theatre didn't mean they necessarily used them in the way we understood attack helicopters from places like Afghanistan. They certainly have that capability, but we have the means of doing the job that we've been asked to do.

MGen A. D. Meinzinger: I would only add that certainly our intent would be to employ the Griffons in a very similar manner as we did in Afghanistan, so the aeromedevac platform—being the Chinook going from the camp in Gao to a mass casualty site—will be under escort of the Griffons, a section of Griffons that would provide overwatch. It would escort in terms of keeping the flanks clear, and certainly it would be weaponized as per the configuration in Afghanistan.

The Chair: Can you give us details on how they would be weaponized in terms of type of armament?

MGen A. D. Meinzinger: My preference would be not to. I think it's important that we not telegraph too publicly the weapon systems we're going to have. If you think of Afghanistan and you imagine the employment of the Griffon in that context, it would be very similar.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

MP Spengemann, you have five minutes.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: I want to return to the idea of core values and why we are doing peacekeeping and raise again...just in the sense of being able to broach it now and hopefully have further discussions in subsequent sections. One of the phenomena of the new conflict is the massive outflow of refugees. That's a humanitarian problem that straddles the military and civilian reconstruction divide, in the sense that we need to protect refugees when they leave, either internally displaced or having to cross national boundaries. Also, when refugees leave, often the educated folks who can run a country leave early.

When we talk about post-conflict reconstruction, who are the people who are going to come back into a place like Iraq or Syria under very different circumstances, much more impoverished and dangerous circumstances later, at the tail end of the conflict, and start to rebuild that country so that there's endogenous effort led by local populations to recreate and rebuild a state?

I just wanted to put that to you as a subject that I'm sure we'll have more detailed discussions on later, but I'd like to get your initial thoughts, please.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I would say that your point about refugees or displaced people is a very important one. I'm not sure it's a value question, but in terms of values, I would say, if you could sum up our approach, it would be that we believe in an international rules-based order, but sometimes to support that, you need to back up your beliefs with taking some action to shoulder some of the responsibility that goes with defending that rules-based order.

In terms of displaced people, you're quite right; it is not a solution to relocate huge volumes of population to other countries, because those are the very people who are going to be instrumental in building peace and, hopefully, a stable country going forward.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: How would you situate the work on the global compact on migration in the context of that question?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I think the global compact is aimed at finding a balance between responding to a humanitarian need with 60-plus million people on the move in the world today, and not all of them are going to be able to go back. They need to have pathways to resettle in places that allow them to lead a decent life. At the same time, we need to balance that with the fact that we can't resettle 65 million people in other countries. We have to find ways to allow them to go home. That's where peace operations come into play in terms of facilitating that.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you for that.

When I raise the concept of values adjunct to the problem of refugees, I meant the responsibility to protect civilian populations when they're on the move.

To our colleagues on the military side, what challenges are arising there in the sense of keeping civilian populations that are forced into migration safe within conflict zones?

•(1015)

LGen Stephen Bowes: Do you mean in the context of the mission in Mali?

Mr. Sven Spengemann: For example, but others as well; potentially Syria later on, and Iraq during its heyday of conflict.

LGen Stephen Bowes: Our mandate is to support MINUSMA in the context of the capability that we're bringing to the table, so it's not one that the air task force is optimized to fulfill. It's hard for me to answer in the context because I'm focused on that piece.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: If I may, one of the core training functions that we impart when we train other countries is how to ensure that militaries deployed in the field abide by international humanitarian law and the law of armed conflict. In providing that training, we hopefully reduce the likelihood that a military might be involved in abuse of civilians or unnecessary harm to civilians along the way.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Operationally, at least conceptually, it will extend to the effort to build safe zones, if and when appropriate within war zones, within conflict zones, for migrating or displaced civilian populations.

MGen A. D. Meininger: I guess in theory you could.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, thanks. That's all I have.

The Chair: MP Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Gwozdecky, you've already said that in Mali there's no peace to keep. Would you say Mali is a failed state, or is it recovering?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I would say that Mali is a state where there is a peace process that is struggling to move ahead and make progress. I wouldn't say it's a failed state, because there is a government that is in place that is working to try to exert its authority across the entirety of its territory. There are certainly pockets of Mali that one might describe as ungoverned space where these terrorist groups and these criminal groups can operate more freely.

Mr. James Bezan: As we also talked about, unfortunately, Canadians still have this nostalgic view of what peacekeeping is. They think about Cyprus and the Golan Heights.

You can even look at the UN itself. The chief of staff for UN forces in Mali, Brigadier-General Daniel Menaouine has said, "The state isn't in a position to safeguard its territory, the Malian army is undergoing a complete overhaul". When you think about it, they actually carried out a military coup. We don't know if we can even trust them, and as he said, "We're not on a peacekeeping mission."

How do we make that resonate? I think Canadians are thinking that we're going over there with blue helmets and that everything is just going to be fine.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: You're right in identifying that there is conflict in Mali. There is instability in Mali, but at the same time there is a legitimate government. There will be elections in three or four months in Mali to bring a new government into place, so, there is democracy that is trying to take hold and assert its control over the entirety of its territory.

Mr. James Bezan: The head of MINUSMA, Mr. Annadif said at the end of 2017, “The terrorists are waging a real asymmetrical war against us—and I’d like to emphasize the word ‘war.’”

You guys are saying it's a complex conflict. The head of MINUSMA is saying it's a war. Do you agree with that statement?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I don't know how one defines these terms. If you're a civilian in the middle of bullets flying, you know it's bad. You're quite right that there are pockets of Mali where conflict is ongoing, and it's hot and it's bloody.

Mr. James Bezan: I know the French have described the foes they are encountering. The terrorist organizations are better trained and better equipped than what we experienced in Afghanistan.

General Bowes, are we prepared to deal with that type of adversary?

LGen Stephen Bowes: There is an enormous variety of groups in play, and there's no doubt that some of the groups are very well equipped. There are groups that are affiliated with Daesh. There are groups that are affiliated with al Qaeda, and they're not to be underestimated.

I think I've got to go to a point. You would be surprised about how those in uniform at senior levels, when we're looking at the context of the international order today, find that the free-flowing use of the term “war” carries with it as much or more baggage as the way people would think about nostalgia towards peacekeeping. In other words, it comes with a mindset that is not as helpful towards the tasks that we have today and the construct of moving forward.

We're watching the rules-based order under assault in the world by a combination of trans-criminal organizations, violent extremists, and malign actors. When those three elements come together, the convergence of those bubbles is a brew that crosses parts of the world where boundaries are very difficult borders, very difficult to enforce. That's why I refer to it as a complex conflict.

The other part of this is that when people talk about the concept of war from a western democratic perspective, it invokes the authority of governments and parliaments, and yet conflict is ongoing below that line in many areas by groups that are employing a variety of violent and other tactics to achieve their objectives.

I think that we need to look at this more holistically going forward. It's something that is very difficult for many Canadians to understand given where we live, given the relative peace and tranquillity that we enjoy in our country, and looking at how the world has fundamentally changed over the last number of years.

• (1020)

The Chair: Thank you for engaging.

MP Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

One of the veterans in my riding who served in Cyprus—in talking about the notion that there is no peace to keep and that things are more complex—made the observation that people are looking at Cyprus from the success end and not the pointy end when he went in. His argument was that peacekeeping, while some of the factors have changed, is fundamentally the same. You don't do peace-

keeping missions in Norway or Switzerland. You go into conflict zones.

His question to me was whether people are really recognizing the value of UN peacekeeping operations, the successes they've had in the past. He was concerned that they're focusing on the failures or the challenges more than the successes.

I guess, Mr. Gwozdecky, that's really directed at you.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I think it's an important point to remember that it's not all doom and gloom and that there are very positive elements in this overall story. Even in Mali we see hopeful signs. Agricultural land under production, under use, has increased, so they're more able to address their food insecurity as a result of the stabilizing effect that having a UN peace mission has brought. We have also seen a decline in maternal/newborn/child mortality. There are a number of positive developments in Mali, and those, in part, derive from the fact that there is a UN mission providing a stabilizing effect. We could compare Mali today to Mali in 2012. After the coup, two-thirds of the territory was ungoverned space. We know, when we look around the world, what happens when there's a sustained period of ungoverned space, like in Afghanistan, like in Iraq. You have the emergence of groups like al Qaeda and the Islamic State, which become global threats. That's certainly not something we want to see repeated.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I think that's an important point you make.

You made reference earlier to Canada's development assistance when you were asked, “Why Mali?” I think that's another piece of the story that's sometimes missing. Could you just comment on our country-of-focus efforts in Mali over the past years?

Mr. Jeff Senior: I can say a few things about the development program in Mali. In terms of financing, it's as Mr. Gwozdecky said. We are the second-largest provider of development bilateral assistance in Mali. For Canada, it's about our fifth-largest partner, looking outward, so it's in the top 20. The spending is in the order of approximately \$125 million a year, and it's focused in some of the critical areas, such as the provision of health care, maternal and infant mortality being one of the more positive stories to tell. It's also focused on food security and agricultural production, along with a number of governance-type pieces, such as working with internal audits and accountability within the government. Those are the large areas of priority. I think, as was just stated, that there is a stabilizing benefit to some of that development work in terms of social capital in Mali and not seeing further erosion in that space while the government struggles to face the broader security challenges.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Great. Thank you.

The Chair: Leona.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: I'd like to leverage what my colleague was talking about in terms of how we define success. Does the UN have a robust mechanism for defining and measuring success? Does Canada, in turn, have its own method for measuring success?

•(1025)

LGen Stephen Bowes: I can start from the mission perspective, if you will. We're focusing on a task that's aeromedical in nature, sustainment. It's much easier, in a sense, to describe. We are making a commitment, through the deployment of an aviation task force, to do certain tasks. It's easy for us, relatively speaking, and I hesitate to use the term "easy", but it's more understandable, that how we would describe the success of our contribution, at the tactical and operational levels, is that the capability the force commander relies on is in fact there.

When it comes to the political level within the UN, I'd have to defer to Mark.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Ultimately, the criteria you outlined at the beginning are around liberal democracies or a rules-based world order being burdened, and therefore, in a way, it is foreign policy by other means. How do we know we're achieving it?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Well, maybe you weren't implying this, but Canada isn't intent on bringing our form of liberal democracy to Mali.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: No, its stability....

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Our goal is to bring stability and to allow for the peace process to succeed.

The UN has its own system of measuring its progress. It focuses on how the political process is moving forward. Right now, I don't think we would say that the process is making major gains at the moment. There's a bit of a stall, I would say, in that process, but it still exists. There still is work under way. It has not fallen apart, so in that sense, we need to keep supporting it. Ultimately, success is going to be measured at the political level, not the military level. We'll be working with the United Nations to improve its ability to do that.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: But that's also on our definition of success. What Canada has chosen is this mission at this time to achieve certain things for Canada, as well. How are we measuring that, politically?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I think we and the United Nations share the same overarching objective. As I said, our strategy is based on the results of successive UN high-level reviews that have said measure, focus on the political, focus on supporting the political dialogue that will lead to sustainable peace.

We seek that and so does the United Nations. There is a consensus around that.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: To that point, you were quite clear and I think it's important to highlight yet again on the mission being not only military. Could you give us an idea of the size, scope, and complexity of the civilian component, or the non-military helicopter operation?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I won't speak about Canada's contribution there because as significant as what Canada is doing, we are, in the global scale, only one contributor and there are many other big donors at work. The European Union is probably the biggest, providing all kinds of comprehensive support from military right through to development assistance and everything in between. Through Operation Barkhane, for example, the French are providing

really vital support in terms of dealing with the counterterrorism issue.

On the civilian support, if you define it as everything non-military—police, stabilization support, counterterrorism, capacity building, development assistance, humanitarian assistance—there's a whole bunch of categories of non-military that I think in scope dwarf the actual military.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Proportionally, would you say 80:20, 70:30? I'm not going to hold you to it, but what is the order of magnitude?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I'd say significantly larger.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have about five minutes left before we have to do in camera committee business, and both MP Rioux and MP Romanado wanted questions, so if you could share that time, I would appreciate that.

MP Rioux, you're up first.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Thank you for being here.

Although I attended the peacekeeping meeting in Vancouver, I can tell you that the information you have provided is more interesting. I think this has helped everyone understand the situation better.

LGen Bowes, you talked about the fact that there was a history in Mali. Does defence go beyond Operation Frequency?

In addition, Mr. Senior, in terms of our commitment to helping the population, how many years has Canada been providing humanitarian aid to Mali?

•(1030)

[*English*]

LGen Stephen Bowes: Our mission in Operation Frequency is a strategic airlift mission in support of Operation Barkhane, so it supports the French forces. We provide a C-17 periodically through the year to airlift supplies in for movement of personnel and equipment for the French forces. That's what Operation Frequency is, into the Sahel.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Was it your first mission to help Mali in military operations?

Mr. Jeff Senior: With respect to the provision of humanitarian assistance, I would need to verify the complete number in terms of what Canada has provided. The general answer is that it's essentially since the crisis emerged in 2012-13 that the situation has become as complex as it is today with increased numbers of displaced persons and refugees within the region. It's since that period that the nature of Canadian assistance has changed and has included an increasingly important humanitarian component in response to that situation. It's in the order of \$60 million, I believe, since 2012, over a five- or six-year period.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Thank you.

[English]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Thank you very much for being here. It's always a pleasure to see you again.

I'm going to premise my question with obviously having two sons serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, I'm a little biased when it comes to our Canadian Armed Forces members.

One of my colleagues was talking about risk, especially with respect to the Mali mission, and I don't know about you but I've never known a Canadian Armed Forces member who would shy away from a mission. I know that Canadian Armed Forces members are incredibly well trained. In terms of other countries asking for more of Canada and why our Canadian troops are so popular, I think it's a testament to their resolve and the training that they receive. You mentioned our numbers may be small, but we're mighty, in my opinion.

That being said, given the change of peacekeeping missions, from peacekeeping to peace operations, can you talk to us a bit about the challenges in terms of recruitment and training of our Canadian Armed Forces to make sure that those brave men and women in uniform have that multi-dimensional training, because it's not just a question of boots on the ground. It's understanding cultural differences, conflict prevention, diplomatic solutions, and so on.

Can you explain a bit about how that's shifted the training of Canadian Armed Forces to understand the multi-dimensional aspects of missions today?

LGen Stephen Bowes: It's a long answer and we don't have the time for a long answer—the flag's already up—the point being that we're a complex organization when you consider the amount of the skills across the Canadian Forces, but we all come together as teams. We focus on individual training all the way through collective training.

There is a greater recognition going forward that it's not just about recruiting. It's about retention of our individuals over time, retaining the leadership from whom you've invested in experience, and then grooming the next generation for succession.

Intellects are the foremost capability we have: intellects being completely blind to race, creed, colour, gender, and sexual orientation. By focusing development on the brightest and best Canadians regardless of those categories, we'll enable ourselves to work in an environment that is best described by the term “ambiguous”. We have to deal with ambiguity on a day in, day out basis. It's a very complex world. The point about peacekeeping is that it used to be between states. Now it's within states, between all of those actors, and it's extremely complex.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: On that, I can assure you that our men and women deployed in Mali will benefit from augmented diplomatic support in the field, which is to say that they will have access to information that our diplomats will be gathering on the ground so that they better understand all the dynamics at play and all the actors at play, and so that when they intervene and when they're involved with the local population they do so from the standpoint of cultural understanding, cultural sensitivity, and awareness.

The Chair: Thank you for coming today. They say timing is everything. Although this motion has been sitting on our books for a while, we're just getting into now. I think the discussion is relevant, because we have a totally different approach and we now have a mission. That didn't occur a year and a half ago when we talked about doing this study, so I think the timing is going to work out great for this.

Thank you very much for coming, and thanks to all of you for your service to Canada. I'm going to suspend so we can let you leave.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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