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# Standing Committee on National Defence

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Chair: The Honourable John McKay





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• (1540)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)):** Okay, let's get started, colleagues. We're already 15 minutes late and we have a vote that's going to interrupt us.

I would like colleagues to give us some discretion on the vote and we'll call it maybe five minutes before the vote.

Is that all right?

It is a procedural vote.

We have with us General Smith and General Ritchie. General Smith is well known to this committee.

This is pursuant to a resolution by the committee to get a briefing on Ukraine and the Baltic region.

We appreciate your attendance and your patience and anticipate that we will appreciate your future patience.

With that, we'll begin.

I just want to welcome Dr. Powlowski to the committee. Obviously the whip didn't talk to me; we are going to have to coordinate on ties.

General Smith or General Ritchie, you have five minutes.

**Major-General Gregory Smith (Director General, International Security Policy, Department of National Defence):** Mr. Chair, members of the committee, I'm honoured to appear before you today. As stated, I'm Major-General Greg Smith, director general of international security policy at the Department of National Defence. With me I have Major-General Bob Ritchie, director of staff at the strategic joint staff.

[Translation]

Thank you for this opportunity to update the committee on the situation in Ukraine and Canada's commitments.

[English]

Russia's war of aggression is now well into its third year. Russia continues to inflict significant damage and suffering onto Ukraine, leveraging its advantage in personnel and artillery ammunition to achieve incremental but steady advances across the front line. The armed forces of Ukraine have also inflicted significant losses on the Russians, but have paid a high price in doing so.

[Translation]

Ukraine's recent incursion into the Kursk region clearly caught the Russians off guard. Although Russia continues to make incremental but significant advances on the Donbass region, it has been forced to redeploy over 30,000 troops to Kursk. Ukrainian forces appear to be digging in and are presenting a serious challenge for Russia to reclaim its territory.

While it is still too early to assess the strategic consequences of the offensive, the incursion has upended prevailing narratives of Ukraine's inability to counter Russian military dominance.

This has boosted morale amongst Ukrainian troops, and Ukraine's leadership appears optimistic that others will see through Russia's supposed red lines. Ukraine has shifted from presenting the Kursk incursion as strictly to defend its Sumy Oblast to now integrating it into a newly announced "Victory Plan" that we understand is now being socialized with the U.S.

[English]

Despite the success in Kursk, Russia's air strikes continue to exploit Ukraine's vulnerabilities by successfully bombing Ukraine's civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, grocery stores and apartment building complexes. The destruction of Ukraine's energy infrastructure has led to significant energy deficits and power outages, once again leaving Ukraine in a precarious position for the upcoming winter.

[Translation]

With sufficient support, Ukraine can win this war, but it requires timely, dependable and co-ordinated aid from western partners to overcome Russia's advantage in size and resources.

Under Operation Unifier, Canada has now trained over 42,000 Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel since 2015. Increasingly, the flow of knowledge goes both ways, as Ukrainians have become experts in Russian tactics, techniques and procedures.

[English]

This spring Canada signed an agreement on security co-operation between Canada and Ukraine, in which we committed to providing broad, multi-faceted support for Ukraine. Under the agreement, DND/CAF will continue to provide military assistance, training and capacity building to the armed forces of Ukraine. We will also continue our collaboration, information sharing, research and development, materiel co-operation and support for reforms and more.

These efforts aim to help Ukraine build a strong and sustainable force, fully interoperable with NATO, and capable of regaining and defending its territory now and deterring future aggression.

• (1545)

[Translation]

The July 2024 NATO Washington Summit was particularly consequential, as it provided NATO leaders an opportunity to reaffirm their solidarity with Ukraine and set out long-term predictable assistance. At the summit, we committed an additional \$500 million in support as part of NATO's long-term pledge for Ukraine.

[English]

We are also directly supporting the launch of NATO security assistance and training for Ukraine, located in Wiesbaden, Germany. Here we will work with allies under a NATO command structure to coordinate the provision of military training, equipment and logistical support to the armed forces of Ukraine.

Finally, we announced at the summit that Canada will allocate up to \$389 million of previously announced funding to enhance F-16 pilot training through the Ukraine Defense Contact Group's air force capability coalition. This commitment will support training for Ukrainian pilots and provide equipment to support Ukraine's safe operation of F-16s.

[Translation]

The experience of delivering this military aid and training to Ukraine as it battles against Russian aggression has underscored a simple fact to me: Canada's support is critical, and we must do more to support Ukraine. The decisions we take now will shape the coming decades, and we must rise to the occasion.

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for your time.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, MGen Smith.

Mr. Bezan, do you want to go ahead, or do you want to...?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** I'm going first.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Thank you for your presentation.

Now, half of the TAPV reconnaissance vehicles sent to Latvia are unserviceable and not operating. No spare parts or money to fix them has been sent over. Half of the vehicles are broken—I believe there are eight in total—and unserviceable. There are no parts, cash or people. We're told there's a fifty-fifty chance that the war will

spill into NATO countries, and Canadian soldiers are on the front lines with half of their reconnaissance vehicles operable.

What's the survivability rate of the women and men we've sent to Latvia?

**Major-General Robert Ritchie (Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff, Canadian Armed Forces, Department of National Defence):** Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

Obviously, this represents a key capability. We're working to furnish spare parts, and we're working with our allies to make sure there is sustainment for these critical-capability vehicles that are forward, empowering the mobility of our Ukrainian partners.

As for the protection of the vehicle in question, it certainly does not have the survivability protection that a more robust armoured fighting vehicle has, but those were the vehicles that were made available. Be mindful that other donations have been made, as well.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Other than having his budget for infrastructure cut in half for this year, the commander of Base Petawawa is having to close down several hundred sleeping quarters, leaving new recruits with nowhere to live. Black mould and vermin, together with faulty plumbing and electrical services, have made these quarters uninhabitable. There are another 7,500 troops who are going to cycle through Petawawa for training for Latvia for the next deployment.

Where are they going to sleep while training in Petawawa?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Chair, I can't speak to the specifics of the 7,000.

However, with the new defence policy "Our North, Strong and Free", there's a considerable amount of money being put into infrastructure. Obviously, there's a lot of work to be done, but it's recognized and we have a plan to start moving forward.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** In fact, the amount of money allocated last year for infrastructure on that particular base was \$21 million. The year prior it was \$41 million, with a top-up of \$51 million. There's no money for infrastructure or upkeep. The World War I-era firing ranges at Base Petawawa are actually sinking and can no longer be used.

How are soldiers supposed to learn how to shoot if there's no place to practice?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Mr. Chair, again, on the specifics, I haven't been to Petawawa for a couple of months. Some would know it better than I do.

However, it's a great base. There is a plan to put more money into it and, indeed, into training. There are thousands and thousands of troops who have cycled through there. They do incredible training that has allowed them to be very successful in Latvia.

• (1550)

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Mr. Chair—if I might add this—we prioritize three things.

One is readiness, which includes what was described in terms of preparing for operations and time on the range.

There is also modernization of future capabilities and our people.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** There's no money to fix up the range and no place for them to stay.

According to NORAD, two IL-38 military aircraft were detected and tracked while operating in the Alaska air defense identification zone on September 14, marking the third such incident in one week.

What message is Russia trying to send us?

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

We are actually aware of five interactions in the north, in partnership with NORAD.

The appropriate responses were taken. I can assure you that at no time did those aircraft pose a threat to Canada.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Given our government's record of defence procurements, plagued with delays and overruns, how confident are you in Canada's defence procurement record when it pertains to getting Ukrainian forces the equipment and weapons they need to fight back against the Russians?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** We have a very good story to tell of getting weapons in the hands of Ukrainians. My analogy has always been that when the war started in February 2022, everybody reached into the weapons locker behind them and handed that weapon to Ukraine. Depending on the size of the countries and their armed forces, they quickly ran out of weapons.

We now have \$4.5 billion worth of weapons and military materiel committed to Ukraine. The team that works under me is moving that as quickly as possible to get it into the hands of the Ukrainians.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Getting that equipment into the hands of Ukrainian soldiers, or at least getting it over to Europe, and actually into Ukraine takes quite a while.

What about the equipment for Canadian soldiers? Where are the replacement orders? When are the soldiers here in Canada going to have equipment to train on?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** We're actually getting the equipment into the hands of the Ukrainians pretty quickly. We have to make sure that we're using taxpayers' money correctly. The team that I work with must make sure we work with other government agencies to get that money looked at properly, and get the contracts put in place properly, so that the money is used wisely for taxpayers.

We then get it as quickly as possible all the way across the ocean and into Ukraine, which is a war zone, so it does take a little bit of time, but we do a good job, and we do it as fast as we can.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** I'm looking at the equipment for our soldiers here in Canada in case they have to be deployed. After all, there is a chance they will be deployed in a hot situation.

What would you like to see from the Government of Canada to ensure that future commitments to Ukraine for weapons and equipment be expedited, so that they could be brought to the front lines in the most immediate manner?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** We're doing a good job doing that. An additional \$500 million was just given in Washington, D.C. We're moving through that right now to give advice to the minister, and, again, to get those in the hands of Ukrainian soldiers.

**The Chair:** Mr. Collins, you have six minutes.

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'll be sharing a portion of my time with my friend and colleague, Mr. Powlowski.

Welcome, Generals.

I'm going to take us to where the member opposite left off, and that is the logistics and how the support that we're providing is landing in the hands of those who need it the most, the Ukrainian military. There has been a lot of discussion at our past meetings, when you've provided updates on this same subject matter, about its not being there when the Ukrainians need it, and that they haven't received what we promised. There are many promises, and we continue to hear the nonsensical political narrative.

From the testimony you just provided, you made it very clear that it is landing in the appropriate hands. It's getting there in a timely manner. In your opening statement, you said that it's essential that the support we provide is timely and dependable.

Can you share with the committee what Canadian equipment has been the most valuable to the Ukrainians? As well, can you talk about the supply lines that make their way from the supplier, or from our stockpiles that we have here in Canada, through to Europe and into Ukraine for the Ukrainian military to use that support to the best of its ability?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** First of all, I'd like to characterize that it's not just me and my team who look at what the Ukrainians need. We work with the Ukrainians themselves. We're tied into an organization in Germany that I mentioned earlier, the SAG-U. We talk to that organization and our allies to see what they're doing. We speak to the Ukrainians in both Ukraine and here in Ottawa to make sure that's their choice, that's what they're looking for, and then move it as quickly as possible.

As I said, it's a lot of money. It's taxpayers' money. We have to make sure we do it properly and then transport it a very long way to get it there. Again, it doesn't go directly into Ukraine.

As a quick example, we're donating drones. This is a conflict in which... What we're learning, and what we're seeing in drone warfare is what I'll call "evolutionary", but at the same time, it's shocking to see. Canadian industry has stepped up. We have committed to over 900 drones being used there. Again, we have to get them over there. We need to train the Ukrainians on how to use them, get them to use them, and then get the feedback on how that's going. Drones are just one example of success.

• (1555)

**The Chair:** I see the lights are flashing. We have 15 minutes left. Can we suspend in 10 minutes?

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** I just have one question. Whoever's on the speaking list, Mr. Collins and then... Otherwise, I don't consent.

**The Chair:** Well, consent is required.

Mr. Collins, continue.

**Mr. Chad Collins:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

General, I've listened to a lot of what General Eyre has said over the last number of months just in terms of where we're at from a global perspective with our own military and some of the challenges that Canadians face, as well as those across the world, with threats that come our way.

He talked about how the biggest threat to our nation right now is disinformation. I know that a big part of the war effort from Russia is trying to convince other nations and their citizenry not to support Ukrainian efforts. We see that in the U.S. with J.D. Vance kind of leading the charge and former president Trump talking about pulling support for this effort and having it wrapped up by the time he's sworn in, if he's successful.

There's a lot of misinformation out there. Russia's actually paying people to spread that information. The U.S. Department of Justice recently released a report that found that some social media influencers in the States had received \$10 million from Russia.

All that is to say that there's a lot going on behind the scenes that we're not aware of.

How are you combatting disinformation that's coming from Russia and some of its supporters—China and others—as it relates to targeting our military personnel, as well as trying to erode the faith that people have in our institutions here in Canada, whether it's our military or otherwise?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Mr. Chair, I'll obviously restrict myself to the Canadian Armed Forces.

That being said, I think it's proper communication with the members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the chain of command, talking to them and their families at any time, telling them the truth of what's going on.

That's our key challenge: It's to communicate with a very large nation of people scattered across both Canada and internationally. It's just to communicate with them and tell them what we're doing

to support Ukraine in this particular case. Again, I think we have a very good story to tell.

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Mr. Chair, I might just add that the Canadian Armed Forces obviously remains ready, resilient and relevant. When we see these threats emerge, we over-communicate amongst ourselves with our allies and partners to make sure that we are all mindful of the pervasive threat.

**Mr. Chad Collins:** Mr. Chair, I'll cede my time to Mr. Powlowski.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Our Prime Minister recently stated that "Canada fully supports Ukraine using long-range weaponry to prevent and interdict Russia's continued ability to degrade Ukrainian civilian infrastructure, and mostly to kill innocent civilians".

Some of our allies seem to be a little more cautious about the use of long-range weapons to target Russian targets within Russia, outside of the Kherson region. It seems that perhaps this is changing, but the concern seems to be Putin's continued threats that this is going to escalate the conflict between Russia and NATO.

What is our assessment of the risk of providing long-range weaponry and allowing Ukrainians to use it?

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Thanks for the question, Mr. Chair.

Indeed, on the 13 of September, our Prime Minister did say that there would be no constraints on any Canadian-donated weapons and systems. In fact, the following day, the chair of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Bauer, stated the same thing. Specifically, he said that every country "has the right to defend itself. And that right doesn't stop at the border of your own nation."

To the question, Mr. Chair, the M777 howitzers, which were initially quite prevalent at the start of the campaign, have a range of about 30 kilometres, depending on the ammunition used.

Some of these longer-range capabilities that have been spoken of can be more than 10 times that range—300 kilometres to 500 kilometres—and therefore they do provide the ability to strike farther in depth, although certainly not into deep Russian territory.

What they can do, though, is create vulnerabilities for the adversary, specifically for Russian assembly areas, command and control, bridges, railways and critical infrastructure. It can therefore create more of a buffer between the front line of troops and where they're mobilizing.

• (1600)

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave the answer there, because we only have consent to go for this round.

Colleagues, I suppose we have to suspend while a vote takes place. Unfortunately, we don't have consent to shrink the vote.

Mrs. Lalonde, please go ahead.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.):** Very briefly, I would certainly appreciate it if the member, Mr. Bezan, could reconsider his perspective. I understand that the whips sometimes talk to each other 10 minutes before or 10 minutes afterwards. This is about Ukraine and the efforts we're doing. I'm sure there's relevance to listening to the information from these wonderful individuals, people who serve our country and who have come here.

**Mr. James Bezan:** [*Inaudible—Editor*].

**The Chair:** No, we're not adjourned; we're suspending, unfortunately.

We'll have to talk to you about coming back.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I'm so sorry. Again, I tried.

• (1600) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1630)

**The Chair:** We're back, colleagues.

We've lost some time with the vote. What I propose is that we complete this round with Generals Smith and Ritchie, starting questioning with Madame Normandin and Ms. Mathysen. Then we will invite the Ukrainian ambassador to the table to make an opening statement. Then with the time left I'm proposing that we extend to six o'clock, so we should have roughly an hour—a little more, a little less. The generals have agreed to stay, along with the ambassador, and we'll continue a regular round of questions. I'm thinking that if we did a four-minute round as an opening, other people could get involved in questions as well, and hopefully we'll work this thing through.

Is that agreeable with everybody?

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Chair, if we have until six o'clock, you should be able to get everybody in on five-minute rounds.

**The Chair:** Let's make a call when we get there.

With that, we'll call on Madame Normandin for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to thank the two witnesses.

Before I get into asking my questions, please allow me a few seconds to put forward a notice of motion.

I don't intend to debate it today. It's just to give notice. It will be distributed by e-mail.

It reads as follows:

Given that the members of this committee learned at the end of June 2024 from an article in the *Globe and Mail* that the former Minister of National Defence, Harjit Sajjan, had allegedly ordered members of the Special Forces deployed by Canada in Afghanistan to carry out an evacuation operation in August 2021 involving 225 Afghans of the Sikh faith, thereby favouring the evacuation of individuals

on the basis of their religious or ethnic affiliation, to the detriment of the evacuation of Canadians and allied Afghans,

That, within 15 days of the adoption of this motion, the committee invite the following persons to testify in order to answer the committee's questions:

a. the Minister of National Defence, Bill Blair, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mélanie Joly, as well as government officials, for a minimum of two hours;

b. the former Minister of National Defence, Harjit Sajjan, for a minimum of two hours;

c. the Chief of the Defence Staff at the time of the events;

d. and any other witnesses the committee deems necessary; and

that the committee reports its findings and recommendations to the House.

Gentlemen, I would like you to tell us about Ukraine's current requirements for 155-millimetre shells. Where do we stand in terms of daily demand, for instance, the global capacity to supply them, and Canada's capacity to supply them as well?

If you have any indicators, even in general, I would appreciate it.

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** I thank the member for her question, Mr. Chair.

We're in the process of supplying those 155-millimetre shells. We've just increased that from 3,000 a month to 5,000 a month. We understand that one country alone can't meet the demand of our Ukrainian friends. We are therefore working with allies and partners to meet the demand together.

• (1635)

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I'd like to hear what you have to say about something that hasn't been talked about much, but that, to my knowledge, can make a big difference for Ukraine. It's drones. I know that Canada has just joined the coalition to provide drones to Ukraine, which is led by Latvia and, if memory serves, by the United Kingdom.

Could you tell us what that means for Canada? What is Canada's role as a coalition partner? Is there anything in the offing that would be interesting to know?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** I thank the member for her question, Mr. Chair.

I'll talk a little bit about drones. First, Canada gave Ukraine about 900 drones directly, at a cost of several million dollars. The Ukrainians are currently training to use them.

In addition, as was mentioned in the question, there is a coalition to provide drones, which means that a few countries are working together, a bit like the television show *Dragons' Den*. This coalition is trying to create a sort of cluster of drone experts to then give Ukraine exactly what it needs.

As I said, there are really a lot of threats coming from drones. Technology is advancing at a very rapid pace on a daily basis. This coalition is trying to provide the most modern drones that work well on the battlefield as the technology advances.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I'd like to get into the subject of new technologies, which, as we know, are evolving very quickly.

The military industry, which is ready to provide new and useful technologies, complains not only that it has to go through the Department of National Defence, but also that it has to go through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada when it involves new technology.

In the case of new technologies, this involves an audit that takes an extremely long time. Are you aware of that? Do you have any comments on the very long approval processes for new technologies?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Mr. Chair, in terms of our direct contributions to Ukraine, I'm not aware of the work that needs to be done with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, but rather the work that needs to be done with another group.

[English]

It's the Canadian Commercial Corporation, I think. I will defer to those who know better on this one.

CCC is an important agency.

[Translation]

We work with it to draft contracts, since we aren't experts.

In terms of technology, we're working with the drone ecosystem in Canada. As I said earlier, we've already sent about 900 drones. We're also working with our allies.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** What are the details of how the \$500 million announced at the NATO summit will be used?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Mr. Chair, we've advised the minister on this. We look forward to the announcement. We'll be able to announce exactly what we're going to do with that money. The announcement was made in July, and we have the money. Now we're trying to formulate our advice as quickly as possible so that the minister can make decisions.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** If I understand correctly, the \$500 million was announced by the minister before he knew what he was going to do with it.

**MGen Gregory Smith:** We receive the money, we have access to that money, and then we provide advice to the minister. There are a lot of options. We have to talk to our Ukrainian allies to find out what they want. Then we'll be able to act. It's important to co-operate.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** You already talked about this a bit with Mr. Powlowski, but I would like to hear you talk about the quantitative impact that long-range attacks could have on Russian territory. We have an idea of what that represents, but what impact could it have on the course of the war or the possibility of Ukraine regaining control, in a way?

• (1640)

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for her question.

There is a risk that this will increase the conflict horizontally or vertically. If the Russians don't achieve their objectives, I think

they'll consider other options. When it comes to these weapons, I believe that our allies are making very specific decisions to ensure the consequences of their decisions.

Canada and NATO are certainly aware of that by using these longer-range weapons.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Mathysen, you have six minutes.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both major-generals for appearing today.

I've had several meetings with incredible people in my community, specifically from the London chapter of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. They have signified to me the importance of the identities of the 20,000 children who have been abducted by Russia. Obviously, many human rights organizations are fearing that this number is actually higher. Russia has abducted the children. They've put them into re-education camps. They've forced them to accept Russian passports. They've subjected these children to abuse and the denial of medical treatment.

International law is clear, and, of course, the House passed a motion stating that Putin is committing a genocide and must be held responsible and accountable by the rules of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.

Can you update the committee on Canada's intelligence on these children and how we're helping the Ukrainians return the children to their homes?

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

We are very conscious that there are four regions, specifically Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, that are currently in Russian possession, and certainly we've been tracking the number of children as well as the number of killed and wounded. We are also of the opinion, alongside our allies, that the Russians are committing contraventions of the law of armed conflict in their targeting. We are working with like-minded allies, once areas are liberated, to reunite members with their proper Ukrainian families.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** You had also mentioned earlier in your testimony the targeting of civilian infrastructure, making it very difficult, of course, for the upcoming winter. That civilian infrastructure is also.... Putin is intentionally targeting hospitals, as we understand. It's mass punishment to pressure Ukrainians to fall and to pressure them into their demands. They're weaponizing human suffering. They're supporting those illegal annexations, the occupation of the Donbass.



Canadians are very proud of our work in standing up for international law and for everything we can do to stop Putin's crimes. Can you update the committee on how we're supporting the resilience of Ukraine's infrastructure to ensure adequate access to things like food aid during these particularly difficult times on that infrastructure-specific target?

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

I'll speak from a Defence perspective of that infrastructure and then see if my colleague has any additional comments about the food security. We are attentive to the prioritized needs of the Ukrainians, in terms of their own critical infrastructure and, as the coalition works to source in-demand air defence systems, to prioritize that for the infrastructure Ukraine has identified.

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Mr. Chair, if I could just double down, obviously, we get to see it on the news every day, and we look with our own intelligence at what the impact is on the infrastructure that was identified. I'll double down with what my colleague said: We've provided a large amount of money, over \$70 million, to work with different allies to try to get what's called the immediate action on air defence. It allowed us to work with allies to get anti-aircraft missiles in the hands of the Ukrainians as quickly as possible. That's an example of a clear need from Ukraine, and we got it to them as fast as we could.

• (1645)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Thank you.

That upholding of international law against Putin's targeting of children, of civilians and infrastructure, is effective. We have to stand up to that, of course, and I know this is the case across all parties. We support international law; that's key. The ICC and the ICJ are working to investigate Putin and to hold him accountable. However, this isn't the only crisis that we've seen across the world.

This summer, I've heard from many Palestinian Canadians who are disgusted that the government, and the Conservatives as well, refuse to recognize the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Many of those civilians, hospitals and children are being targeted.

How can the Canadian government stand strong in terms of that upholding of international law if we don't do it consistently?

**The Chair:** That question is important, but it is possibly beyond the remit of these particular generals. You're welcome to answer if you wish, but that's not why you were invited.

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Let me just take a quick jab at it because obviously international law, humanitarian law and the law of armed conflict remain extremely important to us. I'll just identify, particularly as we train Ukrainians in the UK right now and elsewhere, that is one of the core things we teach.

I would say that the Ukrainians understand the core risk that would arise if something were to occur that's not lawful on the battlefield. They're sensitive to that. We teach them the international law of conflict, law of armed conflict, and we talk about the risks of it. It's very important to the Ukrainians as well.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Actually, you took some of my time, Mr. Chair, so I'd love to have that extra 30 seconds.

**The Chair:** Well, I intervened, so thank you.

At this point, I'm going to ask the ambassador to make her statement. Then, we'll see where that leaves us on the clock.

Welcome, Ambassador, to the committee. You've been to this committee before, and we appreciate your making yourself available. We look forward to your opening statement.

**Her Excellency Yuliya Kovaliv (Ambassador of Ukraine to Canada):** Thank you.

Honourable Chair and honourable members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide you with a briefing on the situation in Ukraine as we continue to fight.

First of all, I would like to thank you for the steadfast support of Canada, the Canadian Parliament, government and the people of Canada for Ukraine and our fight against the illegal and brutal Russian invasion. Your strong standing is highly valued as we continue to fight the biggest conventional war on the European continent since the Second World War. The implications of Russian aggression against Ukraine have impacts far beyond the European continent, as the war challenges the core concept of international rule-based order, respect for security and sovereignty of countries around the world.

Let me brief you on the situation in Ukraine. The situation on the front line is challenging. Despite Russian attempts to move forward and the lack of ammunition and equipment of the Ukrainian armed forces, we managed to stabilize the situation on the front within the past week, particularly in the Donetsk direction. Now most fighting is taking place in the vicinity of Pokrovsk and Kurakhove, which are part of Ukraine.

The Russians have an advantage in their air power and manpower, but they are suffering significant losses. According to our general staff, as of September 16, since the start of the full-scale invasion, Russia's irreplaceable losses of manpower are over 634,000 soldiers, including those wounded and killed. Russia has faced, significantly, the loss of equipment: over 8,000 tanks, 369 aircraft, over 300 helicopters, 28 warships and one submarine.

Ukraine has managed to destroy and disable nearly 33% of the Russian Black Sea fleet, and we managed to do it not only because of the bravery of the people but also because of the unity and support the allies—Canada being one of the closest allies—have provided to us.

Russian troops also brutally violate the chemical weapons convention by using gas grenades and other explosive devices equipped with irritant substances.

Russia continues to accumulate troops and demonstrate commitment to the war of attrition, hoping to get some gains with their still considerable resources, the war fatigue and nuclear blackmail—all of this stuff that we have been seeing for more than two and a half years.

The Russian dictator, Putin, on September 16 signed a decree increasing the manpower of the Russian army, adding 180,000 new conscripts to the Russian army.

Russia has taken all ammunition from Belarus and uses artillery shells and ballistic missiles from North Korea, as well as Iranian drones. North Korea has already supplied the aggressor with at least 10,000 shipping containers that could hold as many as 4.8 million artillery shells and up to 50 ballistic missiles, which the Kremlin has been using against Ukraine. We see these acts of evil becoming closer, stronger and a big challenge to our democracies.

While not having strategic success on the battlefield, Russia seeks to destroy everything it can capture and continues to terrorize Ukraine. Russia destroyed or damaged within the last six months over nine gigawatts of power capacity throughout Ukraine—power grids and power generation—so that today, electricity is supplied to Ukrainian people with huge power outages, and people do not have full access to electricity or a water supply. That was what Russia's strategy has been for a few winters. Now we are coming to winter, and it will be one of the hardest ones.

Another challenge is Russian missile attacks, including the ballistic missiles Russia is using against civilian objects. You all saw the horror in June of the attack over Okhmatdyt, the biggest children's hospital in Ukraine. It's like SickKids that you have in Canada. A Russian ballistic missile destroyed the campus of the clinic, but then Pokrovsk followed, with 55 people being killed by one ballistic missile. It flies in a few minutes to Lviv, Kharkiv and other cities.

The UN human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine confirms that Russian armed forces attacks have caused extensive civilian harm. Since only August 26, there has been a report of 64 civilians killed and 399 injured.

• (1650)

The high casualty numbers follow a sharp increase in civilian deaths and injuries over the summer due to these Russian terrorist attacks over the whole territory of Ukraine.

There are two specific decisions that our partners can make to help us. First is giving us the possibility of using long-range strikes on legitimate military targets on Russian territory—first of all, where they launch all of these missile attacks from—because without that and without having our sky protected, the death toll of civilians and the destruction of civilian buildings and infrastructure will, unfortunately, increase; and also, our partners' agreeing to use their air defence capabilities to shut down missiles and drones closer to our neighbours' and allies' airspace. Our allies already showed unity in taking down rockets and drones over the Middle East, and it's right to demonstrate such unity in Ukraine. These missiles and drones are flying over not only Ukraine but there were also a few cases when they were flying over the territory of our neighbours.

As President Zelenskyy said, “Belarus is taking the lead in shooting down Russian drones.”

We are very grateful for the position taken by the Canadian government for there to be no restrictions on the use of western weapons and using long-range weapons in Russian territory for legitimate military targets.

Also, just to finish, there's one more thing that is very important. Last but not least, I draw your attention today to another big challenge, which is Russian disinformation. Disinformation campaigns are targeting human will and, from a military perspective, as General Eyre rightly said just recently, if that will is affected before the first shot is fired, there is winning even before fighting. The key goal of Russian propaganda campaigns is to challenge our democracies, to spread chaos and to decrease western support for Ukraine. It is well-funded, including by covert and non-covert operations, and we need to take this danger altogether very seriously.

Thank you. I'm ready for your questions.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ambassador.

If we go until 6:00 we can get in two full rounds, a six-minute round and a five-minute round. Is that agreeable?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** We appreciate Generals Ritchie and Smith staying and answering....

With that, Mr. Bezan, you have six minutes.

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

Ambassador, it's great to see you back here.

Generals, thanks for attending and for extending your time. As you know, we had votes and a tribute in the House for one of our former colleagues. A number of us here had a chance to serve with the member and wanted to hear the tributes.

Ambassador, I direct most of my questions to you. First of all, I express our gratitude to all of the brave women and men serving in the Ukrainian armed forces, who are standing in the face of Russian aggression, and to all of the brave civilians for the amazing work they do in supporting the war effort in Ukraine and standing up for democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

As Conservatives, as you know, we support Ukraine. We'll always support Ukraine, and we'll continue to do so going forward, in every way that we possibly can.

You mentioned disinformation. Were you shocked to see the Russian propaganda film *Russians at War*, which was funded with Canadian taxpayer money through the Canada Media Fund, which is an arm of the Canadian government?

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you.

I think the position of Ukraine was very clear to me, our embassy, our government, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We were shocked that the TIFF film festival was providing a place for the film, which is a part of the Russian propaganda campaign. There are numerous reports by the UN Human Rights Council and other international organizations that are present in Ukraine. You all saw this, including many of the independent Canadian journalists who were visiting Ukraine—we opened the borders for them. We all were witnessing horrific war crimes that the Russian soldiers committed in Bucha, Irpin, Iziun—the massive graves and their use of sexual violence as a weapon, and the killing civilians. Just today, the Ukrainian human rights commissioner published the proven information of how Russian soldiers killed a prisoner of war with a sword—the horrible video. This is really what Russian soldiers are doing in Ukraine.

I think showing a one-sided film is an attempt to whitewash Russian war crimes. That's what Russia and the Russian campaign have been doing by trying to blur the lines. It's very dangerous, because that's how propaganda works. We are really disappointed with the decision of TIFF to show this film. It's a big wound for those hundreds of civilians who have been killed and thousands of their families who have lost their loved ones by the cruelty and barbarity of the Russian soldiers. I don't want to say it's Russia; it's Russian soldiers, because there is a physical person who pushed the button for the missile to fly into the biggest kids' hospital. There is the Russian soldier who makes the decision to kill those civilians. We need to recognize that and be very clear on how we name it. It's not Russia, as the collective thing. Every time we, as human beings, have a choice to do it or not. We saw what the Russian soldiers have been doing in Ukraine.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Do you believe the Government of Canada should demand those funds be recouped, since they were used for disinformation?

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** We welcome the decision of—

**Mr. James Bezan:** It's over \$345,000.

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** We welcome the decision of the TVO board to denounce the film and stop showing it.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Back in late November, General Budanov from the Ukrainian defence forces requested our 83,000 CRV7 rockets to be sent to Ukraine. They were sitting in storage and slated for disposal. Our Conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre, in February, seeing there was no response, demanded that they be sent by the Government of Canada, the Canadian Armed Forces. There was an announcement in June of a tranche of about 3,000 rockets and munitions that were sent, and then finally, two weeks ago, we had the announcement that the remaining 80,000 were going to be sent.

Has Ukraine received any of those rockets, and do you have a schedule of when the rest of them will be delivered for use in Ukraine so Ukraine can protect its sovereignty and its people?

• (1700)

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you for this question.

Indeed, we are very grateful for the decision of DND to give us those rockets and the motors of rockets. Part of them are on their way, delivered, part of them were just announced. Logistically it's taking some time, but we hope the delivery will be expedited. It is

important because, as we have mentioned, on some parts of the front lines Russia is prevailing in the number of artillery shows by 12 to one, and sometimes it's five to one. However, even if those rockets were decommissioned, we definitely will make good use of them.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Good.

I just want to follow up quickly on a question Ms. Mathysen asked.

You're familiar with Armatec Survivability, in London, Ontario. They refurbish LAVs. There was an article on CBC that indicated they were going to be allowed to update and upgrade and then rear-mour 50 LAVs, but there's been no contract with the Canadian Commercial Corporation. There has been no communication coming from the Government of Canada. Everything has gone mute.

Have you heard anything at all on whether or not these LAVs—I think they call them the "Block-K"—will be available to Ukraine to help protect the soldiers in the battle against Russia?

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you.

We value strong Canada support in the coalition of capabilities and the armour capabilities also. We closely work with the Canadian government and Canadian producers, and we really value DND's decision and also the refurbishment of the old and decommissioned vehicles. Of course, there is an urgent need for the armoured vehicles, those that are newly produced and those that could be refurbished. This is one of the ways we found that it could be expedited.

We value the decision of DND to support this project and we are looking forward for the CCC.

**The Chair:** I don't appreciate the opportunity to cut you off, but I'm going to have to cut you off. I apologize for that. I've got two generals and an ambassador, and I cut them all off.

Mr. Collins, you are next, for six minutes, please.

**An hon. member:** No, I think it's....

**The Chair:** I just looked at Chad and said, "Is it you next?", and he said, "Yes".

**Mr. Chad Collins:** I'm ready.

**An hon. member:** So is everyone else.

**Mr. Chad Collins:** Let's go to Viviane.

**The Chair:** Viviane, okay. I apologize. Now that we have that straightened out, go ahead.

**Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr Chair.

Thank you, Your Excellency, for coming here today.

How important is the role of NATO in helping to safeguard both Ukraine and the Baltic states from further Russian aggression? What additional measures would Ukraine like to see from the alliance?

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** First, and the most important, is the invitation for NATO. This is the thing that is crucially important and will bring to Ukraine security, post-war security, and it will also increase the capability of NATO because today the Ukrainian armed forces are really very strong and have real combat experience among many of the NATO members. Also, of course, as we saw after the Russian invasion, there was this big change in NATO. We have two more countries who are now NATO members. NATO as an alliance became stronger. Today, defence and military capabilities and defence spending and investment in all of the NATO countries are taken very seriously. Then if you would ask, what is the most important? It is our future NATO membership.

• (1705)

**Ms. Viviane Lapointe:** I'd like to ask a question of the generals since I didn't get a chance in the first round. What is the Department of National Defence's current analysis of Russia's strategic objectives in Ukraine and the Baltic region?

The second part of my question is, how have these objectives evolved over the course of the conflict?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** I'd have to admit that the strategic objectives of Russia are somewhat confusing. Obviously, if they were looking to crack NATO, it didn't happen. If they were looking to defeat Ukraine, equally it didn't happen.

So far they're not doing well. Indeed, with two new countries having joined NATO—Finland and Sweden—that shows some increasing success from the west. Also, given the continued heroism of the Ukrainian people, with support from the west, they've been unable to achieve their objectives to date.

**Ms. Viviane Lapointe:** Thank you.

How likely does the Department of National Defence assess the risk of the conflict in Ukraine spilling over into the Baltic region or escalating into a broader regional war?

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** What I'd respond with is that we have seen a professionalized NATO since 2022, both in terms of regional plans, functional plans, contingencies, and a new readiness model called the new NATO force model. On the eastern flank, we have seen the augmentation from four to eight battle groups, and now eight brigades. While I can't predict possibilities on the Russian front at this level of classification, I can tell you that NATO is galvanized around this opportunity and solidarity of the alliance, including support for Ukraine.

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Mr. Chair, if I could just add, because I know this committee has visited Latvia, I think you've seen what that has done in the alliance. We now have 14 nations participating with Canada in Latvia, who have come together to provide defence for Latvia. That's all an example of how NATO has progressed since 2017 particularly. I think that's a great sign of success and unity.

**Ms. Viviane Lapointe:** We've talked about misinformation. I'd be interested to learn how the department has assessed the cybersecurity risk posed to NATO allies in Canada by the conflict and what steps are being taken to bolster cyber-defence in these regions.

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Indeed, in 2022, the Minister of Defence of Ukraine made a request, and we immediately bolstered Ukraini-

an cyber-defence capabilities. That relationship has been a deliberate, incremental approach, and it's progressed significantly in the last 24 months. To speak specifically, cybersecurity expertise is 24-7, cyber-threat intelligence, software tools, hardware, cloud services, and engineering solutions. This is actually two-way—reciprocal—as we furnish support but also learn from the threats that are being presented, and we're doing so with like-minded allies as well.

**Ms. Viviane Lapointe:** Thank you.

Can you tell us what the key indicators are that the department would monitor to suggest any increase in military threats to the Baltic NATO members?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Mr. Chair, I can give this a try.

We have intelligence. We have all those forces there that are constantly monitoring strategic intelligence. Indeed, NATO, now at 32 members, is doing a lot of work to continue to monitor the Baltic. If I can say...we're co-operating widely across the three Baltic countries and particularly with Poland. I think, as my colleague has said, NATO has come together with plans. I worked in NATO a few years ago. That has all continued to mature to provide the deterrence—not so much the defence but the deterrence—so that Russia will never want to take on NATO. We've shown a degree of deterrence and defence that would prevent them from trying to go after an alliance of 32.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

Your Excellency, it's always a pleasure to welcome you to the committee.

I would like to know your opinion on a question I asked the generals a little earlier about Ukraine's need for 155-millimetre ammunition. Where do things stand, more or less? Have the needs changed? Are there any new ones? To what extent are the allies currently able to meet those needs?

Second, on the increase in the number of munitions that Canada is providing to Ukraine from 3,000 to 5,000 a month, can that be increased in any way?

• (1710)

[English]

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you.

Indeed, the 155-millimetre artillery shells is one of the top kinds of requests that our Minister of Defence is getting directly from the front line. It's widely seen how Russia is able to produce them, but North Korea is also providing a lot of them to Russia. We are grateful to Canada for supporting the Czech initiative, which was to provide us with the artillery shells. However, of course, we are talking about the need for millions of artillery shells and the need to jointly increase the production. We are also launching part of the production in Ukraine, but of course, we welcome the additional support of 155-millimetre artillery shells from our partners, including from Canada and Canadian producers.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

A little earlier, I asked a question about the possibility of deeper strikes on Russian military targets, and I would also like to know your point of view on that. We know what we could aim for, such as launch bases, production lines and supply chains that include trains.

How much can this help Ukraine? Do you think that could completely change the situation? I would like you to tell us about the qualitative aspect of this.

[English]

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you for that question. It's really important.

As we saw back in 2022, we were able to liberate the Kherson region because we had HIMARS. HIMARS has the ability to strike the Russian infrastructure supply chain and all of the military stock deposits. We saw how this Russian front line was cracking. The war is also about logistics and the ability to supply soldiers to the front line.

What are we facing now?

We are now facing Russia using its air drones to launch missiles from deep inside Russia. It also understands that because we have these restrictions, the only thing we are doing in asking you for air defence systems against their missiles.... We're trying to bring down Shahed drones, ballistic missiles and all kinds of the missiles. Almost every night, we have this air siren. They are flying over Ukrainian skies. They're all over Ukrainian territory.

It's also the same with supply chains. If we could attack and destroy Russian supply chains and those legitimate military targets, including the air bases where Russia is launching these missiles, it would significantly change the situation on the front line and for the civilians throughout the whole country.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

I have a longer question for you, but I will save it for the second round.

In the meantime, I'd like you to talk to us about disinformation. We could say, for example, that the Ukrainian incursions are not real, that things aren't going as well as they say. Fighting disinformation could be done through the use of satellite imagery, for example.

Should more resources be provided for the use of satellite imagery, particularly to counter disinformation? This would make it possible, for example, to confirm that when Russia claims the attacks don't work, it's not true.

[English]

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** I could probably spend hours and hours telling you about examples of Russian disinformation, not only since February 2024 or 2022, but going back 10 years.

You need to realize that Russia is very sophisticated in disinformation and propaganda. We have historical cases of Russia targeting Ukrainian communities 30, 40 and 50 years ago, when it was one of the most active countries supporting Ukraine's independence.

This is the same problem here. The tools are probably a bit different. We now have social media. We have other resources, including so-called cultural diplomacy that Russia has been using to spread a few false narratives.

Sanctions are not working, but you you can see the financial results of one of Russia's formerly biggest companies, Gazprom. It's now making a loss. It has decreasing investment and decreasing efficiency. It's one of the examples to look at.

The same thing is happening on the front line. There were even cases of Russian disinformation campaigns attacking particular soldiers in particular brigades in Ukraine to break the morale of the people who were there in the trenches and on the front lines. They were so sophisticated by sending the messages through Telegram channels and other social media, saying they'd better surrender, because all of the other commanders had left the battlefield and so on.

These are very sophisticated operations. Many of them are done in the shadows. We just saw recent news from the U.S., where there was an investigation into a few of the companies that were working with and financed by Russian operatives.

● (1715)

**The Chair:** You have six minutes, Ms. Mathyssen.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Madam Ambassador, for showing up today.

There have been a lot of conversations about the equipment that's so important as part of these defensive actions that Ukraine has to take. I know Canadians are very proud to be a part of that.

Of course, we want them to be sufficient and safe. One of the things Mr. Bezan has talked about in this committee was supplying the CRV7 rockets. A lot of the conversations we had in this committee were about ensuring that they were safe and effective, and that they would be safe during transport.

I would love to hear from the generals and from you, Madam Ambassador, about what we are doing on those reviews to ensure that all of that older equipment is safe, and how that's delaying it—if that's delaying it. What are we doing with all of those checks and balances in place on both sides to ensure that safety is part of that conversation?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Chair, I can talk at least from the Canadian side.

Indeed, for the CRV7s, as indicated, there's an initial tranche that has arrived in Ukraine, and we're preparing for further shipment. As was identified, we have to make sure it's safe. A small number of those rockets have a warhead on them. The vast majority, though, are rockets, so they have an explosive capability to project forward.

Going through the necessary process to make sure they can be transported, either by aircraft or ship, is enormously important. Obviously, we won't hand something over to our Ukrainian partner that's going to damage their soldiers. We've gone through that and therefore ensured those weapon systems are safe when we're transferring them.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** In terms of that reliability on the Ukrainian side....

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** There is a bit of a different perception of safety when you're fighting a war.

On the one side, we really value the procedures that were maintained to ensure that all of the security for their transportation and usage was tested. Now the first shipment is in Ukraine.

However, you also need to understand that there is always a balance between safety standards and pressing need. If the brigade is unarmed, all talk about safety and security is very theoretical because, tomorrow, these people could be injured or, unfortunately, killed if they are not equipped and don't have armoured vehicles to use—whether it's to fight or for evacuation.

We do value this specifically for the rockets. While it is very important for us all to ensure that the needed safety and security measures are maintained while they are being shipped or used in Ukraine, for many other types of equipment we have a different perception. Urgency very often prevails with us, because that's the choice.

I would like to thank DND's approach in helping us build these capabilities—providing not only armoured vehicles and other types of weapons, but also kits of spare parts and the maintenance to support them. It's very important because it keeps those weapons' most efficient for use, and in the longer term too.

I want to reiterate that we really appreciate it.

• (1720)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Part of the issues we found.... You mentioned that our slowness on sanctions is not working. There were disappointments, of course, when it was found that Canadian-made electronic components were being found in Russian missiles and drones. I think we discussed that here at the committee a bit.

I would love to hear from you, Madam Ambassador, about Canada's doing its due diligence in monitoring that end use of arms exports and how that's impacting Ukraine right now, in terms of our obligations on arms exports.

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you.

Indeed, we continue to find a lot of western-produced spare parts in different types of Russian weapons. Recently, regarding informa-

tion I can share, there were no Canadian spare parts. We thank you for monitoring it. We know DND takes preventing Canadian technology from being used in the Russian war machine very seriously.

There are other allies with whom we are working closely to step in with more precise actions, because many of those western spare parts we find in missiles, drones and so on. We are working with DND and Global Affairs. They raised the internationally set mechanism for all export licences. We're fully compliant on our side with that.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Could you talk about Canada's role in promoting—within the international community, as well—anti-mine initiatives? What support does Ukraine need to further demine? I know Canadians are some of the best to do that, but what additional supports might you need for the demining of the countryside, especially after this war?

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you.

Indeed, we greatly value the support Canada is providing us in the demining field. Ukraine is now one of the most mine-contaminated countries, including its grain fields. Unfortunately, many of the casualties are civilians and farmers who continue to work in the fields, because we remain one of the biggest grain exporters in the world. It is a big challenge for both our civilians and our military. Demining equipment for the military is important. It's one of our requests on the lease.

However, regarding demining equipment for civilians, Canada was among the first countries to step in and double, at that time, our capacity on the big demining machines to help us clean, first of all, the fields, so our farmers can come back, work on the fields and supply the world with food.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That completes our first round.

For the second round, we start with Mr. Allison for five minutes.

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the ambassador for being here, and to the major-generals as well.

I have a question for you, Ambassador. You mentioned the term “nuclear blackmail”. Obviously, Putin has mentioned that he is threatening that.

In terms of the fact that he has done some terrible things and they are known for their disinformation, how likely would you think or rank the fact that he is threatening a nuclear response? Do you feel that's just more disinformation, or do you feel that he's actually serious when he talks about that?

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** If I am not mistaken, I have the figure that since February 24, 2022, Russia has blackmailed with nuclear threats 72 times. That is also a part of their campaign to put down so-called red lines. Do you remember what Russia did when Ukraine was first asking about NATO weapons? It was the same narrative then; we were talking about tanks; then we were talking about air defence and then we were talking about the fighter jets. Now we are talking about long-range strikes. It is the same pattern.

If you see what's happening in reality, including with our Kursk operation, you can make your own conclusion that this is blackmail. It's a common Russian strategy just to hold our partners and some of their decisions with respect to the support of Ukraine. It's all about that.

• (1725)

**Mr. Dean Allison:** Do you feel the same? Do you feel it's just disinformation, or is there a legitimate threat?

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Chair, the only thing I'd add is that their escalation dominance is standard Russian doctrine; they're always trying to make it look like they're going to go further.

There are nuclear weapons, but at the same time, on the alliance side, the alliance is very well aware of that and is obviously providing the deterrence that it has with its own nuclear capability.

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

Thank you, Mr. Allison, for splitting your time.

Ambassador, the Government of Canada promised back in January 2023 that we were going to send some NASAMS air defence systems to you. In March of 2023, Minister Anand said it was en route, and now we're hearing it might show up sometime in January 2025.

I know you need them now. That system would be very important for protecting the cities and the civilians of Ukraine. Have you received a hard date for when the NASAMS will be delivered?

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you.

Indeed, we really appreciate the decision to help us with an air defence system. It's in production. Both the Canadian system and the system that our other partners also committed to support us with are now in production by a U.S. manufacturer. We are looking forward. At this stage, none of us can help to expedite that. That's the production process. We have some estimates for dates, which are more linked to the producer.

Also, what would be very helpful is the additional supply of missiles for this air defence system, because we have few of them now in Ukraine. We, of course, are looking forward to getting more, but without the missiles, we can't use them. If there is any possibility to also provide us with the missiles for the system, that would be very helpful. Meanwhile, we are waiting for the system to arrive.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Ambassador, the maker of the CRV7 rockets, which are Canadian-made, is also a manufacturer of missiles and is still in existence and still has the capability to produce missiles. I hope that the Government of Canada would be looking at our own domestic capabilities and industrial strengths in the defence industry to provide you with more of those missiles.

We talked a little bit about the M777 howitzers and the 155-millimetre shells. The government has delayed and dithered on getting our production increased here.

Can you tell us, Ambassador, whether or not Canada is shipping any increase in 155-millimetre ammunition rounds to Ukraine, or are you getting those rounds from other countries?

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** As I've said, the Department of National Defence joined the Czech coalition to supply Ukraine with 155-millimetre artillery shells. That's the international coalition. Many other countries joined with financial contributions to allow our Czech colleagues to procure and supply those 155-millimetre artillery shells to Ukraine.

We greatly value that, but we also see that in general there is a lack of production capability around the world. We also see it as we are starting our own production. There are a lot of supply chain issues for this production. We started to talk about this two years ago. The defence industry is now our great partner, but also a big bottleneck. By working together, we need to ensure that we are all able to produce. Sometimes it's not about the funding; it's just the physical capacity.

I would also like to thank the many Canadian defence producers who are working on production of this military supply. I think a bigger part of the military support that Canada has provided for us is produced in Canada here. I visited a lot of them and I really want to take this opportunity to thank those companies, and the people who are working there, for their efforts.

• (1730)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The five-minute questions seem to be getting into the six-and-a-half and seven-minute range.

Madame Lalonde, you have five minutes.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I'm going to pass it to my colleague, Emmanuella.

**The Chair:** Madame Lambropoulos, you have five minutes.

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

Thank you to our witnesses for being here with us to discuss this important matter today.

My first question will be for Ambassador Kovaliv.

You mentioned in your opening remarks that the support that Ukraine has received from allies is one of the major reasons why it's seen the successes that it has seen, along with, of course, the bravery of the soldiers on the ground.

Canada has committed over \$4.5 billion in military assistance and has trained over 40,000 Ukrainian troops.

I'm wondering if you can speak to which investments have been the most helpful and what more we can do at this stage.

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you.

Indeed, I would like to thank you for the robust military support and, as I mentioned, for the approach that we are building together—the capabilities.

If we're talking about the fighter jet capability, Canada is helping us train Ukrainian pilots. It's not only that the other partners are providing us F-16 fighter jets, but we also need to have well-trained pilots who can effectively operate them.

When it comes to the armoured vehicles coalition, it's not only the armoured vehicles, but there's this whole supply chain. There are many other examples.

One other thing I want to mention, and want to thank you for in the presence of generals here, is the training program Unifier. It started back in 2015. When the war started, we had over 30,000 Ukrainian men and women trained by Canadian trainers through the Unifier program. Now, the figures are much bigger. We are coming close to the 40,000.

I think the generals can probably also say that it's not only one-sided training. It's really the exchange of experience. It's really a win-win for both our armed forces and the members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I always have the privilege of meeting the teams that are coming on a rotation for the six months from Unifier. I'm always really touched by how they feel proud of being a part of the Unifier program, how this exchange...and how the people stay connected. We are also building these relations among the people who are physically protecting us—our soldiers.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Thank you so much.

You also spoke in your opening remarks about how long-range weaponry would be helpful at this stage and about Ukraine's ability to use that into Russia. I know that Major-Generals Smith and Ritchie also spoke to this a little bit earlier, but you were cut off a little short. I know that you may want to finish the thought that you had started earlier.

I'll start with Ambassador Kovaliv to explain why this would be beneficial at this stage.

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you.

As I've said, you can't protect, for example, as we saw a few months ago near Vovchansk in Kharkiv, when Russia was trying to advance from the northeast 30 kilometres to the Russian border. If we are not able to strike on Russian territory, it's very hard to protect especially those big cities that are closer to the Russian border, because the legitimate target is the Russian military depots, all the logistics that they are using and the places where Russia launches their missiles, including ballistic missiles.

So there are two ways: to significantly increase air defence and to help us to draw down missiles and drones, including on at least the western border. We have seen examples of Russian drones falling down onto the territory of NATO members and we saw the unity and how this can be successfully intercepted in the Middle East. We crucially need both of these decisions by our allies.

• (1735)

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Thanks for the question, Mr. Chair.

Indeed it stretches the battlefield and the complexion of the conflict and it exposes more vulnerable second- and third-echelon forces of the Russian military apparatus that are operating in depth. We certainly recognize the inherent benefits of such a capability, and that's why we're excited to, under Canada's new ONSAF policy, also get to explore this capability for the Canadian Armed Forces.

**The Chair:** That was right on five minutes, with 2.5 seconds remaining.

[*Translation*]

The floor is yours, Ms. Normandin.

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

My question is twofold. It's for both the ambassador and the major-generals.

I would like to know to what extent Ukrainian civilians are mobilized to go to the front at this time. Is it really a state of total war or would it still be possible to mobilize civilians by providing, for example, more logistical support, replacing them with international forces or more medical support, among other things?

If it were possible to mobilize more civilians, could we, on our side, train more recruits at the Lydd training camp, for example, if the influx of recruits increased?

[*English*]

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you.

Mobilization in Ukraine is coming. It's in place. We've digitalized a lot of the services, so now the data of all men of conscription age is registered and we know them, but on the military side, we don't need all the men of that age to be sent directly to the front line because there is also critical infrastructure, defence production and the economy, and the country needs to continue to live, and the businesses need to continue to work.

But there is one more reality. We don't have enough equipment, so there is no need to send the people who are untrained and un-equipped to the front line. Our strategy is not what Russia is doing, sending the people who were conscripted just two or three weeks ago as what is being called kind of, unfortunately, meat to be killed on the front line. That's why there's so much value in all the training programs we have. The people are going to obligatory training, but then comes the need for equipment. If we are talking about the armoured vehicles or the other types of equipment we need to equip brigades, that's where timing is essential. Imagine if today we had a plan to equip several big brigades, but there was no equipment.



**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Mr. Chair, if I might just add something, I had the privilege to be deployed to Wiesbaden in January and February of 2022 on the eve of the invasion and then for the next six months, and it was utterly inspiring to watch the Ukrainian population we've spoken to of all ages rallying together to present a unified front. Farmers were towing abandoned Russian vehicles, and families were throwing Molotov cocktails at invading Russians. It was inspiring for the alliance to watch this solidarity.

If I may just speak to the ambassador's comment, one of the most successful programs has been the program to train the trainers. You spoke about LID and the ability to train recruits. Working together, we have trained 173 trainers, who are now training their own recruits. To the ambassador's earlier point, we're learning as much as we are teaching. It is a very reciprocal relationship as we're learning from war-hardened soldiers of Ukraine.

**The Chair:** You have five minutes, Ms. Mathysen.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Thank you.

Ambassador, I asked the major-generals earlier about the 20,000 children that have been abducted by Russia. I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Ukrainian council's London chapter, but we haven't heard back yet, unfortunately.

Can you tell us how Canada can increase more diplomatic pressure on Russia and do our part to help Ukraine return these children to their homes?

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you.

Part of the weapons of war unfortunately are the children. They are the most vulnerable.

We have documented over 19,000 cases of Ukrainian children who have been forcefully deported to Russia. Some of them already have been illegally adopted by Russian families. Unfortunately, with some of them, 16-year-old boys, we have evidence that they have been sent to the military camps for training, and there is a big risk that Russia will try to send them to the front lines. We are working together with the other partners, and I would like to stress the big role Qatar is playing to help us to return the children.

Unfortunately, only a little more than 600 Ukrainian children have been brought back. In order to enforce diplomatic pressure and awareness, together with Canada, we call on the international coalition to return the Ukrainian children. We now have 40 countries from around the world who have joined the coalition, and this number will be growing.

At the end of October, here in Canada—and we are thankful to Global Affairs Canada and Minister Joly—we will have a conference. Part of that agenda will be on our international efforts to bring the Ukrainian children back and to support and coordinate our diplomatic efforts. Canada is also supporting us to help those children who we have managed to bring back to Ukraine to rehabilitate them. These children have suffered a lot, including their mental health, with the need for them to resettle. We greatly value this.

This is one of the most horrific crimes, because it involves those who are the most vulnerable. This is part of the Russian breach of international law. These crimes against children are ones that are

highly punished. That is why the global arrest warrant for Putin is based on the crimes against Ukrainian children.

• (1740)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Don Stewart, welcome to the committee.

You have five minutes, please.

**Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ambassador Kovaliv, Major-General Smith and Major-General Ritchie, thank you for your service.

I spent some time with the Ontario Regiment in the 1980s, and more recently, over the last six years, as honorary colonel with the 2 Intelligence Company in Toronto. During training nights we would often talk about drones and their importance to the safety of our troops and the execution of our strategy.

I'm curious about the activities of CAF and implanting urgently any of these drones as small surveillance or attack drones that can be operated in conjunction with our ground forces.

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

Drones have been a game-changer, like a couple of other capabilities on the battlefield and ones that we're monitoring carefully. We are learning from Ukrainian partners in the fight with Russia. We're also working as we look to procure these capabilities going forward through our recent ONSAF policy, because there is so much opportunity the drone capability presents, and we think it will be evolutionary in the coming years.

**Mr. Don Stewart:** Do we have plans to have those with our troops in Latvia?

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** What I can speak to, Mr. Chair, is that we're upskilling the brigade to 3,000 persistent troops deployed with additional capabilities available to deploy from Canada in the form of an additional battalion. The battle group will be under the brigade. It will be Canadian-led with 14 countries. Amongst the coalition of the 14 countries, I do believe we have drone capability. This is something that the Canadian Armed Forces is interested in and we are looking to expand our capability on this going forward.

**Mr. Don Stewart:** I understand that in the battalion.... I'm sorry, in the brigade, there will be a significant number of reservists staffing that brigade, and that leads me to wonder about training in advance of deployment. Are we going to have soldiers who arrive trained and ready to execute our mission in Latvia?

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Thanks very much for that question, Mr. Chair.

Obviously the professional preparation of soldiers for conflict and for service in NATO is top of mind. What we're trying to do is strike the balance between high-caliber training and minimizing the time away from home, in terms of quality of life before they deploy, because we have had challenges in past years when soldiers may deploy for multiple months before they then go away for six- to nine-month deployments. What we're finding now is the opportunity to conduct the validation training forward in Adazi, and the next brigade validation will be during the period 4 to 14 November, where we'll be able to deliver that high-caliber training forward in Latvia.

• (1745)

**Mr. Don Stewart:** Back in March 2022, we had been pushing the Liberal government to provide our surplus LAV IIs to send them to Ukraine. We had some that were serviceable, but we had, I think, 62 that were in repairable condition, but were deemed surplus, but they would take 220 days to fix. That was in June 2022. I'm wondering if those were ever repaired and sent to Ukraine.

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Mr. Chair, I can't speak to those specific statistics. That being said, we're working actively with Ukraine. If they're asking for hulks—M113s, LAV IIs, as you said—we're moving them as quickly as we can. Obviously, Armatec came up and refurbishment of those, and we're continuing to work through that to achieve a contract as quickly as possible.

**The Chair:** Since you were not able to answer the question specifically about the refurbishment of the 62 LAV IIs. I understand that it's not necessarily in your own notes, but if you could undertake to the respond to the committee, that would be helpful.

**MGen Gregory Smith:** We'll take that on notice, Chair.

**Mr. Don Stewart:** The last thing I would ask you is this. Does our current battle group in Latvia possess the sufficient capabilities to defend against the current state of the Russian military?

**MGen Robert Ritchie:** Thanks for that question, Mr. Chair.

Right now, that brigade is formidable. It has infantry, armour, artillery, tactical helicopters that just recently deployed from the Royal Canadian Air Force, medical logistics and sustainment. Combat engineers are deploying in 2025. This is Canadian-led, multinational, 14 countries, and those other troop-contributing nations bring incredible capability as well.

That said, we are mindful of the changing threats, and we're looking to procure new capability, through new technology in the new policy that we have, to be able to ensure that our forward-leaning forces are successful going forward.

**The Chair:** Mr. Powlowski, you have the final five minutes.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski:** *Dobry den*, Ambassador.

You talked about the importance of assistance in air defence. When there was a conflict in Syria that the United States was involved in, Western forces were willing to enforce a no-fly zone over Syria. I think after the initial attack in 2022, Ukraine was asking for support in enforcing a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Is Ukraine still formally asking for that support?

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Ukraine is asking for many of the different instruments to protect the sky, including the air defence system itself and the missiles for them, including our partners to help us to

draw down the missiles and drones, including in the western border, and including the preventing of those strikes, so there are different....

We have also a very big and serious pending issue, which is the Russian occupation of the biggest civilian nuclear plant—6 gigawatts—the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, which, since the spring 2022, is under Russian occupation. It poses a huge risk not only to Ukraine, but also to all of the surrounding countries. The missiles and drones are flying very close in the vicinity of the reactors themselves, which is a huge risk for millions of people.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski:** This is a question for both the generals and the ambassador.

I think in 2022, when the issue of a no-fly zone came up, the response from the West was that this would be very problematic. It would possibly result in global warfare in case Western NATO forces were to shoot down Russian planes flying over Ukraine.

Right now, given the advances in the Ukrainian army with surface-to-air missiles with Patriot missile systems, are there any Russian planes flying over Ukrainian airspace? If there are no longer Russian airplanes or helicopters flying over presently occupied Ukrainian airspace, has the situation not changed materially?

Perhaps there would be more of an argument for NATO enforcing a no-fly zone, which would be shooting down drones and missiles, so Russians wouldn't be getting killed in their planes over Ukraine. Is it a concept that we ought to be reconsidering? Is NATO taking an active role in supporting a no-fly zone over Ukraine?

• (1750)

**MGen Gregory Smith:** Chair, I'll start.

You have the disadvantage of having a bunch of army guys up here, and we'll do our best.

That's a military operation, and Ukraine is a big country. It's over 600,000 square kilometres. To protect that, you would need to position forces right inside Ukraine. It's not just having a fighter. Now you have an airbase, and you have to protect the airbase. You have to supply the airbase, and it's not just simply setting up a fighter, but how do you defeat enemy air defences? This is a full-up operation. NATO would become engaged in that conflict.

We are supporting Ukraine the best we can. I'd like to go back to the amount of air defence, including Canada's, that is trying to supply Ukraine to have them do the job. Then more recently, there's the \$389 million announced for fighter lead-in training and further training to enable the Ukrainians to win the war themselves.

**Mr. Marcus Powlowski:** Ambassador, in my remaining time, I give the floor to you as an opportunity to say what you would like to say to the Canadian people and to the Canadian government.

**H.E. Yuliya Kovaliv:** Thank you.

There were 369 Russian airplanes flying that have been destroyed. Indeed, the protection of the sky is a huge issue, both for the military and civilians.

The honourable member Don Stewart was talking about drones. Drones and the drones that are using AI are now a game-changer. It's not the conventional war that you saw before. It's also war on technology, the drones and electronic warfare.

We've already created one of the first special parts of the forces that is called unmanned forces. We are actively using different types of drones: air drones, sea drones, or unmanned vehicles on the front line. Ukraine is now on the edge of this technological development. By the end of this year, we will be procuring for the Ukrainian armed forces one million drones of different types: small ones, long range, short range and surveillance drones. We are doing it because this is partly substituting for the lack of artillery and artillery shells. There are some parts of the front line that are controlled only by drones. Sometimes small drones that cost several

thousand dollars can destroy a tank or an armoured vehicle. It is a new type of war.

What we also are offering and working with allies and with Canada on, and we see on our side a big potential, is co-operation in drone production. Today, Ukraine is a testing ground not only for drones but also for their usage against the strong Russian electronic warfare. It's not only to have a good drone. You need this drone to be able to fly, and it needs to withstand your enemy's electronic warfare. This is a big defence technology, a new era in the military where we believe we are on the front line, and we are ready to share our experience. We also we want to welcome more co-operation on this production so we can be leading together on this stage.

**The Chair:** That brings our time together to an end.

I want to thank all members and our witnesses for their co-operation in parliamentary circumstances, which are occasionally difficult. Particularly, I want to thank Generals Ritchie and Smith for their patience and for staying much longer than they were scheduled.

Ambassador Kovaliv, it's always great to see you. We appreciate your ability to give us the view from Ukraine on this conflict.

With that, colleagues, we will adjourn. We will carry on with the threat briefing next Thursday morning. Our clerk has promised to cook a special breakfast for us.

With that, this meeting adjourned.

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