



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on National Defence

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 018

PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

Chair: Charles Sousa



Standing Committee on National Defence

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

• (1530)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 18 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, with some members attending remotely via Zoom.

Before we continue, please consult the guidelines to help prevent audio and feedback incidents and to protect the health and safety of our interpreters.

I'd like to remind you to please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order as best we can. For interpretation, please use your earpiece. Select the appropriate channel: floor, English or French. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

I'd like to welcome our witness, His Excellency Andrii Plakhotniuk. We appreciate you being here and appearing before us. I know we've had some discussions in the past. You've probably had discussions with a few of the members here at this table.

You have up to seven minutes, sir, to provide your opening remarks.

[Translation]

His Excellency Andrii Plakhotniuk (Ambassador of Ukraine to Canada): Mr. Chair, distinguished members of the Standing Committee on National Defence, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you.

With your kind permission, I'll continue in English.

[English]

I would like to start my briefing today by expressing once again our profound gratitude to Canada for its continuous leadership in international efforts to support Ukraine in our existential war for survival against the brutal Russian aggressor.

I wish to use this opportunity of addressing the distinguished members of the House of Commons to extend sincere gratitude to the Canadian government for the recent announcement by the Honourable Anita Anand, Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the meeting of NATO ministers of foreign affairs in Brussels, of \$35 million in funding for NATO's comprehensive assistance package for Ukraine. We are confident that Canada's support will bolster the NATO mul-

ti-donor trust fund to help address Ukraine's immediate, medium and long-term security and defence needs in urgent, non-lethal military assistance, in medium and long-term capacity building and in planning and recovery initiatives.

We are also very grateful for the recent announcement by the Honourable David McGuinty, Minister of National Defence, of Canada's new purchase of a package of critical military capabilities under the so-called PURL initiative, which will amount to \$200 million Canadian. These announcements, like all other previous decisions by Canada, are vital for the defence of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as for saving the lives of Ukrainians.

Distinguished members of the standing committee, let me proceed with a brief overview of the recent developments in Ukraine and the situation on the battlefield.

The situation on the front line continues to be tense, yet Ukraine continues to hold firm. Active hostilities are ongoing along a front line stretching about 1,250 kilometres. The most intense fighting is currently concentrated near Pokrovsk, in the Donetsk region, where Moscow has deployed approximately 150,000 troops from a total of 710,000 Russian troops operating on Ukrainian territory.

The search and assault operations and the elimination of the enemy in urban areas continue in Pokrovsk. In Myrnohrad, despite increasingly complicated logistics, the defence forces of Ukraine continue to hold the defensive lines, eliminating the enemy on their approaches to the city. The defence forces of Ukraine have stabilized the situation in the Huliaipole sector, in the Zaporizhzhia region, halting the enemy's advance.

Despite the intensive Russian offensives, Moscow has failed to achieve any of its strategic objectives, while Ukrainian forces retain the capacity to disrupt and degrade enemy operations along the front line. Russia's losses in personnel and equipment remain extremely high, highlighting the unsustainable nature of its military campaign.

As of December 8, since February 24, 2022, Russia has lost more than 1,182,000 soldiers. Our strategy is to exhaust the Russian army as much as possible, prevent its advance and hold our territory, while simultaneously striking the enemy in the rear, in operational depth and deep inside Russia, with the aim of undermining its defence capabilities, military supply chains and defence industrial potential. To achieve this goal, we need a stable and timely supply of all types of weapons and ammunition in large quantities to hold the front line.

Ukraine is profoundly grateful for every package of support, but we need more. Russia is ramping up its drones and bombs production and is intensifying its offence on the front line by shelling and bombing civil infrastructure. In the first 11 months of 2025, Russians dropped nearly 44,000 guided aerial bombs on the frontline cities and positions of the Ukrainian armed forces, an average of 130 bombs per day. Throughout the week of December 1 to 7, the Russians launched over 1,600 attack drones, around 1,200 guided aerial bombs and nearly 70 missiles of various types against Ukraine. The primary targets of these strikes were critical civil infrastructure, in particular energy infrastructure.

The UN human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine has assessed that these attacks have been of a widespread and systematic nature. It was also concluded that multiple aspects of the Russian military campaign to damage or destroy Ukraine's civilian electricity and heat-producing and transmission infrastructure violated fundamental principles of international humanitarian law. Since the start of Russia's full-scale military invasion, more than 50% of Ukraine's energy capacity has been destroyed, damaged or temporarily occupied.

According to the latest World Bank report, restoring Ukraine's energy sector would cost about \$68 billion U.S. We estimate that the energy sector losses at the end of 2024 amounted to \$93 billion U.S.

Our long-standing top priority is air defence and missile deterrence against ballistic threats. It's so vital for Ukraine to receive 10 additional PATRIOT systems, plus missiles for the PATRIOT, NASAMS, IRIS-T and Hawk systems. We also need deep strike capabilities: Tomahawks, Storm Shadows, SCALPs, Taurus and the joint production of deep strike drones and missiles.

Ukraine is ramping up production both domestically and in cooperation with our partners. We invite foreign companies to establish production facilities directly in Ukraine. We want to multiply the positive results of the so-called Danish model and the "Build with Ukraine/Build in Ukraine" initiative. We are also considering controlled arms exports for overproduced weapons, such as naval drones.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1535)

The Chair: Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much.

We're going to start our first round of questions, with six minutes a round.

We'll start with you, Mr. Anderson.

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

Thanks for attending, Mr. Plakhotniuk, and joining us today. I'm particularly grateful.

I've been to Ukraine twice in the last couple of years: once in November last year and once in July this year. I hesitate to call what I did a tour, but we were in the eastern oblasts and went all the way down.

I'd like to mention that we, on the Conservative side, are strongly in favour of Ukraine. I know there's been some mention elsewhere that we may not be, but that's not true. The reason we are is in part that the sovereignty of nations is a principle that has been codified here since 1945, at least, and arguably since 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia. It's the central premise of international law.

Many of the academics I've talked to about Canada and Russia are talking about a state of prekinetic war. That's the term some have used. Others have simply used the word "war" to describe the situation between Russia and Canada right now. There has been a tendency lately toward isolationism in the west. Some people look at it and say, "Well, we're Canada. You're Ukraine. What do they have to do with each other?"

I was wondering if you could explain to us why Canada's defence is necessary, what Canada has to do with Ukraine right now and why we are in danger from the Russians as well.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: First, thank you so much for visiting Ukraine. It's an important opportunity to gain first-hand information on what's going on and to see and talk to people, especially to understand how people live their ordinary lives.

When it comes to this war, this is the biggest continental war in Europe since World War II. We are facing a major, nuclear power with huge potential, be it in military defence materiel, manpower or natural resources. They are still able to receive assistance from their partner states to support their wartime efforts.

Why is it so important for all of our partners to support Ukraine? It's because it's an existential war for Ukraine for our values, freedom and dignity. What happens on the battlefield has a direct influence on what is going on not only in Europe, but also around the world. If we let the Russians win the war, it will certainly have very negative consequences in other parts of the world.

When we're talking about this war, we're talking not only about the battlefield, but also about a very intense technological race, which is happening every day. It means that if the collective west is not ready to fight in this technological race, we will all lose. These technologies the Russians will possess in the future will appear in the hands of other regimes that could use them to their benefit.

It's very important for all of us to stand united and continue to support Ukraine.

● (1540)

Scott Anderson: On that note, the top generals understand that 21st-century symmetric warfare has fundamentally changed because of drone warfare.

I've talked to a number of Canadian people who run companies here—some small, some large—and want to connect with people and their counterparts in Ukraine to co-operate on drone technology. Is there a central depository for that, or can you tell us how Canadian companies that want to do that can connect?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: First, we have certain international mechanisms that are working very effectively right now. I'm talking about the specific coalitions. We have the so-called Ukraine Defense Contact Group, which has several dimensions. These issues are well coordinated between the partners. That's one issue.

Another issue is that the embassy and our team stand ready to make these connections with our Canadian partners and friends if they want to start working in this specific field with Ukraine. You have your embassy present in Kyiv with the ambassador and her team, who are also ready to support this effort. We also signed an agreement during Prime Minister Carney's visit to Ukraine on August 24 that allows us to develop defence co-operation between Canada and Ukraine.

Scott Anderson: I have one last question. In November of last year, when I was in Zaporizhzhya, the Russians sent in a 3,000-pound FAB-1500, I think it's called, and destroyed the hotel I was in.

Zaporizhzhya is not on the zero line. It's not in the trenches, but it's certainly a frontline city. Have you accumulated numbers as to how many illegal attacks the Russians have made? Attacking a hotel is certainly a civilian attack and has nothing to do with the military. I saw the schools and everything else when we were over there. I'm just wondering if you've compiled a figure. It has to be in the hundreds of thousands.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Zaporizhzhya is located close to the front line. What we see on a daily basis are constant and deliberate attacks on Ukrainian civilian infrastructure: deliberate—I want to stress that specific word—attacks. As of today, as a preliminary number, 287,000 civilian infrastructure facilities have been destroyed or damaged.

Scott Anderson: It's 287,000.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Yes—287,216.

Scott Anderson: Thank you.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: This is a preliminary figure, because it happens every day. It happens regularly, especially with our elec-

tricity grids, with infrastructure objects, with bridges—with everything.

Scott Anderson: My understanding is that Ukrainians—

The Chair: Mr. Anderson, we'll come back to you in a moment.

I'll go to Ms. Romanado.

You have six minutes.

● (1545)

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

Your Excellency, it's a real pleasure to meet you. I understand that you were added to the post in September of this year. I think this is your first appearance at the national defence committee. Welcome.

I want to start first with respect to Canada's support of Ukraine through Operation Unifier. My older son deployed to Ukraine in 2018 to help train Ukrainian soldiers. We've trained over 47,000 Ukrainian military and security personnel in battlefield tactics and advanced military skills since 2015.

As the mission progressed, much of the direct training undertaken by Canadian Armed Forces members transitioned to members of the armed forces of Ukraine, with Canadians acting as advisers and mentors, as well as assisting in the development of courses.

Can you elaborate a bit on how Canada's military contributions, especially in training, have been helpful and integral in Ukraine's counteroffensive to date?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: You've mentioned such an important case with military training. You're so right. We have more than 46,000 Ukrainian military who were trained and continue to be trained in the framework of Operation Unifier, which started not two years ago but earlier. It's really important for us, because when we have this kind of training...and I'm not talking about basic military training. I'm talking about tactical matching. We're also talking about language training for our pilots and technicians. These are very important things that contribute to our overall resilience and to better preparedness, especially when we are trying to master the new types of defence materiel we get from our partners as generous donations.

This work, in our opinion, should be continued, and we are certainly so grateful to the Canadian government for supporting this track for continuous efforts to train more and to make our soldiers better prepared. In the long run, it's about saving the lives of our military on the battlefield, but from other perspectives, we in Ukraine are ready to share our knowledge from the battlefield.

In my opinion, I think this is a two-way road. On the one side, we get your knowledge and your experience not only when we are talking about very practical things, but also when it comes to our future NATO membership. Also, we are ready to share with you what we have received and gained from our battlefield experience. That makes our partners more resilient and better prepared.

Sherry Romanado: Your trained forces are able to punch above their weight in terms of some of the drone activity they've been able to bring to the table and some of that expertise.

You mentioned in your opening remarks Canada's contribution to the PURL initiative and the recent announcement. Can you elaborate a bit on how the critical materiel you're receiving from Canada and other partners is helping on the ground?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: This initiative is so important because we are able, together with our partners—with their generous support and commitment—to get the equipment and defence materiel we do not have and that is produced only in the United States. We are talking about air defence missiles and some other things.

If we are talking about the importance of this initiative, when we are able to accumulate more money and get more very practical things on the ground, we are better prepared. We are better prepared to defend our civilian infrastructure and, more importantly, our civilians in Ukrainian cities and towns.

Sherry Romanado: Canada and many of our allies will be with Ukraine until Ukraine wins this war. As you know, the Prime Minister announced recently the appointment of Chrystia Freeland as Canada's special envoy for Ukraine's recovery.

We know that Ukraine will become successful against Russia, but we will need to help Ukraine rebuild postwar. Can you elaborate a bit on what Ukraine will need for rebuilding after the war?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: According to the assessment of the World Bank—they're also not very accurate, but preliminary—the total cost of the reconstruction will be more than half a trillion dollars U.S., so it will be a megaproject for decades to come.

Certainly, we're talking about reconstruction, but on many occasions we'll be talking about creating something new from scratch. In this sense, when we're talking about this megaproject, we will need all the knowledge and expertise our partners can provide us with.

By appointing a special representative of the Canadian government for the reconstruction, we're talking about strong coordination, high authority and a very strong commitment by the Honourable Chrystia Freeland—her network of connections around the world—because once again, it's so important that this process be well and properly coordinated.

• (1550)

Sherry Romanado: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Simard, you have six minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ambassador, I'm going to give you time to put your earpiece on and check that you can hear the interpreters' soft voice instead of my rough voice.

[*English*]

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Yes, now I hear.

[*Translation*]

Mario Simard: There you go. That's better for you.

In your opening remarks, you clearly stated that the fight you're waging to defend your values, dignity and integrity is also a fight for democracy. It's worth noting that a large diaspora of people from your country, Ukrainians living across Quebec, have clearly let us know the urgency of your situation, and I believe they are having a profound impact.

Among your priorities you mentioned air defence components. To my knowledge, Canada is not a leading western military force with the capacity to play its role to the full. You had a good discussion about that with my colleagues.

I would rather talk with you about reconstruction, but I hope that doesn't give you the impression that I'm minimizing the challenges confronting you. I want to talk to you about reconstruction because your opening remarks suggest that a lot of work will need to be done, especially in the energy sector. You spoke at length about the destruction of electrical power infrastructure.

Quebec has gained special expertise in that field. I'd like to know how we can help you in that regard even before peace negotiations take place or a ceasefire has been reached. Looking ahead, I get a sense that rebuilding this infrastructure is going to play a vital role in restoring a semblance of normality.

[*English*]

Andrii Plakhotniuk: I've been addressing primarily the issues of defence support from the Canadian government and from the Canadian state, but when it comes to energy infrastructure, we are also grateful for the support we receive from the Canadian government for specific energy sectors. In November, I think, foreign minister Anita Anand declared that another \$10 million Canadian will be directed from the previous packages to support our critical needs and infrastructure.

We are working with Canadian businesses here at the federal level but also with provinces to get this most urgently needed equipment to be better prepared for this winter. Of the challenges that we now face, I will give you only one. Even in the city of Kyiv, which is one of the best protected places in Ukraine, during the day, there could be times when we don't have electricity supply for up to 16 hours. This illustrates the critical situation we're now facing, because the Russians continue to deliberately target this area.

When it comes to energy equipment, we have a number of things we need. Not everything can be obtained from Canada, because we have different voltage systems and different technical specifications, but certainly there are some items we are receiving, and we are grateful for that.

One issue that could be solved in a quick way is to support what is being done now. You can support financially other initiatives of the European Union and other partners by providing financial resources so that this equipment can be bought on European markets and delivered as soon as possible to the Ukrainian side. This is a constant priority for us. We are working on that, and we are working with all our Canadian friends to get more equipment that we need.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Mario Simard: What you just said is very interesting.

Through the assistance that you receive from your European partners, we currently know that the military is in need of critical minerals, aluminum, defence-critical metals and military equipment. Unfortunately, the supply chains for many of these critical minerals, like aluminum, are often controlled by Russia and China.

Quebec is the main producer of aluminum supplied to the United States. The federal government is also in the midst of developing a comprehensive critical minerals strategy. Do you think that components like these could help, at least within the military equipment supply chain? Would they be helpful to you?

When it comes to trade with Europe in critical minerals and strategic defence components, is there any role that Canada can play in that regard?

[English]

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Thank you for these remarks and comments.

Canada is playing a strategic and very important role worldwide. How to support and deepen our co-operation in critical minerals was one of the major issues during the recent conference on the reconstruction of Ukraine, which was organized for the first time here in Toronto. This issue is being discussed. We have the memorandum of understanding between Natural Resources Canada and our Minister of Energy. This is a very promising sphere for our bilateral co-operation. We are now scaling up and we are intensifying this co-operation and these discussions with all our partners here.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're on our second round.

Mr. Kibble, you have up to five minutes.

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for being here today.

Last summer, I was at the Invictus Games in Vancouver, and I saw some severely injured Ukrainian soldiers competing in sport there. Their courage and spirit that I saw was just incredible, and I think that's a reflection of your armed services right now. I'm glad

that we mentioned Operation Unifier earlier, a mission that started under the Conservative government at the time.

You mentioned critical minerals. Which ones specifically are really important for you right now?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: What I mentioned was that we have the framework agreement between the two energy departments—here in Canada and Ukraine. This is considered one of the promising spheres. Certainly, the experts and the ministers are now working in order to have more co-operation in this sphere.

Jeff Kibble: We heard about aluminum. Was there any other critical mineral that—

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Yes. It's also very important when it comes to defence production.

Jeff Kibble: Okay. Thank you.

You mentioned the 287,000 attacks on civilian infrastructure. What other war crimes are being committed by the Russians right now?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: War crimes are committed daily. I mentioned critical infrastructure destruction, but when it comes to our abducted children, up to 20,000 of them are now in Russia. The major problem is that we see no will and no determination from their side to return these children. We are talking about children who are growing up and facing this propaganda. Their biometrics are being changed. They are being illegally adopted. There are many other problems.

In this sense, Canada is co-chairing with us the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children. We are grateful for all the efforts that Canada, together with all our partners around the world, are making in order to bring our kids back. We are also talking about the crime of ecocide, where we understand that a lot of damage is being done to nature.

These are deliberate things. When it comes to documenting the evidence of these crimes, the international co-operation and the co-operation with Canada and all our partners is very important.

• (1600)

Jeff Kibble: That's absolutely brutal.

There are peace negotiations being attempted at the moment. What are some hard lines that Ukraine will not give up in those negotiations?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Thank you for asking this question.

The first thing I would like to mention is that we stand ready to be engaged as constructively as possible and as quickly as possible to find a solution that would lead us to a just, comprehensive and sustainable peace for Ukraine. Certainly, dozens of discussions happen every day with American partners, with European partners and with Canada. Today, there was a phone conversation between our President and Prime Minister Carney to exchange ideas and exchange views on how to move forward with that.

My President mentioned yesterday that Ukrainians wouldn't be trading their territories. We have our constitution. We have our legislation, which clearly says we cannot abandon the territories that belong to our sovereign territory. This is a very strong red line for us. We understand that the discussions will continue. Our Ukrainian and European proposals are being finalized right now when it comes to security guarantees and how we see all the processes. We'll be ready to share our vision with our American partners.

Once again, we Ukrainians are not ready for capitulation and we are not ready for peace at any price.

Jeff Kibble: You mentioned earlier the technological race. Ukraine has been instrumental in modernizing drone warfare and has seen huge success. Do you feel that the Russians are catching up on this technology? Are you worried about this?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Certainly, we are concerned with a couple of things. One thing is that despite the sanctions regime and despite all the sanctions we have now, which are very important, they are still able to get spare parts to support their wartime efforts to produce missiles and to produce drones using western technologies and western equipment. This is one thing we are very concerned about.

The second thing is that we see they're also developing their technological capabilities. This is a constant process that we as western countries who share the same values cannot and must not lose.

Jeff Kibble: Very quickly, in your opinion, do you feel that countries like NATO allies and Canada need to be upgrading and modernizing their drone technologies right now to catch up?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: I think this process has already started. What we can do is contribute to that very actively by producing together for both Ukrainian needs and those of our partners in Canada, Europe and elsewhere.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Malette, you have up to five minutes.

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

Ambassador Plakhotniuk, we're most honoured to have you here today.

Today, in the House, we were debating Bill S-210, an act to designate a Ukrainian heritage month in Canada. We're doing our bit in an official capacity to recognize that outside of Russia, Canada, I believe, has the largest diaspora of Ukrainians anywhere in the world. We have a long and close relationship, and that includes me, as I have Ukrainian heritage. This means an awful lot to me and the 1.4 million Canadians who share a Ukrainian heritage.

As my first question for you today, Ambassador, what areas of Canadian military assistance, in your estimation, have been most valuable to this point to Ukraine, and where do you see the future opportunities for deeper co-operation? We touched on that just at the end of the last comment.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: First, let me respond to your remarks about Ukrainian heritage month. It is absolutely profoundly important for all of us. This is a very important thing.

When it comes to what is most valuable, I would say that everything we have received so far really changes the situation on the battlefield. It saves people's lives. It saves the lives of our military. Everything matters. I don't want to say something is more important or something is less important. Training is important, air defence is important and joint defence production is also very important.

What I think at this stage is that we should be talking about how to ramp up our joint production, how to establish new enterprises, how to establish joint ventures and how to make Ukrainians stronger at a time when we will have to be engaged in genuine negotiations with the Russians, together with our partners, and make our partners more resilient.

We have most urgent priorities, and number one is air defence. We need ammunition. As our country is fighting this existential war, which is continental warfare, we need everything. It's obvious to all of us, but certainly we have priorities. To achieve these priorities, we need to produce more altogether. Collectively, our technological potential and our economic potential cannot be compared with the potential of the Russian Federation. We are much stronger.

• (1605)

Chris Malette: To continue in that vein, Ambassador—and I don't want to get too much into the weeds on the numbers or anything that may be confidential—could you quantify how that co-operation is right now? I'm sure, as you're stressing, it could increase exponentially, but where are we right now and where conceivably could we go in the very near future? As you know, time is of the essence when a country such as Ukraine is under such immense threat.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: One thing that was mentioned publicly here was the training of the Ukrainian military. It's important, and certainly it should be continued.

We have a number of initiatives and have a number of areas where we should co-operate more closely. I mentioned production. We also discussed and mentioned drone technologies and the relevant spheres. Canada possesses very good and sophisticated technologies and excellent international expertise. We will certainly need this expertise, and we will certainly be able to contribute in turn to Canada with our knowledge from the battlefield.

Chris Malette: In closing, what would you want the average citizen of Canada to know, Ambassador, about what life is like for the average citizen in Ukraine? You touched on the fact that with the attacks on the electrical grid, you have outages for up to 16 hours. What I don't think a lot of Canadians understand is that the cold we're experiencing in Ottawa right now is the same cold being experienced by your country in some months. Are there any misconceptions you would like to counter, or stories of heroism you would like to amplify?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: First, I have a couple of things from myself representing Ukrainians. People—ordinary Ukrainians, military—are very tired, because this war started not almost four years ago but back in 2014. For us, it's absolutely an existential thing. We understand that if Russia stops the war, withdraws its troops and pays reparations, then peace will come to Ukraine. However, if we stop fighting, there will be no Ukraine.

The second point is that we are profoundly grateful to all Canadians and to all partners and citizens from different countries for all the support we get. It's really important for you to understand and to know that whatever you do is well known to ordinary Ukrainians in the streets. I think those of you distinguished members of the standing committee who visited Ukraine had an opportunity to talk to ordinary Ukrainians and to understand that when it comes to Canada and Canadians, we in Ukraine understand that you stand on the side of the light, supporting us with your commitment and your solidarity by opening your hearts and your doors to Ukrainians here in Canada. These are two very important messages.

The third message is that, in these most challenging times, we should be strong in our unity, because for Ukraine it's now or never.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you, Ambassador.

Chris Malette: I have these last words: *Slava Ukraini*.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: *Heroyam slava*.

The Chair: Monsieur Simard, you have two and a half minutes, sir.

[Translation]

Mario Simard: Thank you very much.

Ambassador, you emphasized air defence. I'd like to understand in somewhat more practical terms how Canada can help you in this area. In answer to questions from my colleagues, you also talked about training that received support from the federal government.

When you talk about air defence, are you speaking primarily of drones? Is that what you're referring to, or are you referring to somewhat more conventional forces?

How can Canada help you? You were talking earlier about Canada's expertise. I'd like to know how we can help you in practical ways.

[English]

Andrii Plakhotniuk: First, when it comes to air defence, we have the PURL initiative that I mentioned, which is about American-made, sophisticated defence materiel that has been purchased with the support of all of our partners, who combined their efforts and financed this defence materiel.

Another thing that can be done.... We are talking about air defence systems that are produced not only by the United States but also by European countries, systems like NASAMS and the SAMP/T, which are produced by Norway, Italy, France and so forth.

What can Canada and our partners do? We have a number of international initiatives that can be supported financially in order to

produce more, because timing is the thing that really matters in this war. If we can produce fast and produce more, it means we will be able to save more lives of ordinary Ukrainians.

However, it's not only about drones. Drones have their own specific mission, but they are also used—interceptor drones—to target Russian Shaheds, which are constantly attacking Ukrainian civilian cities.

[Translation]

Mario Simard: I won't hide the fact that I'm not very familiar with strategic military components. However, I assume that the technologies you use within existing strategies and models are often similar. You don't reinvent the wheel every time.

Increasing production implies financial assistance rather than technical support, financial assistance that lets you produce the equipment you need faster by having it manufactured at some location or other, but perhaps not necessarily in Canada. Can you give us some guidance on that?

The most effective way to help you would be to provide financial support that you could use to secure more air defence components. That is my understanding.

[English]

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Financial support is one side. Technological support is also very important.

I would like to mention one figure here. Throughout this war, the Ukrainian armed forces have mastered 600 different types of defence materiel. When we receive this equipment, we need to have enough knowledge in order to master it. That means support when it comes to the technological sphere is also important. When we receive sophisticated weaponry, we need this kind of knowledge. We need to be trained and then be able to use it to the best of the defence materiel's capability.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Gallant, you have up to five minutes.

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

Your Excellency, aside from the Kardesa system currently under construction, does Ukraine have any undersea cables presently?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Undersea cables....

Cheryl Gallant: I mean telecommunications, like Vodafone. Is it all terrestrial?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: We probably have some communications undersea, but I'm not the expert in this sphere.

Cheryl Gallant: There haven't been instances, then, of these cables being cut and communications being disrupted in that way.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: I don't have this exact information.

Cheryl Gallant: All right.

How does Ukraine assess itself in combatting Russia's grey fleet?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: In combatting Russian what?

Cheryl Gallant: The grey fleet.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: The grey fleet is the shadow fleet. Is that right?

Cheryl Gallant: Right.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: This is one of the top priority issues for Ukraine when it comes to working with our international partners on sanctions. We started to witness this in 2014 when Russians started transporting our grain and our other materials produced in temporarily occupied territories to other countries, trying to conceal that they were produced in Ukraine. It was a very important thing we were working on with our partners.

When it comes to the shadow fleet, we are exchanging information among the sanctions teams from different governments, especially when it comes to the active members of the sanctions coalitions, like Canada and European partners. We share this knowledge. We exchange information on what types of vessels were spotted, what types of vessels didn't have responders and what types of vessels were not properly insured by international insurance companies.

• (1615)

Cheryl Gallant: In terms of cyber-disruption, what new prevailing threats has Ukraine encountered that Canada needs to be ready for?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: When it comes to cyber-attacks, this is a regular thing for Ukraine, which has been targeted by Russian cyber-attacks for more than a decade. In our opinion, one of the effective ways, apart from having enough and efficient software...is certainly international co-operation. It should be intensified between the relevant services and relevant agencies when it comes to cyber-attacks and how to counter them. The more effective this co-operation is and the more effective our software is, the better we are prepared. It's a constant process.

Cheryl Gallant: Russian drones are being launched offshore from their shadow fleet, and they've been causing chaos in major European airports. Can you give us any insight into how Canada should prepare ourselves should we see the same operations happening on our continent?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: We try to support our European partners and friends to the best of our abilities. I would refer to the decision of the Ukrainian authorities and the President to send a team of experts to Denmark to support them in how to deal with the situations of these drones appearing in their airspace. When it comes to all our partners, I think the best way forward for us now—and I think it's being done—is to share information and knowledge on how to counteract them if such situations could happen in our partner states.

Cheryl Gallant: With respect to Russia's shadow fleet, what other systems do they have that may pose an immediate risk? Do they have any advanced weapons systems, lasers or kinetic warfare capabilities that we're unaware of?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: I'm not a military expert, and I'm not the person who has the best knowledge on what these vessels are equipped with. What I know is that when it comes to the shadow fleet, there are a lot of things they obtained from different markets. They are old civilian vessels. Certainly, they may be equipped with different equipment.

Once again, though, this is a serious situation that should be considered seriously and should be monitored seriously by border guard services and by the intelligence community. Exchanging information about it will contribute to our better preparedness.

Cheryl Gallant: There are reports that the Ukrainian children abducted by Russia during the war have been sent to its ally North Korea. What do you know about this?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: This is knowledge that was shared, I think, during the hearings in the U.S. Senate. We have information that a lot of children were sent to Belarus to be educated there under Russian propaganda. If this information is shared by our well-known civil society organizations, it means only one thing: that such cases were witnessed and spotted by our civil society organizations, with the support of OSINT technologies and support from our international partners.

Cheryl Gallant: What about North Korea?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Russians will use each and every opportunity to hide Ukrainian children and not bring them back to Ukraine, but if we have this knowledge, we'll certainly share it with our partners to raise awareness with only one goal, which is to have more unity, and more strength in this unity, to press Russia into bringing our kids back home.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Lapointe, you have up to five minutes.

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

Thank you, Ambassador, for appearing before the committee today.

We often discuss military aid in broad numbers, but we know that behind those figures, there are decisions on mobility, survivability and power resilience.

Where have Canada's contributions filled gaps that might have otherwise resulted in lost territory, reduced defence capability or slower counteroffensives?

• (1620)

Andrii Plakhotniuk: I'm sorry. I didn't quite get your question.

Viviane Lapointe: How has Canada's aid helped Ukraine in preventing lost territory, reduced defence capability or slower counteroffensives?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: If we receive defence equipment from Canada—for example, APCs or other defence materiel—it means only one thing: saving the lives of Ukrainian soldiers on the battlefield. It means they can stand firm in defending their positions.

I want to once again stress the point that literally everything we got from Canada really contributed to saving more lives on the battlefield and in our cities and towns.

Viviane Lapointe: You stated in one of your responses that what happens on the battlefield has profound impacts on Europe and the rest of the world. Canada recently announced that it was joining SAFE, and I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts on what effect you think that may have on European security.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: In my opinion, it was a very important decision for Canada, for European partners and for us, because we are talking about how to have more co-operation in the defence sphere and how, in the long run, to make all our countries more resilient. By strengthening the transatlantic links, which are so important for Canada, Ukraine and Europe, we are contributing to making our countries more resilient. Joining this initiative is a very important step. It will be beneficial for European partners, including Ukraine, and certainly for Canada.

Viviane Lapointe: With some proposals referencing territorial concessions or limits on Ukraine's forces, what impacts do clear and very consistent messages from allies have in shaping international expectations around what is and is not acceptable in any peace framework?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: We need a strong, united position. That's why my President is so actively coordinating all of these initiatives with European partners, Canada and other partners of the world. We've been very firm that all issues about Ukraine should be discussed with Ukraine. All issues about Europe and European security should be discussed with the participation of European states. This is very important.

Another issue that was in our media and in international media was elections. That was very clear, and the President made it very clear that he is ready to go to an election, but the most important thing is to have appropriate conditions according to our legislation and to have this election process. First and foremost, we need a comprehensive and sustainable ceasefire. The procedures will then start working and everything can be organized.

There are a lot of issues, but we need a very strong, united position, and we are working on that.

Viviane Lapointe: As discussions continue around a ceasefire and security arrangements, to what extent does sustained allied military support strengthen Ukraine's position to secure terms that prevent future aggression and ensure long-term self-defence?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: The non-repetition of aggression in the future is absolutely vital for us. That's why we're talking about robust security and these robust security arrangements.

A lot of things are now being discussed, starting with having an international presence in order to support Ukraine and with supporting Ukraine with sophisticated weaponry, and then going into defence production. There are a lot of issues that would contribute to this strong security. The main idea is to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace, but it cannot be achieved if there is no robust security on the ground.

• (1625)

The Chair: Thank you, Ambassador.

I believe Mr. Bezan has crashed, so we're going to you, Mr. Kibble, if you want to proceed.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess he's having some challenges with his Zoom connection and might jump back in.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Ambassador, to ask you some more questions.

There are some relatively new reports of autonomous, land-based drones on the battlefield. Are those Russian, Ukrainian or both? Could you perhaps speak a little to their success or their role?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Do you mean autonomous drone systems?

Jeff Kibble: I mean on the land—land-based drones.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: These are the land robot systems.

Jeff Kibble: Yes.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: This is an area that is developing very fast, because this war is about numbers: the defence materiel, defence equipment and armaments that have been used. It's also about a technological race. This war is developing very fast when it comes to drone technologies, be it naval drones or land robot systems. They are inventing measures; we are inventing countermeasures. This is a very fast process taking place.

We have the land robot systems, which are supporting the forces on the ground, starting with what to do with wounded soldiers and how to deliver them from the battlefield to an evacuation point. They do many other things, like mining areas, but it's about the support of military units on the ground.

Jeff Kibble: In Canada, we're seeing lots of sentiment against supporting the war in Ukraine, specifically online and in social media. Are you aware of this in Canada? Do you know who the source of this might be?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Could you please repeat that?

Jeff Kibble: Online and in social media, we're seeing a lot of sentiment popping up among people about not supporting the war in Ukraine. Do you know where this is coming from and who's pushing this propaganda?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: I think the origin of this information is so obvious to us. Russians will do everything to destroy our unity and to create chaos by different hybrid methods. One of them is Telegram channels. One of them is different types of communities sending signals, messages and information campaigns.

There is only one goal, which is for us to not be united and for us to not be robust in our response to this brutal war of aggression against a sovereign country.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Related to this, there appear to be a lot of misinformation campaigns about government corruption and accusations. Is there anything you'd like to dispel, clarify or share with us about this information that's making the rounds?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Sure. It's a very interesting question, and I'm ready to share the knowledge I have.

First, we have established that we support all of our partners. They are very strong, and I'm more than confident that they are an effective ecosystem when it comes to anti-corruption.

What we see on the ground is only one thing. We see that these agencies have the possibility to investigate, and they have the possibility to go public with their investigations and lay charges against those who commit such types of crimes. On the other side, which is also important to mention, is the resolve of the government and the President to deal with these issues.

Whenever a politician is appearing somewhere in the media, what he or she is immediately going to face is political responsibility. Then, certainly, there is an investigation, court and so on and so forth.

My message is this. The government is committed to dealing with this in a very serious and very effective way. As for what we are now doing, an investigation is being done, not only into the state-owned companies in the energy sector but also into other sectors, in order to have a reset of supervisory boards and to understand and have the most updated information on what is going on in these specific spheres.

We understand that we need international credibility and the support of international partners. This is vital for us, and it's vital for our people, because justice is so important for Ukrainians.

• (1630)

Jeff Kibble: Thank you for your comments and for clarifying the on-the-ground truth.

I'll pass the remainder of my time to Mr. Anderson.

Scott Anderson: Thank you very much.

It's on my bucket list to be banned from Russia. I was hoping you could put in a word for me with the Russian authorities, as I know a number of my colleagues have been banned.

You mentioned that Ukrainians are not ready for capitulation. I would like to relate an experience I had in Kherson, which is another frontline city under fairly constant bombardment. On the wall of a restaurant, somebody had hired a professional sign painter to paint "F Your Republics" on it, which is a direct challenge to Putin, who may very well, if the war continues indefinitely for another 100 years, eventually take over Kherson.

It's this sort of attitude that the Ukrainians have, and I can vouch for it first-hand with the number of Ukrainian flags on car antennas. These are not state-sponsored things; these are organic. Putin's face on toilet paper—I'm sure you've seen that. This is an organic Ukrainian response, and I would certainly second your observation that Ukrainians are not ready to capitulate.

We've talked a lot about what Ukraine can gain from Canada. Can you tell us what Canada can gain from Ukraine, specifically with regard to drone warfare technology and war-fighting technology?

The Chair: I am sensitive to time, Mr. Anderson, and I gave you the liberty, but I want a response to the question.

I'm going to give Mr. Watchorn the last question, but by all means, please respond.

Andrii Plakhotniuk: I will be very brief—15 seconds.

The President and the government on numerous occasions have made it very clear that we stand ready to share our technological knowledge with all our partners and reliable friends. Absolutely, Canada is among our most reliable friends and partners.

Scott Anderson: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Watchorn, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Ambassador, thank you for being with us this afternoon.

I'm very pleased to hear you say that one of your red lines is borders. I think everyone agrees that borders should never be changed by force. That is very important.

Last month, I was fortunate to have attended the Halifax International Security Forum. We had a chance to meet with people from Ukraine who told us that drone technology was evolving so fast that it had to be replaced with updated technology every month. How can the Government of Canada profit from your battlefield experience in planning its procurement of drones and other technologies?

[*English*]

Andrii Plakhotniuk: How can Canada...?

Tim Watchorn: How can Canada profit from your experience on the battlefield to better procure our technology?

Andrii Plakhotniuk: We have started this co-operation when it comes to joint defence production. We stand ready to produce, and we are ready to share this knowledge. The main issue for all of us, not only for Canada and Ukraine, is how fast we can ramp up our production. Certainly we can produce more and do it quickly in Ukraine because we are prepared to do that for our survival.

My message is that we should use and explore each and every opportunity. If we can produce faster in Ukraine, then we should produce in Ukraine. If we can produce strategically somewhere else, let's explore this opportunity. We are ready for all choices.

The Chair: Thank you, sir, for being here today.

I know your towns and cities are being destroyed. I see evidence of that almost daily from accounts that are put on the web, and it's devastating. It's extremely impressive that Ukrainians, even throughout this, are being resilient within that tragedy. It says a lot about Ukrainians. It says a lot about you, your countrymen and your countrywomen, who are there to stand up and fight for democracy and freedom, and to withstand the onslaught of an aggressor. This is being felt throughout the Baltics. You're the defence, the buffer, that so many other European countries just west of you are concerned about.

Some of us have visited the region—Estonia or Latvia. We saw Canadian soldiers and bases provide support and training for young Ukrainian recruits. It was very surreal, Ambassador, because they were there for only a few weeks, and then would go to the front and the fight. No longer were they going to be part of military games and trials. It was the real deal. That, for those of us who were witnessing it, was very shocking. I know that some of the members here have been in the armed forces and know the lifestyle all too well. Your young people are paying the highest price. They're sacrificing a lot not just for Ukraine but also for others around the world.

I thank you, Ambassador, and your country. We appreciate what you're doing. We recognize the urgency of the matter. We understand what Canada's role must be in providing support.

• (1635)

Andrii Plakhotniuk: Thank you, Mr. Chair and distinguished members of this parliamentary committee, for having me, and thank you for your very important words.

The Chair: Folks, I'm going to recess to allow the ambassador to leave, and then we'll go in camera. We have a bit of work to do before we leave today.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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>