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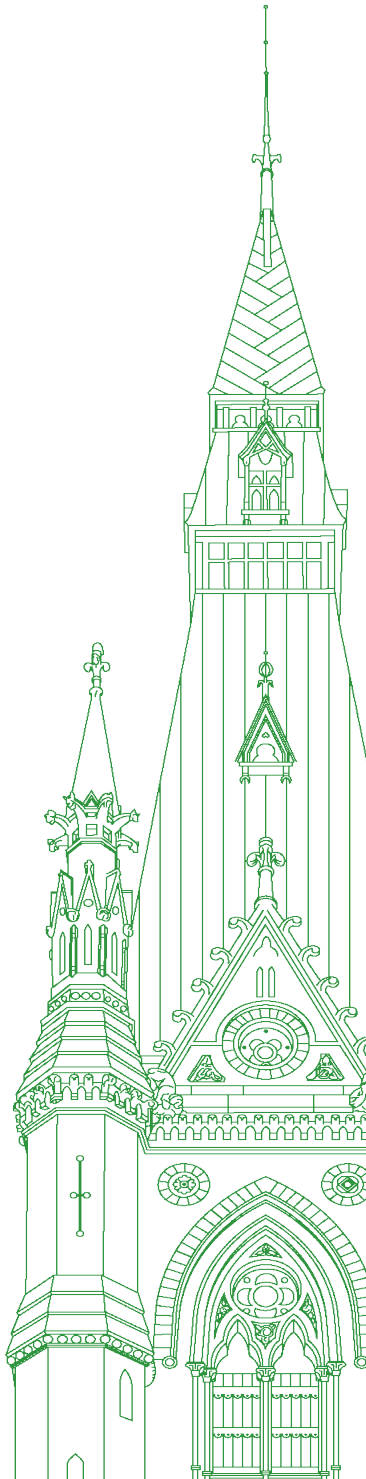
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Chair: Charles Sousa

Standing Committee on National Defence

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● (1535)

[*English*]

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

Welcome, everyone, to meeting number 49 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Monday, January 26, 2026, the committee is meeting to continue the study of “Inflection Point 2025” and the modernization of the Canadian Army.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Committee members are in person, and our witnesses are attending via Zoom.

Before we continue, I ask the participants to consult the guidelines on the table. These measures are there to help prevent audio and feedback incidents and to protect the health and safety of our interpreters.

Members and witnesses, I will 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, use your earpiece and select the appropriate channel. I will remind you that questions will be in either English or French. If you need interpretation, please take a moment now to prepare your earpiece, select a channel in advance and test it to make sure it works. All comments should be addressed through the chair.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses, who are all online. We have Robert Huebert, professor, centre for military, security and strategic studies, University of Calgary; Calvin Aivgak Pedersen, 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, Canadian Rangers; P. Whitney Lackenbauer, our professor and Canada research chair at Trent University and the North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network; and Christian Leuprecht, professor at the Royal Military College of Canada.

Welcome, all of you, to our committee.

I will open it up for your opening statements of up to five minutes each.

Monsieur Robert Huebert, we'll go over to you for five minutes.

Robert Huebert (Professor, Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary, As an Individual): Thank you.

I'd like to thank the committee for giving me this opportunity to talk about this very important issue. I appreciate the time to examine it.

The major takeaway that we have, or at least I have, from the basis of the report that the army has prepared is that it is a welcome effort to address the dangers that Canada is facing. I think that General Wright and his team are to be applauded for the effort to change the overall perspective that has traditionally been the focus of the Canadian Forces as well as the army, which has been more focused on constabulary and non-conflict related issues than what it is now looking at. This is to be congratulated and is something to be encouraged.

There are, however, four problems that I will briefly highlight in terms of my first comments.

The first one is, of course, the issue of the threat assessment. At Calgary, we sponsored a major land power conference where General Wright and his team participated, and I have shared the conference report with the clerk and that will be made available. The problem that we face in trying to determine what we should do in any of our branches, of course, always comes down to how we are actually making that threat assessment.

Now of course within the report itself, it talks about the growing aggression of Russia. It talks about issues in terms of the Middle East, and it makes an oblique reference to our growing problems with the Americans. The question that comes to the forefront is this: How do we do this on a sustained basis and how do we do this in an arm's length way, so it's not just simply the changing of senior leadership within Canada that changes our threat perspective but something that allows the CF to have a much better approach to be able to have this on a sustainable basis?

The second issue that I would raise is, of course, that many of the projects that are cited within the report have a timeline that is hoping to be finished by 2040. The question is, will our adversaries who are identified within that report wait until that time period? Do we have enough time? I dare say that if we look back 14 years in terms of what was happening in the conflict, we can have an appreciation of how rapidly the international environment will change.

The third aspect is the issue of sustainability in the conflict that the report highlights. How do we do this? When we look at the Canadian defence industrial strategy, we can see in fact it talks about how we can start building up our forces, but it of course is silent on how we sustain if we do find ourselves in a major conflict. How do we ensure that the army has the munitions that are necessary, as is discussed within the report?

The last issue is how to deal with the pan-domain. Again, if we think of any major conflict, integration with the navy is going to be essential for any major conflict we face in Europe that we are participating in. The question arises, how in fact will that be sustained? If, in fact, we have an issue with the Americans, and we have to acknowledge that given the fact that the Prime Minister has publicly noted that he has been in discussions about this threat, how then does the army integrate itself in terms with the air force?

What this leaves us with is two observations.

The first one is that we need to go beyond simply identifying what is needed, but beginning exercises. When we look at our past record in terms of how we have done on pan-domain exercises to truly test whether or not we can get to Europe with a sustainable force, and of course now we have to ask the question of a sustainable force within Canada, the number of exercises that we've done on a very large scale is very limited. In fact, you have to go back to Brave Lion of 1986, where we were in fact exercising if we could get to Norway. The general assessment, and particularly if you read Sean Maloney's work, is that we failed at that. The question is, can we actually do what we are talking about?

The last point that I would make for a suggestion is the need for an independent arm's-length threat assessment so that we are not suddenly changing in recognizing what the threat is, again, more or less based on a change of leadership at the highest level within government, but much more sustainably. We've seen in almost all of the issues that are raised in the inflection report that we can trace those threats much further back than the current period of time. I think that this is essential to give us the necessary time period to be able to properly respond.

● (1540)

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Huebert.

Our next speaker is Christian Leuprecht.

It's over to you, sir, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Christian Leuprecht (Professor, Royal Military College of Canada, As an Individual): Mr. Chair, thank you for inviting me to speak today.

I would be happy to answer questions in both official languages.

[*English*]

The restructure does not redefine what it means to defend Canada, as in Canadian troops dedicated to civil defence. Instead, army transformation is all about major combat operations. The reserves are being asked to up their conventional warfare game by a couple of orders of magnitude without any indication of how the factors driving current limitations are going to be addressed.

The 2nd Canadian Division has the domestic role, but it is also supposed to generate combined arms troops to major combat operations. This in itself would be a huge step up from the current army reserve, which struggles to create sub-subformations at the individual combat arm level. This is at a time when the CAF is proposing to introduce rafts of new equipment and doctrine.

Since the primary thrust of “Inflection Point 2025” is to prepare the CAF for major combat operations, it is difficult to believe that domestic operations will get much attention. Yet again, domestic humanitarian and disaster relief is left without a permanent formation. A new defence policy will tell us whether the government is actually changing its mind about the domestic role it expects the armed forces to play.

The new security strategy also means that the armed forces need to consider how to address the intelligence challenge and the longstanding need to develop and implement a domestic intelligence policy. Growing demand for domestic operations calls into question the sustainability of a business model whose combat readiness relies on a general-purpose combat force and now a reserve component that is already challenged and being given a whole new level of operational challenge in contributing combined arms battalions.

The view within the armed services is that humanitarian relief and domestic operations are a threat to their combat role. Defence policy makes provision for civil assistance to civil authorities and non-governmental partners who are responding to international and domestic disasters or major emergencies. Among the eight core missions of the armed forces, domestic operation is one of two unresourced CAF mandates.

Hitherto, the CAF had a distinctly ambiguous attitude towards domestic deployment. The CAF has long been unwilling to create standing capacity in the regular force to address domestic missions. At the same time, the federal government has long been unwilling to either provide military missions with the resources they need or assign military domestic operations and emergency response tasks to a civilian agency. This is reinforced by the recent national security strategy, which limits the federal role to coordinating exercises and response. No civilian federal operational capability seems to be in the works.

Where is the occupational structure to support domestic operations? How far can and should the military go in assigning a core policy role to the primary reserves without the government first addressing problems with job security and availability in the reserves? Lieutenant-General Wright acknowledges perennial problems with staffing, recruiting, training and equipment, but he offers no solutions. Ergo, 2 Cdn Div is bound to fail to meet expectations, in part because the reserves are notoriously understaffed, and a good portion of reservists actually work full-time on class B contracts for the CAF. They are thus mostly unavailable for normal reserve duties.

I and Peter Kasurak, with whom I co-authored this opening statement, wrote the following in our chapter on Canada, in my volume on domestic military operations:

> Past is prologue: The CAF does not want to become more involved in domestic operations and has publicly cautioned about the potential impacts of doing so (though the actual evidence [remains] elusive). Academic sympathizers have been bolstering this line of argument. The [CAF has] no plans to develop specialized units or military occupations to deal with any aspect of [humanitarian and disaster response] and seem content with the belief that general-purpose combat training provides all the capability required. The government has shown equal disinterest in changing the status quo.
>
> ...the federal government is not looking for an additional role that would take it into the contentious fray of provincial-territorial jurisdiction and saddle it with additional operational responsibilities or associated costs.

The national security strategy shows that the government has more pressing priorities. The government continues to be overreliant on the military for the defence and security of Canada. Army transformation is like finding a cure for cancer: What cancer are we actually trying to cure?

● (1545)

It requires a strategy and a short-, medium- and long-term capitalization plan with clear milestones and deliverables that the government is actually willing to mandate and resource.

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Leuprecht.

[*English*]

Thank you for your opening statement.

Mr. Calvin Pedersen, it's over to you, sir, for five minutes.

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen (Canadian Rangers, 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, As an Individual): Thanks for the invitation to speak to this committee.

Today I'm speaking to you as a Canadian Ranger with over 25 years of service, as a member of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary and, most importantly, as a proud Inuk who has travelled almost half a million kilometres on our land, water and ice.

I believe it is a great time for Inuit in the north. We Inuit are in a position where we can make a huge difference here in our own land. However, Canada needs to take its next steps with care and learn from its past dealings with the north.

The last time something this big happened in the Arctic was the construction of the DEW line. It was a scary time for Inuit. Strange planes arrived by the hundreds, bringing southern experts who told us it was all for our own good. We just had to believe them and go along with it. Some of our people were employed as labourers and operators, but nothing of great significance. We definitely had no seat at the table where decisions were made. We cannot let that happen again.

History teaches us an important lesson. Expeditions that came north and went about things alone often failed, sometimes fatally. Those who survived and thrived did so because they involved Inuit, learned from our knowledge and understood how to live in this unforgiving environment. We don't have to prove ourselves to anyone. Our land is littered with the graves of people who thought otherwise.

We Inuit have always been inventors, scientists and engineers. That is how we survived. We took snow and built homes. We invented kayaks and snow goggles. We took skins, stones and bones and created tools, clothing and a life from what many see as a deserted, unfruitful land. We learned through observation, trial and error. Just because we didn't write it down doesn't mean it's not science.

We have been experimenting and perfecting the use of our limited resources in one of the most extreme environments in the world for generations. My late grandfather, Red Asger Pedersen, spoke to me about these things from his observations of Inuit while living and working with them as a Hudson's Bay Company boy. His words still apply today.

Look at how far we've come. Zacharias Kunuk recently reflected on how much Inuit life has changed in just 70 years. From living in *igluit*, sod huts and tents and surviving by hunting, to having modern homes, instant communications, airplanes and Inuit working as pilots, nurses, lawmakers, surgeons, artists and business leaders. As he put it, “We do not do enough to admire the successes we have had when we have stepped into another nation's world.”

Seventy years—has any other people accomplished so much in such a short time? I don't think so. Even with forced relocations, residential schools and the colonization of Inuit, we are still here. We are thriving, and we are not going anywhere. This is our home. This is our land. We were here long before Canada existed. We have been stewards of this land for generations. Give us the resources, training and opportunity, and we will defend this land like no other can because we know how to live with Mother Nature and her temper tantrums.

In my previous career with the Canadian High Arctic Research Station, I saw highly educated scientists come north who could not survive without Inuit leadership and guidance. Sometimes something as simple as dressing properly can mean the difference between life and death. Some could have saved thousands of dollars and countless hours by simply asking Inuit what we already knew. Look at the Franklin ships. Inuit knowledge pointed to their location for generations, but it took far too long for that knowledge to be taken seriously. Countless dollars, resources and years were spent searching for something Inuit had been talking about all along.

Our oral history has proven to be one of the most accurate games of telephone tag in the world. Would writing it down have made us smarter? No. Would it have made outsiders recognize us as experts? Probably not, but that doesn't change what we know.

The lesson is clear: If you want to succeed in the Arctic, involve Inuit from the beginning and throughout the life of any project, not as an afterthought but as equal partners. We have rangers, junior rangers and cadets. Expand these programs and their roles. Train our people and create opportunities for our youth. Let them see Inuit working alongside the government and military as equals, as the experts on this land and sea.

If you want communities to buy in, they need to see their people making decisions, executing plans and running everyday operations, not just working as labourers but sitting at the table where important decisions are made. Don't underestimate what Inuit can contribute. We are adaptable, and our history proves it.

● (1550)

Imagine what our young people could accomplish with proper education, training and resources. Imagine the opportunities that could be created in our own communities and the difference that would make for the next generation.

All the best technology in the world means nothing without the people who know how to keep it running in the most extreme environment this planet has to offer. Imagine where we will be in another 70 years.

The world is finally realizing what Inuit are capable of. Let's show them how great our country can be when we work together. Whether anyone likes it or not, we do stand on guard for thee. We are Canadian. This is our land. We have been here since time immemorial, and we will be here for a long time to come. Let us help keep this country strong and free. Give us the training, the resources, the responsibility and, above all, a seat at the table.

That is how we move forward.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pedersen, and thank you for your 25 years of service as a ranger.

Mr. Lackenbauer, it's over to you for five minutes, sir.

P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Professor and Canada Research Chair, Trent University-North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, As an Individual): Chair and members of the committee, thanks for the invitation to offer some opening comments. “Inflection Point 2025” begins with a frank assessment: “the Army we have is not the Army we need.”

Along these lines, the army's Arctic ambitions deserve serious attention. Modernization should strengthen both the defence of Canada's Arctic and allied security in the wider north. Success should be measured by the missions that the forces can accomplish, their response time and their endurance. The army identifies Canada and the Arctic as its primary geographic priority. That priority must shape investment, training and readiness.

To begin, I'd like to offer four observations.

First, we must be precise about the army's Arctic mission, both within and beyond Canada. My research distinguishes threats passing through the Arctic, threats directed to the region and the security challenges within it. Continental defence, protecting northern infrastructure and assisting communities in crisis, like Dr. Leuprecht referred to, involve different responsibilities and capabilities.

Recent army restructuring places domestic responsibilities with the 2nd Canadian Division, with the 1st Canadian Division's light infantry retaining Arctic response tasks. These formations must work together with clear arrangements for generating forces and employing them under joint command. Arctic defence requires the capabilities appropriate to the mission, wherever they reside within the army.

Second, northern campaigning provides a practical test of restructuring. Operation Nanook, the CAF's principal northern operation, brings together military forces, civilian agencies, northern partners and international allies. Its evolution toward persistent and enduring campaigning offers opportunities to develop capabilities while exercising our ability to detect, deter and set conditions to defend.

The question is how the restructured army will provide the forces this requires, including engineers, communications, air defence, counterdrone capabilities, logistics and medical support. The readiness test in “Inflection Point 2025” is the army's ability to deploy and sustain lethal forces within relevant timelines.

In the Arctic, arriving in the region is only the beginning. Forces must move, communicate, maintain equipment, receive supplies and care for casualties. The army and joint operational commanders must establish whether support and transport arranged months ahead for scheduled activities can also be made available when a contingency develops with little warning.

Third, domestic Arctic readiness and expeditionary operations with our northern NATO allies must reinforce one another. Cold weather mobility, maintenance, communications and sustainment matter in both contexts. Allied co-operation strengthens these capabilities.

Army training authorities and operational commanders must assess forces against the distances, terrain, infrastructure, seasons and threats of their intended missions. Experience in northern Norway does not automatically establish readiness for Canada's Arctic archipelago and vice versa. The army and the CAF more broadly must plan for concurrent demands. When forces deploy overseas, what remains available to defend Canada, including aircraft and shared support?

Conversely, how do we reduce the risk that adversaries could exploit vulnerabilities in the Canadian Arctic to tie down our forces at home and constrain our vital contributions to deterrence and allied defence abroad?

Fourth, the army's “one army” approach brings regular force members, primary reservists, Canadian Rangers and civilian employees together as an integrated team. Each requires resources and support suited to their respective roles. I will highlight the Canadian Rangers—reservists like Calvin—whose local knowledge, trusted relationships and enduring presence offer distinctive operational capabilities. Their expertise must continue to shape how the army prepares for and conducts northern operations, enabling other members of the defence team and broader whole-of-government systems to operate effectively.

Toward these same ends, primary reservists need predictable budgets for training, equipment, leadership and realistic deployment commitments. Ranger patrols need administrative and instructor support, suitable communications and opportunities to trial and train with new technologies. These are essential investments in force generation—in recruiting, retaining, preparing and sustaining the people who deliver operational capability. Arctic readiness requires sustained funding for the training days, the maintenance and support that keeps those forces ready between deployments.

For army modernization, partnership also means planning northern deployments and infrastructure with indigenous governments, territorial authorities and communities. Decisions about vehicles and storage, fuel, accommodation, transport access and maintenance must account for local capacity. These arrangements should be established before larger forces arrive, with responsibilities and community benefits agreed upon.

● (1555)

I think that DND review services' October 2024 evaluation of Arctic operations provides a useful starting point for assessing progress. It identified unclear operational objectives, gaps in readiness for short-notice operations, failures to apply lessons from previous deployments and inadequate infrastructure. Planning has advanced since then. The committee should ask army leadership how those changes have improved operational readiness and what evidence demonstrates that progress.

To conclude, I will suggest three priorities.

First, request an update from the army on progress about Arctic operational direction, how it is incorporating lessons learned into operations and infrastructure assessment and planning.

Second, request measurable readiness objectives and a funded plan connecting army forces with joint support, infrastructure and interim capabilities.

Third, request operational assessments that demonstrate deployment, mission execution, sustainment, casualty care and concurrent commitments with northern partners.

I believe these measures will help turn the ambitions in “Inflection Point 2025” into reliable Arctic capabilities and strengthen an army ready to defend Canada, deter threats and contribute decisively alongside our allies at home and around the world.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

● (1600)

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

Thank you to all of you for your opening statements.

We're going to go to our first round of questions. It's 18 minutes long, and we're going to start with Ms. Gallant.

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

Through you, recently the U.S. command and NORAD deployed multiple ground-based air defence systems around Mar-a-Lago and the Palm Beach International Airport, where the U.S. president frequents. This is at the request of the U.S. Secret Service without their giving a specific reason other than claiming that they are operating in a heightened security environment.

What new threat do you suspect the U.S. has detected that would warrant them to deploy these air-defence systems, and how urgent is this threat?

The Chair: Who are you asking?

Cheryl Gallant: Anybody who wants to answer it.

Go ahead, Mr. Leuprecht.

Christian Leuprecht: Ms. Gallant, that's a great question.

This is akin to the challenges we're seeing in Europe with the kinetic campaign that Russia has been running against European installations, including, notoriously, the defeated attack, the attempted attack, at the airport in Leipzig. These defences would likely be primarily targeting unmanned aerial systems and other drone warfare types that can be launched from a multiplicity of platforms. We see this in Europe happening on virtually a daily basis and on a weekly basis over critical infrastructure.

This is something we need to get ready for, including in the Arctic, which includes drone swarms that pose a genuine threat to the security and stability of North America.

Cheryl Gallant: Dr. Huebert, because NORAD is involved in the deployment, does this government need to act immediately in securing our own air defence if we were to meet the same threat that the U.S. has just detected?

How available and at our disposal is air defence so that we could protect our airspace, particularly around our national capital where the federal government operates?

Robert Huebert: Yes, that's an excellent question.

The first part of the question is whether we need to act in the same way as the Americans? Absolutely. What we're seeing right across the board is the development of these new types of delivery systems, the drones and other unidentified aircraft.

The other thing that makes it so challenging for any state that is facing them now is often what's referred to as fourth-generation warfare, where the enemy is not identified. In other words, it's not a question of being able to say that this was Russian and this was Chinese, or any other state. It becomes unknown.

This is really what is being talked about beyond what the inflection report refers to but also at the core of the recently released security policy, which is saying that the delivery of these new systems, this ability to attack on domestic areas, is something of an increasing threat. It is going to be something that NORAD is going to have to increasingly deal with, but it still comes down to issues of resources and having the ability to do so.

Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Lackenbauer, as this government slowly acquires our own ground-based air defences, at present, what available air defence capabilities do we have or can be acquired quickly to counter a potential area of threat from drone swarms?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: Yes, I can actually answer that question directly, in the sense that I'm aware of “Inflection Point 2025” pointing out the need for investments in tactical air defence capabilities for continental and expeditionary defence and deterrence. It's there. It's going to be very short-range air defence and very specific sites and deployable systems. It can be short-range air defence with a bit more range for combat brigades, but in terms of the actual suite of systems, I can't speak to that directly.

The challenge, I think, is that we don't have the domestic industrial capability to produce these things on our own right now. We're still reliant upon our allies to access these. We're going to have to get into a queue.

I know that Professor Huebert brought up the issues of ammunition stocks and munitions more generally. We're also facing a constrained environment, where we're not the only customer out there looking for these kinds of defence systems. Here's an area where, yes, we're going to be looking for interim stopgap measures to close whatever perceived needs are there.

I'm not sure if we have a Canadian situation requiring the kinds of steps that President Trump has taken with Mar-a-Lago. Whether that's protecting himself and his family or U.S. national interests is probably up for interpretation and question, but in our case, I think it's important for us to be looking at this as an important mission set that we need to be looking at—and it does connect to the army. Here, it speaks again to the need for thinking all domain, and ground-based air defence is something that is being looked at as an army capability that needs to be developed.

● (1605)

Cheryl Gallant: Dr. Huebert, if a hostile aerial threat were to possess the ability to strike deep within the United States, should we expect it here in Canada?

Robert Huebert: This is really the crux of what we're trying to deal with: understanding the enemies and adversaries that we have, along with their capabilities. There's no question whatsoever that if an enemy has the capability of striking deep within the United States, they will have the ability of striking within Canada. I think one of the best examples we saw, of course, was when the Chinese released a series of unidentified flying objects and balloons in order to demonstrate that.

Basically, if you are coming up with these novel ways of entering into North American aerospace, it is a combined defence system. That is the essence from 1957 when we came to an agreement with the Americans: Basically, if you have that ability to attack in central U.S., you have that ability to attack in Canada. I think that for many of the adversaries we're talking about, they won't necessarily draw a distinction between us or the Americans in this context.

Cheryl Gallant: Dr. Huebert, would we expect any aerial threat, if they were to attack North America, to be launched covertly within our borders, such as what's been happening in Europe with the Russian drone attack against Leipzig and its airport, which happened this summer?

Robert Huebert: There's no question that we have to prepare for this possibility.

Remember when we were dealing with international terrorism and we saw, of course, the Toronto 18 trying to engage in some of the most horrific terrorist attacks that we had seen occur, both within the United States with 9/11 and, of course, within Europe. In other words, the mistaken belief that because we're Canadians no one's going to attack us, even though they're going to attack everybody around us, I don't believe holds in this context.

Remember that what we are seeing within the real rubric of the capability of our adversaries is the effort to divide. One of the best ways of doing that is to ensure that you are able to attack any of the western allies, and that includes us in this context.

Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The Chair: Thanks to both of you.

Mr. Watchorn, it's over to you for six minutes, sir.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I'd like to direct my first question to Mr. Pedersen.

First of all, I want to thank you for your opening five minutes. I could sense the pride in your voice, and I could sense how much the land and Canada mean to you.

We had the chance to meet with the rangers up in Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk last summer. They were telling us about some of the problems they have in just getting basic computer equipment. I'd like you to tell us what problems you're seeing right now, what equipment you guys need and what services you guys need to help you out so that you can do your job properly up there.

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: Thank you.

I think it might be easier to tell you what we do have. You're seeing most of what I have right now, other than my .308 rifle. I have a cap, a sweater, my medals, a basic uniform and that's about it.

Yes, we really need more equipment if you guys want us to be effective up here. We're great with our .308s, but there's only so much we can do with those.

Tim Watchorn: To follow up on that, they also told us there were problems coordinating with the Coast Guard on search and rescue stuff. The Coast Guard has some search and rescue boats up there, but apparently it was difficult to coordinate with them to make sure that you guys had access to the boats.

Are you seeing that in your area as well?

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: Do you mean for rangers' access to the boats?

Tim Watchorn: Yes. Do you have access, as the Coast Guard Auxiliary, to these boats?

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: I think you're referring to the boats the Coast Guard Auxiliary owns. We have access to them. At the moment, there are 13 communities across Nunavut that have these boats. They're working on getting more for other communities, but it may be some time before every community has one of these boats.

Tim Watchorn: I have maybe one last question for you.

How do we get young people from first nations communities interested in joining the rangers? How do we build up the force to make sure that you guys have what you need in personnel and equipment up there so that we get the young people involved?

● (1610)

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: Get them involved in operations that come up here and in all aspects. Youth are very intuitive. If you give them a task that involves working with the people here while they're here, they're going to become engaged and, of course, very interested. Hopefully, they'll move on to the rangers and then maybe into the CAF.

Tim Watchorn: That's great. Thank you for that.

If I could, I'll go to Professor Lackenbauer.

You spoke about Operation Nanook before. I wonder how we could get the best practices from all of the countries that are involved in Operation Nanook to better serve our armed forces in operations in the Arctic. How do we go about getting these best practices?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: That's an excellent question.

I just got back from various trips to Nordic allies over the last two months, and there's an insatiable appetite on their side to learn from us about some of our best practices in terms of resilience. Canadian Rangers are a case in point. The Coast Guard Auxiliary is another. At the same time, they have a ton to offer us in terms of how they conceptualize total defence and comprehensive security, which are other ways of describing the intent expressed by Prime Minister Carney in the national security strategy that came out last week.

From that standpoint, definitely within a Nanook concept, I think the fact that NATO has now integrated our Operation Nanook—our signature, domestic, year-round activity—into its enhanced vigilance activity, Arctic Sentry, and is cohering that with all of the other activities going on in the European high north and Arctic creates incentives for all of the like-minded allied Arctic countries to come together to share best practices and to realize that the work we're doing in the Arctic actually gets us our credits for allied contributions going forward.

If I may build a bit upon the rangers, certainly, from a Canadian Rangers enhancement side, there are proposals to go forward with increasing and modernizing their communications systems, policies, training and support arrangements. It's looking at things like communications suites, some of which were actually trialled during Operation Nanook-Nunalivut this winter and spring—satellite and Internet connectivity situational awareness tools, for example—to supplement all of the knowledge rangers already have on the land but also to figure out ways, in the spirit of the national security strategy, to take the on-the-ground experience and knowledge rangers have and be able to feed that into our overall Canadian federal operating picture.

At the same time, with all the different sensors we have that we're ingesting information from, we can figure out new ways to triage information and send it to the rangers and other community members so that we're not looking at these security measures as another example of us extracting information from the north. Rather, they're seeing it as an ongoing relationship.

I think the rangers are one of the great examples out there of what a true partnership relationship, based upon trust and respect, actually looks like.

Tim Watchorn: Thank you.

Professor Huebert, I have maybe one last question for you.

You piqued my interest when you talked about an independent threat assessment board. What would that look like?

Robert Huebert: One model is that you set up something along the American system, which is a bipartisan, bilateral element that can constantly be feeding in. Part of this is that they are required by Congress to do this every four years, so you get the various reports that come out to provide the threat. The reason why it's so badly needed, in my assessment, is that each and every one of the threats that are identified in the context of the army report, the forthcoming navy strategy and even the national strategy paper, which is a security paper in itself, is a long-term threat that we've been aware of for a long time.

The question in my mind is always this: Why is it always that it takes something such as the election and activity of a second-term Donald Trump before we take it seriously? Perhaps if we were to develop a multipartisan ability to do this, so that we are not simply trying to come up with solutions that are only going to truly come into effect by 2040 and assuming that our adversaries will wait until that time before they actually cause us a conflict, it would help us tremendously.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Huebert.

Thank you, Mr. Watchorn.

Monsieur Barsalou-Duval, it's over to you for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to talk about some of the topics discussed so far, particularly regarding external threats. I believe that some of my colleagues spoke about the attacks in Leipzig, which remain unclaimed.

We could wonder about the likelihood of these types of attacks—claimed or unclaimed—taking place on Canadian soil. I think that you all said that this type of thing could happen.

My question concerns geography, which is nonetheless quite different. When we look at Russia's location relative to Germany, we can see the distance that must be covered. Perhaps it isn't the same type of distance that must be covered in order to reach Canada. This is especially true when we consider that the population resides in the south and that the Far North encompasses a vast expanse.

On the one hand, do you think that we could easily see unclaimed attacks despite these obstacles? What types of attacks might our infrastructure face?

On the other hand, couldn't the attacks take a different form, such as terrorism? If so, how can we prepare for this?

Those are the two parts of my question. Perhaps I'll start with you, Mr. Huebert.

● (1615)

[*English*]

Robert Huebert: My answer to that very important question you've asked has always been that you have to look at our adversaries at three levels. The first thing you have to look at is what their capabilities are. What do they invest in terms of scarce resources and what are the weapon systems they're developing? The second thing you have to look at is, of course, the public statements the political leadership provides. The third thing you have to look at is the intent. What are they actually doing?

I'll start off with the most dangerous kinetic threats to Canada, in my view. If you look at Russia after the coming of power of Putin, it is easy in the open literature to track a series of delivery systems that are clearly designed to be able to hit North American targets. The reason I say "North American" is that, of course, the U.S. is the major target, but in terms of geography, our ability to provide a means of sensors places us at risk as well, as well as our leadership. That is a KSAU. That is a Poseidon. That is an Avangard.

We started becoming aware of all of these weapons systems as early as 2002 or 2003, so there's long-term intent. We also have Russia talking publicly about the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, I think we have to take Putin at his word when he started talking about that in the second phase of the Ukrainian war in 2022. That's the most dangerous kinetic.

The second most dangerous kinetic, of course, is the fact that we see China developing amphibious capabilities that, again, in terms of capability and intent in statements, seem to suggest that we have to take it seriously about eventually using military force to retake Taiwan. If that happens, there would be a spillover because the Americans would, of course, come to their assistance. What happens then is that the Asia-Pacific region will provide a danger against Canada. It's lesser, I would suggest, than a Russian threat, but it's still there.

We then start getting into the threats of the terrorists and the unknown actors that want to destabilize our societies for reasons that we may not have a further comprehension of. These are the terrorists, the hybrid threat or even those states that don't want to be identified as attacking but still want to weaken us. That becomes one of the most difficult ones to our attempts.

Basically, it's the entire spectrum, going from the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons to conventional forces that may occur in Europe or attacks by terrorist entities seeking to weaken us. We may not even know our enemies at this point in time.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you for your response.

I may be wrong. It seems that the situation that I'm about to discuss is what we're seeing right now. It isn't necessarily what we'll see tomorrow, the day after tomorrow or in six months. However, the attacks that we're currently seeing in Europe fall mainly along the lines of the attack in Leipzig. We can also talk about destabilization through computer systems, digital technology, and so on. I gather that these types of attacks generally don't lead to an open conflict.

We don't hear much about this type of situation, which could have happened here. It's as if it isn't being reported to us. Is it because we aren't the target, or because it isn't being reported to us?

To what extent are these attacks exactly the types of things that we should expect to see here?

[*English*]

Robert Huebert: The problem with answering your question is, of course, the ones that are not reported—the ones where, perhaps, we can see aggressors starting to utilize their plans against us, but often, because they're not reported, we're not aware of it. Non-awareness does not equate to the fact that we are, in fact, somehow immune to it.

Again, I draw on our reaction to some of the terrorist activities that the RCMP and other security forces were successful in being able to stop. Go back to the threat that was posed by the Toronto 18. Had they seriously been successful with their efforts to break into Parliament and execute the Prime Minister on live TV, I dare say that we would be in a very different society.

There's a differential in Canada in terms of how we treat threats, whether or not threats have been successfully carried out on Canadian soil and how many we have stopped. This convinces us that geography is still able to protect us in a way it did prior. I would argue that this does not exist in this case now.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

Mr. Leuprecht, do you have anything to add to the discussion so far?

Christian Leuprecht: Oddly, neither the Canadian army's transformation plan nor the national security strategy mentions the threats. China isn't mentioned at all. Russia comes up only once—in connection with the war of aggression—in the documents related to the transformation. Hybrid threats and extremist threats aren't mentioned at all.

First, we need to identify the vectors and players behind the threats before we can establish a strong position to defend ourselves against them. As noted by my colleague, Mr. Huebert, we have a problem with the perception of the threat.

The members of Parliament and Canadians must first come to an agreement. You must explain to the general public that we're indeed facing serious threats. These threats are coming not only from abroad, but also from within our own country already, as we see in Europe every day.

We must take a firm stand against these threats that extend beyond our borders.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, do I have any time left?

The Chair: Is that all?

[*English*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Do I still have time?

The Chair: No, you will have time later.

Mr. Kibble has time now, but he only has five minutes.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for their statements.

Mr. Pedersen, thank you for your service.

I want to move beyond computers and equipment shortages. I think you clearly identified the bigger picture. You twice referred to having a seat at the decision-making table. I think that was a wise comment. I was in Inuvik recently, and I heard many frustrations when I was up there.

Do you feel the Inuit are being included at the decision-making table under the government's new plans?

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: As of right now, I believe they're a little under-represented. I don't know of any fellow rangers at the table right now.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you for that. I really appreciated that you asked that question. That was really key.

I'd like to move on, now, to Mr. Huebert.

I've asked a lot of people this question: Is one manoeuvre division enough?

You mentioned the problem of threat assessment, and you also mentioned independent threat assessments. Is one manoeuvre division enough?

Robert Huebert: Isn't that the question?

You have to appreciate that what we are doing with the modernization.... When General Wright says that the army of today is not what we need into the future, it comes back to threat assessment and what you are trying to respond to.

There are three levels we have to respond to. I would say that what is promised is enough at the first level and maybe at the second level but not at the third level.

The first level is convincing the Americans that we are doing enough for the joint protection of North America. Trump is, of course, the worst extreme in terms of attacking Canada on our not doing enough and all the other types of rhetoric he brings forward. However, recognize that this was identified even prior to Trump. The Americans were, in fact, becoming very critical of our lack of defence expenditure. You have to make an effort. In academic circles, it's called the “defence against help”. You have to show the Americans that you are not a drag on their system. Therefore, doing something has tended to be enough.

The second level, of course, is deterring. It's deterring the Russians from continuing the aggressive actions they began. We can trace this back to 2008 and even possibly beforehand—like keeping Georgia out of NATO and the EU. It's about being able to say to the Russians, “No, there is a unified western voice. We will be able to stand.” In that context, just the ability to mount an efficient force could be said to be enough. That's the deterrence we have in the Baltics. All of this contributes to convincing the Russians that we speak with one voice.

The problem is—

● (1625)

Jeff Kibble: Thank you. I got that part. I just want to move on. I have some questions for Dr. Leuprecht as well. Thank you for that.

Dr. Leuprecht, it's good to see you again. Perhaps you could quickly address the threat.

You referenced the defence strategy. I'm wondering if you've had the opportunity to review it. What are your overall comments? Some have characterized it as hollow. I'm wondering about your comments on the defence strategy that was just tabled.

Christian Leuprecht: Look, here's the threat. The threat, I think, is that an actor such as Russia has built out the capabilities to impose strategic dilemmas on Canada, allies and partners in multiple regions in the domains of its choosing and with the timing and means of its choosing, including land, air, sea, cyber and space. We have not built the escalation management capabilities and the escalation ladder in order to be able to effectively deter that type of aggression. That type of aggression will accelerate as Russia weakens on the battlefield in Ukraine.

Indeed, with regard to your question and previous questions, we can expect the Russian threat to accelerate, including here in North America. We need to take a cue from our European allies, who now refer to this not as hybrid threats but as an orchestrated daily hybrid campaign against them. We need to change our language.

In the national security strategy, we are overemphasizing the military, and we are not focusing enough on cognitive warfare, financial warfare and the home front, including law and order as well as domestic resilience. It is missing the most important element for reform: urgent RCMP reform so that it can deliver on its federal mandate and the national security mandate that the government and Canadians expect it to deliver on.

Jeff Kibble: Thank you very much.

I know I'm out of time, but perhaps one of my colleagues will ask about the domestic intelligence operations that you hinted at in your opening statement. I would love to know more about that. If not, maybe you could table some information on that. That was a compelling comment.

Thank you, everyone, for your answers.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kibble.

Ms. Lapointe, we'll go over to you for five minutes.

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

Professor Lackenbauer, in your opening comments, you suggested that members of this committee should request Canadian Armed Forces leaders to provide us with measurable readiness objectives. Can you tell us what we should look for in the responses that they provide to this committee when we ask that question?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: Sure. That's a great question.

I think it does begin with what threat they are responding to—readiness and preparedness for what?

The other big component of this is a central implementation challenge. I think my colleagues have also touched on this. There's an impending tension between the investment being undertaken by the CAF and the staffing needed to turn investments into operational capability. It's not just about reversing a decade of understaffing against the approved establishment. It's whether the establishment is actually tailored to a CAF with the new capabilities and platforms—from interceptors, surface ships and subs to fighter aircraft—that are now being acquired. The reality is that we may not have enough people to operate, train, maintain, protect and sustain the expanded force.

When I think about readiness and the metrics of this, it's conceptualizing this as a CAF-wide challenge that has important consequences for army modernization but that recognizes that new capabilities bring additional tasks, including things like base security crews, training, maintenance, command and control, and logistics support. It's about thinking into the future.

Right now a lot of the planning documents are focused on filling establishment levels that have already been created to deal with past operational postures. As we're looking forward, I think we need to really ask for some frank accounting in terms of numbers. Right now, a lot of the budget is going towards capital programs, procuring kit, equipment and platforms. Is it going proportionately into the operational side and especially the training and force-generation side that I think is vital?

What I would be asking for is a lot of clarity about what readiness looks like in terms of the people. How are we making sure that we're creating the right establishment with the right specializations to be able to build that force? We could find ourselves with a whole bunch of platforms, vehicles and long-range firing systems but not the personnel to crew them.

● (1630)

Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

Professor Huebert, it would seem that independent threat assessments are something all the colleagues around this table are asking you about. Why do you consider that it needs to be independent?

Robert Huebert: It needs to be independent because, if I can be frank here, Canada has demonstrated at the political level that we tend to want to avoid certain threats that we deem politically inexpedient. I'll give you one example. For the longest time, we've had an appreciation that there are those adversaries who want to interfere within our political system, but if you have a look in terms of what CSIS was allowed to report on, we see a general blanket statement in terms of interference.

It takes until the Hogue report to actually have an identification of who these various nations are and how they are trying to undermine us. Many Canadians were surprised, though not at the first two. Everybody, when the Hogue report...and I should point out it's at about page 221 before we actually say it, but we identify the Russians and the Chinese. Okay, we had a suspicion of that, but we also see that the Hogue report identified India, Pakistan and Iran. There are obviously political ramifications in terms of how much we want to identify the role of India in terms of interference, and even Iran in terms of interference.

The reason why I emphasize an independent requirement, or at least a bipartisan effort, is to eliminate that political sensitivity in which our political elites sometimes have been hesitant to identify certain actors because it might in fact infringe on political outcomes, if I can be so bold with that.

Viviane Lapointe: The principal Arctic body for co-operation and dialogue is the Arctic Council. In your opinion, does its framework meet the current geopolitical realities faced by Canada and other nations in the Arctic right now?

Robert Huebert: If this is still directed towards me, because I know Whitney will want to say something, and I know that Aivgak will want to comment, the answer is no. The Arctic Council was devised in a period of what is referred to as "Arctic exceptionalism," in which the security elements were specifically forbidden to be discussed, and that was at the insistence of the Americans.

I might add that in much of the success in this period, when we thought co-operation with Russia was in fact possible, not having the military segment on it was, of course, something worthwhile. We did try to add having the chief of the defence staff with an arm's-length connection around one period. However, that would prove to be too difficult once the Russians invaded Ukraine in 2014, so that's not what it's designed to do. I think that's the reason why it's had the successes that it has.

I'll yield some time to Whitney, because I know he has a lot of thoughts on that.

The Chair: Whitney, we're going to have to proceed to the next questioner. Monsieur Barsalou-Duval may ask the question himself, I don't know, but I think he has other questions.

We go over to you, Monsieur.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to continue this discussion with you, Mr. Leuprecht.

When you delivered your opening remarks earlier, you really emphasized the difficulty that reservists face in obtaining sufficient equipment or training. The "Inflection Point 2025" document, which the government is currently introducing, seeks to completely separate the reserves and the regular forces at the division level.

Do you think that this will have a positive impact on these issues?

On the contrary, will separating them into truly distinct divisions lead to them working together less?

Are there ways to address the shortcomings identified in the reserves?

Christian Leuprecht: In my view, the purpose of the restructuring is to make operational combat capabilities more effective.

There used to be three divisions, and none of them had enough members. They usually had perhaps two-thirds of the required number of members. They tried to recruit additional members, particularly from the reserves.

We're trying to strengthen combat capabilities. However, as I said, we have in fact increased the demands placed on the reserves without resolving the long-standing issues already identified.

My colleagues likely have some comments to make on the reserves as well.

● (1635)

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Would any of you like to share your thoughts on this topic?

[*English*]

Robert Huebert: The issue of reserve redevelopment has been a long-standing issue. My colleague, David Bercuson, who was also Whitney's supervisor, has long written on the fact that we often talk about the necessity of bringing in the reserves in terms of preparation, but we always undersource them in terms of their economic capabilities. There's even a possibility, in fact, that the reservists involved with the tragedy over at Wainwright may, in fact, be treated differently in terms of long-term requirements—I won't call them "benefits"—after the aftermath of the tragedy they suffered in that context.

The fact that this remains a possibility highlights the fact we have not figured out how to adequately reward our reserves, how to identify them as integral parts and how to make sure they are in fact reimbursed. It goes back to a couple of the points that Christian was making earlier.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Lackenbauer, do you have anything to say on this topic as well?

[*English*]

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: Since the 1990s, we've had this total force concept, which largely conceptualizes the primary reserves as augmentees to the regular force. A lot of their training is directed to having them go and fill out the missions that are required for which we do not have a sufficiently large regular force to conduct on its own.

I think we find ourselves now at a moment where perhaps we look at the reserves in a different way.

Is there a way in which the Canadian Rangers, for example, are part of the Canadian Army reserves? They are an element of it, a distinct subcomponent.

If we're being encouraged in “Inflection Point 2025” to think about changes, to be bold and not to be encumbered by the way we have done things in the past, is it time now to think about a more varied reserve force that also has a role for primary reservists who are mainly directed and intended to be used in defence of Canada missions? They would be domestically oriented such that the metric of what they are being trained to do is more directed at the defence of Canada and of North America.

I think that's a conversation worth reinvigorating. Again, it may rub against some of the ways we've thought about the roles, particularly for the primary reserves, and the types of training and metrics for readiness we apply to the primary reserves.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

[*Translation*]

Christian Leuprecht: The structures of the reserves actually reflect the fact that Canadians don't support a large regular force. We need to expand the reserves, but we simply don't have the structure to do so in the required manner.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Anderson, it's over to you for five minutes, sir.

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

Professor Huebert, all of you have identified significant weaknesses with continental defence.

In 1949, NATO was set up as an umbrella organization with the force coming from the North American continent toward Europe as an umbrella alliance. In 2026, we have a different front now. We have the Arctic front, yet NATO is still set up so that the force goes in one direction.

With this added sort of swing toward the EU, are NATO commitments—and I'd like to separate the EU commitments that are over and above the NATO commitments—getting in the way of North American continental defence, in your opinion?

Robert Huebert: I don't know if I'd go so far as to say that they're getting in the way, but they're going to complicate it. One of the drivers right now of why we see such a focus on the return of the third option is the American factor, the Trump factor. Remember, we tried to do this in the 1970s as well, when we were also trying to get away from the American influence.

The question I'm asking myself at this point is what happens in two years when Trump is dead, out of office or a dictator? What is going to change in terms of how we have attempted to get closer to the Europeans as we have under the EU? As part of their price tag for our doing more on the economic side, call it an associate membership or whatever term we are now utilizing, an underlying theme and expectation of the Europeans will in fact be a contribution to defence.

To your point on NATO not looking to the north, we are now seeing a recognition that there is an upper tier of NATO members that are very aware that the bulk of the strategic threat from the Russians is in the Kola Peninsula. Therefore, Finland, Sweden and the other Nordic countries are in fact creating a very different orientation of NATO than what we had in 1949.

It's confounding because of the political overlay, but it still points to trying to deter the Russians from everything that Christian was talking about earlier in this context. That's where NATO and NORAD, once we pull out Trump, become a critical point of coordination in meeting this threat.

● (1640)

Scott Anderson: Professor Lackenbauer, do you have any thoughts on that same question?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: Very much so, and perhaps they are slightly different than my former adviser, Professor Huebert, on this one.

I think the opposite. We need to make sure that continental defence is not seen as an obstacle to contributions to NATO in Europe. We need to see that the access through the European high north and north Atlantic is one of the known threats to North America. It's where the Russian northern fleet would deploy to set up launch stations off the eastern seaboard of Canada and the United States.

I think we need to go back to Louis St. Laurent's Gray lecture in 1947, where he laid out the road map for Canada that still exists to this very day. I would view Carney's Davos speech early this year as the successor to the Gray lecture. It talks about the importance of Canada being strong at home so that we can contribute abroad as an international actor and help to make sure that we deter and, if necessary, defeat threats as far away from Canada as possible before they manifest as threats to Canada.

Scott Anderson: Thank you very much.

With regard to procurement and procuring more and more from the EU, in the event of a European conflict, are our supply lines going to be constricted because of that? How can we ensure that we're going to actually get the sort of equipment we need if there's a European war soaking it up on that end?

Robert Huebert: That's the problem. This is what we need the Canada industrial defence strategy to deal with. It talks in vagaries in terms of a supply centre, but if the European supply centre back to us is cut off, we have a problem. If we rely on the Americans but then the Americans become entangled in a war with China over Taiwan, we then face being cut off beyond the political side. This is where we need to recognize that there are no golden bullets. There is no “solve it all”. In fact, you need an industrial strategy that acknowledges that we may lose the European side. We may lose anything coming from the Asians, or we may lose it from the Americans. I haven't seen this show up in any of our documentation yet to explain how you actually respond in that context.

Scott Anderson: Thank you very much.

Christian Leuprecht: You're quite—

The Chair: Mr. Leuprecht, I'm going to go to Chris Malette, and then we'll proceed.

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

Thank you to our witnesses.

Thank you, Mr. Pedersen, again, for your service.

By the way, that was epic when you said, “Just because we didn't write it down doesn't mean it's not science.” I'm going to use that some time. I'll attribute it to you, of course. As a former reporter, I've never been ashamed of catching a good line when I see one.

CFB Trenton is in my riding of Bay of Quinte. Given that it provides logistical support to Canadian Forces Station Alert and other areas north, how important is the relationship between southern military installations, like Trenton, and northern communities in maintaining Canada's Arctic presence? From your experience, can you see any areas to expand that? You said you've travelled half a million miles across the north.

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: Building a relationship, first and foremost, with Trenton and any other organization south that comes up and plans to work up here, I've always loved to use the hockey analogy. We have to get to know our whole team before we can decide who's the best forward, who's the goalie and who's on defence. In order for us to work together, we have to know each other's strengths and weaknesses, and then we can go from there.

● (1645)

Chris Malette: In your estimation, are there opportunities to improve coordination between air mobility units and the rangers? Does that exist now in any way, shape or form, or do you just take it from Canadian Joint Operations Command in the north?

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: With my ranger hat on, yes, it's with joint operations. My day job is manager of search and rescue for the territory of Nunavut. I deal with Trenton and all the other JRCCs quite often. That relationship is beginning to be quite strong from a few round tables over the years. If we could get the rangers more involved, that would be great too.

Chris Malette: We're quite proud of the JRCCs' effort, not just in Trenton but across the country. They do some pretty amazing work.

My next question is for Professor Lackenbauer.

The indigenous and northern communities are essential partners, as we're hearing, in protecting Canada's Arctic sovereignty, Professor.

How can the government ensure that Arctic defence modernization meaningfully incorporates indigenous knowledge, strengthens partnerships in northern communities and creates lasting economic opportunities for people living in the north?

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: Thanks. That's a fantastic question. To me, this is the centre of gravity—the relationships. I think it's important for us to shift. We don't face acute, exceptional, conventional military threats to our north, as I see it, in the immediate term. A lot of those have been overinflated, apart from those we've faced to Canada more generally.

It's important to look at indigenous partners, Inuit partners like Calvin, in the north as providers of Canadian security, granting us access to their homelands and welcoming us so as to be able to operate as part of the overall defence of Canada, defence of North America and defence of NATO enterprises that we're involved in.

From this standpoint, first of all, I think it begins with acknowledging and being more emphatic on the value of these partnerships. They're enduring. They're long-standing. Calvin's expression of his pride in being Canadian and serving Canada is something that we hear throughout the Canadian north.

First and foremost, it's taking that spirit of partnership and transferring it over so that when we're talking about undertaking these big investments in infrastructure, we are transparent and clear. Not all of that infrastructure is going to be dual-use. Some of it is going to be dedicated military infrastructure because that's required. No one at a community level is going to have access to a CF-35 hangar unless they have level three, top secret clearance and a whole bunch of things.

A bunch of other infrastructure builds are being conceptualized right now, in continuous dialogue with northern rights holders and northern stakeholders. From the mayors and chiefs to the hamlet officials and regional Inuit organizations and so on, there are thick layers of conversation on an ongoing basis. I think the challenge is going to be the expectation that we deliver to very ambitious timelines, at the same time as adhering to these processes that we've established with northern rights holders.

In essence, we should celebrate the partnership and work towards those partnerships. We have a lot that has been produced in terms of reports and priorities set by northern leadership. Our retreat should not be to set up another committee. We need to harmonize, synchronize and cohere all the information we have, and be prepared to act, beginning with an ask from northern leadership. Northern leadership should also have some prepared asks of the military.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

We're now going to go to our third round, starting with Mr. Bezan.

James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for joining us today. I want to start with Mr. Pedersen.

Are there enough days of training currently for the Canadian Rangers, in your mind?

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: No...not if you want us to expand and become a more effective footprint in the Arctic.

James Bezan: Rangers are supposed to be at a strength of about 5,000 members. The last number I saw was just over 4,700, which is down. It's always been around 4,950 to 5,000. Are you seeing a decrease across the Canadian Rangers group?

Why is it happening that we're not at full strength?

● (1650)

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: Up here in the Arctic, I noticed that after COVID, everything dropped, including the ranger participation. It's not the only thing that has decreased. As I said earlier, my day job is manager of search and rescue, and our search and rescue volunteers have unfortunately gone down as well. I think after COVID, that just seemed to decline.

James Bezan: What can we do to bolster the ranks of the Canadian Rangers at this point in time? How do we attract new recruits and then retain the ones that we have?

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: You can start early and get involved with schools and the education department. Get the CAF into schools, showing how effective it can be. Then show the kids that we're not big, scary guys who only carry guns. We are Canadian. We're here for you.

We have Nunavut Arctic College programs that we can develop as future employment within the CAF. We can also enhance the junior rangers and cadet programs with more CAF involvement—just everyday appearances of CAF working with Inuit and and the rangers.

James Bezan: I appreciate that. We definitely need to do more to grow the rangers. I think you are our permanent presence in the Arctic—way more present than JTFN and our other installations up there. The more we can grow the rangers and increase your responsibilities, the safer we will be as Canadians right across the board.

My question is for our professors. I'll start with Professor Leuprecht.

In the defence of Canada division, a lot of concerns are being raised by the reserves across this country that they are going to be trained predominantly to do emergency assistance, disaster relief and fighting wildfires and other natural disasters, rather than being trained as a group to augment the Canadian Forces at home and abroad. Do you have any of those concerns?

We talk about all the money that's going into capital projects and new equipment. At the same time, operational budgets are being cut by 10% right now. It seems that the front line of the cuts are happening at the reserve level.

This is for all three of our professors. Do you see that there is going to be a perception that the Canadian Forces will not be using the reserves the way they've been traditionally used and that there is a moral hazard that provinces are going to use our reserves first and foremost for fighting natural disasters, rather than investing in their own capabilities?

Christian Leuprecht: Mr. Bezan, as you know, I've done an an entire book around this problem—on 27 countries around the world and how they responded during COVID and the like. I've long been on record on the perverse incentive when provinces know that rather than invest in prevention and resilience, they can just call the feds. Of course, the federal government is also guilty. There are now several cases where the federal government responded, for political reasons, before local resources were exhausted. We need to get back to a better balance.

I also think we have public statements from members in uniform saying that they would do their best with the domestic operations for which they were called, but they were neither trained nor equipped for the missions they were asked to conduct. The assumption by the CAF is that if you're trained for combat operations, that's sufficient for domestic operations. Given the scale, scope and complexity of domestic operations that we've seen, this approach is no longer going to work.

I've long been on record that we need a dedicated structure—probably led by the air force, because we always need strategic lift—with a significant, permanent reserve component so that we don't constantly have to pull people out of operations, training or other expectations with regard to support of combat operations. The business model is no longer working. We see that in transformation, but there's a long way to go to get us to a more sustainable level.

James Bezan: Just—

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

Mr. Bezan, time is of the essence. We'll get back to you, though.

Ms. Idlout, I'm going to go over to you quickly before Mr. Bezan interrupts—I'm kidding.

It's over to you, Ms. Idlout.

Lori Idlout (Nunavut, Lib.): *Qujannamiik*.

It's good to see you again, Whitney and Aivgak.

I wanted to ask you a question, Aivgak. You gave a comparison of what happens when there's not a relationship with Inuit in terms of working in the Arctic with the Franklin expedition, for example. When a joint task force comes to Nunavut, for example, what kind of training do you give to the Canadian Armed Forces operating up there that allows them to have success in their training?

● (1655)

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: As you know, the rangers are the experts up in the north.

Some of the guys who come up here haven't ever been in these types of temperatures, because they live down south and they work down there. The only time they really feel the Arctic air is when they come up on operations. Sometimes it's training for how to dress up. It's as simple as how to dress up properly, because up here, the air bites you. It literally bites you. Operating in -50°C takes a special skill set. You need to know how to dress up properly without freezing yourself.

We do a lot of that—on basically living and operating in extreme temperatures and on how to survive with little to no resources up here.

Lori Idlout: Thank you for your 25 years of service. I first met you in Kugluktuk, when our indigenous and northern affairs committee went there and met with the Canadian Rangers. Then you also appeared at the INAN committee in 2022, where you gave recommendations regarding how to make sure that the Canadian Rangers' role was strengthened.

I wonder if you could share with us if there have been any differences since 2022, what you see in our policies today, whether there have been any improvements and if you have any suggestions for solutions to improve that relationship with the Canadian Rangers.

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: There hasn't been anything very significant to my knowledge since 2022, but I would recommend that.... We are the experts in the north. CAF are the experts in air force and defence. We're not trying to replace or become experts within CAF, and they're not trying to become experts up here. If we work together on all operations up here, then they can thrive and do what they need to do up here, and we can assist them and basically keep them alive in our extreme environment.

Lori Idlout: I've also met amazing people like Neil Kigutaq and Titus Allooloo, who are also Canadian Rangers. There seems to be a certain kind of person who is willing to be a Canadian Ranger, and those people also typically do search and rescue. They provide emergency response.

Do you think there's a connection that we need to keep in mind in terms of search and rescue skills and whether those types of other activities can contribute to ensuring that the Canadian Rangers' role is also strengthened?

Calvin Aivgak Pedersen: In the north, there are 41,000 people. Unfortunately, in a lot of things like being a ranger or a search and rescue member, those are the same people. If you look behind me, these are the different hats I wear. Earlier I said I'm part of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. I'm also part of search and rescue. I'm a ranger. I'm also part of the race committee. Every community has multiple people wearing multiple hats.

It's just unfortunate. We have such a small population, and it's spread out across 25 communities. Within those 25 communities, it's a hard thing for people to do search and rescue because we know everybody. We know everybody we're looking for. We've grown up with them. We've worked with them. We see them every day. It has created a bit of a challenge that way because we so intimately know the people.

I hope I answered your question there.

● (1700)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pedersen.

Thank you, Ms. Idlout.

Monsieur Barsalou-Duval, it's back to you.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So far, we don't seem to have talked much about one aspect. It isn't necessarily mentioned in the “Inflection Point 2025” document either. However, I think that it's an important issue. It's the matter of soldier education.

The “Inflection Point 2025” document refers to multiple lean years. It states that things are going badly and that gaps need to be filled in certain areas. We're filling the gaps that constitute major problems to solve. We're organizing things so that we can operate more easily with what we have. People say that we finally have some resources. However, I wonder whether we're looking even further ahead than that to five, 10 or even 15 years down the road.

I think that education for soldiers and the armed forces—meaning the types of education, the nature of the required knowledge and the kind of equipment needed in the future—is important. I'm thinking in particular of the fact that—as we know—more and more pieces of equipment in certain theatres of operation don't require the presence of humans. In other words, it's stand-alone equipment. This strikes me as a major shift in dynamics. I don't see a clear direction regarding a large-scale reform or the approach to educating members or acquiring equipment.

Am I wrong? If not, I would like to hear your thoughts on this, Mr. Leuprecht.

Christian Leuprecht: When member shortages arise, one way to create multiplier effects is to provide education. The documents related to the army's transformation make no mention of education. The documents discuss training, but they make no mention of professional development. This is despite the Canadian Armed Forces placing a strategic emphasis on non-commissioned members and their education in order to increase the number of officers, since they don't have enough of them. They can't educate or train enough of them quickly enough. They also want to ensure that the forces still have the necessary leadership.

The most overlooked factor in defence policy and within the Canadian Armed Forces is likely how much education supplements professional development and training. We also overlook the distinct nature of the education that provides the basic skills needed to think, speak and analyze issues in order to then make sound decisions and to implement those decisions, in the case of non-commissioned members.

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you. That was helpful.

Would anyone else like to share their thoughts on this topic?

[*English*]

Robert Huebert: Yes. The biggest problem we face on training is that training is always the easiest to cut on an individual basis. Because of the constant underfunding that we've had of the forces, when you're just simply trying to sustain your capability and when you're trying to make sure you have the right kit, the thing that always gets pulled out will be training. Therefore, we see the long-term impact and the detriment that we've had in this context.

At the individual lower level, the problem is that we tend to undervalue what training really is necessary for. Just speaking on an individual basis, I have students who join the forces and then say that they never get around to getting proper training and they keep constantly getting told that there are not enough resources. There's a higher-level issue.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

Mr. Bezan, it's back to you now, for another five minutes.

Mr. Lackenbauer, I know that you had your hand up. I'm going to go to Mr. Bezan, and he may ask you a question instead.

James Bezan: Actually, I'm going back to Professor Huebert.

We were talking about Ukraine and lessons learned there. We talked about how UAVs are being used. We talked about how cyber-attacks are taking place. We know that currently the EU and the U.K. are advising their citizens to have three days' supply of food and cash on hand, because of all the cyber-attacks that are taking place at the supply chain level, in grocery stores and in logistics at the civilian level. We know that North Korea just recently stole over $6 billion in cryptocurrency.

All of these are starting to ramp up. Do you see enough in “Inflection Point 2025” that's going to counter the asymmetrical warfare that we're in today and what we're watching take place in places like Israel, Iran and Ukraine?

● (1705)

Robert Huebert: That's an excellent question, because the answer is no. It is trying to deal with so many other issues that we've allowed the land forces to deteriorate on that the ability to deal with all the threats you're talking about simply would go beyond what in fact Wright is trying to do.

Let's reflect upon a point that Calvin made. Calvin made the very important point that after COVID, a lot of the training for the rangers decreased. We say that, okay, COVID has had this long-standing issue. One of the issues, of course, that we don't want to consider in terms of understanding a threat, is a biothreat. Surely, some of our enemies are looking at how much we shut down during the COVID period, both as a society and in terms of defence issues. They're looking at how you engineer that as a weapon.

Are we giving any consideration at this point beyond the internal possible terrorism—the kinetic threats—to engaging in the biothreat? Again, reflecting on Calvin's point, we're still suffering from the effects of what happened in 2020.

The answer is no. I don't think that we are looking at many of these other issues because the short-term requirements of getting an army up to where it needs to be, as General Wright has correctly pointed out, is taking the attention, but this doesn't mitigate against these other threats that we now have to be thinking about.

James Bezan: Professor Lackenbauer.

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: Thanks. That's an excellent question.

I think we're skirting around the whole issue of hybrid threats and below-the-threshold threats. Nesting it at its proper level begins with the national security plan, which is still general. We're presumably—hopefully—going to see a bunch of subordinate documents that will be developed and articulated in the coming months and years, looking at how whole of government and whole of society are cohering around a plan along the lines you said.

I just came back from Poland and Lithuania in the last couple of weeks. The kinds of things we're talking about are real and everyday for people living in those countries. Your question really resonates right now.

To answer one of the earlier questions, we're in a country inundated by cyber-attacks on a continuous basis, including in northern jurisdictions. We're facing information and influence operations that are trying to pick away at the social cohesion and social fabric of our country. We face real risks to critical infrastructure. The overarching question is where the army fits into that whole-of-society and whole-of-government plan to secure our society and infrastructure. I look to NATO's seven baseline requirements for resilience as one offered game plan.

We're hosting a group of Nordic colleagues and Canadian experts in the next couple of weeks in Ottawa. We're going to be gaming out where Nordic countries can share best practices with Canadians and vice versa, specifically looking at what the roles of different elements of the Canadian Armed Forces are in this total-defence way of conceptualizing the world.

My take-away from that is this: I think the army will play a role in helping Canadians think in this total-defence mindset, which sees military defence and more comprehensive forms of security going hand in hand. We can't slip back to the old 1980s debates about whether to have a military or not. You need to have both comprehensive security and human security. You need to have infrastructure resilience and national defence to allow you to cover off all those other things. That's where we are as a country. Now it's about articulating where, specifically, actors like the army fit into this.

James Bezan: Professor Leuprecht, if we're talking about the reserves again and the expertise required to deal with things like biosecurity, potential cyber-attacks and other asymmetrical warfare directed at Canada, more so than anything else, wouldn't it be wise for the Canadian Army to use the reserves to recruit that expertise—the part-time warriors who do this day-to-day for a living? Wouldn't going out there and recruiting the expertise that already exists be a way to save training time and increase our readiness?

Christian Leuprecht: That's, in part, what I mean when I say that we are overreliant on the military. We still have a very conventional idea of how we defend the country.

You can take away from my colleague Whitney that we haven't built out a very good conception of not just a whole-of-government approach, both horizontal and vertical—with our local partners, of course, including our ranger partners—but also a whole-of-society one, because we don't have a lot of those capabilities that we need. The government has a concept of the supplementary reserves that sort of resembles what some of the Nordic countries are doing with their home guard models and the like, but we're very far away from that. That's the problem with both the national security strategy as well as the transformation plan. It all looks like we have a nice runway of five, 10 or 15 years where we can build this out.

Mr. Bezan, if you look at the military intelligence and the open-source intelligence that's been released, we are going to have serious problems in Europe within the next two to four years. We don't have the time, yet I see no sense of urgency, at least in the government, to make sure we position ourselves successfully both internationally as well as domestically for that sort of contingency.

● (1710)

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

I remind everyone to go through the chair.

Ms. Romanado, it's over to you for five minutes.

Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne—Greenfield Park, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Through you, I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today. I'll start with a first question for Professor Huebert.

You mentioned the need for independent, arm's-length threat assessment. Canada has the integrated threat assessment centre. Would this not be the appropriate channel in terms of threat assessment for Canadians? It already exists.

Robert Huebert: In theory, but I still come back to the point that I raised in terms of the fact that we only now in 2026 are identifying these types of problems, which we see in the inflection report, and the creation of the strategies. To remember the last time we tried to do that, we have to go back to the minority government of, oh, I can't believe I just forgot the name of our Prime Minister. Anyway, you have to go back prior to Harper to find where we thought about it.

We think about some of the threat levels that Christian and Whitney are talking about in terms of the fact that we're not giving it proper, serious contention. I would argue that this is evidence that this body is not providing the type of threat assessment that we need. We need to be able to say that there are these hybrid warfares. I'm in total agreement with Christian when he says we have to be aware that there will be oncoming conflicts in a two-year period, not the 13-year period.

Again, I come back to the point that most of these threats that we saw in open-source literature started telling us that the Russians, Chinese and Iranians were doing this as early as 2014 or 2015. Therefore, what we have now has not been working, and this is where the urgency comes in.

Sherry Romanado: I'm going to switch gears. I believe all three of you...and apologies, Mr. Pedersen, I will get to you and get a question in.

All three of you had mentioned the use of the Canadian Armed Forces for domestic response in terms of natural disasters and so on. I know that in a previous role, prior to my role here as the Parliamentary Secretary for National Defence, I was the parliamentary secretary for emergency management. Public Safety Canada has set up a humanitarian workforce that is basically for that exact role, to respond when provinces and territories have met capacity in terms of natural disasters. I'm in agreement that the CAF should be used as a last resort and only when requests for assistance and the use of the humanitarian workforce and so on and so forth have been exhausted.

With respect to that, do you agree that we perhaps should be augmenting that capacity through Public Safety Canada rather than relying on the Canadian Armed Forces?

Robert Huebert: I'll jump in to say—and this may be me being a dreamer on this—I've never understood why we haven't been able to create a separate body that is coordinated between the federal and the provincial authorities and territorial authorities that creates a specific focus on being able to respond to these issues. We know what they are in firefighting. We know in terms of storms. We know what to prepare for, and I dare say the students I see would love to have the opportunity of not necessarily joining the military, that takes a certain personality. However, there are many people who would say, “Yeah, this would be something that I can contribute to.”

Of course, Christian knows better. He's done the research on it, but in my view, it shows a lack of an imagination on the part of our political leadership. Why don't we just recognize that ths is what we need?

● (1715)

Sherry Romanado: Essentially, I think that was the point of my question, that we do actually have a humanitarian workforce. The reality is that, as you said, not every Canadian is going to want to join the Canadian Armed Forces, and the universality of service requires that they deploy. This could be an option for people. I know that General Maisonneuve was here, and he testified about this sort of national response unit or I guess a FEMA, if you would, in terms of response for domestic. I'm in agreement, but it's something that already exists.

I think, as Mr. Bezan has also mentioned, the habit of certain premiers of provinces and territories publicly requesting the CAF versus saying we need a request for assistance has been a way for them to specifically request the CAF publicly versus asking for a response that may not necessarily be the CAF.

I will go to you, Professor Leuprecht, in that regard because you did mention your research on federalism and multi-level governance. How could we actually then respond to such requests? How would we divide that between federal, provincial and municipal authorities?

Christian Leuprecht: First, we need genuine a civilian operational capability. That does not exist within the federal government at present. The reason we fall back on the CAF is that the federal government has very little operational capacity. What makes the Department of National Defence and the CAF different is that it is the one department with a large operational capacity. You find a little bit in the RCMP, which is one more reason why we desperately need RCMP reform, because it can provide operational capacity. You find a little bit in other departments such as Transport Canada.

We don't have a single coordinated capability to harness that. My argument is that if we're not going to put it within the CAF, then we need a civilian operational capacity for domestic response, and we do not currently have that.

Other countries have solved this differently. There are state emergency services. I would strongly recommend—I've an entire book on this—that the FEMA model is not a way to success. It barely works in the United States. There are particular reasons that they need it in the United States. It is bureaucratic, ponderous and expensive, but when you have as little capability on the social side as you have in the United States, it is the only way to approach it. I would not recommend FEMA for any other country in the west, and no other country has adopted a FEMA model for that reason.

There's the Technisches Hilfswerk in Germany. There are state emergency services in Australia that have an operational capability, and that is a civilian entity that can generate hundreds and thousands of people on relatively short notice. It is possible, but, Ms. Romanado, we do not currently have this provided by the federal government.

The Chair: Professor, thank you for that.

To all members, I'm sensitive to time, and we do have to deal with a motion from the Bloc. Is there any one question that someone would like to ask before we ask the witnesses to be on their way?

Ms. Gallant, go ahead.

Cheryl Gallant: Dr. Huebert, how do we impart a sense of urgency to the public about what's going on without inciting panic?

Robert Huebert: I think there's always the danger of panic, but I think that given the dangers we are now facing, that's a risk we have to take. I'll be blunt: We need it coming from you. I think back to Afghanistan, when we saw the change in the government's approach from basically trying to ignore the military to acknowledging the sacrifice of men and women. I think of all those Canadians who came out, when, in fact, men and women were killed in those operations and embraced the Canadian military. If we get from our political leadership a sense that things are changing and dangerous, I think the Canadian public will respond.

I just offer the last piece of evidence. Look at the Canadian response to the Davos speech where, in fact, we had the Prime Minister outlining a very clear identification of the problem. Canadians will respond, but we need it coming from you. We can't hide the enemy. We can't hide the fact that we are at risk and that we need to be taking action now.

● (1720)

The Chair: Thank you, Professor.

Mr. Lackenbauer, I know your hand has been up quite a bit. Ms. Idlout would like to ask you a question. Maybe it will pertain to your hand. We'll see.

Ms. Idlout, go ahead.

Lori Idlout: It's good to see you, Whitney.

From one Canadian Rangers fan to another, the inflection point strategy references the Canadian Rangers in the context of moving towards a one army approach. I wonder if you could share with us really quickly what that would look like in practice from the rangers' perspective.

P. Whitney Lackenbauer: Thank you. That's an excellent question.

It's basically seeing the army as a team. We often associate with the regular force. We associate with the primary reserves. It's conceptualizing it as inclusive of the Canadian Rangers so that people like Calvin are recognized as inherent members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

It's recognizing that the rangers bring very exquisite skill sets to the table. They're low cost in the conventional sense but very expensive to go and try to generate if you're not relying upon all that talent and expertise that already resides in our northern and remote coastal communities across the country.

In terms of how we can better capitalize on this, Calvin alluded to it: Increase the patrol frequency. Sustain that presence in key geographic areas. Improve how we incorporate the observations that rangers are making as members of their communities who know what is unusual and then feed that in from reporting to help us act on that better. It's that long-standing role of local sensors. At the end of the day, make sure that the rangers have the tools so that they remain as capable as they've always been at integrating new systems, whether that was GPS when it came online or different HF radio systems.

As we're looking to the future, rangers can continue to be good at their core tasks and, at the same time, be given opportunities to do more trialling, testing and operationalizing of some of these other technologies. In that way, they'll be able to play that role in reconnaissance and as scouts and subject matter experts, guiding other follow-on forces to targets as need be.

Again, to tie that in and answer the question that Dr. Huebert touched on, how do we convey to northern Canadians and Canadians more generally that we're in a very precarious international situation that requires urgency without creating panic? It's very simple. You follow up your statement of threats with a plan for how you're going to deal with those threats. That requires boldness and courage to speak absolutely transparently and truthfully on what those threats are and how we're going to work together.

I believe that as Canadians we can get through this like we've gotten through other perilous moments in our history. We need leadership that instills a sense of confidence and taps into that sense of being that makes us such a resilient country.

The Chair: Professors and Mr. Calvin Pedersen, thank you to all of you for your testimonies and your participation today. It's very valuable to us in our work in regard to this study, and it's valuable to Canada, frankly, in terms of our moving forward in a way that protects our sovereignty and our preparedness, as all of you have highlighted very clearly.

You're welcome to stay on. I have some housekeeping that is necessary, so I'm going to bid you all farewell. If you decide to escape, you have our permission.

With that, I'm going to go back to our committee members. There are three things I want to deal with before we go to the motion quickly. We have a hard stop at 5:30.

On Thursday, we are going to have a meeting. We're going to proceed with Bill C-40. We have a panel of academics who are going to be appearing. Be aware of that in case you want to go to the budget lockup.

We received confidential anonymous briefs about Bill C-40. Does the committee want to receive them? I think the clerk wants to share them, so he wants clarity. Do you guys want to see these things?

Ms. Romanado, go ahead.

Sherry Romanado: I'm happy to receive things, but if they're anonymous, it's kind of hard to determine the validity of them. I don't want to be mean.

If they're signed or whatever, I'm happy to see anything as long as it's in both official languages.

The Clerk of the Committee (Jean-Denis Kusion): We received a request inquiring about what the committee would be interested in receiving. It is from a person who has an interest in Bill C-40 but doesn't want their employer to know what they are going to share on that topic.

The options are to either receive a brief anonymously, so no name would appear on the brief online, or confidentially, so that it would only be distributed to the members and not be put on our website. It would be stored.

The request was made for a confidential submission specifically.

● (1725)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bezan.

James Bezan: I think we should be more than happy to receive confidential signed briefs that we don't circulate. As long as they're signed and held in trust by committee members and the analysts, I think that is in order. Having anonymous ones would be problematic.

The Chair: I tend to agree. If they want to provide what they're proposing confidentially, we wouldn't share it, but for your benefit, we should be aware.

Folks, I'm going to ask Mr. Barsalou-Duval to proceed with his motion.

[*Translation*]

Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

At the last meeting, I moved a motion to have the Commissioner of Official Languages appear as part of the study on the “Inflection Point 2025” document regarding the restructuring of the forces and the anticipated impact on the use of French within the forces. I won't read the motion in its entirety, since you all received it and I read it last time. Some of you may have additional questions.

I know that, outside the committee, we discussed the possibility of including the testimony of the Commissioner of Official Languages—which I'm proposing for the current study—in the broader study on francophones and French in the army. I would have no objection to his testimony also contributing to this study. However, I believe that the document “Inflection Point 2025” specifically refers to organizational changes within the army that warrant comments from the Commissioner of Official Languages.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

We have the motion. We've all received it in both official languages.

Is there any further debate?

Are there no amendments? There's no desire for change. I just wanted to make sure.

Ms. Idlout, go ahead.

Lori Idlout: I'm looking at the motion. I wasn't able to understand it when you first presented it only in French. I'm glad that I have it now in both English and French.

It doesn't specify how long in this motion, but I think that it would be sufficient for the commissioner to appear for one hour.

I don't know if that requires an amendment.

The Chair: Does it require an amendment, or can I just use the chair's discretion?

James Bezan: The chair's discretion....

The Chair: If there's no further debate, all in favour?

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We'll try to bring the commissioner in as well.

We do have an opportunity, I believe, to also bring in the Minister of National Defence, regarding the indigenous and francophone study, to finalize that.

This Thursday, we're going to have our meeting. We're going to also have extended hours when we return. We'll circulate those to you when we decide and when have the witnesses confirmed. It won't be that bad, with two, three...maybe one for four hours.

● (1730)

Cheryl Gallant: What...for who?

The Chair: It's for Bill C-40.

We'll make it painless, Cheryl.

This meeting is now adjourned.

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