



[This document contains testimony relating to Canada's upcoming "peacekeeping" mission to Mali by Major-General (retired) Lewis MacKenzie, Major-General (retired) Denis Thompson, and Brigadier-General (retired) Gregory Mitchell. Major-General Thompson and Brigadier-General Mitchell are graduates of the Royal Military College.]

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(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)):

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on National Defence this morning to talk about Canada's contributions to international peacekeeping. We have with us this morning Major-General (Retired) Lewis MacKenzie, Major-General (Retired) Denis Thompson, and Brigadier-General (Retired) Gregory Mitchell.

Thank you, gentlemen, for coming this morning. There's lots to talk about. We've recently announced a mission, we have a new way of doing business, and all of you have a whole host of experiences and opinions on the matter, so I'm looking forward to hearing from you. I'm going to turn the floor over to Major-General (Retired) Lewis Mackenzie.

Sir, you have the floor for opening remarks.

Major-General (Retired) Lewis MacKenzie (As an Individual):

Thanks very much, Mr. Chair and members. It's a pleasure to be here on a nice sunny day. You might not know, but I set a Guinness record. I only served about 13 months in what we call "military capital punishment" here in Ottawa.

I'm often introduced as the most experienced peacekeeper in the world. The thing is that the people who are kind enough to say that don't understand why. It's not because of the number of missions I've done—which is a lot, nine in total—but it's for a couple of other reasons. I've served at every rank from lieutenant to major general on peacekeeping duty, with the exception of full colonel. Having done that, I've see it at the very sharp end and I've seen it at the political end. I'm the only Canadian to have commanded a UN mission. Now you're all thinking, well,

what about E.L.M. Burns, what about General Clive Milner in Cyprus—the father not the son—and what about Roméo Dallaire. They all had an SRSg, a special representative of the secretary-general, who was in charge of the mission. They were commanding the military component.

In my command in central America just before the wall came down, I had no SRSg or political adviser. I dealt directly with the five central American presidents on a face-to-face basis on a regular basis, implementing the Esquipulas II agreement. It was very easy in Nicaragua. Violeta Chamorro was a graduate of McGill University, and four of her cabinet members were graduates of McGill University. She said that if you turned back the collar in her cabinet—the youngest cabinet in the world—you'd see “Made in Canada”.

If I had a problem, I could go to the presidents, and if they couldn't sort it out as far as the ceasefire went, then we could go to New York because each of those countries had a delegation at New York and had a flag flying in front of the building. We could directly deal with them in that way and resolve the issue, which happened on a regular basis.

Now in actual fact, I commanded two UN missions without an SRSg, and when I say “sector Sarajevo” that won't make sense to you because we were working within UNPROFOR. However, within a couple of weeks of setting up sector Sarajevo in the summer of 1992, when all the shit was flying in Sarajevo as opposed to up on the Croatian border, the UN ordered me to deal directly with the UN. I would inform my commander at UNPROFOR, Satish Nambiar, one of the finest gentlemen I've ever worked with, the Indian three-star who was rated number one out of 96 three-stars in the Indian Army. I would send him info copies of what I was dealing with, with regard to the UN.

I should add, because I forgot to mention it, that in the case of Roméo Dallaire, his SRSg was much more of a hindrance than a help to him, an incompetent Colombian diplomat.

So I've seen it from both sides, and what was easy during pre-Cold War has now become virtually impossible, which was the situation in Sarajevo because all of a sudden I was dealing with a brand new country that thought anything to do with the UN should be on their side—the Bosnian Muslim government—and two factions.

I thought I had it hard dealing with the factions of the breakaway Croats and Serbs. It was nowhere near as hard as some of the current missions, where you have factions that are not only fighting the UN or but in their own self-interest are occasionally also fighting each other or banding together.

So “post-Cold War peacekeeping” is bullshit. It's not peacekeeping. Will people please stop using the term? It's grammatically incorrect and it's incorrect in reality. There is no peace to keep.

If you go into a mission area, I would suggest the first thing you ask yourself if you're in the planning process is what the mission is, or in military terms, what the aim is. If I ask each one of you to respond to that question around the table, I know how many different answers I'll get. Is the mission worth dying for? That's the question, because if it's worth dying for, then go in and fulfill your mission with troops that are properly trained, equipped, and understand why they're there, and by the way—and I'll get into this—are properly paid by their home government.

(0850)

Let me just read the countries I've served with in peacekeeping duty during the Cold War: Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Argentina, India, Brazil, Poland, Hungary, Colombia, Spain, Fiji, and Finland. These are pretty good countries, with pretty good equipment and pretty good leadership. As soon as we had the disasters of Srebrenica, Somalia and Rwanda, those countries backed off, including Canada. We now have Ethiopia, Rwanda, Bangladesh. Don't get me wrong. Some of those countries have worked with me and for me. They're fine soldiers. They're paid bloody little, and they don't have the right equipment. They are lacking in training, and you and I know why they're there: their countries receive \$1,100 U.S. per month into the national coffers.

The only mutiny I've ever had to deal with in my military career was by my Russian in Sarajevo and the Balkans. Why? Because they thought the \$1,100 U.S. was coming to them. When they found out it was going to their government, and their families at home in Russia weren't even getting paid and were being issued seeds, so they could plan to grow some potatoes or something to eat, they were highly pissed-off, and with good reason. They would back their vehicles up to the presidency in downtown Sarajevo, and flog the diesel from their vehicles to the presidency. The UN gave me a direct order to have them stop, and I refused. I said that I would stop them when they were paid the \$1.50 per day per diem they were supposed to receive from the UN. They hadn't been paid in the last three months.

You have a problem with underpaid soldiers in areas where there is potential for human trafficking, prostitution rings, and black marketeering. I'm not saying they're all doing it, but boy the temptation is there for these poorly equipped, and in some case poorly trained, so-called contributions to UN peacekeeping.

Please consider the aim. I know it's going to come up, and it just aggravates me to the core this idiotic debate about combat. I know for some of you it's very important, because all of a sudden combat triggers a Parliamentary debate or whatever. That's out of my league. I'm just saying to talk about risk, not combat. If the mission is worth dying for, then fine, deploy. Don't run around the world as we have been doing, and saying that in Mali, for example, our guys and gals are going to be safe, because they're flying choppers. Don't say they're not going to be on the road, that they won't be ambushed, that there won't be any IEDs.

Just check the fatality rate in Mali, for example. Over 50% have been killed in their bases by indirect fire. Even the Germans, bless them, have counter bombardment mortars, a mortar radar. I don't know what good it's going to do them, because they don't have any ability to respond to the mortar fire coming from outside the base.

I would merely say, study the risk factor. By the way, if you say it's not combat, I suggest that if you visit our soldiers in the field in any of the missions, stand back when you tell them they're not in combat, when they've just been mortared the day before, for example. Get outside of their striking range.

Please, let's not talk about combat. Let's talk about risk. You can have acceptable risk within a mission that has no chance of success, and Mali is a good example. When somebody tells me, as they have done any number of times, that the aim there is support of the peace process, that's BS. The peace process, by any definition, has collapsed the Bamako agreement. There is no peace process that's working, and, not only that, there are a whole bunch of people who are the major players in what's going on in Mali, for example, who aren't part of the peace process. They're the fundamentalists, in the north in particular, the franchise of ISIS and al Qaeda.

(0855)

So study the risk factor. That would be my recommendation to anybody doing planning for peace support operations in the future.

As an aside, you could go into a failed peace process mission and select a specific role. For example, if there is a village that is being threatened and regularly invaded and people are being killed, defend the village. You're not contributing to the peace process, but you are saving lives, if that's what you want to do.

Thank you very much.

The Chair:

Thank you.

General Thompson.

[Translation]

Major-General (Retired) Denis Thompson (As an Individual):

Hello.

I am retired Major-General Denis Thompson. I am delighted to be here to share my thoughts about peacekeeping.

Since I have only 10 minutes, I will speak in English.

[English]

That will probably save you from listening to my horrible accent.

I had the good fortune of serving 39 years in the Canadian Armed Forces, from 1978 to 2017, which makes me a little bit younger than you, General.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie: Much younger.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson: Throughout that time, I was privileged to serve in the infantry with the Royal Canadian Regiment at home and abroad, a regiment that General Mitchell and I share. I was a platoon commander in Cyprus and Germany; a company commander in Bosnia; a battalion or battle group commander again in Bosnia under NATO, and not UN command; the brigade or task force commander in Kandahar, Afghanistan; and the commander of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command. Finally, I returned after three years in the Sinai of being the force commander of the Multinational Force and Observers, which, while a peacekeeping mission, is not a UN peacekeeping mission.

In short, I'm a practitioner, although what I'm about to tell you is vaguely academic.

Peacekeeping is imperfect. There are no rainbows, butterflies, or unicorns in the world that is inhabited by peacekeepers. It's ugly, it's violent, it's arbitrary, and at times, it's blatantly unfair. It certainly is not for the faint of heart. Sadly, when it is under-resourced, the consequences can be disastrous, and often they are counterproductive. And yet, that is the world in which peacekeepers must function.

It is but one form of military operation on the spectrum of conflict, which ranges from conflict prevention to all-out war. The Canadian Armed Forces is capable of participating in that full range of the spectrum of conflict. The costs of managing conflicts rises exponentially, driven by the level of activity that is necessary. Thus, if a conflict prevention mission costs you one dollar, a peacekeeping mission will cost you \$10, and a peace enforcement mission will cost you \$100. Each of them is an order of magnitude more expensive.

Clearly, it would be best to stifle or resolve a conflict before it commences. However, to quote the scene I enjoy at the end of my favourite movie, *The Mission*, "We must work in the world; the world is thus." That world is one where a lack of political consensus rarely results in conflict prevention, compelling those in the international community to field military forces as a bandage to stabilize a conflict. That is meant only to allow time for a political solution to be developed.

Often these peacekeeping missions are deployed in apparently or allegedly benign environments. As the general explained, though, many of these benign environments are invaded by non-state actors, and they're not likely to follow any international norm. I lived this in the MFO in Egypt, where the Sinai Province affiliate of the Islamic State was present in my area of operations.

Thus, to be successful—and this, I guess, is the point I am trying to make today—a mission needs to have quality density from top to bottom. That means that at the top it needs to have competent, active-force commanders

overseen by equally committed civilian leadership. General MacKenzie spoke to that. In the UN context, as you heard, those are special representatives of the secretary-general. In the MFO, it's the director general, who sits in Rome. They need to be supported by properly staffed headquarters that have access to and harness a variety of capable enablers—including intelligence feeds, proper logistics support, helicopters, and fixed-wing assets—and where the rubber meets the road, properly trained and disciplined boots on the ground. It's the full range from the leadership through to the staff and to the properly trained boots on the ground that creates an atmosphere of deterrence and reassurance in their area of operation. This is what is meant, in my mind, by quality density across the entire spectrum of conflict.

(0900)

In fielding military forces, quality density matters because it contributes directly to the credibility of a mission. Canada has all those elements of quality density in its Canadian Armed Forces and, I would also hazard to say, within its civilian agencies too. In my experience, credibility is bestowed upon those who put boots on the ground. As I have already indicated, we're not talking about just any boots. It serves little purpose to deploy expensive enablers that feed actionable intelligence to front-line troops who cannot or will not act.

As I mentioned, driving such forces requires committed mission leadership. Canada possesses that both in and out of uniform. We proved our mettle in Kandahar with the employment of a joined-up comprehensive approach that went some way to resolving the difficulties in that province. That mission, while certainly not a peacekeeping mission, benefited enormously from the presence—again—of Canadian boots on the ground, and they were boots on the ground that in turn gave Canada a seat at the table and a say in what was going on in that country.

Is there risk? The general spoke about risks earlier. Can soldiers be wounded and die? Hell yes. That's not new. It's reality. Since the dawn of civilization, the currency of nations has been measured in its blood and treasure. I have a personal aversion to referencing Canadian Armed Forces soldiers as "Canada's sons and daughters". That metaphor creates the impression that they are too precious to put in harm's way. What nonsense. They may well be someone's son or daughter—and I have a son who serves in the military—but they are also professional soldiers who joined the Canadian Armed Forces precisely because they want to take up that challenge and they want to be in harm's way.

If you want to play a leadership role in the world, you need to accept the risk, in blood and treasure, by contributing boots on the ground to round out the quality of a fully enabled peacekeeping mission from top to bottom. By so doing, Canada would build credibility, garner the leadership positions that it hasn't held for many years, and over time re-emerge as a leader on the world stage.

Now that I've got that off my chest, I'm going to hit three tangential points.

First, the government's Elsie initiative is important, as having more women in peacekeeping acts as a form of enabler, thus adding to the quality density of any peacekeeping mission. It will succeed if, and only if, it actually manages to field women in the field in positions that would be considered boots on the ground. It is but one small value-added element in an overall strategy that should also include leadership, military and civilian; enablers, and I acknowledge the recent commitment of helicopters to Mali as one such enabler; and a formed combat unit to provide quality boots on the ground.

Second, I am a fellow of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute and the Canadian defence associations institute. These two institutes, which count among the few in Canada, are populated with an impressive array of former diplomats, government officials, police, and armed forces members. Their members, in my opinion, possess much unplumbed and non-partisan expertise that committees of this nature should call upon.

Third and finally, I'd like to close my statement by adding a personal biographical note. I grew up in the small village of New Lowell, Ontario, which is in Simcoe County, just north of Toronto. It is the small village that gave Canada Miss Vickie's potato chips. I know that you all secretly love Miss Vickie's potato chips, and that should be reason enough for you to weigh my comments heavily.

Voices: Oh, oh!

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson: Thank you.

(0905)

The Chair:

The salt and vinegar ones.

An hon. member: That's what I was going to say.

The Chair: General Mitchell.

Brigadier-General (Retired) Gregory Mitchell (Special Advisor on Peacekeeping, Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association):

Good morning, honourable members of the committee.

It is indeed a pleasure and a privilege to be asked to testify before you today. I thank you for the opportunity to offer some observations and proposals on behalf of the organization I represent, the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association.

[Translation]

May I also say it is a privilege for me to be included among the other witnesses here today, all of whom are experienced and expert practitioners of peacekeeping. I admire and respect each of them and count them as friends and esteemed colleagues.

Today, I will concentrate on what I consider to be a key issue—Canadian leadership within UN peace support operations—and I will offer two practical, national-level proposals to enhance our leadership capabilities.

[English]

Even at its lowest ebb, Canada continued to contribute civilians, troops, and police to United Nations peace support operations, or PSOs. Now, however, the government's ambitions involve larger contributions and a greater role in PSOs, preferably in smarter, more targeted ways, in order to maximize the effects on the ground. Presumably, it foresees that smarter and more effective contributions will assist Canada in regaining our position as a respected world leader in PSO.

[Translation]

Canada most recently announced some of these new, smarter contributions to the UN mission in Mali. No doubt Global Affairs Canada and National Defence explained to you last week how they are planning to meet the Canadian national interest for this mission, which should translate into very simple national objectives: making a significant contribution toward mission success, and then returning our people and equipment home safely.

[English]

Although the objectives may be simple, implementation is not. Apart from currently being the most dangerous mission in the world for peacekeepers, the United Nations' multi-dimensional integrated stabilization mission in Mali is a good example of how modern PSOs have evolved to become ever more complex, multi-dimensional, and integrated. Conducted within austere and hostile environments, in countries with minimal host nation infrastructure or support, and meddling neighbours, the modern PSO is more akin to counter-insurgency operations with added responsibilities for nation building and humanitarian and disaster relief efforts.

As such, modern PSOs require expertise in such major crosscutting issues as security sector reform, defence sector reform, justice and rule of law, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, sexual and gender-based violence, protection of civilians, and peace-building tasks.

To be successful, missions also require advanced equipment and support, which Canada is now offering, but they also require, from troop- and police-contributing countries, expert leadership from well-qualified military, police, and civilian personnel, not only on the ground or tactical level, but also at the mission or operational level, and, I would propose, at the UN headquarters or strategic levels as well.

PSOs also require commanders and multinational staffs who are not only experts in these evolving and complex areas of endeavour, but who can also be available at very short notice and have the ability and training to work effectively as coherent staff teams within the Byzantine UN systems. They must be able, effectively and efficiently, to provide integrated police, military and civilian capabilities in such areas as intelligence, mobility, logistics, engineering, and medical support. Since most UN missions now operate under security council resolutions that include elements of chapter 7, or the use of force, those same mission leaders and their staffs must also be warriors with clear-eyed understanding, capability, and determination to undertake robust operations as required, but within sensitive political and diplomatic environments.

One way to assist the UN in meeting these complex and evolving challenges is by providing better leaders at all three levels—strategic, operational, and tactical—and from all three elements—military, police, and civilian. Canada obviously has excellent leaders in all three, but over the past dozen or so years, it has lost much of its broad-based capabilities in peace support operations. With that loss, it has forfeited its claim to be an international leader in that field.

(0910)

[Translation]

To turn that situation around, Canada will need to commit suitable time and resources to the development of the required expertise, and its contributions must be readily available and rapidly deployable, so that timely establishment of new or expanded peacekeeping operations can be achieved. To be blunt, Canada must re-learn all aspects of peacekeeping support operations, including how to train, prepare, deploy, and support its troops, police, and government-provided civilians within the UN context.

[English]

If it so chooses, Canada can be fully capable of meeting these new challenges and of providing the necessary military police and civilian expertise and leadership within those evolving, multi-dimensional, complex, and integrated missions. However, this will not happen without strong direction and support from Parliament before, during, and after deployments.

The conclusion I personally have come to, which has the endorsement of the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association, focuses on two areas that I have had some experience with. I foresee both of them offering the means to regain our leadership position within missions and on the international stage.

Specifically, I would make these two proposals: one, the establishment of a Canadian international peace support training centre to enable development of PSO research, education, training, and capacity building; and two, contributing a rapidly deployable, pre-trained multinational headquarters to support UN mission leadership, something that the UN desperately needs but cannot provide itself.

First of all, on a Canadian international peace support training centre, we had something very much like this in the past, the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. Before its dissolution due to the withdrawal of financial and personnel support from DND, the RCMP, and Foreign Affairs, it was the world's first civilian-managed peacekeeping training centre, one of only a handful conducting training, capacity building, public education, and research that reflected the multidisciplinary realities of contemporary peace support operations. The PPC was historically an effective instrument of Canadian foreign and defence policy. It enjoyed a solid reputation in the international community as a leading authority on peace support operations, and served as a model for other countries. Unfortunately, the withdrawal of long-term financial security and personnel support sounded the death knell for the PPC.

I therefore propose that a new institution be established, a Canadian international peace support training centre, with capabilities similar in nature to the former PPC, but without the financial vulnerability it suffered from. The long-term commitment of government support would be a necessity so that the new institution could concentrate on accomplishing its work rather than expending effort on remaining financially solvent.

My second proposal envisages Canada contributing towards a rapidly deployable, multinational headquarters to support mission leadership. Like my first proposal, this is not a new one for Canada. For 12 years, we partnered with 15 like-minded nations to create a multinational, standby high-readiness brigade for United Nations operations, or SHIRBRIG. This was a multinational brigade that could be made available to the UN as a rapidly deployable peacekeeping force. It did not belong to the UN, but rather was made available to the UN as required and at the discretion of the individual SHIRBRIG members.

[Translation]

This brigade was first declared available for deployment in 2000 and in that same year deployed to the United Nations Mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia. That successful mission was followed by deployments and planning assistance in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan—including work in the Darfur Planning Team—Chad and Somalia.

(0915)

[English]

Canada was a recognized leader within SHIRBRIG. Although a full multinational brigade may never be resurrected for political and economic reasons, Canada could still undertake the leadership role by focusing on providing the framework of one vital contribution that SHIRBRIG provided—the jewel in the crown, if you will—and that is a multinational UN military headquarters. Such a headquarters could be fully trained and equipped with UN-compatible vehicles, equipment, and communications, able to integrate fully within a UN mission headquarters, and deployable within a very short period of time in order to rapidly establish new military command-and-control capacity within an integrated UN mission headquarters. It should not be a full-time, fully manned headquarters, but rather would have a small, permanent planning and training staff that would be augmented from across the country for training events and operations. By recreating that headquarters capability, Canada would be offering a unique yet vital capability to the UN, something it cannot provide itself or readily obtain from anywhere else, except with the possibility of NATO and the European Union.

To achieve the headquarters multinational character, Canada could provide the basic building blocks, and then arrange to partner with like-minded nations to provide elements to augment the headquarters staff, equipment, and

resources. Once established and trained, it could be offered as a formed headquarters on standby, and readily deployable within the framework of the UN peacekeeping capability readiness system.

Honourable members of the committee, my two proposals to you today have both focused on PSO leadership, one on PSO leadership development, and the second on the practical application of those PSO leadership skills. Both are proven concepts to which Canada has ascribed in the not-too-distant past. The requisite knowledge and expertise to plan and implement both proposals are still readily available in Canada today. With a relatively modest infusion of resources, both could be accomplished in a comprehensive whole-of-government fashion. The resulting Canadian impact on PSOs could be greatly enhanced, in turn positioning Canada in an even greater overall leadership role on the international UN stage.

Thank you.

The Chair:

Thank you very much for that.

We'll move to seven-minute questions.

Mr. Robillard, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.):

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here, gentlemen, and for your cooperation today.

There are many differences between first and second generation peacekeeping operations. In your opinion, how do the peacekeeping operations conducted in Africa and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s differ from those conducted during the cold war?

[English]

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Yes, they're very, very different. I would go back to the point that you're dealing with people who are in the midst of the conflict and have no delegation at UN headquarters in New York. There's no flag flying in front of the building. There are factions. Their headquarters are in many cases mobile. You sit down with those folks, as I did 14 times, and you broker a ceasefire.

Then somebody breaks the ceasefire. In many cases, it was the government representative on the Bosnian Muslim side, and for good reason. They were under attack.

You want to meet with the people you signed the deal with, but you can't find them. They're not at the other end. What I did when I got to Sarajevo, for example, as a naive old peacekeeper, was to give telephones, radio sets, to each of the two factions and the government on the same frequency. My thinking was that, as it normally was in previous peace operations, they would sort things out themselves. It didn't work worth a damn. Therefore, it was difficult to follow up on any breaches of the ceasefire, right through me and up to and including Lord Carrington, who was the head of negotiations in the Balkans for a ceasefire.

They're so different that they shouldn't even be compared. They are totally and absolutely different. The UN during the pre-Cold War era always sent the absolute minimum to try to get the job done. They never anticipated the worst-case scenario. They always anticipated the best-case scenario, which was normally accurate.

Let me give you a humorous example. In Cypress in 1965, the Irish Parliament withdrew its forces with 30 days' notice. They were beside the Canadian contingent in northern Cypress. I, as the recce platoon commander of 35 soldiers, was ordered by my commanding officer, General Kirby, a lieutenant-colonel at the time, to go over and replace the Irish contingent with 30-some soldiers. I did that on a Wednesday.

On a Friday—the day is important—the leaders of the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots came to me and asked me why I hadn't called them for a meeting on the Friday. I said, "What, you were getting together and meeting?" I was told, "Yes, but it was also happy hour. We always came here and drank for a couple of hours. Then we went back to our positions. We haven't been fighting each other in the last three months." That doesn't happen anymore. You can't imagine calling in ISIS and al Qaeda and sitting down and having a party.

So it is unbelievably different. That's why you need well-trained, well-led, and well-equipped soldiers with some time for them to work together to become a team.

(0920)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard:

What kinds of reforms—administrative, institutional, political, financial or other—are needed to ensure that UN peacekeeping missions are effective and successful?

[English]

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

If I understood your question correctly, again, I wasn't a force commander on a UN mission. I know that UN missions are constructed in a fashion that doesn't actually lead to any sort of efficiency.

In other words, the SRSG, the head of logistics in a UN mission, reports to the civilian head of the mission and not to the military commander. The condition in which I lived at the MFO, the Multinational Force and Observers, which is, again, a completely different beast, was that the chief of support, while he was a civilian, reported to me. That made a world of difference in terms of being able to organize and being able to focus his effort on what was important to me.

The general spoke earlier about people having counter-rocket artillery and counter-mortar radar. This is something I didn't have in the MFO until we started to get rocketed and mortared. Then the United States provided them to us. They provided us with ray cameras. They provided us with multiple C-17 flights. All sorts of resources were poured in, but it's not the way the UN functions, to my understanding.

There are some lessons to be taken away from the way the MFO functions—it's almost like a business entity rather than the way the UN performs its duties—but I don't know that it really advances the conversation that much.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard:

How is Canada's value added perceived?

What training expertise do we have to offer to improve the overall effectiveness of UN operations?

In this regard, how does Canada's support for international peacekeeping operations serve our national values and interests?

[English]

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

That's an interesting one. Thank you.

[Translation]

If I may, I will answer in English.

[English]

On Canadian values, first of all, I believe that's well above our pay grade. We are not politicians or diplomats by any means. We're only observing from a certain level within missions sometimes.

Simply through our participation, our presence in the areas of influence, and so forth, there is a certain morphing or influence on the others around us that is going to transmit Canadian values. It's not us going out preaching and saying we have U.S. exceptionalism or anything else. We are there because we are interested in creating a peaceful environment, or whatever it is we wish to do. We're not there because we're interested in the oil. We're not interested in the resources, we're not interested in this, and we're not interested in that. We are there to help create peace. The way we do business quietly, professionally, and so forth influences others, whether it be other developing nations or even other alliance nations of ours now. We have to look at things from a different perspective, in my opinion, and help change things.

For example, when I was co-chairing a military joint committee between north and south Sudan, and we were dealing with things like prisoner exchanges, stopping child soldiers, reopening routes, and everything else, you could tell the difference in values by the different responses to the questions we'd ask. We'd say that after 20 years of war, "Hundreds of thousands have been killed. We now need to talk about prisoner exchanges. How many prisoners do you have, and how many prisoners do you have?" They would say, "We have 14." We'd then ask the others, "How many do you have?" They would respond, "We have none." What does that tell me? All the prisoners were killed. Those are different values. We need to spread our values around the world.

(0925)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard:

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair:

MP Bezan.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the generals for appearing, for your service, and for your candour in your description of the missions that we undertake for the U.N.

I agree with you 100%, General MacKenzie, that peacekeeping is a misnomer, that first and foremost, we train soldiers for combat who sometimes have to do peacekeeping. It's a whole different avenue, and we have to make sure that Canadians understand that, rather than always have this nostalgic view that peacekeepers are blue helmets standing between two factions that have come to some sort of accord. Of course, that doesn't exist in today's world.

Let's take what you said, General MacKenzie, about whether the mission is worth dying for. Are the risk and the objectives in Canada's national interest? As it comes to this Mali mission, is it worth dying for, in your opinion, General?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

If it's based on, as I think it should be, on the chances for success and there's considered to be no chance of success—and success is not necessarily the establishment of a democratic government in a very western style—then no. Aiming at the latter doesn't work. However, if it stops the killing, then it certainly is justified.

The problem is that any attempt at the peace process doesn't include the most serious parts of the various insurgents who are operating with seven neighbours, of which at least three or four are safe havens for them, and the UN in particular is not permitted to cross the borders.

What's interesting is the presence of the United States Africa Command—and don't kid yourself, they're there—and the French, who are killing insurgents, and the new force of five African nations that's trying to figure out what it's supposed to be doing right now. None of them will accept direction from the UN. They will not come under UN control.

Mr. James Bezan:

But the UN has sanctioned their activities and has even said that any UN medevac helicopters, as well as logistic support, which Canada will be providing, can be assigned to the operations, particularly of the G5 Sahel.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

That's right. Getting to value added, my interpretation is the second interpretation of it—for example, helicopters as opposed to your basic grunts like the rest of us here. When you send in value-added resources, you must guarantee that you provide them with their own security, because having some of the nations that are participating providing security for your people—no, I wouldn't accept that.

Mr. James Bezan:

You made the point about the Germans on base. We're replacing the Germans in Gao. There have been attacks at that base of course. They have over 560 troops there. Canada's talking about supplying only 250. We learned from the CBC this morning that El Salvador may provide aerial protection with attack helicopters for our helicopter fleet, and that the UN is also saying that we aren't sending in enough helicopters for transport, and they want to repurpose the Griffons for transport rather than as gunships.

When you look at working with El Salvador—you have Central American experience—are they a reliable partner? You talk about people being underequipped and undertrained in some cases, but El Salvadorans will provide the skills and ability to protect Canadian troops as they move around?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

I don't have concerns about that. I don't have intimate knowledge, but based on my experience, I wouldn't have any concerns. At the same time, I want enough of our own folks around when we do these things.

I still have great faith in the leadership of the Canadian forces. They understand exactly what we're talking about here, and they are not going to get sucked in to deploying forces that aren't going to be adequately protected. I would be very disappointed were that the case, and I don't anticipate that.

Could I add one point, while I have a chance, on the value-added issue? I was a director at the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. There was a tiny amount of money, between \$200,000 and \$300,000, and it was pulled back. Do you know what we were doing? We were bringing African policewomen over to Ottawa and to Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, and training these African policewomen to the extent that they went back to their countries and trained African policewomen in their countries. That whole program collapsed. I'm not playing politics. I still think the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre was not a proper name at the time. Pearson wasn't very popular with the party of the day.

(0930)

Mr. James Bezan:

General Thompson, you have unique experience. You have done both NATO and UN. There is often a lot of talk about Bosnia. Success happened through NATO and not under the UN mission.

Can you speak to your experience as to what was more effective, and why NATO was more effective than was the UN of the day?

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

I didn't get a chance to serve in UNPROFOR with General MacKenzie, although I was in the third battalion. I left the third battalion just as Peter Devlin joined the fray in Sarajevo. He can certainly speak to the quality of the soldiers I served with.

I arrived in Bosnia on New Year's Eve 1995-1996 at the very front end of the IFOR mission, the implementation of force in NATO. NATO turned up with 60,000 troops and swarmed into that country. How many soldiers died as a result of direct action from belligerence during NATO's mission? I can give you that number right now. It's zero, because we flooded the place. Some people died as a result of running over mines or road traffic accidents, etc. In fact, we lost a guy named Sapper Holopina during our mission, in a road traffic accident.

I was part of a British battle group. We had Challenger tanks. I had a company of 185 men with mortars, pioneers, snipers, all the bells and whistles. We had access to close air support. We had quality density from top to bottom, and that's why it worked.

Mr. James Bezan:

When we are deploying on UN missions, should we be going with entire battle groups? We have had witnesses here before on other studies who have said that when we deploy, we need to go with all the assets so that we are providing the density, that contribution, and a commitment.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

You just need to make sure the UN is going to front up with all that stuff. You can be part of, as I was, a multinational battle group, a company inside of a battle group, or you can show up with an entire battle group, or you can turn up with a brigade, or be a part of a brigade. You just need to make sure the people you deploy with are the same quality you are.

The Chair:

Thank you.

Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I really do appreciate the peacekeeping service of those who are before us today. Around this table already, we've spent a lot of time focusing on the complexity and the difficulties of UN peacekeeping missions. I want to ask you a different question about successes.

The one mission I knew the most about, the UN transitional administration in East Timor, was very successful. We had the UN mission in Côte d'Ivoire, which left behind a much more stable country.

Would any of you like to talk about any of the successes you've seen in UN peacekeeping missions and why you think they were successful.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

I'd be delighted to answer that, because I always use East Timor as an example, and Somalia. Both of those were subcontracted. The UN was up to here in the crap in East Timor until it turned to the Australians and said, "Would you please take up a leadership position, and command and control this mission," and bang, it worked.

People forget that the American intervention in Somalia was one of the most successful interventions in the history of the UN. When the American troops arrived on the shores of Mogadishu, the media was there to greet them. That's because Aidid and Mahdi, the warlords, had buggered-off, because the Americans came in with lots of force.

When it became an election issue, and Bill Clinton withdrew the force, leaving a modest force behind, commanded by a classmate of mine from the U.S. army war college, the force commander there, the Turkish three star, asked to see me when I was there reporting for CTV. He said, "I've been left here with nothing. What the hell is going on? I can't deploy my reserve"—the American force—"without the permission of the American deputy commander who reports to me." But in the initial stages, the American-led chapter VII intervention was unbelievable.

So, subcontract to somebody rather than trying to run the show from Manhattan, the building in downtown New York.

(0935)

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

Another example, if I may say, is Sierra Leone, just next door to Côte d'Ivoire, with the same circumstances. There was a UN mission. It failed or was failing. They were backed up by the British. The British stabilized the area, along with, unfortunately, some mercenaries, but that's another story. Then the UN came in, this time with 19,000 troops, after the situation had been stabilized, and now that country has transitioned and gone through a couple of elections.

There are a few examples of where UN missions have been successful, largely because they're properly resourced from top to bottom.

Mr. Randall Garrison:

14/38

General Mitchell.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

Ethiopia and Eritrea was touted at the time as being very successful—probably more along the lines of classic peacekeeping, the separation of two state parties. That's why, but also because of the strong leadership and the strong forces that were sent in.

I want to make one comment that ties back to Mr. Bezan's remarks and a favourite saying that I recall of General MacKenzie: "If you're going to a knife fight, take a gun." I think that sums it up. Yes, if you're going to put boots on the ground, don't mess around with, "Oh, we're restricted to 300 or 500." Send a battle group. Make sure the APCs, the armoured personnel carriers, go to Sarajevo. Even if you're told not to take them, take them. Do all the stuff. Even if the UN is not going to pay you, take them.

Mr. Randall Garrison:

When we've talked about peacekeeping, we're told the stories of the UN approaching Canada on repeated occasions, asking us to participate. I'm going to ask all three the same question. What's the value added that Canada brings? Why is Canada popular for these requests?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Certainly, it's our past reputation. We did, in fact, participate in every UN mission that anybody had ever thought of up until the end of the Cold War, and performed admirably.

We bring more than we're permitted to bring. As was mentioned, we were ordered to bring 13 APCs to Sarajevo. The brilliance of the RCR-led battle group is that it brought 83. I was just in the midst of having to pay for all the gas for the extra ones that came in when Sarajevo started to implode, and we needed them. Then the UN begged us to keep them there—that type of thing.

In my day there were three people in the peacekeeping department at the UN. They weren't answering the phone after five o'clock on weekdays.

We're a reliable force, and we provide well-trained leadership to the levels that the general is talking about.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

Canadian troops are largely regarded as well-trained and, therefore, properly suited to peacekeeping operations.

The second point is that we have no colonial baggage, and that's important to many of these belligerents. When we turn up some place, they'll often ask, as I was asked in Bosnia and sometimes in Egypt, "What the hell are you doing here? Why is Canada interested in this particular part of the world?" That actually plays to our favour, not having political baggage.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

I'll knock off a couple of those that I was going to mention about [Inaudible--Editor] and so forth. We have no hidden agenda. Canadians bring strong values and military values. If I could refer back to my alma mater and Ms. Alleslev's alma mater from our military college, it's truth, duty, valour. Those things sum up the military values I think that we take to peacekeeping, and they are well respected.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

That's what makes Mali so dangerous, because we are all—not just the white Christians—seen as crusaders by both ISIS and al Qaeda. That's how they refer to the UN force no matter its colour or religion: “They're crusaders here in our country.”

Mr. Randall Garrison:

Thanks very much—I've only got one minute left—I want to go back to General Mitchell's proposal for something like the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, perhaps without the Pearson title, and the need to guarantee its longevity. You mentioned that you didn't think it would take many resources to put this back together.

Can you say a bit more about that?

(0940)

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

Financially, it's not a huge thing, but it does take a financial commitment over a number of years. It does take a commitment from each of the departments and it should be a multi-departmental. I believe it should be a governmental agency of some form, as opposed to a separate civilian agency. That's just a proposition. It does need input and support from National Defence, Global Affairs Canada, and the RCMP, because if it's going to be whole of government and to meet governmental needs, it needs to have those representations. We're not talking large numbers of people and huge dollars, and we would need to find a location that would help it to connect with other things that are going in.

Again, if I may, Mr. Garrison, I think perhaps you would want to push for Kingston because there's a peace support training centre there. There are the various military aspects there and a whole bunch of things going on. That would be one.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Certainly there's a ton of retired military, police, diplomats, civil servants who line up outside the door as soon as you start recruiting for a centre like that.

The Chair:

We'll have two five-minute questions now.

I'm going to give the first one to MP Rioux.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.):

Thank you.

That is very—

[English]

The Chair:

My mistake. I've looked down the list. I'll go to Mr. Gerretsen first.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll start off with General Mitchell perhaps. I'll pick up where we left off on the Pearson training centre.

When did that close?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Five years ago.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

Two thousand and twelvish?

Do you know why it closed?

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

Money. For many years, after it was initially set up, it received government support, but that was gradually cut back by government over several years and it was told to make it on its own, the sort of business case. However, the customers are generally countries that can't afford it. You're trying to capacity build an African country to train female policemen and so forth and that kind of thing. They don't have the money to do that. You've got to try to beat the bushes and look for money. They weren't able to do that successfully enough to keep their doors open.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

I did have an opportunity to look at the article you authored on peace support operations and whole-of-government education and training, and the four specific recommendations that you had in there about establishing the centre: that it be fully funded, that it partner with other Canadian organizations, and that it offer enhanced education and training capabilities.

How would that differ from the peace training centre in Kingston?

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

PSTC is essentially training observers, individuals, to go out and do their business on various missions as individuals. It doesn't do a huge amount of research. It doesn't do a lot of international capacity-building, although individuals would come from different countries. It's much smaller and it's a training facility. It's not an education facility.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

Mr. Thompson, you said at one point in your opening remarks that Canada can re-emerge as a leader on the world stage.

When did we lose that? Where are we coming back from?

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

We're coming back from an era when we used to.... I think today on UN operations we might have 30 people. It's a ridiculously low number. Even if we count the people who are in the MFO, who aren't counted against the UN number, that's 68, and we're not anywhere near where we used to be in terms of our participation in international security operations.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

When you say “participation in international security operations”, are you talking about the actual military forces?

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

Of course, if you don't put boots on the ground and skin in the game, then no one is going to give you the time of day. You don't have any credibility. That's the issue.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

That's fair enough. I'm just asking by way of reference back to our previous meeting, where I asked similar questions about where we were and where we are now and how we've changed. I challenged the witnesses with exact thing you just said, which is why we don't now dedicate the same resources to peacekeeping that we used to. The response I got was along the lines that peacekeeping—sorry for the term; I mean peace support—has changed quite a bit over the last number of decades and moved away from the military toward more diplomatic engagement. I'm curious about what your thoughts are on that.

(0945)

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

Nonsense. What I would say is exactly what General Mitchell said, that peacekeeping—if you want to use the word—has transitioned from what it used to be to counter-insurgency, basically. Unless you put sufficient resources on the ground, you cannot stabilize the situation. You might be dealing with belligerents who have signed up to the agreement, but also, as General MacKenzie pointed out, you have to deal with non-state actors.

I had the Islamic State Sinai Province in my backyard in the Sinai, who wounded seven of my soldiers over the course of three years. Thankfully nobody died, largely because of all the force protection measures we took. You still have to deliver the goods in that kind of environment. If you don't put enough people on the ground, you will take casualties, as I think I pointed out when NATO intervened in Bosnia.

The international community—it isn't just about Canada—has to engage with enough resources to resolve the situation.

Carolyn McAskie—if I might say just one last thing—used to be SRS in Burundi. I remember her saying very cogently that you either pay now or you pay more later. What we tend to do is pay more later.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

Okay.

Just going back to your comment about re-emerging, you're defining that re-emergence as a level of engagement in terms of the number of people on the ground.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

Yes. The comprehensive approach, which isn't just military, but also involves police and civilians, needs to have sufficient folks on the ground, quality density from top to bottom, from across the international community in order to make it happen. If Canada wants to play a part in that, then they've got to contribute to the international community.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

Mr. Mitchell.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

To go back to your initial question—why we lost leadership and how we lost it—we got involved in Afghanistan, and we were there for a lot of years doing counter-insurgency, and both the military and the government of the day were focused on a very difficult mission for a long time, and everything fell away. At that time, a lot of senior folks thought peacekeeping was just a lot of nonsense.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

It's difficult to wrap my head around it because, if you look at the statistics.... I'm sure you agree because this is what you're saying, that over the years, we seem to have withdrawn in terms of the number of personnel we dedicate on the ground. But this is not a political thing. It's gone on over three—if you'd like to comment on this, I'd love to hear your thoughts on it. It seems to be something that's been going on over the last three or four decades, under all political stripes. There seems to be this withdrawal from that.

Mr. MacKenzie, what are your thoughts?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

It goes way back before Afghanistan. It goes back to the mid-nineties due to the gross incompetence of the United Nations and all those nations I listed that backed off from peacekeeping because they didn't trust the UN anymore.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

Was Canada one of those?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

We had 8,000 persons deployed on peacekeeping operations in 1992—Cambodia.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

So would you say that Canada lost faith in the UN?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Absolutely, along with all those other nations I mentioned, particularly the Scandinavian countries.

Very quickly, there was a lack of understanding amongst elected politicians at that time too. We mentioned the fact of NATO coming in and taking over from the UN. I wanted to throw something at my TV that night when, in statements for the record, two members from two different parties stood up, and they had it backwards. They had the UN taking over from NATO on the debate. I couldn't believe it. It was the other way around. That was the level of ignorance of elected representatives at that time in the mid-nineties. No wonder the military has a hard time figuring out where it's supposed to be going when the elected representatives giving them their task don't even understand the difference between NATO and the UN.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

I'm out of time, but I'd love to hear your thoughts on how you would change that and build that confidence among elected officials.

The Chair:

We'll have to circle back on that. Now we'll go to five-minute questions.

MP Rioux.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux:

Thank you.

First of all, I am very impressed by your record. Thank you for appearing before the committee and sharing your expertise.

My questions follow up on those from my honourable colleague from Kingston and the Islands.

Why has Canada withdrawn from peacekeeping missions since the 1990s? You talked about the credibility of the UN, but what is your analysis, as military professionals?

(0950)

[English]

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Well, to repeat myself somewhat, which I'm happy to do, the point is that—not to be overly dramatic about it—26 members of the Royal Canadian Regiment were going to burn to death in the back of their vehicles in Sarajevo, and I phoned the UN. It was 11 o'clock at night in New York. I needed help. I needed somebody else to get to the president, President Izetbegovic, other than just me, and I got the third person in charge of the UN peacekeeping department. At that stage, Martin Bell had told me that I had been interviewed more times on television than anybody in the history of television. It was before the O.J. Simpson trial.

Voices: Oh, oh!

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie: I got that three IC on and said, "Hi. This is General MacKenzie." He said, "Yes, and where are you?" I said, "I'm with UNPROFOR." He said, "What country is that in?" I said it was the former Yugoslavia, and he asked where I was. I said, "I'm in Sarajevo." He said, "What do you do?" That's when I hung up. I mean, that was the level of incompetence at UN in New York at the time.

It had no priority within the Security Council, the General Assembly, or whatever. That's what happened. We backed off. Afghanistan came along later, and now we're doing something that we know how to do, and we get proper leadership, even though with some of the caveat bullshit that showed up in NATO, it was very frustrating. It wasn't quite as homogenous as we thought it was going to be in Command and Control, but nevertheless, at least the troops, the equipment, the training, and the leaders were there to compensate.

It was the mid-nineties when we all backed off. Rwanda, Srebrenica, Somalia: that's what caused us to pull back. Was it worth dying for? That was the question. The mission no longer was worth dying for.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux:

Mr. Mitchell, you talked a lot about leadership. The 2017 UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial meeting was held in Vancouver. Canada announced that it supported the principles of the Elsie initiative and led the other countries to accept them also, along with the principles pertaining to child soldiers. The first priority is training our troops well, and beyond that making sure we never have to face child soldiers again.

We also talked a lot about smart pledges, that is, joint commitments to offer our services to the UN. We did that indirectly during Operation Frequence, by helping France. During Operation Entebbe, we offered transport services. I can tell you that, according to UN officials, the reception at the summit in Vancouver was outstanding. Third, we have just offered two Chinooks and four Griffons for the UN mission in Mali.

You talked about leadership, using influence more, being there, and offering resources that other countries do not have. Is that the right path for Canada?

[English]

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

Without wanting to dabble in the political realm or the summit, other than when I look at it from a military perspective, the announcements were essentially for enablers, as was mentioned. Helicopters, communications, and intelligence are things that are enablers and that the UN is always begging to obtain from the developed world. I applaud those. They're very important. They're needed.

Do they provide leadership? I would suggest that the leadership comes from things like a concentration in and support for the child soldiers initiative and the money that was pledged to the Roméo Dallaire child soldiers initiative at Dalhousie. That's excellent. It's great work, and it should happen. It also came in the concentration on gender issues and so forth, which was again something that the Pearson Centre was doing. Those I would applaud.

Has it gained us a leadership position on the international stage? A little bit, yes, in good things. Are they "smart" contributions? Personally, I just think that's a PR term. They're all good contributions and welcome. I don't think it's big enough. I don't think it's broad enough. It's penny-packeted, if you understand my meaning.

(0955)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux:

What is missing ultimately?

[English]

The Chair:

I'm going to have to leave it there, Jean, unfortunately.

MP Gallant, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Generals MacKenzie and Thompson.

Militarily, do you see the Mali conflict in any way as a threat to Canada?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

No. It's not a threat to Canada. It's a continuing threat to international peace and order, because it involves very much not just the civil conflict that's going on, but the insurgency and the fundamentalism and the franchise of al Qaeda and ISIS, etc. It's like whack-a-mole. We're chasing them all around the world, and they just happen to be doing a pretty good job in Mali right now.

There's a contribution there, but as a threat to Canada, no.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

As I think you know, my wife was the ambassador in Mali from 2005 to 2008—Madame Isabelle Roy. I know Mali very well. I've been there probably more than half a dozen times. I actually went from Timbuktu to Gao on the river. It took me three days. It was a lot of fun, but you can't do that today.

Is Mali a threat to Canada? Absolutely not. Is it in Canada's interests? It sure is. We have commercial mining interests there. If we were a colonial power, we would be really interested, but we're not of that mindset. We're concerned about al Qaeda in Maghreb. They hosted Bob Fowler there for the better part of 100 plus days.

We need to play a full part in the counterterrorism strategy that's ongoing in Mali, in my humble opinion. This committee knows that when I was the commander of Canada's special forces, we trained the 33ème Régiment des Commandos Parachutistes in Mali, before the coup. That regiment was disbanded and many of their members killed because they supported President Amadou Toumani Touré.

We have a lot of links to Mali. While my wife was the ambassador there, we were the third-largest donor to that country, and it was definitely en croissance. Any country that we can rebuild to that extent is worth investing in. That's why it's in Canada's interests. It's not a threat, but it's in our interests to participate.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

Thank you.

I know that neither of you were in Rwanda, but you've compared the Mali mission to the United Nations mission in Central America, as well as the former Yugoslavia.

Could you compare what you would experience as a commander in Mali to the way it was in Rwanda?

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

The terrain is entirely different. The population density is entirely different. The whole physical geography is completely different, so the military problem set is different as well.

Plus, this was organized slaughter in Rwanda. You were talking about multiple insurgent groups working at counter-purposes to the United Nations there.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

The big difference is that the whole situation in and around Rwanda was just a modest border observation force. It was the surprise that caught the UN out, because all of a sudden the president's plane was shot down and all hell broke loose. That's when the genocide started. Before that, it was a very modest observation mission on the east boundary.

Having been surprised, the UN didn't want to augment the force. They did, modestly. Some idiot had put a previous colonial contingent, the Belgians, on the ground in an area where the Belgians weren't terribly popular as one side in the conflict. It was a ridiculous UN decision to put the Belgians there, and it put them in a very difficult position. Subsequently, after the slaughter, they went home.

It was the surprise of Rwanda, both on General Dallaire and on his force. That wasn't what they were supposed to be dealing with. They were supposed to have a simple border monitoring mission, much like a conventional peacekeeping mission. It didn't turn out that way.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

In terms of the communication with command and the UN, was there the ease of flow that you're aware of, compared to your experience with Central America?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Look, Roméo Dallaire is a friend, and we have a public debate about a few issues. The problem for General Dallaire, God bless him, was that he'd never worked with the UN before, and he kept asking for permission. You never ask permission from the UN. You do things, and then you say the next morning, oh, by the way, I did such and such. They'll say, "You shouldn't have done that!" Well, sorry, it's too late.

The UN was incompetent at that time in terms of giving General Dallaire what he needed by way of resources, intelligence, support, logistics, and all of that. They hung him out to dry.

(1000)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

General Thompson, you mentioned that we had Canadian soldiers—

The Chair:

It's five minutes right on the nose. We won't have time to even get a response, unfortunately. But we will have time at the end and if you'd like another question just let us know.

I'm going to yield the floor to Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. Your level of knowledge on this is astounding.

These will probably seem like fairly basic questions, but I'm interested in how peacekeeping has changed. We've all used the term "peacekeeping", but we've all said that the term "peacekeeping" isn't accurate. We heard comments like "counter-insurgency" and "no peace to keep". I guess my question would be, how has peacekeeping changed? Has change occurred only because of successes or failures, or is there an upsurge of better ideas on how we can move forward? Are we in a better position now than we were before? I asked last week if our new Canadian strategy adds to our credibility, and was told that it did. I'm curious about your response too, because of your very blunt responses, which I appreciate. Does it add to our credibility? Is it perhaps a response to some of the things that we've seen that have changed the face of what we may or may not call "peacekeeping" today?

I'll start with General Mitchell, but if any of you feels like you have any interest in chiming in, please feel free.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

First and foremost, the thing that has changed is that we're not in the mid-nineties as far as the UN situation goes. The UN headquarters is far more advanced than it was back then. Even since I last worked for them, in 2006, when I was working to develop a new mission start-up guide, it has changed dramatically since then. It has gone from having three people in its peacekeeping department to having huge capabilities now. It's not perfect—it's far from perfect. It's still a very Byzantine system, and there are lots of areas to try to improve, but it is improving and it's trying. Let's keep in mind, please, that the UN is its member states. If we're not prepared to step up and provide leadership and help out, then why should anybody else? We're a member state.

The peacekeeping has changed because it's more complex, it's more dangerous, it's more of everything like that. It's not two people separated. It has changed. We've been very disappointed. We've stepped back a lot less in countries. It's now developing-nations-led as far as boots on the ground are concerned. I had an Indian general say to me, "Well, why should I want you guys from SHIRBRIG? I can put a division of Indian troops on the ground here tomorrow with the division headquarters, and so forth." The UN doesn't want unilateral things; they want multinational things. Again, my suggestion about a multinational headquarters before is important.

The other thing to keep in mind is the when we talk about credibility, the boots on the ground are an important part of that credibility—the Indians and the Bangladeshi, and everybody else. I would suggest that if Canada also puts boots on the ground, along with the other things that we're talking about, we would step into that world leadership role again.

Mr. Darren Fisher:

General Thompson.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

Very briefly, I think the big change has been a shift from a lot of chapter VI missions to chapter VII missions, and the inclusion in those mandates of such things as protection of civilians. When you give a UN force a "protection of civilians" mandate, you're taxing them quite considerably. I think that's where you need a lot of resources. To harp on what I said before, it's about quality and density from top to bottom.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Lester Pearson didn't invent peacekeeping. There were tons of ideas floating around New York at the time about putting a neutral force in-between countries, armies, that are fighting. He richly deserved the peace prize because he stickhandled through the General Assembly—not the Security Council—the approval to deploy the force between countries, Egypt and Israel. It's no longer countries, fortunately, that are going at each other; it's these factions. From the point of view of our getting involved and taking a leadership role, let's just consider for a moment that in the days that we had a leadership role, in 1992, we were 1% of the world's population doing 10% of the world's peacekeeping.

We are now being asked to join forces of 12,000, 16,000, or over 100,000 deployed worldwide. The only time the UN, up until the end of the Cold War, really screwed up and didn't do conventional peacekeeping was when it went into the Congo in 1960, and 250 peacekeepers were killed. It's no longer conventional peacekeeping because, fortunately, countries aren't invading each other all that much these days and calling for the UN to come to give them a pause.

(1005)

The Chair:

That's your time. It goes fast.

MP Yurdiga.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the generals for coming here and providing your expertise. I really appreciate it.

I heard the term, the UN is “incompetent” or that there's “incompetency”. Has the UN changed over the years? Is it more competent to get the job done? Obviously there's some concern on the part of a lot of people that the UN is not up to its job.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

I'll just add a bit of humour to all of this very serious discussion. When I did say to the public that if you are a UN commander in the field and did it at CDAI, don't phone the UN after five or on the weekend, because there's no one to take your call then. When I got back to Canada, I was invited to New York. I was taken to a building on the far side, on the opposite side facing the UN building. We went up in an elevator to the third floor, and there was a door that had a cardboard sign on it. It said, “The General Lewis MacKenzie Memorial Situation Room. We work 24-7”. It was commanded by a Canadian diplomat who was running the show.

They do have an integrated headquarters, as General Mitchell has mentioned. The problem is that at one stage, for about two to three years, Canada and a number of highly trained, staff-trained officers were donated to the UN to set up and run the headquarters. A lot of third world nations, etc., who liked the \$150 U.S. per diem in New York, protested because they were losing those positions. They were being asked to turn them over to mostly western-trained officers to run this headquarters, and the UN cancelled the whole thing after less than a year.

They still struggle with this unequal quality of trained personnel to set up and run missions overseas, to the point where the under-secretary general of peacekeeping at the UN, less than three years ago, said that the UN was not capable of running a mission overseas on the scale they have now. However, they haven't resolved the issue. They are still trying. Their hearts are in the right place, but it's pretty hard to do when you have battles going on in the middle of the Central African Republic, for example.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

I'm no UN expert, but I will just quickly add that MFO civilian headquarters in Rome has 12 professionals in it. I knew them all by their first names. If I needed something, I just picked up the phone and called them. That's in stark contrast to what these two gentlemen had to deal with.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

The biggest problem with being on the ground in a mission is the fact that everything—military and civilian—is controlled by the civilian side through the UN headquarters and answers to the UN.

In one of my favourite stories—and I can't even tell you what mission it was—a military commander wanted to do a helicopter operation and planned to get the orders from someone, and then when it came time to launch, he said that the petrol wasn't permitted, allowed, signed off, or authorized by the chief administrative officer of the mission, so the helicopter operation didn't go.

The biggest problem is the command and control, and that's where Denis in the MFO had the wonderful arrangement where he controlled both and was able to do anything.

Mr. David Yurdiga:

Thank you.

Just looking at Mali, what type of military operation should be in place? I know it's not a peacekeeping mission, because everybody agrees that it's not. Should someone else be taking the lead on it, instead of the UN, like NATO or someone else? We don't want to be there for 50 years, because there's no peace to keep. What would you recommend? Who should take the lead and end this conflict in an efficient and quick manner?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

I would just say that the lead has already been taken, and it's the French who are actually killing the bad guys. They're concentrating on the fundamentalists, and they're responding with deadly force. It certainly can't be the UN, because the other three participants there right now—plus a few others who are there with special forces and don't get announced—are not prepared to accept UN leadership. So, if you're asking me who should lead—and I don't know whether they'd like it—I would say the French.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

Again, I recall that immediately after the French intervened and before the conflict, there was talk of splitting the north into six different zones with PRTs—provincial reconstruction teams—and mimicking the structure we had in Afghanistan. It needs a counter-insurgency. It wouldn't take a lot of resources, and not to the scale of Afghanistan, because the population is thin. Also, even though the area is large, I think you could probably resolve that issue from a military standpoint and allow for the political dialogue to occur if you put your back into it.

(1010)

The Chair:

That's your time.

MP Alleslev.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):

Thank you very much.

Thank you for being here.

Before I get into my question, I wanted to confirm something that you said in your testimony, General Thompson. You said something very critical, and I want to make sure I heard it correctly.

As a guy from the pointy end, you said that logistics matters to an operational commander, or did I mishear you?

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

You didn't mishear me.

I'll just say very quickly that in the MFO, they don't have processed food like every other military mission I've been on. I enjoyed fresh veg and fruit from Israel and Egypt, and I much appreciated it.

Ms. Leona Alleslev:

As a former logistician, I greatly appreciate that, sir.

We've been talking a great deal about the degradation and diminishing of our leadership role in peace operations. I don't have a lot of military in my riding, so when I have a conversation with them about our alliances—NATO, NORAD, and our role in peace operations—I often get the response, “Why? Why does this matter?”

Canadians value what they understand. To your comment, General MacKenzie, members of Parliament tend to be a reflection of the priorities of Canadians and tend to advocate for the things that Canadians think are important.

As Canadians, gentlemen, and thought leaders and former practitioners, how do we argue that? What is the answer to why peacekeeping or peace operations matter to Canada, and why does a leadership role in that domain matter to Canada and Canadians?

[Expand]

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Very briefly, we're not capable of assuming the leadership role. You have three infanteers here. Most of the boots on the ground, most of the casualties, etc....

I'm an honorary chief of the Toronto police service. We have 2,000 more cops in Toronto than we have infanteers in the Canadian Army. Joining forces of 12,000 or 16,000 or so, we don't have the ability...with a number of other more important deployments with NATO, even if you don't agree with some of them. I might not, but that's neither here nor there. Those are important issues, with a proper chain of command.

We don't have the ability to take the leadership role, in my estimation. A leadership role isn't just having the commander of one of the forces. It is unfortunate that we didn't grab one in Mali, for example, although I would have felt sorry for the individual.

We are tiny. We're not a threat to anybody, and we have a tiny military.

Ms. Leona Alleslev:

But should we? If we decide, and Canadians decide that we should take a leadership role, in the same way that we value policing in Toronto and put the resources to it, then we as Canadians will dedicate the resources to it.

What is the argument for why we should be? Is it relative to the times that we find ourselves in, and the incredible destabilization of many more regions in the world, not only from state but from non-state actors?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

I'll just say that we're looking to a nostalgic past, which isn't possible.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

I think you just need to look to defence policy: defence at home, defence of the continent, and defence of Canada's interests abroad. Peacekeeping, if we're going to use that word—peacekeeping or peace operations—falls into that third realm: defence of Canada's interests abroad.

Are we a G7 nation or not? Do we want to be influential around the world? Do we want to turn the tide on all these negative trends? That's the direction you have to take this in. We're a full player in the international community or we're not. We can close the doors and sit here fat, dumb, and happy in Canada, and this stuff probably won't visit us in our lifetimes. I think we have an obligation as citizens of the planet to engage, as our defence policy points out.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

We live in the world. Our international trade, stability, are all in our interests. That's not going to happen without peace.

I would suggest that we as Canadians have a particular interest. If you look at your riding, the number of immigrants from around the world who all have homes—and people in a lot of these different places that they have escaped from—they have an interest and they reflect Canada. They're part of the face of Canada.

(1015)

Ms. Leona Alleslev:

How do we proceed? What are the critical three things that we need to do to further us in the endeavour?

The Chair:

I'm going to have to close this round, as we've hit five minutes.

We'll go to our second round, so our last formal round of questions will go to MP Garrison. There's more time, though, so we can circle back on issues we didn't complete.

Mr. Randall Garrison:

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Mitchell, at the beginning you talked about establishing a Canadian peace support training centre. That's of course something close to my heart, which I'm hoping this committee will take very seriously.

The other thing you talked about is less well known as a Canadian contribution, and that's the rapidly deployable headquarters. Can you tell us a bit more about what it will require to get that tradition going again?

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

The initial one was a brigade. It was made up of contributions of troops on standby, not full-time standby. For example, if Canada said it was going to contribute a helicopter squadron, it would do its normal duties and everything else. Once or twice a year, its leadership would go on some training organized by the brigade headquarters, the planning folks. They would train on UN procedures, policies, and so forth.

We might take a particular mission. We might visit it, and that sort of thing. We would send people back, and they would do their own helicopter business for the rest of the year. If it were deployed and Canada agreed to deploy, that helicopter squadron would pick up and go.

What I'm suggesting is, forget the brigade. I don't think that will ever come up again with these countries. They're not interested.

The jewel in the crown of that brigade was its multinational headquarters. That headquarters deployed on numerous occasions within seven days to set up a new mission or to expand a current mission. It had all of the branches of a military mission headquarters. It even had police in it. They would go and set it up and have communications set up within the same day, regardless of the location.

They knew the UN policies. They knew the UN procedures. They knew how to do all the reports and returns. They knew that after three months, when some country actually provided the senior operations officer—that person would come from India, Bangladesh, or wherever—our operations officer would step back and be the number two and help them out, and that sort of thing.

What I'm suggesting is that this core of a brigade headquarters might involve 10 or a dozen people, full time in Canada, doing planning, preparing training, reaching out to the other nations, visiting missions, staying in touch with New York, and setting it up. That would be the involvement, with very little cost. It's more of a planning and capability potential. That's what I'm proposing.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

The reason that General Mitchell's idea could well be practical is that this would be done outside the UN. Rapid deployment for the UN is an oxymoron, a big-time oxymoron. Any time you try to establish a rapid reaction force, as has been done—and R2P falls into the same category—Russia and China will veto it. Anybody who has internal problems within their own country does not want the UN to have a rapid deployment capability, so it will never happen in my lifetime.

Mr. Randall Garrison:

As somebody who was in East Timor waiting for the UN to arrive, where it took closer to eight weeks than eight days, I certainly do appreciate the idea of a rapidly deployable headquarters.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

The Australians showed up pretty fast.

Mr. Randall Garrison:

Once the Australians were asked, they were pretty ready to go.

That was actually where I was going with my question. Are there other countries with that same expertise, or do we as Canadians have a particular role to play in the deployable headquarters?

The Chair:

I'm going to have to hold it there—

Mr. Randall Garrison:

Just don't make eye contact.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair:

The good news is, you're going to get some more time.

That ends the two rounds of questioning. We still have time on the clock. I have MP Gerretsen, MP Gallant, MP Garrison, and MP Alleslev. There will be another slot left if someone just wants to get a question in.

Having said that, I'm going to give the floor over for five minutes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

We're just going to switch, if you can start with—

The Chair:

Well, then I'll start over here on this side.

MP Gallant, the floor is yours.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We were told by the military commanders that the Canadians will be going into the encampment where the Germans currently are. It will be cordoned off, sort of like an airfield. There won't be the need for interoperability with the forces for Burkina Faso, Bangladesh, Chad, or the Chinese, who have reportedly dropped their guns and run.

How would you characterise the capabilities and the threat level of the terrorist groups who are taking the fight to the actual peacekeeping operations people in Mali?

(1020)

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Briefly, when we established safe havens in Bosnia, I made the point that if you're going to establish a safe haven, you have to go out to at least long-range artillery range and sanitize that area. Otherwise, you're just sitting there waiting to be attacked.

On a lesser scale, the same thing will happen in Mali. Just because those weapons systems that can threaten from a distant location haven't shown up yet, these people have sponsors, whether it's Iran, China, Russia, or whoever in the world, and they will provide the weapons necessary to pin down the crusaders and to threaten them.

The best you can do is to defend your compound and patrol out from those locations. I trust that the Canadian Forces will have the capability to do that and sanitize the area out to artillery range—or mortar range in this case, which is fortunately a lot shorter.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

Okay, and—

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

So, if I can just pile on, I've been to Gao, and it looks a lot like the Sinai. It's a desert location. I haven't been to this specific airfield, but I imagine that it's a wide open space. The general mentioned C-RAM, counter rocket, artillery, and mortar radar. That's important. It tells you when stuff is coming in, and sure, you might not be able to answer, but it does give you the time of flight to make yourself flat, and it avoids casualties.

There's a whole bunch of other protection measures you can take, including the installation of long-range IR cameras, etc., but somebody—

A voice: Drones.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson: Well, drones, of course, and they do have them. But somebody has to go out there and engage these guys if they decide to turn up and lob stuff your way. In terms of state sponsors, one of the mortar bombs that hit my camp in Egypt didn't explode, so we could see that the tail fins on it were triangular. That meant it was of Iranian manufacture. So we know these guys are being supported by outside agencies. The proof is in the pudding, so to speak.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

Can you tell us how our air protection will be different from what the Germans have? What will we have as opposed to what the Germans currently have? Will that change? You mentioned they have the ability to sense mortar rounds coming in, but they don't have the ability to fire at them before they hit the encampment.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

I have no idea. I don't know what the Germans have.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

What I would say is that I'm upset when I hear people talking about our gunships. I heard gunships mentioned. We have utility troop-carrying helicopters with a machine gun in the door. When it's fired, the bullets can hit the ground but they're not going to be precise, and that's no criticism at all. They were never designed to be escort helicopters for two Chinooks, as opposed to Apache helicopters that are available within the force at present, but I guess are leaving. Those are proper gunships. They can pinpoint a target on the ground.

So they won't have the same capability as they're replacing, in a breath.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

Given that our soldiers will probably be targeted, just as current troops on the ground are being targeted, are you recommending or suggesting that we should have these counterterrorism groups surrounding or protecting our encampment when we're there?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

I trust the Canadian Forces will. I know they're working on it—that's for sure—but the information is coming out in dribs and drabs. I have confidence that they are aware of that and will do something about it.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

Yes, I can't imagine that we would deploy a force without making sure that contingency is looked after.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

It's very difficult for this committee to have an idea of what's going on—what's being planned and what's actually currently going on—because we haven't had the courtesy of briefings as we had received, for example, for Afghanistan and other missions that were ongoing previously. We're just relying on what's in the news in dribs and drabs to understand what's going on with this mission and missions abroad.

In terms of the original concept of peacekeeping, do we have the consent of all parties in Mali, that you're aware of, to be there doing what we're doing?

The Chair:

I'm going to have to end that. Sorry, we're out of time for this particular question.

I'm going to give the floor to MP Gerretsen.

(1025)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General MacKenzie, picking up where we left off, you said that politicians lacked an understanding, or there was a lack of understanding amongst elected officials of what exactly our role in peacekeeping is.

Can you expand on that?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Yes, and I'm going back a ways, but in the mid-90s, when the people delivering the prepared statements in Parliament in the evening session didn't know the difference between NATO and the UN, that wasn't very encouraging.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

Do we have a better understanding now?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

I'm waiting to see. I can't pass judgment because I haven't seen any debates on the issue.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

Going back to Mr. Mitchell's comment about the decrease in funding in 2012, which led to the closure of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, can you comment as to whether you think that had a little bit to do with our lack of understanding?

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

I think it had to do with the Canadian military not being happy with the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre either. They felt that they could do the job of preparing their people better than the peacekeeping centre could, because the latter didn't look beyond the training of observers and leaders going into peacekeeping. It neglected to take account the civilian training that was going on, like the African female police officers who were being brought over, or a number of other civilian organizations. We ran some role-playing exercises at the War Museum which, from a military perspective.... Rest her soul, Flora MacDonald sitting beside me as the political representative—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

The last great Progressive Conservative.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

Yes, and it was a very effective exercise, and it cost us.... I don't know what it cost us: 50,000 bucks or that type of thing. The money that we were spending was not a lot.

It was a shame. We had I think a pretty impressive board too. We had a lot of good people on the board who were making good recommendations.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

Mr. Mitchell, did you want to follow up?

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

I was just going to say that should this international peacekeeping training centre be set up and funded as a government agency or government institution, one of its tasks could be informing members of Parliament and running courses for them, or seminars, or whatever you wanted to do.

There are other ways to do it. You can ask CDAI and other groups to do something similar, but this could be something that you could directly control and it could keep you as informed as you wish.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

I have a hard time wrapping my head around it. Maybe I'll end it where I started with you, General Mitchell.

We talk about how great a reputation Canada has had historically in this area of peacekeeping or peace support. Why did we choose to withdraw from it by assigning fewer resources towards it? Why did we close the Pearson peacekeeping training centre? Why did we look at it as something that we needed to take money away from?

There must have been a legitimate reason, other than what Mr. MacKenzie has said in terms of lack of understanding.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

Personally, I believe it was a lack of interest at the time, with the government of the day not wanting to put money into non-profits, NGOs, or anything else. It was going across the board. It was just another one. It was on the target list.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

Yes, like our withdrawal from AWACS and the other things we did.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

AWACS is not an NGO. It's a capability tool.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

I realize that. I'm just saying that it's a common theme.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

I'm trying to do this without getting political, but I'm—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

I'm not of the same....

Voices: Oh, oh!

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

I understand that. All I'm saying is that if it's not valuable to you or you don't see it, then you stop supporting it. In this particular case, I don't think the value was recognized. The input of resources and the output on the international and national stage was huge.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen:

In my remaining few seconds, do you still stand by the recommendation you outlined in that article you authored, as talked about here, as being the correct path forward for Canada?

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell: Yes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You do?

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

Yes, very much so.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair:

You're right on time.

MP Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison:

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

General Thompson, you talked about the added complexity for missions when the protection of civilians is added in. I want to explore that a bit more from our view of the success of missions. Again, as a human rights observer on the ground, a lot of times missions were successful for civilians because they did create some safety and some ability to return to a more normal life, but they didn't look successful at the political level.

(1030)

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

First of all, any force, whether it's peacekeeping, peace support, or counter-insurgency, whatever you want to call it, has to create the conditions where the belligerents are deterred and the civilian population is reassured. To do that, you need numbers, and you need quality density, as I mentioned before.

I'm going to give you some numbers. In counter-insurgency, to be successful you need 20 security force personnel—that can be internationals or local security forces—for every 1,000 people in the population. To secure Afghanistan, you need 500,000 security force personnel if you're going to be serious about it. Those are straight-on numbers. If you get a protection-of-civilians mandate and you're in a counter-insurgency environment, that's the kind of order of magnitude that you have to be thinking about.

If you can't do that—and a lot of times you can't—then you need to create what General MacKenzie talked about: UN protected areas. But they need to be properly resourced to protect the people who are inside those protected areas. If you can't do that, then you go to the lowest common denominator, which unfortunately is bringing these civilians as refugees or internally displaced persons onto your camp and protecting them there.

Those last two are actually the least desirable options. The bottom line is that you need to do what we did in NATO's case: flood the country with troops. Kosovo is another example. There were 40,000 soldiers from NATO in a postage stamp of a country. That completely stabilized it almost overnight. In fact, I recall visiting there, and you couldn't drive a kilometre without bumping into another NATO checkpoint. It created what I called at the time “belligerent gridlock”. You couldn't turn anywhere without bumping into a NATO soldier.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

UNPROFOR, the United Nations Protection Force—12,000 to 14,000 strong in United Nations-protected areas—worked. Unfortunately, for the first time in military history, the people up front were feeling sorry for their headquarters in Sarajevo—it was the one being shelled—and the locals said, “What idiot gave you guys the title of protection force?” We said, “Yes, but we're the headquarters for the protection force 300 kilometres away.” That didn't fall on welcoming ears, because we were not, with 30 conscript Swedish soldiers or their infantry unit, in a position to protect anybody except by diplomacy.

Mr. Randall Garrison:

But protected areas were created.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

They were, on the Croatian-Bosnian border, absolutely, and it worked. Those areas were, in the early stages, relatively peaceful, until the whole thing went to hell in a handbasket.

Mr. Randall Garrison:

Part of the new situation we seem to have with peacekeeping is one in which groups are quite prepared to create human misery in order to either recruit or discredit other folks in the field. We've seen attacks on what you'd call the infrastructure that supports civilians. We've seen attacks on humanitarian aid going on.

Would you say that this is an important part of the changed landscape of peacekeeping, General Mitchell?

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

Absolutely. You have criminal elements who have a vested interest in a non-secure state. The more disruption, the more violence, the better they can do their work. You have neighbouring countries that like to meddle because of the resources in the Congo and other places. There is ISIS and al Qaeda and everybody else who thrives on disruption. It is in their vested interest, their best interest, to get rid of, attack, discredit, or do whatever they can to anybody who represents stability. The reason a UN force would be there or a peacekeeping force would be there is to provide stability or to help to provide stability.

The Chair:

Thank you.

MP Alleslev.

Ms. Leona Alleslev:

Thank you very much.

Further on the theme of conversing with Canadians, earlier in the testimony we talked about what is today a spectrum of conflict, which is not necessarily what was peace and war, clear cut, from perhaps a generation ago or before 1990 and the Cold War.

How do we start to explain that the lexicon matters, that terms matter? What words should we be using right down to the name of this study? Our study is called "Canada's Contributions to International Peacekeeping", and yet in every testimony, we trip over it. Are we in a new era of explaining war and peace and conflict? How would we characterize it, and what lexicon should we be using to more effectively communicate these ideas among ourselves and those in the tent and to Canadians in general?

(1035)

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

I don't know. We've been uniquely unsuccessful with editorials, TV interviews, and all of that. The modern generation doesn't get its news that way. It's not the type of thing that shows up on social media, etc., and on blogs. I honestly don't know.

We've been trying to get rid of this peacekeeping myth for decades, and it hasn't happened. People are tired of military conflict after Afghanistan, and naturally the forces are having a problem with attrition, ironically because there's not enough action going around. That's not why they joined. We're all Cold War—at least I am a Cold War

warrior who trained by going bang, bang, bang when I represented gunfire, because we didn't have blank ammunition, etc.

Ms. Leona Alleslev:

I'm old enough to be Cold War too.

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

I don't know the answer to your question. I really don't.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

I think you just need to keep plugging away and educating people and talking about the spectrum.

While we're talking about the spectrum, I use that word picture deliberately. Conflict prevention is \$1 and at the other end of the scale it's \$100. These are orders of magnitude, more expensive than blood and treasure. I'm going to give you one conflict-prevention example very quickly because, unlike General MacKenzie, I did five and a half years in the puzzle palace over here in the policy group, including a secondment to Foreign Affairs, so I think I understand how government works.

Conflict prevention: has anybody heard of the conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria? Probably not, right? There is a lot of oil in the Bakassi Peninsula and there's a real potential for conflict between those two countries. However, in 2005 there was an SRSG for west Africa. The Department of Political Affairs asked Canada to provide them with one military officer to assist them in demarking the border between Nigeria and Cameroon. That mission was successful. There was no war between Nigeria and Cameroon that I'm aware of. It's still an issue, but in large measure it has been resolved. It's a classic example of how conflict-prevention works. But nobody knows about it and nobody cares about it, and it's not in the news.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

I'll say the same thing, and give a different example: Abia in South Sudan, between north and south Sudan, is an oil-rich area. If they had just taken the Abia commission and made a decision on what the border would be when you secede or not, there would be no problem, but they said, "Ahhhh", and all left again, and fighting, warfare, carries on.

Ms. Leona Alleslev:

So it starts with us. Help us name the study.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

Call it "international Operations". I used to rail at my title over there. I was the director of peacekeeping policy, and I did everything but peacekeeping. I was doing all sorts of operations. Just call them "international operations", not even "military operations" because, again it's a comprehensive approach that needs to be applied—and here I don't like the expression a "whole-of-government" approach—to all of these international security situations.

Ms. Leona Alleslev:

So foreign policy by other means—heavy on the international relationships.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

That's a bit of a tongue twister.

A hon. member: It's too long a title.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Yes, obviously.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell: I would hope, and I believe that's what you're going to do, but you're just starting out on these things, and it must include Global Affairs, policing, and corrections people, and you should have judges. If you're going out, you're doing not just military and police security on the ground, but you're into nation building. You're doing all sorts of other things that are involved in peace support operations now.

Ms. Leona Alleslev:

I think you summed it up very effectively. It has to be strategic, operational, and tactical, and it has to be military, policing, and civilian. We have to look at it, not as a whole-of-government operation maybe, but whole of infrastructure, or whatever we come up with, and it's more than that.

So we have to define the spectrum of conflict and help people to understand that moving from chapter VI to chapter VII is certainly moving much closer to conflict, and that all the things we do, whether it's NATO, or UN, or whatever, have various mission-specifics along that spectrum of conflict.

Is that accurate?

The Chair:

This is the white flag. I have to move on. Sorry.

Ms. Leona Alleslev:

Can I have a yes or no?

The Chair:

The last one goes to MP Robillard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard:

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What lessons have the United Nations learned from past failures and successes in peacekeeping?

Further, how can we convince Canadians that we have learned the lessons from the peacekeeping missions in Somalia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia and that those mistakes will not be repeated?

(1040)

[English]

MGen (Ret'd) Lewis MacKenzie:

It's a leading question, and I'm not avoiding the answer, but it depends on who's running the show. That's the problem, to pin it down.

If it is the United Nations, then we're going to have to accept the handicap of multinational representation at the command and control at New York, with the direct intervention of the Security Council who are briefed by the

secretary general. He rarely, if ever, gets the response he is after, because his comments require resources that he is not going to get.

When they established the safe havens in Bosnia, I was retired at the time and indicated that 110,000 troops were required to defend the safe havens. My successor said he had heard me interviewed, and he would try it with 80,000. The secretary general went to the Security Council and requested 27,000, and six months later, 2,000 had shown up. That's the decision-making process. That hasn't changed at the United Nations.

The United Nations is us. We provide the resources, and they are not being provided except—and this is unkind, I know—by countries that want the financial remuneration for providing their soldiers to the UN.

MGen (Ret'd) Denis Thompson:

It's worth mentioning that Canada pays, I think, almost 2% in terms of assessed contributions to peacekeeping operations. Not only should we be putting boots on the ground, but we have an interest in protecting our investment in peacekeeping operations.

BGen (Ret'd) Gregory Mitchell:

On the one hand, I don't think Canadians really know or care, to be honest, for the most part, when you ask, "Did we learn the lessons, etc.?" I think people have very short memories. Except for the most recent thing that went on for over a decade in Afghanistan, they don't really know about these other things, unless they happen to have read Roméo Dallaire's book on Rwanda, etc.

From a moving-forward perspective, there should be no bullshit, no sugar-coating. It should be, "We're going to Mali to run counter-insurgency under a UN umbrella", or whatever it is. It shouldn't be, "Oh, our people are safe, and they're going to be doing this." Just be straightforward with Canadians. Take a chapter from General Hillier, who spoke openly about what to expect—casualties and so forth.

I think the important part, from a parliamentary perspective, is this: what are we trying to achieve? Why are we going to do this? Why Mali? I've never heard an explanation of why Mali over anything else. It was on the list, but why? What are our interests there? Why that one and not another one? What do we hope to accomplish? How are we going to do it, with what, and when? If you can explain those things, Canadians will say, "Okay, it makes sense to me", or they won't. They'll argue about it.

A voice: Not the way they explain it.

The Chair:

I think we're out of time.

I want to thank all three of you for your frank and valued contribution to this discussion and for your service to Canada.

With that, I'm going to adjourn the meeting.