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Chair

Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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● (0850)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): Good morning. Welcome everybody to the national defence committee study on aerial readiness in the defence of North America. I'd like to welcome our in-house guests, Aurel Braun and Elinor Sloan. Thank you for appearing today. We also have Margarita Assenova by video conference, who is just taking her seat now.

We'll start with Professor Sloan, if you don't mind. You'll have 10 minutes for your opening statements and then we'll move on to our next witness. The floor is yours. Thank you for coming.

Dr. Elinor Sloan (Professor, Carleton University, As an Individual): Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence on this important topic. Over the next 10 minutes I'll briefly discuss the emerging threat to North America and NORAD and Canada's aerial readiness in response to these threats. Then, of course, I'd be happy to take your questions.

Turning first to the emerging threat environment, the 9/11 attacks revealed an internal aerial threat to North America, prompting significant organizational, operational, and procedural changes at NORAD and at the U.S. and Canadian federal government levels. For example, NORAD's mandate was in large to look inwards. Northern Command was created. There's now a 24/7 NAVCAN and FAA feed into NORAD, and there was Operation Noble Eagle, etc. All of these different things took place in response to the internal aerial threat to North America and continue today.

In my view, NORAD has the capabilities and procedures it needs to address the internal aerial threat to North America. It's in the external threat environment that the most dramatic changes have taken place in recent years. A benchmark date is the summer of 2007 when Russia resumed its bomber patrols close to North America and planted a flag at the North Pole's ocean floor. Since that time and at an accelerating pace in recent years, Russia has been militarizing the Arctic region. It is opening new infrastructure in the Arctic and has begun building new ships, ice breakers, ballistic missile submarines, and has stepped up the number of bomber patrols.

Of particular concern is a new long-range conventionally armed precision cruise missile that Russia has developed that could easily reach North America from Russian air space or waters. The Kh-101 cruise missile is hard to detect on radar and is believed to have an intercontinental range of between 3,000 and 5,000 kilometres. Last fall, Russia launched the Kh-101 from strategic bombers against targets in Syria. The missile can also be launched from ships and submarines, and it comes in a nuclear armed version, the Kh-102. Russian submarines and aircraft carried cruise missiles during the 1980's, so that part is not new. But the difference today is that the new missile is much more precise and has longer range.

North Korea also poses a potential threat to North America. For many years, that country has been seeking to develop an ICBM that can reach North America, as well as develop miniaturized nuclear warheads that can be fitted to ICBMs. Reports indicate that it's getting ever closer to that goal. North Korea is also developing submarine launched ballistic missiles. Combined with an unstable leadership, North Korea's capability and behaviour present at minimum a medium-term threat to North America.

Other potential threats and challenges stem from the melting Arctic and the resultant interest in Arctic resources—lessened perhaps by the drop in gas and oil prices, but nevertheless still there—and also the interest in using Arctic shipping lanes. China, for example, has a long-standing and growing interest in the Arctic. In January, China commissioned its second polar class ice breaker despite the fact that it's territory lies thousands of miles from the Arctic.

Responding to these challenges requires surveillance and control. That is, it is necessary to be able to detect a threat and then to be able to address it. NORAD has the ability to detect ballistic missiles through long-standing space and land-based systems, all of them belonging to the United States, none of them being on Canadian soil.

More recently, as part of its ballistic missile defence system, the United States has deployed sensors on ships in the Sea of Japan and on a large barge in the north Pacific. Canada has access to all of this information and we'd know of a ballistic missile launch. That's why some people say we're already part of ballistic missile defence. To respond to a potential threat, the United States has deployed ground-based interceptors at bases in California and Alaska.

In 2005, Canada of course decided not to take part in BMD and, therefore, theoretically at least, would not have a voice in the response to a ballistic missile strike against North America. Canadian territory would be defended in the event of a strike if that territory happens to be part of what the United States defines as its defended area, the extent of which is classified. Canada's decision not to participate in the response part of ballistic missile defence is illogical and I hope, and actually I believe, is going to be addressed in the defence review.

Turning to the air breathing threat, NORAD gets surveillance and early-warning information about aircraft approaching North America from the north warning system of radars along the 70th parallel, as well as from radars on the east and west coasts of Canada. The north warning system was constructed in the late 1980s and early 1990s and will need to be upgraded or replaced in the next decade or so. One option is a space-based surveillance or detection system, and the RADARSAT constellation of three satellites scheduled to be launched starting in 2018 could well be suited to this mission. Another option might be unmanned aerial vehicles, the high altitude ones like the Global Hawk UAV.

U.S. and Canadian fighter aircraft are dedicated to the NORAD mission to respond to potential airborne threats. Since 9/11 NORAD fighter jets have been scrambled thousands of times in response to internal and external situations. The statement of requirements for Canada's new land-based fighter will have to take into account an assessment of the number of fighters Canada needs to effectively carry out its air defence role. Air refuelling tankers also have to be part of the discussion.

Where there is a notable gap in the aerial surveillance and control of North America is in the ability to detect and respond to cruise missile threats. Cruise missiles fly low to the earth. They are hard to detect and harder to intercept. NORAD has only a limited detection capability against cruise missiles, likely involving airborne warning and control aircraft. It's classified information. America's concern with the new Russian cruise missile is such that it is pursuing a land-attack cruise missile detection system made up of giant radar blimps to be deployed around Washington, D.C. The radar system, which is in the early stages of development, would allow National Guard F-16 aircraft to shoot down low-flying cruise missiles.

For the general surveillance of its territorial approaches, Canada has a fleet of long-range patrol aircraft that travel over the Arctic and the east and west coasts on a periodic basis. That's the Aurora long-range patrol aircraft. Polar Epsilon is a surveillance capability on RADARSAT-2 that also gives images of the north as the satellite passes over. But as the Arctic continues to melt and traffic increases, Canada will want to move to a more persistent surveillance of the region. The RADARSAT constellation of satellites and high-altitude unmanned aerial vehicles that I mentioned a few minutes ago could best provide a persistent surveillance of the air and maritime space region, although it's possible that three satellites would not be enough in terms of the RADARSAT Constellation, that you would need perhaps five.

A final point on aerial capabilities around North America is that the traditional role provided by the Aurora maritime patrol aircraft, that is to say, the anti-submarine warfare that was the Cold War mission of the Aurora, is growing in importance in the new security environment. Many of our allies, including Britain, Australia, and Norway, are now investing in their maritime patrol aircraft fleets. Canada will want to prioritize the multi-mission aircraft that has been on the books for some time to replace Canada's upgraded but aging and relevantly limited in number long-range patrol aircraft.

I look forward to your questions.

● (0855)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Sloan.

I would like to move to Washington to the video conference with Ms. Assenova.

If you're ready, I'd like to hear from you. You have 10 minutes. You have the floor.

Ms. Margarita Assenova (Director of Programs for Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia, The Jamestown Foundation, As an Individual): I was asked to speak about Russian threats to central, eastern, and northern Europe in the context of American security. U. S. military leaders have recently named Russia as the greatest threat to America—an existential threat to the United States, they say, the only country in the world with a nuclear capability that could destroy the United States and, of course, Canada.

Although Russian nuclear capabilities have existed for decades, Moscow's aggressive behaviour since the war with Georgia in 2008 has raised concerns that its capabilities could be matched with intent. The subsequent annexation of Crimea and military intervention in Ukraine through its military support for the separatists, but also by its covertly sending Russian troops to the eastern Ukraine, raised more fears that Moscow is pursuing a neo-imperial strategy through aggression.

This presents threats to North America on several levels. First, by violating international law Russia has undermined the security system governing Europe and the world since World War II. Second, it is setting a dangerous precedent that others could follow worldwide. Third, Russian aggression is undermining international organizations such as the United Nations, and military alliances such as NATO. Then Russia is directly threatening NATO member states in Europe, raising the question of whether it would attempt to threaten North America as well. Finally, the militarization of strategic zones, such as the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea, and the Arctic, confirms that Russia is aiming for military domination of a vast area of the world.

Russian aggression does not end in eastern Ukraine, as evidenced by Moscow's behaviour throughout central and eastern Europe, northern Europe, and the Baltics. Russia is using a number of instruments of subversion in the countries on its flanks. These tools include military threats; diplomatic pressure; spying; economic penetration; energy dependence; old comrade networks; corruption; the undermining of democratic societies and sabotaging of EU unity; the support of ultranationalists; information war; cybersecurity; and the stirring of ethnic tensions, not only by using the Russian minorities, but also other minorities throughout the region.

This is a well-thought-through, long-term strategy aiming to restore Russian relevance and influence, and in some cases domination and control in a large part of the European continent and Eurasia, as well as establishing Russia as a major pillar in a multi-pillar world. Moscow's behaviour is not opportunistic. It is carefully calibrated by its neo-imperial strategy, but using different instruments of subversion when the opportunity arises.

The Black Sea is a contested zone and a major geopolitical component of Russian revisionism. Expanding positions there is more important and more effective than land conquests. It cannot be done without control of the coastal territory. The annexation of Crimea served precisely this purpose, expanding Russia's Black Sea coastline and, consequently, the area of military domination in the sea.

This process started in 2008 with the war in Georgia, with Abkhazia, which is strategically important to Russian naval power in the Black Sea. This is why Russia is planning to develop the port of Ochamchira in Abkhazia and connect it by roads with the north Caucasus. While South Ossetia has little strategic value for Russia other than as a tool to destabilize Georgia, Abkhazia is strategically important because of its location on the Black Sea coast. Moscow needs Abkhazia to achieve military supremacy in the Black Sea, which is its strategic goal, and one major reason for its annexation of the Crimea.

The Black Sea strategy threatens to reverse NATO gains in this critical part of Europe. It also aims to deny NATO access to Ukraine, Moldova, and the Caucasus. In 2015, Moscow formulated a doctrine that focused on creating an A2/AD or an anti-access/area-denial zone toward NATO in the Black Sea, while at the same time ensuring a growing threat to the alliance’s southeastern flank.

Moscow is focusing more attention and investment on militarizing the Black Sea, while in many ways withdrawing from regions less linked to NATO, such as Central Asia, for example. Evidently, the Kremlin puts greater importance on adversity with NATO than on its competition with China.

● (0900)

Russian strategy in the Black Sea is already putting greater pressure on Bulgaria and Romania, including the maritime energy fields of Romania's exclusive economic zone. Romania now de facto shares maritime borders with Russia in the Black Sea waters. That means that NATO shares maritime borders with Russia in the Black Sea as well.

It is taking a toll on the military forces of Bulgaria and Romania, which have to patrol the region and respond to every violation of their airspace. Bulgaria currently has only four flying airplanes, and they're all Russian made, but it is planning to buy new airplanes soon, probably F-16s. Romania purchased 12 F-16s from Portugal and is planning to buy another 12 in 2017. That increased military equipment for the two countries—NATO allies in the Black Sea—includes buying new patrol boats.

Russian control of ports and sea lanes threatens to choke the trade in energy routes, prevents NATO from projecting sufficient security for Black Sea members, and gives Moscow a larger stake in exploiting fossil fuels in maritime locations. Offshore deposits around Crimea are now under Russian control. It could also disrupt or challenge energy supplies through pipeline connections between the Caspian Basin and Europe and set back EU attempts to pursue energy diversity. This could further curtail EU and European connections with central Asia, and undermine prospects for future natural gas deliveries from Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to Europe.

The Baltic Sea is another area of interest to Russia. It occupies a pivotal position in Moscow's plans to consolidate the northern flank of its expansionist Eurasian project. It provides a vital trade route to Russia's second-largest city, St. Petersburg; hosts the Nord Stream natural gas pipeline to Germany; and is the location of the Baltic fleet headquartered in Russia's Kaliningrad exclave.

Despite Kremlin opposition over the past two decades, the Baltic Sea has become a largely NATO lake, with six member states having coastlines there: the traditional members Denmark and Germany; and new members Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In addition, since Russia's assault on Ukraine, the remaining two neutral states, Sweden and Finland, are moving closer to NATO in efforts to protect their security in this increasingly unpredictable region.

Russia's northen flank consists of two sets of countries that have experienced growing pressure from Moscow—the Baltic and the Nordic. The three Baltic states occupy the most vulnerable position, especially Latvia and Estonia, which contain significant Russian and —

● (0905)

The Chair: Excuse me for one second, Ms. Assenova.

Could you speak a little more slowly? Our translators are having a hard time keeping up with you.

Ms. Margarita Assenova: I'm so sorry.

The Chair: That's okay. Continue. Thank you.

Ms. Margarita Assenova: Each state campaigns for more effective NATO protection to counter attempts to unsettle internal security. In the wake of Russia's attack on Ukraine, the Baltic states formally requested that NATO deploy several thousand troops as a permanent deterrent. They're seeking a brigade-sized unit of approximately 3,000 soldiers so that every Baltic nation would have at least one battalion stationed in its territory.

The successful defence of any NATO member in deterring Moscow's many-pronged assaults will be a critical test for the credibility of the alliance over the next decade. If any NATO member is dismembered by Russia, then Moscow will not only exact revenge for losing the Cold War. It will also have in effect dismantled the western alliance.

The Nordic non-NATO members, Sweden and Finland, have also become increasingly concerned by Moscow's activities along their borders. Events in Ukraine in 2014 threw into sharp focus the absence of Nordic capabilities following years of drawdowns and a focus on crisis management operations instead of territorial defence. Northern Europe has been left dangerously exposed to military coercion at a time of mounting uncertainty. If regional stability was threatened because of Russia's actions, both Sweden and Finland could petition for NATO membership, thus expanding the rupture between Washington and Moscow and intensifying Russia's justifications for its regional aggressiveness.

In the event that Moscow decides to directly attack Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, in an alleged defence of its national interests, it will seek full military manoeuvrability in the Baltic Sea and seek to restrict NATO's response. In flexing its military muscles through large-scale manoeuvres, the construction of new bases, and frequent violations of the airspace and coastal waters of littoral states, Moscow has been aiming at several objectives.

First, the military buildup is supposed to demonstrate that Russia is again a great power and can create an environment of uncertainty in the Baltic and Nordic regions. Second, Moscow is testing NATO's political and military responses and adjusting its own tactics and operations in potential preparation for armed conflict. Third, in the case of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the Kremlin's military pressure is part of a broader multi-pronged offensive to weaken their governments, stir up social and ethnic conflicts, and demonstrate that NATO will not be able to defend them in the event of war.

East and central Europe have been divided throughout the Ukrainian crisis. That shows the leverage that Russia has gained in those countries. Russian officials focus on influencing political decisions, in each of the capitals, through a combination of diplomatic pressure, personal and professional contacts, economic enticements, and energy dependence. Reports regularly surface in Slovakia, Hungary, and other states that old comrade networks continue to operate between local politicians and Moscow. These are based on financial benefits rather than ideological or political convictions. It enables the Kremlin to exert political influence over certain officials and governments, challenges unified EU and NATO positions, and assists Moscow's international aspirations.

The Chair: Ms. Assenova, just to make sure we have time for all the questions that I know will come, can I ask you to quickly summarize your presentation? Thank you.

● (0910)

Ms. Margarita Assenova: Okay.

In summary, eastern Europe and the Balkans, or southern Europe, are being put under intense pressure by Russia, with security threats and threats of economic intervention, energy dependence, while being fertile ground for incitement of ethnic rivalries, especially in the former Yugoslav republics. This is a very painful issue.

Russia's attack in Ukraine did not convince Hungary to terminate the contract with Rosatom, for example. The central European countries continue maintaining relations with Russia regardless of the sanctions, except for Poland. The Czech Republic also has not called for strengthening NATO forces in Europe. Slovakia adopted a weak stance on the Ukrainian crisis. We saw similar positions in the Balkans, particularly in Serbia, which is a close ally of Russia, but not in Bulgaria and Romania, countries that stood firmly behind the sanctions.

In conclusion, I would like to say that since Russia's invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014, official western perceptions of the Putin administration have changed dramatically. Russia is now more accurately viewed as a revisionist, revanchist, and aggressive regime instead of pragmatic and co-operative power. Unlike during the Cold War status quo and the post-Cold War rapprochement, the consequences of the conflict between Russia and the east will be less predictable and stable. This will have repercussions for the future of NATO and the EU by testing their political unity and strategic reach as well as their willpower and capabilities vis-à-vis a belligerent Russia. The west must also consider the prospect of Russian implosion, if imperial overstretch is coupled with long-term economic decline, growing social unrest, and territorial fracture. This would have major consequences for nearby regions and western institutions.

Thank you very much, and I am looking forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

I would like to move to Professor Braun. A gentle reminder that you have 10 minutes.

Dr. Aurel Braun (Professor, University of Toronto, As an Individual): Thank you for the warning, and the invitation and opportunity to appear before the committee. This is indeed both a vital and urgent topic.

I would like to state at the very beginning that from my perspective, any analysis of North American defence may be deconstructed only for analytical and functional purposes. A full understanding of the issues and modalities of Canadian and North American defence ultimately needs to operate within a larger context, given that we live and operate in a globalized system. Consequently, threats are interconnected and developments far away have an impact on us.

What I propose to focus on here are specific Canadian and continental defence concerns, while trying to keep in mind the larger perspective that I outlined. Within the narrow analysis, we should nonetheless be cognizant of the full range of threats, from the political to the military and the environmental. The current comprehensive review of Canadian defence policy, one that I understand should be completed in 2017, will hopefully take this holistic and global approach.

Canadian defence, I would argue, operates at three levels: the country, continental arrangements, and the larger trans-Atlantic Alliance. In essence, as in the case of any state, Canada is first and foremost responsible for the production of its own sovereignty and national interests. However, we are also part of NORAD and NATO, as we have seen, and for several decades our defence and that of the continent, at least from north of the Rio Grande, has been a blending of these three levels.

At the country level, we know that Canada operates the Joint Task Force North, and Canadian Forces maintain a year-round presence in the northern region. The RCAF's mission, in turn, ranges from search and rescue to sovereignty protection. Canada, as well, pursues military co-operation through the tri-command, which is the relationship between the Canadian Joint Operations Command, the U.S. Northern Command, and NORAD. NORAD, the bi-national military command, has a significant presence in the north through operations and training. Further, NORAD's north warning system, using radars covering 4,800 kilometres, looks for airborne activity and, since 2006, also potential maritime threats. Outside of this area, Canada also co-operates with NATO regarding global security concerns.

All of these activities function within a certain context and environment, and any analysis cannot be judged in abstract terms. That is, Canada has to respond to specific threats. Also, as has been outlined by my two other colleagues, the two primary threats to Canada—and there are also threats on the periphery—emanate from Russia, and potentially from North Korea. By far the greatest threat comes from Russia.

I would like to begin by saying that we are not in a new Cold War. Rather, to the contrary, I would contend that Russia, as really a remnant of the Soviet Union, is not the same as the Soviet Union, although we do need to worry about various acts of aggression on the part of Russia. There are no longer two conflicting universal ideologies confronting each other across the globe. There's not the same threat of nuclear Armageddon or nuclear winter, and in terms of conventional warfare, we do not have the threat of scores of Russian divisions pushing through the Fulda Gap on their way to the Channel. Having said that, this is far from contending that we need to be reassured, because we have seen an assertive, and even aggressive, Russia with very virulent manifestations of this in Ukraine, and earlier in Georgia. We have returned, as Walter Russel Mead has suggested, to geopolitics.

The Russian government is also prodding and probing western weaknesses. It has outlined new ambitions, particularly in the vast and strategic Arctic, which is so much a part of Canada's concerns about protecting sovereignty.

The rhetoric from Moscow and even that from Washington is troubling. At the February 2016 conference in Munich, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev claimed, “we have slid back to a new Cold War.... On almost a daily basis, we're called one of the most terrible threats either to NATO...or Europe, or to the United States.” This is somewhat ironic, since it was Russia using hybrid warfare that illegally annexed Crimea, and continues to fund, arm, and direct separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine.

● (0915)

The Americans have also expressed alarm. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter declared in February of 2016 that “we haven't had to worry about this”—meaning a Russian threat or attack—“for 25 years” and “[w]hile I wish it were otherwise, now we do.”

Despite this rhetoric, we are not quite yet in a new Cold War; Russia's capabilities are limited by the fact that it has a GDP roughly that of Italy's in nominal terms. But this does not mean that it does not enjoy very significant regional advantages, as has been outlined by others, and I would not by any means wish to minimize those threats. But how do we deal with that?

The west is basically hard-wired—and this is not necessarily bad—to negotiate. That is not necessarily the Russian approach or the approach of the Kremlin currently. Russian foreign policy is driven to a very large extent by a series of intertwined domestic crises. We need to understand this if we are to cope with the military threat, because it operates within the larger political context. It is persistent and is likely to continue for a very long time under the current leadership in the Kremlin.

The domestic motive forces of Russian action and Russian military threats externally are driven by four domestic crises: the political legitimacy crisis, the economic crisis, an identity crisis, and a coming succession crisis. In light of the Kremlin's inability or unwillingness to take the fundamental steps that would be needed to resolve these crises, the Putin government not only has been shrinking the zone of democracy within Russia, but has relied on manufacturing external threats to create a kind of permanent mobilization as an alternative to genuine political legitimation.

Its economic problems have also pushed Russia to try to gain as much control over the Arctic as possible, both in terms of political goals and in terms of economic value. The Arctic has enormous potential resources, but the Arctic is also a very fragile area. If we look at the threat in the Arctic, we see four areas of concern: one, environment and ecology; two, energy exploration; three, trade and navigation; and four, security. I will skip over the first three because I want to spend a little more time on the fourth one.

Needless to say, any major spills in the Arctic would be catastrophic. That exploration would take place in one of the most ecologically fragile areas in the world and that no country has a worse record as a custodian of the environment than Russia, and no country is pushing for more exploration than Russia.... Russia also tries to control navigation, and this is where the Russian capacity to use icebreakers, which other countries don't have, and which neither the Americans nor we in Canada have paid enough attention to, I would argue, presents Russia with certain advantages.

In the fourth area, Russian security and military aspirations in the Arctic are enormous. The Russians have created the joint strategic command, SEVER, and have deployed a large Arctic brigade only 50 kilometres from the border of Finland. They continually conduct large exercises, including the vast military exercise in the north in 2015, involving something like 80,000 troops.

In December 2014 the Kremlin established the Arctic strategic command with the same legal status as the four other long-standing military districts. In 2015 Mr. Putin not only created a coordinating mission for development of the Arctic, vested with power in all areas and activities, but confirmed in March of that year as commission chair the notoriously anti-Western and aggressive deputy prime minister Dmitry Rogozin, who famously quipped that “tanks don't need visas”. Russia has also deployed extensive nuclear assets in the Arctic, including the nuclear Borei-class submarines with Bulava missiles.

Clearly, Canada cannot cope with a threat of this magnitude on its own. It needs help from its American ally in NORAD and from its other allies in NATO.

● (0920)

In the case off NORAD, however, in addition to the Russian threat, at some point we may also face one from North Korea, which is becoming more imminent as we get information on the possibility of the militarization of nuclear warheads and the deployment of mobile missiles in the case of Korea.

The problem with NORAD is that we rely a great deal on the United States. Under the current administration in the United States, there is a preference to limit engagement or to “lead from behind” and to lower defence expenditures. So reliance on the United States, allies have found, has become significantly more uncertain.

In terms of NATO—and this involves Iceland, Norway, and Denmark, as well as the United States, as they are fellow NATO members—the alliance itself does not have a particularly encouraging record of maintaining its defence capabilities. Despite the agreement in Wales two years ago that committed all 28 members to meeting the 2% of GDP defence expenditure target, only five countries have done so. Among the five that do, the United States and the U.K. have, in fact, been diminishing their defence expenditures. Canada, at roughly 1%, with a zero increase in 2014-15, also has a less than encouraging record when we have vast areas to protect in terms of our sovereignty. Germany, the second largest economy in NATO, has expenditures on defence of only about 1.2% of GDP, and last year those declined in absolute terms.

There is no magical solution to defence. You have to spend the money, you have to get the weapons. Negotiations, cooperation, and improved discursive practices all help, but ultimately the largest regional threat—the one coming from Russia—has to be addressed with both capacity and the will to dissuade. Moscow has taken aggressive political, military, and economic steps, particularly in the Arctic. The threat is not one of all-out attack, at least in the Arctic—and I'm not looking at the Baltic States, which are somewhat different. But the danger in the Arctic is one of misperception, miscalculation, and missteps. The response should be driven by prudence, not paranoia.

In conclusion, Canada needs to protect its rights in the Arctic, and air power will play a key role, but it all has to be done in a coordinated, comprehensive, deliberate, and determined fashion. Russia deserves respect, as does any other state, but a certain reality needs to be communicated to the Kremlin. Clever tactics by Moscow, the use of hybrid warfare in various parts of the world, and political pressure do not change the fundamentals of a country, Russia, that should concentrate far more on its domestic issues and on tapping its vast human and natural resources in order to become a modern state, rather than looking to find some sort of imaginary road to its restoration as a superpower through various foreign adventures.

The west, in turn, needs to have an integrated approach, a kind of grand strategy where Canada works together with the U.S. through NORAD and with NATO in its approach to the Arctic and to North American threats in general.

Russia should be made to understand that not only an outright conflict but even just an all-out military competition would ultimately be very bad for it, because it simply cannot match the capacity of a combined and determined west. Russia needs to look to Cervantes and Sancho Panza's line about a ceramic pitcher, where he said, “if the pitcher hits the stone or the stone hits the pitcher, it’s bad for the pitcher”. In an all-out confrontation, Russia is the pitcher. So perhaps Russia should be persuaded, indeed, to focus more on its domestic issues, as foreign adventures are not a substitute for resolving those problems.

Lastly, another European writer-philosopher, Voltaire, put it best in terms of advice. Voltaire, in *Candide*, speaking through his ever-optimistic hero, who had been mugged by reality, declared that ultimately, “*Il faut cultiver notre jardin*”, we must cultivate our garden. This perhaps is particularly timely advice for Russia and others who may pose threats to North America.

● (0925)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Professor Braun.

We're going to move to our first round of questions. They are seven minutes each, including both the question and answer. So I encourage everyone to be brief in their response so we can get as many questions in as possible.

We're going to move to Mr. Fisher, as our first questioner.

Go ahead, Mr. Fisher. You have the floor.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much to the presenters for sharing your vast level of knowledge.

Professor Sloan, there have been lots of discussion over the years historically about our lack of participation in ballistic missile defence. We currently don't participate.

What are the historical risks, and have these risks changed since we made a conscious decision not to participate?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Do you mean in terms of the ballistic missile threat?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Yes, our non-participation in BMD. Have the risks changed, what are the historical risks, and have they changed?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Historically there was no ballistic missile defence system. It started in 2004. The Bush administration made that decision premised basically on North Korea's behaviour.

In 2004 we decided that NORAD's ballistic missile detection information could go to Northern Command, which holds the mission for ballistic missile defence.

The risk in not being part of ballistic missile defence is that we don't have a say in a decision whether to strike down a ballistic missile. Let's say there's a missile coming at Churchill, Manitoba, and to strike it down might create collateral damage, or whatever, then our commander won't have a say in whether the strike takes place. There's that risk, but there is another risk that I think is even more likely, and that is when we're cut out of information.

I did say in my prepared comments that there is information out there, and that we're not cut out of it. In response to my questions at NORAD, I have been assured that we're not cut out of information, but it is possible because there are many sensors that have been deployed since our decision in 2005 not to take part in ballistic missile defence.

There is the x-band radar in the north Pacific, the Aegis cruisers, the ships in the Sea of Japan, as I've mentioned. There's also a new land-based detection system on, I think, the southern part of Japan. There are new sensors that have come into place since 2005.

All of that information is channelled into strategic command, which is in Nebraska. Whether or not space command and strategic command sends all of that information to NORAD—because don't forget our only window on this is NORAD—I don't know, and I think that's a risk. It's an incomplete information sharing risk.

● (0930)

Mr. Darren Fisher: All right. I'll quote something from your prepared statement.

You stated that "NORAD has the ability to detect ballistic missiles through longstanding space and land-based systems, of which none are on Canadian soil."

Keeping in mind that I don't have the level of knowledge you have on this, are we protected in any way? Do we have any sense of protection at all against ballistic missiles?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Yes. On the detection side, the space-based system I'm talking about is a satellite system that went up starting in the 1960s or 1970s. We've always received that information. The land-based systems I'm talking about are in Alaska, Greenland, and the northern United Kingdom. They are called ballistic missile early warning system radars.

Those are the land and the space ones that have always been up there for the last 30 or 40 years. That information has always been channelled into NORAD, and we've received that.

The new stuff are the things I mentioned like the ships in the Sea of Japan, a radar system on the land in Japan, and also that x-band radar that sits in Pearl Harbour that then goes up toward the Bering Strait when necessary. Those are the new detection systems geared directly to the North Korea threat, because the satellites and the BMEWS radars are facing Russia.

That's the detection side of things. In terms of the defence, you know the silos are in North Dakota, etc. That's the Cold War defence against Russian missiles.

For the new threat against North Korea there are ground-based interceptors at two locations: California and Alaska, at Vandenberg Air Force Base and Greeley Air Force Base, respectively. There are about 30 interceptors, and the Americans are trying to increase those to 44 by 2017. These are the ground-based interceptors that are designed and meant to respond to a North Korean threat. They're all U.S., of course.

Mr. Darren Fisher: All U.S.

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Yes. We're not part of any of that.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Short of asking you for a yes or no answer, do you feel that we have the level of protection in Canada that we need, by not participating in ballistic missile defence?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: No, I don't think so. I think we should be part of the response component of ballistic missile defence. We're already part of the detection component, but I think we should be part of the response part.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay.

I have nothing further, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We'll move over to Ms. Gallant.

You have the floor, and you have seven minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My questions are directed to Professor Sloan.

Notwithstanding that our military does not see any state actors as threats to Canada, what is the best defence against cruise missiles?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: A cruise missile requires both detection and interception. The detection side is classified, and I don't have access to the information. I know this because I've asked the question and have not had access to the information. But I believe that around North America the detection of cruise missiles would be done by the airborne warning and control craft, which the United States owns but which Canada helps man. They're based in Oklahoma.

I believe the north warning system also has a very limited ability to detect against cruise missiles, but it is certainly optimized for that function. The north warning system along the 70th parallel was set up to detect ballistic missiles. Cruise missiles are much harder to detect, because they fly low to the ground.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Would ground-based interceptors and detectors in Canada augment the integrity of protection against cruise missiles?

● (0935)

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Yes, a ground-based detection system would help. It's a matter of where you locate them. We have in the past had air defence systems located on the east and west coasts. I believe they have been de-commissioned. Ground-based systems based in northern parts of Canada in specific locations would help.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You mentioned the new cruise missile that the Russians have. There was reportedly a launch over Iran towards Syria, and there were reports that the trajectory fell short and it hit Iran.

There are reports of Russian nuclear subs in the Arctic, and you mentioned that cruise missiles could be launched from ships—or submarines, for that matter. I'm not sure you said submarines, but you said marine. Should there be measures put in place to detect and intercept them, and overall should more military assets be placed in the Arctic to be able to patrol and detect these at an earlier point in time?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Yes, the Arctic would be a good location.

You mentioned the action against Iran and Syria. The thing about the new long-range cruise missile that surprised the international community was that it was not necessary for Russia to use that cruise missile against Syria, because it was designed to evade air defences in a much more powerful country. It was, then, almost a demonstration for effect; it was perhaps a demonstration to show that it has a long-range precision cruise missile that could be launched from Russian waters, from submarines, from bombers, and also from ships.

To defend against that, you would need to have a detection capability, which could involve AWACS, could involve the F-35, which I believe has a detection capability against cruise missiles, and could involve land-based sensors. The problem with any aircraft designed to detect against cruise missiles is that you have to have it flying all the time, so it's not really a long-term solution.

Potentially, the RADARSAT Constellation could look down and detect cruise missiles. RADARSAT Constellation is designed to detect ships and so is much more powerful than a satellite higher up; thus it could potentially detect cruise missiles. Also, unmanned aerial vehicles.... I think I mentioned the Global Hawk, which is basically the U-2 replacement—you'll remember the U-2 from the Cold War—which can detect cruise missiles.

If you are looking for persistent surveillance, then you're looking at satellites, high-altitude unmanned aerial vehicles, or a land-based system. Of course, if there's a lot of land, it's hard to decide where to put it.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay. The more immediate threat, we are told, is an attack from jihadist organizations. How realistic do you see a threat from their commissioning a state actor to launch a missile toward North America? In other words, could ISIL, al Shabaab, or al Qaeda have the means to pay, for example, North Korea to do a launch toward us? Right now, there isn't the feeling that they are much of an enemy, that there is any realistic....

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Do you mean, in terms of cruise missiles?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I would say cruise or ballistic, because they presently don't have either capability.

Dr. Elinor Sloan: At this stage, my assessment is that you have to have a state actor and that that scenario is quite unlikely.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You mentioned fighter jets. We know that there is going to be a delay. First of all, do you foresee them becoming obsolete with the development of more sophisticated unmanned aerial vehicles? I ask the question because the current government has delayed the decision to replace the F-18s during this term in office, and we see that delayed procurements can have negative, and latent negative, effects. Just today it was revealed that a 2009 Griffon crash in Afghanistan was in part due to the overloading of the chopper. We didn't have the lift capability of the helicopter.

As it turned out, the 1993 cancellation of the EH-101 contract—totally an electoral ploy—cost almost $1 billion after cancellation fees, and that the government ultimately returned to the EH-101 aircraft for SAR. Many Canadians were needlessly killed as a consequence of the decision to cancel that contract, and other misplaced spending priorities.

My question is, should a decision be made earlier, rather than delaying at least four years on going forward with some sort of replacement for the F-18s?

● (0940)

Dr. Elinor Sloan: No, I think a decision should go ahead right away. My hope is that the statement of requirements is being drafted. I am sure it has been drafted or is in process because it has been six months since the election. I think, absolutely, sooner rather than later. My understanding is that the F-18s will fly to about 2025. That's a new number. The old number used to be 2017, the absolute latest date. The reason the number has changed is that if you fly the aircraft less then it can last longer. The tradeoff has been readiness in terms of the aircraft. In order to have an aircraft in place by 2025, you need to start very, very soon.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Garrison, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all our witnesses for appearing today.

I am just going to continue with Professor Sloan for a moment. You used the term "notable gap" in your presentation on aerial surveillance, which implies that there are other gaps. I would be interested in that.

One of our concerns has been the reprofiling of procurement. You just mentioned that. We had the Conservatives put off $6.5 billion in spending. The Liberals have now put off another $3.7 billion. We have some $10 billion in spending that has been "reprofiled" till after 2019. I would like to go back to what you were just talking about. Are we facing some real gaps in capacity with fighter planes, with refuelling, and with our surveillance aircraft? Is that what you are talking about when you are referring to notable gaps in one place?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: I see, I see. Yes.

The cruise missile one is just one that has stood out for years, and it's a tough one to tackle. That's why it stood out.

The other component may be on the ballistic missile side. The United States is looking to increase its detection capabilities against North Korea, and that could possibly be a gap. Indeed, I haven't talked about Iran at all, but it could be missiles from the other side as well.

On the fighter aircraft side, I think that one is absolutely critical. Although we're not in a new Cold War, we're in a situation like a Cold War in terms of the threat. What we need today and over the next few years would be similar, logically speaking, in terms of fighter aircraft to what we needed during the Cold War. I mention that because during the Cold War we had 120 F-18s. That was reduced to 80 at some point, when they were upgraded. I could probably be corrected on this. Now we've said that we're going to buy 65 fighter aircraft. I think there absolutely needs to be an assessment of just how many fighter aircraft you need to effectively defend Canada, considering that the threat today is starting to look an awful lot like the threat of the mid- to late 1980s just before Gorbachev called off the bomber patrols.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Professor Braun, you mentioned the commitment to 2% of defence spending and the fact that not only is Canada at 1% but we appear to be heading in the wrong direction on this. Given the current budget projecting increases in spending for defence below the rate of inflation and below the rate of GDP growth, we're actually going to sink even further below 1%.

I was very interested in what you had to say about this in terms of there being no substitute to actually spending on the equipment we need. Can you expand somewhat on those comments?

● (0945)

Dr. Aurel Braun: As an academic, obviously my preference would be that we spend money on universities and hospitals, and not on weapons. But the reality is that we live in an international system where there are significant threats.

Russia has been prodding and probing, and it has enjoyed tactical successes, at a great cost to its domestic economy. Misperception and miscalculation are often what lead to conflict. So I do not think there's a plan on the part of Russia to enter into a conflict with the western countries, but weakness can be provocative, as they say.

The danger is that Canada, just as other members of an alliance, cannot just cherry-pick. When we talk about what the dangers are of not participating, technologies have been developed now. BDM has moved tremendously. The capacity of x-band radars has expanded. There are things that can be done against cruise missiles, but you do need to spend the money. You need to have the willpower, and you have to demonstrate that you are doing that.

Deterrence is crucial. To defend against cruise missiles, it's not just what you deploy on the ground but also the perception of what you're willing to do, what the message is that you convey. Deterrence involves a psychological relationship. If you consistently under-spend, if you have a situation with the Germans, for example, now realizing that much of their fighter air power is just not usable.... Something like 42% of their Tornado airplanes just can't get up in the air. So you have all of these problems.

In the case of Canada, we have to think very hard about what we can do, even with the limited dollars we have. We can't match Russia, let's say, in terms of quantity. We need to try, therefore, to use quality. That has been the traditional strength western countries have had.

What would quality be? Quality would be using the latest technology. The latest technology is not about an airplane; it is about a system. Do you go for fourth generation, or four and a half? We really need to go for fifth generation and spend the money. There are no really inexpensive ways of getting around it. And there is an obligation to be part of that alliance. It is essential to demonstrate.

We need to also understand that patience is beginning to wear thin in the case of the entire political spectrum in the United States. It is not just Donald Trump who's ranting and raving about free riders, but you see this in the campaign of Bernie Sanders. You see it with Hillary Clinton. You see it in the criticism that President Obama has levelled at France and Britain.

If we are to take sovereignty protection seriously, if we are to take our alliances seriously, then the risk is of alliance management, the risk is of actual defence. The risk is also of depriving our industry of technology that we could share, that we could build on. When we calculate a risk, we have to calculate that risk across the entire political, economic, and psychological spectrum.

Mr. Randall Garrison: In your presentation, you made reference to—

The Chair: It appears that's seven minutes right on the nose.

I'm going to move on to the next question to keep us on time.

Mr. Spengemann, you have the floor, for seven minutes.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all three experts here today. We really appreciate your views and your expertise.

I'd like to start with a question for Professor Sloan.

I'd like to switch lenses a little bit and move away from the state-to-state paradigm and suggest that in addition to threats emanating from Russia and Korea as state entities, one of the most worrisome threats today is the risk of domestic terrorism. To the extent that's the case, that threat would be centred around major urban centres.

My question for you is about the location of current and future western fighter assets in Canada. The United States Air Force is now currently conducting a fairly sizeable number of directed landings on Canadian soil. In light of that, I'm wondering if our current western fighter assets are actually strategically well deployed in Cold Lake or in Bagotville, or if it might make more sense to move them over to the west coast towards Vancouver, potentially to a location such as Comox. I'm wondering what your views are on that.

● (0950)

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Our fighter bases are located based on the Cold War threat. I agree that it can be very difficult for our aircraft to get to our major cities in time to address a threat. So the United States would have to address that threat and go over our border. So, yes, it probably would make sense to relocate that base closer to the urban centre.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: I'm not even suggesting that the base needs to be relocated, but that the air assets be deployed strategically in—

Dr. Elinor Sloan: The air assets don't stay at the base at all times. For instance, we have F-18s sometimes at Uplands airport here in Ottawa; they deploy to different locations around Canada. It's a matter of making sure they're on location when a threat arises or when it's thought that there might be a potential threat. For example, during the Vancouver Olympics, I don't know for sure, but my guess is that the F-18s were deployed closer to all the activities.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Okay.

Professor Braun, is that something you would agree with as well?

Dr. Aurel Braun: Well, it's not just a matter of where you deploy; you have to have something to deploy. If we don't have enough aircraft, there is no magic.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Yes, sure, but let's assume today. We do have the capacity, and I said deploying current or future assets, whatever they are.

Dr. Aurel Braun: Well, we have some capacity. We obviously have to try to deploy them as wisely as possible and where the most likely threats are going to be. But we have to cooperate with our allies. We just don't have enough and will never have enough, so we have to do it jointly. I'm sure we can refine the policy, we can adjust it. Any good military deployment adapts, and adapts to ongoing threats.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: That's the point I was—

Dr. Aurel Braun: That's the sensible way to do it. If that is what you're advocating, it makes eminent good sense.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you for that. That's the point I was trying to get to.

As a broader question, switching lenses a little and taking a look at the Arctic, let me suggest that the most imminent threat may not necessarily be even a land grab from Russia or from China or from any other state entity. We have melting Arctic sea ice, we have access to the Northwest Passage, we have sharply decreasing oil prices, and a corresponding increase in the interest in other resources that are in the Arctic and potentially on the seabed.

You could imagine a scenario, and this question is for all three of you, wherein you may have a non-state entity—a consortium of sorts—simply starting to do mining in Canadian territorial waters, whether it's on the ocean floor or elsewhere. That might be the kind of threat—in the shadow, perhaps, of some military state-entity posturing—that we would face in the short term.

The answer, of course, would be a political, diplomatic one, in terms of what steps to take immediately, but from an air-readiness perspective, what kind of assets would be required to address such a scenario, and do we have those assets in place at the moment?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Detecting that would require the ability to detect ships, and that's what the RADARSAT Constellation will be able to do. RADARSAT-2 already can do it; the problem is that it's not a Constellation, and in order to have persistent surveillance, you need.... I know the Constellation plan is for three satellites, but it might be that they need four or five for persistent surveillance of the Arctic region. As I mentioned, unmanned aerial vehicles would also be able to conduct the surveillance of the region.

That's the detection component of it. I believe we also have underwater sensors at some locations in the north.

In terms of responding to it, the Arctic offshore patrol vessel will be an important asset to have, but only in the summer months. Of course, it can only go through one-metre-thick ice. It's very important that our Polar-class icebreaker be built, the new one that's supposed to be built in Vancouver.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: But staying with aerial readiness, from the perspective of interdiction or potential dissuasion, what kind of assets would you see being deployed?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Are you referring to mining and offshore oil and that sort of thing?

Mr. Sven Spengemann: That's right.

Dr. Elinor Sloan: An aerial asset can be used for detection but would not be used for response, in my view.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Okay.

Professor Braun?

Dr. Aurel Braun: I say that's exactly how they could detect, but to respond, you need to have ships. You need to have troops on the ground and you need to have icebreakers. This is where Russia has a tremendous advantage.

I'm not that concerned about non-state actors. They're not likely to do it; there's not that much capacity. But there is a problem with Russia, and there is a legal problem. The Russians have been extremely aggressive in legal terms. In legal terms, it is a kind of Cold War. The kinds of argument they're making, in terms of international law.... This is a self-plug: I'm completing a book on Russia, the western Arctic, and security.

One problem is that there are competing claims to the Lomonosov and Mendeleev Ridges and about where exploration can take place.

There's also the issue of navigation. The Chinese have become much more interested in it, because if you can shorten the route through which you can navigate, that will have a dramatic impact on trade. They now have observer status—it's not just the Arctic Council—and they really are pushing for this. We thus need detection capacity, and any capacity, not just.... NORAD since 2006 has looked more to offset maritime threats, but you need to have a system and you need to have the proper tools.

This is why I think, in the debate we're having about aircraft, it makes no sense to look at anything other than the F-35, because it is a system; it is something that is integrated. It is what the United States is getting; it is what Norway got; it is what Denmark is likely to get. It is part of a detection and response system at the aerial level, which has then to be combined with other things, including getting those icebreakers—and what is the timeline for the new icebreakers? Is it 2020, 2022?

● (0955)

Dr. Elinor Sloan: It will be a long time before they'll be built.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, thank you. Those are my questions. If there's any remaining time, I would like to allocate it to the next Liberal.

The Chair: You're actually a little bit over. Good timing.

We'll now move to our five-minute rounds of questions.

The first questions will come from Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for you, Ms. Sloan. We've talked quite a bit about ballistic missile defence and how we're part of the detection but not part of the response. You've advocated, at least to my interpretation, that we be part of that response.

Can you share a little bit about what's involved in that? What is involved from a commitment level? Is this a financial commitment or more of a political commitment? Can you give some clarity to that?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: What was requested originally in 2004 by the Bush administration was a political commitment. There has been no request since then. Although we talk about it north of the border, and I'm sure the United States would want Canada to join, they have not officially requested that we join again. But should we join, this time around it is my understanding that it would be more than a political commitment and that it would involve a financial investment of some kind.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: And you don't know what the—

Dr. Elinor Sloan: I don't know what the financial investment would be.

We were talking about notable detection problems, and I mentioned that perhaps the United States is looking for another location to locate sensors or interceptors. It is looking in different locations across the United States, but it could also look at Canadian territory.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

I'd be interested to hear what all three of you have to say with regard to my next question. Perhaps I'll start with Ms. Assenova.

We've had a lot of discussion here today about our sovereignty, in particular in the Arctic, and our northern defence. We've talked a lot about state actors, the Russians, and China's interest. Yet this committee, both before this membership and as recently as March, heard comments to the effect that there's no military threat from other states, at least not within the next 10 years.

Ms. Assenova, I know you talked a little bit about the intent. My interpretation of what you were saying was that there could be changes in intent. I'd be curious to hear your comments on that. Do you think those are valid comments that there's no military threat to Canada within at least the next 10 years? Or is it very easy for that intent to all of a sudden change?

Ms. Margarita Assenova: Well, we saw the evolution of Russian intent and Russian behaviour over the last 10 years. It is difficult to predict whether there will be a military threat or not.

One thing that I think is clear is that Mr. Putin is not going to be willing to use nuclear weapons, because that means suicide for him, and he is pretty fond of life as it is. I don't think he's suicidal. This is more of a tactic of irritating adversaries. It's more of a tactic of demonstrating superiority or demonstrating capabilities in order for Russia to be taken seriously and to take back the place they used to have during the Cold War, when we had a two-power world.

Mr. Putin is not willing to accept that there is one leading force right now, one leading country in the world. He wants to restore this so-called multipolar world at this time and make Russia a great pillar of that world. We can see that cruise missiles have been used as a demonstration of that, as was mentioned before. That's extremely dangerous for the countries around the Caspian Sea, because they get involved in a war that's not their war at all. They get manipulated by Russia as well.

That said, we cannot predict intent at this point. The U.S. military leaders are very worried that the pattern of behaviour may eventually change the intent. At that point, it is very important to have sufficient defence. At the same time, psychologically, as Professor Braun mentioned, it's very important to have that defence.

Unlike in the Cold War, when things were predictable, we have now a very unpredictable situation. We have a situation where Russia is calculating and calibrating its moves according to the gains it wants. It is no longer the established, balanced system we had during the Cold War. It actually is worse now. This is why showing the bully our strength is very important at the moment, regardless of whether we're going to have to use it or not.

● (1000)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Is my time up?

The Chair: Yes, your time is up.

We'll move on to Mr. Paul-Hus. You have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for appearing before us today.

Since the beginning of our meetings with the various stakeholders, including Mr. Burke, who is a research associate on national security studies, we have been attempting to accurately assess the threat to our country. At this time, I think Canadians need a mental reprogramming in the wake of the old cold war. We were programmed in a way to consider Russia and the former Soviet Union as a single block and a nuclear threat, whereas today's situation is entirely different.

I will first ask you whether you believe that Canada really sees Russia as a potential threat? Personally, I would say that that is not the case, but what do your studies and analyses say? Does Canada see Russia as a threat? The question is for any one of you.

[*English*]

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Yes, I think Canadians would accept it as a threat if presented with the evidence, and I think we are seeing the evidence based on some of the capabilities I laid out in my presentation, and also intent. As a threshold, of course, we saw the action in Georgia and in Ukraine, so it has shown a pattern of behaviour.

On the other side of the world, North Korea is also showing a pattern of bombastic statements, but also the development of capabilities.

I've framed North Korea as a medium-term threat because technologically it has to overcome the requirement to miniaturize nuclear weapons to put those on a ballistic missile, and also the ability to develop a long-range ballistic missile. But from the intelligence reports I read, it's moving in that direction. So you see intent and capability on both sides, perhaps not tomorrow but moving in that direction, and I think Canadians, presented with the evidence, would be willing to accept that.

Dr. Aurel Braun: In a sense this would tie in to some of the other questions that were asked. We need a conceptual clarification of what is a threat. When we say, “Look, there is no threat,” there is no threat in the sense of what we were used to in the Cold War, where we saw massive forces with tens of thousands of tanks as part of a strategy that would have involved a lunge toward the Channel. That is not what Russia intends. That is not what Russia is capable of doing.

However, the threat emanates from a country that prods and probes and seeks tactical advantages, that seeks to resolve its domestic problems and the problem of domestic instability. The social contract that had existed has fallen apart and you have a Kremlin that is looking for a kind of external validation. This is a recipe for having a kind of accidental conflict.

We see the Russians sending submarines into the waters of neighbouring states. The Swedes were pretty certain there was a Russian sub in their waters. We see the kind of challenges in the air, whether it was the British or others, where Russian aircraft come very close to their airspace. There were near accidents that have occurred. It has been a long time since that has happened. You have to go back to Soviet days when the Russian air force last acted this provocatively. So all of these are recipes for miscalculation.

You have a similar situation in North Korea. This is a wretchedly poor country, where people are starving, where people are trying to escape, and yet all its resources are being spent on trying to present the country as powerful and able to intimidate and develop nuclear weapons.

This is something out of the toolbox of the dictator. Where you don't have the domestic legitimacy, where you can't solve domestic problems or use a kind of local magical realism to sway the people, you seek to have a kind of permanent mobilization by calling on external threats and by using ultra-nationalism. That is subject to its own laws of diminishing returns. You have to keep ratcheting it up and this is what Russia has been doing. That presents dangers.

The economic problems in Russia mean that Russia needs to be aggressive in trying to get more energy. What does Russia export? It is energy, weapons, and corruption. That's about the three things, so where are they going to get additional energy? Well, they're looking at the Arctic.

If you have a catastrophic spill in the Arctic it would make what happened in the Gulf of Mexico look like a picnic. That is also a threat. So we have this economic threat, we have the ecological threat, and we have a military threat. We need to properly conceptualize, contextualize, and understand it, and we need to send the right kind of message. The capacity of the west is so much greater, but we have not mobilized that capacity, not for a confrontation but to send clear messages to Russia: solve your domestic problems, don't look for international adventures. There's no reason why Russia could not be a prosperous modern state. It isn't.

● (1005)

The Chair: That's the time. Sorry.

The floor is yours, Ms. Romanado. You have five minutes.

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

I'd like to first thank Dr. Braun, Dr. Sloan, and Ms. Assenova for being here today.

We've heard a lot about surveillance and control. In terms of surveillance, Dr. Sloan, you've identified some opportunities, some areas of perhaps weakness in terms of ground-based interceptors and our RADARSAT Constellation satellites. In terms of control, we've heard a little bit from my colleague regarding the location of our air defence assets, the fact that ground-based interceptors for the United States are based in California and Alaska—so again, the west coast —and the fact that our fighter jets are currently in Bagotville and Cold Lake.

I'd like you to elaborate a little bit on the importance of our air tanker support in terms of the vast territory that we have to monitor. Could you elaborate a little bit on that and its importance?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Canada has five tankers, and they're based in Trenton. I think that that's sufficient, but just barely sufficient, because oftentimes our tankers are required overseas. I guess that would be the short answer. If you have one tanker dedicated to the Syrian theatre, one in refit, another one dedicated to perhaps some other mission, and then one for North America, then you are cutting it awfully close. It's a big country. Canada is often required to call on U.S. tankers to refuel our fighter aircraft.

● (1010)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Okay.

We heard a little bit about the replacement of our CF-18s. It was brought up through colleagues here around the table. You wrote an excellent report in 2014, “Something Has to Give: Why Delays Are the New Reality of Canada's Defence Procurement Strategy”. In that report, you outlined some of the concerns that we have about replacing our assets and some of the challenges we're currently facing.

We've heard from Dr. Braun who mentioned the F-35s. Given our current assets in Canada and the length of time it takes to procure assets in defence, could you give us a recommendation in terms of an action plan that we can take? What should we be looking at? What is realistic in terms of our current situation?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: In terms of all air assets or in terms of fighter aircraft?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Fighter aircraft.

Dr. Elinor Sloan: In terms of fighter aircraft, I was pleased that the Trudeau government put the F-35 back in the mix for the competition. Today I'm not willing to say that the Super Hornet or F-35 is the best aircraft. I do think that the competition needs to proceed expeditiously. If the statement of requirement is already done up, then it is possible that we could have an aircraft in place within four years, and certainly by 2025, which is now the end date given on our F-18s based on their airframe.

I think there are things that we need to consider. I would agree with the Trudeau government's approach of focusing on Canadian sovereignty and the aircraft that's necessary for Canadian sovereignty. Therefore, I don't necessarily think that fifth-generation stealth is critical in terms of our having an ability to take out air defence batteries in a foreign operation. I think we will probably always engage in such missions with the United States. What happened in Libya was that U.S. stealth aircraft took out the air defence and then the rest of NATO conducted its precision-strike missions.

It is possible, though, that you'll need a stealth aircraft to operate against Russia in the north. There are indications, as I mentioned, that the F-35 might be able to detect cruise missiles. There are just so many factors to include in deciding which aircraft is best. I'm unwilling today to say which direction we should go in.

The Chair: We go over to Mr. Bezan. You have five minutes.

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

I want to welcome our witnesses. It's good to see you, Professor Braun and Professor Sloan, back at committee.

Ms. Assenova, it's good to see you again. It's been several weeks since we've chatted.

I feel that the purpose of this panel is to talk about the risks and threats to Canada and to North America. I think that all three of you have clearly outlined the concerns that we have with Russia, especially in the near-Arctic airspace, but also their capabilities. I know, hearing from all three of you, that the one thing that probably keeps you guys awake at night, and keeps me awake at night, is the proliferation of cruise missiles, the incredible technology that we're seeing from the Russians on cruise missiles.

But also I want to talk about one of the U.S. subcontractors on cruise missiles who had their systems hacked into a number of years ago. That information was set out into the global sphere. What other countries do we see, as well as possibly non-state players, having access to those schematics to build their own cruise missiles?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: If I've heard you correctly, who else could launch cruise missiles at North America? I do believe it's a state-based capability. I don't think a non-state actor has or will have in the near future that capability. I do think you're looking specifically at Russia. North Korea is focused on ballistic missiles right now.

Mr. James Bezan: Getting back to Russia, it's been said that Putin is provoked by weakness.

I'll start with you, Ms. Assenova. What types of deterrents do we need in North America to keep Putin at bay, to keep the Kremlin working? Of course, they're continuing to agitate and be an aggressor in the global sphere, but especially in eastern Europe. What do we need in a North American context to deter Putin from perceiving us as being weak and an easy play for him in the context of the expansionism and adventurism he's been demonstrating recently?

● (1015)

Ms. Margarita Assenova: I think we need the firm response that we used to have during the Cold War in similar situations. We need to help our allies in eastern Europe in creating their defences. They need to increase their spending as well, because they are falling in the same category as Canada and France, not really spending 2% of GDP. Some of them are already thinking about increasing their budgets gradually. It has to be done much more quickly.

The components of missile defence that are going to be located in Romania, Poland, and Turkey are very important too. Russia has been violating the air space of the countries in the Black Sea region for months, for years already. Turkey was the one country that shot down a Russian fighter jet in Syria, but this was not the first incident of such magnitude in the region.

We need to show Russia that we have protection and that the NATO alliance is there behind the eastern European countries. He is not aiming at the moment at the United States and Canada. I am saying “at the moment” because we don't know how his intent is going to change. He is aiming at the immediate flanks of Russia, from northern Europe, through eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and central Asia. Russia is already reducing spending in some of these regions—I mentioned central Asia—and reducing even the military base in Tajikistan, downgrading it as well. It is withdrawing from water projects in Kazakhstan, and this is very important to notice because that means Russia has serious financial problems. It's not going to be able to militarize forever and to increase its military might. We need to help the eastern Europeans, because I see this response see as the most important and the most telling to Russian President Putin to consider, that the west is strong. Instead we saw a refugee crisis in Europe that was partly provoked by Russian intervention in Syria in order to weaken Europe, and we are seeing at the same time American candidates for president dismissing NATO as a military alliance. These are positions that are going to work very comfortably, very suitably, for Mr. Putin. This is something we shouldn't be allowing.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Braun.

The Chair: That's about five minutes. I'm going to move on to the next questioner, I'm sorry.

Mr. Rioux, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being here with us today.

Currently in the news we always hear about ISIL. I think the Arctic is being neglected. We have talked about it a lot today. Some say that other countries have increased their weaponry in the Arctic. People also talk about icebreakers, obviously, and antimissile devices. First of all, is this true? I'm going to ask you several questions in a row, which will allow you to answer in a general way.

I would also like to know if the threat to Canada involves maintaining our sovereignty over our territories, or whether it lies with the interest other countries have in our natural resources? You spoke about this earlier. What timeframe are we looking at? If I am not mistaken, it is mainly Russia and China who have shown interest there, but to what extent, respectively? Our sovereignty is currently under threat. In fact, are other countries interested in our natural resources? Do you think there are other types of threats, and are they pressing?

Mr. Braun, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Dr. Aurel Braun: The argument presents a very complex picture of both opportunities and threats. It is a vast region with enormous resources. Something like 22% of potential fossil fuel resources are in the Arctic. The temptation is tremendous. As the Arctic ice melts, the navigation potential, the northern sea route, could dramatically change trade patterns. This is what China is interested in, and other countries are interested as well.

Sovereignty protection takes a more complex form in terms of resource protection, in terms of looking at the environmental threat. This takes me back to how we can we deal with these multiple threats that operate at so many levels. Even the United States cannot do it alone. Even they need to do it jointly with other allies.

Our response has to be part of a comprehensive strategy that has to operate at many levels: the political, the military, the psychological, the economic level, and NORAD and NATO come into it. One of the difficulties has been that Russia has viewed NATO as this pathetic weak giant that is incapable of action, not because it doesn't have the resources, but because it doesn't have the willpower; it doesn't have the capacity to mobilize and respond effectively.

While Russia uses cruise missiles.... I think it was my colleague who said it wasn't necessary—but it was necessary in a sense for Russia, because they needed to make a point. They wanted to send a message. This is what Russia is doing. They're sending all sorts of messages, and we have not been sending messages back.

So symbolism is very important. When we look at the type of aircraft that we're going to get, it's not merely a matter of dollars and cents. It's a matter of proper integration in terms of what kind of message you send to the other side. You could be penny-wise and pound foolish. Sometimes you spend extra money because you create a certain kind of image.

When I spent some time many years ago at Stanford University as a visiting scholar, Milton Friedman was there on loan from University of Chicago. I was working on the Warsaw Pact, and writing on it. We had this chat about what cost means. He said that as an economist, sometimes you need to spend a certain amount of money and you have to look at the value of it differently than in purely economic terms. On occasion, you might spend a dollar and you can inflict 10 dollars' worth of damage on the other side and it's not worth it. At other times you may spend 10 dollars to get one dollar's worth of benefit on the other side and it's worth it, because ultimately you look at the cost in political terms.

Whatever military aircraft we get, our participation in BDM also has to operate within that group or context. What image do we project? How effective are we in creating the sense to anyone who might challenge our sovereignty, who might be tempted to engage in exploration that could be harmful to our interests, who might engage in navigation that would have a negative impact...? Do we project the kind of image of sufficient strength and determination singly in our alliance with NORAD and through our alliance with NATO? That is very important. This is why in the 21st century in particular, symbolism and signals are also essential.

● (1020)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to move to the last question for round two to Mr. Garrison, for three minutes, please.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I want to go back to the question of our naval capacity in the Arctic. I know some have asked who is the largest naval power in Canada. It's not the Royal Canadian Navy; it's actually Fednav, which has more ships operational than our navy has at this time. They also have an icebreaker that has a greater capacity than the Canadian navy.

Professor Braun, I want to ask you this again. The *Nunavik* that Fednav owns is under contract to a Chinese-owned mining company. Is this an example of the kind of threat of lack of capacity, that resource development will run ahead of Canada's ability to control the Arctic?

● (1025)

Dr. Aurel Braun: There is always a risk because of the kinds of temptations that exist. We look for resources and companies that want to make profits. On occasion we allow companies in and maybe we don't fully think through all of the implications that involve more than just economic benefit, but can involve security factors as well.

This is why it is so essential that the government think in terms of a grand strategy to look at that larger picture at all times. I can well understand that we need to make practical decisions. There are the functional factors and there are some cost factors. What do we get when we build icebreakers? Do we loan them? How do we co-operate with others?

These are decisions at a certain level, but at the highest level of government, that is where you do the grand strategy thinking. We have to ask ourselves if we have really done that effectively, not just in Canada but collectively in the west. I look at the threat that Russia has presented, and this should not have happened. We should not have allowed this. We did not respond properly in the case of Georgia. We did not respond properly in the case of Ukraine, and what happens in Ukraine has an impact on what happens in the Baltics, and what happens in the Baltics has an impact on what happens in the Scandinavian countries and in the Arctic.

When I was doing research on this latest book, I was talking to people in Denmark and Sweden. They said that they were really concerned about what happens in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, but what happens in Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania is also influenced by what happened in Ukraine, where Russia was able to demonstrate that they can overthrow the post-Cold War order with impunity. That is what has happened in the case of a country that doesn't have the power.... Russia is not a superpower, but it has been able to do these things.

Mr. Putin demonstrated in the case of Syria that he was able to act unilaterally, surprise the Americans, and not get into a quagmire. This may tempt him into other adventures.

These are the kinds of factors that we have to look at, whether it's a commercial matter, a military matter, or a political matter, and in the Arctic we have no margin of error. If there are problems in the Arctic, an error will have catastrophic consequences.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That concludes rounds one and two.

I'm going to ask one question and then hand it over to Mr. Bezan.

I'm going to direct this question to you, Professor Sloan. We've heard today—and I happen to know—that our defence priorities for our air force in terms of our fighter forces are that sovereignty is number one, then NORAD, and then NATO. From a practical perspective, I think that when we buy something in the future, no matter what it is, we should obviously keep in mind those priorities, as well as our infrastructure and our budget. I also agree, as was mentioned earlier, that NORAD and NATO are actually the systems that we plug into. We provide capability to those organizations.

That said, if our number one priority is sovereignty, we have an infrastructure in place and we have a limited amount of money. The number of fighters was mentioned earlier. We have tankers that work with certain systems and not others. We have a Canadian north that's littered with 6,000-foot runways. Would it not make sense if we focused on our number one priority and our limitations in terms of infrastructure and money to select something that would serve us first and still have the ability to plug into those systems like NORAD and NATO? We all know that Germany and France aren't buying a fifth-generation fighter. They have the Rafale and the Eurofighter, yet no one is freaking out about them not coming to the table.

Having said all that, may I have your comments on that, please?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: Yes, absolutely. I think we do need to prioritize the defence of North America. As I say, a Super Hornet would probably feed into that. I've not made up my mind either way.

As I mentioned earlier, there are so many factors that you need to look at, but one of the factors you need to look at is the supply chain and how long it's going to.... My understanding is that the Super Hornet in the United States is flying to 2040. Maybe I'm wrong on that, but we want an aircraft that will fly for at least 40 years. The CF-18 will have flown for 45 years by the time it's done.

Will there be supply chain problems in the long term, in the third and fourth decades? That would be one of the things that I would include in the SOR as a factor that I would look at.

Also, it is important to be able to operate with our allies. If all of our major allies are buying the F-35, then it would go in the F-35 direction with the United States, and with Britain and Australia, although, as you've mentioned, there are many allies that are not buying the F-35. But they're not necessarily the ones that would be the coalition leaders. Germany would probably not be the coalition leader for a mission that Canada would take part in, although I guess that could change in the future.

Those are a few more factors that I would include in a decision on which direction to go in.

● (1030)

The Chair: Thank you very much. Do you have an opinion, Mr. Braun? Be very quick.

Dr. Aurel Braun: Yes, I do. We're not buying an aircraft; we're buying a system. It's a mistake to think of the aircraft as a stand-alone. As Elinor Sloan said, we have to think about which allies we operate with in the north, and that would be Norway, Denmark, and the United States. The United States is buying this aircraft massively.

Lastly what's very important is that we're protecting sovereignty against whom? If the threat is Russia, what is the message we're sending? The aircraft and the system sends a message.

The Chair: Very well, and as I mentioned earlier, NORAD is a system. So long as we're interoperable with NORAD, we've got that covered.

Mr. Bezan, you have the floor.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to go back to something that might provoke Russia.

Professor Sloan, you talked about the flag that was planted at the bottom of the Arctic seabed at the North Pole by the Russians, and we have this whole process happening right now with the United Nations Law of the Sea.

If the decision on the location of the continental shelves goes against what Russia perceives as their extension of territory, would that probably increase tensions in the Arctic?

Dr. Elinor Sloan: I don't think so. I think that Russia has bought into the UNCLOS process and that it would respect that decision. I don't think that would be a spark.

Russia's main concern in the Arctic, I believe, is its northern sea route and the fact that it's melting much more quickly than our side of the Arctic. A spark would be China using the northern sea route without requesting permission. It's very much a maritime threat up there that this committee might want to look at next.

Mr. James Bezan: Right.

I want to get quick feedback from Professor Braun and Ms. Assenova. I'd be remiss in not having all the expertise sitting at the table here, and not talking about the upcoming NATO summit in Warsaw, and what you think might come out of that considering the increased Russian aggression. Where do you think Canada and the United States will fit in with this discussion?

Professor Braun, could you start us off?

Dr. Aurel Braun: I think there will be enormous pressure on the NATO members who are not spending 2% of GDP on defence to increase their spending. I think we're beginning to see signs of this, even in Scandinavia where, in a way, they've been mugged by reality. The Swedes had sold off their anti-submarine aircraft. They have to get new ones. The Danes are going to be spending more money as well. I think the Germans have to re-examine the relationship they have in Europe, although they're still having considerations about building Nord Stream 2 , which I think would be sending the wrong message.

I think this will be a very important summit where it will be essential to send the right kind of message to re-establish the deterrent that is so essential for NATO to have. We also will need to think in terms of how to help the eastern part of NATO. Those countries are vulnerable. As Ms. Assenova pointed out, Romania now has a maritime border with Russia. Ultimately, that has an impact on us, as Canada is a NATO member.

We have to think in all of those terms, and we will be making some tough decisions. I think we also need to plan the longer term. We keep talking about Mr. Putin's Russia, but no one lives forever and no system is absolutely immutable. There's something called Stein's Law. Herbert Stein said that if a trend can't continue, it won't. No one lives forever, including Mr. Putin. It will end at some point, and there's no succession in place. It will be very chaotic.

● (1035)

The Chair: Do you want to proceed with committee business we discussed earlier?

I'd like to thank our guests for coming and speaking today. It is very much appreciated. On behalf of the committee, thank you so much.

We're going to suspend for two minutes to allow you to depart, and then we're going to carry on with committee business, so thanks very much.

● (1035)

(Pause)

● (1035)

The Chair: We're back. Do you have a motion?

Mr. James Bezan: I tabled a notice of motion a couple of weeks ago, so I'll just read it into the record:

> That the Committee undertake a study on the strategy and development of a new defence white paper and policy review by the government; that the study focus on the following:
>
> (a) risks and threats assessment;
>
> (b) capabilities and capacity;
>
> (c) readiness and recruitment;
>
> (d) procurement; (e) national security and protection of sovereignty, including the Arctic and maritime approaches;
>
> (f) deterrence, combat and peace keeping responsibilities, including NORAD, NATO, and the United Nations; and
>
> That the committee report its findings to the House of Commons by Tuesday, October 18, 2016.

Mr. Chair, you and I have discussed this. The purpose of the motion isn't to distract from what we're doing right now, but to build on it. We would still do our report, as determined by committee, on the defence of North America focusing on aerial readiness. But as we're hearing from witnesses, we're also talking about things beyond just NORAD; we're talking about things like NATO and other infrastructure and security needs of the Canadian Armed Forces. This would give us the opportunity to take some of this information that we're gleaning right now to apply to a second report, which could probably take part of the.... Maybe we could do some travel in the summer, but more specifically, start off early in the fall to close the gap on some things like where we're sitting with NATO, our procurement issues, our navy, and readiness and capabilities.

I'm hoping that if the committee accepts this, we may even look at making a quick trip in the summer up to the Arctic, to Resolute and/or Alert, to look at what we're doing there, especially with the new training systems that we have at Resolute Bay. And then if we want, we could even travel to SHAPE at Brussels and look at the things from a NATO context, and definitely a trip to Halifax at the very least to look at the Royal Canadian Navy and the national shipbuilding program, and then still be able to feed into the defence review process.

I've talked to Minister Sajjan about this, and although I know they want to have cut off public consultations sometime at the end of July and that they'll be spending the entire last six months of the year drafting and writing the policy review, even if we're coming out in October with the report, it would still help feed and inform some of that drafting. As you know, the Senate committee has been asked to take on a specific role on peacekeeping and looking at UN missions, but I think there still needs to be some work done in a broader context of some of the other alliances that we have, specifically from a NATO perspective.

● (1040)

The Chair: I'll open it up for discussion.

Mr. Garrison, you have the floor.

Mr. Randall Garrison: One of my concerns with the announcement of the review is that there is no indication of what the process is after the collection of the public input. While I'm generally in support of Mr. Bezan's motion, it's not very clear how the minister and the government as a whole envisioned the role of this committee. In particular, what I'm still looking for is a commitment that at some point a draft of either the summary of those consultations or a draft of the strategy comes back to the House of Commons in some form. The best place for that I think is this committee.

I'm supportive of this in general, but we have a bit of confusion here about the role of this committee in the defence review, and a bit of a gap in the defence review from the department and ministerial side and the parliamentary side. I have that longer-term concern. I am supportive of this motion, but I think the committee needs to turn its mind to what's going to happen after we do all of these consultations and studies and what our role will to be in looking at that proposed defence policy, based on the review.

The Chair: Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, I think this is laudable in its ambition, but I think it's the ambition behind this that really makes its timing unworkable. It's far too big a chunk to complete and execute under the timelines that we're facing, especially when we're talking about the end of July as far as public consultations are concerned. It would be nice to run a parallel process; it would get some media attention, but it's not going to cross-feed into the government's defence review. With the aerial defence study that we have going right now, we have something that we can deliver value on. If the calculation is to provide some gap filling, it wouldn't be through a project that's this ambitious, but through smaller chunks that we could feed into the process and have some indication that the government might take them up. I don't think this is viable in terms of the timelines.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan, go ahead.

Mr. James Bezan: Some of this has already been done. I think by the time we are done with this, with all the other expert opinions that we've received, “risks and threats assessment” from the aerial component of the defence of North America will already be covered off. Because we are concentrating only on aerial assets, we have some major gaps in capabilities and capacity. That is why we need to talk to the navy. That is why we should have a presentation from a commander of the Canadian Army.

As for readiness and recruitment, the Canadian Armed Forces are facing huge issues right now . Reserve force strength, in particular, is dropping off. We need to hear from the experts on reserves, as well as recruitment of regular force.

Procurement is a dog's breakfast. It doesn't matter what political stripe you are; we know that we have to tackle this one, and we should have one or two hearings on that.

I think that paragraph (e) of the motion, “national security and protection of sovereignty”, will be covered off in the study that we are doing right now.

Then, when we talk about NATO and the UN, we can still inform the process. From my conversations with the minister, this would still be considered worthwhile. As you know, you'll have the expert panel that will be weighing through all the evidence. I think that in October they'll still be looking at what they received from the public consultations and the online submissions, and they'll still have time to look at this and build it into their overall review policy and the white paper as it's drafted. We are not expecting that to come out and be presented until January, the minister is saying, so there is time there. There is a whole quarter for that to be used and to fill in some of those gaps.

To speak to Randall's concerns, I agree that this is part of the information-gathering process, but again, the question is what comes next, and whether or not we, as a committee, in the fall, or even in the winter, will have a chance to look at what the expert panel has sifted through and make recommendations in the white paper draft. Then, ultimately, once the white paper is out there, we'll want to look at that again and have the minister come forward and present it in the new year.

I think this is doable and that it is our responsibility. This is policy development, and probably the biggest thing that's coming down in the next two years. We want to be engaged in it and exercise our responsibility, as parliamentarians, to help inform the government on what goes in that white paper.

● (1045)

The Chair: Mrs. Romanado, go ahead.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I think the motion is a little redundant. As you've mentioned, there are some elements that we are covering in the current study. As we have said and have agreed to as a committee, the initial focus is on aerial readiness, but we will be looking at the other elements of our Canadian Armed Forces in the fall. That, I think, will be addressed.

Now, in terms of the defence review, I think it is going to cover a lot of what's in your motion. My recommendation would not be to pursue an additional study, given the timeline constraints, and given the fact that we have a defence review being undertaken right now and there are opportunities for the general public, including parliamentarians, to provide their input, as well as members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I think it would be redundant. There might be an opportunity for us to invite the defence minister in the fall, once the preliminary report is prepared, perhaps to present it to us so that we could provide feedback. That would address that issue with respect to going through the committee process, but I think at this time I couldn't support a motion for an additional study, given the fact that these issues are going to be addressed in multiple channels.

Mr. James Bezan: Okay, I'll just finish off and let you call the question.

The Chair: Sure. Mr. Bezan, go ahead.

Mr. James Bezan: I see where the Liberals are. They want to keep their focus just on one issue, rather than take on the entire issue.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: That is not what I said.

Mr. James Bezan: I am not trying to take away from what we are working on right now. We are still going to make those deadlines. This is about building on and looking at the broader aspect of defence within Canada, and how that feeds into the white paper. I am trying to enhance it, as a second step, after we have finished the aerial focus of the defence of North America, and then, in the fall, in a matter of quick time we can pull together some extra information. That is what I am suggesting in this motion. It is not to detract from what we are doing right now.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: We are addressing it in the fall. That's what we said.

Mr. James Bezan: Yes, that's what I said. October 18 is when this will be reported back, so it covers it off.

The second thing I would say is that, if you look at what the United Kingdom did when they went through their white paper review, they did three very quick studies. All of that built into the development of the white paper they published a few months ago. They built upon each study. It started off narrowly focused, and then they started to build upon that. They started off with a very generalized, quick study, about six or seven meetings, and issued a report. Then they went into NATO, and then they went to a third stage. I am just saying that we can have that type of flexibility and capability because we have great analysts, and we can quickly pull together this data and issue a report that will still inform the white paper in plenty of time.

With that, I leave it to you to call the question.

The Chair: All right. As moved by Mr. Bezan, it is closed for discussion—unless somebody needs the motion repeated. Let's do this by a show of hands—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: May I interrupt you? I have a question. We are going to continue, are we not?

The Chair: Just to clarify, that was part of your initial—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Did you vote against that?

The Chair: No. Your suggestion was incorporated, so it's a study of the defence of North America with an initial focus on aerial readiness.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: But we're going to finish it?

The Chair: Yes.

● (1050)

Mr. James Bezan: That's by the end of June.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: It's not by the end of June.

The Chair: No. The aerial readiness was going to go to the end of June, and then we were going to shift to something else that we were going to decide on leading into that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: All right.

Mr. James Bezan: That's what I'm trying to feed into.

The Chair: Okay. The door is still open to move down that road.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What he's trying to do is just incorporate all this into the rest of the study.

The Chair: As you've added to our original statement, the door is still open to do this. As it's written, it says that the study will “focus on the following”. It doesn't say “may”, but is very direct language. It says those seven are great things and, from what I'm hearing over here, we'll vote on it, but the door is still open to go where you want to go.

Mr. James Bezan: This is the door right here, so let's go.

The Chair: All in favour of the motion as moved by Mr. Bezan. All opposed.

It looks as if it's defeated.

Mr. James Bezan: Could I have a recorded vote?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Philippe Grenier-Michaud): Yes, we could.

We need to proceed to the recorded vote. It won't take long. Please answer yea or nay when I call your name.

(Motion negatived: nays 5; yeas 4)

The Chair: Could I have a motion to adjourn?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I move that the committee adjourn.

The Chair: Thank you very much.