HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on National Defence

NDDN • NUMBER 058 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, September 14, 2017

Chair

Mr. Stephen Fuhr

Standing Committee on National Defence

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● (1000)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): We're a minute early, but everyone's ready to go, so we'll start.

I would like to welcome Mr. O'Toole and Ms. Vandenbeld to the committee today. Thank you for appearing.

I welcome my colleagues back from the summer in their ridings.

Welcome to the first of four panels on defence and foreign affairs; specifically, Stephen Burt, Mark Gwozdecky, and Sarah Taylor. We'll discuss the changing situation in North Korea and how that may or may not relate to Canada.

We have four panels. I'm going to be very disciplined on time, so whether you're asking a question or responding, please look at me once in awhile. If you see this, you've got 30 seconds to wrap up. In order for this thing not collapse into an accordion and rob people of their time at the end of the day, if I don't get your attention, I'll just politely say that we need to move on. Please forgive me in advance if I seem abrupt, but I have to keep us on time.

Having said all that, Foreign Affairs is first to speak, for up to five minutes.

Mr. Gwozdecky, you have the floor.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky (Assistant Deputy Minister, International Security and Political Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Honourable members, thank you for the invitation to speak to you today.

Canada, like many other countries, is gravely concerned by North Korea's reckless and provocative actions in pursuit of nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them. This concern is not hypothetical. North Korea has now demonstrated a capacity to deliver missiles intercontinentally, with a range that could reach most of North America. In this sense, the threat from North Korea is real, strategic, and global in nature.

The current crisis has been decades in the making. Since it first became known that North Korea was pursuing a nuclear weapons program in the early 1990s, the international community has continuously sought to persuade North Korea to permanently and verifiably denuclearize. These efforts have not yet succeeded.

[*Translation*]

Although it is difficult to be certain of the reasoning behind the actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we feel that North Korea's behaviour is motivated by a single priority: the survival of the regime.

North Korea has developed and refined a brutal system of internal repression that has systematically deprived its people of fundamental human rights for more than 70 years, for the sole purpose of protecting the regime from internal threats.

The human rights situation in North Korea is absolutely appalling. The regime sees external threats and feels vulnerable. It knows it cannot match the technological and military superiority of South Korea and the United States. It believes that building the capacity to strike North America with nuclear weapons safeguards its own security.

On the peninsula, North Korea and South Korea are technically still in a state of war, and their fragile truce is being strained because of North Korea's plans to equip itself with nuclear weapons and to perfect the delivery systems.

[*English*]

Beyond sanctions and sustained diplomacy, there are no easy or obvious policy alternatives. North Korea's actions represent a grave threat to regional security and a risk to our friends and allies South Korea and Japan as a result of North Korean missile tests, many of which are landing within their exclusive economic zones and at least one test that overflew Japan on August 29. North Korea has abducted citizens of other countries, conducted assassinations abroad, and repeatedly threatened its neighbours with the use of conventional and nuclear weapons.

As disturbing as the thought of a nuclear-armed North Korea is, the citizens of the Republic of Korea have lived under a significant conventional threat from North Korea since World War II. Thousands could die in a matter of minutes should military conflict erupt. Currently the risk is significant that misinterpretation of intent or miscalculation could lead to an unintended escalation, including military conflict. Canada has therefore strongly called for a de-escalation of tensions.

The profound consequences of conflict also underlie Canada's position that the North Korean nuclear issue must be resolved peacefully through dialogue and diplomacy. Minister Freeland has had direct, sustained, and systematic contact with foreign ministers of the United States, China, and South Korea, and in August with the North Korean foreign minister to press our point that this issue needs to be resolved peacefully and diplomatically.

The six-party talks, led by China, with Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia, and the United States, were conceived in 2003 to find a peaceful resolution to security concerns resulting from North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Six rounds of those talks resulted in little progress, and in 2009 North Korea announced it would no longer participate in those talks.

North Korea is currently the most significant threat to global nuclear non-proliferation and the regime that tries to prevent it. It is the only country to have conducted nuclear tests in the 21st century, having conducted six tests to date, including its most recent one on September 3. Its nuclear tests contravene its international legal obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, but they also undermine the long-standing norm against nuclear testing established by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. With the sole exception of North Korea, the rest of the world maintains a voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing.

In 2009 inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency were forced to leave North Korea, and since then have had no direct access to North Korea. They must rely upon things like satellite imagery to monitor the nuclear program there. We therefore cannot say conclusively how much explosive fissile material North Korea has produced or how many nuclear devices it may possess.

North Korea is willing to proliferate dangerous technologies, as demonstrated through its export of ballistic missiles and materials to Iran and Syria and by its involvement in Syria's construction of a covert nuclear reactor. That reactor was destroyed in 2007.

● (1005)

[*Translation*]

Through increased diplomatic and economic pressures, North Korea must be persuaded to change its current and dangerous course.

Canada played and continues to play a role in striving to change Pyongyang's agenda. In 2010, Canada adopted a controlled engagement policy regarding North Korea in order to draw the regime's attention to the fact that its behaviour has consequences for its bilateral relations. The policy limits official bilateral relations to the following issues: regional security concerns; the humanitarian situation and human rights; inter-Korean relations; and, finally, consular matters.

North Korea is increasingly isolated on the international stage. Even the countries that have historically maintained a minimum level of relations with North Korea are breaking or weakening those ties. Canada has also demonstrated leadership by exerting economic pressure on North Korea.

Canada's long-standing unilateral sanctions under the Special Economic Measures Act are among the strictest in the world and include, among others, a ban on all exports and imports, as well as a ban on the delivery of financial services to North Korea and its people.

[*English*]

The Security Council has adopted nine separate resolutions imposing sanctions on North Korea. Despite this, we believe the international community must exert greater pressure and coordinated bilateral and multilateral engagement with Pyongyang so it realizes that the costs of pursuing nuclear weapons outweigh any perceived benefit. To change course from its current dangerous path, we must convince Pyongyang that it can achieve its goals through peaceful diplomatic means.

Canada has called on the Security Council to take further action to constrain North Korea's proliferation efforts, and we insist that all states fully implement those sanctions. The grave and global nature of the threat posed by North Korea to its neighbours, and indeed to international peace and security, merits the significant and continuing efforts of the international community to address this problem.

Thank you very much for your time and attention. After my colleague finishes speaking, I'll be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you for your testimony.

Mr. Burt, are you five minutes, 10 minutes...? We're already off to an overrun.

Mr. Stephen Burt (Assistant Chief of Defence Intelligence, Canadian Forces Intelligence Command, Department of National Defence): It should be five.

The Chair: Thank you. You have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stephen Burt: Mr. Chair, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me this morning.

I am very pleased to appear before you today and share our views on North Korea and on the threat it represents for North America, to the extent that I am authorized to do so in an unclassified environment.

[*English*]

When assessing the threat to Canada posed by North Korea's nuclear and conventional weapons, we look at the country's intent and its capabilities. Tracking or predicting changes in capabilities is sometimes challenging, but is usually possible within a reasonable margin of error. Gauging current and evolving intent is more complicated, and predicting future intent and staking one's security on that prediction is highly risky.

When a state like North Korea acquires a capability, it remains in its arsenal regardless of whatever changes may happen in its political calculus and intent, and while it is sometimes difficult to forecast intentions, North Korea has a long-stated desire to be able to target North America with nuclear weapons. With this in mind, I would like to briefly highlight for you today both the likely motivations behind North Korea's weapons program and the state of its current technical capability.

● (1010)

[*Translation*]

According to defence intelligence officials, North Korea believes that the progress of its nuclear and ballistic technologies are essential to ensuring the survival of its current regime in the long term.

Since Kim Jong-un came to power in 2011, we have seen a significant increase in the number of ballistic and nuclear tests. The regime has clearly communicated its aspirations. During a plenary meeting of the Workers' Party of Korea in 2013, Kim Jong-un outlined those aspirations by demanding the simultaneous pursuit of the country's economic development and its nuclear program. Those two objectives focus on strengthening the state and on its long-term survival.

The North Korean regime feels that it is the only legitimate government on the Korean peninsula and wants to be recognized as such by the entire world.

[*English*]

North Korea's propaganda also highlights a desire to be seen and treated as an equal to the United States, and Pyongyang appears to believe that this will be achieved only if it is recognized as a nuclear power. If we take its statements at face value, there are signs that the government in Pyongyang may be willing to talk, so long as there are no preconditions, including international demands that it give up its nuclear program. Pyongyang maintains that its nuclear weapons are the most dependable and realistic guarantee for peace on the Korean peninsula.

To summarize, the development of an effective nuclear deterrent has been a key long-term goal for North Korea for some time. It sees these weapons as crucial to its survival, and it wants to be recognized as a nuclear power.

I'll move on to North Korea's capabilities in terms of weapons of mass destruction. As I have already noted, Pyongyang has expressly indicated that it wants to be able to target North America with nuclear-armed missiles. To that end, North Korea has now performed six underground nuclear device tests. The first was in 2006, and the last was on September 3, 2017.

A previous North Korean claim that its nuclear device test of January 2016 was a successful thermonuclear weapon, or hydrogen bomb, remains unsubstantiated. However, the high yield of the 2017 test is consistent with either a boosted fission device or a two-stage thermonuclear one. North Korea claims that this test involved a miniaturized thermonuclear weapon designed to be mounted on an intercontinental ballistic missile, which can deliver a high-altitude electromagnetic pulse in a strategic attack. These claims are credible but unverified.

North Korea's nuclear device testing history has demonstrated real advancements in the development of nuclear weapons. Its possible detonation of a thermonuclear device suggests that it will likely be able to produce an arsenal of high-yield nuclear warheads without the need to produce additional weapons-grade fissile material. Nevertheless, defence intelligence judges that North Korea will continue to increase its stockpile of weapons-grade fissile material.

It is difficult to determine accurately how many nuclear warheads North Korea may possess or may be capable of producing. Our low-confidence estimate is that it probably possesses a number of nuclear devices capable of being delivered by shorter-range missiles, and that it aspires to having a deliverable intercontinental nuclear capability. We judge that it probably has produced enough fissile material for at least 30 devices, and all signs indicate that North Korea will continue its nuclear testing program and efforts to enhance its nuclear capability.

I should also note that North Korea is widely believed to have offensive chemical and biological weapons programs. While it is unlikely that North Korea has the capability to target North America with chemical or biological agents, understanding all the weapons of mass destruction capabilities North Korea may pose is crucial.

Finally, separate from its nuclear program, North Korea has aggressively pursued its development of ballistic missiles of various ranges, including intercontinental ballistic missiles, or ICBMs. In July of this year, it twice tested the Hwasong-14 ICBM, and Pyongyang has now demonstrated rocket booster capacity with a range that could reach Canada and the majority of the United States.

Nevertheless, some gaps in our knowledge remain. For one, North Korea has not demonstrated credible re-entry vehicle performance at intercontinental operational ranges. However, Pyongyang has now clearly demonstrated a real capability to reach North America. Additionally, North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons and delivery systems and its threat to target nuclear ICBMs at potential adversaries anywhere in the world directly undermine global non-proliferation norms and threaten Canada's key regional partners in Asia.

While we do not currently have proof of a fully functional nuclear ICBM, given the progress they have made so far, we believe it's only a matter of time before North Korea develops a reliable nuclear-armed ballistic missile.

● (1015)

[*Translation*]

Thank you.

I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

I'll yield the floor to Mr. Mark Gerretsen.

You have up to seven minutes.

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

Thank you to our panel for being here this morning.

Perhaps I'll start with you, Mr. Burt, as you were the last to speak. You talked a lot about the capabilities of North Korea and of it being only a matter of time before those capabilities could become what they are striving to achieve, but I didn't hear much talk about what you thought the actual threat was to Canada specifically. Do you feel that North Korea is a threat to Canada? Put a different way, are there circumstances in which North Korea would want to attack Canada?

Mr. Stephen Burt: As I said at the beginning, for us, threat is a combination of intent and capabilities. This is my third time with the committee where I've walked through this paradigm, and I've sensed a bit of frustration with it previously.

The reality is that in the intelligence business, capabilities are a lot easier to deal with than intent, because they are more concrete. North Korea's statements have talked about their desire to have the capability—they have had very colourful rhetoric on a number of occasions—but they have not talked about what they would intend to do with that capability. I suspect their goal has been focused on what it is they hope to achieve capability-wise.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: But they have indicated that they regard the U.S. as a potential target, correct? There is a lot of rhetoric around that, is there not?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Yes, there is, but there has been no direct threat to Canada. In fact, on the contrary, in recent contacts with the North Korean government, including in August when our national security adviser was in Pyongyang, the indications were that they perceived Canada as a peaceful and indeed a friendly country. So on the contrary, we don't sense a direct threat; we sense that, for the time being at least, they perceive us as not an enemy and therefore potentially a friend.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That is based on what they're saying.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Yes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay.

Mr. Gwozdecky, you referred to talks that started in 2003 and mentioned how effective those were. You talked about Canada and the importance of having dialogue and diplomacy. I think at one point you even said, although it may have been in the translation, that Canada must use diplomatic pressures.

Can you give some indication as to how effective those diplomatic pressures have been?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: In terms of whether we have reached our ultimate destination, we have not yet succeeded there. Diplomacy requires a great deal of patience.

I would just highlight, as an example, that the efforts that resulted in the nuclear agreement with Iran took more than a decade of painstaking diplomatic negotiation to try to change the threat perception that Iran from the west and make it understand that it could achieve its goals through a diplomatic solution and not through armament.

I think we're engaged in a similar process with the DPRK. We have not yet seen the players return to the negotiating table. We hope that comes sometime soon.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Other than sanctions, then, no other diplomatic pressures have worked or have produced results that are tangible in terms of being productive?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I think history is going to tell us whether we're having some effect. It's pretty hard to discern where we're at right now. I think we're in a pre-negotiating phase where both sides are trying to improve their leverage by the time they reach the negotiating table. But I think North Korea is not immune to the fact that those in the international community, including major western powers, are consistently advocating that it abandon its aggressive posture and engage in a diplomatic solution. One day we hope to see the results from that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: What do you see Canada's role being in terms of that diplomacy? Is there an opportunity for Canada to bring perhaps the U.S. and China closer together, to genuinely play a diplomatic role in order to help alleviate or to improve the situation?

● (1020)

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I think Minister Freeland feels that Canada has a role because we are a trusted partner to many of the principal players, whether South Korea, the United States, or Japan, and we have, I believe, credibility in the eyes of the others, such as China. Recently our contacts with North Korea, including her discussion with her North Korean counterpart, suggest that we are seen as a serious player, that we don't have a particular agenda, and that we are listened to.

I think also we are seen, in particular Minister Freeland, as someone who has the ear of the United States, and therefore is in a role or in a position to potentially have an influence not only in Washington but elsewhere.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'll now yield the floor to Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Thank you.

It's good to join my colleagues. We're getting a head start on the parliamentary session.

Thank you to our witnesses who are here with us today.

Your first sentence, Mr. Gwozdecky, was startling, because it contradicted what Mr. Burt said last year at committee, which was that there was no state actor with the capability or intent to pose a threat to Canada. Your first sentence was that North Korea clearly has that capability. Leaving intent aside, the capability for an ICBM strike on North America is a clear risk.

Mr. Stephen Burt: I think I can probably take that one.

You're absolutely correct that my testimony last year was different from this year's. The explanation for this is that a number of things have occurred over that intervening time in terms of ballistic and nuclear weapons capability—

Hon. Erin O'Toole: So when the threat environment changes, perhaps Canada's stance to that threat should change as well. Would that be fair to say?

Mr. Stephen Burt: Look, the role of defence intelligence is to tell people what's going on in the world with as much detail and specificity as I can. What is done with it is up to others.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Certainly, and that's up to this committee and to Parliament, but I do find that it recognizes the increased tempo of North Korean operations with respect to its nuclear program and with respect to its missile development. Would that be fair to say, that in the last year it's been—

Mr. Stephen Burt: As I said in my statement, there has been a notable increase in testing of both, under the current North Korean regime, and in the last year and a half to two years in particular.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: When that information was digested, and you said there's no sense that there's a threat.... I think “sense” was the term you used. You know, 516 Canadians died in the Korean War, and that war is still a ceasefire, right? There has been no resolution to that conflict.

Does that play a part in whether or not Canada as a participant in that conflict would be a potential target?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: As I said, we've had no indication that North Korea perceives Canada as an enemy and no evidence that it is taking measures to target Canada.

You mentioned Canada's role in the United Nations Command group of countries that took action in the Korean War. We are still a significant participant in the UN Command. We have six armed force personnel permanently deployed there. We are I think the third-largest country to participate in the exercises annually, with the United States, Korea, and others, to ensure that we have a vigilant posture with regard to the peninsula.

It's a part of the world that we take very seriously and that we've committed our people and our resources to, but as I say, we have not yet seen any direct threat from North Korea.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: If there's an ICBM threat to the United States and not to Canada, per se, the partial polar route of that ICBM and a mistake in the targeting systems or trajectory could mean that parts of Canada would be exposed, whether or not we are the target. Would that be fair to say?

Mr. Stephen Burt: I think in that kind of hypothetical scenario you can spin it in a number of different directions. I would go back to the fact that the regime in North Korea is primarily motivated by its desire to survive itself and sustain its rule. While their rhetoric is colourful and their behaviour occasionally strikes us as peculiar, they're no fools. They understand the consequences of that kind of an action.

● (1025)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: My final time will be spent on the delegation that was sent in early August that was alluded to. Daniel Jean, the PM's special envoy, and the delegation of six attracted much attention with respect to the case of Pastor Lim, but the reports of that delegation's work were that other issues of regional concern were discussed.

Could you outline what Canada's position was to North Korea with respect to their nuclear program and to their missile development at those meetings in August?

Ms. Sarah Taylor (Director General, North Asia and Oceania, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Indeed the national security adviser was in Pyongyang briefly in August. The primary focus of the mission, from our perspective, was to secure the release of Pastor Lim, which they were successful in doing, so we were very pleased with that outcome.

He did have discussions with representatives of the North Korean foreign ministry, and in the course of those raised the concerns we have regarding North Korean proliferation and the grave threat it poses to peace and security in the region. There was a discussion around those issues.

I don't have the full transcript of the discussion, but from memory the response of the North Koreans was what we've heard many times before.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Is there a transcript of that discussion that we would be able to obtain? My concern is that shortly after the early August meetings with the Canadian delegation, the firing into Japanese exclusive economic zones took place. Certainly I take it that there were no undertakings made by the North Korean regime to cease. They seemed to actually step up their aggressive targeting, post the Canadian delegation.

Ms. Sarah Taylor: No, there were no undertakings made by the North Koreans. Again, the primary focus of the discussion was around Pastor Lim's case. At any opportunity we have, if we have interaction with the North Koreans, we raise our concerns both on the proliferation-disarmament side and on the human rights side.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Would it be possible to obtain the transcript from those meetings for the committee's review, or is that confidential?

Ms. Sarah Taylor: I believe it's confidential, but I can check and see.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, could the committee request it, and if the answer is no, at least we've asked?

The Chair: We'll request the documents and see where we get with that.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Thank you.

The Chair: I'll give the floor now to Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to start by saying that the NDP supported holding these hearings, because we think this is an important issue on which there's an opportunity for Canada to play a positive role.

I'll start by following up on what Mr. Burt said, because there's a tendency in the rhetoric that's emerged in the media and from some of the players to treat North Korea as absolutely irrational and suicidal. The remarks you just made are in line, I think, with what we in the NDP have felt, which is that North Korea tends to pursue traditional nuclear deterrence policies, and it understands how this has worked in the past and that its nuclear capacity is a way of protecting its regime and protecting its survival. I wonder if you could just say a bit more about that, because I think it's dangerous when we assume the players are irrational if they're not behaving irrationally.

Mr. Stephen Burt: I would say it's absolutely clear that the North Koreans are motivated by regime survival and that their behaviour is consistent with that aim.

With regard to the issue of behaving in line with traditional deterrence policy, I think it's important to remember that the deterrence policy we are familiar with from the Cold War era was developed over a long period of time and had a fair number of very tense moments. The risks of miscalculation on both sides are high in those kinds of situations, and the friction, particularly within the region between North Korea and its neighbours, is such that, as we've seen in the not-too-distant past, local conventional conflicts can spark up very easily. If there was a perception that the regime's survival was threatened in one of those situations, that could have very serious consequences.

I would be cautious about throwing around the phrase “deterrence policy” in the historic sense we have vis-à-vis the Americans and the Russians.

● (1030)

Mr. Randall Garrison: To be clear, there's no way that I was implying that I would endorse such a policy. In fact, the NDP has stood against the existence of nuclear weapons, and we were quite disappointed that Canada wasn't at the talks in New York and hasn't taken part in the attempts to ban nuclear weapons.

My emphasis really is on figuring out a way to deal with North Korea. I want to follow that up, since what both of you really said is that there's not a perception of Canada as a direct threat. Because we had a delegation in North Korea in August, is there any opportunity for Canada to play a role in pushing for the resumption of talks on an unconditional basis? It seems that North Korea has at least rhetorically said it would consider talks if there were no preconditions.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: We're absolutely supportive of diplomacy, but I think we have to be mindful of the lessons of the past and the positions of our friends and allies. Currently, the United States is not yet prepared to sit down on an unconditional basis. The North Koreans, on the other hand, have insisted that they will sit down only if there are no conditions.

I think it's important that we support our allies and partners to position those talks for success when they take place. That means the North Korean regime has to make certain undertakings that would give us some confidence that it is prepared to make modifications and begin to adhere to international rules and norms around non-proliferation, around Security Council adherence, around a number of human rights, etc. I'm not saying all of those things have to be preconditions, but right now it's deemed by our friends and partners that the conditions aren't yet ripe for any kind of successful resumption.

Mr. Randall Garrison: If we look back at the parallel with Iran, though, weren't the talks with Iran undertaken without any preconditions, and then eventually worked their way to a successful conclusion?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: You're forcing me to go back a long time in the memory banks, and I can't say for sure that you're correct or not. I do know that there was a lengthy period, several years in fact, of what we would call pre-negotiation before they actually sat down. A good deal of diplomatic effort went into preparing the ground for those talks before they actually took place.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Would you say there's a role for Canada in, if you like, the pre-talks, in preparing the pre-talks, in trying to work with the United States to see what progress we could make toward talks? I don't see any way out of this, other than disaster, unless there's some dialogue.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: I think Canada is playing a role. I think Minister Freeland has been very active and energetic in engaging her counterparts in all the principal countries in pushing for diplomatic solutions here and making it clear that Canada is available to offer whatever kind of assistance might be helpful in restarting those discussions and setting them up for success.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Thank you, folks, for being here. I appreciate your input.

Mr. Gwozdecky, you mentioned the tools to de-escalate tensions: sanctions, diplomacy, and dialogue. I'm interested in your thoughts on sanctions and how they might be further provoking North Korea to continue this proliferation of nuclear and ballistic missiles. Is this perceived provocation from the United States going to destabilize the region even further?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: It's very difficult to determine what impact sanctions may be having on the thinking in Pyongyang. The role that sanctions plays—it is accepted, at least by those who are supportive of sanctions—is to raise the stakes, raise the costs, to a regime like Pyongyang that is flouting international norms and rules, and make it understand that perhaps it's too costly to pursue its current course of action. Then the role of diplomacy is to communicate to that kind of country that it can achieve its goals through diplomatic means, not through armaments.

The short answer to your question is that it's very difficult to ascertain how much impact sanctions are having in terms of the thinking in Pyongyang, but certainly we do know it has raised the stakes. It has hurt them and their ability to acquire certain materials. The rest is up to diplomats to try to convince them to alter their threat perceptions.

● (1035)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. You suggest that the sanctions are working, but I believe that China is 90% of their economic trade. If we're talking about increased sanctions, where are we going to get any further move or further push from North Korea if it's just that 10% remainder? I know that sanctions are more than just trade, but I find it interesting that 90% of North Korea's economic trade is with China.

There has been talk about trying to convince China to stop all trade and aid to North Korea. I'm interested also in what impact that would have on their ability to build, maintain, and test weapons, but also how that might destabilize the region, or, again, add that last straw, that major provocation for them to react or respond.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Let me make one comment, and then I'll ask my colleague to add to it.

We are not naive about the role that sanctions might play. It is but a single tool in a tool box that we have to use. Sanctions are less impactful, perhaps, in a place like North Korea because their external trade is so minimal. In fact, I think something like only 10% of their economy is trade-dependent. It is a very self-sufficient economy. They can produce a lot of things domestically. What we're trying to do is ensure that they can't procure internationally the kinds of materials and technologies that are relevant to their weapons programs. There we still have work to do. The fact is that some countries are not implementing the sanctions as fully as they could, and we're working with those countries to plug those gaps.

Perhaps Sarah has something further to add.

Ms. Sarah Taylor: Just very briefly on the China front, as far as we can tell, roughly 90% of North Korean trade runs through China. We were very pleased to see that the Chinese government supported the latest UN Security Council resolution, which is significantly upping the sanctions that are imposed, including in very key areas like oil.

As Mark said, it's an economy that's quite self-sufficient. Only about 10% to 15% is dependent on foreign trade. Another big source of income for them is from overseas labour, from a lot of North Koreans working abroad in a number of places and their salaries being remitted. That's another area we're looking at very closely, along with other partners, in a UN context. We have been joining with other partners, including the U.S., to both encourage and support those countries that aren't doing so well on implementing the sanctions to do so, helping them build capacity so that they can deal with issues like this.

That most recent UN Security Council resolution, among others things, turned the tap off on future flows from North Korean workers abroad.

Mr. Darren Fisher: You said that sanctions were just one tool, but twice this summer there was an increase in sanctions to North Korea. It's good to hear that they're monitoring countries. Are there penalties? What is the response when a country is not properly administering the sanctions that have been endorsed?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Every country is obliged to fully comply with Security Council resolutions in the imposition of sanctions. In many cases, some countries simply don't have the capacity to do what can be a very complex and difficult thing. Countries like Canada and others offer support to those countries, so that they can fulfill their obligations. In some cases, there are countries that may not wish to. We're bringing diplomatic pressure on those who have the means to but may not be fully using those means.

You know, with 200 countries in the world, there's a lot of work that can continue to be done to make sure that the compliance regime is solid.

● (1040)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Interesting.

Is that my time?

The Chair: You have about 40 seconds for a question and response, so we'll call that your time.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay.

The Chair: We'll go to five-minute questions. We have about 20 minutes left with this panel, just as an update.

Mr. Robillard, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

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

Madam, gentlemen, welcome to the Standing Committee on National Defence. Thank you for your testimony.

First of all, could you tell us more about the expected results of the recent sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council this week?

Furthermore, what can you tell us about the strategy behind those sanctions? Can you tell us how far they might go if other sanctions had to be imposed?

Please answer in French.

Ms. Sarah Taylor: As Mr. Gwozdecky indicated earlier, of course our hope is that, strategically speaking, the effect will be to push the North Korean government to revisit its approach.

We know it's a difficult task, but it is still one way to clearly explain the world's disapproval of its approach. There is also an economic effect, more specifically in terms of the sanctions that have just been imposed, because those sanctions affect its trade with China, especially the trade of petroleum products. So that's quite a strong point of pressure.

Our hope is that the North Korean regime will begin to understand that even that privileged relationship, which is vital from a foreign trade perspective, is now under pressure. China has not agreed to close the pipe completely, but it is still a very strong message, I think, because, right now, North Korea depends almost entirely on China for petroleum products. The same goes for foreign workers.

Roughly speaking, we estimate that the recent sanctions will cut almost one-third of North Korea's trade revenue. How far should this go? It is a difficult and delicate question, and the answer depends a great deal on China. China has already shared its concerns about a potential economic crisis and a collapse of the regime if we press too hard. So there would be a lot of humanitarian implications not only for North Korea, but also for China, of course.

That's one of China's concerns. It's certainly an issue that a number of our allies, particularly the Americans, often have to address when it comes to China. We also do so. We have discussed this issue at very high levels with China. We will continue to do so.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you.

[*English*]

I will share my time with my colleague.

The Chair: Ms. Alleslev, you have about a minute and a half.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Many Canadians, and the world of course, are watching with bated breath, and they don't have the luxury of all of the detailed information that you have. From the outside looking in, they might see increasing of sanctions at the same time as the increasing of testing and rhetoric. Could you help us as Canadians by telling us what we should be looking for that would indicate that the situation is improving through diplomatic channels rather than perhaps becoming more strained? What should the broad public be looking at to know that things and the diplomatic process are having an impact?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: It's difficult to predict, but one thing that you might watch for is a pause in the kind of missile and nuclear tests that we've seen. That might suggest that the regime feels that it's prepared to sit down at the table, having done the necessary work to test its systems.

There's good and bad news there. The bad news is that potentially they're only ready to sit down and talk once they feel they've perfected their intercontinental ballistic missile systems. But I think a pause in those kinds of tests would be a big indicator.

● (1045)

The Chair: Mrs. Gallant, you have five minutes.

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

Thank you to our witnesses. We had anticipated and asked that the Minister of National Defence and the chief of defence staff attend. The fact that they're not coming and you are makes us even more appreciative of your answering our questions.

After the last round of sanctions, as you mentioned, North Korea detonated an underground bomb with the impact of a 6.3 earthquake. Previously, before the Senate the U.S. congressional EMP commission warned that North Korea does have the operational capability and contingency plans to make a nuclear EMP attack against North America. They've been exercising...and terrorists could potentially execute a nuclear EMP.

Now, your iconic EMP attack detonates a warhead 300 to 400 kilometres high over the centre of the U.S.—assuming they're the target—generating an EMP field over all 48 contiguous United States and most of Canada. As I mentioned, North Korea has practised this. North Korea also has orbited satellites on the south polar trajectories that evade U.S. early warning radars and national missile defences. If these satellites were nuclear warheads, they would place an EMP field over most of North America.

Given that your testimony today has changed, with the increased capabilities of North Korea, from the last time you appeared here, I want to know whether you feel that Canada is ready and prepared to safeguard against an EMP attack.

Mr. Stephen Burt: Again, my role in this is to describe the things that other countries may do and to make sure that Canadian decision-makers have the best possible information at their fingertips to have an advantage in information as they make decisions.

With regard to the scenario you've painted, I would go back to my earlier commentary, which is to say that all manner of things are possible, but the North Koreans know full well that the consequences of a significant event like that would be very, very hard on them. We are looking for further testing by the North Koreans to prove their capability. That could involve a number of different actions that would either prove the ability of the warhead to survive re-entry conditions, which they have not yet demonstrated. It could involve some other kind of demonstration of the ability to match up a warhead to a missile. But the kind of thing you're projecting they're hypothesizing on would in itself be an attack, and it would bring very serious consequences.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Apparently they have also practised a nuclear EMP attack using a short-range missile launched off a freighter. Such an attack could be conducted anonymously to escape U.S. retaliation. Furthermore, to deter the United States with the hope of avoiding the full-scale U.S. response that you described, a state may undertake a demonstration attack on Canada.

Is Canada prepared to defend its citizens and take care of any aftermath should it happen inadvertently, if not on purpose?

Mr. Stephen Burt: The next panel may be better positioned to talk about what preparations Canada has in place. I am not in any way positioned to discuss that.

Again, I'm not aware of the specific test you're talking about with regard to a barge and an EMP. I would have to look into that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What would you anticipate in terms of retaliation after the most recent round of sanctions that have been placed on North Korea?

● (1050)

Mr. Stephen Burt: Retaliation by whom?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The last time a round of sanctions was put on North Korea, they retaliated with the underground detonation registering 6.3. Kim Jong-un stated specifically that it was a reaction to the sanctions. Now we have another round recently this week—

Mr. Stephen Burt: I think it would be a mistake to characterize the testing and development they're doing as reaction. They do take advantage of the symbolic value, but we see their work being driven by engineering considerations, frankly.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gallant.

Ms. Vandenbeld, you have the floor.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I think Canadians are rightly very concerned about this issue at the moment. I think your testimony has been very helpful.

Mr. Gwozdecky, you indicated that North Korea perceives Canada as a peaceful country. I think you even used the word “friendly”. Given that Mr. Burt said that our minister is seen as having the ear of the United States and that we're not perceived as having a particular agenda, is this something we can use to advantage in the sense of using multilateral discussions, multilateral talks, to be able to prepare the ground in the pre-negotiation phase first of all, as you discussed, but also to start the six-party talks again and maybe even go beyond that and engage a wider Asia-Pacific community in that?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: First of all, let me say that the kind and courteous words you hear across a diplomatic table are not always 100% the case. We're not naive in terms of hearing some words from North Koreans and assuming that they absolutely consider us to be peaceful and friendly, but they are some of the preliminary indications. We have to prepare for other considerations as well.

I think we feel we can play a role. I think the minister feels we are a serious player and we're listened to by all the key players, and we have been pushing to create the conditions where those talks could start. What specific role Canada might play would be up to the principal parties. In historic terms, the six-party talks have been the mechanism that brings together the six key parties. We don't presume that Canada would be among those, but as I indicated, the minister has made it very clear that we're prepared to support in any way we can. If the parties feel that having a Canadian voice at a table, or having Canada express something to another player...we're more than ready to do that.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: In other parts of the world, particularly if you look at the Balkans and the Caucasus, Canada through OSCE, through multilateral organizations, has been able to participate, and that in many ways has been successful in containing very severe conflicts. Is that perhaps something we could look at in the Asia-Pacific region, that kind of dialogue, that kind of discussion, looking at maybe a model of OSCE?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Indeed the OSCE, which is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, is one of the network of multilateral institutions that are important in promoting European security and stability. Those are absent in the Asia context. The absence of those kinds of security infrastructures in the Asia region has been a concern for many, including Canada, for some time. We have spoken, but right now, I think my colleague would agree, it's not yet something that the Asian countries themselves are ready to embrace.

Is that correct?

Ms. Sarah Taylor: I would just add that there is one venue that brings together North Korea and a lot of other regional players, which is the ASEAN Regional Forum. That was the setting in which Minister Freeland was able to engage recently with the North Korean foreign minister. But that is not exclusively or primarily focused on the northeast Asia region.

The South Korean president has recently put forward some proposals for enhanced trilateral cooperation: Japan, China, South Korea. That exists, but to broaden that and focus it more on regional security, he's also spoken beyond that about some sort of broader regional entity, and I think if that comes into play there might be a role for Canada there. Certainly we work very closely with South Korea as a very close ally and one that's very directly concerned with it.

● (1055)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: So for Canada as a Pacific country, this might be an area where we could pursue some diplomatic options in terms of trying to promote that kind of idea.

Ms. Sarah Taylor: Yes.

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Most certainly, we are committed to the kind of confidence-building measures that the OSCE provides in Europe. We would think that those would be very welcome in an Asian context as well.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan, you have the last question for this panel.

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

I want to thank our witnesses for being here.

Mr. Gwozdecky, you said that North Korea now sees Canada as peaceful and friendly despite the battle of Kapyong and our involvement in the Korean peninsula war. Minister Freeland said just this summer that when Canadians' allies, including the United States, are threatened, we are there.

If you can just square the circle for me, how can North Korea see us as peaceful and friendly when we're standing with our allies?

Mr. Mark Gwozdecky: Well, I can't speak for the view in Pyongyang. I can only tell you that in the discussions that have taken place—they haven't been plentiful discussions, but there have been some with the North Korean regime—they tell us that they don't see us as a threat. That's what we are basing those comments on. Now, it's not inconsistent at the same time for the minister to say that we have allies, and we are prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies.

Ms. Sarah Taylor: If I can add to that very briefly, while we're obviously happy that we're not seen by the North Koreans as an enemy or a threat, I think that stems in part from their very laser-like focus on the U.S. and their relationship with the U.S. In fact, one of the messages we have been trying to put across is that it's not just the Americans who don't like what they're doing and who are pushing for sanctions; it is the international community as a whole. We do think that a very important message to put to them is to continue to say that we and others strongly disapprove of what they are doing, but certainly I would attest that they have told us they see us a friendly country, including in direct discussions I've had with North Korean counterparts.

Mr. James Bezan: If you're trying to ramp up diplomatic relations, I hope we're not talking about reopening an embassy in Pyongyang.

Ms. Sarah Taylor: No, absolutely not.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

The Chair: I would like to thank our guests, Stephen Burt, Mark Gwozdecky, and Sarah Taylor, for appearing in front of committee today.

I will suspend while we bring in our next panel.

● (1055)

(Pause)

● (1100)

The Chair: Could I ask everyone to take their seats, please, so we can get started with our second panel?

Before we get started, many of you may have seen a news alert on your phones that our colleague Arnold Chan passed away today. I would like to acknowledge that and obviously send our condolences from this committee to his family.

I'd like to welcome our guests to committee: Lieutenant-General Pierre St-Amand, Major-General Al Meinzinger, and Major-General William Seymour.

Thank you for coming today. I appreciate your time. I was told that two of you will speaking and that five minutes is about what you need. If you could keep it to that, I would appreciate it. If you see me hold up a paper in the question and answer period, that's the signal that you have 30 seconds to sum up. I have to be very disciplined with the time in order for us to move on to our third panel after yours.

Lieutenant-General Pierre St-Amand, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

LGen Pierre St-Amand (Deputy Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), Department of National Defence): Mr. Chair, members of the committee, let me first thank you for giving me the opportunity to join you to discuss NORAD in the context of the developments in North Korea's intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capabilities and the readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I would also like to convey greetings from the commander of NORAD, General Lori Robinson.

Defending Canada and North America is the Canadian Armed Forces' most important mission. That is why men and women in uniform work side by side on a daily basis at NORAD, but also around the world, to protect our continent.

The importance of this defence relationship for Canada was reiterated in the new defence policy published a few months ago. The recent demonstrations of North Korea's growing capabilities in ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons are an increasingly significant concern for North American defence, a concern that has grown significantly and much more rapidly and extensively than the experts had foreseen.

The years 2016 and 2017 have been North Korea's most active years in the development of its nuclear weapons and missiles program. The country is looking for nuclear weapons and ballistic missile capabilities that can reach North America. In his five years as a supreme leader, Kim Jong-un has conducted almost three times as many ballistic missile tests as his father and grandfather in their combined reigns of 63 years in power.

Overall, when NORAD assesses the evolving ICBM threat posed by North Korea, it considers mainly two factors: capability and intent.

In terms of capability, North Korea has demonstrated, through consecutive ICBM testing, its ability to reach North America and its determination to address the remaining operational challenge.

As for the intent, North Korea was explicit about its will to use its weapons against the United States. However, this expressed will must be understood, at least in part, in the context of its overall strategic objectives to develop its own force—

● (1105)

[*English*]

The Chair: Lieutenant-General St-Amand, could you slow down a bit? Our interpreters are having a hard time keeping up. They don't have a paper copy, and they are trying to keep up with you as you are speaking.

Thank you.

LGen Pierre St-Amand: Sure. Let me start again at the last sentence.

[*Translation*]

However, this expressed will must be understood, at least in part, in the context of its overall strategic objectives to develop its own strategic deterrent force against the United States.

As a result, when we look at North Korea's capabilities and intent, we can say that North Korean intercontinental ballistic missiles represent a threat for North America and thereby a significant concern for NORAD.

[*English*]

As I am sure all committee members are aware, Canada does not participate in the U.S. ballistic missile defence system. However, in the context of its own mandate, NORAD contributes as a partner to the missile defence continuum.

The ballistic missile defence continuum is not only about engagement of an incoming ballistic missile. Once the threat is identified, we must find the threat, fix it, track it, target it, and then engage it. NORAD has three mandated missions—aerospace warning, aerospace control, and maritime warning.

Under NORAD's aerospace warning mission, NORAD routinely participates in some segments that enable ballistic missile defence, stopping short of the targeting and engagement segments, which are unilateral U.S. Northern Command responsibilities under their ballistic missile defence mission.

In addition, NORAD is responsible to both the United States and Canada to provide assessments of any ballistic missile activity globally that is a threat to North America and may constitute an attack on our shared continent. NORAD conducts this assessment through a process known as the integrated threat warning and attack assessment, which is a subset of the aerospace warning mission.

NORAD has assigned Canadian Armed Forces members to play key operational roles in the defence of potential missile attacks against North America. More than a dozen Canadians are directly involved and work hand in hand with U.S. personnel in the 24/7 surveillance and detection phases of ballistic missile launch, from radar stations from Alaska to Thule, Greenland, and within the United States. Canadians also work alongside the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia at the space-based infrared system mission control station in Buckley, Colorado.

In Colorado Springs, Canadian Armed Forces members man air, missile, and space domain stations and occupy command centre director positions in our NORAD and U.S. Northern Command centre. Canadians also occupy posts in the NORAD and U.S. Northern Command integrated staff, executing staff functions within, amongst others, intelligence, NORAD operations, and plans, policy, and strategy. These are all functions that directly or indirectly support our aerospace warning mission.

Canadian generals and flag officers hold positions at NORAD—in deputy director, director, and deputy commander positions—where they support the commander of NORAD in the exercise of her functions, which include helping to focus the command on current and future issues.

Canadians have a seat at the table and play an active role in finding, fixing, tracking, and assessing ballistic missile activity. When it comes to targeting and engagement, we have no active role. This does not mean that our job is done. We become observers for a particular engagement sequence, but our aerospace warning mission continues, and we never let go of the watch.

With this, I thank you for your attention, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before I turn the floor over to Mr. Seymour, there have been a lot of phones making all sorts of noises. If you could just double-check your devices, the multiple ones that we all have, and make sure the sound is off, I would appreciate it.

Major-General Seymour, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

MGen William Seymour (Chief of Staff Operations, Canadian Joint Operations Command, Department of National Defence): Mr. Chair, honourable members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to appear before the Standing Committee on National Defence to address the committee's concerns about North Korea and the readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces.

As LGen St-Amand mentioned, North Korea's increasing number of ballistic missile tests is a significant concern for the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Similarly, North Korea's recent tests and the overall development of the nuclear weapons and missiles program are a significant concern for the Canadian Armed Forces.

[*English*]

As is often stated and reiterated in Canada's new defence policy—strong, secure, engaged—the home game, the defence of Canada and contributing to the defence of North America, is the Canadian Armed Forces' number one mission. We realize, furthermore, that Canada's geography no longer insulates us from threats, as it once did, and our military stands ready to detect, prepare for, and respond to threats as they arise.

Under detection, the Canadian Armed Forces maintains an all-domain awareness at home through Operation Limpid. As well, the Canadian Space Operations Centre is manned 24-7 to provide continuous monitoring of missile warning data through its primary-display-system modified systems, which rely on U.S. overhead persistent infrared space-based sensors to detect any missile launch. The Space Operations Centre is also in frequent contact with the U. S. intelligence community to receive additional indications and warnings of possible upcoming ballistic missile launches. Together with the United States through our binational partnership in NORAD, we track air and aerospace threats to Canada and the continent.

Lastly, through our partnership with allied nations, predominantly the U.S., we have access to intelligence and space-based capabilities in order to detect threats to Canadian territory. In the event of a North Korean ballistic missile attack against Canada or another nation where Canadians are present, the Canadian Armed Forces has a well-established communication plan to notify the highest levels of Canadian leadership.

The numerous intelligence-sharing partnerships of which Canada is a member, such as the Five Eyes community made up of Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, and networks comprised of NATO member countries facilitate our access to information to better assess potential threats.

With respect to preparation and adaptation, while detection is paramount, the Canadian Armed Forces remains vigilant to prepare for any and all scenarios in order to mitigate threats and to rapidly respond to developing situations.

From a planning perspective, our military maintains numerous contingency plans to deal with all eventualities related to the defence of the Canadian territory to full-spectrum operations. One such contingency plan is called CONPLAN ANGLE, which is the Canadian Armed Forces' global contingency plan for non-combatant evacuation operations. This contingency plan is facilitated by 1st Canadian Division Headquarters, our high-readiness deployable headquarters.

In order to ensure adequate readiness, this contingency plan is maintained through numerous joint and combined exercises such as Exercise Uichie Freedom Guardian, an annual South Korea and U. S.-led exercise that includes non-combatant evacuation operations aspects, and was in fact just concluded a few days ago. We will continue to work with our allies to refine our plans and support the evacuation of Canadian citizens from the Korean peninsula and the region, should that be required.

With respect to response or action, complementing our focus to detect and prepare is the Canadian Armed Forces' primary role of efficiently and rapidly responding to developing threats. Many developing incidents are time sensitive, and we maintain a number of units on rapid notice to move.

The Royal Canadian Navy has ready duty ships on Canada's east and west coasts that are on eight-hour notice to move, while the Canadian Army has four 350-person immediate response units with components on eight, 12, and 24 hours' notice to move.

The Royal Canadian Air Force maintains CF-18 fighter aircraft at high readiness as part of our NORAD commitments, and we also maintain one C-17 on a high-readiness posture of 24 hours to move, in order to provide a strategic lift capability.

Additionally, the Canadian Armed Forces rotates units from all three services through a tiered readiness program to ensure that a number of units are at high readiness for rapid deployment.

The Canadian Armed Forces has a total of six members deployed to the United Nations Command, five in South Korea and one in Japan, at headquarters located in South Korea and authorized to conduct military operations in support of that country. The command's mandate is to monitor the 1953 armistice, to be prepared to assist in the defence of South Korea, and to integrate any forces sent by other countries in the defence of South Korea.

In closing, the Canadian Armed Forces continuously maintains a high readiness posture in order to quickly react to all developing security situations, including in response to the threat of North Korean ballistic missiles. We maintain plans in support of this readiness and are routinely working to update them with our allies and our partners, while exercising these plans to maintain that readiness.

Moreover, we rely on access to intelligence networks and to space-based capabilities to detect threats to Canada and North America and work closely with the U.S. and other key allies to ensure comprehensive detection and response to threats.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

Thank you for your time today. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you for your comments.

Ms. Alleslev, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you very much.

Thank you for that comprehensive overview of just where our defence is on this topic.

The purpose of our investigation today is to determine Canada's abilities to defend itself and its allies in the event of an attack from North Korea; and there's no question that Canadians are concerned from what they see in the news. Even if North Korea is not directly threatening us, of course, we're concerned that our close proximity does not make us immune.

While we're not actually engaged in the ballistic missile defence, could you give us some idea—break it down for us—of what would happen if a missile were launched: how Canada would respond, how perhaps our NORAD partner would respond, and how we would ensure that Canada was in a position to defend itself in that scenario?

● (1115)

LGen Pierre St-Amand: I will start by giving the NORAD perspective, because I think we would first be engaging in the detection of a ballistic missile launch. This is under our aerospace warning mission, which long predates ballistic missile defence, by the way.

As I described in my opening remarks, we have Canadians manning consoles alongside our U.S. partners at our operations centre, fully participant and with full view and full situational awareness of what's happening and what's coming our way. We'd have this warning. While the warning's being worked within the staff in the NORAD headquarters, this warning would also be shared with our partners here in Canada through a CFIC organization. CJOC is also in on those conferences, and will be tracking the same activity we will be tracking. The Canadian government, through the CDS, will be informed very quickly of something that's coming our way, coming toward North America.

The next phase will be an assessment, again under our aerospace warning mission, where we will be making a determination of whether or not this missile is an attack or something else. It could be a research and development shot. It could be something that in fact is not an attack. That's a fairly important assessment, because the chain of events that follows will be determined by that assessment.

At that point, Canadians in the NORAD enterprise will go back into watch mode for further shots, for something else coming in. We never quit. We are always at the station. At this point, in terms of the engagement, it will be totally and entirely a U.S. decision to engage that missile or not. We are not a part of that discussion. We are in the room, however. We are sitting side by side. For example, as deputy commander of NORAD, I have an equal status to the deputy commander of U.S. Northern Command. We'll be sitting side by side to understand exactly what's happening. It's kind of a complementary mission, if you want.

From that point of view, we will have the warning, we will know where it's going, and then the U.S. will decide whether they defend against that missile or not.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you very much.

We know that this is now an emerging threat, more so than it has been in the past. We've just gone through a defence policy review. We've made a very strong commitment to the “secure” in North America aspect of our defence policy of strong, secure, and engaged. Part of that, of course, is our relationship with NORAD.

While we have USNORTHCOM, which is responsible for the ballistic missile defence aspect, and we in NORAD not so much, as part of NORAD modernization, is it possible that we might consider how that emerging threat is changing and perhaps look at our new warning systems and engagement model possibly falling into NORAD modernization? Could you speak to that a bit?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: Yes. Under our aerospace warning mission, we always discuss emerging threats because we have to warn against it. We participate in the characterization of new capabilities. We seek to understand what's happening. We seek to understand the geopolitical situation that surrounds events. This is something we do every single day, because we do detect ballistic missile launches globally.

From that point of view, we are in discussions, because we're part of this segment that is aerospace warning. That's a long-standing mission we've had for many years. It predates, once again, BMD. Having participated fully in the characterization of that new threat, that analysis then will go to a standstill until we see something else. We're always monitoring. We are concerned about emerging threats. We do everything we can to make sure we maintain the greatest situational awareness possible.

That's alongside our intelligence partners, by the way. When I say that "NORAD" does this, it is in concert with intelligence, it is in concert with planning and strategy, and it is in concert with other components of the headquarters.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: What are some of the elements of the NORAD modernization? What are some of the things we need to focus on next to really ensure that we have that capability?

● (1120)

LGen Pierre St-Amand: What is NORAD modernization? It's in the category of prudent planning, essentially. It is not advice to the government, because that's not what we do. It is an analysis by the commanders who are responsible together for the defence of the continent—namely, the tri-command of NORAD, Northern Command, and CJOC—under the tri-command framework. We talk about how best to organize, correctly and efficiently, to provide a defence against all perils and all threats to the continent.

It is a very large initiative. The scope of work is fairly large. We have been talking about this now for two years. It is internal to the commands. We have come to no solutions yet, because we're still very much in the problem definition phases. We're approaching the project by domains—air, maritime, cyber, aerospace, and space in the future possibly—but this is going very deliberately.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

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

I thank our generals for appearing today and giving us an update.

I want to start off with General St-Amand, talking about NORAD.

You were talking about NORAD's role if there were an incoming intercontinental ballistic missile, and then as an observer. As you said when you were here last, in 2016, you become a silent observer. How does that affect the relationship between Canada and the U.S. within NORAD operations? Would you say that's being a responsible ally, to be just a silent partner? Is it responsible vis-à-vis the protection of Canada if we're just going to be a silent partner?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: Because we've been doing this for so many years, the machine is smooth. When it comes to that decision to engage or not, it is up to the U.S. only, but we're in the room again. I think, through the development of our standard operating procedures, the way that we spread the duties around the various general officers and flag officers who would have certain duties and authorities when it comes to assessment or weapons release authority on the U.S. side, we have learned to work together. In terms of the effect on the relationship between the U.S. and Canada in Colorado Springs, it is complementary and it is smooth. It's going well. I have no concerns whatsoever. Certainly I don't hear any concerns from the United States or my colleagues when we do in fact engage in that type of activity.

As far as being a responsible ally or whether it is just something that we should do goes, unfortunately, I have to declare that that is out of my league. As a force employer, we execute policy, and then we do what we're told. At this point, I will be limiting my comments to that.

Mr. James Bezan: If there were an attack and a missile were coming over, I think a lot of Canadians just assume the United States would shoot it down, and they take comfort in that. Maybe it's a false comfort. I think Canadians have more confidence now in the capability of DND, but they're under the assumption that the United States would protect Canada. If a missile's coming in, and they don't know if it's going to hit Vancouver or Seattle, it'll come down. Do you feel that if we're not part of this program, and with our relationship in NORAD, USNORTHCOM would make the decision to protect Canada?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: We're being told in Colorado Springs that the extant U.S. policy is not to defend Canada. That's the policy that's stated to us, so that's the fact that I can bring to the table.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

I want to move on to the growing threats and capabilities of North Korea. All the media coverage of course is on the intercontinental ballistic missiles. We heard earlier about EMP, the electromagnetic pulse capability, and how that would affect all of continental North America, not just the United States but Canada as well. Are we seeing also, through the proliferation of the North Korean submarine program, any activity in the Atlantic Ocean that could threaten...? If they were going to have a multilateral attack, using multiple platforms, do they have the capabilities on their submarines to launch short-range missiles into North America?

● (1125)

MGen William Seymour: Sir, part of the answer to that is that I think there is some information there that's classified.

It's very clear, as you're probably reading in the open media, that the North Koreans are developing a capability—they've long had submarines, and we certainly saw the attack on the South Koreans years ago that sunk one of their warships—and that they've been developing the capacity for a submarine-launched ballistic missile, which I would characterize as nascent to this stage. It's not proven, and is certainly limited to their home territorial waters. We certainly watch it with a great deal of concern, because, as we've seen with their other missiles, it's a capability that they're growing and are able to refine and develop further. However, at this point I would suggest that as Canadians, we shouldn't be concerned. That is probably the single most watched submarine in the entire world, and frankly, I would be surprised if in times of conflict it went too far beyond Korean territorial waters.

Mr. James Bezan: I appreciate that.

Continuing on down the CJOC path, in your Canadian Joint Operations Command, where are we in discussions on preparedness and readiness, not just in terms of the Canadian Armed Forces but in our work with our allies, particularly the United States, Japan, and South Korea?

MGen William Seymour: Sir, that's an area that's a great news story. CJOC and the entire Canadian Forces are fully plugged in, both with the United States and with our allies in the Asia-Pacific. As you know, I spent three years working at the United States Pacific Command and I learned a great deal about U.S. and allied operations while there. Canada, of course, is a Pacific nation, and has been for a very long time. There are a great many things we do within the region.

In fact, last week the chief of the defence staff hosted, for the first time, the PACOM CHODs, which see all of the chiefs of defence from the Asia-Pacific region converge in a meeting—in this case in Victoria—in which they discuss a range of things relating to Asia-Pacific security.

We also concluded, in co-operation with our allies in South Korea, Exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian—I mentioned that in my opening comments—in which we worked together for the defence of South Korea and those kinds of things.

We're also very closely linked with Japan. Japan and other countries in the Asia-Pacific are partners in Exercise RIMPAC. RIMPAC occurs every two years. It last occurred in 2016. We're working up again for RIMPAC in 2018, the largest-scale maritime exercise on the globe. We have been participants from the outset in RIMPAC and will continue to be. It's a great exercise to work through a variety of capabilities, including ASWs, which touches on the previous question that you asked.

Certainly our involvement in the Asia-Pacific extends very broadly beyond that. We have defence attachés throughout the entire region. We continue to have a general officer in the United States Pacific Command. We work very closely with our allies in Australia, and I could certainly offer more should you be curious.

Mr. James Bezan: I have just a final question before I run out of time here, Mr. Chair. You talked about being prepared and ready, about the threat, and about how you have a number of assets in certain locations, that are ready to be deployed both from a troop standpoint and from an equipment standpoint. In the worst-case scenario—and I know that you guys are always prepared to deal with a worst-case scenario—if there is an attack and there's fallout, how are the Canadian Armed Forces dealing with our other intergovernmental agencies to deal with the aftermath of an attack?

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to come back to that, because we are out of time.

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

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will give the witnesses a chance to answer that if they'd like to.

MGen William Seymour: Are you specifically asking about a nuclear attack on North America?

Mr. James Bezan: Yes. If there is an ICBM that happens to land or an EMP that does impact Canada, how are the Canadian Armed Forces working with other government agencies to make sure we are there to clean up the aftermath?

MGen William Seymour: Sir, that's a great question, and it links into what General St-Amand talked about, the warning problem. From very early on in the process, Canada is made aware that there's a potential issue, in this case a missile that could strike North America. Right from the get-go the senior levels of government are made aware, and notification is made both in the Canadian Forces and across all levels of government in Canada. The response to that is something the Canadian Forces work on in concert with the Government of Canada and with our provinces and municipalities. We have contingency plans that cover a number of possibilities, including the possibility of a nuclear attack, either by terrorists or by other states that would seek to do us harm.

Those contingency plans have been exercised as recently as last spring, in the Maritimes, where we walked through a nuclear scenario in concert with our allies, the United States. In this scenario, a bomb went off on the east coast of the United States and also in Canada. We worked collaboratively to deal with that.

All aspects of government were involved in that exercise, and that's an ongoing process to exercise those contingency plans and continue to refine them. Of course, they span other areas, which I'd be happy to answer questions about.

● (1130)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much for that answer. Thanks for being here this morning.

From what I've heard from your testimony this morning, my opinion that Canada's best defence here is to advance our diplomacy has been reaffirmed. The NDP, of course, is always opposed to participating in ballistic missile defence, on the grounds that since it's always easier to build more offensive weapons cheaply and easily, doing so will contribute to an arms race. There are questions about the effectiveness of U.S. ballistic missile defence, especially with regard to the issue of decoys. To me it doesn't seem to be a solution for us to try to join something that's unproven, that's very expensive, and that will probably lead to an arms race.

I think what you said just a few moments ago, General St-Amand, is extremely important, which is that current U.S. policy is not to defend Canada in the case of a ballistic missile launch. If the scenario we're talking about is that North Korea had bad aim and shot a missile toward North America, are you saying that if that missile was directed toward Canada, current U.S. policy would be not to respond to that?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: It is entirely a U.S. decision.

Mr. Randall Garrison: But you said just earlier that U.S. policy is not to defend Canada.

LGen Pierre St-Amand: That's correct, so I can't comment on whether in the heat of the moment there would be a discussion at the highest level to decide to go contrary to policy or not, but what I'm saying is that it would be entirely a U.S. discussion and a U.S. decision.

Mr. Randall Garrison: What defence capability do we have ourselves in that capacity?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: You mean against ballistic missiles? We don't. The mission that we have is a large part of the continuum, as described, of defence against ballistic missiles, which includes the warning part and the identification and the assessment.

Mr. Randall Garrison: That leads me back to my conclusion that our defence here is diplomacy; that we have to ensure that such a launch does not occur since we have essentially no Canadian defence against a badly aimed North Korean missile.

LGen Pierre St-Amand: Sorry, sir, what was the question?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Obviously, diplomacy then is our only defence, if we have none against that missile, to try to make sure those launches don't occur.

LGen Pierre St-Amand: That's a policy discussion that I'm not able to comment on.

Mr. Randall Garrison: It's a big concern here that we've called people around this table and what we find is that if North Korea is acting irrationally and has poor technology, we are extremely vulnerable to that. I don't think it's a policy question; it's a defence question that we have to engage in the diplomacy that would make sure this does not happen. Otherwise we remain extremely vulnerable.

I'm going to end my questions there.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

If North Korea were to try to attack the United States, it's very clear that we would be either an accidental target or collateral damage. Hawaii now has a state preparedness plan, just in case, specifically designed for an attack by North Korea. At what point do you think Canada should have a public emergency preparedness plan in place for a situation like this?

MGen William Seymour: Having lived in Hawaii and having been responsible for disaster management in Hawaii, I'm aware that was developed. I think within the U.S. psyche with the very notion that they're under threat they would walk through that kind of a scenario. It's entirely in line with U.S. thinking.

In the Canadian context, I think our current contingency plans that I referred to cover off elements of a possible nuclear attack against Canada, but I think speaking about a shift from a Cold War mentality to the current era when we're talking about the possibility of a single missile that might or might not strike the North American continent, following through on that to review our plans in light of that threat and building upon our current capacity and response is something we would consider. It's entirely consistent with our approach and policy going forward to continue to develop our capacity to respond to evolving threats.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay, but that doesn't speak to a plan that would alert the public on what to do if such a thing were to happen. Are you suggesting it's not something about which we would be able to contemplate what exactly would happen and what this would look like so we could prepare the public?

MGen William Seymour: I think we've been in the mindset of considering terrorist events, and we've had plans that have considered the use by terrorists of certain kinds of weapons, be they nuclear, chemical, or biological, and those kinds of things. Public notification and public response through provinces, the federal government, and municipalities are all a part of that. Shifting to a mindset of a possible nuclear attack by some nation on the Canadian land mass, there is a logical extension of the things we already do, so there's an evolution of existing planning, not the requirement for a new plan.

● (1135)

Major-General Al Meinzinger (Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence): I would add one more example, perhaps. I look at some of the tragedies we've seen happening in some of our universities and our colleges, certainly down south, with active shooters entering educational facilities, and some of our children come home to tell us that they've run through an active-shooter drill, so what we're seeing I think is reflective of the kind of prudent planning that's happening.

I would agree with my colleague that this is generally happening at the bottom level up, with municipalities taking leadership, seeing that there's a potential concern or threat and then developing standing procedures at their facilities. I think that's the approach I would recommend.

MGen William Seymour: I could reinforce that too, having worked in the United States Pacific Command and having noted differences between the U.S. and Canada in how we respond to gun violence. In our headquarters we repeatedly exercised first-person shooter scenarios in which we responded to those kinds of things.

In Canada we pay less attention to those kinds of things and, frankly, we don't exercise it to the same degree we do in the U.S. I think were the threat to evolve further, that's the kind of attention we'd pay to it and then we would evolve in how we practise and prepare.

Mr. Darren Fisher: We know that a growing number of cyber-attacks have been coming out of this region. We've even seen reports in the media of North Korean hackers funding their attacks through bitcoin used to skirt the heavy UN sanctioning, so it looks as though cyberwarfare could be the next battleground.

What steps has Canada taken to protect our country from cyberwarfare?

MGen Al Meinzinger: I can certainly start.

I think our most recent defence policy talks about the importance of cyber-protection. Certainly, job number one for us in uniform is to provide the necessary protection for our critical systems, command, and control. When you look at operating abroad, the fundamental enabling nature of our systems needs to be protected, so from a military perspective that's a key part of our approach.

As I look at our defence policy, one of the many initiatives that speaks very specifically to the Canadian Armed Forces is developing a new trade, a cyber trade. Because there's an incredible amount of talent in our youth, we will now develop the skill sets we need to bring into the Canadian Armed Forces to support us in that regard. That's something we're very much focused on. There will be a new opportunity, a new trade, and we're very keen to recruit great young Canadians to come in and join us and become cyber-operators within that realm. That's going to be part of our focus and our effort moving forward.

MGen William Seymour: I would just add that we, as a force employer, pay a great deal of attention to this. We work in concert with the Communications Security Establishment on the things that we're already capable of doing on the cyber front in protecting our forces. With the force we sent overseas to Latvia—Mr. Bezan is well aware of this and I understand he's going to Latvia—one of the things we paid very close attention to was making sure that they were cyber-protected against any potential intrusions from any source.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Do I have much time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have a minute and twenty, for a question and a response.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Gerretsen touched on this in the last panel on Canada's role in diplomacy. I'm interested in Canada's current role in the stabilizing of this region, on the peninsula, right now. What do we have on the ground? What is our role right now in...? I assume it would be in South Korea. What's our role right now? I know we do an exercise every year in September. I think it's called Ulchi-Freedom. What is our role right now in stabilizing that region?

MGen Al Meinzinger: I think, as my colleague mentioned, as part of the United Nations Command in Korea, we have five Canadian Armed Forces members. One in that command is in Japan, with a mission to obviously oversee the armistice agreement from back in the early fifties, working with South Korea and coordinating with our allies. As you've highlighted, we regularly exercise, largely through 1st Canadian Division in Kingston. They are our vanguard element which is typically engaged in that particular area.

Of course, we have a presence as well, as was highlighted. Our attaché network we regularly engage in the region. We have our frigates often in the region, meeting with allies. We look to continually build our understanding and our awareness of the issues. There were the discussions that happened last week at the Pacific Command Chiefs of Defense conference here in Canada. All of that continues to inform our situational awareness and our understanding as to where our allies are at. Certainly, it's very beneficial to get context and perspective for those who live proximate to South Korea and North Korea. I'm talking about the South Koreans and obviously the Japanese specifically.

It's a continual effort and we look to continue to maintain our awareness.

● (1140)

The Chair: That's all the time for that question.

We have a little less than 20 minutes left with this panel. We'll go to five-minute questions.

Mr. Robillard, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Mr. St-Amand, in your remarks about the ballistic missile defence system, you said that Canada's role stops when it comes to targeting and engagement. You said that we become observers.

Could you elaborate on that?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: Yes, of course.

Let me start by describing the sequence of events.

As I already described, when we detect ballistic missile activity, we have to determine whether the activity constitutes an attack against North America. At that point, our aerospace warning mission continues. It is not over. There could actually be something else. If we consider that one vehicle or missile constitutes an attack, there may be others. We remain in front of our screens to continue our mission.

When I say that we are observers, I mean that we are physically in the room. The people from the U.S. Northern Command and NORAD are together in the same room. However, we do not take part in the discussions related to targeting and engagement. That's all; it's as simple as that.

If another missile is directed at North America, once again, we have to assess the situation and make a decision. Once again, the responsibilities are transferred from NORAD to the U.S. Northern Command, and the mission continues. That's the process. Physically, we are in the same room.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: You still have a little bit of time left.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I don't think he wants it.

The Chair: Well, then let's move to.... Does anybody on this side want it? There is a good portion of three minutes left.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you very much.

I want to touch on NORAD headquarters for a second. The committee had the opportunity to go to Colorado Springs. One of the things that I will say I was impressed with right from the beginning was the way the Canadians and the Americans work side by side to the point that they are saluting each other, and you can tell there's genuine appreciation of the input from both sides. I cannot think of another alliance that could be stronger than what we witnessed there.

General St-Amand, you talked in follow-up to Mr. Robillard's question about the atmosphere in the room. Most people don't get to be inside there to see it, do draw us a picture. You have this big room. You have these screens where they are monitoring the threats. Decisions are being made in which Americans and Canadians are participating jointly as if they were one entity doing that.

When all of a sudden a threat is detected, what happens physically in the room? Is there another table that people go to, that they sit around, and Canadians aren't invited? Is it sectioned off? What does that look like?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: I'll ask the members to be very visual here in my attempt to explain.

We have a large room, an operating centre, that is divided into domains. There is a land domain, which is mainly the U.S. Northern Command's concern. There is an aerospace domain. There is a missile domain as well. There is an intelligence section. Canadians and Americans are manning consoles at all times, 24-7. There is not one minute when these consoles will not be manned. If something happens, there is an immediate warning, and people will get to work. That is the front of the room.

In the middle of the room you have the command element, which we call the command centre, with the director and his staff. His job is to coordinate, to orchestrate the activities of the different domains of these people who will man these consoles that will provide the information. We have Canadians who will be operating in those positions as well.

Then you have the assessors and the authorities, who are usually in the back when they are present in the room. Those are the authorities that have to do with assessment and the authorities that have to do with engagement, not only from a ballistic missile point of view but also under the context of Operation Noble Eagle and the 9/11 scenario. We also have engagement authority in the air domain that is being exercised.

The CCD, which is the command centre director and the authorities, is a conduit through which we talk back and forth. Decisions have to be made really quickly in all instances. The dynamic is very smooth. As you said, we work hand in hand together.

● (1145)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: So when a threat is—

The Chair: That's your time.

I'm going to yield the floor to Mr. O'Toole.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm sure you share my enthusiasm for how much light blue we have here this morning. Thank you very much.

General, how many Canadians work within NORAD in Colorado Springs and throughout?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: Throughout the United States we have 300 members, more or less, in uniform. In Colorado Springs per se we have 145 or 147—so it varies—along with their families.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Please thank all the men and women who work as part of that, because we're all very appreciative of their efforts.

I have two specific questions.

NORAD was developed in the late 1950s concurrent with Russia's ability to develop an ICBM threat. The primary goal in the NORAD treaty is aerospace warning. The aerospace warning is to detect and defend against an airborne threat. That threat now exists in the hands of other state actors. NORAD looks for all state actors, not at its historic roots. Is that fair to say?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: That is fair to say, sir.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: In the future there may be more countries adverse to Canada with this same capability that a country like North Korea possesses.

LGen Pierre St-Amand: That is fair to say.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: In the many years of NORAD's existence, it has been updated multiple times, including in 2006 for the maritime threat as well.

Do the Americans view ballistic missile defence as an update to NORAD?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: I don't know, because we have not engaged in those discussions. As you know, the policy is set and we're not a part of BMD, so I cannot comment on that.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: They have to counter the airborne threat, the traditional Russian bear coming and probing our airspace, right through to the extraordinary development of ICBM technology over the years since the late 1950s to today, and the BMD portion of a North American defence is purely a defensive one. Mr. Garrison suggests that it would start an arms race, but there's only a defensive aspect to BMD. Is that correct?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: That's right.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: In your opinion, would that defensive capability create some arms race in a way that the mutually assured destruction and the strategic capability of the U.S. did?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: Sir, I'm not qualified to answer that question. It's way above my lane....

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Okay.

In the time I have left, I'll say that I was struck by the way you described Canada as a proud partner in NORAD. NORAD participates as a partner in BMD, but we're observers when it comes to decisions relating to BMD. We're a partner in a partnership, and that partnership is a partner in BMD, but we're an observer on this one component. Does that mean, going back to the question of my colleague James Bezan, that we're not a true partner in NORAD?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: I don't think so, sir. Again, it goes back to the long history of NORAD. The aerospace warning mission long predates BMD. We've always done that. The architecture, the sensors, and the command-and-control arrangements that surround aerospace warning are distinct from the area sensors and command-and-control architecture that surround BMD. Those were added later on.

When you think of the segments that lead the U.S. to decide whether or not to defend, we are participants, because they use some of the information that we use as a result of having area sensors that are just for NORAD. It would be—

● (1150)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Let me stop you there, General, with respect. You described that earlier as the "heat of the moment decision"—which I found is a very apt phrase—on a response to an airborne threat for which the Americans would have to decide, if that threat was going to hit Canada, whether to deploy a defensive measure. If we were not an observer, if we were a partner, would Canada be involved in that "heat of the moment decision"?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: It's very difficult to decide. We are a force employer and when it comes to discussions about BMD, the policy set is clear for us: we're not a part of it. To speculate as to how it would look, I think that probably I would not be able to bring any accuracies or any information on that topic.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Would it be as simple as, say, us going from being observer to participant? Would that be fair? That how that participation was structured would be determined by—

LGen Pierre St-Amand: Again, it would depend on the policy and the end result of the arrangement, which would be, again, very speculative at this time.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Before, you said that we have no organic defensive capability against this threat from North Korea or anyone else. Therefore, we're completely reliant on the U.S. and their decision in that "heat of the moment", as you've said. Is that correct?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: Yes, sir.

The Chair: That's your time.

Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I appreciate your illustrating what NORAD headquarters looks like. Within this room, there would then be a sectioned-off area that only Americans would be allowed to be present in. That would be the NORTHCOM part of the room. Is that correct?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: I would qualify it more. There is a section of that room with consoles that only Americans are manning. It is not sectioned off. It is a part of the operations centre, but Canadians are not manning those stations.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay. Thank you.

Switching over to talking about the modernization of NORAD, a couple of people have touched on it already. This is obviously not the first time there's been a discussion of modernizing NORAD. In fact, up until September 11, it's at least my understanding that all of the work NORAD was doing was looking at incoming threats, not within the borders. Things have changed quite a bit now, because NORAD is also monitoring what's happening within the borders of North America.

When we talk about modernizing NORAD and about the threats that are happening today, where do you see other potential threats, outside of missiles specifically, and what other areas of NORAD need to be modernized, essentially?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: I'll refer to earlier remarks. NORAD modernization is pursued under the tri-command framework, and that is to signify, as the words in the policy say—"defence against all perils or threats"—that we are concerned with multi-domain approaches to North America. The main concern in the 1950s was with the air domain only; this is how we started. We have evolved at various times throughout our history, and now we are conducting prudent planning and analysis, internal to our headquarters, to take a look at other domains.

The maritime domain is becoming a concern because of the advances in sea-borne cruise missiles and subsurface-related capabilities. Cyber doesn't care about borders or oceans.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: When we talk about modernizing NORAD, are we talking about modernizing Canada's participation in NORAD or about modernizing NORAD generally speaking, in which case much of the input into that modernization would be through discussions and agreements with our partner?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: It is about generally modernizing NORAD. It is about materiel solutions and non-materiel solutions—you've heard those terms before. It is about the commanders who jointly are responsible for continental defence, namely the Americans and the Canadians, coming together and asking the question underlying the original premise of NORAD: are we better defending together than we are unilaterally? Even though we can accord, can we do so in other domains and can we pursue other solutions?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: When we talk about modernizing NORAD, it's not exclusively a Canadian discussion; it's a discussion with our American partners that has to happen.

LGen Pierre St-Amand: It is, sir, and it is at the command level at this time.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Right.

General Seymour, you said in your statements—concerning Canada's role in NORAD, if I understood you correctly—that Canada is responsible for detection, and we also plan for response.

Did I get that correctly?

● (1155)

MGen William Seymour: Yes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: How do we respond, if it's with regard to a ballistic missile and we're not part of the body that makes the decision on how to respond?

MGen William Seymour: I think we've missed a part of a fundamental issue. Regardless of where a missile hits, either in Canada or elsewhere in North America, the consequences of that missile's hitting are borne by both Canada and the United States, so that—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You're talking about the plan to respond after the missile has hit.

MGen William Seymour: That's correct. Our primary role—and we worked on this very much with NORTHCOM headquarters—is in consequence management. I've already described what it is we do federally and provincially as a part of that effort.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Yes, you did.

Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I guess my time's up.

The Chair: Ms. Gallant has the last question to this panel.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Sir, Canada participates in BMD through NATO. How would what the personnel of the Canadian Armed Forces do in NATO with respect to BMD differ from what they would do were we involved in BMD at NORAD?

MGen Al Meinzinger: To answer your question, Ms. Gallant, we do not have any Canadian Armed Forces members engaged in the NATO BMD system. The extant government policy, pursuant to the Lisbon summit, is that Canada supports that policy. We are strong NATO allies. As you would know, we have about 850 Canadians currently deployed supporting our alliance in Latvia and, by way of reassurance measures, in a ship currently deployed, and we have air policing happening in Romania.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We saw that on 9/11 a Canadian was in command when it happened. Now, were there to be a ballistic missile attack and a Canadian were in command, how would it work? You said that we don't have the decision-making authority.

LGen Pierre St-Amand: The way it works is that there are persons designated as weapons release authorities in the U.S., and there are no Canadians who have those authorities. There is always somebody who is able to make that decision on the U.S. side.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: When you were last here, General, you said that with respect to an EMP, our detection and monitoring equipment would be good until 2025. Given the advances that North Korea has made with respect to EMP, would the current level of protection until 2025 still hold good?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: What I was talking about until 2025 was the state of our north warning system. I don't recall it being related to EMP per se. What I can offer to you is that in the NORAD sense, in terms of continuity of operations, we have EMP protection where it counts.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: NORAD is also responsible for maritime detection and monitoring. In November of 2015, two South Korean ships made it down the St. Lawrence undetected. Mind you, they are friendly and they were expected. Nevertheless, they did not check in, and warships don't have transponders. The protocol is that our pilots would take the ships in the rest of the way. Given that breach, the fact that the United States has now posted that it has looked for marine-borne nuclear threat-detection systems and is now at the testing and evaluation phase, and the fact that Canada—with 10 times more coastline—has nothing, do you think we have the proper safeguards in place and are protecting our people the way we should?

LGen Pierre St-Amand: I recall this incident vaguely. Our mission is maritime warning, so it is largely an intelligence mission. There's quite a bit of analysis in order for us to declare something in our maritime lines of communication to be a matter for an advisory or warning. Whether those ships met that criteria or not, I don't recall.

When we talk under NORAD about the maritime domain, those would be the types of discussions I imagine we would have in due course, and this is what the commanders are doing. There is continuous concern, and continuous monitoring of what's happening outside. When we detect something that is not working well, we fix it.

That's the only thing I can offer to your question.

MGen William Seymour: I would supplement that. In terms of the NORAD maritime warning mission, we're missing an element of the whole-of-government role in all of this. We have the Maritime Security Operation Centres. There are three in Canada, one on each coast. They work with Transport Canada, the Coast Guard, the Canadian Forces, specifically the navy, and other government partners to fuse information not just from Canadian sources but from all sources, to detect anything like that. We have information on manifests, crew, cargo, and those kinds of things. All of those pieces combine to give us a sense of what's coming into Canada.

● (1200)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Since Canada does not have the systems in place for nuclear or radiation detection, is the United States monitoring our coastline for that particular threat vector?

MGen William Seymour: I'm not familiar with the specifics of what you're talking about, but I think the Coast Guard and Transport Canada would be better positioned to talk about it and answer your question.

The Chair: That's the time we have for this particular panel. Gentlemen, I want to thank you for your time and your testimony here today. I'm going to suspend for about an hour to allow a break for everyone, and we'll resume at one o'clock. Thank you.

● (1200)

(Pause)

● (1300)

The Chair: I welcome the committee back to our discussion on North Korea as it relates to Canada. The next two panels will consist of academics and academic opinion on that topic.

Joining us on this one-hour panel we have Professor Michael Byers from the University of British Columbia; Danny Lam from Edmonton; Colin Robertson from the Canadian Global Affairs Institute; and Robert Huebert from the University of Calgary. I believe the order of operation in terms of speakers is exactly that. I know academics like to talk, and that's a good thing. However, we're restricting you to five minutes each, so please be mindful of that. Four people on a panel will really limit the number of questions we can get through if you guys blow outside the five minutes.

Thank you very much for coming.

Professor Byers, you have the floor.

Dr. Michael Byers (Professor, Department of Political Science, University of British Columbia, As an Individual): Thank you.

I'll jump right into it. You heard this morning that North Korea does not consider Canada a threat. I don't find that surprising. Canada does not have nuclear weapons; we do not have ICBMs; we do not have bombers, and we do not have aircraft carriers, so, no, we are not a threat to North Korea.

I want to also say from the beginning that what North Korea has accomplished so far is not particularly difficult. It has been seven decades since the first atomic bomb, six decades since the first hydrogen bomb, six decades since the first ICBMs. Of course, North Korea has had some help along the way, notably from Pakistan, and if you believe *The New York Times*, more recently from a Ukrainian company. What North Korea has done is not particularly challenging.

In terms of some other history, bear in mind that NORAD was established to address, first of all, the threat from Russian bombers. It was a surveillance capacity, coupled with the capacity to send fighter interceptor aircraft out to meet the bombers. When NORAD transitioned to aerospace, part of the mission changed. It remained that surveillance, that sensory function, but the response to ICBMs was not to send fighter jets; it would have been to send a retaliatory nuclear strike, and Canada was never going to be involved in that decision. Through the latter half of the Cold War, NORAD provided the sensory function, and the United States provided the strike response capability and decision-making.

When the United States renounced the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty under the George W. Bush administration and began to build its anti-ballistic missile system based, first and foremost, in Alaska, it saw this as a continuation of that situation, and in fact decided in 2004 that the decision-making function within missile defence would be within NORTHCOM. It wasn't until the following year that Prime Minister Paul Martin decided that Canada would not participate, so the U.S. decided before Canada's decision that we would not be part of the decision-making process with respect to the launch of interceptors.

That is not particularly surprising. Again, North Korea does not regard Canada as a threat. If it were to attempt a missile strike against North America, it would almost certainly be aiming for its enemy, the United States.

In 2004, Canada gave NORTHCOM approval to use NORAD's sensory information collected using Canadian assets, so they didn't need anything more than that.

Another really important point to make here is that the intercepts do not take place over Canadian territory. The missile defence interceptors in Alaska have to shoot forward as the North Korean warhead is coming towards North America. You can't catch up to an ICBM; you have to shoot it when it's coming towards you, so the intercepts would likely take place over the Bering Sea, not over Canada. The missiles themselves are not entering Canadian airspace; they're in space. Canadian airspace goes up around 120 to 130 kilometres, and then it's space. This is not in Canadian airspace, except perhaps in the final returning stage.

Another thing to say in that context—and this is very important—is that any strike on North America, regardless where a hydrogen bomb exploded, would impact all of North America. These are nuclear weapons. They create radiation, and radiation clouds drift. A strike on Seattle is a strike on Vancouver; a strike on Vancouver is a strike on Seattle. A strike on Calgary is a strike on the Midwest of the United States. You just look at the prevailing winds. This idea that somehow the United States would just sit back and say, "We've actually decided we're not going to take out this incoming missile because it's headed for Vancouver", is implausible in the extreme. An attack on North America is an attack on North America.

Another thing to add here is that technology is improving so very quickly that I do believe it is possible for the United States to develop a pretty high-capability system for striking what North Korea has right now. SpaceX can launch the first stage of a rocket carrying a satellite into space and bring that first stage back and land it on lakes. They can do this, but can they keep up with the incredible rate of improvement of North Korea's technology? We are in that arms race—the U.S. now and North Korea. That itself is doubtful.

● (1305)

The final point I'll close on in my introductory statements is that I don't know—and you might know better than I—whether the United States has made a formal request that Canada join. We were asked in 2004; we said no in 2005. Have we been formally asked to join, and do you want to go as a supplicant asking to join in a situation where we're dealing with an administration that is a hardball negotiator, or do you want to wait for a request or perhaps seek other ways in which you can contribute to the U.S. mission?

I'm happy to talk about other ways to contribute to the U.S. mission in response to questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your testimony.

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

Go ahead, please.

Mr. Danny Lam (As an Individual): Thank you. It's a pleasure to be back in Ottawa where I received my Ph.D. from Carleton University 25 years ago, particularly because I'm not here because of a factory recall.

Carleton University's first Ph.D. in this field was my mentor, Professor Ashok Kapur, the renowned expert on India's nuclear program, so I'm kind of still following in his footsteps.

I come before you today with grave concerns. North Korea's thermonuclear ICBMs are an imminent existential threat to this country. Australia and the U.K., which are very similar to us, were threatened by North Korea August 20 for participating in military exercises in South Korea, so I don't think we're exempt.

Kim Jong-un's nuclear arsenal is different from those of other nuclear powers. We live with other nuclear powers, and they're different. He will use his nuclear weapons offensively to win wars. That's my conclusion, and I came to this conclusion after studying his intentions and motives, not just his capability. North Korea is driven by a race-based nationalism, rage, and a profit motive. Kim Jong-un, the leader, is young, aggressive, savvy, and worldly, with boundless ambitions, an appetite for risk, and a drive to win.

What does he want? North Korea's goals are, first, expelling the United States from South Korea; second, ending the hostile policy against North Korea; and third, unification of Korea on their terms. Finally, they're looking for a peace treaty with the United States, and they are expecting substantial war indemnities and compensation in the trillions of dollars. They've made that public.

There are ample published documents no less dramatic than *Mein Kampf* that document their goals. They haven't changed in 70 years. There must be something to it. North Korea are not deterred from using their nuclear weapons just because the United States has more of them. Kim Jong-un thinks they can win a nuclear war with the United States, and I sat down and ran through kind of mental war games, and I agree with him. I think he could win.

If DPRK united Korea, let's look at what would happen. You're going to have a formidable military and economic powerhouse in Asia, a nuclear-armed, ambitious Japan without pacifism. What will they do next then?

North Korea will soon be able to enforce their demands with a thermonuclear arsenal with global reach. We as Canadians think we are peaceful and harmless. We are not; we're still at war legally. We have a ceasefire with a nuclear-armed state that wants a war for profit and tribute like Genghis Khan, the Manchus, and Imperial Japan before they were stopped.

We are weak and undefended. We see ourselves as neutral. We do not expect an unprovoked attack. We are the ideal target for a bully looking for someone to make an example of. Unless our nuclear allies—and I'm talking about the U.S., U.K., and France—decide to risk their cities to retaliate for an unprovoked strike on Canada, we don't even have a deterrent today.

We cannot be indifferent and stand idly by. The window of opportunity to stop North Korea is one to two years. If not stopped, the threat is going to spread to other causes as North Korea exports the means to other states such as Iran or Pakistan. Who knows who they'll sell to? Imagine a nuclear war over religion, nationalism, race, ethnicity, ideology, empire, or garden variety territorial disputes. Past world wars will look civil and restrained.

We cannot acquiesce to this. The crown has the responsibility to protect Canadians on Canadian soil. We are a democracy, and we need to sit down, get an all-party consensus on the threat posed by North Korea, and build on that consensus. We have to both build a credible defence with our allies, and failing that, prepare for war, and also try every diplomatic means possible to avert this problem. Let us not only bet on appeasement. Let posterity not remember with shame how we failed to prevent a nuclear attack on our soil.

Thank you.

● (1310)

The Chair: That was right on time. Thank you for that.

Mr. Robertson, you have the floor.

Mr. Colin Robertson (Vice-President and Fellow, Canadian Global Affairs Institute, As an Individual): Thank you. My remarks draw on 33 years of experience in the Canadian foreign service and, since then, my work with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

I spent a week earlier this year in Seoul as a guest of the Korea Foundation, meeting with Korean scholars and senior Korean defence officials and senior officials.

Let me address three questions: first, Canadian participation in BMD; second, our policy toward North Korea; and third, how Canada can contribute to nuclear non-proliferation.

On ballistic missile defence, I believe it is now time for Canada to participate in BMD as an insurance policy to shield Canadians should missiles come our way. Our European allies and Pacific partners employ it. So should we.

The government dodged consideration of BMD in the recent defence policy review. When I asked at the technical briefing, at the launch of the DPR last May, I was told that the government was staying with the policy adopted by the Martin government and then Harper government that we will not participate in BMD but that the government was discussing defending North America against “all threats” with the U.S. government. That would have to include BMD.

From discussions around the 2005 decision, I understand that at that time the government could not get adequate answers to three questions: first, whether BMD works and how BMD would protect Canada; second, how much participation Canada would have in what is essentially a U.S.-managed system; and third, how much it would cost.

These are still good questions, and the current government should get these answers and share them with Canadians.

That said, based on the evidence presented to it, the Senate national defence committee unanimously recommended in June 2014 that Canada participate in BMD. I think that is the course we should take.

Since then there has been abundant evidence of North Korea’s improved capacity to both miniaturize a nuclear warhead and then project it by ballistic missile across continents. As then President George W. Bush reportedly asked then Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2006: what happens if a North Korean missile aimed at Los Angeles or Seattle winds up heading towards Calgary or Vancouver? Don’t we want protection?

While the U.S. may protect a Canadian target near to a U.S. city, there can be no guarantee, since the U.S. system is limited in size and the North Korean ICBM force is of uncertain number and capacity. Unless we are inside the system and making a contribution, we have no assurances, even if the U.S. commander would wish to protect a Canadian target that is remote from a U.S. asset—think, in particular, of Edmonton or Calgary.

Consideration of Canadian engagement on BMD should cover all possible initiatives beyond the simple positioning of anti-missiles in Canada. These would range from a government declaration that we acknowledge the missile threat to North America, to allocating additional Canadian Forces resources to NORAD, to equipping our naval assets with appropriate gear to detect missiles, to radar arrays in Canada, to writing a cheque to support research.

In each case, it would require more attention to security in Canada's north. Joining BMD would likely bring the continental BMD defence function under NORAD and NORTHCOM. Canada has participated in NORAD's missile warning function for many years, and bringing BMD into it would strengthen the binational institution at the heart of Canada-U.S. relations, and the defence relationship in particular.

On North Korea, I believe that the government, as part of its commitment to active internationalism, needs to reconsider its current policy approach to North Korea. Diplomatic relations are not a seal of good housekeeping but rather the means by which we advance Canadian interests and protect Canadians. Relations also allow us to bring insight, intelligence, and a Canadian perspective to the diplomatic table.

The current policy of controlled engagement was adopted by the Harper government in 2010 after a North Korean submarine torpedoed a South Korean warship in blatant disregard of its international obligations.

The current policy limits engagement to discussion of, one, regional security concerns; two, the human rights and humanitarian situation in North Korea; three, inter-Korean relations; and four, consular issues. This last provision was how national security advisor Daniel Jean negotiated the recent exit from North Korea of Pastor Lim. The Lim episode aside, it has meant we have virtually no contact with the Kim regime.

There has not been an ambassadorial visit to North Korea since 2010. In fact, no Canadian ambassador has been accredited to North Korea since 2011. This contrasts with like-minded embassies in Seoul whose ambassadors have regularly travelled to North Korea in the last seven years. Seven EU countries also have resident embassies in North Korea.

Our current policy helps no one, hinders communication, particularly at a time when we most need it, and puts us at an information disadvantage, which lessens our value to our closest allies.

● (1315)

The authoritarian regime of Kim Jong-un continues to break international nuclear non-proliferation norms, despite repeated Security Council resolutions. My view is that, while any role for Canada would likely be limited, it would serve our interests to engage the North Koreans, thus enabling us to bring some intelligence or niche capacity to the table.

My former foreign service colleague James Trottier, who made four official visits to North Korea in 2015 and 2016, recently wrote an informed and useful piece in *The Ottawa Citizen*, arguing for a combination of negotiations, incentives, sanctions, and strengthened missile defence.

Here are some observations. First, South Korea is our friend, a fellow middle power, and the only nation in Asia with which we have a free trade agreement. It's a country that we should cultivate, keeping in mind that it respects and understand toughness in trade negotiations.

South Korea has lived under the threat of bombardment by North Korea since the armistice in 1953. Seoul, a city of 10 million people, is 60 kilometres from the border and within easy range of conventional bombardment. After I met with a very senior official in March, he walked me to the elevator, where I saw what I thought were a bunch of goggles. He looked at me and said, "That's for a chemical or biological gas attack. I don't fear a nuclear bomb, because what we have created in South Korea is just too valuable for Kim Jong-un to destroy. He'd rather eliminate us so he can put his own people here."

Second, Kim Jong-un is ruthless—

The Chair: Mr. Robertson, with respect, can I get you to wrap up in 25 seconds or less? You are a couple of minutes over your five.

Mr. Colin Robertson: Sure.

Second, he acts like something out of *Game of Thrones*, but his behaviour is rational and based on self-preservation. For him and the 200,000 or so senior officials who benefit from his autocracy, a nuclear bomb is their insurance policy.

Third, we will have to live with a nuclear North Korea. We need to establish a new equilibrium and accept the least offensive outcome if we are to realize objectives under what I would call the failed "strategic patience".

The time for a military intervention, if it ever existed, has probably passed, short of some sort of revolutionary, extraordinary intervention by the Chinese, the only power with real leverage in this situation. But for now China does not want a failed regime and the migrants it would bring.

We must live with the situation. I will conclude by saying that we need to reconsider ballistic missile defence for Canada and we should find some way to engage North Korea by changing our current policy.

The Chair: Thank you for your testimony.

We'll go via VTC to Calgary.

Professor Huebert, you have the floor—or screen, in this case.

Dr. Robert Huebert (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary, As an Individual): Thank you very much.

It's a pleasure to appear before the committee again, among such an esteemed set of colleagues as well.

I have two points that I want to make in the five minutes I have before me. First is the nature of the problem, and second is what Canada should be doing.

The nature of the problem is relatively straightforward: we have an authoritative, absolute monarchy, whose major and only foreign and defence policy is the maintenance of that monarchy, and which has nuclear weapons. Within the context of that particular reality, we have a direct and indirect threat to Canadian security.

I'm often told, “Don't worry about the North Koreans. If they fire a missile at North America, the Americans will make sure they shoot down that missile.” The problem with the pretense of that assumption is that the North Koreans will fire only one missile.

It's safe to say we've seen that this is a long-term problem. This is not something that has just appeared in the last couple of days; it is something that the North Koreans are doing, and continue to do. The problem that we face, in terms of not being an integral part of the American ABM system, is that the Americans may have only a limited number of interceptors, and the North Koreans may have more missiles than we were expecting. At that point it is entirely conceivable, if we are not within the system, that the Americans or an American commander may in fact make the decision that he will be reserving his ABMs.

The second part of the issue that is often overlooked is that the North Koreans have a habit of not directly confronting the Americans, but trying to pick off the American allies. We see this in terms of the activity against the South Koreans and against the Japanese. It is not improbable to suggest that in the long term, as the North Koreans develop longer ICBM capabilities, as they can start looking towards reaching North America, we could also become subject to the type of bullying that South Korea and Japan have suffered under. Therefore, that's the most direct threat to Canada.

The second indirect threat that we do not talk about, but we need to, is that even a conventional or chemical war on the Korean Peninsula is an indirect and major threat to Canadian security, even if ICBMs are not ultimately utilized.

What do we do to resolve this? First and foremost, I will echo my colleagues who have called for Canadian participation on ABM. We need to ensure that we are part of the system, even if we're a junior partner as we are within NORAD. At the very least, if we are facing an unknown situation where the North Koreans are firing multiple ICBMs, we need to ensure that the Americans are not thinking only about saving their cities in that context. That may not be the situation, but it's something we have to be very cognizant of.

Second of all, the time has come for us to consider in much more serious terms how we can participate with the key members among the democratic friends we have within that region. Particularly, I'm referring to an improved security relationship with the Japanese, South Koreans, Australians, and New Zealanders. Obviously, we cannot create a NATO within that region. But given the fact that we are dealing with an individual who seems to understand only the utilization of military force, the more we can act in terms of reassuring our friends—we can't officially say allies, but our friends within that region—the more it goes to addressing the longer-term problem we have with the authoritative regime of North Korea.

The third part we may want to consider is looking once again, as Dr. Byers has suggested, at the fact that if it was relatively easy for the North Koreans to get an ICBM and nuclear weapons, we can expect that we are going to be seeing this particular threat going beyond simply North Korea, so that we may also want to start thinking about building up an indigenous capability.

Substantially smaller countries such as Norway are beginning to think about giving their Aegis frigates an ABM capability when they go into refit. Whether or not they do it, we do not know. We are, of course, about to engage in construction of a very large-scale rebuilding of our next surface combatant. We may want to give some consideration to the possibility of some of the capability being given to a maritime ABM capability. At this point in time, only the Americans and the Japanese seem to truly have this capability, but given the type of trajectory we are seeing, this may be something that we ultimately want to consider.

● (1320)

I will conclude by saying I strongly agree with those individuals who see the North Koreans as a growing threat, but that has been not only within the last two months. This has been in place since the regime came to power and developed nuclear weapons.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you for your testimony.

We'll go to seven-minute questions, and the first question will go to Mark Gerretsen.

You have the floor.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of you.

Wow, what a different perspective from what we heard this morning.

Mr. Lam, who are you? A lot of the witnesses who come before this committee we interact with regularly so we get to know them. Can you give us a sense of your background and how you came to formulate the opinions you have?

● (1325)

Mr. Danny Lam: I've been involved with East Asia on and off in different capacities for 25 years. I did my Ph.D. at Carleton University, and I was supervised by Professor Kenneth D. McRae. I've been an academic, in business, and in the high tech industry. From there, I woke up one day and said that I wanted to do something different, so I went back to school and did an engineering degree in energy.

I've been involved in the defence business on and off for decades, as I said. It's very much like *Hotel California* in that you can come in but you cannot leave.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you for that.

Dr. Byers, do you agree with Mr. Lam's suggestion that the United States could be eliminated by nuclear threats from North Korea, if I'm paraphrasing what he said correctly?

Dr. Michael Byers: The power of disparity between the United States and North Korea at the present moment is overwhelming. This is a tyrannosaurus rex versus a very loud and angry mouse. The thing we need to remember is that if it chose to, the United States could crush North Korea using conventional weapons. It doesn't need to go nuclear.

The concern for the United States and other countries is the safety and well-being of all the people in South Korea, who are extremely vulnerable, even to a ground attack. You could imagine a nightmare scenario where, with the willingness to lose 100,000 troops, North Korea could get to the centre of Seoul and announce they had a nuclear warhead with them, and had therefore essentially captured the peninsula.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Based on what you're saying, we understand that North Korea is a threat. To what extent would you say that Canada should prioritize expenditures specifically on something like BMD versus the other priorities we might have for defence?

Dr. Michael Byers: We have theoretically been exposed to the North Korean nuclear threat for over a decade now, because you can put a warhead onto a freighter or a private yacht and sail it into Vancouver harbour. We do radioactive screening for containers after they make it onshore but not for them to go into the harbour. The same applies to Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

It's not that North Korea has just acquired the capacity to deliver. It has had the capacity to deliver for over a decade, which isn't so easily traced straight back to North Korea. ICBM is a bright red line back to the launch site.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Where should the priority be?

Dr. Michael Byers: Where do you want to spend your money? The United States has its weapons system. It's working on its system and is spending roughly $10 billion a year. Do you want to sign on to that, or do you want to add capacity with Canadian systems?

For instance, we have to—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's what I'm asking you. Where do you think the priority should be?

Dr. Michael Byers: Our northern warning system needs to be completely renewed. That's a big expenditure. Canada should take the lead. That's directed against air-breathing threats, including cruise missiles from really dangerous countries like Russia.

Rob Huebert very correctly mentioned the Canadian surface combatants. If you want to have a discussion about missile defence, talk about whether we should put Aegis class radar and missile systems on those Canadian surface combatants. Now is the time. It will cost this country $10 billion to do that.

If you had unlimited defence budgets, you could have perfect defence. You don't have an unlimited defence budget, so you have to prioritize.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I apologize, but I'm short on time. You think that the BMD program is not the only program we should be looking at in making those priorities?

Dr. Michael Byers: You're right.

And we haven't been asked formally to join, and we don't know what the entry price would be if we were allowed in. Is the United States going to open up NORTHCOM and let Canada in, and how much would they charge? Until you know the answer to those questions, you can't recommend anything with regard to missile defence.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Robertson, you spoke about 2004-05, when Prime Minister Martin chose not to sign on to the BMD program. Do you recall how opposition leader Stephen Harper felt about it at the time?

Mr. Colin Robertson: My recollection is that he favoured—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: He did.

Do you have any idea why, after being in government for ten years, he never did anything about signing on? Do you have any insight into that?

Mr. Colin Robertson: I would just say that I understand they were working on looking at ballistic missile defence prior to the election. I know there was a fair bit of work going on within the Department of National Defence.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That was prior to the 2015 election?

● (1330)

Mr. Colin Robertson: That's correct.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Colin Robertson: I would just add that the threat configuration changed, I think, from 2004 to 2010. Notwithstanding what Dr. Byers said, I think the anti-ballistic missile threat has certainly increased in the last six months.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Well, the Americans perceived it as a threat in 2004. They chose to sign on then. They did identify it as a threat then.

Mr. Colin Robertson: Most of our allies in Europe did as well.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Right.

Mr. Colin Robertson: We also have endorsed it, under both Prime Minister Martin and Prime Minister Harper, for our European allies and our Pacific partners.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Byers, you're shaking your head.

Dr. Michael Byers: I'm shaking my head because the European-based system is fundamentally different from the North American one. It's an Aegis class system with Standard Missile-3s. The United States purposely changed to that system because Russia had regarded the idea of larger interceptors as threatening to it. It's thus a different system from the system based in Alaska. The system based in Alaska is for intercepts in space. It also has a potential aggressive function, in that it is the ideal anti-satellite weapon system also.

That should be part of the discussion, if Canada wants to move forward on this.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Gallant, you have the floor.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The assumption of many Canadians has been that the United States would never allow a missile attack to be successful on Canada; that they would intervene. Yet this morning in testimony we heard that it is not U.S. policy to protect Canada, and particularly as it applies to ABMs.

For those of you who are witnesses who understand that there is a threat to Canada, what would you say our options are, going forward, aside from the Aegis class detection and systems and interceptors on our ships?

Dr. Michael Byers: I'll just say a couple of things.

First of all, Ms. Gallant, you were very right to point out the marine-borne threat of weapons of mass destruction. Thank you for that.

This is something we need to step up, in terms of protection. We do a lot of work with the United States through the proliferation security initiative, for instance. There is a lot the Royal Canadian Navy could do in addition to what's being done right now.

Concerning diplomacy, we heard some really good testimony this morning about the fact that Canada is in an almost unique position, with a direct channel to Washington but not being perceived by North Korea as a threat to it. The recent success of the national security adviser in Pyongyang is a testimony to opportunity for Canada.

Then, as I mentioned, there are other things that the United States would much rather we focus on. They haven't asked for missile defence; they've asked for an increase in defence spending on things such as our air force and our navy, and they want that north warning system to be rejuvenated.

Let's do the priority items, then, and realize that although North Korea captures a lot of attention and although it is dangerous, there are lots of threats in the world. This should not be our single obsession.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Again, what are our options going forward in terms of BMD? The United States is not going to ask us again to join; they've already done that. If we choose to, are we just going forward as supplicants? What realistically can we do at this point in terms of participating in BMD?

Dr. Robert Huebert: Could I interject here?

Let's be clear on one thing. We don't know what the costs are or what the Americans would require from us at this point. In other words, if we start saying that we're drawing away substantial resources for a price tag for participation, that may or may not be the case.

We are moving ahead, as has been mentioned, with the renewal of NORAD, so it's entirely conceivable that if we were the ones to initiate some form of participation within the American ABM system we might be able to negotiate it in that context, because we are going to have to take some very expensive internal moves for the modernization of the north warning system and satellite systems that the Liberal defence policy says we are going to be doing.

In this context, I want to put a brake on the assumption that it's as though if we do ABM with the Americans it's going to cost us a whole lot of money. They may have a price tag; with Donald Trump as President, who knows? On the other hand, though, given the fact that we can see clearly the way the threat has been developing, to ensure that we have some form of participation—it will be junior, and it's silly to think it's going to be anything but junior participation—we want to lock ourselves in for that possibility. As I said earlier, if the North Koreans start getting into the situation that they can start overwhelming the system, we want to make sure we are involved at least in some part so that the Americans are thinking of us in a crisis situation. I think that's really what we're trying to get ourselves involved with at this point in time.

● (1335)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The threat of an electromagnetic pulse seems to be far more advanced than analysts had thought up until recently. The concern is that an EMP would go off, take down our electrical grid, knock out the ABM system, and then they would be free to launch without the concern of interceptors from North America.

How do we deal with that potential? Based on that, even if we had BMD in place, we're still not protected. What would you suggest as a solution? How do we counter that?

Dr. Michael Byers: I think you heard this morning that the military systems are likely protected against an EMP attack. Given a choice between an EMP attack and its consequences for civilian functionality, I'd still take it over a hydrogen bomb on a major city. It's one of a range of slight risks that are out there. Let's keep our eye on the opportunities for Canada. If we join missile defence, we'll likely freeze ourselves out of diplomacy with Pyongyang. That's to start with.

Second, it's not clear the Americans want us in missile defence. Until we know the answer to that question and how much they would charge, we shouldn't be recommending anything.

There are serious threats. I'm not naive about this. North Korea is extremely dangerous. Joining missile defence is like saying, “We have to do something; what can we do?”, and you reach for the one thing and it's purely symbolic. Let's get serious and do real, meaningful things.

Mr. Danny Lam: If you allow me to interject, as of September 7, President Trump issued a shoot-down order for any missile heading towards the United States. I don't have the specifics of the order yet, but my understanding of the order is that it will be shot down during what's called "boost phase"—that is, literally, when it flies from North Korea at the very early stages—which means you're doing it with missiles based in Japan on vessels or on land. You're not even going to give them a chance to get to Alaska, get over the horizon, because you can't take a chance. A shoot-down at boost phase, if you think about it, is incredibly provocative. They have concluded they could not take the chance of a surprise attack. They have concluded that North Korea is likely to do a surprise attack.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We have had quite a discussion on the threats from the air. We know that the marine-borne, especially nuclear, threat vector exists. Canada has 10 times more coastline than the United States has, and we have at most, at any one time, three submarines. The United States is under way with a radiation detection system for surface vessels, but Canada has nothing. Given that people or drugs can be smuggled through maritime operations, probably components for a nuclear bomb could be smuggled as well. How do we safeguard and protect Canadians against that sort of threat?

The Chair: I'm going to have to ask you to hold your answer on that because I have to yield the floor to Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I do want to thank my colleague, Ms. Gallant, for continuing to raise the maritime security issues, because I think those are the kinds of things we're talking about that are tangible and real and something we might be able to do something about.

Mr. Byers took away my first question, because I was going to ask him, and also Mr. Robertson, about the chances for diplomacy if we chose to join ballistic missile defence. I think Mr. Byers was quite clear that a role for Canada in diplomacy in this region would probably be eliminated by joining ballistic missile defence. I wonder if Mr. Robertson would agree with that.

Mr. Colin Robertson: No, I would not agree.

Right now, if we're talking particularly about North Korea, we need to change our current policy to have engagement with North Korea and accredit our ambassador in Seoul to Pyongyang as well, and let him go up and see. Just as our national security adviser has done recently, I would do that as a piece of the puzzle. I'm not convinced that signing on to ballistic missile defence for Canadian reasons will have any effect on the relationship with North Korea. I don't think it will. Countries make their own decisions for their own reasons, and I think we would make this decision now because of the heightened threat to Canadians. Ultimately, and partly to answer Ms. Gallant's comment, there are many threats to a country and you're constantly doing risk assessment of them and making decisions accordingly.

NORAD provides us a great deal of protection, because we're able to build on that partnership with the United States. We are the smaller partner, but we benefit hugely from the investments the Americans make. This is a little piece of the puzzle. One of the questions Mr. Byers asked earlier was, are the Americans asking us? I do not believe the Americans will ask us, because we have been asked. They're going to stay away from this because, although Mr. Trump is unpredictable, certainly I think those around him feel that it's not something they want to get involved in with Canada. It would be for Canada, for Canadian reasons, to say, "Okay, we're interested; how much is it going to cost, what do you want from us, and what will be our ability to manage the system?" I think those are important questions that we need to get answers to, and we do it not because we're partners with the Americans as allies but because we want to defend Canadians.

● (1340)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Byers, on the question of diplomacy, could you elaborate?

Dr. Michael Byers: If Canada were to approach the United States on joining missile defence, I would recommend that it be done very quietly, so that Pyongyang would not find out that we are asking questions about things like what the United States would need from us and how much it would cost.

It's perfectly fine to ask those questions or have a discussion, but don't recommend joining until you know what it entails. That's my message to this committee, right? Doing that is foolish and uninformed. Go and find out the information. Ask the Americans.

The other thing to realize is that a lot has changed technologically since 2004. Back in 2004, the Americans were interested in putting a radar base in Labrador and Newfoundland. They were also interested in getting information through the NORAD system. Technology has improved. BMD is going to be serviced mostly from space-based sensors, from satellites, in the next decade and beyond.

They don't need Canada as much as they did just 13 years ago. That needs to be part of the discussion too. Do they need us? What would they like us to do in terms of strengthening the defence of North America, given the pressure from the White House to increase defence spending? They're not asking for missile defence. They're asking us to increase defence spending, and that is air force, navy, and army, not missile defence.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I want to come back to the unique opportunity that people are talking about for Canada as a country that has the ear of the United States and is not identified directly as an enemy of North Korea. With the success we had with the controlled engagement policy most recently, is there an opening for Canada at this point, perhaps even in pursuing something like turning the 1953 armistice into a peace treaty, to take initiatives that don't directly go at the threat but that would reduce tensions in the region?

Mr. Byers and then maybe Mr. Huebert can answer.

Dr. Michael Byers: I have a very simple answer. I don't know, but we should try. You don't know until you try. This is an extremely dangerous situation. We may have an opening. I think we as a country have an obligation to pursue that, because we might be able to dial the temperature down.

Dr. Robert Huebert: If I could interject, I have to take an opposite position. I do not see, on the limited amount that we have for diplomacy.... In terms of the cost for diplomacy with the North Koreans, the North Koreans are not going to pay attention. I don't even know if they necessarily know we exist.

If we are going to be placing diplomacy, it should be to reassure the front-line states that are facing.... In other words, we should be talking with the Japanese who are constantly trying to get our attention on many of these security issues, talking to the South Koreans, and, I would also suspect, talking to the Australians and the New Zealanders.

The more that we can provide some means of diplomacy, thus providing a very clear front against the North Koreans, I think is a much better use of our diplomatic efforts, rather than going off on what I would characterize as a bit of a fool's errand and trying to get the North Koreans' attention on us. It just simply is not going to be there.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Robertson.

Mr. Colin Robertson: I'll just add that first of all you need to have diplomatic relations, which we do not have.

For example, we were useful recently to President Obama in his opening to Cuba. As you know, a number of private meetings were held in Canada. Doing that was possible because we have and maintain diplomatic relations with the Cubans. We were able to very quietly provide Canada as a venue for this kind of thing. It was not known until after the fact and only because the president thanked us.

We could not do that right now with North Korea because we don't have the relationship. I would say to first get the relationship and then see what you can do.

● (1345)

The Chair: Mr. Robillard.

Mr. Yves Robillard: My question could be addressed either to one of you or to all of you. Since this meeting is about the threat North Korea represents for Canada, can you recall for us some of the instances in which Canada was singled out by North Korean rhetoric? What was it about and why were we singled out?

Mr. Danny Lam: Specifically, we have not been singled out recently, but on August 20, the U.K. and Australia were singled out because they participated in military exercises with South Korea.

Mr. Colin Robertson: I'm not aware of it. You'd have to go back to the Korean War before you would see a Canada engagement. You could ask Global Affairs. They could probably give you a readout on that.

Dr. Michael Byers: There was one tweet from the North Korean information office that was making some unpleasant fun of our Prime Minister, but it wasn't—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Now that's where we draw the line.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Dr. Michael Byers: I do want to add something, if you'll just bear with me for five or 10 seconds. Canada also has a strong relationship with the People's Republic of China, and China is one of the very major players in this situation. If we're doing any foreign policy with regard to North Korea, we should at least be talking with the Chinese to make sure we're not stepping on their toes, because that's the only country that can really solve the problem. If there's a role for Canada, it has to be in concert with the Chinese.

Dr. Robert Huebert: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] any tweet or anything that the Koreans have in fact singled us out, though I would add that we have to be careful not to get too focused on whether we are in fact concerned if we have been singled out. Recognize that if we are dealing with an aggressor state that we can characterize as a bully, to give too much credibility when they do single us out, or to say that we had better not do anything because we might get singled out, is to basically give in to the type of aggressive behaviour that we see them using against the Japanese and South Koreans.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you.

[*English*]

I will share my time with my colleague Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: How much time would there be, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have about four minutes or so.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Byers, in response to a question from Mr. Garrison, you said that signing on to BMD would be a signal that we're losing our ability to use diplomacy.

I'm curious to see if you can expand on that. BMD is a program about defence. How can preparing yourself to defend your country be seen as an aggressive tactic? It would be one thing if we were engaged in offensive behaviour, but we're talking about defending our country. We're not talking about being aggressive.

Dr. Michael Byers: I can't put myself in the mind of the North Korean leadership any better than you can. What I can say is that they are likely following developments very closely, including testimony from this committee, and they would be aware that Canada has a somewhat different posture. We chose not to have nuclear weapons. We chose not to have ICBMs. We chose not to have that capacity to strike at countries such as North Korea—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Why can't we choose to defend ourselves?

Dr. Michael Byers: We can choose to defend ourselves, absolutely, but we would be choosing to defend ourselves by buying into and joining a weapon system that is primarily controlled by their arch-enemy. It's a U.S. weapon system. Yes, it is for striking warheads coming at them, but it is still a weapon system.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay. I appreciate that.

Earlier this morning during the discussion—I believe you were in the room—there was another exchange when Mr. Garrison was asking questions about whether or not the United States would respond on our behalf. I think a number of people asked the question and continued to push the point by saying, "But wouldn't they respond?" and "Surely, they would respond." Of course, the folks who were sitting here before really do not have the capacity to weigh in on rhetorical questions like that.

At what point, in making these assertions that you are relying on somebody else to respond, do you start to lose your sovereignty and your autonomy? Your whole argument is to say "don't worry" because somebody else will take care of it, but aren't you basically giving up your sovereignty by doing that?

● (1350)

Dr. Michael Byers: During the Cold War, did we give up our sovereignty by allowing decision-making on nuclear deterrence to rest with the United States instead of Canada? I don't think so. We participated in the gathering of surveillance through NORAD.

Right now, we're in a situation where the question—a hypothetical question, because the United States hasn't asked us—is whether we're going to join in their weapon system. The last time we came this close to having a discussion like this was when we accepted U.S. nuclear warheads on Canadian soil, which would probably have been put on Canadian missiles in the event of a breaking out of war—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I understand where you're going but—

Dr. Michael Byers: This is a U.S. weapon system. It's a step beyond what we've done before.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I appreciate that, but I'm really limited on time.

Would you agree, at least generally or philosophically speaking, that if you are depending on somebody else to respond on your behalf, you're essentially giving away your sovereignty?

Dr. Michael Byers: We depend on other countries all of the time, right? We go to Afghanistan and we're getting air cover from the U. S. Air Force. We depend on other countries all the time. That's the whole point of being in an alliance—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's off our own land.

Dr. Michael Byers: Well, we work with the—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That's in a joint operation when we're somewhere else—

Dr. Michael Byers: Even here, we're part of the Five Eyes system for intelligence sharing. That's protection of North America. We rely on other countries all the time.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: The difference is that we're not in an agreement with the U.S. that they would take care of us. We're just assuming they would. That's the difference. In every other example that you're using, you were in an alliance, and people are assuming that when they make these assertions. I'm not weighing in one way or the other. All I'm trying to get at is, do you see it as a concern with respect to our sovereignty?

Dr. Michael Byers: What I heard this morning was that the United States has told us that we would not be involved in the decision-making. They have not explicitly said that they would not strike at a missile coming towards Canada, if one were in fact coming towards Canada, which is unlikely, given that North Korea doesn't regard us as a threat.

Yes, you can run down every single hypothetical, and if you had an unlimited defence budget and the desire for perfect protection, you could go there, but this sort of question should be part of a discussion with the United States. You're just hypothesizing. I'm hypothesizing, right? We don't know what the U.S. position would be—

The Chair: I'm going to have to kibosh the hypothesizing for now and give the floor to Ms. Alleslev, who can continue that, if she wishes.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Thank you very much, and thanks to you guys for being here and giving us such a broad perspective.

I'd like to return to the conversation on diplomacy. We've talked about what the potential cost of diplomacy might be in terms of becoming engaged in missile defence. What would the cost be of not being involved in diplomacy, pragmatic security, and economic and other relationships?

Mr. Robertson.

Mr. Colin Robertson: Right now, I'd say on diplomacy that you would have the current situation, where we do not really have a relationship with North Korea. If we were to change the policy, it would involve probably more frequent trips by our ambassador. It's not that far up to Pyongyang, so the cost would be marginal, but at least we would have Canadian eyes on the situation and would be able to bring a Canadian perspective to the table, and potentially—but I would say it is a very limited potential—might be able to be helpful in an instance.

Dr. Byers has talked about the relationship with China. That's all true. I think that's correct, but you have to be able to be there first. I might say that first we would have to change the current policy so that we had greater engagement for Canadian interests. We're not doing this for the United States. We're doing this because there are Canadian interests at stake, just as recently, for example, our national security adviser went to help secure the exit of Pastor Lim. There potentially will be other situations—

Ms. Leona Alleslev: That's from one aspect. What I mean, though, is that we've made the decision at this point to not be involved in ballistic missile defence. Is there a cost to Canada for not being involved in it, and what is that?

Mr. Colin Robertson: In terms of the relationship with the United States or others? No, I don't think so.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Economically or practically?

Mr. Colin Robertson: There may be some if we make an investment.... Then again, these are decisions the government would make. If we were to decide to go into it, there may be technology that we would get access to, but that would all be part of the negotiation process.

What is fundamental here is this: is there a greater threat to Canadians than there was 10 years ago? I believe there is. Therefore, I think we should re-examine and ask the tough questions. How much does it cost? How much participation are we going to have in it? I'm not troubled by the fact that it's an American-made system. We use American-made systems all the time, but we use them for Canadian reasons to protect Canadians. That's what's important.

● (1355)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Can I ask you to respond, Mr. Lam?

Mr. Danny Lam: I'll make two points.

First of all, the threat is different. The explosion on September 3 was 250 kilotons. This is not a toy. That determination has changed U.S. policy from "we could live with it and put up with it for a little longer" to "we have to do something about it now".

In this discussion of BMD, you talk about joining and you talk about costs...? Excuse me. That is going to take months and years. We have a problem today.

Now, the other point on defence is that missile defence doesn't work incrementally. The first increment of defence you build changes everything, because then you're no longer the easiest target. They may be able to defeat your missile defence, but they have uncertainty. You have upset their calculation. My argument is that fielding something quickly, even if it's only one desultory anti-ballistic missile, has value. We could actually do it today if it's forward defence, okay? We can do it quickly and cheap.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Huebert.

Dr. Robert Huebert: I just have to weigh in. We've talked about diplomacy. Diplomacy also comes from strength. You talk about the economic factors and all of these. It's not about economics. It's about how we have Canadian security.

We also seem to be fixated on this one scenario that is just about the North Koreans firing a missile at North America before anything else happens. I think we have to be really careful about getting so fixated on that, because the more realistic probability is a quick invasion from the North Koreans into South Korea and a war erupts. At that point, we want to make sure that we are participating fully with the Americans when the heat of battle means that all the planning we had beforehand goes out the window.

Therefore, in answer to your very good question—what is the cost if we're not involved?—it's that in that scenario where North Korea invades South Korea, the war breaks out, things get hot, and then at that point they fire, we want to be ready in some form, even if it's as a junior participant that we're there. To say that somehow we have security by not participating I think is totally based on false premises, to be honest.

The Chair: The last couple of minutes for this panel will go to Mr. Bezan.

James, you have the floor.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was wondering if we'd get any balance here. We've had 19 minutes of Liberal questions versus only seven so far for the Conservatives.

I want to thank all you gentlemen for being here today, and I do want to talk about this whole path of what avenues we can explore from a deterrence factor. I do believe, as Professor Huebert just said, that diplomacy is through strength. I think we see that Kim Jong-un is provoked by weakness. It's the same thing we see with Putin.

How can we take a stronger role in developing that strength through deterrence and through supporting our allies like South Korea and Japan? Of course, we can talk about our arch-enemy potentially being North Korea, but we also have our arch-ally, which is the United States, so how do we strengthen that relationship? You guys have all touched on it briefly, but maybe we can dive down just quickly into what the priority areas are in which we can strengthen that relationship.

I'll start with Professor Huebert and then Colin, and then see if we have time left to come back to Danny.

Dr. Robert Huebert: In the interests of time, first of all, from the military security perspective, we go for ABM, we look at how we can in fact improve the satellite surveillance systems we're talking about for the modernization of NORAD, and we consider the possibility for the next surface combatants. In other words, it's something real. It's something to show that in fact we will defend.

From a diplomatic perspective, remember that it was Canada that was able to get the ball rolling on NATO. I'm not suggesting that we get into some form of a NATO-like relationship with the Japanese, South Koreans, Americans, and the Aussies, but we can do a lot more than what we've been doing in the context of trying to facilitate that security-political relationship with those four states. I really think that we need to be pushing somehow. If you want to be investing in diplomatic efforts, I think that's where to go. I think the Japanese and the South Koreans would jump at it.

● (1400)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Robertson.

Mr. Colin Robertson: In the broad sense, I think it's recognition or changing the current policy toward North Korea to at least be at the table. That's on the diplomatic front.

On the defence front, I'd endorse what Professor Huebert just said. I also think, in the broad sense, that following through with what we committed to in the defence program review, which is very much in alignment with what the Harper government had come up with in terms of improving our capacity with our new fighter jets and warships and improving on our ground side, is important, because that then feeds into the alliance in meeting the targets that we have agreed to. It would be stronger if it were all-partisan.

Mr. James Bezan: Professor Lam.

Mr. Danny Lam: I would say, first of all, let's revisit NORAD and update the agreement to include missile defence. Second, do whatever it takes to make a deal with the U.S. to get one or two ground-based missile interceptors in Alaska that are dedicated for Canada only. Cut a cheque and pay them. Third, with our allies—Japan and South Korea—we must have a relationship for our forward defence.

On the diplomatic side, I completely agree.

The Chair: Gentlemen, thank you very much for your time today. I'm going to suspend the meeting to bring in our last panel of academics.

● (1400)

(Pause)

● (1405)

The Chair: I would like to welcome everyone back to our discussion about North Korea as it relates to Canada.

We have our last panel of academics. First off, we have James Fergusson from the University of Manitoba, here with us in Ottawa; Andrea Charron from Manitoba via VTC; and Andrea Berger via video conference from London, England. I believe that will also be the order of the speakers.

My apologies, Ms. Mason. I missed your name, which was listed on the back page.

We also have with us Peggy Mason as a witness.

To our academics, please restrict your comments to five minutes each. If we run over, it gives our MPs little time to ask questions, and I know they're very interested in asking you your opinions on various aspects of this discussion.

Having said that, Mr. Fergusson, you have the floor.

Dr. James Fergusson (Professor, Department of Political Studies, University of Manitoba, As an Individual): Thank you.

I believe all the members of the committee have the overhead hard copy of the threat fans. They are a copy of a threat fan from North Korea and where a ballistic missile trajectory would go to be able to cover all of North America.

Let me get right to the point and deal with the three issues at hand, beginning with the threat assessment.

First, it's clear that North Korea possesses nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles up to the intercontinental range. How many warheads and how many missiles, particularly at the ICBM level, is unknown.

Whether North Korea has to date been able to neutralize and marry nuclear weapons to its fleet of ballistic missiles remains open for debate. We have not seen evidence, and the only real evidence we could get would be if North Korea launched a demonstration test somewhere over the North Pacific, where it would detonate a nuclear device just to make sure everyone knows it can do it. Right now, at the minimum, we have to plan for an uncertain future, where they eventually do get the technology.

Third, although North Korea has done many military parades of solid-fuel ballistic missiles on mobile launchers, it's unclear whether it has mastered this very difficult and complicated technology. As it stands, notwithstanding the future, most of these missiles are liquid fuelled, which provides ample warning and preparation before a strike. An ICBM has to be fuelled roughly 24 hours before it can be launched, so you get this warning. That's an important thing to consider.

Also unclear is the extent to which North Korea has mastered guidance systems—the ability to launch a missile, fire and forget it, and where it's going to go where they want it to go—and whether that really matters to them, notwithstanding other factors, particularly when you cut through orbital space and the debris up there that might alter its course. We certainly don't know how well they are doing there. They have demonstrated or are showing the beginnings of submarine launch capability, but that, I would suggest, given the empirical evidence of how long China has taken to get to that point, is probably a decade or more off.

The North Koreans, despite what the so-called experts say, do not—and will not for a long time—possess decoys or penetration aids for their systems. This is extremely complicated technology. I refer you to the costs of the Chevaline system that the Brits undertook in the 1970s with Polaris to be able to penetrate the Soviet ABM system around Moscow. In addition, it follows that they do not have a multiple warhead capability. These are one-shot warheads.

The conditions under which the North Koreans would attack North America are extremely difficult to know. I could develop a series of scenarios of how this could happen, but by and large the rhetoric that cuts through all the nonsense is that the North Koreans portray this as a deterrent against the imperialist threat. Whether or not the probability of a bolt from the blue or a pre-emptive attack is low, it cannot be assumed to be zero. It is a possibility that has to be considered.

From general views in the west, as we interpret this through our own lens of deterrence thinking and on our past behaviour, we are looking at an escalatory process in which nuclear attacks, missile attacks, will be directed first against South Korea. In particular, they will be directed against American bases in South Korea, then to its four bases, in Guam and Okinawa, then subsequently Hawaii, then finally the continental United States. This thinking reflects the natural development process of North Korean missile tests, going from short range up the ladder until you get to three-stage ICBMs.

Having heard this issue about how we are not a threat, and we're not identified as a threat, I'll put it aside for the moment, but I'd be happy to talk to you in the question period about the lack of definition and this long-standing, misguided belief that somehow Canada is perceived as different from our core ally in the United States in terms of target sets. Nonetheless, from a basic perspective Canada faces two direct threats.

The first is Canada as accidental target. In an attempt to hit the continental United States, for a variety of guidance reasons—problems with fuelling, etc., or various factors—the warhead doesn't get there. As you look at the overhead, you get an idea of where it might drop if it goes short.

● (1410)

Second, as was pointed out—I think correctly—Canada can be a demonstration target to indicate North Korean resolve and capability in the context of a crisis or war, especially if North Korea is at war and is on the verge of defeat and destruction. One might expect the demonstration would then take place over the North Pacific as a way to signal the west, led by the United States, to stop whatever they're doing, but it may also be the case that they will look at Canada and say that they can fire at Canada undefended, along a path that would demonstrate their ability to hit Washington, D.C.

I will go to the end of this. Let me go clear to "Is Canada Defended?" The rest I'll pick up later and you can read it.

The straightforward and honest answer is no, we are not defended. The belief that the United States will defend us is morally reprehensible and politically irresponsible. It is morally reprehensible because we place the United States and the officers who by oath are there to defend the United States—not Canada—in a difficult moral dilemma which to me is unacceptable. As well, it is irresponsible because we have not negotiated any form of arrangement with the United States to deal with the problem of the defence of Canada.

The United States has three options in a potential attack scenario: a pre-emptive strike to eliminate North Korean capabilities; a second layer of forward-deployed naval systems, which may work against an ICBM; and, of course, a third ground-based layer.

Whether on functional terms the United States would defend Canada is based on four considerations: the size of the North Korean arsenal relative to intercept probabilities and numbers; second, the ability to identify the specific target here; third, the location of the Canadian target relative to American targets; and finally, will the things actually go where they're supposed to go? I'll leave it there for now.

The Chair: Thank you for your testimony.

I would ask other academics to please restrict yourself to five minutes.

Ms. Mason, you have the floor.

Ms. Peggy Mason (President, Rideau Institute on International Affairs): Thank you very much. Just by way of interesting comment, I'm a lawyer, a former ambassador, and president of a very small independent think tank, but I am not an academic. I'm a practitioner.

In my written submission, I made the following arguments. I'll list them because of course there's no time to go into them in detail, and the submission has been circulated.

One, North Korea seeks nuclear weapons for defensive purposes.

Two, there is no effective military means to denuclearize North Korea.

Three, dialogue with North Korea without preconditions has not yet been tried.

Four, there is a role for Canada in promoting a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

Five, which I spoke at length on the last time the committee looked into this issue in May of 2016, American strategic ballistic missile defence does not work, undermines strategic stability, puts at risk civilian satellites and, indeed, the peaceful uses of outer space, and is exorbitantly expensive, all of that notwithstanding one—in quotes—"successful" test in May of 2017 in highly artificial circumstances.

My sixth point is not a point I made last time basically because of the timing; I was concerned about the official possibly being identified. Given the toxic history in Canada-U.S. relations of potential Canadian participation in American strategic ballistic missile defence, it is not only futile but risky to raise it again. As I said in my written submission, the word "toxic" is the description of the history of Canadian participation by a senior American official.

Time is short and I wish now to focus in my oral comments mainly on the prospects for a diplomatic approach—given my background, this won't be a surprise—as the only effective way forward.

Dialogue with North Korea without preconditions has not yet been tried. We've heard a lot on the news in particular and in statements not so much from the President of the United States, but certainly from the U.S. Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, who have voiced their openness to dialogue and diplomacy on more than one occasion. What we haven't heard on the media is that so has North Korea, over and over again.

Former senior American official and now visiting professor Robert Carlin recently catalogued... Of course, we're all dependent on translations. If the media doesn't give it to us, most of us can't go and read read the original North Korean statement, but that's why this is such a great service: a real American expert, as I said, a former senior official, has catalogued recent North Korean offers to negotiate. He's gone through a whole series of them throughout this period of crisis, essentially, through the various tests of missiles and the nuclear tests.

Here is how the formulation typically goes. This is the translation from the North Korean statement:

> We will, under no circumstances, put the nukes and ballistic rockets on the negotiating table. Neither shall we flinch even an inch from the road to bolstering up the nuclear forces chosen by ourselves—

That's the part we hear over and over. The part we don't hear is the rest of the statement, which is as follows:

> —unless the hostile policy and nuclear threat of the U.S. against the D.P.R.K. are fundamentally eliminated.

As I said, troublingly, we hear the first part reported, but often not the second part.

Also less well known is the fact that the U.S.A. has yet to offer dialogue that is not conditional on North Korea first renouncing nuclear weapons before the talks can begin, clearly a non-starter insofar as North Korea is concerned. That is why Senator Dianne Feinstein, a senior senator and Democrat from California, vice-chair of the Senate intelligence committee, issued a statement on August 8—it took a while before it started getting attention—urging the United States government "to quickly engage North Korea in a high-level dialogue without any preconditions".

To put this another way, this is incredibly optimistic, because it means that diplomacy, far from having failed, in fact has not been given a meaningful chance to work.

Sorry. You're giving me a....

● (1415)

The Chair: I gave you a 30-second warning 20 seconds ago.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thirty seconds? Wow. Gee.

The Chair: Time goes by fast.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Yes, it does.

In my written statement I outline two different proposals. I outline a proposal for a comprehensive solution, which would see North Korea renouncing nuclear weapons—sadly, I think the time for that has passed—and then a much more recent proposal by the Chinese and the Russians, which they call a "double-freeze": a missile and nuclear freeze by the DPRK and a freeze on large-scale joint exercises by the U.S. and the Republic of Korea on the other side.

All of which is to say there are some really good proposals on the table, and Angela Merkel has indicated that Germany would play the same role they did in the highly successful negotiations with Iran. The UN Secretary-General has offered his good offices. It's time that Canada put its weight behind a diplomatic initiative.

Thank you very much.

● (1420)

The Chair: Thank you.

I'm going to turn it over to you, Professor Charron.

Dr. Andrea Charron (Assistant Professor, Political Studies, Director of the Centre for Security Intelligence, University of Manitoba, As an Individual): Thank you very much for the invitation.

I think testimony is starting to repeat. I've sent in my written statement, so I think what I will do is just try to summarize and unpack the three perennial objections to joining ballistic missile defence.

By that, I'm assuming that we're talking about the ground-based midcourse defense mission, or GMD, in which, of course, NORAD's role, were North Korea to launch an intercontinental ballistic missile at the continental U.S. or Canada, is to just warn of the attack. NORAD does not have a role of defeating ballistic missiles. That mission belongs to USNORTHCOM. The current GMD architecture is a system of systems involving several U.S. combatant commands, in which Canada has no decision-making standing or authority, although we will contribute to the warning information and intelligence.

Overall, the three perennial Canadian objections to BMD have been these. First, does it work? Second, what's the cost? Third, what effect might Canada joining have on global stability and international security?

First, on whether or not it works, the current U.S. GMD system, of course, has never been tested for real, thank goodness. Yes, there are Patriot, THAAD and Aegis systems that have been tested, but those really are intended for theatre ballistic missiles. That's very different from the ground-based interceptors at Fort Greely and Vandenberg.

The U.S. Missile Defense Agency would suggest that test results of the GBI of course are mixed, but they would also say that certainly today's interceptors are much better than those first deployed in 2005. Of course, the full details of the reliability of the system are not likely to be revealed unless Canada signs on.

Second, to go to the cost, GMD is expensive. The U.S. is estimated to spend at least $40 billion U.S. on this. By comparison, often it's quoted that Canada hopes to spend only $32 billion Canadian by the end of the next decade. Of course, then, people suggest that we have to make some tough choices between things like Canadian surface combatants or the new fighter aircraft, but still, it might be money that we need to spend if we think that defence against ballistic missiles, especially from North Korea, is going to be an ongoing concern, and that the BMD system will be able to adapt and change not only to different threats but also to different adversaries.

As many have argued, is it wise for Canada to continue to expect the U.S. to pay the lion's share of the expenses to defend North America? Perhaps there are ways in which Canada can contribute, such as through research and development, which would also benefit Canadian companies and universities. This doesn't necessarily entail a fifty-fifty split, which, I might point out, the U.S. has never expected. It might also be that as a sending state party to the United Nations Command in South Korea, there's more of a role we could play there.

Third, to global stability, Canada's decision to join or not join will have absolutely no effect on Kim Jong-un and his singular focus to achieve nuclear proliferation, but it may on his choice of targets. Ultimately, regardless of the position Canada takes, there are going to be what-ifs.

If Canada doesn't join the BMD and there's an attack on Canada, Canadians are going to ask why we didn't do anything, and certainly allies will ask why they aren't protected. If we say yes to ballistic missile defence—and of course we have some questions about the U.S. accepting our yes, and what the conditions are—but nothing happens, Canadians will want to know why we joined? If we say no and nothing happens, Canadians will conclude that it was the right decision, but if we continue to say no and the U.S. is attacked, then certainly the U.S. public will want to know where Canada was.

I think that at the end of the day this is a perennial problem, a stalemate that's been created, and I don't see it changing with such a politically charged issue with many unknowns.

The Chair: Thank you for your testimony.

Our last witness today is Ms. Berger.

Ms. Andrea Berger (Senior Research Associate, Middlebury Institute of International Studies, As an Individual): Thank you. I'm really looking forward to having a discussion with you today about the North Korean issue, which is one that I've worked on very closely over the years.

Let me start by saying that the obvious observation we have at this time is that North Korea has been rapidly advancing in demonstrating its nuclear missile capabilities, and I use the word “demonstrating” there because they've actually been developing those capabilities for quite some time. The change we're seeing now is that, especially since February but particularly since Kim Jong-un came to the leadership in North Korea, North Korea has been conducting tests, which, one after another, are designed to show us that they are making new technical advancements, from solid-fuel missile systems to new engines and to the ability to conduct H-bomb tests.

This rapid progress is in my view invalidating some of the assumptions that have underpinned multilateral policy towards North Korea for some time, but particularly policy in the United States. By that, I mean the idea that we can prevent North Korea from achieving the ability to strike North America with a nuclear weapon no longer seems to hold. Indeed, I believe we've passed that point already. In addition to that, the idea that we might get North Korea to denuclearize any time in the medium-term future seems to be very unlikely now and, as a basis for policy, seems to be imprudent.

I also believe that we have at this moment a crisis in assurance, especially with the U.S. and its allies and amongst those allies. This has been particularly acute in the last few months as North Korea has been conducting many of the provocations that we're concerned about, and I believe it's an issue that is worth everyone's attention.

As a result of all of these dynamics, I believe we also have a major challenge in communications. That challenge in communications relates not only to assurance but also to communicating deterrence and trying to establish the basis for crisis management when crises begin to arise. Furthermore, we have an issue of outlining how we believe we are going to start to meet reasonable objectives as that relates to North Korea. I hope that we can have further discussion over what some of those strategies and policies might look like and what end Canada and others should be jointly working towards.

Thank you.

● (1425)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will go to the agreed order and duration of questions. The first question goes to Mr. Fisher.

You have the floor.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much.

Thank you, folks, for being here. I appreciate your feedback.

Ms. Mason, you spoke about the fact that a diplomatic approach was the best bet to end the North Korean threat. I want to talk a bit about sanctions and hear some of your thoughts on them: whether they traditionally work or whether they're working in this particular case with North Korea. If the U.S. were to soften its stance, do you think North Korea would be more open to diplomacy, or would it continue to advance its research and development?

Also, in your opinion, do the last two decisions to ramp up sanctions directly correspond to the proliferation of what North Korea has been actively doing in the last year or so?

Ms. Peggy Mason: I think it's obvious. It's clear—manifestly clear—that sanctions have not worked. The long history of sanctions has not worked to prevent North Korea from continuing to develop a nuclear weapons capability. The classic statement about sanctions is that they must be part of a larger strategy, that the best they can hope to do is slow things down, and that in the meantime you should be pursuing an effective solution. In this case, I'm arguing for a negotiated solution.

It was interesting in the Iran case. Again, Iran is an example of sanctions and a broader negotiating strategy. One way that sanctions can bite a bit happens where the government is answerable in some way to the public, such as facing an electorate, so that the economic impact of the sanctions is felt by the public and they let the government know that they don't like it. That of course doesn't apply in North Korea at all.

Sanctions, however, are important. I certainly wouldn't argue that the sanctions be lifted. They're important in a broader context to send a message to other states that this is not a cost-free exercise. North Korea has an incredible tolerance of sanctions because the regime is all-powerful. As the Russians have said, the North Korean regime would let its public eat grass before they would give up.

However, it's still important that the sanctions stay on. This is a statement by the international community that this behaviour is not acceptable, and it's also important for the broader messages being sent, but no, they manifestly fail to stop North Korea. That's why we need to try other things, and I'm urging diplomacy.

● (1430)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. You spoke about tolerance to sanctions. I'm going to go to Ms. Berger, if I may, for a moment.

China is directly responsible for 90% of North Korea's trade. If China were to stop trading with North Korea right now, what would happen, in your opinion? Does that cripple them? Does it make us or the UN have to step in and take over issues there? Or does it make them respond more negatively?

Ms. Andrea Berger: In order to answer that, I have to come back to your earlier question and throw in my two cents on it.

Sanctions as a strategy make sense if they're aligned towards a reasonable and a feasible objective. I think the reason we're all sitting here saying that sanctions aren't working is that the objective that has always been outlined for the sanctions is the denuclearization of North Korea. I don't believe that is a realistic objective so long as the regime in North Korea has the character that it currently has.

Partly, it's not the fault of sanctions that we can't make it happen, in my mind. That's not to say that sanctions are not useful tools in meeting other objectives short of that—in my view—quite lofty goal. For example, there might be a chance that sanctions change North Korea's cost-benefit calculation to come to the negotiating table and negotiate something that looks like nuclear restraint. That cost-benefit calculation is probably different for them from what it is for denuclearization. Similarly, sanctions are there as well to prevent North Korea from proliferating dangerous technology to others. That's an objective that's feasible and is worth maintaining sanctions for.

To come back to your question on China specifically, I still need to be convinced that if China were to implement even the sanctions it has already agreed to in the UN Security Council, doing so would sufficiently change a cost-benefit calculation in Kim Jong-un's mind to make him say that he's ready to give it all up. I'm doubtful that this is a calculation we can affect, even if China were to co-operate on it.

In terms of other objectives, I think Chinese participation would be more significant, for example, on such objectives as preventing proliferation to others or changing North Korean calculations over the merits of nuclear restraint and responsible nuclear behaviour. That's a separate discussion that I think is really worth thinking through in more depth, rather than just using the standard narrative that has become so mainstream now, which is that sanctions don't work.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Is there any time left, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, you have a minute and 30 seconds.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Can I pass that time along to Ms. Vandenbeld?

The Chair: Ms. Vandenbeld.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Thank you.

Professor Fergusson, I was interested by your comment that an attack on North America would likely not be the first attack, that it would first be on the U.S. bases in South Korea, and then Guam or Hawaii. If there were an attack on Hawaii, it would trigger article 5 of the NATO treaty.

If that were to happen, how would it change the scenario concerning what happens if there were either an accidental or, as you said, a demonstration attack on Canada, if we were already in an article 5 situation?

Dr. James Fergusson: Why attack Hawaii? First of all, Hawaii is defended with its own batteries as well as forward-deployed naval systems, so it has a defence. If it is attacked, yes, we are bound by article 5 to come to the assistance of any NATO member. Exactly what we decide to do in terms of that assistance in a state of war—because we would be at war with North Korea— is an entirely different issue.

That does not affect or negate, all things being equal, the potential problems that Canada faces. It just expands them in a way, because then we are part of a formal coalition at war, by virtue of which we are now a target—a legitimate target. We then expand the number of probabilities to accidental, intentional, and demonstrated.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Wouldn't it also work the other way, so that if Canada were targeted, that would also trigger article 5?

The Chair: I'm going to have to hold it there and go to Mr. O'Toole.

You have the floor.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much to all of our witnesses for participating. I have a couple of specific questions.

I'll start with you, Dr. Berger. Thank you very much for appearing. I've seen some of your commentary on television in recent weeks and months and I found it fascinating. You focus on how the act of demonstration is very clearly part of the goal of the regime in North Korea. You also mentioned that we are past the point of looking at them under the old rubric of “developing”. They're now demonstrating.

Regardless of the presidential change in the United States, is it fair to say that the era of strategic patience is over?

● (1435)

Ms. Andrea Berger: The way I would probably best describe the current approach by the Trump administration is non-strategic impatience, if we can put it that way.

In terms of strategic patience, it is a strategy that is low risk, and I think that's probably one of the reasons why it was adopted by the United States. Also, it just is the product of looking at this extremely difficult situation and realizing that many of the approaches you can take are potentially high risk. You can define risk in a number of ways, but domestic political response is one of the things that politicians factor into that: that it's high risk and has potentially low chances of success across the board, so you're dealing with that in some variations of degree across your policy options.

Yes, in looking at this situation, I don't feel that there's a huge amount of support for something that is labelled strategic patience. Strategic patience was fundamentally about hoping that the approaches you were taking at a particular point in time would bite at some point in the future and prevent North Korea from achieving an ICBM capability and the ability to threaten the continental United States. We're there now, so there's nothing to be patient for.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Yes, and that's been clear from almost all our expert testimony today.

I know that both sides of the House of Commons always want to put diplomacy first, as we should, but we have the recent experience of Daniel Jean, the Prime Minister's envoy, who went over with a delegation of six to talk about the Pastor Lim case. They also talked about regional issues and security and, weeks after that, we saw the Japanese missile firing.

What are your general thoughts on diplomacy? I hear some people say that diplomacy works when there's a “rational actor” on the other side. It seems as though Canada's diplomatic effort actually led to an escalation or had no bearing on their own decisions regarding their missile testing. Can we deal with them as a rational actor?

Ms. Andrea Berger: Yes, absolutely I believe North Korea can be dealt with as a rational actor. I would suggest that the two developments you mentioned—the presence of the Canadians in North Korea for what was ultimately a humanitarian mission and North Korea's nuclear missile testing program—are completely unlinked. I would go to the second assessment you made, which is that it has no bearing on the nuclear and missile program of North Korea.

However, yes, they are rational. We can look at North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and assess that there are primarily two drivers for them. The first, of course, is to secure the regime, and we have to talk about what regime security means. I believe it means ensuring the continuity of a Kim-based leadership in North Korea, and deterrence assists in that aim by keeping the United States away from military action on the Korean Peninsula. Similarly, North Korea is driven in part by domestic politics as well. Here we have a leader who is trying to demonstrate legitimacy in an office that he has not held for very long and who is doing that on the back of nuclear- and missile-testing successes.

Both of those are rational goals for North Korea. Everything I've looked at in North Korea over the years in terms of their development suggests that they're perfectly rational. They just think about things that we might not.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Thank you.

In my remaining time, I have a question for Dr. Charron. It was interesting that the three general objections you listed for Canada's participation in ballistic missile defence going back to 2005 echoed almost identically the three points made by Colin Robertson, a previous witness: whether it works, the cost, and the impact on geopolitical stability.

How would you say each of those things has changed since 2005? To me, it would seem that in terms of whether it works, the technology has improved. It's confidential or classified, but it's obviously having more impact. Cost has been shared, or potentially shared, as with the U.K. example. Then there's the impact on stability.

Could you talk about how things have changed from 2005 to today?

● (1440)

Dr. Andrea Charron: I want to be clear. When I was summarizing the three objections, those aren't my objections. I'm simply telling you what is the perennial one.

In some ways, there have been changes since 2005, because technology changes and budgets change and the like, but those three objections have remained fairly consistent and haven't changed fundamentally. It's a mindset that Canadians have on why not to join ballistic missile defence.

At the same time, however, adversaries such as North Korea have bolted ahead of us. They now have technology that we've assumed is still in development and might not reach us, and I think we've seen that this is simply not the case. Our arguments have stayed quite static, but certainly the technology of our adversaries is bolting ahead.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: The threat has increased dramatically, but we haven't reassessed it with that threat in mind.

Dr. Andrea Charron: Yes, and here is a related argument. For example, on the Global Affairs website, we haven't updated our basic fact sheet for North Korea. We still list Kim Jong-nam as the country's spokesperson. He's the brother whom Kim Jong-un had killed a few months ago.

We don't list a population for North Korea. We don't list any basic information. This is an example of the ways in which our arguments have remained static. We're not keeping up on this topic, and it's basic things such as generating new information about the status of North Korea that we're not communicating to the public.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I want to start by dealing with an assumption by one of the witnesses and a couple of you on the other side of the table that those who are opposed to ballistic missile defence are somehow presuming that the United States will protect Canada. I want to disassociate myself from that position, because I don't think the thing works, so I'm not presuming that there's any protection there to offer.

I want to thank Dr. Berger for her comments on sanctions. It's a very useful contribution to this debate to talk about why sanctions haven't worked, instead of just throwing up our hands and saying sanctions don't work. That was very useful.

There's a disturbing tendency—and it has come up at the table a couple of times today—to make an assumption that conflict at a higher level is inevitable in this situation, rather than to talk about what might be done to reduce the conflict. I know that Peggy Mason was a bit frustrated at not getting to talk about what a comprehensive diplomatic solution might look like, so I want to give her a chance to say a bit more about what a diplomatic solution would look like.

Ms. Peggy Mason: Thank you very much. Yes, I undiplomatically indicated my frustration, and I apologize for that.

Before I jump into this question, I want to add another point. I think the decisive point in then prime minister Paul Martin's decision to withdraw Canada's request to participate in 2005 was that he could get no guarantee from the United States of a meaningful operational role for Canada—a say, as opposed to a passive seat at the table—and he could get no guarantee that Canada would be defended. He wisely thought he could not defend participation to the Canadian public. Those key reasons have not changed in any way.

With respect to the diplomatic dimension, the really encouraging thing about it is that there are so many elements that have not been explored. North Korea has made it very clear, for example, how objectionable they find the military exercises.

Frankly, when one considers the scope of those joint South Korean and U.S. military exercises and then also those of the United States and Japan, they are exercises involving 70,000 South Korean soldiers to begin with, and massive amounts of weaponry, including nuclear-capable planes, and they simulate a decapitation, an attack, a regime change in North Korea. These are extraordinarily frightening simulated exercises. Clearly, over and over again, North Korea has said they want those to stop. That's a very key part of the Russian-Chinese proposal.

Much more basic are discussions without preconditions on ending the technical war that still exists between the United States, South Korea, Japan, and North Korea. There was only a ceasefire, and there have not been negotiations to reach a full peace treaty.

Those are just two examples of the many areas that have not been fully explored.

I come back to the point that Senator Feinstein has called for the United States to indicate dialogue without preconditions. Then the parties can determine the full scope of the various elements they wish to pursue further.

● (1445)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Given that Canada has a special relationship with the United States and a positive relationship with China and is not identified as an enemy by North Korea, do you see pressure points where Canada could advance the agenda toward diplomatic solutions?

Ms. Peggy Mason: On this one, I think the main role that Canada can play at this point is really very much articulating the need, supporting dialogue—behind the scenes, of course—urging the United States to take up diplomacy without preconditions.

Sadly, we haven't engaged with North Korea for a long time. There was a time when Canada was much more actively engaged and we had diplomats with a great deal of expertise, but that's an expertise that, like so many areas in foreign affairs, has been allowed to atrophy under the previous administration, the previous government. I'm afraid we have to be modest about how much we can do directly. Therefore, it's much more important that we get behind and support, for example, the UN Secretary-General's offer of good offices, and others who have played a key role. I mentioned Angela Merkel. I think that's is the way.

I'm not going to minimize that. That is an important role for Canada to forthrightly.... Minister Freeland did make one statement urging dialogue, but the Prime Minister hasn't done that. I think that in terms of dialogue without preconditions, we could talk privately to the secretary of state, for example, about that.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Would there be any role for Canada in lining up other middle powers, others of our allies, in favour of a diplomatic solution, or in other words, of Canada going to others with whom we have good relations and forming a group that would support the Secretary-General?

Ms. Peggy Mason: Absolutely. There already is. There's a pretty large appetite in the international community for diplomacy to be given a chance. What we have to bear in mind here is that in terms of any other approach there is no effective military response. Any military response is catastrophic. With the level of rhetoric we have, there's really a danger of inadvertent escalation and miscalculation. That's a huge danger, and we need to get that rhetoric down.

If one comes to grips and faces the hard reality, there is no effective military response. I fully agree with earlier comments made by Andrea Berger about the time being past for North Korea to renounce nuclear weapons. She used the term “restraint”. As the Chinese and the Russians have urged, there might be a possibility of measures of restraint, of some form of freezing of the activity.

The final point I would make about the demonstration aspect is that this is classic deterrence. It's North Korea trying to make clear that they have a credible retaliatory capacity. It's very ironic that in fact they're demonstrating the classic deterrence theory as espoused by the nuclear arms states.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Ms. Mason, you indicated that it was your impression that then prime minister Martin's decision to not get involved in BMD was as a result of his feelings of what Canada's participation would be in that. Is that something the former prime minister told you?

● (1450)

Ms. Peggy Mason: No. It's—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Is that something that somebody within his inner circle told you?

Ms. Peggy Mason: No, I—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: How did you come to that conclusion?

Ms. Peggy Mason: It was by the character of the public debate that took place. It was when—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: You have nothing other than a perception of a debate, and you've come to this conclusion based on that.

Ms. Peggy Mason: If one wants to go back—and we can—over the public debate, in circumstances where the American ambassador to Canada had to speak publicly on the issue, there were a number of statements made. The public debate got to the point where individuals like me were arguing that the United States would not provide this guarantee, and there was no statement forthcoming from the United States.

The onus—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay, but you don't know that to be fact. This is an assumption you've made based on information that you received.

Ms. Berger, if I heard you correctly, you indicated that you believe the opportunity for diplomacy is over.

Ms. Andrea Berger: No, not at all. As a matter of fact, I think it's extremely important that diplomacy be one of the strands of policy that we align other things with, such as sanctions. If your objective is to try to get North Korea to negotiate restraint, you need to have a negotiating table present for the North Koreans to see as an off-ramp there.

I do think it's extremely important. I also think it's especially important for crisis management purposes. If we think back to the Cold War where the United States had deterrence relationships with other nuclear-armed adversaries—and indeed, it still does—it had channels of dialogue with all those countries and had a good understanding at a fairly high level of how their leadership made decisions, who had the ear of various leaders, what their calculations were, what their vital interests were, and—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Your comment was more about the possibility, now that I think I understand it better, of North Korea's actually ending its nuclear interest—the proliferation. That's what you're saying is over. You don't think it's realistic for that to happen.

Ms. Andrea Berger: I don't think denuclearization is a feasible objective in the medium term. The longer term is an open question. Also, that assessment does not account for such things as the possibility of North Korean state collapse, in which case denuclearization would become a possibility.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

Going back to you, Ms. Mason, I'm curious. You seem to subscribe to a philosophy or an ideology that the only option is diplomacy. It's diplomacy at all costs. You also illustrated where the North Koreans have drawn the line in the sand: they've said that the public will eat grass before giving up. They've made very clear what their position is.

What should our position be in terms of our interest in diplomacy? At what point do we say that we've tried diplomacy, it's not working, and now we need another option? What is our threshold?

Ms. Peggy Mason: The starting point for me is not diplomacy at all costs. The starting point for me is to ask what the options are. What are we trying to achieve and what are the means of achieving it?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I apologize for misrepresenting you. I'm sorry, but can you get to answering my question?

Ms. Peggy Mason: There aren't other options. This is the problem. A military engagement would be catastrophic for the—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Your suggestion, then, is that we just engage in diplomacy over and over, even if we're being attacked and there are—

Ms. Peggy Mason: No, of course—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: What is your threshold? That's what I'm getting at.

Ms. Peggy Mason: My position is that there is ample.... First, as I said, I agree that sanctions should continue but that they should be in the context of a broader strategy, which includes negotiations at various levels, that this has to be tried, and that it serves no purpose to—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Do you believe that there is any point at which we should engage in a military fashion?

Ms. Peggy Mason: I think we should do everything possible to avoid that catastrophic scenario.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Do you agree that at some point we might need to get to that point?

Ms. Peggy Mason: I don't think it's helpful to go down that road —

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay. thank you.

Ms. Peggy Mason: —because then we're talking potentially about a nuclear war that could engulf the world. I think that kind of dialogue is not helpful.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

Ms. Charron, there's been a lot of discussion about the amount of rhetoric that has been flying around and the escalation of tensions. I'm curious. Do you think there is a consistency between what President Trump is saying in the media and what the U.S. military is actually doing? Are the movements of the military operations matching his rhetoric?

● (1455)

Dr. Andrea Charron: Of course, he is the commander-in-chief, so the military is going to follow Trump, but I think one thing that hasn't been mentioned now is—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: The military is not following what Trump is saying on Twitter. The military is following Trump based on his executive orders.

Dr. Andrea Charron: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Is what he is saying in the media and on social media matching what the actual operations are doing?

Dr. Andrea Charron: No military commander will take a tweet as his or her orders.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Right. Would you agree, then, that the rhetoric and the escalation are perhaps a tool that Trump is using to move people away, maybe, from other things that are happening and that he wants to avoid discussing?

Dr. Andrea Charron: Yes, and I think what you should be listening to is Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, and the comments she made. If you look at the new resolution placing sanctions on North Korea, you see that it is very nuanced. One of the calls back is for the six-party talks to resume. Those six players are key to ending this escalation. That's what we should be focusing on, notwithstanding the tweets we sometimes get from Trump.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It's safe to say, then, that the rhetoric is perhaps more embellished than the way it translates into what's actually happening on the ground.

Dr. Andrea Charron: Yes, and it's exactly what North Korea is doing with its public. If you look at the TV, you'll see that they've brought back Granny North Korea, because she is so beloved by the North Korean people. The testimony just gets wilder and wilder, but what we have to look at is the actual official channel of action—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

Dr. Andrea Charron: —and that's the UN Security Council.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you.

The Chair: We only have a couple of minutes left, so I believe that's all the time we're going to have for questions for you.

Before we dismiss the committee, however, I believe Mr. Gerretsen has a motion with regard to expenditures to allow this discussion to occur.

Mr. Darren Fisher: That have occurred—

The Chair: That have occurred, yes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I do have a motion here, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate all the witnesses for participating today over the four different panels. I hope we can make sure that everybody is properly remunerated for their participation.

The motion reads:

> That a proposed budget in the amount of $ 14,700.00, for the study of Canada's Abilities to Defend Itself and our Allies in the Event of an Attack by North Korea on the North American Continent be adopted.

The Chair: Is there discussion on that? All in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: I too would like to thank our guests, our witnesses, for appearing today. We very much appreciate it. We wish you a good day.

The meeting is adjourned.