



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on National Defence

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 003

Thursday, September 18, 2025

Chair: Charles Sousa



Standing Committee on National Defence

Thursday, September 18, 2025

• (0815)

[English]

The Chair (Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to meeting number three of the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence.

Pursuant to the motion adopted on September 16, 2025, the committee is meeting to receive a threat analysis of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions.

Before we continue, I would like to ask all persons participating to consult the guidelines written on the cards on the table. These measures are in place to help prevent audio and feedback incidents and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters. You will notice a QR code on the cards, which links to a short awareness video. I'll ask you to look at it after our meeting so that we can pay full attention to our witnesses.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference—there are none—please click on the microphone. For those of us here, take advantage of the translation for different languages.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

For members in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. You know the drill.

The topic for panel one is defence and security in the Euro-Atlantic region.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses. From the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, we have Eric Laporte, executive director of defence and security relations. From the Department of National Defence, we have Major-General Robert Ritchie, director of staff for the strategic joint staff of the Canadian Armed Forces, and Ty Curran, deputy director general of international security policy.

It is my understanding that only officials from DND will be delivering opening remarks. You have five minutes for your statement.

Thank you again for being here.

Ty Curran (Deputy Director General, International Security Policy, Department of National Defence): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you for the invitation.

We've already gone through the introduction, so I'll just say on behalf of my colleagues that it's an honour to be here this morning, and we're looking forward to the discussion.

The topics of the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific are very relevant, given the priority that was placed on them in our recent defence policy update, "Our North, Strong and Free".

[Translation]

For the first session, I would like to start with the recent NATO summit in The Hague, which underlined the cornerstone role that NATO plays in our defence and security and those of all allies. At the NATO summit, Canada committed to meeting the 2% target this fiscal year. We are accelerating over \$9 billion in investments to rebuild, rearm and modernize the Canadian Armed Forces.

[English]

A 2% investment will mean better pay and support for personnel, new aircraft and vehicles, advanced sensors for Arctic surveillance and modernization of our digital infrastructure.

Additionally, allies, including Canada, have also made a historic commitment to strengthen our collective defence, including a pledge to reach 5% of GDP in defence spending by 2035. This 5% has two components.

First, allies will allocate at least 3.5% of GDP annually to core defence requirements. These are the defence areas that make up the previous 2% NATO target.

Second, the remaining 1.5% of GDP will be invested in strengthening allies' defence industrial base, protecting critical infrastructure, and ensuring civilian preparedness and resilience.

[Translation]

Prior to the NATO summit, the Prime Minister also participated in a Canada-EU summit and concluded a security and defence partnership with the EU that reflects our broader commitment to reinforcing and deepening transatlantic security ties.

Our Global Affairs Canada colleagues are preparing to start negotiating a bilateral agreement with the EU under the security action for Europe, or SAFE, program in order to improve access for Canadian defence companies to European opportunities.

[English]

Beyond these summits, Europe remains a key operational area for the CAF. We continue to lead NATO's land forces in Latvia through Operation Reassurance, our largest overseas mission. During a recent visit to Latvia, the Prime Minister announced an extension of that operation for another three years.

[Translation]

Canada is a key player in NATO's deterrence posture on the eastern flank. As a framework nation for NATO's forward land forces in Latvia, Canada, along with our 13 partners in the multinational brigade, is part of the biggest reinforcement of alliance collective defence in a generation.

In the east, supporting Ukraine is central to our shared security. Canada's efforts in military training and capacity building began in 2015 and continue today through Operation Unifier. Since 2015, we have trained over 46,000 Ukrainian troops under Operation Unifier, covering vital areas such as basic and advanced military skills, battlefield tactics, medical training and combat engineering.

[English]

On the battlefield, we've seen small Russian progress at significant costs for them, and numerous examples of Ukrainian innovation and willingness to continue to fight, such as June's Operation Spiderweb, which targeted Russian long-range aviation. My colleagues can provide additional details on the battlefield situation or on the status of negotiations, if desired.

Canada continues to contribute and is working with our allies, through the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine, or NSATU, and through the coalition of the willing, to explore substantive security guarantees for Ukraine, which is an essential step toward a durable peace.

In the meantime, though, we are also focused on ensuring that Ukraine has the funding and equipment needed to continue the fight. Since the full-scale invasion, Canada has pledged nearly \$22 billion in aid to Ukraine, including over \$6.5 billion in military assistance. This has delivered critical capabilities for Ukrainians, including armoured vehicles, high-tech components, flight simulators for F-16s and essential things such as winter clothing, all of which have been provided by Canadian suppliers.

We are also proud to provide training for F-16 pilots under the Ukraine Defense Contact Group's air force capability coalition and to contribute to the armour, drone, and information and technology coalitions. These efforts reflect our enduring commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and to Euro-Atlantic stability.

[Translation]

In closing, I would like to point out that the security environment in Europe remains dynamic and complex. That said, NATO remains strong and ready to defend allied territory, as seen in the recent incursion of Russian drones over Polish airspace on September 9 and 10. This prompted a coordinated response from allied forces and the invocation of article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

[English]

These very difficult times underline the importance of the defence investments that we're making and the need to work closely with our allies.

We look forward to your questions.

● (0820)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Curran.

We appreciate the introduction and your getting us started.

I'm going to pass it over to Cheryl Gallant to lead us off.

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

Through you to the witnesses, I'd first like to mention that the troops are still waiting for that pay increase that was promised to them on April 1.

A week ago today, Taiwanese ambassador Harry Tseng hosted a session on maritime security. We learned about the intentional undersea cable cutting in the Baltics, Europe and Taiwan.

How prevalent along Canadian shores is the grey-zone tactic of cutting undersea cables?

Ty Curran: Perhaps I'll zoom out a little about grey-zone tactics writ large. We can talk through that and then perhaps get into the details about undersea cables.

We've seen hybrid threats and grey-zone tactics emerge, continue and proliferate over the last several years. We think it underlines the importance of defence investments in order to provide deterrence from a military point of view, but we recognize that when faced with challenges militarily, our adversaries will look for other ways to target us. That includes things like cyber-threats, targeting critical infrastructure and threats to democratic resilience. It speaks to the need for a whole-of-society approach in order to counter these threats, noting as well that our ability to counter them is based on our ability to counter military threats, which underlines the importance of these investments.

Cheryl Gallant: How often have the undersea cable cuttings happened along the Canadian land mass?

● (0825)

Ty Curran: I'll turn to my colleague.

Robert Ritchie (Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff, Canadian Armed Forces, Department of National Defence): This is something that, in partnership with other government departments and agencies, the Department of National Defence continues to monitor. There have been incidents off the east coast of Canada. We are actively monitoring them in partnership with allies and partners, and we continue to take proactive and preventive measures against potential reoccurrences in the future.

Cheryl Gallant: The question was about how many, as well.

In any of these incidents, were any vessels identified around those times as being close to the path of the undersea cables?

Robert Ritchie: We continue to work with partners. I do not have that information available at this time.

That said, I can commit that the integrated intelligence community is lashed up and working across the Government of Canada and in partnership with provinces, territories and indigenous stakeholders and, importantly, with allies in continental defence in terms of surveillance for detection of all domain threats from the sea floor to space.

Cheryl Gallant: Do Canadian fishing vessels have access to the charts that show the undersea cable routing?

Robert Ritchie: Mr. Chair, that is not my area of expertise. We can coordinate with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and with the Canadian Coast Guard, as they are probably in a better position to provide an accurate response to that question.

Cheryl Gallant: The Coast Guard and the military are being combined, it has been reported. Do the Coast Guard patrols keep an eye on vessels loitering near the undersea cables?

Robert Ritchie: Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to be able to talk about the Canadian Coast Guard.

As colleagues know, on June 9 the Prime Minister announced the merger. At this point, there is no plan to militarize the Canadian Coast Guard or to incorporate a law enforcement role. I can speak to the fact that they will be additive in the security domain in surveilling for all-domain threats as well as supporting search and rescue and icebreaking in the Arctic and in commercial shipping routes. They will contribute to ocean science, to safe navigation and to fisheries enforcement, as well as contribute environmentally.

Cheryl Gallant: All right.

If a fishing vessel noticed another vessel, a foreign vessel, loitering along the pathway of the undersea cables, would the crew know who to report this to? It's suspicious activity.

Robert Ritchie: Yes. Right now we have a Canadian Coast Guard that is robust in their procedures and in strengthening sovereignty, and maritime domain is at the core of their mission. We're right now finalizing and professionalizing the integration of the Canadian Coast Guard with the Royal Canadian Navy and with the Royal Canadian Air Force to ensure that we provide integrated awareness to be able to cue exploitation of other assets if we see suspicious activity.

Cheryl Gallant: Okay. It sounds like they should report it to the Coast Guard.

Do the Canadian Forces depend on communications routed through undersea cables?

Ty Curran: Yes.

Cheryl Gallant: Okay. The answer was yes. I don't know, Mr. Curran, if that was on the record.

Ty Curran: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. Yes.

Cheryl Gallant: Since it takes 40 days and \$3 million to repair a single cable, does DND have a company on retainer to mend undersea cables on call, on demand?

Ty Curran: I'm not aware of a company... Mr. Chair, I don't know whether we have a contract in existence to do that. There are a number of Canadian companies that we can work with in the event of either an accidental event or a targeted event that targets our undersea cable networks.

Cheryl Gallant: Does the CAF have the personnel and the equipment necessary to do the undersea cable repair itself?

Robert Ritchie: Mr. Chair, that is not currently an autonomous capability of the Canadian Armed Forces. It does speak to the growing relationship between defence and the whole of society, as well as Canadian industry, and we're working hard to strengthen those ties. We are also exploring and expanding our capability for surveillance from sea floor to space.

Cheryl Gallant: Has the—

The Chair: Ms. Gallant, your time is up. I'm going to pass it on now to Ms. Lapointe, please.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Major-General, I had the opportunity to go to the Baltic region last year. We went to Latvia, and I did get to meet some of our Canadian Armed Forces members there. It's an impressive brigade that I believe now numbers close to 2,000 members.

On that, how effective has Canada's contribution been to Operation Reassurance in Latvia in deterring Russian aggression?

● (0830)

Robert Ritchie: The Canadian Armed Forces have been leading in Europe since 2015, when our presence first got there 10 years ago. We stepped up as one of the first four lead framework nations for a battle group in 2017. In 2022, in response to the invasion, the Canadian Armed Forces stood up again from battle group to brigade; the number of 2,200 is accurate. We do surge on that mission when you combine the land forces in Latvia with the air and the maritime contributions, and they peak episodically around 3,000.

We have been resolute in our support for NATO-led deterrence and defence. Concurrently, Canadian Armed Forces are strengthening relationships with the 13 allies with whom we're partnered, including our gracious hosts in Latvia.

Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

Mr. Curran, in terms of the Euro-Atlantic region, what do you see as both the challenges and the opportunities that exist for Canada to specialize in areas like cyber-defence or Arctic security that can contribute meaningfully to Arctic defence?

Ty Curran: One of the most exciting opportunities, I think, also speaks to one of our most significant challenges, which is that investments are required in the defence industrial base.

We recognize that our ability to resupply the forces to ensure that we have the ammunition and the spare parts available for the type of fights that we are trying to deter requires significant investments. That's part of the reason that we're working with the European Union on defence-related issues, and we're trying to grow our relationship there.

I would say as well that the work that we do in the Arctic is often expeditionary in nature, even for Canada. The distances are extreme and the weather can be incredibly difficult. Those same capabilities that we developed for the Arctic can help us in force projection in a European theatre. I think they are complementary.

We recognize as well that a conflict involving NATO allies that could break out in Europe would not be limited to the European theatre, and the likelihood of threats through the Arctic is something that we need to focus on. That's a reason it was a priority in the recently updated defence policy, "Our North, Strong and Free".

Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

Robert Ritchie: Mr. Chair, if I might add, there's a reflex at times to see adversaries in specific regions, but the adversaries are global. The adversary you might be facing a certain region is the same one in another region, and, importantly, NATO is focused on the northwest flank of the Atlantic Ocean and is therefore very interested in the contributions and the defence of Canada and the collective defence of North America.

Viviane Lapointe: Mr. Laporte, like many Canadians, we have a real concern over the rise of misinformation online, and a big source of these misinformation campaigns is Russia. Can you tell us how Canada is working with NATO and our European partners to counter the Russian hybrid threats in cyber-attacks and disinformation?

Eric Laporte (Executive Director, Defence and Security Relations, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): I can, absolutely, and thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

Canada is very active on the cyber-front and in the foreign information manipulation and interference realms. In the G7, we lead what's called the rapid response mechanism, which includes not only G7 partners but also the European Union and NATO participants. That mechanism looks for online sources of disinformation and misinformation and try to correct those and adjust responses. It looks at open source information to develop skills, tools and capacity building for society and civil society organizations. There's capacity building involved in that for NATO allies and for NATO

partners beyond just NATO allies, as well as for other areas. Canada is very active in that sphere.

That's from a Global Affairs perspective. I know our Canadian security establishment is also very active in that field, as is the Canadian Armed Forces cyber command.

Viviane Lapointe: Do I have time remaining, Chair?

The Chair: You have another minute.

Viviane Lapointe: I'm going to ask this very quickly then, Major-General. From a military readiness perspective, what are some of the Canadian Armed Forces' greatest challenges in meeting simultaneous commitments in Europe and in the Indo-Pacific?

● (0835)

Robert Ritchie: We are seizing the opportunity that's been provided to us by Canadians and the Canadian government for focused investment to expand our readiness. That said, we will see the downstream return on that investment as it materializes over months and years. We currently have the readiness we have based on the investments that have been made to date, and there are therefore fixed forces that we are working to optimize, but there are choices to be made about how to employ the Canadian Armed Forces based on the global instability that we see around the world.

The Chair: We'll pass it over to you, Mr. Savard.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, gentlemen. Thank you for being here and for your presentations.

If you don't mind, let's move to the Indo-Pacific region. As of today, Canada's current official position is still recognition of Beijing's one China. In the event of an attack, of armed conflict in Taiwan, what would Canada's position be? I'm not talking about readiness levels yet, but about the position as such.

Eric Laporte: Thank you for your question.

As you pointed out at the beginning of your question, our policy is the one China policy, which recognizes Beijing's China as China's legitimate government. That said, we still have access to direct exchanges with Taiwan, as well as to trade. At this stage, I would prefer not to speculate on the posture the Government of Canada would take in a potential conflict.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: So, at the moment, there is no deterrence posture. There is no posture where support would be given to Taiwan or anything like that.

Eric Laporte: I can say that a lot of discussions and diplomatic dialogues are under way with the Chinese authorities in Beijing on the fact that an armed conflict in the Taiwan Strait would be harmful. Therefore, our preference is to maintain the status quo. The fact that the Canadian Armed Forces are in the region also has a deterrent effect. However, I'm not in a position to comment this morning on what the government would do in the event of a conflict.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: So I can say that there is disagreement about a potential Chinese attack on Taiwan, but that there is still no clear position on what would happen in that case. Is that a fair summary of what you're saying?

Eric Laporte: Yes. There is no desire to see a conflict between China and Taiwan. This position has been communicated very clearly to the Chinese authorities.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: What we know right now is that the People's Republic of China is deploying troops. In the Taiwan Strait, boat patrols have tried to show Chinese military capability by firing into the air. We also know that President Xi Jinping has ordered the People's Liberation Army, the PLA, to have the necessary military capabilities to invade Taiwan by 2027. If he wants the PLA to be ready for 2027, that means it could happen before. Things happen quickly; 2027 is tomorrow morning.

Based on your information, are those words just hot air or is something really afoot?

Robert Ritchie: Thank you for your question.

First, I would say that China is in the process of perfecting its military capabilities to reach a world-class level by 2049.

Second, the date that was announced to the military and that we are monitoring very closely is indeed 2027.

Third, we are currently seeing that activities in China are much more present and intense than before, across all fields. This will make it increasingly difficult to recognize the signs of an attack on Taiwan.

● (0840)

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: If I understand correctly, military activities are intensifying in China, and that muddies the waters. Activities are increasing, but that doesn't mean there is a will to invade or attack.

Is that right?

Ty Curran: Thank you for your question.

We know that China wants to be ready, but we don't know how willing it is to act. Therefore, we are working with our partners and allies to better prepare the Canadian Armed Forces for all eventualities to deter global conflicts.

However, it is true that the Chinese are preparing and are supposed to be ready in 2027.

Eric Laporte: Mr. Chair, as my colleagues have said, it is becoming increasingly difficult to detect warning signs sent by the Chinese in advance.

We're looking to maintain the status quo. However, we note that, in their operations, exercises and tactics, the Chinese themselves are starting to change the status quo.

So we have to pay attention to the fact that they are changing the situation.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: So you can confirm that China's military activities are intensifying.

My question is for Mr. Laporte, but Mr. Curran can obviously add to it.

Mr. Laporte, I read that you were with the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.

Can you tell me to what extent the Chinese military depends on Canada for technology, such as chips, software and engines?

In other words, in its trade with China, is Canada helping to strengthen the Chinese army?

Eric Laporte: I work at Global Affairs Canada, but on the policy side and not on the trade side, so I don't have the answer to that question.

However, we still have an export control regime that examines Canadian products sold abroad, and we always analyze the implications for regional security, human rights and national security in Canada. When we make export decisions, we always consult the Department of National Defence, which assesses their impact on national security.

So there is an awareness, as you say, in terms of ensuring that Canadian components sold abroad are not being sent to the Chinese armed forces.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We can note that we went into panel two just now, which is fine, if the committee is okay with that. We can have a free-for-all.

Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, thank you so much. I am now going to pass it over to Mr. Jeff Kibble.

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and through you to the witnesses, I'm looking to explore some capability in threats that our CAF personnel who are deployed in Latvia are facing.

Thank you, General Ritchie, for your service. Could you tell me how many troops we have there right now?

Robert Ritchie: I will pull up the exact number, but we fluctuate around 2,200. The number, as I mentioned, maxes out at 3,000 through the episodic commitments of both air and maritime contingents. Presently, we have our air contribution in both Latvia and Prestwick. As well, we have three ships currently contributed to NATO, and therefore we're on the higher end of 2,500, but we do hit 3,000 from time to time.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you. Does that 3,000 include the ships that are there, or is it approximately just 2,200 on the ground in Latvia?

Robert Ritchie: In Latvia, 2,200 is an accurate approximation.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you.

I recently visited CFB Edmonton and I heard about some of the challenges they're facing there. Can you briefly tell me the timeline of the cycle for force generation, their deployment and their return, regroup and resting?

Robert Ritchie: Historically, readiness models have involved three phases: preparation for the deployment and execution of a mission, and then the recovery and the reconstitution of the force.

That has changed for Latvia specifically. We've moved the force generation training out of Wainwright, Alberta, where it was conducted previously. It is now being done in Latvia, with the host nation, alongside the 13 allies. To make sure that we can maximize our contribution to the nation while still supporting our people, we are continuing to assess the duration of the deployments, which will condition the preparation and the recovery time based on the cumulative demand for the Canadian Armed Forces.

• (0845)

Jeff Kibble: Would it be fair to say that the cycle has been compressed since the deployment began?

Robert Ritchie: The cycle continues to be optimized, and as there are changes in theatre, both in Europe as well as in support to the Ukrainian armed forces, there are adjustments to the cycles. I can't speak to whether a specific group may have had a slightly adjusted schedule.

Jeff Kibble: You mentioned an extension of three years. Based on the troops and the information that I've heard from the base in Edmonton, do you assess it as a challenge for the CAF to maintain this cycle for another three years?

Robert Ritchie: Indeed, our most significant contribution is Operation Reassurance. For the Canadian Army, the focal point is our commitment to Latvia. At present, we are sustaining our contribution, but it is alongside other emerging global instabilities. As we consider potential increases in Latvia, we'll have to do that with a clear mind to other challenges and the choice space that these challenges present.

Jeff Kibble: I've heard official statements saying that adding troops to Ukraine based on potential security agreements and guarantees is a possibility being looked at in the future. Will that potential new commitment impact the capability of the approximately 2,200 personnel on the ground in Latvia?

Robert Ritchie: This is, indeed, a global challenge with the fixed forces that we have. At present, we are resolute in our commitment to Latvia, and we see that being unchanged. That said, led by the U.K. and France, we are working in collaboration with allies on the coalition of the willing to examine possibilities for force generation of elements across 30 contributing nations to assist in a just peace for Ukraine, should a ceasefire be reached.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you very much.

I would like to ask a question specifically for Canada, because you referred to other allies. Are we going to be able to maintain the approximately 2,000 in Latvia concurrent with a potential commitment in Ukraine?

Robert Ritchie: Yes, we can maintain the current contribution to Operation Reassurance in Latvia, but it is absolutely informing our

capacity to contribute to an expanded mission in Ukraine should the coalition of the willing deploy forces on the eve of a ceasefire agreement that may be reached.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you.

You mentioned pre-deployment.

The time is up?

The Chair: Thank you. That was five minutes.

Just for the benefit of the witnesses, there is a second panel. It is going to be dealing with the Asia-Pacific, and there will be opening remarks by the witnesses. Could we try to concentrate on the Euro-Atlantic region during this panel to enable—

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: If I may, Mr. Chair, I would like to raise a point.

Can we not ask questions as we see fit? If we have more to ask on the Indo-Pacific region, can we not expand on the other session? Are you suggesting that we can't ask questions—

[*English*]

The Chair: I am suggesting for the benefit of the witnesses, that's all, because they came prepared for two different panels and they have opening remarks in the second panel. By all means, the members are free to ask whatever they wish. I'm just asking us to be courteous to the witnesses because of what they have prepared before us.

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Chair, the witnesses are well prepared on both issues and can handle them. It's the same panel for both hearings, so I—

The Chair: I leave it to the members to decide how they want to proceed. I'm just being cognizant of the witnesses and the second panel, in which they will be given an opportunity to have opening remarks. Oh, they're very capable, absolutely.

Next, it's over to you, MP Malette. You have five minutes.

Chris Malette (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Through you, Mr. Chair, this summer, Minister McGuinty and Prime Minister Carney were in Brussels to sign a new deal with European Union states regarding defence procurement, among other things.

My question is to Mr. Curran.

Can you tell us more about how Canada is forging new partnerships with EU member states to support Ukraine?

• (0850)

Ty Curran: I'll turn to my colleague from GAC, and then I can provide some additional comments.

Eric Laporte: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Indeed, this summer the Prime Minister, Minister McGuinty and Minister Anand signed a security and defence partnership with the European Union. That is a partnership that includes work on support to Ukraine, crisis management, cybersecurity, countering hybrid threats, arms control, space security, AI, emerging technologies and enhancing defence industrial co-operation. A big part of that is going to be the defence industrial co-operation.

In addition to this security and defence partnership, my colleagues will be engaged in negotiations with the European Union to access SAFE, the safe security action for Europe, or the ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030. That is a European Union defence plan that has two components. One is up to 650 billion euros in deficit spending allowances for EU member states. That is not where we're trying to be. These are simply the rules that govern the EU members.

Of that, however, 150 billion euros are sort of a loan program for defence spending to allow European Union member states to access funds and resources to increase their defence capabilities. Therefore, we will soon be negotiating with the EU an agreement to provide Canadian firms with access as potential bidders and competitors to support the EU.

Ty Curran: Mr. Chair, I would just add that our work with the EU is also important from a defence point of view, in the sense that the EU is very helpful when it comes to things like logistics support, military mobility and working together on advanced technologies. We are very proud to work with it through the PESCO projects, or Permanent Structured Cooperation projects, because a lot of how we fight is predicated on how we get there, and the EU can be very helpful from that point of view.

Eric Laporte: I'll add one more thing that I should have mentioned. Yes, we are forging this partnership with the EU, but at the same time, that doesn't change the fact that NATO remains the core guarantor of transatlantic security. That is recognized by all European allies.

Chris Malette: Mr. Laporte, further to that, as we've seen Canada evolve in its activities in Europe, particularly in its training in Latvia, in the overall scheme of its relationship with the EU and in the united front that we're showing—the coalition of the willing, as it's been called—has Canada carved out its particular role in that respect?

Eric Laporte: I can start to answer and then turn it over to Mr. Curran or General Ritchie.

We've signed this security and defence partnership with the EU. We have a long-standing relationship with a lot of European allies. We have a commitment to Latvia, which is recognized among European allies as a really well-done deployment. It's one that is very multinational and is able to bring in more allies than other similar deployments. We're also recognized as a very strong supporter of Ukraine, including in the training sphere and in capacity development. There is a recognition of Canadian continued interest and contribution to Euro-Atlantic and European security.

Maybe I can turn it over to colleagues if they have anything to add.

Robert Ritchie: To add a little colour to the coalition of the willing, it is distinct from the EU measures that have been referenced. This is a conglomerate of nations—30 at this time—that are like-minded in protecting Ukraine, rebuilding the Ukrainian armed forces, deterring Russia, and defending values and Europe.

The discussions are happening at the political level. Our Prime Minister and our Minister of Defence have participated. There are also cascading discussions happening at the strategic military and operational military levels.

Operational headquarters are being led by the U.K. and France in Paris, into which the 30 nations have the opportunity to embed planners and liaison officers to develop robust implementation plans if a ceasefire is reached in Ukraine. That could see the potential voluntary deployment of these coalition of the willing member states.

Importantly, that would not be a NATO mission at this time. It would have no Article 5 guarantee in its current construct.

• (0855)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mallette.

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, it's over to you. You have five minutes.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Chair—

[English]

The Chair: Sorry, you have two and a half minutes. I apologize.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Laporte, I'll try to make you happy and make me happy at the same time: We're going to mix up the Indo-Pacific and the Euro-Atlantic. I imagine you'll answer me, but if Mr. Ritchie has anything to add, he should feel free to do so.

The famous sanctions against Russia are clearly necessary. That's the only thing we can do when such an attack is carried out. That goes without saying. However, on the one hand, we see the European Union's energy dependence. On the other hand, we also see that India has started buying Russian gas and oil and reselling them as its own. The European Union is well aware of this, but it thinks that, as a matter of principle, it is buying it from India and not from Russia. Ultimately, since India also makes a profit, the cost to the European Union is higher, and the origin is the same. Everyone, aside from Europe, is happy, and absolutely nothing has changed for Russia.

Because of the sanctions, China has also literally taken over the Russian economy. It has strengthened the geopolitical and geostrategic bloc called BRICS, in that region, and, in terms of security, it has strengthened the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. That is what we have seen. If I'm not mistaken, the yuan is now the number one foreign currency in Russia. You must have noted this.

Is that seen as a grey area when it comes to sanctions? How is that being dealt with?

Eric Laporte: Thank you for the question.

You're absolutely right to make the connection between the Indo-Pacific and the Euro-Atlantic, as you say. Europe, the United States, Canada and other countries have imposed sanctions to cap the price at which Russia can sell its oil. That price is much lower, so Russia makes less profit, but it still sells its oil. Finance ministers have been engaging in increased discussions to see how to further limit Russia's ability to obtain oil revenues.

In my opinion, one of the consequences of the war in Ukraine that can be harmful to Russia in the long term is its much greater dependence on China. In this China-Russia relationship, Russia really finds itself as a lesser partner. In the long term, some members of the Russian elite wonder whether Russia has done well in this area, as some concerns have been raised.

One of the worrisome things we're looking at closely is the dynamic between Russia and North Korea, which has become Russia's major partner in its conflict in Ukraine by sending soldiers, weapons, ballistic missiles, ammunition and so on to Ukraine.

There is another consequence, as Mr. Curran said earlier: Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific theatres are becoming much more integrated. With a conflict in Europe with Russia, we must not underestimate the possibility of a conflict with China elsewhere.

I apologize for my lengthy answer.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Savard-Tremblay, thank you very much for your very relevant questions.

I'm allowing a little extra time for the responses, so they do go a bit over time, but I do want to try to keep us on track.

I am now moving over to Mr. Scott Anderson. You have five minutes.

Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC): Thank you very much.

Can you explain why Canada is not doing pre-deployment training in Canada?

Robert Ritchie: If we're speaking about Operation Reassurance in Latvia, it was historically done in Wainwright, where we had instrumentation support. With that said, we would be doing so unilaterally as Canadians. It's not realistic for our 13 NATO member nations to return to Wainwright, Alberta.

Additionally, we need to place that into higher organizations—a multinational division in a corps—which would be offset in time, and then there is ultimately a deterrence effect by virtue of conduct-

ing the training in location on the front line that the multinational group is defending.

That conglomerate of reasons led us to the decision to move the pre-deployment training to Latvia, which was exceptionally well received by Latvia and all the allies.

• (0900)

Scott Anderson: I know that historically there has been multinational training in Canada. Is it partially because of a lack of equipment that we're not doing it here?

Robert Ritchie: It's not because of a lack of equipment, but as this group would acknowledge, that commitment of 2,200 individuals has over 400 vehicle types that are deployed to Latvia. It required three container ships to send all that equipment over to Europe, and therefore we don't have those extra 400 vehicles, nor are they required. The vehicles that the individuals are using for that deployment are the ones they need to conduct the pre-deployment training so that they understand the systems and have trust and confidence in that equipment.

Scott Anderson: Does that mean we don't have the redundancy here, then?

Robert Ritchie: Currently 400 vehicles have been deployed for the support of Latvia. We do not have a mirror complement of that equipment in Canada, nor is it required.

Ultimately, the pre-deployment training has more benefits for more members of the alliance if it is conducted forward.

Scott Anderson: I think Canadians understand why we're supporting NATO. I'm not sure some Canadians understand why we are sending \$6.5 billion to a non-NATO nation.

For the benefit of Canadians, can one of you explain why we are doing that?

Eric Laporte: Canadians understand the importance of NATO. It's our collective security. I think what we're also seeing with Russia's illegitimate and illegal invasion of Ukraine is that it has basically broken the peace that has stood in Europe since the Second World War. It is basically attacking the values that Canadians stand for in terms of democracy and rule of law.

If Ukraine fails, then the signal that it sends to not only Russia but to other adversaries is that you can survive with might and that might can win over anything. That is why Europeans have taken a lead in wanting to provide assistance to Ukraine, to protect Ukraine and to defend Ukraine. From a Canadian perspective, that is the right thing to do. That is protecting our values and our norms *à distance*, if I can put it that way. That's why we also, as Canadians and the Government of Canada, have been committed to supporting Ukraine.

Scott Anderson: I completely understand the sovereignty argument and I completely agree with it. However, we have warfare elsewhere. In the DRC, for instance, six million people have been killed. Why Ukraine? Why is it in Canada's national interest to help Ukraine and not elsewhere?

Eric Laporte: Again, this is a conflict that is happening on the border of NATO. We're a member of NATO. NATO allies are extremely concerned about the implications of failure to support or defend Ukraine in this context. There are potentially downstream implications, again, not only for Russia and what Russia might want to do vis-à-vis NATO in the future. Should it win in Ukraine, I think it will feel emboldened.

Also, it's about what other adversaries are seeing in terms of the response from the west. Think of China, for example. Think of Iran and think of South Korea in terms of how they would see a western response to Ukraine that is insufficient.

Scott Anderson: This is the first time in this century that we've seen modern symmetrical warfare using mainly weapons that are 21st century vintage, and it's not what we thought. We thought it would be short and sweet and over quickly. It has turned out that weight does matter.

What lessons has Canada learned from that conflict?

● (0905)

The Chair: If I may, that's a great question. Let's put it in your back pocket so that we can respond to it. Your time is up, so we have to go on to the next member.

We'll go over to you, Mr. Watchorn. You have five minutes.

[Translation]

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, thank you for answering our questions today.

This week, Russia sent drones into Polish airspace. To what extent does that increase the threat level and how does it affect the conflict?

Robert Ritchie: Thank you for your question.

Yes, on September 10, Russia violated Poland's sovereignty with approximately 24 drones, some of which passed through Belarus. NATO responded decisively with fighter jets from the Netherlands and Poland; Italy was also involved. At least three of those drones were shot down by NATO. Poland has discovered at least 14 of those drones on its own territory, and there appear to have been no injuries or murders related to these activities. On September 13, we saw something similar in Romania, where only one drone entered its airspace. In that case, four fighter jets from Romania and Germany were mobilized.

Eric Laporte: As General Ritchie said, NATO responded quickly and effectively, not only by mobilizing fighter jets, but also by convening a meeting of the North Atlantic Council the next day under article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty. That means Poland felt threatened and wanted to tell its allies that it needed help, while signalling to its adversaries that they had gone a bit too far. NATO responded quickly by establishing a military activity called Eastern Sentry, which gives the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, or SACEUR, permission to move forces from elsewhere to the eastern front to protect NATO airspace. So it's a coordinated, rapid and determined response.

Tim Watchorn: Thank you for the answer.

I would like to know more. What would Canada's contribution be if there were an escalation? Let's say it happens again and the Russians violate other NATO partners' airspace.

How could Canada contribute to respond to that?

Robert Ritchie: Thank you for your question.

We work with our NATO colleagues, officers in the office of the SACEUR, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and their teams. We're looking at options to increase air defence and to create a drone and technology operating capability that would be based in Poland. Within defence, we are currently looking at options for the management of forces. We're in the process of formalizing that analysis, and we'll present it to our chiefs.

Tim Watchorn: That's excellent. Thank you.

I'll continue talking about drones. In the conflicts in Europe, we've seen drones being used much more than expected, with surprising effectiveness.

Does Canada have enough drones to respond to this kind of an attack?

Robert Ritchie: I'll start with drone technology before I turn it over to my colleagues.

Russia has significantly increased its own drone production. Over the past six months, we've seen three things change.

First, the drone payload has increased from 50 kilograms to 90 kilograms, a load that is about twice as heavy.

Second, the drone can bring more different projectiles: fragmentation bombs or thermobaric weapons.

Third, drones are increasingly resistant to electronic warfare.

● (0910)

Ty Curran: Speaking of learning, drones are clearly an important part of this battle. Investment is needed to have useful drones for the Canadian Armed Forces. That is why we are working with Ukraine. We can take advantage of its learning and technologies to equip the Canadian Armed Forces with drones capable of operating in this type of situation, in spite of electronic countermeasures.

We can take advantage of all the lessons that Ukrainians have learned during this war.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm mindful of the time. We are into round three.

I would like Mr. Bezan and Sherry Romanado to have their say, but given the time that I've taken away from Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, I was wondering if it's okay to give him an additional two and a half minutes. Are the members okay to allow the Bloc to ask an additional question for this last round? Okay.

It's over to you, Mr. Bezan.

James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank our witnesses for being here.

I want to follow up and go back to the question of the NATO certification of Canadian troops with our allies in Latvia. It was reported by the CBC that a large number of our personnel were unable to participate in that certification exercise because a large number of vehicles.... You said there were 400 vehicles there, but a bunch of them were not in service and were unable to be used in that training exercise.

Can you speak to why that happened?

Robert Ritchie: In the department of defence, we have what we call national procurement, and that is the characterization of funds that go to the sustainment of fleets of equipment, including vehicles. I would declare that the recent budget commitment has enabled delivery of major spare parts orders, and we have undertaken that at speed.

That said, the lack of past resourcing eroded a couple of things, the first being the reserve stock that we had on the shelves of spare parts to sustain these fleets. As well, some of our long-standing suppliers pivoted to other contracts, given that we'd had periods of time without a contract. Time is required for industry to ramp up to need.

In the specific case that was mentioned, tanks were at issue. Tanks, importantly, are an aging platform. The current variant that we have is facing obsolescence. This is not unique to Canada. Allies that are also using the Leopard tank have encountered the same shortfalls. The war in Ukraine has intensified global demand against fixed production, and in some cases—

James Bezan: How many tanks were not available for that training exercise?

If that is an issue for us in Latvia, does it mean that the tanks that are here for training at Edmonton and elsewhere are unable to be used for training at this moment as well?

Robert Ritchie: Of the 400 vehicles that are in Latvia, 17 have a Leopard tank chassis. Fifteen of them are main battle tanks and two of them are armoured recovery vehicles. I don't have the exact number of the 17 that were not up.

That fleet is under duress as we're working with allies in Germany who generate. We always have to balance the global fleet demands, so while we privilege Operation Reassurance for the reasons that are obvious to this table, there are other theatres that may require these capabilities. We need to make sure that we're balancing domestic readiness with international readiness in different theatres.

James Bezan: I appreciate that.

Let's get back to the incursion of Russian drones into Polish and Romanian airspaces. The swarm that came into Poland wasn't there by accident and wasn't just testing airspace, as we saw in Romania, which was just a fly-through. You mentioned that Belarus was one of the locations where they were potentially launched from, if not flown over.

What was the target in Poland? What were they going after? Was it materiel and supply lines for Ukraine that originated out of Poland?

Robert Ritchie: Up front, we don't have conclusive confirmation about Russian intent. It is something on the classified level that we're monitoring carefully, including through Canadian sources and in partnership with allies.

We have seen more daring and provocative behaviour from Russia. This is all about escalation management, as Russia looks to uncover what the response is of both NATO and states on the border in terms of time, capability and risk management.

● (0915)

James Bezan: Let's talk about escalation of Russia in Ukraine specifically.

You mentioned that they seem to be gaining little ground for a high cost. We're hearing of casualties of over a million people on the Russian side already. I'm hearing that tanks and armoured vehicles are in quite a state of disrepair and that the Russians do not have availability of them anymore, especially main battle tanks.

How is that impacting their rationale in going more to Shahed drones, using more hypersonic glide missiles and rockets, and attacking further inland than what we witnessed, such as more frequent bombings of Kyiv, Lviv and other Ukrainian cities?

Robert Ritchie: To be sure, as you've inferred, technology has expanded reach, scope and endurance. Specifically in drone and missile technology, we are seeing iterative adjustments and iterative responses in defence on both sides of that battle space, from which we continue to learn.

You also made reference to Russian mobilization challenges, which are a thing. Russia has three times the population of Ukraine. As you're aware, they have expanded the ranks of the Russian Federation's armed forces three times since 2022, when the war started three and a half years ago. They have a goal of expanding to 1.5 million individuals and they are resorting to things like monetary initiatives, propaganda and coercion to continue to fill the ranks.

They continue to maintain a strategic partnership with North Korea. As this table knows, in November 2024, 12,000 DPRK soldiers were committed to the Kursk region, and we understand that there may still be north of 10,000 in Russian territory along that border.

The Chair: Thank you, General Ritchie.

We'll go over to you, Ms. Romanado. You have five minutes.

Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Thank you very much Mr. Chair. Through you, I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today.

There were some comments earlier questioning Canada's participation with Operation Reassurance. As Canada is a proud founding member of NATO, it's imperative that people understand that what is happening in Ukraine is a menace to global security.

We heard a little bit about Operation Reassurance and the fact that we have renewed our commitment for three years. What will be the impact of that renewal of this operation for NATO's eastern flank, as well as in the detection and deterrence activities that NATO is leading in the region?

Ty Curran: I think the extension of our mission is incredibly important to assure our allies about our long-term commitment to deterrence on the eastern flank. Operation Reassurance is the Canadian contribution to that, but all of our allies are deploying forces to the eastern flank to ensure that we are ready and able to deter future Russian aggression and, as we look at this escalation management that my colleague referred to, that we have forces that are ready to further escalate if the situation requires it, so as to deter Russian aggression.

That reinforcement that all of our allies are doing is incredibly significant. As I said before, it's the largest upscaling in a generation, and it serves to reassure our allies that the alliance is solid from a unity point of view, that we are in this together and that the territory of all members of the alliance will be defended if there is future aggression.

I'll pass that to either of my colleagues, who may or may not want to jump in.

Sherry Romanado: At the G7 leaders' meeting recently, the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence announced an additional \$2 billion in military assistance that will go towards critical equipment, drones and electronics, ammunition and military equipment to strengthen air defence support.

Can you tell us how these critical investments and tools will help on the ground?

Ty Curran: I can, absolutely. I have the pleasure of managing our military assistance program to Ukraine. I'm very proud of the work that we've done with some of those armoured vehicles that members have referred to that are no longer usable.

It's an incredibly challenging space for the Ukrainians. There are, as we already alluded to, significant upticks in ballistic missile attacks and drone attacks. When we speak to the Ukrainians, they've underlined to us consistently the need for more investments in air defence, the need for more investments in artillery shells and the need for more investment in drones.

Canada has played a proud part in that. We have recently announced a contribution to a U.S.-NATO initiative, the Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List, which provides urgently needed high-end military equipment to the Ukrainians, including things like Patriot missiles. We've also been able to make significant investments from Canadian industry to support the work that Ukraine is doing, not only through components but also things like armoured vehicles, ammunition and other supports.

The work we do is helping Ukraine on the ground every day. We are always keen to do more, but we recognize the need to make sure that the investments we are making are worthwhile and relevant for Canada and for Ukraine.

• (0920)

Sherry Romanado: Major-General, would you agree that Canada's presence and training in the region, as you mentioned in terms of readiness, are important for deterrence of the CRINKS—China, Russia, Iran and North Korea—and to ensure a display of force so that we are not dealing with additional conflict in the region from the CRINKS?

Robert Ritchie: Canada is a resolute partner in NATO. We've been leading with strength for the last decade, doing so alongside our 13 allies on the flanks with the multinational brigades. We are seeing the interaction intensifying among adversaries such as China, Russia, Iran and North Korea. They seem to have unique relationships forming, with transactional benefits in each circumstance, but, to be sure, what's happening in Ukraine and what's happening with NATO on the eastern flank is sending a unified message to those adversaries that we are resolute in our deterrence and in the defence of the partner nations.

Sherry Romanado: Thank you.

Do I have a few more moments?

The Chair: Thank you. No, that's it.

Mr. Savard-Tremblay, you have two and a half minutes, and then we'll go to the next panel.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I have only two and a half minutes. My goodness, it will go quickly. It's just enough time to say hello, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Laporte, earlier, when you were interrupted, I sensed that you had something to add. I remind you that we were talking about sanctions leading to a strengthening of the Euro-Asian bloc—that is to say the relationship between Russia and China—and about India circumventing sanctions by supplying Europe with oil and gas.

Did you have anything to add on that?

Eric Laporte: No.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I would still like to continue the conversation on this topic, which is the connection between the Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific, namely geostrategic strengthening. However, this may concern you more than the witnesses from the Department of National Defence.

How do you view the geostrategic strengthening of this bloc? We know that relations between India and Russia are extremely complex, if not cold. We saw it again at the BRICS+ meeting last week or two weeks ago. In any case, it's very recent. We saw that Mr. Modi was there at the beginning of the meeting and then left rather quickly.

In addition to the economic strengthening of this bloc, are there any concrete results in terms of military co-operation? When it comes to economic strengthening, we're talking about an alternative currency, among other things. However, are there any signals from a military standpoint?

Eric Laporte: I can start, and then I'll turn it over to the general.

Thank you for your question.

As you pointed out and as was mentioned earlier, we are really seeing this strengthening of co-operation, especially between China, Russia, Iran and North Korea. It is intensifying, but at the same time, these four countries still have their own agendas. So it's not an alliance as such, but there's a lot more coordination and co-operation among them. Separately, they have hybrid campaigns, sabotage and espionage programs, and attempts to influence the west and to undermine the status quo everywhere against our allies.

In terms of military co-operation, as we've seen, North Korea is contributing significantly to the conflict in Ukraine, but so is Iran, with Shahed drones and so on. There's increased co-operation.

I'll turn it over to General Ritchie.

• (0925)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll continue on to the next panel.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: In any case, it seems that the next panel of witnesses will really focus on that.

[English]

The Chair: We'll now move on to the topic of panel two, which is defence and security to the Indo-Pacific region.

I would now like to invite the officials of DND to deliver their opening remarks. You have five minutes, but if you want to spare a few, that would be great.

Ty Curran: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Given that we've covered some of these issues, I will condense my remarks as much as possible.

As we were just speaking about with the vice-chair, these are two important topics to discuss together, because Indo-Pacific security and Euro-Atlantic security are interconnected. Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea are all NATO partner countries in the region, and our security in the Indo-Pacific directly impacts our security in Europe and here at home.

China, as we've already discussed, remains a critical enabler of Russia's war in Ukraine, and military co-operation between North Korea and Russia has deepened, spanning personnel, as General Ritchie raised, but also military tactics, training and, importantly, the transfer of technology.

Because our Arctic region straddles Europe and the Pacific, both regions remain crucial for our national security and economic prosperity.

[Translation]

The Indo-Pacific region faces many challenges: the rise of authoritarian powers threatening democratic norms and principles; diplomatic, economic and military coercion; the weaponization of trade; and the undermining of human rights and media freedom.

Notably, we see China attempting to reshape the international system to create an environment more permissible to its interests. We remain particularly concerned by China's efforts to further mili-

tarize the South China Sea, including the use of naval, coast guard and maritime militia vessels to intimidate and threaten the ships of other states.

These activities challenge long-standing norms and international law and affect the rights of all nations to operate peacefully in international commons, whether at sea or in the air.

[English]

I'll speak briefly to our Indo-Pacific strategy and our current operations and then open up to questions.

All of this work is achieved through Canada's broader Indo-Pacific strategy, led by the Department of Foreign Affairs, and through the development of defence industrial policies that aim to strengthen, secure and diversify Canada's defence industrial base.

From deploying three Canadian navy ships to the region per year to taking part in Exercise Talisman Sabre 25 recently, which was the largest CAF deployment in a strategic multilateral exercise, the Department of National Defence continues to deliver our part of the Indo-Pacific strategy.

In particular, through Operation Horizon, which is the primary vehicle for our work in the region, we do things such as our routine transits through the Taiwan Strait, maintaining the peaceful and accessible nature of this waterway, which is indispensable to the security and prosperity of the international community.

We also work through Operation Neon, which continues to monitor United Nations Security Council resolutions against Korea. We maintain our long-standing support for the United Nations Command and the importance of denuclearization and the promotion of peace on the Korean peninsula.

This isn't something we can do alone. We have to work very closely with our partners, and it's through that work, I think, that we can continue to promote the values and the important security priorities we find within the region that have direct impacts on our work here at home.

With that, we welcome your questions.

The Chair: Thank you for the opening remarks.

Ms. Cheryl Gallant, we'll go over to you. You have five minutes.

Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Earlier this year, China's navy circumnavigated Australia and performed unannounced live fire exercises outside of its exclusive economic zone. Australia only knew of this because a commercial pilot flying overhead detected them first, before their navy or any other allied navies could.

What is the threat to Canada and North America, should China decide to pull a similar operation by covertly deploying off our shores with their navy or their dual-purpose vessels?

Robert Ritchie: First, I'll give some quick context.

Indeed, Australia and New Zealand were involved in that operation in February 2025. It was the first time ever that a Chinese naval task group circumnavigated Australia and conducted a live-fire exercise in the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand. All nations in that region, as well as allies, are continuing to professionalize their all-domain sense capability from sea floor to space.

You did identify the dual-purpose vessels. They are problematic. We continue to work across government with all departments and agencies as well as all their sensors to be able to monitor such vessels. We continue to do that in our own Arctic.

● (0930)

Cheryl Gallant: How would our navy respond to an intrusion of the PLA Navy if they were to intrude in Canada's exclusive economic zone off our Pacific coast or in the Arctic?

Robert Ritchie: One of the missions of the binational command that is NORAD, of which we are a proud member, is maritime domain awareness. It's an integrated mission set around continental surveillance in the maritime domain. We have response capability in the Royal Canadian Navy as well as in the Canadian Coast Guard surveillance, and a range of other effectors within Department of National Defence and the Government of Canada, for a calibrated response.

Cheryl Gallant: Upon China's invasion of Taiwan, how prepared are our armed forces to mount a massive operation to evacuate our Canadian citizens, permanent residents or those with connections to Canada to repatriate them?

Robert Ritchie: I'll speak to Canadian Armed Forces' global readiness, and I may defer to colleagues if there are any policy components.

We do maintain the standing capability to conduct a non-combatant evacuation operation, should such a request come from Global Affairs Canada.

That said, this is a unique environment, and if we're talking about the aftermath of hostilities breaking out on the island, the current force that's postured would certainly not be suitable for that conflict. We are monitoring the different ranges of ambition of Beijing for a potential unification with Taiwan, and I can speak about that if there is interest.

Cheryl Gallant: Okay. Well, it's no secret that the PRC is trying to claim ownership of the Arctic territory. They've already set up shop, claiming they're doing research. Besides the Rangers, what actual military base has been established in our Arctic? Is Canada working on making Inuvik a full forward operating location, with all the necessary infrastructure?

Robert Ritchie: First, we do have a permanent presence in the Arctic that's based on 5,000 Canadian Rangers in 200 communities across the three territories. We also have Canadian Forces Station Alert. We also have 440 Squadron in Yellowknife. Then we have an

army presence with the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, also in Yellowknife.

To your question, we had previously maintained three forward operating locations in Yellowknife, Inuvik and Iqaluit. Those three locations are being professionalized through the northern basing initiative. They also happen to have a correlation with our northern operational support hubs.

Cheryl Gallant: Where are you in your upgrades? What progress is there in the forward operating locations?

Robert Ritchie: That work is ongoing. The forward operating bases are proceeding ahead of the northern operational support hubs, but the first three northern operational support hubs are co-located—to your question regarding the forward operating location—because there are great synergies for those to occur in the same locations.

Cheryl Gallant: Under what conditions would the Royal Canadian Navy participate in the defence of Japan, the Philippines or Australia, should the PRC mount an attack against any one or all of those countries?

Eric Laporte: Obviously, we work very closely with our allies and consult and exercise on a regular basis, and the Royal Canadian Navy takes part in that.

Again, in the event of a Taiwan scenario or anything else, those are contingency or hypothetical at this time, and I'm not prepared to answer questions in terms of what Canada would or could do in those circumstances. Those discussions are certainly ongoing, but I don't want to prejudge any government decision.

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

I shouldn't say that. Time has only just begun.

It's over to you, Ms. Lapointe. You have five minutes.

Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

Major-General, recently the world, certainly from the western perspective, watched with some trepidation when China's president hosted Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un at a major military parade. Much has been said about that, but I would be very interested in hearing, from your perspective, what the strategic significance is of this trilateral show of alignment and how Canada and its allies should interpret the signals it sends for global security, particularly in the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic regions.

● (0935)

Robert Ritchie: What is clear is that those adversaries have a common intention, and that is to challenge the west and the current rules-based international order. We have been watching this for some time with great interest, alongside our allies, as we share in the classified domain.

On September 3, we assessed that to be a parade showing solidarity and demonstration, but we do not see the sophisticated level of co-operation that might be enjoyed right now alongside NATO partners. We are carefully watching certain areas where they're transferring technology, resources and drone capability as new and accelerating threats that can present challenges to both NATO and Canada on the continent.

Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

Mr. Curran, you mentioned Operation Horizon. Could you explain the strategic objectives of that operation and how it fits with Canada's defence policy framework, particularly "Strong, Secure, Engaged"?

Ty Curran: Under our defence policy, we identified three priority regions. Obviously, Canada and the Arctic and our defence of Canadians are paramount, but we identified Europe and the Indo-Pacific as other priority areas.

Under the Indo-Pacific strategy led by GAC, our biggest commitment is through Operation Horizon. It's a bit of a catch-all for a number of activities that we do: capacity building, training exercises and the three ships that we mentioned.

I think a fair criticism of Canada in the past has been that we don't always have an enduring presence in the region. We often come in and dip out, depending on other priorities, and so what we've tried to do through Operation Horizon is ensure that we have that enduring and sustained presence so we can ensure we're picking up on intelligence or information or deepening our relationships in that area so that we can benefit from that experience and use that experience for the ultimate security of Canada and Canadians.

Eric Laporte: Mr. Chair, if I may, it might be helpful to give a bit of context on the Indo-Pacific strategy as a whole and how Operation Horizon fits into that.

In 2022, the government launched the Indo-Pacific strategy, which is basically \$2.3 billion over five years that looks at engaging in the region to bolster and diversify our trade as well as enhance our security. It has five interconnected strategic objectives for promoting peace, which is what DND does through Operation Horizon: expanding trade, investing, connecting people, building a sustainable and green future, and making sure that Canada is active.

Why are we engaging in the Indo-Pacific? Frankly, the region is the fastest-growing economic region in the world and accounts for almost two-thirds of global growth. By 2030, it will be home to two-thirds of the global middle class, and by 2040, the region will account for more than half of the global economy.

Our Indo-Pacific strategy seeks to advance and defend Canada's interests by supporting a more secure, prosperous, inclusive and sustainable region, while at the same time protecting Canada's national and economic security at home. One big element of the strategy is building and diversifying our partnerships, and since the launch of the strategy, we've reinforced those with Australia, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines, as examples.

Viviane Lapointe: Okay. Actually, that leads to a question. How is the Department of National Defence approaching co-operation with some of these newer security groupings we're seeing, like

AUKUS, when Canada is not a formal member of those? How are we defining our co-operation in those types of alliances?

Ty Curran: There are a number of international groupings out there. Canada is a member of many of them, but not all, of course. We do think there are opportunities, when it makes sense, for there to be collaboration.

When we think of AUKUS, the root of that was nuclear-powered submarines, which is not an area that we expect Canada to make an investment in, but in pillar two of the grouping, where we can look at high technology co-operation, we think there are opportunities to do that, either with AUKUS or through partners there. Similarly, there are lots of other organizations out there, and we think we can benefit from their experience even if we aren't members.

Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

The Chair: Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, you have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Thank you.

Gentlemen, I'd like to go back and pick up where we left off earlier.

You talked about co-operation, rather than an alliance, among four players that each have their own interests. On that note, are there any key points to be monitored or any divergences to keep an eye on?

Next, I want to talk about India. I touched on this in a previous question. It's a more complex player in all of this.

What would you like to tell us about that?

● (0940)

Eric Laporte: Plenty of things.

Thank you for the question.

As has already been said, the four countries involved have different relationships with each other. I would say that China plays a predominant role in these relationships, but everyone is still independently involved.

Iran has a much closer relationship with Russia when it comes to material defence co-operation and political support on the nuclear issue, for example. Iran also has a very close trading relationship with China, particularly when it comes to oil.

As has already been mentioned, North Korea has a military relationship with Russia. It is also a very close partner of China.

These are things we are looking at. Perhaps General Ritchie has some examples he could add.

You also asked about India. On that topic, I would just like to say that we have a long-standing relationship that is quite close, based on mutual respect—

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: You're talking about India and what other country?

Eric Laporte: About Canada's relationship with India.

This relationship is based on principles such as the rule of law, sovereignty and so on.

At the G7, Prime Minister Carney had a bilateral meeting with his Indian counterpart, Prime Minister Modi. They're trying to recalibrate the relationship. Both sides even announced new high commissioners.

I put India in a different basket than the other four countries.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I would summarize the relationship between India and China by saying that it's cold, but it's still a relationship. Would you agree with me?

Eric Laporte: Yes, I would say it's a very cold relationship. They have gone to war several times over the past two decades.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: How would you describe their relationship within BRICS, the group made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, and where it seems to be heading right now?

Eric Laporte: As you said, it's still a relationship.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Based on your summary, then, India is not a security threat within the dynamic of the shifting international tectonic plates in the Indo-Pacific region.

What about the military aspect, Mr. Ritchie?

Robert Ritchie: Thank you for your question.

To add to my colleagues' comments, I would say that militarily, we are seeing drone and air defence technology exchanged between Russia and China, and between Russia and Iran.

Between North Korea and Russia, we mainly see a human contribution, the 12,000 people sent to fight the war in Ukraine. Conversely, from Russia to North Korea, we've seen a transfer of money, technology and experience, which continues to destabilize the peninsula.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

[English]

The Chair: You have another 30 seconds.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: What can I say intelligently in 30 seconds? I'll ask my question during my next turn, because I don't want to start another long question right now.

[English]

The Chair: Very well.

Mr. Kibble, you have four minutes.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Through you to the witnesses, I was just on board HMCS *Vancouver*, recently returned from Operation Talisman Sabre. Six days ago, we saw a PLAN aircraft carrier, their new one, transit the Taiwan Strait, exercising the right of innocent passage. Our RCN ship did that as well.

What's your assessment of PLAN's diplomatic protest against us for conducting those operations while they do it concurrently?

• (0945)

Robert Ritchie: Maybe I'll start with some military characterization and turn it over to colleagues....

Okay, I'll go straight to colleagues, please.

Eric Laporte: Yes, the Royal Canadian Navy regularly conducts transits through the Taiwan Strait. In this particular instance, we did it with the Australians. That was the first time we did it bilaterally with them.

Also, as is the norm, whenever we transit the strait, we often hear about it from our Chinese colleagues, both in Beijing and here, and also within the ministry of national defence and within the foreign affairs department. They *démarche* us and explain that we shouldn't be there and that we're hyping it up, and we explain that through UNCLOS, the Law of the Sea, we are allowed passage through the strait. It's a strait for international navigation, and so there's nothing preventing us from doing so.

Jeff Kibble: Do you see this as their signalling clear intent of what they plan to do in that area?

Eric Laporte: Certainly, it's their intent to try to demonstrate that this is an area they consider to be theirs, and they want to diplomatically register that. There have been times when they also signal that militarily.

Maybe I could turn back to colleagues in the Department of National Defence in terms of the activities that the Chinese, either the Chinese navy or air force, do when our forces are in the region.

Jeff Kibble: In their new aircraft carriers, there's certainly a strategic power projection platform. They're doing sea trials right now. Have they successfully launched and recovered aircraft yet and proven that capability?

Robert Ritchie: Canada does not have an aircraft carrier in its inventory, as you know with your previous service, but we often participate in multinational coalitions, such as the Highmast series, which was led by the U.K., in which our most recent *Ville de Québec* participated alongside—

Jeff Kibble: I'll restate my question, if I can. Has the PLAN aircraft carrier proven the capability to launch and recover aircraft?

Robert Ritchie: The information that I'm aware of is in a classified domain, and I'm happy to share that with colleagues in that form.

Jeff Kibble: You mentioned the dual-purpose vessels. We've seen up to five Chinese PLAN auxiliary general intelligence vessels, AGIs, in our Arctic, very close to our shore. Can our Canadian Coast Guard counter this threat? What capability do they have, beyond navigation radars, to intercept communications, track these vessels, figure out what they're up to and keep track of them?

Ty Curran: While we've always worked very closely with the Coast Guard, I think the integration of the Coast Guard as a special operating agency as part of the Department of National Defence is going to allow us to work more closely together and benefit from the experience they have.

When we think about countering threats, it's not just about the Coast Guard, obviously; it's also about what the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Armed Forces can do. I think that is how we work together to deter those sorts of threats. It's through both surveillance and active operations.

Robert Ritchie: Mr. Chair, I might just add that there have been 15 Chinese Arctic expeditions since 1999. Since 2015, we've seen patrols in the subarctic, in both the Bering Sea and the Baltic Sea areas.

To your point, from 2023 to present we've seen it go from one to three to five, so we continue to actively monitor.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Malette, you have four minutes.

Chris Malette: Thank you, Chair.

I believe Mr. Curran was describing some of our activities in the Indo-Pacific region. Specifically returning to the biennial exercise of Operation Talisman Sabre, that exercise involved how many CAF members? Can you quantify how that tested our resilience to remain enduring and sustainable in that region?

As we heard earlier, we are quite well committed to eastern Europe, and we're a globe away. Does this exemplify our ability to operate, at numbers, in two distant theatres?

• (0950)

Robert Ritchie: The short answer is yes. For some additional detail, it was a multinational warfighting exercise for three weeks, from July 13 to August 4, hosted by Australia, with 43,000 members of the interested community of 19 nations. Canadian Armed Forces deployed 600 individuals across all domains and services. That involved sea, land, air and special operations forces, one ship and four aircraft. It was the largest Canadian Armed Forces deployment in the region since the commencement of Operation Horizon in 2022.

You asked a question about sustainability. With tremendous support from Australia, we were able to strategically rearm the *Ville de Québec* with its missiles. Although the missiles were projected from Canada, which was significant, with their assistance we were able to rearm forward and be prepared for operational endurance in that region.

Chris Malette: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Savard-Tremblay, we'll go over to you. You have two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I would like to go back to Mr. Laporte.

I think I asked you a question earlier about whether there is a risk in supplying the Chinese military with technology, chips and so on. You told me that it was fairly well screened. However, we know that the Chinese regime is very integrated. The state, the major industrial groups, in other words the major companies, the army and the Communist Party have a very incestuous relationship, to the point where they are almost a single entity.

What guarantee do we have that the high tech we trade doesn't end up in the hands of the army?

Eric Laporte: Thank you for your question.

You mentioned the fact that the line between private and public doesn't exist in the Chinese system. In fact, a lot of companies are owned by the government. Chinese companies are also trying to hide their holdings in front companies.

When our department receives export control requests, it analyzes the entire chain of the company to try to trace the source and see where all the parts and components fit in. There is always a risk of diversion, and we are looking at it closely.

Are we fully effective? I don't know. There are always doubts that a component could potentially end up in parts of Chinese military technologies. Our focus is really very much on the fact that we don't want Canadian components to end up in Chinese companies.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: For example, if a Canadian SME sends a small case of chips to a Chinese SME, it may be led to believe that the case will be monitored and subject to some form of control.

Eric Laporte: The items in question are on the export control list. Some chips are, and some chips are not.

I'm not an expert in this area, but I'm telling you what I know.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I'm going to Scott Anderson now for four minutes.

Scott Anderson: Thank you very much.

The Coast Guard is a civilian organization. It's being moved under the umbrella of DND. Is the movement of that budget under the DND umbrella going to be figured in the 2% commitment to NATO?

Ty Curran: Yes, I can confirm that the budget of the Department of National Defence counts towards NATO spending.

Scott Anderson: That's 2%. Good. The Coast Guard...

Ty Curran: Yes, the Coast Guard would now be part of the budget of the—

Scott Anderson: Can you tell me what the Coast Guard budget is?

Ty Curran: That's not a fact I have in front of me. I'll just defer to my colleagues.

Scott Anderson: That's fair enough.

At the same time, we're building several new ships for the Coast Guard. They're in production. They began production before the current strategy appeared. Are any modifications being made to those ships to increase their lethality?

We talked about monitoring the Arctic. We haven't talked about what we're going to actually do about the Arctic.

Robert Ritchie: At present, there are no plans to militarize the Coast Guard or to incorporate a law enforcement role.

The current status is that it has 120 vessels in its fleet. That said, there is a proposed mandate via the strong borders act, Bill C-2, as this group knows. It's an amendment under the Oceans Act. It could strengthen sovereignty and maritime domain awareness, particularly in the remote Arctic waters. If passed, it could also enable the CCG to conduct security patrols and collect, analyze, receive and share information and intelligence for security purposes, which is not currently in its mandate, from which we would benefit.

A final comment is that you may—

• (0955)

Scott Anderson: That's fair enough. I'm sorry to interrupt you.

The problem is that these are now warships. These are going to be warships. They're legitimate targets for foreign ships, but they have no defence capability that I see. Is that not a concern for the Canadian Armed Forces?

Robert Ritchie: The Canadian Armed Forces have a range of capabilities that serve different purposes. It's a systems approach, and when we deploy a capability, certain elements will be focused on detection and surveillance. Other ones may be effective with a kinetic capacity. Then we'll have others that are focused on the protection and sustainment of the force.

We would deploy assets in an integrated fashion.

Scott Anderson: When you deploy the Coast Guard, will you then be deploying the Canadian Navy with it?

Robert Ritchie: I was speaking conceptually. It's not in all instances.

Scott Anderson: I'm talking practically.

Robert Ritchie: Practically speaking, I can say that the Canadian Armed Forces will be working operationally with the Coast Guard. In certain instances, we will be deployed independently. In other instances our capabilities will be collaborative and additive, and there will be circumstances in which elements of the Department of National Defence and the Coast Guard will deploy alongside each other for integrated outcomes.

Scott Anderson: Thank you.

Just to switch gears a little bit, we're talking about the lessons learned from modern symmetrical warfare. Is the Canadian military actually pivoting to incorporate some of those lessons?

Specifically, armour seems to be to modern symmetrical warfare what cavalry was to blitzkrieg. It seems to not even be operational on the Ukraine front lines at the moment. Ukraine is using it for medium-range artillery. Russia has gotten them all blown up.

Are we pivoting our forces to reflect the realities of modern symmetrical warfare?

Ty Curran: Part of the benefit of having our troops deployed in Europe is that we can actively benefit from the lessons learned in Ukraine. We can take that back into the force development process that we have so that we can learn those lessons and incorporate them into our training.

I'm happy to turn it over to the director of staff if there's anything to add.

Robert Ritchie: We're indeed monitoring, with great anticipation, technological developments in the battle space, particularly in the areas of uncrewed systems—not just in drones, but also in the maritime and subsurface domains. We're looking to capitalize on the use of artificial intelligence to move humans up the value chain and to make quicker decisions at speed and outpace the adversary.

Scott Anderson: Is that both tactical and strategic drone warfare?

Robert Ritchie: Indeed, with the defence-industrial nexus, we see this in terms of AI at the strategic level in terms of decision advantage and at the tactical level in terms of the employment of these technologies.

Scott Anderson: At the unit level, are we training tactical drone—

The Chair: If I may, your time is over.

Mr. Watchorn, you have four minutes.

[Translation]

Tim Watchorn: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to continue talking about equipment for a few moments. The Government of Canada will invest heavily to acquire ships and submarines for its defence.

How will these tools be used in the Indo-Pacific?

Robert Ritchie: Thank you for your question.

Right now, our policy provides for a near-constant presence. We have three ships. As soon as those resources are integrated into the forces, we'll see if the policy changes, but they will give us more possibilities.

At the same time, we need to maintain Canada's and the continent's maritime defence resources with NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defense Command.

Ty Curran: I'd like to add something.

Investments in ships and submarines are important, because our fleet continues to operate amid worsening threats. It's important to have up-to-date equipment, which can help us operate in more difficult conditions than were anticipated when the vessels were built.

• (1000)

Tim Watchorn: Thank you.

There are currently several conflicts in the Indo-Pacific theatre: China versus Taiwan, Myanmar versus Thailand and India versus Pakistan.

I would like to know your assessment of the most imminent risk in that theatre.

Eric Laporte: Thank you.

That's a very good question. You highlighted some of the conflicts and tensions in that theatre.

One region that is very important to us on the Global Affairs Canada side is the South China Sea, where there are tensions mainly between China and the Philippines, but also between China and other countries that border that sea. Every day, we see more than 200 Chinese army, coast guard and maritime militia ships in the region. Very recently, we've seen incidents where boats collide and water cannons are used.

It's a strategic location with a great likelihood of escalation, on top of the ones you mentioned.

Tim Watchorn: Thank you.

Regional forums are currently taking place in the Indo-Pacific region, such as the Shangri-La Dialogue.

Do you think these meetings are productive in terms of regional co-operation?

Eric Laporte: Thank you for your question.

There are a number of major groups and forums in the region. The Shangri-La Dialogue is a conference, but Canada is a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which includes a number of countries in the region as well as outside partners. The forum's aims include advancing discussions to maintain peace and security in the region.

Canada also participates in the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus, where the Department of National Defence serves as an observer. It also promotes dialogue among all the countries in the region, as well as with other countries. These groups are useful.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Laporte.

We are going to our last round of this panel.

It's over to you, James, for four minutes.

James Bezan: Thank you.

Mr. Curran, you mentioned that the Canadian Coast Guard budget is now going to be allocated in its entirety under the Department of National Defence. Is that accurate?

Ty Curran: So that there's no confusion, the Canadian Coast Guard will remain a special operating agency under the deputy

minister of defence, so it will maintain its budget independent of the Department of National Defence. What I was trying to say, perhaps poorly, was that this commitment would count towards our NATO target.

James Bezan: The NATO matrix would say the entire Coast Guard budget is part of our 2%. Is that correct?

Ty Curran: Yes, Mr. Chair, it is.

James Bezan: We're going to get credit for all the dollars without any defence capability. The science vessels are in there, as are the commercial navigation and commercial icebreaking vessels. There are a number of things that they do, but we actually don't get any kinetic power from that to help the Canadian Armed Forces in protecting Canada.

Robert Ritchie: If the proposed mandate is approved through the change to the act, sovereignty will indeed be strengthened. We'll have enhanced maritime domain awareness and an integrated recognized maritime picture.

James Bezan: General, come on. The Coast Guard's been out there for the last 100 years and has never counted towards being part of our national defence matrix. It definitely isn't a paramilitary organization. It doesn't have the interdiction capabilities. They can't even fine anyone for a fishing violation. They have to bring on fisheries officers to do that. We can't just have creative accounting to get to 2%; we actually need capability to protect Canada and our sovereignty.

• (1005)

Robert Ritchie: If the mandate is adjusted to reflect the onboarding of the Canadian Coast Guard inside defence, we will see an additive output in the sharing of information and intelligence value that we'll be able to extract from the Canadian Coast Guard. As the Coast Guard is employed within a system of systems, we think there will be significant additive offence to surveillance and the defence of Canada.

James Bezan: As long as there's equipment to back that up and actually feed into the overall security and intelligence-gathering systems, then yes, but as it stands today, they don't provide any of that.

Mr. Laporte, you also mentioned that every time Canada sails through the Strait of Taiwan, we're called into the embassy or our foreign service in Beijing gets called in and is issued a *démarche*. Do we issue a *démarche* to the People's Republic of China when they sail into the Beaufort Sea?

Eric Laporte: I'm not aware of any recent *démarches* following a Chinese vessel sailing into the Beaufort Sea. Maybe historically we have done it.

James Bezan: Should we?

Eric Laporte: Perhaps.

James Bezan: They're 250 miles from the Yukon and the Northwest Territories borders.

Eric Laporte: Our economic exclusive zone extends to 200 nautical miles, so if they're outside of it, they're legitimately allowed there. They're also, under UNCLOS, allowed to go into EEZs of other countries as a normal course of passage.

James Bezan: I know that the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Coast Guard were monitoring those vessels while they were in our Arctic region. Were Canadian frigate and/or Coast Guard vessels also monitoring in the region, or did we do that strictly from an air force standpoint?

Robert Ritchie: First, that's one of the mission sets of the NORAD binational command, as you know well, and therefore NORAD.... It was both Canadian and U.S. assets. Canadian assets were deployed into the region under a number of different operations. We were monitoring, conducting integrated surveillance and passing intelligence across the apparatus of the Canadian government as well as sharing it with U.S. and NORAD headquarters.

The Chair: Thank you, General Ritchie.

I do remind others that we're probably going to have a discussion about the Coast Guard in one of the motions that you put forward.

I realize that all of us here also know that we just invested another \$2 billion to augment the Canadian Armed Forces in regard to their pay raise and so forth.

I am now going over to Sherry Romanado for four minutes.

Sherry Romanado: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I can understand that my colleagues across the way voted against the \$9.3 billion we just invested to get to 2%, and maybe the frustration is there, but climate change is a real global problem. It's having a particularly serious effect on our Arctic and northern regions, presenting new and escalating challenges with a range of implications for Canada's security.

Canada's defence policy update, "Our North, Strong and Free", is focused on the defence of the Arctic. Can you explain how Canada's work to defend the Arctic is part of defending NATO's northern flank?

Eric Laporte: That's absolutely correct. The Canadian Armed Forces, the Department of National Defence and other entities of the Canadian government are actively engaged in supporting sovereignty and defence of the Arctic.

In NATO itself, the area of operations of NATO as SACEUR is continental Europe and into the Atlantic. The Canadian Arctic is not part of the NATO area of operation. It is part of the NORAD area of operation. With that said, everything we do in our Arctic helps to contribute to strengthening, supporting and defending the northern and western flanks of the alliance.

Sherry Romanado: In terms of our maritime awareness, our NORAD agreement and the modernization of NORAD, could you elaborate a little more on why the investments and getting to the 2% are so important in terms of our continental defence?

Robert Ritchie: First, we have current capability through the North Warning System and other infrastructure, the radar station network that was built between 1986 and 1992. As this forum knows well, new and accelerating threats are challenging that antiquated technology. Therefore, investments have been made in NO-

RAD modernization, in both Arctic over-the-horizon as well as polar over-the-horizon capabilities.

I will also say that integrated air and missile defence is exceptionally topical and important. When we talk about visualizing a Canadian continental shield, in the United States they have the U.S. "golden dome". Generally speaking, this is a system of systems that allows you to sense and react to incoming threats that eclipse our North Warning System, but for which the investments made, and soon to be realized, are going to position us to better deal with those accelerating threats.

• (1010)

Sherry Romanado: Mr. Chair, I'd like to give my remaining time to Monsieur Savard-Tremblay, because it's very difficult for him to have only two and a half minutes.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Romanado.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I wasn't expecting to have a little more speaking time. How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

[English]

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes.

[Translation]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I thought you were giving me part of the last speaking time.

Mr. Laporte, I had intended to ask you a question at the end of the meeting, when we were shaking hands with the witnesses. I'd like to know more about the screening mechanism for shipments. You said earlier that there were different categories of chips and that the border service did the screening.

Is it when the goods are shipped? Is it when the shipment is registered? In other words, at what point does the exporter make a declaration on the nature of the goods?

Also, is there a list of countries to watch a little more closely? Without going into too much detail, please help us sort it all out. Earlier, you told me that you were not an expert in this technology. Tell us about the security-related export categories.

Eric Laporte: Thank you for your question.

In fact, there are several layers.

There is a watch list of products and countries. When a Canadian company wants to export a product, it needs to ask the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development whether the product is on that list and obtain its permission. We then analyze the product or component and consult with the Department of National Defence and other organizations, including security services, to try to find out more about the recipient. At that point, permission can be granted or denied.

We look at the type of product to be exported and the recipient country. We look at the impact that the export of a product could have on a country's regional security, on human rights and on Canada's national interest.

Our colleagues at the CBSA, the Canada Border Services Agency, also conduct border checks—

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Are they random?

Eric Laporte: I can't tell you, because I don't know.

If the committee would like, perhaps it could get an explanation from our experts on exports and controls.

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: That would be a good idea.

I imagine, Mr. Chair, that you're going to tell me I'm out of time.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have another minute. We added to your time.

[*Translation*]

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: I'm surprised, but that's fine, don't worry. More often, my challenge is to ask a question that I could get an answer to within a minute.

What I understand from your comments is that checks are done at the borders, but you're not able to tell us how they are done.

I do know, however, that there are all kinds of ways to send things in the mail. As an individual, I sometimes order things and find that the message written on the envelope to me, as an importer, is different from the message written by the exporter. There are all kinds of ways of going about it. For example, some shipped items are declared as gifts, which puts them in a different shipment category.

Do you think there are a lot of goods that are slipping through the cracks and could pose a real danger to our security from the People's Liberation Army?

Eric Laporte: Thank you for your question.

Unfortunately, I'm not in a position to answer it. I'm sorry.

Ty Curran: Mr. Chair, if I may, I would like to add something.

Earlier, we talked about hybrid threats. We need to respond in a coordinated way to these threats. It's not just the CBSA's responsibility; we need information from other departments as well. We absolutely have to notify the other departments and the public about these threats, because they crop up in all our investigations. We need to coordinate our response to threats, and the threat from exports is just one among many.

● (1015)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much to the witnesses. I appreciate your candour, your discussions and your further elaboration on the issues that are concerning not just this to committee, but to Canadians and those watching. We recognize that the work our armed forces do is exceptional, and we really appreciate your service. We will continue among ourselves to try to support the efforts of our armed forces.

Folks, our next meeting is going to be on either Tuesday or Thursday. I'm trying to arrange for the ombudsman to come on Tuesday to make up for the fact that the Auditor General won't be available under the circumstances.

I'm going to adjourn, with your permission, so that we can move into an in camera subcommittee meeting to determine our priorities as we go forward.

With that, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your service and your participation today.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>