



CANADA

Debates of the Senate

2nd SESSION

•

37th PARLIAMENT

•

VOLUME 140

•

NUMBER 18

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, November 19, 2002



THE HONOURABLE ROSE-MARIE LOSIER-COOL
ACTING SPEAKER

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(Daily index of proceedings appears at back of this issue).

Debates and Publications: Chambers Building, Room 943, Tel. 996-0193

Published by the Senate
Available from Communication Canada – Canadian Government Publishing, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S9.
Also available on the Internet: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

THE SENATE

Tuesday, November 19, 2002

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Hon. Rose-Marie Losier-Cool (The Hon. the Acting Speaker) in the Chair.

Prayers.

VISITORS IN THE GALLERY

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, I wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Mr. George Bowering, our first Parliamentary Poet Laureate. Mr. Bowering is a resident of British Columbia, and his appointment is for a period of two years.

[Translation]

On behalf of all the senators, I bid you welcome to the Senate of Canada.

[English]

Honourable senators, I also wish to draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Senator Alan Ferguson, Chair, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia. He is accompanied by senators and MPs from Australia.

[Translation]

On behalf of all senators, I bid you welcome to the Senate of Canada.

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

APPEARANCE OF FORMER COMMANDING OFFICERS OF AFGHANISTAN AND CANADIAN JOINT TASK FORCE SOUTHWEST ASIA IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

On the Order:

The Senate in Committee of the Whole in order to receive Lieutenant-Colonel Pat Stogran, former Commanding Officer, 3 Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group, Canadian Forces Battle Group in Afghanistan, February to July 2002, and Major-General Michel Gauthier, former Commander Canadian Joint Task Force Southwest Asia, February to October 2002, for the purpose of discussing the preparation and training prior to deployment as well as the experiences of the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan in the war on terrorism.

The Senate was accordingly adjourned during pleasure and put into a Committee of the Whole, the Honourable Lorna Milne in the Chair.

The Chairman: Honourable senators, pursuant to order, the Senate is resolved into Committee of the Whole for the purpose of receiving MGen. Michel Gauthier, former Commander Canadian

Joint Task Force Southwest Asia, and LCol. Pat Stogran, former Commanding Officer, 3 Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry Battalion Group, Canadian Forces Battle Group in Afghanistan, February to July 2002, for the purpose of discussing the preparation and training prior to deployment as well as the experiences of the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan in the war on terrorism.

Before we begin, honourable senators, I draw your attention to rule 83, which states:

When the Senate is put into Committee of the Whole every Senator shall sit in the place assigned to that Senator. A Senator who desires to speak shall rise and address the Chair.

Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, that rule 83 be waived?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Chairman: It is agreed.

Senator Carstairs: I move, seconded by the Honourable Senator Kenny, that MGen. Michel Gauthier and LCol. Pat Stogran be escorted to seats in the chamber.

The Chairman: Is it agreed, honourable senators?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Pursuant to Order of the Senate, MGen. Michel Gauthier and LCol. Pat Stogran were escorted to seats in the Senate chamber.

Senator Kinsella: Might I suggest, Madam Chair, if it is agreeable to honourable senators, that in the first round we limit ourselves to about eight or nine minutes per senator?

Senator Carstairs: The rules, as you know, honourable senator, say 10 minutes. If people will shorten that time, it would certainly be acceptable to me. I know many senators want to participate in this debate.

• (1410)

The Chairman: On behalf of all honourable senators, I welcome MGen. Michel Gauthier and LCol. Pat Stogran.

Major-General Michel Gauthier, former Commander, Canadian Joint Task Force Southwest Asia: Honourable senators, it is an honour for LCol. Stogran and I to report to you in this historic chamber, just as it was a tremendous privilege for both of us to command Canadian Forces personnel on Operation Apollo, Canada's military contribution to the global campaign against terror.

[Translation]

As many of you know, Canada was among the very first nations to join the United States in the global campaign against terrorism. Since early October of last year, well over 5,000 Canadian soldiers, sailors and air personnel have deployed overseas in support of this important mission, aimed at eliminating the threat of terrorism. The professional and selfless response of our men and women since the earliest days of this campaign has been a source of pride and inspiration to all of us who are privileged to lead them.

Over the next few minutes, I propose to give you a brief overview of the full breadth of the Canadian Forces' contribution to the campaign against terror, following which LCol. Stogran will speak more specifically about the 3 PPCLI Battle Group and the ground campaign in Afghanistan. Following this, we will be happy to answer your questions.

[English]

By way of personal context, I will note that I assumed my duties as Commander of Canadian Joint Task Force Southwest Asia based at U.S. Central Command, Tampa, Florida, on April 19, 2002, the day after the tragic events at Tarnak Farm. It was in the face of this adversity that I was able to observe the inspiring professionalism of Canadian Forces personnel. It was epitomized by LCol. Stogran's personal response in the immediate aftermath of the bombing, caring for his fallen and wounded soldiers, while at the same time immediately preparing for the next operational mission. I saw it at all rank levels and in all three services, in response to a host of unique challenges that characterize military operations in the 21st century.

Operation Enduring Freedom is the U.S. designation for the global campaign against terror, and Canada's contribution to this operation has been significant on many fronts. Canada's Naval Task Group was the first, after the U.S., to arrive in the Southwest Asia theatre. At its peak, the Canadian Naval commitment included six warships and over 1,500 personnel.

A key component of the CENTCOM maritime campaign has been leadership interdiction operations aimed at intercepting terrorist leadership elements escaping in merchant vessels or fishing boats from Pakistan or Iran. The Canadian commodore in charge of Canada's Naval Task Group has, for virtually all of the past 12 months, been given responsibility for commanding these counterterrorist operations. On any given day, he might have as many as nine ships from eight different countries under his command, and that situation continues today.

Canadian and allied ships patrol the region constantly, hailing virtually all vessels transiting the area and, when necessary, visiting and physically boarding those that are suspicious. In the conduct of their LIO duties, Her Majesty's Canadian ships, with CP-140 Auroras and Sea King helicopters in direct support, have conducted over 50 per cent or approximately 16,000 of the total coalition hails, and 64 per cent or approximately 200 of the total coalition boardings. Sea King helicopters have flown more than 360 missions in the theatre. Of particular note, in July, it was a Canadian ship, HMCS *Algonquin*, that on two occasions captured suspected al-Qaeda operatives at sea.

Canadian sailors and ships have contributed out of all proportion to their numbers. This is a function of experienced leadership, effective training and a professional, purposeful mindset, together with robust rules of engagement and truly unequalled interoperability with U.S. maritime forces.

The allied perception of our naval contribution was aptly reflected in a letter I received recently from American Vice-Admiral Timothy Keating, the Commander of Coalition Naval Forces, who said, among many other things, "No individual was more instrumental in unleashing the combat power of the coalition forces in the Gulf of Oman than Canada's Commodore Eric Lerhe. He served with distinction, and we appreciate his service to this just cause."

[Translation]

Our air forces have made a diverse and equally meaningful contribution to the coalition air effort, with four different types of aircraft initially involved in the campaign. A strategic airlift detachment, based on a CC-150 Polaris (Airbus), was deployed in support of the campaign from November 16, 2001, until the end of May 2002, when its services were no longer essential. Through this period, it moved almost one million pounds of freight in support of the coalition logistics effort.

Two CP140 Aurora aircraft have flown eight to ten-hour surveillance missions daily from a base in the Arabian Desert in support of maritime operations. With their multi-faceted surveillance capabilities, the Auroras have been instrumental to building the coalition recognized maritime picture in support of counter-terrorist operations at sea. They also played a key role in the capture of the four suspected terrorists at sea. The Auroras were joined by a tactical airlift detachment composed of approximately 200 air personnel, and three CC130 Hercules aircraft. The detachment has been responsible for short-haul airlift support to coalition forces. Its crews have carried more than 3,500 passengers and 4.3 million pounds of freight, and much of this has involved flying combat support missions into and out of Kandahar airfield in Afghanistan virtually daily.

[English]

The Hercules, the Aurora and the Sea Kings embarked on our ships are setting the coalition standard in their mission completion rates. All have drawn effusive praise from our allies. I believe we have been able to achieve this success for three main reasons: Our aircrew are as professional and well-trained as any; our ground crews are resourceful and just will not stop until the job gets done; and more than just about any other nation, we are team players — coalition objectives come first when it comes to getting the job done.

Honourable senators, LCol. Stogran will give you his first-hand insights into the historic experiences of the men and women of 3 PPCLI Battle Group. I will tell you that the breadth and depth of challenges they faced in Afghanistan is tough to encapsulate in a few words — the terrain; the mines; the destruction; the heat and the dust; deploying halfway around the world with an absolute minimum of equipment and supplies; integrating themselves into a close-knit fighting formation from another nation, U.S. Task Force Rakkasan; and most important, for the first time in five decades, preparing to engage in combat against a declared enemy.

Let me relate a few things LCol. Stogran would be too humble to say himself. I had occasion to deploy in Afghanistan four times personally. I can tell you that during each of those deployments, the praise I heard from U.S. commanders on the ground about our soldiers was overwhelming. The first of the two officers commanding Task Force Rakkasan, U.S. Colonel Francis Wiercinski, described 3 PPCLI's prowess and effectiveness on Operation Harpoon as the best he had seen in his 23 years of military service. His successor, Col. Michael Linnington, rated LCol. Stogran the best of his nine battalion commanders — the other eight being Americans, of course — and described the unit's execution of Operation Cherokee Sky in June as "flawless, in the toughest environment imaginable," a result that could only have been achieved by "a well-rehearsed, capably led and superbly conditioned outfit."

[Translation]

In addition to these operational units, two others should be mentioned briefly. Operation Apollo was sufficiently complex to warrant creating a unique joint national support unit (NSU) to cater to the diverse logistical support needs of deployed air, land and naval assets. The challenge of bridging the gap between home bases across Canada and the units deployed at sea, in the Arabian desert, and in Afghanistan was monumental; our support personnel have been outstanding.

[English]

Also, since the earliest days of the operation, Canada has had a robust national command element, co-located with CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa, which serves as a bridge between the tactical units deployed and the strategic level in Ottawa. The staff works hand in glove with the staff of CENTCOM and has played an important leadership role in the coalition planning effort in Tampa.

• (1420)

There is so much more I have not said in the interests of time. I met, spoke with and observed literally thousands of our men and women during my six deployments forward into the mission area. Above all, from my perspective, this is a human story in two important respects. The first is one of professional excellence, pride in doing one's best, and courage under physically demanding and dangerous conditions. It is equally a story of selfless service to the nation.

I will end by saying that it was a unique honour for me to play a role in this important campaign and an inspiring opportunity to witness so many Canadians doing their country proud. They deserve our full support.

The Chairman: Thank you. We have next LCol. Pat Stogran, who has been sitting here listening to the high praise that has been bestowed upon him.

Lieutenant-Colonel Pat Stogran, former Commanding Officer, 3 Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group, Canadian Forces: Honourable senators, may I start by echoing the

comments of MGen. Gauthier regarding what an honour it is to present myself before this Senate Committee of the Whole.

In February of this year, I had the privilege to lead the 3 PPCLI Battle Group on Operation Apollo as Canada's ground contribution to the U.S.-led war against terrorism. Although the battle group was based on the Third Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, it also consisted of Charlie Company, from the Second Battalion PPCLI, the reconnaissance squadron of Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), one of the Canadian army's armoured regiments, a squadron of Sappers from 1 Combat Engineer Regiment, a mortar platoon from the First Regiment Royal Canadian Horse Artillery and a large cadre of combat and combat service support personnel from across Canada.

When we left, we understood our mission was open-ended — we did not know when we would be coming back or what we would encounter in Afghanistan. This certainly did not sway our troops. On the contrary, we embarked on our task with the resolve to do whatever was necessary to serve our country with honour. In the end, our contribution to Operation Apollo turned out to be six months in duration, and we left Afghanistan with a sense of pride and accomplishment.

The 3 PPCLI Battle Group worked extremely well together, and upon assuming responsibility for the defence of the Kandahar airfield, we quickly demonstrated our prowess in combat operations. This fostered an excellent working relationship between us and our coalition partners, 187 Brigade Combat Team of the 101st Airborne Division, Task Force Rakkasan.

In addition to our defence of the Kandahar airfield, we embarked on three large-scale, battalion-sized offensive operations in pursuit of the al-Qaeda, one such operation being the first combat air assault in the history of the Canadian army into the Sha I Kot Valley, in March 2002. Sub-elements of the battle group also conducted numerous operations of smaller scale, both defensive and offensive in nature.

Although we were never bloodied by the al-Qaeda, the soldiers of the 3 PPCLI Battle Group had to deal with all of the fears, anxieties and apprehensions associated with launching combat operations against a declared enemy and the trauma of having comrades killed in action.

I know all of Canada is proud of the performance of our troops in Afghanistan, but nobody can claim to be prouder of them than me, their commanding officer. They all demonstrated the skills and courage, both moral and physical, that perpetuate the legacy established by our veterans of conflicts more than half a century ago. There is no doubt that the performance of the 3 PPCLI Battle Group in offensive and defensive combat operations earned the respect of our allies and coalition partners, and this is a tribute to the standard of professionalism that exists amongst the soldiers of the Canadian army today.

Finally, I am proud as a Canadian to have been a part of the team that demonstrated, once again, Canada's ongoing commitment to international stability and collective security.

[MGen. Gauthier]

The Chairman: Thank you for your statements, gentlemen. I have quite a few senators on the list to question you. I would remind honourable senators that we have agreed to try to limit the questions to five minutes each.

We will begin with Senators Kenny, Forrestall, Banks and Kinsella.

I would remind those honourable senators sitting at the end of the room that, rule 83 having been waived, you can move down here to see our witnesses' faces.

Senator Kenny: MGen. Gauthier and LCol. Stogran, welcome to the Senate of Canada. We are pleased to see you here. I want to tell you that we are terribly proud of the work you have done, how you have served Canada, and we are glad to see you back safely.

MGen. Gauthier, could you describe to the committee the command and control relationships, how they worked vis-à-vis National Defence Headquarters here in Ottawa, Central Command in Tampa, your headquarters and the Canadian personnel deployed under Operation Apollo? It seems like a pretty complicated relationship. Could you explain to us how it functioned?

MGen. Gauthier: I will try to demystify it and simplify it to the extent I can, although it is a complex subject. The force itself was complex, with over 43 nations involved in the coalition. It was also complicated, given the nature and scope of operations.

The Canadian chain of command was, from my perspective, crystal clear. I had a direct line to National Defence Headquarters, to the Chief of the Defence Staff, through the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff for day-to-day business. They assigned operational command to me, and there is a definition for that, of all Canadian Forces, less special forces operating in Afghanistan.

At the same time as I was assigned operational command of those forces, they were assigned to the operational control of General Franks in Central Command, as the commander-in-chief of Central Command. He, in turn, delegated operational control of those forces down his chain of command. There were essentially parallel national and CENTCOM chains of commands.

I retained national command of deployed forces. I spoke regularly by phone and other means to LCol. Stogran and all the other deployed commanders. At the same time, for operational purposes, LCol. Stogran, for instance, was assigned ultimately with the delegation of operational control. He was assigned under the operational control of Task Force Rakkasan, which is essentially a brigade-level organization. Between Task Force Rakkasan, which is a land component organization, and CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa, there were two other layers in the chain of command — a land component headquarters and a combined joint task force headquarters, both located in Bagram, Afghanistan. There were several steps in the chain of command from a U.S. perspective; the links were much more direct from a Canadian perspective.

It is essentially the same relationship with our naval forces. The commodore at sea and the ships that he exercised command over were assigned to the operational control of the commander NAVCENT whom I referred to in my opening remarks, the commander of Naval Forces Central Command, Vice Admiral Keating. The same also held true for air assets.

Do you want me to get into detail on that subject as well? Does that answer your question, senator?

Senator Kenny: Yes, thank you.

LCol. Stogran, could you answer roughly the same question from your perspective? How did it work on a day-to-day basis?

• (1430)

LCol. Stogran: For all intents and purposes, I received my orders directly from Col. Wiercinski and, later, Col. Linnington, the commanders of Task Force Rakkasan. When I was originally deployed on Operation Apollo, I was given four tasks as part of my overarching mandate. I was tasked with providing perimeter security to the airfield; facilitating humanitarian aid, if and when it would arrive in theatre; conducting what we referred to as sensitive site exploitations, which is an offensive operation of going into an area where the al-Qaeda were operating, or suspected to have been operating, in order to gather evidence; and conducting offensive operations on order.

I was handed what I would call very robust rules of engagement for any tasks of a defensive nature. Through robust rules of engagement, my soldiers were entitled to use lethal force against a person if they suspected that hostile intent was involved. That is, if a soldier felt that he had a reasonable apprehension of serious harm or injury, he could resort to lethal force in his defence.

When dealing with the Taliban and al-Qaeda as declared enemies, we were authorized to conduct offensive operations under laws of armed conflict. In doing so in any pre-planned engagements, any offensive operations of a deliberate nature, I was to refer to my chain of command to receive ultimate approval from General Gauthier.

Senator Forrestall: I join with Senator Kenny in welcoming the two of you, assuring you at the same time of our deepest respect for your professionalism and the function and role that you carried out on our behalf.

You will note, in some of the questions being asked this afternoon, a reflection of many of the inquiries and concerns after the Somalia inquiry.

LCol. Stogran, how and when did you receive your first order to prepare forces to deploy to Afghanistan?

LCol. Stogran: I received the initial warning that we were earmarked for deployment to Afghanistan on November 14, 2001, I believe. The original intent, as I understood it at the time, was for us to deploy with ISAF, the International Security Assistance Force.

From November 14, 2001, I was involved in reconnaissance and liaison here with National Defence Headquarters. The battalion was preparing all of our equipment to allow us to deploy. At the time, we thought we would deploy into the Baghran area.

As things developed near Christmas time, we understood that we would no longer be invited as a member to the International Security Assistance Force, and our focus was changed to the coalition operation, Operation Enduring Freedom. I believe that it was on or about January 8, 2002, that I received a subsequent order for us to become part of Task Force Rakkasan.

Senator Forrestall: Was your unit at full strength on January 8, 2002?

LCol. Stogran: Yes, sir. We had been reinforced by Charlie Company from the second battalion of the PPCLI to bring us to full strength in terms of infantry. Of course, the other attachments were at full strength, also.

Senator Forrestall: When were you told to prepare for a rather robust role alongside our allies and friends from the south? On what date did you have first knowledge of that?

LCol. Stogran: The actual warning for us as part of the coalition would have been January 8. However, I had been warned in April of last year to head the Immediate Reaction Force (Land). That force is at a high state of readiness for contingencies such as non-combatant evacuation operations. From that time, the battalion embarked on an aggressive combat-oriented training program that facilitated our deployment in January 2002 with the coalition force.

Senator Forrestall: Did the composition of your Battle Group give you concern prior to deployment? If so, did you communicate this concern to the chain of command and what was the response?

LCol. Stogran: Sir, my one concern with the battle group was that at no time had we ever actually trained as a complete battalion. I was familiar with Charlie Company of 2 PPCLI. We had embarked on a training exercise in October, which Charlie Company and Major Ford had attended as part of the battalion. I was also familiar with the mortar platoon attached to us because of a regular affiliation that my battalion had with that particular battery. We had worked with the reconnaissance squadron from the armoured regiment in an exercise in April of the previous year.

I was familiar with all of the component parts. However, I did express my concern, although it was not a show-stopper, that we had never had the full footprint of the IRFL on the ground.

Senator Forrestall: Have you a date in mind when you formally committed for deployment training for Afghanistan?

LCol. Stogran: Sir, we never conducted specific pre-deployment training for the Afghanistan theatre. As I said, we had embarked on a very aggressive year of training that culminated in October

of last year with an exercise that I referred to as "Venturesome Brave," during which the commander of first brigade allowed us to rent state-of-the-art laser engagement simulators to allow us to train in as realistic a combat environment as possible.

The Chairman: Senator Forrestall, I remind you that we have agreed on a five-minute question period. Perhaps you would agree to speak again at the end.

Senator Forrestall: I did not agree to a five-minute limit. I thought that the limit was seven minutes or eight minutes. We had hoped for a limit of 10 minutes. Having said that, I suggest that we proceed.

Senator Banks: I should like to thank MGen. Gauthier and LCol. Stogran for accepting our invitation. I am an Alberta senator. The colonel already knows how proud Albertans are of your performance and that of the men and women serving with you. In particular, Edmontonians are proud of the participation of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry and Lord Strathcona's Horse, Royal Canadians.

You should also know that the committee of which I have the honour to be a member has had the opportunity of hearing from some of the people who served under you. The people who worked for you loudly reinforce the commendation that you have received from your superiors. They hold you in the highest regard.

You have read, I am sure, as we all have, reports and comments from various associations and commentators in the media — both electronic and print — about the difficulties that you faced, first, in getting to Afghanistan and, second, in being properly provided with the materiel that you needed once you got there, ranging from uniforms and boots to proper night vision equipment. Would you ruminate about that for a few minutes, please?

LCol. Stogran: Sir, it is difficult for me to comment in any detail on the difficulties that were experienced by the battle group in deploying because I was already in Afghanistan in January, working with the brigade headquarters to which I was attached. I was not a part of the actual deployment.

• (1440)

Anecdotally, there were some problems on the tarmac with respect to the loading of kit and equipment. Working with the assets that were provided to us by the United States Air Force, things went very smoothly at the receiving end on the other side.

With regard to the difficulties with our kit, I think our record in Afghanistan speaks for itself. We did not really encounter what I would call show-stoppers in terms of kit. We were capable of operating at night because of the provision of night vision goggles and laser designators for our weapons systems. However, the army pulled out all of the stops to ensure all our riflemen were outfitted and capable of night-fighting.

We had a list of other equipment items that we had asked for, which we refer to as urgent operational requirements or immediate operational requirements, many of which were never satisfied. However, due to good luck or good management, this did not impede my ability to satisfy the demands that were placed on us by my coalition commander.

Senator Banks: That answer speaks to your inventiveness and that of the people who were serving under you.

In your opening address, you mentioned that you were responsible for the distribution of humanitarian aid if and when it arrived. Did it arrive?

LCol. Stogran: Humanitarian aid, per se, was slow in coming. We deployed on our operation with the understanding that a government agency would provide \$100,000 for humanitarian aid. That money was not forthcoming. We submitted plans and proposals and worked with MGen. Gauthier's headquarters to firm up a direction. We started our preparations right from day one. I viewed the humanitarian aid issue to be a very important aspect of our operation, not only from an operational security perspective. We wanted to demonstrate to the locals that we were not there as a force of occupation and that we were interested in rebuilding their nation.

The humanitarian aid component of the plan also provided us inroads with respect to human intelligence. Once we won the confidence of the Afghan military forces, we started working closer with the local forces that surrounded the perimeter. That was an important aspect of my plan. Canadian soldiers, given their history and culture, do not like to go to a country that is hurting and not give assistance to the local populace. Humanitarian aid is a very important moral factor for our soldiers.

As time went on, it became apparent that the funding from the government agency would not be forthcoming. As I understand it, \$50,000 was provided to us from the operating funds of the Department of National Defence.

Over and above that, interested Canadian businessmen who happened to be in Dubai also gave us funds. We used all of that money to purchase water pumps for the local population and to build approximately a half dozen schools.

Senator Kinsella: Colonel, I would like to turn the focus to your rules of engagement. Could you share with honourable senators the date on which you received your first draft of the rules of engagement under which you were able to commence training? Did the rules of engagement cover how prisoners were to be treated? In addition, what guidance were you given with regard to the transfer of Taliban and al-Qaeda prisoners to the United States? Was this accomplished through orders from National Defence Headquarters, or was it given explicitly in the rules of engagement that you received?

LCol. Stogran: Senator, I could not comment on the precise date that official rules of engagement were handed down to the battalion because, again, I was overseas at that point in time. We had received in November or December a draft of the rules of engagement. We had actually started training our troops so they would be familiar with the intent, if not the specific details, of the rules of engagement that we might be working with.

Canadian Forces troops are very conversant with rules of engagement. We received the rules of engagement sometime in January. In my absence, I know that an intensive training program was undertaken in Canada by my deputy commanding officer.

I was satisfied upon their arrival that the troops were fully conversant with the rules of engagement. I consulted with my legal officer, and he assured me that the troops were conversant with the rules of engagement as they stood at that point in time.

To the best of my recollection, the rules of engagement did not deal with the treatment of prisoners, per se, but I stand to be corrected on that matter. We train our troops to deal with prisoners in accordance with existing laws of armed conflict and international conventions. There was never any specific reference early on in the deployment to the treatment of Taliban or al-Qaeda and how the transfer process would be effected with Task Force Rakkasan. Early in the deployment, I recognized that we were under their operational control. I actually had access to the short-term holding facility and recognized that the prisoners, upon my observation, were being treated in accordance with international conventions. I felt comfortable handing over anyone we may have detained. We did not have detainees in the process until the protocols were actually established within the chain of command.

Senator Kinsella: Given that the Somalia inquiry report underscored the importance that, in the future, rules of engagement must be respectful of Canadian domestic law, and given the fact that in Canada the death penalty is foreign to Canadian law, did the Department of National Defence give any instruction or guidance to our officers in the field with regard to the treatment and the transfer of prisoners who could very well face the death penalty if handed over to the United States?

MGen. Gauthier: To get back to the first part of your question, to add to what LCol. Stogran said, from my perspective, as the national task force commander, rules of engagement were one of the success stories of this mission. Institutionally, we have learned a tremendous amount in the nine years since the events in Somalia. I can tell you that rare were the instances where LCol. Stogran and I needed to discuss or debate issues surrounding the rules of engagement. The same applies to the rules of engagement for other elements of the force at sea and elsewhere. That is a positive comment about where we have come.

With respect to the handling of detainees, I have to respectfully say that LCol. Stogran's memory may be failing him a little bit in the sense that there was a published task force standing order on the handling of detainees based on the direction that we had been given. LCol. Stogran was very busy in Afghanistan, and this may be why he does not remember explicitly the bureaucratic side of this matter.

There were instructions. We can get you a copy of the standing order, which specifies how the detainees are to be handled. The bottom line, certainly at the operational level, is that there cannot be a lot of discussion in this respect. LCol. Stogran did not have with him the full range of expertise needed to go through a proper interrogation process to determine whether a particular suspect should be released. By and large, Americans made those decisions.

• (1450)

The rule from a Canadian perspective was, first of all, that this had to be catalogued and documented very carefully. LCol. Stogran and his staff know that because we had reports of certain detainees. They were pushed up the chain of command through us to the national level, to the Government of Canada in fact, on a very timely basis.

The bottom line of the instruction was simply that the detainees were to be turned over to American forces as quickly as possible to render a judgment as to whether they should be detained or not. In all instances where 3 PPCLI actually apprehended individuals for any length of time, it was for a short period of time. They were subsequently released rather than going further along the detainee process.

Does that answer your question, sir?

Senator Kinsella: Thank you.

Senator Wiebe: MGen. Gauthier and LCol. Stogran, let me first say that I echo the congratulatory words of my colleagues today. I believe that I speak on behalf of all honourable senators in this chamber when I ask that you pass on our congratulations and thanks to the men and women in 3 PPCLI battle group who we believe did an outstanding job of representing our country in Afghanistan.

In your comments, LCol. Stogran, you mentioned that the Canadian battle group was drawn from various units across Canada. Does that then mean that we do not have a battalion-size battle group in one place in Canada that trains constantly at one base?

LCol. Stogran: Senator, we have several battalion-size elements. I should clarify that the nature of the battle group I was commanding at that point in time had many specialist functions attached to it, such as a national rear link or a signals element that allowed us to communicate with Canada.

The dental element that was attached to us came from outside the normal configuration of an infantry battalion. Those are the sorts of functions I was referring to that were drawn from as far away as Petawawa and Kingston.

Senator Wiebe: Would this be the first time over the last eight years that a battle group of battalion size had trained together this extensively?

LCol. Stogran: I will have to plead some degree of ignorance again, as I could not really comment on some of the early battle groups we would have sent off to other watershed peacekeeping missions and Kosovo.

The battle group that I commanded was extremely robust in terms of a diversity of capabilities, from signals intelligence through to the Coyote surveillance system on the armoured vehicles. In very recent history, it is probably one of the more robust battle groups to have trained together.

Senator Wiebe: Upon the unit's return to Canada, have Canadian Forces personnel been returned to their individual units instead of being kept together as a battalion?

LCol. Stogran: Yes, sir, for the most part. There was a period of time where we kept the major part of the battle group together in Edmonton.

Senator Wiebe: The individuals who served in Afghanistan have gained a tremendous amount of experience, knowledge and ability in their deployment there. How does the military plan to use those new experiences to train new recruits or existing personnel within Canada? Is that a fair question to ask of either of you?

MGen. Gauthier: Senator, I cannot give you an institutional answer to the question.

I remember sitting with LCol. Stogran in Kandahar, discussing the issue of how to reintegrate his soldiers into Canadian life in all of its facets, military and otherwise. The two of us agreed vociferously that we have to instill in these soldiers a sense that, when they get back to Canada, it is their responsibility to make the army better and wiser for the richness of their experiences in Afghanistan.

LCol. Stogran: As I expect the question may arise later, I want to add some information regarding our reintegration program in Guam. A key part of that program was workplace reintegration. In the time that we had with the soldiers, we impressed upon them that their experiences in Afghanistan were valuable to the army. They should conduct themselves as they go out into the expanse of the army in a way that would have the army welcome their experiences. I tried to impress upon the soldiers that they should not expect to change the army; they should shape it through their experiences.

Some of the soldiers from our battalion were posted to many of our training institutions. I am performing a job at National Defence Headquarters where I hope to be able to assist in the shaping of our army for the future.

Senator Comeau: My question to LCol. Stogran deals with intelligence, which I know is a sensitive issue. I would not ask LCol. Stogran to compromise state or military security in any way. I will be asking general questions. If he wishes, he should feel free to answer in a general way.

I am aware of testimony from the Somalia inquiry indicating that an intelligence officer had to go to the Internet and pull information off the BBC and CNN because of the lack of proper intelligence information at the time. Could you tell honourable senators what kind of intelligence on Afghanistan you were provided prior to deployment?

LCol. Stogran: Prior to the deployment, most of the intelligence we received was very much of a general nature, to the best of my recollection.

Senator Comeau: Were you satisfied with the general quality and level of intelligence that you were provided? When you did ask, were you provided with the type of information that you would have needed?

[MGen. Gauthier]

LCol. Stogran: Upon our deployment into the theatre of operation, I had a very robust intelligence capability. We had an extremely capable signals intelligence capability. I had two intelligence officers as well as non-commissioned officers in my intelligence cell, and they were highly competent. They were receiving imagery from sources in Canada, as well as working very closely with the Americans. I was extremely satisfied with the potential they brought to the battlefield.

The biggest concern I had was that there were certain no-foreigner issues that our American counterparts were exercising in guarding some of their intelligence. We had full and open access to anything that was collected, using some of the facilities that Task Force Rakkasan had. We were very robust in terms of intelligence capability.

Senator Comeau: This was in-theatre?

LCol. Stogran: Yes, sir.

Senator Comeau: Prior to going into the theatre, were you given access to information that would have been available to the British and the Americans?

LCol. Stogran: We were in contact with sources here at National Defence Headquarters. The information I would have seen was open to our NATO and ABC allies. I can infer from that that we were drawing from those sources as well. I was satisfied with the type of information we were receiving at that time.

MGen. Gauthier: I understand this a little bit better now with the benefit of two weeks of experience as the new Director General of Intelligence at National Defence Headquarters.

Senator Comeau: Congratulations.

MGen. Gauthier: I can say unequivocally that I am beginning to understand how much I do not know. We have agreements and arrangements with our allies that are central to the intelligence process. I can assure the senator that the intelligence was shared and continues to be shared on an ongoing basis. I have no doubt that this sort of information was pushed down to the unit level.

• (1500)

Senator Comeau: Prior to the deployment, were you aware or advised whether there was an Afghan desk at Foreign Affairs with which you could interact or contact, in case of questions that might come up?

LCol. Stogran: On our initial warning last year, Foreign Affairs took an active part in many of the briefings provided to us, as did other agencies within the government. Yes, I was fully aware that Foreign Affairs had such a desk.

Senator Comeau: When you did go to theatre, were you provided with proper reconnaissance of the country, such as maps and the information you needed as an operations group?

LCol. Stogran: I would have to say yes. With regard to maps, the maps of the region were what I would call primitive. We were working with Soviet maps in some cases and other local maps that had been enhanced by coalition forces. For the most part, I was satisfied with the types of deliverables that my intelligence assets provided.

Senator Comeau: There were many groups other than the U.S. and British, of course. Did you have access to any intelligence information from other countries that were part of the coalition?

LCol. Stogran: Again, I would have to refer to my earlier comments about my degree of satisfaction with our intelligence sources.

I can say that my intelligence cell actually had an excellent working relationship with the U.S. and coalition special forces in theatre. Even when we, as members of the coalition, detected a rift between the U.S. conventional and special forces community in terms of the transfer of information, we had good success with the obtaining of intelligence from the American special forces and other elements operating in theatre.

The Chairman: I want to remind honourable senators that I have eight names still on the first round, and four on the second round, with one half hour to go.

Senator Smith: Madam Chair, I would echo the congratulatory comments previous speakers have made. I will try to keep to one broad question, as I know you have a long list.

At the beginning of your comments, MGen. Gauthier, you said the Canadian Forces contributed out of all proportion to their numbers. I might say that your remarks sounded quite convincing.

I will not ask you for your views on the merits of whether or not the government should go into such missions, but it is fair to try to get some readback on the enthusiasm, the morale and the spirit of the troops and their commanders on such missions. We have a 50-year history of peacekeeping that has now been expanded to collective security that can include combat. Was morale sustained? Are you up for this assignment? How do they feel about this role that Canada has developed a niche for?

MGen. Gauthier: Do you refer specifically to the mission in Afghanistan?

Senator Smith: Yes, as a result.

MGen. Gauthier: I would be surprised if there was a soldier in the entire army who would not have volunteered for this. I am sure LCol. Stogran would share that view in terms of the soldiers in his battalion or battle group. I do not mean to sound like I am overstating this. It is typical certainly of the soldiers of which I have become very proud over almost three decades of serving with the forces. They would not turn down an opportunity to serve during this operation. I ran into not just soldiers, by the way, but also airmen and sailors. I came across one who was on his ninth six-month deployment in a 15-year career. There were two others who were on their eighth six-month deployment. I ran into any number on their fourth or fifth six-month deployment. I could go on with this. I ran into a sergeant in 3 PPCLI Battle Group, a supply tech who had been a young private in 4 Combat Engineer Regiment when I commanded it in 1992, when we deployed to Croatia as the first unit into that particular conflict. That was his first mission. When I bumped into him in Afghanistan, he was on his sixth mission.

They step up to the plate every time, of course. However, the other side to this is its effect on family life. I asked him what his family situation was like and he said, "I have been married and divorced since then." Of course, that is a price that many are paying because of their enthusiasm and because of the operational tempo, the rate of pace of operations in the Canadian Forces with which you are already well familiar.

From a morale perspective, when it comes to a new mission, one would be hard pressed to find anyone who does not want to take part. However, there is a price to be paid for it. That price is growing.

Senator Meighen: Perhaps I could continue with your response to the last question from Senator Smith. There is indeed a considerable price to be paid for the dramatically increased tempo of operations in the army. General, I may be wrong in saying that you may have left the impression that that is a satisfactory price. I am not sure it is. I am not sure that family break-up on a widespread scale, which I understand is happening because of the dramatically increased tempo, is satisfactory to Canadians. Would you not agree that the situation must be addressed, and that possibly the best way of addressing it is to either reduce the tempo of operations or to increase the effective strength of the military, in particular the army?

MGen. Gauthier: I hope I did not leave the impression that I believe that this was a good thing in terms of marriage breakups and the wear and tear on families — not for a minute. I feel very strongly about it. That is why I gave you some of those facts and figures. I have many more. I spent two years commanding Land Force Central Area, the army in Ontario, with 12,000 regular reserve soldiers and civilians. This is the message, as many of you on the committee have heard, on your visits.

Of course, from a serving officer's perspective, it is not about demanding more money. I can only echo what the senior leadership and the minister himself have said: It is about sustainability; it is about balance between tasks and resources. One either reduces the tasks or increases the resources.

Senator Meighen: Hopefully, we will get on with one of those solutions before too much longer.

Speaking of reservists, and given the reservists' fairly significant role in Bosnia, Croatia and elsewhere, were there reservists with you, LCol. Stogran?

LCol. Stogran: For the most part, there were not. There may have been individuals transparent to me within our national rear link, but certainly amongst the combat and combat service support elements, there were no reservists.

Senator Meighen: Why was that?

LCol. Stogran: That is due to the nature of the rapid reaction and our inability to actually maintain a constant state of readiness with reservists. I worked within the third battalion with several regiments in Saskatchewan and they were keen to be part of the

immediate reaction force. When we thought we might be going to Afghanistan, they were keen to be a part of that, but it was just impossible, due to the prolonged wait, to actually embrace them as part of our team.

Senator Meighen: What would you have done if the mission had been prolonged? I understand it could not have been with the number of people we had available. However, if there had been dire circumstances, would you have been able to turn to reservists to fill your numbers?

LCol. Stogran: Do you mean while we were in theatre, if we had to wait longer?

Senator Meighen: If you had to be there longer, yes.

LCol. Stogran: That would be a question for the force generators back in Canada. I can say that, based on my experiences in my training with the third battalion and the reservists, they were keen soldiers. I would have welcomed them on to the team had they had the opportunity to train to a deployable level of capability.

Senator Meighen: How long would that take, given their present level?

LCol. Stogran: It really depends, I think, on how long it had been since they may have been deployed on a Bosnia tour or something of that nature. Normally, we like to have them for 90 days, sir.

• (1510)

MGen. Gauthier: Of course, that depends on the mission. For a mission like Bosnia, it would be 90 days. For something much less benign, if I can put it that way, such as Afghanistan, I would say we need much more than 90 days.

Senator Meighen: Were there any reported cases of PTSD since your return, Colonel, and, if there were, what are you doing about them?

LCol. Stogran: PTSD, per se, is a difficult thing to quantify and identify. I have been keeping in contact with some of my colleagues back in the third battalion to see what sorts of problems may have manifested themselves in the families and with the soldiers over the leave period, and — this is purely anecdotal — there has been strain in some marriages. Whether that is related to stress from the operation or to problems that existed before is difficult to say.

I can only speculate at this point in time, based on my dealings with the experts that I had in theatre — I had social workers and my medical officers as well as my padres — that we had a very effective coping mechanism in 3 PPCLI in terms of talking it out and displaying our emotions.

Our padre, who is very experienced in deployments overseas, said she had never seen the level of openness that she had experienced with the 3 PPCLI battle group. Guys and girls wanted to talk about their problems. I expressed my feelings to the troops also.

I remain hopeful that this sort of openness and ability that we had in theatre, as well as during our debriefing period in Guam, will allow the soldiers to unload their baggage and not keep it inside.

MGen. Gauthier: Senator, Col. Stogran is being humble here. I do not think a battalion-sized unit has deployed out of this country in the last 10 years better prepared than 3 PPCLI to deal with the traumatic events that they had to deal with. That had everything to do with the team he built, and his own personal leadership prior to and during the deployment, to deal with precisely that kind of situation. The human infrastructure, if I can put it that way, was in place to cope, with all sorts of specialists, advisers and leaders throughout his unit. One can only hope that that will have its effects in terms of low PTSD incidence in the coming months and years.

[Translation]

Senator Joyal: Honourable senators, I would like to borrow one element of Senator Meighen's question. What impact did the incident where four Canadians soldiers were killed and others were wounded have on the morale of your troops?

It is one thing to go to war and face the enemy, but it is a different story to feel threatened by the allies with whom we have joined forces.

Every time we sit in this chamber, we can see on its walls depictions of the horrors of war: destruction, refugees, people losing their life, others facing an uncertain future. We also realize that our troops cannot be protected against friendly fire. In your assessment, could the incidents you experienced have been avoided had there been heightened cooperation with the American forces?

[English]

LCol. Stogran: Senator, you are right. For a soldier there is no more demoralizing way to lose troops than through a fratricide incident. I know we pushed the limits of safety in our own training in order to polish our tactics, techniques and procedures to face al-Qaeda, and I lived in fear every day that we would have a fratricide incident of our own to deal with.

Professional soldiers try to condition themselves every day they wear the green uniform for the possibility of losing friends, and I know I faced it and lived it with our soldiers. It is a difficult thing to get through.

In our case, I think the openness of the battalion was instrumental in allowing us to get on with the mission, and also the amazing outpouring of support from Canadians overwhelmed us. Soldiers really do have to have an ability to bury their dead and get on with their mission.

We were at one with Task Force Rakkasan. We fought with them and we also grieved together. Col. Wiercinski shared our grief just as if we were American. We were part of Task Force Rakkasan. Internally, within the task force, I am absolutely

confident that we had all of the mechanisms in place to ensure, to the best of our abilities, from the land side of things, that the chance of fratricide was minimalized, despite the dangerous nature of everything we were doing there.

I could not, however, comment in an educated fashion about the mechanisms that existed between the ground force, my immediate commander and the Air Force, which was really, on that fateful night, beyond our comprehension on the ground, that element in the sky, because there are so many moving parts up there. I could not really give an informed position on those sorts of mechanisms.

[Translation]

Senator Joyal: Without getting into the details of the investigation conducted, what changes or initiatives would you recommend to prevent this kind of incident in the future?

[English]

LCol. Stogran: Again, as an infantry officer, I could not comment on how we would synchronize air and land forces to prevent an accident of that nature. All I can say is I am confident that among the ground forces operating in the area, Tarnak Farm was a recognized training venue for ground troops, Kandahar was a recognized base for ground troops, and we had mechanisms in place to work with the Air Force in terms of when Hercules and transport aircraft were coming into the theatre. I could not begin to comment on how the coordination of the fighter aircraft could be enhanced or improved.

[Translation]

Senator Joyal: I would like to come back to the issue of refugees and the condition of civilians. There have been more civilian casualties than al-Qaeda combatants taken out of action. Could you describe to us the relief that was to be provided as part of the operation, both by Canada and by allied nations? Based on your hands-on experience, would you say sufficient relief was provided to alleviate the situation of the civilians affected by the conflict?

[English]

LCol. Stogran: At the risk of sounding like I am avoiding another issue, I could not really comment on the capacity of the humanitarian aid agencies in the area. I can also say that, during our time in theatre with Task Force Rakkasan, the number of civilian casualties, right up until the last month, was an absolute minimum.

• (1520)

I can also say that when there were casualties amongst the civil population in the area of the Kandahar airfield, our coalition partners made their medical facilities readily available. I can think of no occasion on which there were injuries inflicted by armaments that our American hosts did not treat the local populace. That extends to the incident in Deh Rawud, where there was an alleged bombing of a wedding ceremony. Task Force Rakkasan took an active interest in treating all of the civilian casualties and diverting resources to the hospital facility in the city of Kandahar, to assist in the treatment of those who were injured in that particular encounter.

[Translation]

MGen. Gauthier: General Franks has also asked this question. Does security lead to humanitarian aid, or does it precede it? Or does humanitarian aid lead to a more secure situation? This question is one that is debated not only by the military, but also by aid organizations.

[English]

Senator Atkins: Madam Chair, we should congratulate MGen. Gauthier on his promotion.

MGen. Gauthier: Thank you.

Senator Atkins: We will be watching to see whether LCol. Stogran gets another stripe soon.

What equipment could you have used in Afghanistan that was not available to you that might have been part of the coalition forces other than ours?

LCol. Stogran: I would have to review the wish list that we submitted to MGen. Gauthier for his approval.

I understand that, back in Canada, the uniforms were a contentious issue. It would have been nice to have an arid-patterned uniform, but I can say, in all honesty, that we would not have worn them all the time. When we deployed in mountain operations, it was much like Kananaskis country, and we were well served by the green uniforms.

We could have used some of what we refer to as “gaiters,” which are small all-terrain vehicles, not much bigger than a garden tractor. We had requested those. They are flexible enough to load on helicopters and bring them around with us.

There are all sorts of things that we asked for that probably would have enhanced us to a degree, but no real showstoppers that come to mind at this time.

MGen. Gauthier: There was a long list of needs and wants from the battle group. On each of my four visits to the battle group, this was their number one frustration. Since they were in a unique environment, they had asked for any number of unique pieces of equipment that are not normally in an infantry battalion. Those needs and wants butted up against a couple of things. One is the process issue, where I will say, and I have said in my after-action report in our lessons learned, that our material management process, our procurement system, the system and the process whereby we get the right piece of equipment to the right place at the right time, is not sufficiently responsive to operational needs. I have said that, and it is an issue that is being looked at closely as a result of this operation.

The other issue, of course, is that there are different realities at different levels. The soldier's reality in the trench is different from

the strategic reality, and all along the way, in that gap between the two, are decision makers who get to make decisions about whether or not something is actually needed.

In my view, a combination of both of those caused us to be not nearly as successful as we should have been in getting 3 PPCLI the equipment they felt they needed to get the job done.

Senator Atkins: Are there things you believe were done well, and are there things that you would change or do over if given another opportunity?

LCol. Stogran: At the risk of sounding like I am bragging, senator, at the end of the tour, my field officers and I did our own after-action review and asked that very question. Although we were busy patting ourselves on the back for doing an excellent job, we had to ask ourselves what we should have done differently.

There were some minor problems along the way; however, I do not really think we would have done anything drastically different. Perhaps we are not being rigorous enough in our own analysis.

MGen. Gauthier may say there are some things he wishes I had done differently.

Senator Atkins: Is there anything you would change in the training manual as a result of Afghanistan?

LCol. Stogran: To the contrary, senator, that is the great asset that we have to contribute to any coalition — the highly trained, experienced soldiers we have in the Canadian military. We have many soldiers who have experienced training in Germany, in the airborne regiment, and have done world-class courses with different armies in the world. That is tempered with their experiences in peace support operations. We have a unique culture and, in terms of our training and background, something beneficial in a coalition environment.

MGen. Gauthier: The number one positive lesson from my perspective, the message I gave to NDHQ when I got back, was that effective leadership, together with effective training, produces world-class soldiers. We have been doing that right for some time in the Canadian military. There is a long list of things I feel we did well. There is an equally long list of things that we can improve upon, and those have been captured in the lessons-learned process.

Senator Grafstein: I would like to add my words of welcome to MGen. Gauthier. I understand our notes are incorrect in regard to your rank. Your status has been improved dramatically, perhaps in anticipation of this meeting. I also wish to extend a warm welcome to LCol. Stogran.

We in Ontario are also proud of the Princess Pat's. As a cadet officer back in London, Ontario, in the 1940s and 1950s, I was privileged to be associated with the Princess Pat's then under the leadership of General Rockingham, who served with great distinction during the Korean War. Your most recent mission is an added embellishment to the Princess Pat's long history of great success, for which we commend you.

My first question is a follow-up on the oversight and interface in the command structure with respect to attack aircraft while the battalion was on the ground. Again, listening carefully to LCol. Stogran, he indicated that while he was satisfied — and I do not want to take his words out of context — that he was covered off with respect to the logistical backup with respect to the Hercules and so on, there was an open question with respect to attack aircraft like the fighter aircraft.

Looking backwards now, in terms of that horrible incident, MGen. Gauthier, are you satisfied that there was sufficient interface between the Canadian command structure of the battalion and the American overall command structure so that a similar incident might be avoided in the future?

MGen. Gauthier: Unequivocally, sir, I am satisfied. I think you could just as easily, on that night, have had an American battalion doing the same training in the same location and with the same pilots potentially in the same circumstances — the same bomb would have dropped on American soldiers rather than Canadian soldiers.

Senator Kinsella: On a point of order, I wonder whether honourable senators would agree to continue for another 15 minutes, if our witnesses are able to stay on another 15 minutes. We are getting close to 3:30.

The Chairman: I would point out to the Senate that, after Senator Grafstein, I still have Senators Stratton, Mahovlich and Tkachuk on a first round, and then four senators on a second round. It would be nice to complete a first round.

Senator Carstairs: I have no objection to that, but it cannot go beyond 3:45.

Senator St. Germain: I would like to be on the list as well, Madam Chair.

The Chairman: I apologize; I did not see you, senator.

Is it agreed, honourable senators, that we will continue for a further 15 minutes, until 3:45?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Chairman: I would ask honourable senators to confine their questions to very short ones.

• (1530)

Senator Grafstein: Colonel, did your mission change once you got to Afghanistan? We understand that you were originally responsible, in terms of your first engagement, with respect to guarding the airfield at Kandahar. Did the type and variety of mission change sufficiently to put you in a position where you felt fully prepared for these changes? Can you provide us with a description of what the changes were, if there were change from your original mission, which was, as I understand it, guarding the airport at Kandahar?

LCol. Stogran: Honourable senators, the mandate I was given when I left the country included the four tasks, first of which was the defence of the airfield proper. When I arrived in theatre, I came under the operational control of the local commander, Col. Wiercinski. We fit in as another one of his battalions. He had a rotation scheme such that one of his battalions would be responsible for defending the perimeter of the airfield. Another would be in what we call the force projection role or the combat role for operations outside the perimeter. We were rotated in that sort of sequence. He also had another battalion that was responsible for security duties in Pakistan, but we were precluded from that.

Prior to the rotation Col. Wiercinski, and Col. Linnington subsequently, would ensure that we were fully briefed on the possibility of upcoming offensive operations when we were about to go into that combat role. Although our first offensive mission was Operation Harpoon up into the Shaw-I-Cot Valley, which was very much just in time due to the nature of the battle that had been going on in the Shaw-I-Cot Valley with the 101 Airborne against al-Qaeda, we always had a great deal of time to prepare for our operations in detail to ensure we had the proper intelligence picture. Force protection was also a primary concern for me. We did not, except in the first case, feel rushed in an operation. Even in the example of the assault in the Shaw-I-Cot Valley, it is again a tribute to the professionalism of the Canadian soldiers and commanders in that we were doing what we call parallel planning at all levels from section platoon company as well as battalion. I feel confident in saying that all of the soldiers were well informed and ready to launch into Operation Harpoon.

Senator Stratton: Welcome, gentlemen. I should like to refer to the friendly fire incident once again. There are reports today that soldiers from the Princess Patricia's battle group were ordered to check fire only minutes before the friendly fire incident. Is this true and, if so, why were Canadian troops ordered to check fire?

LCol. Stogran: Honourable senators, in our training around the Kandahar airfield, check fires were a regular occurrence. I could not comment on the claim that the check fire had been issued only minutes prior to the actual attack. There was a check fire shortly before, but the time frame escapes me right now, whether or not it was five minutes.

I knew that our procedures were very much in tune with the ground force commander, Col. Wiercinski, and Task Force Rakkasan. I have always been confident that if negligence were involved in the decision of the pilots, justice would take its course. I also knew that, unfortunately, all sorts of arguments would be brought out by the defence in trying to cast reasonable doubt on the incidents of that night. All of the members of the battle group, including myself, are confident that we were doing everything that could be done, and that the area was recognized as a training area. The unfortunate thing is that the families witness arguments of this nature. These types of arguments have been leveraged in the press since the military tribunal began.

Senator Stratton: I appreciate that answer. What are the normal circumstances, or can you describe to us what the circumstances would be for a check fire? Is a list of criteria followed, or is it just reaction to whatever is taking place?

LCol. Stogran: Very often, we were issuing check fires because of the approach of cargo aircraft into the Kandahar airfield. We had a procedure where, initially, the tower would phone down to our battalion headquarters and issue the check fire in that manner. If I am not mistaken, as a result of the accident, we tried to impose stricter control. I may be a little off on the actual details, but the expectation was that we would actually provide someone in the tower. I cannot remember if that was actually a result of fallout from the accident, or if that was the practice prior to the incident.

Senator Mahovlich: I also wish to express my congratulations to the Major-General and to the Lieutenant Colonel for a job well done.

Many people characterize war as hours and hours of boredom, punctuated by moments of sheer terror, much like professional sports; is that a correct way to describe your mission?

LCol. Stogran: Honourable senators, I will start off by saying what an honour it is to see an old hockey idol of mine.

In response to your question, it is interesting that you cite that quote. From the very time we deployed and I met the soldiers in Afghanistan, I used virtually the same words: that they can expect long periods of boredom punctuated by short periods of sheer terror. We did experience that. I felt that, next to the al-Qaeda, our biggest threat would be complacency, especially in view of the extreme climatic conditions that I knew we would be experiencing there.

The leadership rose to the challenge and kept the troops on a fighting edge. We maintained an aggressive training program at Tarnak Farm to try to avoid that feeling of complacency that could have overcome us.

Senator Mahovlich: I spent most of my life waiting for buses, trains, flights and everything else.

Did the troops have any time off from their operational mission? If so, what did they do with their free time? Was there any Canadian entertainment that visited Afghanistan while you were deployed?

LCol. Stogran: Honourable senators, because of the unique nature of this particular deployment, we did not have the opportunity to do the normal leave rotation period. We implemented a plan in consultation and coordination with Tampa that we referred to as the "forced rest program" whereby we rotated every soldier out of the theatre into Dubai for a period of 96 hours. That was a tremendously successful program. We rotated 850 soldiers through this forced rest program. We did not have a single incident; by that I mean a criminal offence, an injury or anything of that nature.

It was also therapeutic for the troops that National Defence Headquarters and the decision makers allowed the soldiers to purchase, at the expense of the Crown, a limited degree of civilian clothing. Normally, we would send soldiers off and expect them to wear their physical training gear or something of that nature. This was an extremely successful program. The troops came back charged and ready to carry on with their mission.

We also had a Canadian contingent entertainment troop, a first class professional group that came and performed. They had dancers, singers and comedians at Kandahar. I was especially proud on that occasion because of the standard of the entertainment. It was a performance that even our American colleagues were impressed with. We were provided those types of rest and relaxation.

Senator Mahovlich: Major-General, Canadian troops were not as prepared for war as they were 11 years ago for Desert Storm; is that a fair statement?

• (1540)

MGen. Gauthier: I could not begin to comment on that, other than to say that, in my personal experience of the last six months, the actions of 3 PPCLI demonstrate that, in this particular instance, we were prepared.

Senator Tkachuk: Welcome, gentlemen. I would like to thank you on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan for your superb effort in Afghanistan. Just lately, we have had a young man killed in Bali during a terrorist act, so that is hitting close to home.

LCol. Stogran, I believe you are on record as stating that the future of ground operations rests on air transport ability. Apart from having fun reporting on the uniform issue, the media were also talking about the question of our being able to move our troops from Canada to Afghanistan and the situation that we were in. I also understand that the army commander is considering eliminating the parachute battalions.

Based on what happened and what you learned in Afghanistan, could you comment on what happened in relation to the movement of the troops and our ability to rely on the American planes to do that? How would the loss of the paratroops affect operations?

LCol. Stogran: I can only echo my earlier comments about our deployment out there, from my perspective as a commander on the ground. The air movement was as flawless as we could expect, including our movements between Kandahar airfield and up to the Baghran airfield, as well as with respect to the use of helicopters. We were very well served by the air transport ability.

My personal opinion would be that the loss of the parachute capability would be a travesty. I have been on the record in suggesting that the asymmetric threat is the threat of the 21st century, and we have to have the capability to react quickly. The parachute capability remains a valid one. However, in this day and age, in our army, nothing is really sacrosanct from the cuts.

Also, despite the fact that I am a light warrior and a paratrooper, I am a proponent of the tank, which we have also considered doing away with. We have been asked to do a great deal more with a great deal less and unfortunately, at some point in time, those kinds of capabilities will be considered for cuts.

Senator Tkachuk: Do you feel that the proposed reorganizations in the battalions are driven by operational concerns or is the issue, as you seem to imply, a matter of money?

LCol. Stogran: Sir, I will be able to comment on that a little better after I have assumed my next job and am actually part of that process. As MGen. Gauthier and the Chief of Land Staff have mentioned, there is a balance of capability and sustainability, and you cannot really have one without the other. We have to maintain a balance. At some time it is necessary to assess the risk and what capability you can do without, in order to achieve sustainability. It is almost a matter of what comes first: the chicken or the egg.

The Chairman: Major-General, would you care to comment on that?

MGen. Gauthier: You would be hard pressed to find anyone in the building in which I work who would suggest that cash is not an issue. Of course it is absolutely an issue.

Senator Tkachuk: Since you answered in that way, I understand that money is driving these decisions; in other words, there is not a question of choices in operations. These are being driven by budget cuts.

MGen. Gauthier: There is a whole host of factors but, at the end of the day, you will have capability to the extent that you can afford to have capability. Every military around the world faces the same challenge. Their decisions will be guided by funding envelopes as well as other elements of policy decisions on tasks and the nature of the forces that we desire.

The Chairman: Thank you. The time for Committee of the Whole will expire at 3:45.

Senator Carstairs: Honourable senators, I move that the committee rise at 3:45 and that the Chair report that the committee has concluded deliberations.

Senator St. Germain: On a point of order, I raised my hand to be put on the list of questioners for this committee.

Madam Chair, I know you would not discriminate against anybody because of where they come from, but as a Westerner and a Canadian Alliance senator, I would have liked to ask a question. In any event, if that is not possible, congratulations, gentlemen; you are doing a great job.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator St. Germain.

Senator Kinsella: Question.

The Chairman: Before I put the question, I would like to add my thanks to the witnesses. You have done a fine job for Canada.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

The Chairman: Honourable senators, is it your pleasure to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, the sitting is resumed.

Hon. Lorna Milne: The Committee of the Whole, which received MGen. Michel Gauthier and LCol. Pat Stogran, has

asked me to report that the committee has concluded its deliberations.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

EXPORT AND IMPORT OF ROUGH DIAMONDS BILL

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Acting Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-14, to provide for controls on the export, import or transit across Canada of rough diamonds and for a certification scheme for the export of rough diamonds in order to meet Canada's obligations under the Kimberley Process.

Bill read first time.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the second time?

On motion of Senator Carstairs, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.

[Translation]

BILL TO CHANGE NAMES OF CERTAIN ELECTORAL DISTRICTS

FIRST READING

The Hon. the Acting Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons with Bill C-300, to change the names of certain electoral districts.

Bill read first time.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the second time?

On motion of Senator Rompkey, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I move that the Senate now rise, and that all orders, inquiries and motions be postponed until the next sitting of the Senate.

The Hon. the Acting Speaker: Honourable senators, is it your pleasure to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

The Senate adjourned until Wednesday, November 20, 2002, at 1:30 p.m.

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