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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): We'll call this meeting to order.

We have our friends from Global Affairs and DND here to brief us on what's going on in eastern Europe. We look forward to what you have to say. I understand there's going to be one five-minute statement from whomever, and then it'll be open to the members for the balance of the hour and a half to ask questions. Thereafter, colleagues, we're going to go in camera to discuss committee business and we'll go from there.

With that, I'll call on Major-General Prévost.

Welcome. It's good to see you in person.

Major-General Paul Prévost (Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence): It's good to see you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks for having us again.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, I am Major-General Paul Prévost, and I have met with you a number of times. Again, I'm the director of staff of the Canadian Armed Forces strategic joint staff. With me today are Ty Curran, deputy director general, international security policy at the Department of National Defence, as well as my colleagues from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Kati Csaba and Alison Grant.

We are honoured to appear before you today to provide an update on Operation Unifier and the situation in Ukraine.

The Canadian Armed Forces have a history of providing military support to Ukraine. Following Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014, Canada launched Operation Unifier in response to requests from Ukraine for help deterring Russian aggression and remaining free, sovereign, secure and stable.

Through various iterations of Operation Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces have provided the security forces of Ukraine with specialized military training to support their professionalization and to assist them in aligning with NATO standards and principles. Since the inception of Operation Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces have trained over 38,000 members of the security forces—

[English]

The Chair: Major-General Prévost, can we slow it down a bit? That would be helpful because the translators are trying to keep up with you.

MGen Paul Prévost: We can do that, for sure, Mr. Chair. It's my French coming out. I'm sorry about that.

[Translation]

Since the inception of Operation Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces have trained more than 38,000 members of Ukraine's security forces in Ukraine or in third countries.

Since the start of the Russian invasion, Canada has contributed nearly \$2 billion in military assistance to Ukraine. Canada's contribution includes 39 armoured combat support vehicles, eight Leopard 2 main battle tanks, one armoured recovery vehicle, a surface-to-air missile system, M777 howitzers and associated ammunition, 200 armoured vehicles, winter clothing and equipment, small arms, demining equipment, high-resolution drone cameras, and satellite imagery.

[English]

The Canadian Armed Forces has also provided, and continues to provide, the security forces of Ukraine with recruit training at Camp Lydd in the U.K., combat medic training, armoured training, sapper training, technical training on the M777 howitzer and leadership training. Over 4,600 members of the security forces of Ukraine have been trained through those initiatives since the spring of 2022.

Through our air task force in Prestwick, in the U.K., the RCAF has flown over 450 air missions, transporting over 12 million pounds of military donations from our allies and partners. It is a significant contribution to ensure a constant flow of supplies to the security forces of Ukraine.

Also, at the request of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces has been bolstering Ukraine's cyber-defence capabilities since early 2022. Notably, this support includes the provision of 24-7 cybersecurity expertise and of cyber-threat intelligence.

All these contributions and those of our allies and partners are coordinated through the security assistance group for Ukraine, or the SAG-U, located in Wiesbaden, Germany. Canada plays a significant and integral role in its headquarters, namely with the provision of a Canadian team, led by a Canadian general, coordinating all the training for all allies.

The support from Canada, from our allies and from our international partners is critical in assisting Ukraine in this very difficult and intense campaign. The ongoing Ukrainian counteroffensive continues to make tactical progress in the Zaporizhzhia region.

Ukraine has demonstrated an impressive resolve over the last 572 days since the invasion started in 2022. There is no denying that Russia is feeling the effects of sustained combat operations. Russia is likely to conduct another partial military mobilization in the next three to six months, with the intent of amassing enough troops to launch a renewed offensive in Ukraine. However, it is very likely that the newly mobilized troops will be ill-equipped and poorly trained.

In its effort to fracture Ukraine's civilian and military resilience, Russia will continue to target Ukrainian grain storage and port infrastructure facilities with drones and missile strikes to prevent the export of Ukrainian agricultural products. Over the coming winter, Russia is also likely to resume its strike campaign against the Ukrainian power grid, which greatly affects the Ukrainian population.

• (1535)

Russia will continue to look at challenging western allies in our collective commitment to Ukraine. This is why it's important that the defence team and the rest of our NATO allies remain focused.

I will end my remarks here. I look forward to answering your questions on this.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Bezan, you have six minutes.

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

As Conservatives, we support you guys 100% in what you're doing to support Ukraine. As we all know, Operation Unifier and the first donations of military equipment happened under the previous Conservative government. It's something I'm very proud of. As the official opposition, the Conservative Party has supported the government in every effort it has made in supporting Ukraine in this brutal war against the Russian invaders. We will continue to do so. In fact, we've asked the government to do more.

One thing we've been asking for is to provide more armoured vehicles to Ukraine. On a recent trip to Ukraine, Pat and I heard directly from both the Office of the President and the Ministry of Defence that they love the Leopard tanks. They love the Senators that we provided and would love to get more. They also know that

things like LAVs and M113s—tracked LAVs—which have been well used in Ukraine, were donated by other countries.

We are in the process of decommissioning hundreds of pieces of older stock that is considered surplus and worn out. I know that Armatec, in London, has made a proposal to the Government of Canada to refit those vehicles and send them to Ukraine. They can do eight per month. The Australians and the Americans have said they would partner with us on this if Canada would lead. They have surplus vehicles as well, which Armatec could rearm, retool and put in the fight.

Where are we, as the Government of Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces, in terms of donating these surplus decommissioned vehicles to Armatec and ultimately to Ukraine?

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Bezan, I'll turn to Ty here, who's the expert on donations in the Department of National Defence.

Mr. Ty Curran (Deputy Director General, International Security, Department of National Defence): Chair, it's a pleasure to be here. I'm Ty Curran, deputy director general for international security policy.

The process by which we identify donations that we're providing to Ukraine is relatively straightforward. At its heart are items that Ukraine has asked us for. We get that through a number of different methods, particularly through the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, which is meeting today in Ramstein, Germany. As well, we get that directly from the ambassador and Ukrainians who have reached out to us.

We've worked very hard to ensure we're meeting those priorities by sending armoured vehicles, by sending tanks and by sending some of the other items the general mentioned. We have a \$500-million funding envelope that's available in this fiscal year to help support Ukraine.

• (1540)

Mr. James Bezan: Has that been allocated, or is it still available for other donations?

Mr. Ty Curran: Parts of it have been allocated. You would have seen over the weekend that the minister made an announcement about our support for an air defence partnership. Some of that money came out of that allocation, but there are funds that remain in that space, and we continue to look at ways we can support Ukraine.

Mr. James Bezan: In previous tranches of money that have been earmarked for supporting Ukraine, there was the NASAMS air defence missile system we were purchasing from the United States. Has that been delivered?

Mr. Ty Curran: No, it has not.

Mr. James Bezan: When will Ukrainians actually get that piece of kit, which we promised months ago?

Mr. Ty Curran: We're working with the United States to produce this piece of equipment. We're hoping that's going to be available soon, but there is a production timeline that goes along with that.

Mr. James Bezan: Are you guys tracking that to make sure it is delivered in real time, as much as possible?

Mr. Ty Curran: Absolutely. Part of the challenge has been the availability of systems of that nature, just the global availability of that type of equipment. We're working very hard to support that, given that air defence is the number one priority for the Ukrainians.

Mr. James Bezan: About the Leopard 2 tanks we've sent, are they all still in operation or have any of them been destroyed in battle?

MGen Paul Prévost: We had received reports in the past that maybe one tank had been destroyed. Now I'm getting more reporting that this is not the case. We're still looking into it. There are more than our Leopard 2 tanks in theatre, so we're digging into that. We got early reports this week that it might not have been one of our eight tanks that was destroyed, so we're looking into—

Mr. James Bezan: Under Operation Unifier, we sent over a number of our Canadian soldiers to help train Ukrainians on our Leopard 2s. That work is completed. Have those soldiers come home, or have they been tasked with other duties in Operation Unifier or under NATO while they're stationed in Europe?

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, again it's a developing story here. Recently in discussions with Poland there was no demand signal for our troops to train on Leopard 2. Lately, a couple of weeks ago, we were asked again to throw another course together. We have 24 members there conducting what we think is going to be maybe the last serial of Leopard 2 training. If more is asked of us, we'll be ready to answer again.

Mr. James Bezan: I can tell you that when we were there as a committee, it was a sobering experience to see our troops training Ukrainian recruits. I was last in Ukraine a number of years ago, during Operation Unifier, when we as a committee went to Yavoriv, where we were training Ukrainians along with the Americans and the Brits. We were training experienced soldiers. Now we're training green recruits.

To all of our forces working in Operation Unifier, as well as all those working in NATO, including those who are serving in the brigade in Latvia at EFP NATO just outside Riga at Adazi, I just want to say thank you for your service. Thank you for standing up for Ukraine. Thank you for standing against the Russian aggression we're experiencing, not just in Ukraine but right across the NATO eastern flank and our Arctic.

The Chair: I didn't hear, but maybe I should have heard, an answer on Armatec.

Mr. Ty Curran: We are tracking quite closely a number of different inputs from industry that have made recommendations about different proposals. Ultimately, that's a decision we pass up to policy-makers, and then we try to act. The challenge, of course, around any of the donations that come out of the CAF inventory, which is involved with that as well, is balancing out the operational requirements for the CAF, particularly as we do things like Operation Reassurance and flow forces into Latvia.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher, you have six minutes.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and welcome back to all the members of the committee. It's been a few months.

Major-General, thank you for being here. Thank you to your team for being here. Thank you for your service to our country.

You had only a five-minute opening. I almost wish you had 20 or 25 minutes so you'd be able to really give us a feel for what's going on there.

You talked about how the Russians are looking to remobilize again. It feels like it was just yesterday they did that. I can recall having this fear that it was going to be very significant, much like the start of the war, when we thought it could be over very quickly. Then, of course, the resilience of the Ukrainians was something the world took notice of.

I'm wondering if you could describe quickly what that next remobilization looks like for Russia. Will it be 10,000 troops? Are they looking for 250,000 troops? Was the last one considered successful or was it considered a bit of a flop? As you'll recall, when we met a year ago, this war, this unjust war, was in the news every day. We saw it. It was top of mind for all of our allies and in Canada. Now we don't hear about it nearly as much.

Maybe you could give us your thoughts on the first remobilization by Russia—I think they entered into some conscription and things like that—whether that was successful, and what the new one might look like. Is that a regular thing? Is it something that's traditionally done, continually remobilizing and putting a call out for more soldiers?

• (1545)

MGen Paul Prévost: It's a great question. It's a two-part question.

Did the first mobilization work? We don't think it did. We don't have the final numbers of how many.... There will be a lot of propaganda out there on what Russia would have us believe they were successful with. One thing is certain: Ukraine was able to hold back. As you mentioned, the resolve and the resilience in Ukraine are incredible.

At the time of the first blow, initially, we thought Russia may have had a chance. Ukraine has been really good at holding the initial offensive and also at holding ground through that mobilization. Russia was not able to do much more. The Russians have been able to hold that line, but they have not been able to take critical ground. You will have seen how long they've been around Bakhmut with not much gain there. That's to the first part of your question, about the initial mobilization.

On this remobilization, we don't have any numbers. I don't think Russia will publish any numbers, because their first mobilization didn't work very well. We don't have specific numbers. We can dig into that, but I don't think we have any. What we believe, though, is that it's going to be more of the same, with ill-equipped, poorly trained and demoralized troops, and probably not effective.

I think our role as the west is to make sure we continue to provide Ukraine with what they need to continue to hold off Russia as long as possible.

Mr. Darren Fisher: The enthusiasm on Canada's part has been unwavering. We heard some things. We heard six, eight, 10 months ago that there might be a bit less enthusiasm from the United States on one side of the political spectrum, but it seems that Biden is holding strong on that.

What is the general enthusiasm from our allies for supporting Ukraine?

MGen Paul Prévost: I can start with the first part of the question. My colleague Ty mentioned today that the UDCG is happening in Ramstein, where all the ministers of defence from the coalition are gathered to discuss that issue. The support is still there. We and the U.S. continue to look at what we can send. In that space, among the allies we've all looked into what was already ready in the inventory. We have to find a balance between this particular situation, what we can provide to Ukraine and what we have to keep as a coalition for ourselves, so it's a tough space.

The industry has answers to this. How do we work with industry to mobilize in order to continue to feed over the long run, to make sure that Ukraine sustains at least holding ground but at some point also continues to break through and regain some of that territory?

Ty or Alison, do you want to add something?

Ms. Alison Grant (Director General, International Security Policy Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): I'm Alison Grant, director general for international security at Global Affairs Canada. I would love to pitch in on that question, because it's my team at Global Affairs that organized for the NATO summit in Vilnius that just took place in July.

There was very widespread and strong support to ensure that parts of the communiqué were strong on Ukraine. Also, we approved several different types of support for Ukraine at the summit: institutional support; practical support in terms of launching a new comprehensive assistance program for Ukraine, focusing on non-lethal assistance from all allies that will be pooled and will go to Ukraine; and political support with the establishment of a new NATO-Ukraine council. That all happened about a month and a half ago. It was a strong show of support for Ukraine, rallying around on good language on membership too.

• (1550)

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Normandin, you have six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you very much.

It's always a pleasure to have you good people here. Thank you for making yourselves available. We really appreciate it.

I have some more questions about what we can provide to Ukraine. Obviously, we have to keep certain things here because we have obligations, but we also have to produce materiel to send to Ukraine. One thing that comes to mind is ammunition, which is a problem.

Recently, there was a newspaper article about problems with the ammunition supply. It clearly tried to place the blame on the industry. However, a number of people have noted the fact that Canada hasn't given the industry firm contracts to ensure production. Among others, Christyn Cianfarani, whom we have already heard from here, said that you could not take a press release or a tweet to the bank and get funding. We need long-term contracts and guarantees for the industry so that it can invest in producing equipment. At this point, we don't have that. That's our understanding. The war

has been going on for a year and a half, and no contract has been signed with the industry. Contracts would also make things better for the communities in which these industries are located. I know some of those communities are in Quebec.

I would like to know whether the absence of a firm, long-term contract between the government and industry to provide Ukraine with military equipment, including ammunition, is a problem.

[English]

Mr. Ty Curran: The reality is that a lot of munitions and equipment have gone out the door to Ukraine, and they need to be both replaced and provided for. There is a requirement for industry to scale up to meet that demand. Similarly, we're seeing shortages internationally on shells and equipment, as you mentioned.

It's a fair point that industry is looking for that long-term signal about what is required. Part of the challenge we've had over the last year is responding rapidly to Ukraine's needs, trying to find whatever was on the shelf in order to meet their demands and do that in as short a timeline as possible.

As the conflict continues to drag on, we need to get ourselves on a footing so as to respond to that in the long term. We all hope the conflict ends soon, but in thinking not just about the continuation of the conflict but also about how we restock our own inventory afterwards, I think industry has a significant role to play in that. It's something we're going to need to look at improving over the coming time.

[Translation]

MGen Paul Prévost: I would like to add a few points.

This is an ongoing discussion. There have been a lot of discussions between the Department of National Defence and the industry, including, for one, Quebec's ammunition industry, which you mentioned. A lot of discussions are happening. All the NATO countries involved in the conflict are having those same discussions with their industries. It's a challenge. Our materiel ADM participated in a NATO discussion in recent weeks to try to find solutions.

There certainly is a market. The U.S. sent over one million 155 mm rounds for the M777 howitzers. That market exists. The industry may be looking for guarantees, but it should see that a market exists. Canadian demand is not going to change how this industry needs to be transformed for the future. We're discussing it, but it's a huge problem for all the allies. I don't want to criticize, but there is a market right now. War is not a market we want to promote, but I think both sides have to take some risks.

Thank you.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

I have a question about that too.

The former minister of National Defence, who is now President of the Treasury Board, told us to expect \$15 billion in budget cuts across several departments.

Are these looming budget cuts a problem for defence, specifically providing support to Ukraine? What are your thoughts on that?

[English]

Mr. Ty Curran: Defence is a significant portion of the federal budget. It has a role to play in any attempt to reallocate the budget. There's a certain responsibility that defence is going to have in that space, but I don't think that diminishes the priority we're putting on Ukraine and the need to ensure we're meeting the demands it has.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: My next question has more to do with Global Affairs Canada. We know that a number of countries have embargoed Ukraine's agricultural products, and it looks like Ukraine may want to take Poland and other countries, which I won't name because I wouldn't want to get it wrong, to the World Trade Organization.

In your opinion, does this make it look like the allies' unity is weakening?

• (1555)

[English]

Ms. Kati Csaba (Executive Director, Ukraine Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Mr. Chair, to respond on that point, I'll say that it has been somewhat surprising to see that several EU member states have chosen to put this embargo on Ukrainian grain. This is a trade issue between those individual states and Ukraine. We are aware that the European Union was making best efforts to be able to negotiate around this particular challenge, but we are also aware, at the same time, that those very same states are very supportive of Ukraine in many other ways and will continue to provide other types of support. We see this as a very straightforward trade-related issue.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

Ms. Mathysen, you have six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you very much for appearing before us today in person. It's great.

General Prévost, you discussed the focus for Ukraine on air defence and that partnership. One of the key commitments that we made was in terms of training and dollars. Of course, we don't have the F-16s. That's what they're looking for. However, we do have a number of international schools. There is one that is really incredible and that wants to help and participate in the training of Ukrainian potential pilots on that F-16 platform.

Can you talk about that and how we're moving forward in terms of the allocation of those training dollars—specifically how it relates to air defence training?

MGen Paul Prévost: Although I wear the blue uniform, Ty is actually the expert on that piece.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Fair enough.

Mr. Ty Curran: F-16s have been a high priority for the Government of Ukraine. We were very excited that we were able to join the international coalition. We've been working very closely with

the Dutch and the Danes, who are leading this initiative, trying to figure out how we can support the various phases that are out there for training. That includes things like language training so that the Ukrainian pilots can be up to speed on the machines. That includes things like learning how to fly fighter jets in general, as well as training that's specific to the F-16s. From a DND and CAF point of view, as you mentioned, we don't have F-16s, but there are areas where we can contribute as part of that.

It's been a challenging file from the point of view that F-16s are very complicated pieces of equipment. We're working closely with international partners to see how we can fit in. That's one of the areas that we've allocated funding to support.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: So those potential funds for that training, for a school like the one that exists in my riding, could still be open. Is there still a possibility for that help to Ukraine as part of the commitment that the government made?

Mr. Ty Curran: Yes. Part of it depends on.... As I said, we're working with international partners in this space. We're trying to find a place where we can bring unique Canadian capabilities to meet the Ukrainian demands. In that case, we're trying to look at spaces or areas where perhaps allies haven't already put forward a donation or an offer to the Ukrainians.

We are certainly still looking at all the options.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Okay.

Obviously, 59 million dollars' worth of weapons was announced by the Prime Minister, which would be ammunition that would be sourced from Canadian companies to donate to Ukraine. Can you confirm whether the production of the equipment occurred within Canada? The sourcing of that ammunition was questioned in a news story previously, where it was coming from.

Mr. Ty Curran: With regard to the \$59 million, would you be referring to the Colt Canada contract?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Yes.

Mr. Ty Curran: We've purchased a number of weapons, small arms and ammo, from Colt Canada, as well as, I believe, Prairie Gun Works. In the case of Prairie Gun Works, I know that the equipment was produced in Canada, or I'm pretty sure, but I don't know the answer off the top of my head for Colt Canada. I can certainly get back to you on that.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: That would be great, because it was also hinted that ultimately the defence department wanted to actually not make that information public. Making that information public would be really helpful, considering that a lot of our industry partners, as Madame Normandin has stated, are looking to ensure that they can solidify those contracts.

In terms of your general, overall knowledge here at this table, can you assure us right now that all that information will be kept public and there won't be certain things held back in terms of non-disclosure statements?

• (1600)

Mr. Ty Curran: Let me start by saying that if there is a contractual agreement that we've signed in that space, we would obviously have to respect that, but from my point of view, I'm happy to get back to you with the answer to that question. We have a very strong relationship with Colt Canada. I just don't happen to know where all of their production is done. I wouldn't want to give you the wrong answer right now on that front.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I appreciate it.

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Okay.

I think I won't fit it in, so I'll give it back and I'll come back to you.

The Chair: And you'll expect me to be nice to you.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Yes, always.

The Chair: Yes, well, sometimes your expectations are unrealized.

Mr. Kelly, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Thank you.

I'd like to begin by echoing the remarks of Mr. Bezan and affirm just how strongly we in the opposition support the work of the government in its support of Ukraine, and remind anybody who has forgotten that the previous government was there in 2014 and launched Operation Unifier. We continue to stand with Ukraine and call on the government to do more and do better to support Ukraine.

I'd like to ask for a quick response, if I could, on a question that came out of your remarks, General Prévost. What land mine clearance equipment have we sent or are we sending? You mentioned it in your opening statement.

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, some of the equipment we sent from CAF, the Canadian Armed Forces, was tactical equipment that soldiers would use to demine for their operations—rather than demining writ large for a country, which normally comes back more in to the Global Affairs lane, as a remediation to the conflict. We sent metal detectors and tactical equipment for the security forces of Ukraine to be able to demine for their own operations.

Mr. Pat Kelly: All right.

Now, we've been told about the depth of mine defence. In some cases, minefields are 18 kilometres deep. I mean, you're not going to clear that with hand-held detection devices. In order to clear a minefield that deep, as we were told repeatedly, it's all about artillery capability and being able to push back so that you won't have the immediate targeted response once you detonate a mine in the clearing process.

Going back to the issue of shells, has there been an increase in Canadian production in the last year over year?

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, for the answer to that question, we'll have to check with the company. I know that our associate deputy minister of materiel is dealing with the company. Have they

increased their production? Will they increase their production? We'll have to come back.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Which company are you referring to?

MGen Paul Prévost: It's GD-OTS.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Is this at the facility located north of Montreal?

MGen Paul Prévost: That's correct.

Mr. Pat Kelly: So it's still not operating and not—

MGen Paul Prévost: I wouldn't be able to answer that question, but we could come back with the answer to it.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Okay.

I think it's been a year since this was identified as an area in which Canadian production could be employed. Is there a sense of urgency in getting this factory up and running?

MGen Paul Prévost: Yes. That's the point I was making earlier here. There's a point where we have to negotiate with industry, but Canadian demands alone won't be enough to satisfy that industry. That industry needs to recognize that there's a global market for this here. We're working with that industry now.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Okay, but to meet global markets, they require export certification from Global Affairs. Will they be able to do that immediately? What steps has Global Affairs taken to ensure that the companies have the assurance that they can in fact export any surplus the Canadian Forces wouldn't take?

Ms. Alison Grant: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

I'm not in charge of export controls, but my team is involved in the process at Global Affairs. I do know that we have developed a special and fast process for clearing military exports to Ukraine. We work alongside DND on that. I'm aware of a special procedure for that. Unfortunately, I don't have all the details. I'm not in charge of it. I can get back to you.

• (1605)

Mr. Pat Kelly: I would appreciate it if you could table anything with the committee.

We heard repeatedly—in the various bases the committee visited in the summer, and when James and I were in Ukraine—that 155 millimetre shells are perhaps the hottest military commodity for our allied forces that use that calibre of weapon. Getting them built is critical to the entire defence. We heard repeatedly that artillery capability is what holds back their ability to clear minefields and to actually advance into Russian positions that are extraordinarily well defended at this point.

I'll give you the last 20 seconds if you have a response.

MGen Paul Prévost: That's good, sir.

Mr. Chair, we'll provide what update we can from the discussions between our department, the allies involved in that conversation and the company.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelly.

We do seem to be accumulating a lot of undertakings to respond at a later date. One way or another we'll have to organize that.

Ms. Lambropoulos, you have five minutes. Go ahead, please.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess we need to practise the last name again a few more times. It was too long a break.

The Chair: I know. I just realized I stumbled. It was three months of not saying your name.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here to answer our questions today.

My first question brings us back a few months. At our last meetings before we rose, we heard a lot about the Ukrainian offensive that was going to take place in the spring and summer. I'm wondering if you can tell us in which ways, if any, Ukraine gained anything from that offensive. Could you just give us a bit of a resumé before I move on to my next question?

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, thanks for the question.

We did discuss how we were expecting that counteroffensive to occur. It started this summer. There have been, I would say, tactical gains. There hasn't been a huge shift in gains. It's the nature of that conflict. This is a conflict that is very much based on old tactics of trench lines and artillery being shelled one way or the other.

Russia had made quite some gains in southern Ukraine, and it's heavily defended. Ukrainians are making tactical moves, but there has been no sweeping breakthrough at this time. This work has to continue.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: We had also heard a lot about how Russia had immense potential, because of its resources, vast land and population, to maintain the potential weapon production a lot more than did, obviously, Ukraine. Ukraine relies a lot on the west in order to make sure it is able to fight back. Today you've told us a lot about what weapons we've sent over and generally what is needed.

I'm wondering if you can give us a bit more information on how we're working with our allies and what specifically our allies can be doing to better support this in the long run, considering there might be more than one more offensive by Russia. Obviously, we seem to think that the war will continue for a long time. What strategies have been put in place and what kinds of discussions are happening with NATO allies? What role does Canada play in all of that?

MGen Paul Prévost: Maybe I'll start, Mr. Chair, and then allow Ty or my colleagues here to reinforce if possible.

It's important to note that throughout the conflict, the nature of the donations—if you have not noticed—has changed because of the nature of the conflict. We talked a lot about artillery initially, artillery rounds, because it was the nature of the conflict at the time. This continues, so there are going to be those needs that persist until there's a breakthrough on the Ukrainian side.

There was also a change in the nature of the conflict when Russia started attacking by air. There were indiscriminate attacks against the population, nodes and everything else, and then air defence be-

came important. You saw afterwards that the tank discussion came because of the counteroffensive. We basically mounted, as a coalition, brigades of Ukrainians to be able to push that counteroffensive.

That strategy is always being updated, mainly in Wiesbaden, but in consultation...actually, it's a Ukrainian plan that we helped them with. Those things will change, which is also complicating matters with industry in guaranteeing long-term what's going to be the next bound.

What's also complicating this piece is that a lot of what they'll need in the future requires high technology. When we talk about air defence systems, we're talking about things that need long-term, elite items that are complicated to build and don't get delivered quickly. That is why we have those tables that are weekly and monthly to discuss a strategy long-term in order to do what we can with industry to match or even exceed what Russia can produce on the other side.

I think there's clearly a technical advantage in the west, so we can win that fight, compared to Russia.

Go ahead, Ty.

• (1610)

Mr. Ty Curran: Mr. Chair, I'll add that the question of coordination is something we're quite focused on. I mentioned already that the Minister of Defence was at the Ukraine Defense Contact Group in Ramstein, Germany, today. That's with a number of NATO and like-minded partners all working together to try to figure out how we can support Ukraine's priorities. We've seen some of the coalitions that have been stood up. We talked a bit about the F-16 coalition earlier, but there is the air defence one we recently joined, tanks and that kind of thing.

Trying to figure out how we as partners can best bring the resources we have to bear to meet the Ukrainian demands is something we're always working on with our partners. The enthusiasm across the board is still very high. It's something we're concerned about, in the sense that if it were to waver, it could be a challenge, but I think as collective supporters of Ukraine, that enthusiasm continues to be high.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Alison Grant: Mr. Chair, if I have a minute to answer, more on the political side, I would say there's been a lot of energy put into this question of how we demonstrate the political commitment to support Ukraine over the long term.

You will have seen at the Vilnius summit of NATO in July that G7 leaders signed a joint declaration of support for Ukraine. We now have over 20 countries that have signed on to this declaration. Canada played a central role in producing that declaration and getting support for it. At its heart is a commitment to provide multi-year, long-term security assurances and commitments to Ukraine, primarily in the military and security sphere, but also for reconstruction and recovery in the event of ongoing Russian aggression, and in the future for repeated attempts of Russian aggression.

The point of that is to ensure that allies and partners are able to reassure Ukraine over the long term at we are there for as long as it takes, and to signal to Putin that he will have to face a coordinated campaign of western support for Ukraine over the long term.

The Chair: Two and a half minutes go to Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I have a question about drones. We know that Canada provides software, such as camera systems, but apparently some problems surfaced recently. For example, Elon Musk prevented Starlink-enabled drone attacks. We also know that China has developed technology that can prevent Ukrainian drones from operating. Can you comment on that?

Drone technology, which was very useful during the war, may become useless in the future given these vulnerabilities. Is anyone looking into that at this time?

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you for your question.

Yes, we are on top of that. Not just Canada, but the entire coalition. We are talking about these things with intelligence agencies and with planners. That is kind of the nature of war, which begins one way and evolves.

The Ukrainians have done the same thing. They adapt to the technologies that each country sends them. They adapt their tactics and operations to new technologies that they weren't even trained to use before the conflict began.

It's happening on both sides. We are monitoring the issues you mentioned, and we are looking at ways to counter that and get ahead of those changes.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

You probably won't be able to answer my next question now, but I'll ask it and, if there isn't enough time left, you can answer it in the second round.

We know that six deputy ministers were fired following the arrival of the new Ukrainian defence minister. Could you comment on that? What message does that send? We also know that there are still corruption issues in Ukraine. What is Global Affairs Canada's take on that?

There are only 30 seconds left, so why don't you continue your answer in the next round?

[*English*]

Ms. Kati Csaba: Mr. Chair, it is true that six deputy ministers and the secretary of state of defence were recently asked to resign.

This is apparently a standard practice when the minister has resigned from a post. This should not be considered a sign that any of those deputy ministers were involved in corrupt activities.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

Ms. Mathyssen, you have two and a half minutes, plus one.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: To continue on, I'll say that this lack of consistency in terms of personnel on the other side does prove problematic.

Can you talk about how our officials and communications on our side...? How are we handling that? Are there additional changes that we need to consider in order to maintain the relationships?

Ms. Kati Csaba: Mr. Chair, it's still very early days. I think it will be a question of rebuilding relationships with the deputy ministers through our ambassador and defence attaché at the Canadian embassy in Kyiv. It will take a bit of time.

Mr. Ty Curran: I'll add that we're fortunate that we have a very strong relationship with the Ukrainian government. Our previous minister and the previous minister of defence in Ukraine had a very strong relationship. We look forward to getting the opportunity to create that relationship with Minister Blair and the new minister.

Similarly, it goes beyond that to the bureaucratic level, as well. We're very fortunate that Canada is seen as a reliable partner in that space. The Ukrainians have been very engaging with us from that point of view.

You're right. Any time there is a change like that, there are some relationships that need to be rebuilt. I think that's something we need to work on in coordination with our colleagues at the embassy in Kyiv.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: One of the things that happened during our trip this summer was the massive meeting of the BRICS nations and the expansion. This is more of a GAC question, but can you talk about how we are responding to that differently? How does that potentially change things, or is it still along the same points? Can you expand on what that meeting has meant in terms of discussions internally?

Ms. Kati Csaba: The addition of new countries to BRICS will have long-term implications that we will be following closely. At this point, it's still a little early to be saying what those implications might be. I think it is fair to say that BRICS may be seeking to align itself as an opposing force to western countries. If that is, indeed, the case, then it's something we will have to watch closely and respond to appropriately.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Earlier in the year, the CDS made that huge announcement about the reconstitution order and the impact. My colleague, Ms. Normandin, has spoken about budget cuts in terms of limiting capability.

Can you talk about the increasing stresses on the Canadian Armed Forces in terms of the lack of numbers for men and women who are active and about what we're doing to ensure continued support of our own people but in relation to Ukraine and what we're doing for it?

MGen Paul Prévost: Reconstitution is still our priority in the Canadian Armed Forces. It's the top priority, along with culture. We need to refill the ranks. We're still missing the troops. Since the last time we talked, there's been no change in terms of the number of recruits we have.

The ones who are implicated in the fight to train Ukrainians are, I'll say, very motivated. It is great work that we're doing in all the countries. We're involved in training—I mentioned the 4,600 Ukrainian troops we've trained. One thing our soldiers noticed over there—and you saw it on the trip—is that we have very young soldiers contributing over there in training. They appreciate training soldiers who are focused because they know those soldiers are leaving for the battle. It's very motivating, and we hope that we will be able to continue to do the same, because it's a great recruiting tool for us. It's the same with the brigade that we look forward to mounting in Latvia.

These are good-news stories for us, but recruiting Canadian soldiers to the CAF continues to be a challenge that we're focused on.

The Chair: Thank you.

I think I can speak for the ones who were on the trip. The people we spoke to were very motivated. The corporals were doing sergeants' work, sergeants were doing lieutenants' work, and lieutenants were doing majors' work. They were quite excited about the work they were doing. I hope that works in favour of recruitment for you.

Mrs. Kramp-Neuman is next.

• (1620)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you for being here.

Retired Brigadier-General Gaston Côté said:

Extremely important lessons are emerging from all this and from everything happening in Ukraine. However, these lessons are being ignored in some of the defence policy programs.

In your opinion, what lessons learned from Ukraine do we need to be implementing now? It's a question from 30,000 feet, but could you give me a snapshot in 30 seconds or so?

MGen Paul Prévost: I would say one that's top of mind, which came up a few times today, is that you go to war with what you have. That is one lesson here. Ukraine had to look to allies to help out from the get-go, and we were right there responding to this. That's one.

We're looking at more operational-level lessons as well. I think one good one is that in Ukraine, through the training we've done over the years before the second invasion in 2022, we had built a way of command and control and training that was more western-like than Soviet-like, and that seems to have worked in favour of Ukraine so far.

We're looking at those lessons from a tactical perspective, an operational perspective and a strategic perspective as well. This is ongoing right now.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you.

To follow up, Andrew Leslie told our committee in June:

With NATO, we were supposed to send a battle group on short notice should there be cause to do so, which there is, by the way—let's not forget what Russia is doing, those atrocities in Ukraine. It took us months to send a couple of hundred. We're supposed to send a brigade...and command it. It still hasn't left.

Responding rapidly seems to be the intent, but it doesn't seem to be the case. How has the CAF recruitment and retention crisis limited our ability to assist Ukraine?

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

To be frank, I think our recruiting challenges and the reconstitution have not affected the way we responded to Ukraine. We've responded to the requests of Ukraine in terms of training and in terms of sappers, howitzers and all the others I listed before. We're able to respond there.

Your question also had to do with how we're going to plan to mount a brigade in Latvia. In this one, we came up with a plan fairly quickly. This was a quickly developing story between the Baltic nations first, and then there was an announcement by NATO that there were going to be more battle groups along the border, notably in Bulgaria and Slovakia, and in Romania as well. We responded quickly with our plan. We made a plan quickly.

In this case, we're implementing that plan. We're working with Latvia very hard to get the infrastructure ready. Latvia is not ready right now to receive a multinational brigade of that size in terms of infrastructure, so we're working with them to be ready. Our plan matches the NATO regional plans and the plans we have with the sister countries there, with Lithuania and Estonia, but also with the other brigades.

I think we're on par with the plan we've put forward. We're discussing with our allies how to man that brigade, and it's going well. One of the pieces, as I mentioned, is infrastructure, not only to house our troops in Latvia—because we're talking 2,200 Canadians now being deployed in Latvia over the next couple of years and we need to house them—but there are also training ranges and a whole bunch of infrastructure that needs to be worked on with Latvia in order to make this happen, and we're on track.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you.

My next question is, could you provide us with an update on the Canadian Leopard 2s that were sent over to Ukraine? Are they currently available for use by the Ukrainian forces in theatre? How many units are still operational?

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll answer that one here.

We sent eight tanks to Ukraine. They are involved in a battle right now in the Zaporizhzhia region. We have confirmation of that. As we mentioned, we had a report over the last few weeks that one of them may have been destroyed. I'm getting new reports now that it might not have been one of ours. We're just clarifying the issue. It seems like it was not one of ours, which means the eight tanks we have are still in the fight.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: During the last session, we heard from a number of different delegations with regard to regional powers, including Poland, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania. They were all unanimous in their call for the Canadian government to increase our spending to 2% of GDP. Finland and Japan have also indicated that they have a plan to hit 2%, but unfortunately our government has made it clear that they do not intend to meet this bare minimum.

How has this affected relations with NATO allies that are currently dealing with these very real Russian threats? How has it affected our ability to deliver the aid Ukraine needs in a timely and effective manner?

• (1625)

The Chair: You might consider that to be a political question to defer to your political masters, but you are all sophisticated witnesses, so I'll let the question stand.

Mr. Ty Curran: I might add that we deal regularly with our allies, particularly the ones you just listed. I think we've had the opportunity to make some fairly significant contributions in that area. As you know, we have forces in Poland that are doing training. We have the stand-up to the brigade in Latvia.

I think our partners are very happy with the work we are doing. However, they would always like us to do more. I think that's something we continue to look at.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Kramp-Neuman.

Mr. Sousa, you have five minutes.

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all for attending.

You know, Canada, being the sixth-largest GDP country in NATO, is also the sixth-largest contributor to NATO. Canada is doing its part in that regard, but certainly we can always do better. I was taken by the tremendous amount of reception and gratitude we received in Estonia and Latvia, even in Poland, in recognizing that Canada has been a leading force and has contributed tremendously to the cause.

I was really taken by watching some of the Ukrainian recruits being trained by Canadians—not to fight, necessarily, but to defend themselves against the mines and the “dragon's teeth”, as they call it, and all the stuff that's created in trench warfare. I was taken by the colonels basically advising their soldiers not to get too friendly with the Ukrainian recruits—be calm, do the job, avoid friendships, and don't do Instagram, Facebook or any social media—never knowing if these guys will come back. That's the sad reality of this fight. These young kids are putting their lives.... They're brave. They're going out and doing the job, and Canadians are there to try

to provide support where necessary. I'm very proud of our team and what they're doing out there, so thank you for what you're doing.

When I was there and I saw all this, I saw a tremendous amount of collaboration and support with Operation Unifier, with the other countries and states. I was also taken by the need for us to be responsive to article 5, should it exist, either in the Baltic states...and hence the tremendous amount of support that we have in the eastern front.

The obvious question is this: How much support is there, and how long will that area be secure, given the amount of ammo that's available to us? I'm getting conflicting reports as to how much we can withstand a defence measure there. Do you have a sense of that?

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, I'll take the first stab. Then I'll see if Alison or Ty or even Kati has something to add.

In the context in which I think the member is speaking here, it would be a very different conflict from what we see in Ukraine. I don't think the 155s would matter at that point. On the technological might of NATO, if you think of the fighters, which we're trying to get to Ukraine, these are game-changers.

So I think we can't really compare. We're concerned. I think this is why all allies right now are trying to play the balance of what we can provide that's already readily available, while the industry is helping in some of the contracts we want to lay. I think if Putin would cross the line there, the battle would change.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I would assume that there would be a huge response by NATO and by the western countries involved. I also appreciate that the tremendous amount of display we have there is causing a deterrent to Russia for not doing anything further beyond where they're at in Ukraine. I do worry about Belarus, though, and surrounding areas in terms of insurrections.

One question I've always had—I still don't know this—is how many civilian casualties have occurred, and how many soldiers, both Russian and Ukrainian. I'm getting conflicting reports. How many people are actually being injured and how many people are dying? Do you have a sense to date?

• (1630)

Mr. Ty Curran: Mr. Chair, thank you for the question.

Our Ukrainian partners have resisted efforts to provide numbers, so we don't have an official source that says how many Ukrainian civilians have been killed or wounded. It's similar with their forces. There is online reporting that talks about that, but officially, from that point of view, it's not something the Ukrainian government has provided.

I'll defer to my colleagues at GAC, if they want to add to that.

Ms. Alison Grant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That's correct. I agree with Ty on that answer.

I would simply add, on the deterrent factor on the eastern flank.... I'm going to mention the NATO summit in Vilnius again. It's the third time I have, but it's because there was an incredible focus there on defence and deterrence planning, and a very significant agreement on NATO's regional plans along the eastern flank. You've seen an increase in the number of battle groups that are stationed along the eastern flank. It's now no longer just the Baltics; you have four new ones in southeastern Europe as well—Romania, Bulgaria, etc.—as well as, of course, the surge in the battle group sizes in the Baltics. There's a real focus there.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sousa.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Now I have one more.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Now you'll have to come back on Thursday, then.

Mr. Charles Sousa: He's so mean.

The Chair: Only "one more"....

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we know, a long war probably favours Russia, mainly because of its ability to renew its troops. We know its strategy: it can go get them from other countries if necessary. However, there may be something else that could benefit Russia in the long term.

What are your thoughts on the possibility that an election south of the border could put Donald Trump back in power? I would like to hear your comments on that.

I can see some people don't like that idea. I'm sorry to have to ask the question.

[*English*]

Ms. Kati Csaba: I think that's probably a question we would want to leave to our political colleagues to respond to.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

While we were on mission, we heard that Ukraine gave very little information to allies at the beginning of the conflict; it kept quiet. However, over time, it has opened up a little and been candid with feedback on the training we give recruits.

Is that still happening? Is there more and more information coming from Ukraine?

MGen Paul Prévost: I'll take that one, Mr. Chair.

I think that, from day one and even before the invasion, there was a lot of information sharing between Ukrainians and Canadians through our embassies and the Canadian defence attaché, but also through mechanisms like Wiesbaden, which I mentioned earlier.

There is also a lot of information sharing. We talked about cybersecurity. We welcome feedback on the training we provide to the troops. Our soldiers, our young women and our young men, see that every day. Every week, we hear stories about the number of lives

saved because we trained medical technicians. We get direct feedback from the troops involved in the training. Staff also share a lot of information.

How to engage in the war remains Ukraine's decision, and we support it through Wiesbaden by updating the plans and equipment we send. Information exchange was constant, even before the war.

[*English*]

The Chair: As incredible as it may seem, I screwed up. I should have gone to Mrs. Gallant for five minutes.

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

With respect to NATO, we see our allies increasing their military effectiveness. For example, in Poland, they're doubling their armed forces to 300,000. What lessons can we learn from our NATO allies that they're taking and that we should be implementing over here?

MGen Paul Prévost: I'll start and I'll see if Ty or Alison wants to continue.

NATO is an alliance. Obviously, Poland is right on the border of Russia. I think we've worked very well together—since before the invasion started, as we had seen some signs of it—to mount and relook at our plans that we were going to work on as a coalition. Before the invasion started, we had three battle groups—the EFPs that we were leading in Latvia—and it's now grown to eight EFPs along the border.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You're talking about the battlefield. I'm talking about Canada.

What should we be doing that our allies are doing? What should we be doing in Canada to meet the expectations wherein the minimum of 2% has now become the floor instead of the aspirational goal?

● (1635)

Mr. Ty Curran: I think, Mr. Chair, the lesson we've learned from this is that there's an important element for us to be prepared for whatever is coming next. When we look at defence spending, I know that an opportunity to make sure Canada can continue to contribute along the way, as it has, is important. Looking at ways we can grow the work we're doing with NATO is also important. We've made some valuable contributions over the last years. We've already referenced our percentage—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: There are no specific lessons, then, that you want to report to this committee right now, observations that we can emulate.

Mr. Ty Curran: Mr. Chair, maybe one very important lesson, one of the things that I think this conflict has shown us, is the importance of logistics and mobility. We probably fell out of practice of moving large bits of equipment, both across the ocean and internally in the European theatre. We've worked very closely with the European Union as well to ensure that things like bridges, railheads and that sort of thing are available for transport.

I think it's been a practical element of the conflict—in addition to a number of other things—that has forced us to relook at that. I think we will be better prepared for the next conflict because of that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you very much.

For our foreign affairs officials, reportedly the Wagner Group has dissipated in Russia. How does this development impact the effectiveness of the Russian military in the Ukraine conflict?

Ms. Alison Grant: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to answer that question.

It's hard to know exactly. The Wagner organization was used by the Russian army in Ukraine, but not to a very large extent. From our understanding, they were used in the Bakhmut area in particular to launch the offensive there, but then pulled out. We do not—this is broadly speaking—expect that developments with the Wagner Group will have a significant effect on the Russian effort.

That answers directly that question. If there are others on Wagner, I'm happy to also answer those.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

While everyone is saying that we need to increase financing to the military, in the news recently there's been an announcement of forthcoming cuts to the military. How are we going to increase our spending allocation to a minimum of 2% if we're already cutting back funding to the military?

Mr. Ty Curran: Mr. Chair, thanks for the question.

As we look at the fiscal reallocation, defence is a big portion of the federal budget and, as a result, we need to play a role in that. I think we're also looking at the same time at the defence policy update and looking for that to come to fruition in the near future. I think we have a fiscal reality that the government has asked us to look at—that defence needs to play a role—but, similarly, the government has also noted the requirement for an update to our defence policy, and we're continuing to work on that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Quite apart from our area of operations where our troops are, there are the surrounding countries almost adjacent to Ukraine. Very close is Romania, for example. Are we doing anything for those countries to help augment their defences against this impending force?

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, thanks for the question.

In Romania, a battle group will be stood up as well. It's one of the four countries, I believe, that will have a brigade like the one we're mounting now in Latvia.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Is there Canadian contribution?

MGen Paul Prévost: There is no Canadian contribution to that. Again, NATO is an alliance, so right now we're going through force

generation conferences to figure out which allies will be assigned to which battle groups. We have our partners, and Romania will have their partners.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mrs. Gallant.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Lalonde, welcome to the committee.

You have the floor for five minutes.

• (1640)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

This is my first time attending this committee as parliamentary secretary, and I would like to begin by thanking the women and men who serve Canada here at home and around the world.

[*English*]

I'll start by saying thanks to everyone in our military for their great service. Last Friday was our Military Family Appreciation Day, and these are the unsung heroes of our CAF members. I want to start by saying thank you for all your service.

Major-General Prévost, you mentioned that there was a change in the nature of the conflict. As we are looking over the past few months, we've seen Ukraine utilizing drones to strike at targets within Russia. What do you see as driving this change in tactics and what are the potential upsides and risks in these kinds of attacks from a Ukrainian perspective?

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the member for her questions.

One of the reasons, regarding the changes to this, is that Ukraine is obviously trying to impede Russia's ability to continue to sustain that conflict. Much as Russia is trying to do this in Ukraine by attacking lines of communication where the military aid is actually transiting through, Ukraine is trying to do that. We call that a deep battle, trying to keep Russian reinforcements from moving into Ukraine. That's the reason it's moved into that space now. We're obviously watching this carefully. There's always the risk of lateral escalation with these actions, but Ukraine is at the point now that they have to stop Russia's actions further down than just along the front line where they did initially.

Mme Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much. I'll just say that we also have to thank the Ukrainian army for their efforts in this war.

In terms of Operation Unifier, how has the nature of Ukraine's needs changed? What type of training is currently more in demand, and what does this tell us about the state of the conflict, if I may ask, Major-General?

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, that's a very good question.

Just as the conflict has changed, the nature of the training has changed as well on our side. Obviously, one of our biggest contributions initially was the training for the recruits in the U.K. Operation Interflex, which I think you visited, and then as Canada started to contribute specific capabilities like the howitzer, for instance, we started training the troops on the equipment that we had donated. This is how it's changed. Some of the things we'll probably continue, like having the medical technicians or medic training we're doing.

One thing I'll mention, though, is that we tend to train the trainer. When we start in a space, we initially train the soldier. That's how Unifier has grown over time. We've moved, along the way, to training the trainer as well, and the good news about this is that now Ukraine has exceeded the coalition's capacity to train their own recruits. So right now there are more recruits being trained in Ukraine by Ukrainians than by all other coalition members together. This is, I think, what Canada does best: train young folks but also train the trainers.

• (1645)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you. This is actually very nice news.

If I have a bit more time, how is Canada—and I think you somewhat answered but I'm just going to ask more specifically—leveraging the expertise of the members of our Canadian Armed Forces to best assist in the training of the Ukrainian armed forces? I think you said how, but I will let you finish.

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you again for the question.

I've talked already about training the trainers in spaces we're moving into. I think you've potentially noticed that in Latvia. There are also places where we start training more leadership. We're starting to do more collective training rather than just recruits. We're kind of going up the value chain. As Ukrainians are picking up their own needs at the lower levels, we're starting to go up the value chain in terms of the training we dispense.

My colleague from Global Affairs talked about security assurances over the long term. These will probably also change the nature of our longer-term contributions. We are looking at that for the future, but right now, what you've seen is what we've provided. That's just evolving a bit into the value chain of the training that we provide.

The Chair: It's Ms. Mathysen and then Mr. Bezan for five minutes.

Unless my Liberal colleagues have any wild objections, I'll take the final five minutes. Is that okay? Thank you.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Building on a number of questions—certainly Mr. Sousa's question or commentary—I will say that we did see remarkable things from our own Canadian troops and the training of those Ukrainians. It was quite moving, and that, of course, has had an emotional impact on those troops. Could you talk about the combination of a few things, including the supports we're providing to our own troops in terms of the emotional mental health stresses that they are dealing with because of that? In addition, we talked earlier about how, while they are incredibly motivated and excited to do this work and so proud to do this work, it takes

a toll in terms of the reconstitution order and the numbers. There is also how all that is impacting our folks within DND centrally here.

So there is a combination of that stress and how we're dealing with that in terms of mental health programs specifically in this, but also for folks at home.

MGen Paul Prévost: I'll start, and then I'll maybe turn to Global Affairs to talk about mental health if they wish to.

This is the first time I've heard about it in this form, and there is lots going on in the mental health portion. In terms of our own troops, this is something we've learned about over the years—resilience ahead of a deployment. During deployments, we've also heard some of the comments here.

In the initial part of the conflict, when it started, some of our troops who had trained Ukrainians started to try to get in contact with the soldiers over there and some of them were not answering, so we have to be educating our troops about that. There's the mental health portion that we monitor ahead of a deployment, during a deployment and when they come back to their families as well. It's a constant conversation about the mental resilience of our troops there.

In terms of the mental health and health in general of Ukrainians, I know that's not necessarily the nature of the question, but I want to see if Kati has something to say here.

Ms. Kati Csaba: Sure.

To add to that, certainly it doesn't cover Canadian troops, but we have also been providing mental health support to our locally employed staff at the embassy in Kyiv, who have been going through their own traumas. I know it doesn't answer your question directly, but we are providing direct support to Ukraine for the mental health of Ukrainians in various ways, including women and girls who have been affected by sexual and gender-based violence.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: If there's more you can add to that as part of this report, to report back, that would be great.

The Chair: We'll go to Mr. Bezan for five minutes.

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

I want to follow up on some of the comments that I've made and, I guess, challenge General Prévost a bit on Latvia and them being prepared to accept our troops. From when this committee was over in Latvia in 2017 to visiting Camp Adazi this time around, the amount of infrastructure that has been built up there to support Canada and our allies is amazing. Latvia has been a very gracious and charitable host. They love the Canadians and the job we're doing there. To suggest that we aren't going to go up to the brigade level until the infrastructure is there I think is a bit of a cop-out when you look at.... When we first went there, we were all in tents and happy to be there. We witnessed them levelling ground quickly to put more barracks up, but in the interim, if we need to put our guys in tents, I know they'll be happy to stay out there, as cold and ugly as it is during the wintertime. There's a job to be done and a border to protect, and the eastern flank is at risk.

When we were visiting our American colleagues in Poland, after several years they're still working out of temporary facilities, while the Latvians built the nicest fitness centre I've ever seen on a military base in my life. It's gorgeous. I want to thank the Latvians for being such great hosts to Canada. We'll continue to do what needs to be done and get there quickly, rather than later.

The other thing that was touched on was about our defence expenditures. In the CANFORGENS, there was a memo that came out on September 6 from Deputy Minister Bill Matthews and CDS General Wayne Eyre. It says:

As one of the largest federal departments, National Defence has an important role to play in effective and efficient government operations. Early efforts are now underway across the Defence Team to address our part in this initiative by developing spending reduction options.

Are these reductions going to impact our ability to support Ukraine and to support our allies in NATO, and, of course, to continue to recruit and retain our forces so that we can take care of things at home as required?

• (1650)

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll answer for sure the first part and a bit of the second part, and we'll see if Ty has something else to add.

On the infrastructure, our army and even our air force members are always happy to live in tents, and we will do so if there's nothing else to live in. As we mount the brigade over there, I think the critical infrastructure.... We need to have a combat-capable brigade, which, in order to do deterrence, we need to exercise. We need to show Russia on the other side that we're ready to jump in. The critical infrastructure we're looking for here is a training range and training infrastructure, which is not solved for now.

If headquarters are not there, we'll continue to operate out of temporary shelters, as we did in 2017. We're happy to do that. I think the critical piece is how we create the link between all the bases and the training range they're looking at right now, how we bring our equipment, how we bring our tanks to the field, how we bring our ammo to the field and how we train together with the Latvians. Latvians are amazing partners and we're discussing daily with them in theatre. We're happy with the way it's going, but there are some pieces of the infrastructure that will be critical for that brigade to be combat-capable.

A tent is just fine with us. It's just a matter of how we're going to train.

Mr. James Bezan: You mentioned Leopard tanks. We're going to move a company of tanks there. One thing that's come out through the reporting on the tanks we've donated to Ukraine—and we're also trying to gear up to have enough tanks to train here, as well as to deploy forward into Latvia with our Leopard 2s—is that the state of repair and maintenance on our Leopard 2s has been left wanting.

Are we doing any heavy overhaul and maintenance on our Leopard 2s to ensure that what we have left is operational, especially because we're down on numbers? Are there any plans to replace the Leopard 2s that we donated to Ukraine for our own Canadian Armed Forces?

MGen Paul Prévost: On the first part of the question, we are working on our tanks. We're just sending eight tanks right now to Latvia, because we do need to position tanks, as you mentioned, in what we call a squadron of tanks. These ones are shipshape. Now we're working on making sure that the train...because we sent eight to Ukraine and we're sending some to.... I'm sorry. It's more than eight. It's actually 19, I believe. I'd have to come back on the number. We're sending those tanks to Latvia. The ones we have in Canada are also being well maintained, to the best of our ability, in order to train there.

On the question of the spending reduction, we are going through the analysis right now. One thing we're not touching in the spending reduction is the money that's been allocated to our operations there. There shouldn't be an impact to what we do in Ukraine or what we do in Latvia in what we're allocated through the spending reductions right now.

The Chair: We'll have to leave it there. Your five minutes are up.

One of the developments we've been talking about is the scarcity of shells from the Ukrainian side. We haven't talked about the scarcity of shells from the Russian side. Mr. Putin went on bended knee to Mr. Kim in North Korea to beg for shells. That's in part because the Russian supply is either dwindling or junk, one or the other. They haven't maintained the fuses, etc.

I'd be interested in this development, because this is bringing a European war into Asia, and Asia feeding into a European war. It has geopolitical implications, but it also has practical implications on the ground. If the Russians are running out of shells, I don't know what the implications are. You're the experts. What are your thoughts on this latest development with Kim and Putin?

• (1655)

Ms. Alison Grant: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a very interesting question, and one that of course we look at and study.

You know, there has been a lot of commentary about Russia having to go hat in hand to its dwindling number of friends and allies, in particular Iran and North Korea. Coming out of that meeting between Russia and the DPRK, there were no arms deals announced, from what I know, but of course we cannot speculate on what was discussed. We will certainly hold Russia's feet to the fire in terms of taking any actions that violate UN Security Council sanctions, which would be the case if they did make an arms deal with North Korea. With Iran, we know that there have been reports, of course, of deals struck as well, with weapons found on the battlefield in the theatre.

It is not surprising that Russia is going to these countries to ask for weapons. It has only some means of supply; it is not able to get them from erstwhile friends such as China, for example. That's been discussed as well. There have been no arms deals discussed.

The Chair: It is interesting that the Chinese are not supplying the Russians with armaments.

Ms. Alison Grant: That's correct. It is, and we will continue as well to publicly remind China of its own obligations and ensure that it doesn't become directly complicit militarily in the conflict in Ukraine.

The Chair: Just quickly, from DND's standpoint, what are the strategic/tactical implications of limitations on the supply of shells?

MGen Paul Prévost: Do you mean from the Russian side?

The Chair: I mean from the Ukrainian side.

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, the same message here is that we need to continue, all the alliance together, the partners that are involved in the fight, to galvanize the industry and work with our governments to continue to feed that fight.

The Chair: That is a singularly unsatisfactory answer, but I will let you off the hook and go to another question.

Elon Musk seems to like to turn on his satellites and turn them off. I'm interested in your views as to what limitation this might have on the ability of the Ukrainians to mount operations if, in fact, they don't have reliable satellite services. You did mention this in your opening remarks about Canada's supplying satellite information, but I don't know that it's actually services.

Do you have any comments on that?

Mr. Ty Curran: Going back to an earlier question about lessons learned, one of the things we've seen in this conflict is the importance of software in addition to just platforms. This question of the ability of a foreign government or a company to alter some of the equipment speaks to the importance of ensuring that we have not just access to the platforms that we need but also the ability to manage the software that's part of that. It's something that we need to keep looking at as we look at future procurements.

I'm more in the general's space here, but it's an increasingly information-driven future of conflict, and we need to be able to manage that information space, which includes the software elements of that.

The Chair: Thank you. Unfortunately, my time is up, and if I'm going to make my colleagues adhere to time, I have to adhere to it myself.

I want to offer, on behalf of those of us who travelled, that one of the most impressive presentations was on cybersecurity from the UN representative. We have a lot of lessons to learn from these folks, and if we collectively have any advice to give, it would be that we put some people in with the cybersecurity people we saw in Latvia.

Colleagues, that brings us to the first hour and a half of our two hours.

I want to thank you, friends, for coming and briefing us. We appreciate your service, and I don't say that lightly. It is a very difficult geopolitical situation in which we find ourselves, with immense personal implications—many personal implications in this room. Again, thank you for your presence, and no doubt we will see you again.

With that, we will suspend and go in camera. Thank you.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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