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• (1535)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

I am chairing the meeting today. Mr. Spengemann is not available, so as vice-chair, this duty has fallen to me.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather virtually and in person is the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin nation.

Welcome to meeting number three of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Pursuant to the motion adopted on January 31, the committee is meeting on the situation at the Russia-Ukraine border and implications for peace and security.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of November 25, 2021. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. So you are aware, the webcast will show the person speaking, rather than the entirety of the committee. Screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to outline a few of the rules to follow.

Members and witnesses may speak in the official language of their choice. Interpretation services are available for this meeting. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. If interpretation is lost, please inform me immediately and we will ensure interpretation is properly restored before resuming the proceedings. The “raise hand” feature at the bottom of the screen can be used at any time if you wish to speak or alert the chair.

For members participating in person, proceed as you usually would when the whole committee is meeting in person in a committee room. Keep in mind the Board of Internal Economy's guidelines for mask use and health protocols. As the chair, I will be enforcing these measures for the duration of the meeting, and I thank members in advance for their co-operation.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. If you are on the video conference, please click on the microphone icon to unmute yourself. For those in the room, your microphone will be controlled as normal by the proceedings and verification of-

ficer. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

I would remind you that all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

I would like now to welcome our witnesses.

Is Ms. Hulan on now?

Ms. Heidi Hulan (Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): I am.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Ms. Hulan, I'm Marty Morantz, the member of Parliament for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley and vice-chair of the foreign affairs committee. I am chairing today, as the chair is not available.

I would like to welcome you to begin your remarks. You have five minutes. Please feel free to proceed.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I hope my camera is working properly. I have had some technical issues, and I apologize for my delay in joining of the meeting.

Thank you again, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the members of the committee.

[Translation]

The mobilization of Russian military forces in and around Ukraine continues, with no sign of de-escalation. The situation remains unpredictable and President Putin's military intentions remain unclear.

We're working closely with our allies and partners to find a diplomatic solution to the military conflict, by developing multiple strong deterrents.

Today, I'll be talking to you about the four main areas that Global Affairs Canada is focusing on: our diplomatic approach, our work on sanctions, our support for Ukraine and consular planning.

[English]

Turning to diplomatic engagement, over the last month Canada and our Euro-Atlantic allies have engaged in intense diplomacy along several complementary tracks, primarily via NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE, and bilaterally, between the United States and Russia.

Minister Joly recently travelled to Ukraine, Belgium and France and is in frequent contact with her counterparts.

Canada and its allies are united in this crisis. We speak with one voice in support of Ukraine and see diplomacy as the only viable path forward for Russia. We have presented Russia with a choice: meaningful dialogue or severe consequences.

[*Translation*]

In terms of the impact, Canada is working with Australia; Europe and its member states; the United Kingdom; and the United States to develop strong and concrete punitive measures, including sanctions.

Canada is prepared to quickly impose tough sanctions that would target influential individuals and entities with ties to key sectors of the Russian economy. We'll also be able, with little notice, to extend these sanctions to other prominent individuals and entities that are part of key sectors of the Russian economy. In addition, we can quickly implement other financial measures, including export bans in specific sectors.

At this point, we aren't ruling out any possibilities.

[*English*]

Turning to our support for Ukraine, since January 2014 Canada has committed more than \$890 million in multi-faceted assistance to Ukraine. Now we are further bolstering that support. On January 26, in addition to the renewal of Operation Unifier, which my colleague from the Department of National Defence will address, the Prime Minister announced that Canada is providing a further \$50 million in assistance to Ukraine. This includes \$35 million in development assistance and \$15 million in humanitarian assistance.

This new funding complements the work of Canada's peace and stabilization operations program in Ukraine on security sector reform, countering disinformation, supporting the Minsk process, and advancing the women, peace and security agenda. Russia's threat has destabilized Ukraine's economy, which is why Canada also offered a loan of up to \$120 million to Ukraine last month.

Through Canada's assistance, we are also supporting Ukraine's efforts to reform and build accountable, effective and resilient democratic institutions. In the long run, such reforms are the most effective way to strengthen Ukraine's democracy, enhance prosperity for the people of Ukraine and build Ukraine's resilience to Russian aggression.

• (1540)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You have one minute left.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Heidi Hulan: From a consular perspective, while the security situation is stable, the risk of armed conflict in Ukraine has increased following Russia's actions. As a result, we changed our travel advice and advisories to recommend that Canadians avoid all travel to Ukraine and leave the country before it's impossible to board a commercial aircraft.

The Canadian Embassy has also authorized the departure of non-essential personnel and their families.

I want to point out that 90% of Canadians in Ukraine have dual citizenship, meaning that they're Ukrainian-Canadians. Approxi-

mately 800 Canadians have registered with our embassy in Ukraine. So far, few requests for consular assistance have been received.

[*English*]

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, although the situation in Ukraine and on its border is fluid, Canada's support for Ukraine is steadfast. Russia's actions strike at the very core of the values and principles that underpin the rules-based international order. In that sense, Ukraine's security is not just Europe's security; it is the world's security, including ours here at home in Canada.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Ms. Hulan, your five minutes are up. Could you wrap up?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Yes. Canada will continue to work hand in hand with our allies and partners towards a peaceful solution.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you very much.

We will go to our next witness. We have with us Major-General Paul Prévost from the Department of National Defence.

Major-General, you have five minutes. Please proceed.

Major-General Paul Prévost (Director of Staff, Strategic Joint Staff, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. Good afternoon.

Mr. Chair, I understand that my microphone is not the best. If you lose me at any time, please interrupt me.

[*Translation*]

As the vice-chair said, I'm Major-General Paul Prévost. I'm the director of the strategic joint staff at the Department of National Defence.

I'm pleased to be speaking to you this afternoon. Thank you for having me here.

[*English*]

As a result of the complex operational environment linked to the rapidly evolving tensions between Ukraine and Russia, I'll be providing you with a brief update on Operation Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces training mission in Ukraine.

Let me start by speaking broadly about Operation Unifier, as last week's announcement is an extension and an expansion of this mission. Since 2015 the Canadian Armed Forces have had roughly 200 personnel deployed to Ukraine on a six-month rotational basis, known collectively as Joint Task Force Ukraine. They generally operate across a number of geographical locations across the country, with headquarters currently located in Kyiv.

Operation Unifier has the largest footprint among NATO countries in Ukraine. In fact, Canada has been one of the main contributors to assist the security forces of Ukraine through capacity and capability building in coordination with other countries providing similar assistance.

[Translation]

The current contingent arrived in Ukraine last September and is composed mainly of members of the 5th Canadian mechanized brigade group from Valcartier Base in the Quebec City area. Members of this contingent will be home next April and will be replaced by other members from the Valcartier Base.

[English]

To date under Operation Unifier, our trainers have trained over 32,000 soldiers and personnel from the Ukraine security forces to increase their readiness and operational effectiveness. Since last September alone, even through the pandemic, more than 2,700 members of the Ukraine security forces have been trained by our contingent. Through Operation Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces have delivered more than 700 training courses, working alongside Ukraine's military to develop highly specialized skills and capabilities, such as explosive ordnance disposal, military policing, combat medical training, combat engineer training, and navigation and reconnaissance training, to name a few.

• (1545)

[Translation]

Over the years, our mission has evolved. Initially, this training mission focused primarily on the individual training of members of the Ukrainian Security Forces. Over the years, we've adjusted and diversified training to meet the needs of the Ukrainian Forces.

[English]

For example, in 2020, our Canadian special forces joined our efforts under Operation Unifier and have been providing training and leadership expertise to Ukraine's special forces.

The training has also progressed from individual training to brigade level training. We've also added components to achieve lasting effects by building the institutions, such as in the professional development and academic fields.

Last week's announcement is a continuation of what we have been doing since 2015. This announcement will allow us to increase the throughput of our training we deliver, and will also allow us to plan longer term, at least until March 2025.

[Translation]

As announced last week, an additional contingent of 60 Canadian Armed Forces members has been added in the short term. This deployment is currently under way. The ceiling for this mission has also doubled and now authorizes the deployment of up to 400 defence personnel. This will allow us to adjust our offer over time to meet Ukraine's needs. These adjustments are welcome and will allow us to continue to build the capacity of the Ukrainian Forces to defend themselves against a range of threats.

[English]

It was also announced last week that we're delivering non-lethal aid. This non-lethal aid will include metal detectors, thermal binoculars, laser range finders, medical kits, armour plates, and other protective equipment.

Regarding the current security situation regarding Russia amassing troops on the borders of Ukraine, in Belarus and also in Crimea, we are very concerned. We are watching this very closely as the safety of our troops is always our number one priority. We follow the intelligence minute by minute, and have regular conversations with our allies to exchange our views.

[Translation]

Operation Unifier is a training mission, not a combat mission. Our members are far from the conflict zones. We're adjusting our posture based on the training needs of Ukrainians and the security situation.

While closely monitoring the situation in Ukraine and along its borders, we're continuing to train and we plan to keep training as long as conditions permit.

[English]

Our contingency planning is ongoing should mission adjustment be necessary. We cannot disclose the full details of these plans, but we can reassure you that our troops are currently in western Ukraine, and that solid plans are in place should further adjustments be necessary.

Let me finish by saying that Operation Unifier has been and continues to be a great mission for Ukrainians but also for the Canadian Armed Forces. We have already started our work to implement the government's decision to expand our presence in Ukraine. Despite the current tensions, we will continue to deliver on this important mission, keeping a very close eye on the security situation to ensure our troops are safe at all times.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Chair and committee members, for having me here today and for allowing me to speak with you. I'm ready to answer your questions.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you very much, Major-General.

Our first round is our six-minute round.

First up is Mr. Chong, followed by Ms. Bodayan, Mr. Bergeron, and Ms. McPherson.

Mr. Chong, you're up for six minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you to the witnesses for appearing in front of us today.

It's good to see all of you.

There's been a lot of talk that NATO is working together to counter Russia's threats to Ukraine, but I'm wondering how united NATO is, considering reports that Germany, for example, blocked NATO member Estonia from transferring military equipment to Ukraine by refusing to grant permits for German origin weapons that were destined for Kyiv.

Could the witnesses comment on that?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, I can make a few comments on this, although not on the specifics of the case that has just been cited.

What we can say is that NATO solidarity is extremely strong, in fact, ironclad at this moment. All NATO allies have shared their concerns with the situation on the border and its gravity, and what it might mean not only for Ukraine but also for the broader region. They are united in saying publicly that should Russia choose a military path, NATO is prepared and its individual members are prepared to respond with significant actions.

• (1550)

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Hulan, you mentioned that NATO is united, but there seems to be discord in NATO between those members that believe in granting Ukraine's request for lethal defensive weaponry, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Poland and Latvia, and those members, like Canada and Germany, which have not granted that request. Can you explain that difference among NATO members?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: What I would say here is that Canada and other NATO members are part of an extremely broad-based effort, a wider effort, to support Ukraine in many ways. This is a complex crisis and complex crises require many things, military support, yes, but also financial support, political support, etc. What Canada and other individual NATO allies bring to the table in their national capacity, whether it's training, lethal or non-lethal support, or financial support is part of this larger picture and part of the effort in demonstrating globally that the alliance is with Ukraine on all fronts.

Hon. Michael Chong: The crisis in Ukraine today really reminds me of the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, which was a prelude to the Second World War. There are parallels. Democracies at the time blocked military shipments to the Spanish republic, which was desperately in need of military equipment at the time, and fascists, particularly Germany and Italy at the time, liberally supplied military weaponry to the nationalists. That was the reason for the collapse of the democratically elected Spanish republic.

I think many democracies subsequently regretted their lack of action in support, lack of support, lack of provisioning of military weapons for Spanish republicans during that time, particularly in the aftermath of the six years that followed that, which led to the terrible events of the Second World War. I'm wondering if Canada, Germany and NATO members like that are not committing the same error that was committed in the 1930s.

I'll finish by asking this question: Are there any circumstances under which Canada would consider transferring lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine, granting her request for this assistance?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, Canada is focused right now, as are our NATO allies, on the dual track of dialogue and deterrence. The situation on Ukraine's borders is grave. The risk of further armed conflict is real. Canada is deeply concerned about Russia's buildup of military forces on Ukraine's border, and we call on them to de-escalate tensions and provide transparency with respect to their military activity.

Mr. Chairman, questions regarding what the government may or may not be prepared to provide going forward, as you will understand, are questions best answered by members of the government. What I can tell you is that Canada continues to consult closely with our allies regarding Ukraine's needs. Critically, we continue to talk to Ukraine about Ukraine's needs, and we will be ready to adjust our posture going forward depending on the situation.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You have 25 seconds remaining.

Hon. Michael Chong: I'll just make a quick comment.

There seems to be an incongruity between the government's stated policy of not sending lethal defensive weaponry to Ukraine and at the same time the minister openly and publicly calling for Ukraine's ascension to NATO. The essence of the NATO alliance, the heart of the treaty, is that member states are to come to the military aid and defence of fellow NATO members. Those two things seem to be incongruous.

Thank you.

• (1555)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Next we have Ms. Bendayan for a six-minute round.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would also like to thank all the witnesses, but especially Major-General Prévost. On behalf of the committee members, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary work of our armed forces, which are all over the world, including in Ukraine.

[*English*]

I think I speak for all colleagues on the foreign affairs committee when I thank the armed forces for their work, and I would like to also do so on behalf of the federal government.

I would like, in that connection, to pick up on something that you said, Major-General. You mentioned that our armed forces are not currently in harm's way in Ukraine, nor currently in a conflict area, but of course, as we know, there are risks by being on the ground.

What are you seeing on the ground at the moment? Can you elaborate on the work that our armed forces are doing in Ukraine right now?

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, obviously, like I mentioned, we're watching this situation closely. We are, as I mentioned as well, far from the conflict zone right now in eastern Ukraine. Obviously based on what we observe we've made some decisions to re-locate some of our personnel in western Ukraine. This has been done in consultation with our Ukrainian partners.

I will continue by saying the training continues. Even if we move into western Ukraine, much of the training activities continue. The majority of our training actually continues in western Ukraine. We'll continue to watch throughout the next weeks and months. Obviously the security of our troops will remain our main priority, and we'll continue to work with the Ukrainians and our allies, because we're not alone in Ukraine. We have the Danes and Sweden as well as part of our task force Unifier. We'll continue to work closely together to make the best decision to protect our troops.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: You mentioned working in collaboration with our allies who are also on the ground. Is it correct, of course, to say that Canada has the largest presence in Ukraine at the moment?

MGen Paul Prévost: It is true. Since 2015 we've had the largest training mission on the ground in Ukraine, but there are many more partners working with us over there.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I understand that we've trained about 32,000 Ukrainian soldiers up to today. With our expanded mission, do you have a target or approximate numbers, in either the short or medium term, of how many more soldiers our armed forces will be able to train?

MGen Paul Prévost: We don't at the moment, so we're increasing our capacity. You've heard the announcement—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Yes.

MGen Paul Prévost: —that we're sending an additional 60 troops to do this. The government also allowed us to increase our personal cap, which was 200 in the past, now to 400. Over the coming weeks and months we will continue to adjust what we have to offer. Obviously at certain points we'll hit double the capacity, so you'll see the training increase.

Also something I've mentioned [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I think we lost you, Major-General.

Mr. Chair, is there an issue with the witness?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I think he's back.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

As a last question, Major-General, how do you see the sanctions being used most effectively as a deterrent to further Russian aggression? Any witness may answer this. Do you believe that sanctions, including Magnitsky sanctions, could be an effective deterrent to Russian aggression?

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you for the question.

I think I'll pass this one to my colleagues at Global Affairs, probably Heidi.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Thanks, Major-General.

Yes, sanctions are always an important tool in the tool box for responding to and de-escalating crises and promoting respect for norms and values, including human rights.

Canada and our allies are currently looking at the crafting of significant economic measures that could be implemented very quickly should Russia choose a military path.

• (1600)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Are you looking specifically at Magnitsky sanctions?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Magnitsky sanctions and SEMA sanctions have different purposes and different triggers. The Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, known as Magnitsky, allows us to target individuals for human rights abuses. Our Special Economic Measures Act allows us to target not only individuals but also states and state institutions for their actions. In this situation we may very well need a combination of both, but our primary target is the Russian state and its institutions.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, do I have time for one more question?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Yes. You have about 35 seconds.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

Could someone expand on the type of equipment we are sending to Ukraine? I believe the major-general mentioned a few items in his opening remarks. Perhaps he could complete that list for the committee.

MGen Paul Prévost: I can assure you, Ms. Bendayan [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] mainly the range finders, thermal binoculars, spotting scopes, which I had not mentioned before, as well as metal detectors, body armour, ballistic armoured plates and some carriage equipment with that as well.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Ms. Bendayan. That ends your round.

Next up we have Mr. Bergeron for a six-minute round.

Please proceed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today. I also want to thank them for always being available to enlighten parliamentarians.

Even though it may seem like I'm trying to put you on the spot, I want to assure you that I'm just trying to understand.

I'll start with you, Major-General, not because you're from my constituency, but because one of the things that struck me in listening to your remarks was the rapidly evolving tensions between Ukraine and Russia. Ms. Hulan also emphasized this in response to a question asked by my colleague, Michael Chong.

Let me give you some background.

As a member of the Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group, the committee attended a presentation by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development and the Department of National Defence on April 22, 2021. At that time, we were briefed on the situation on the ground. At first glance, it seems similar to the situation presented to us a few days ago, on January 27, in another briefing session, this time organized by Global Affairs Canada. You participated in that briefing, Major-General. At one point, I referred directly to this similarity. I asked what had changed since April to cause this type of hysteria, this fear of an imminent invasion of Ukraine by Russia. I asked what was so different, besides the movement of troops at the border and the presence of Russian troops in Belarus. We were told candidly that it wasn't clear what had changed.

Again today, you're coming back to tell us about a rapid increase in tensions between Ukraine and Russia, which Russia denies, and which Ukraine also denies. Even Ukraine is telling us to stop this fear-mongering, because it isn't helping.

Why is this fear-mongering continuing, when there doesn't seem to be that much difference on the ground from where things stood last year? Are there actually things going on that you aren't telling us about?

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you for the question, Mr. Bergeron.

[*English*]

Mr. Chair, I will start but probably ask my colleague from Global Affairs to continue.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

It's true that, last year, there were tensions or, at the very least, troop movements around the border of Ukraine and in Crimea. That said, those movements were much less extensive than this year. Another change, which you've obviously seen in the media, is that a large portion of the troops are also deployed in Belarus. You'll also see, in the information released by the media or elsewhere in the public sphere, that the Russians have begun to operate in the Arctic, in the Atlantic, in the Mediterranean Sea as well as in the Black Sea. All this shows many more military movements.

Also, the new development this year, compared to last year, is the public demands made by the Russians, in this case Mr. Putin, as well as the diplomatic efforts. We didn't have these things last year.

I'll let my colleague from Global Affairs Canada address these new developments.

[*English*]

Ms. Heidi Hulan: I can build on that a little bit.

The buildup last spring was serious, and there was a lot of concerted diplomacy from the G7, NATO and European partners. Following that, Russia did eventually de-escalate tensions and pull back the majority of its troops from Ukraine's borders, but the intelligence picture around the current buildup is quite different.

During the spring buildup, Russia attempted to justify its presence on the basis of exercises. This time no justification of any sort has been offered for the positioning of almost a third of Russia's land forces on the border with Ukraine. As the major-general has just said, the other major change now is that Russia is demanding legally binding security guarantees that would constrain Ukraine's options into the future. This is new, and this is the subject of ongoing diplomacy at this time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You have one minute.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: I'll just also say that, in addition to demands for legally binding guarantees, which cannot be met by NATO and our allies as they violate our core principles, Russia has also heightened its hybrid aggression, as the major-general has just indicated, its propaganda and its disinformation campaign. All of these things are highly destabilizing not just to Ukraine, but also to the wider region.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the witnesses for their very insightful answers.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you very much, Mr. Bergeron.

Next up is Ms. McPherson with a six-minute round.

Please proceed.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to echo my colleagues when I say thank you very much to all the witnesses for joining us today and providing this information. It is, as my colleague Mr. Bergeron just said, very enlightening and informative. Thank you for taking the time to do this.

What's happening in Ukraine is extremely serious, and we are very deeply worried about that. I come from Alberta. Alberta has an enormous Ukrainian population, and I know many people who are deeply concerned about family members, friends and colleagues who are in Ukraine at this time.

It won't be a surprise to anyone on this call that the New Democrats are quite concerned that we put our effort into things like diplomacy and using things like sanctions or anything we can do to de-escalate the situation and prevent the increased aggression of Russia, prevent war and prevent things that would cause loss of life for civilians, women and children around Ukraine.

I'm going to ask some questions around that, and I hope you'll accommodate me, please.

On January 21, the Canadian government announced that it was providing a loan of up to \$120 million to the Government of Ukraine. It is something that President Zelenskyy has asked for. It is to "support the country's economic resilience and governance reforms".

Can you confirm for us that none of this loan will be going to the military, and if you can't confirm that, how are you going to make sure that is the case? What mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that? That's open to whoever would like to answer it.

• (1610)

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, with your permission, I'll just say that Canadian sovereign loans are always subject to negotiation, but I would like to turn to my colleague, Sandra McCardell, the assistant deputy minister for Europe, who has responsibility for this file.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Ms. McCardell, please proceed.

Ms. Sandra McCardell (Assistant Deputy Minister, Europe, Arctic, Middle East and Maghreb, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to clarify how the sovereign loan program works.

I can assure the chair that the sovereign loan cannot be used for weapons or military purposes. I can also explain a little bit about the process for the loan, which will give some comfort as to how we are able to monitor and determine the purposes of the loan.

Just to make it clear, the sovereign loan program is developed and negotiated with the Ukrainians and must serve either peace and security or poverty reduction goals in line with our feminist international assistance policy. To do that, we have begun discussions with Ukraine to identify the priority programs that this loan will be appropriate for. Once that is completed and we have a focus for the loan, Ukraine needs to submit a formal request to us, and then we go through due diligence and ministerial approval.

It's just to say that this loan is destined for a specific focus. That focus must be in line with FIAP, and the results of that loan are monitored by our development officers.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

It's lovely to hear that this is going to align with FIAP and hopefully our soon-to-be-released feminist foreign policy.

Speaking of our feminist foreign policy, as you will all know, making sure that women are included at all of the tables, including in decision-making, de-escalation efforts and diplomatic efforts, is essential. It's critical if those are going to be successful.

What is the government doing to ensure that women peace-builders are supported and that Canada's commitment to the feminist foreign policy is reflected in its supports to Ukraine?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, attention to the role of women is part of our short and longer-term support to Ukraine's military. It's central to our training effort there. That is why our ambassador for women, peace and security travelled with the chief of the defence staff when he visited Ukraine recently.

Both they and our ambassador on the ground in Ukraine emphasize the strategic, operational and tactical benefits to the military of considering gender at every stage of their efforts

If I could just answer the question more broadly, our wider efforts in Ukraine also have FIAP or feminist foreign policy objec-

tives at their very heart. Human rights, women and gender considerations are integral to our training. They're integral to our technical assistance in the areas of security and judicial reform, including in encouraging appointments. We are supporting women through funding for community and grassroots organizations in Ukraine, although I don't have the name of that program with me. We are supporting Ukrainian women to lead at the very highest levels.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You have one minute.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: I'll just make a final point if I may, Mr. Chair.

Whatever happens in Ukraine, it will end with diplomacy. Whatever agreement is reached will need to be monitored. We know from our experience working with communities around the world that those who monitor must include women and be attentive to gender issues. I want to assure you, Mr. Chair and the members of the committee, that Canada will be insisting on this in all of our engagements.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much, Ms. Hulan. That's very reassuring.

Mr. Chair, am I—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You have 35 seconds.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I will pass it on and I will get it on my next round.

Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Ms. McPherson.

We're going on to round two now. It's five-minute rounds for all members, except for the Bloc and NDP members, who have rounds of two and a half minutes.

Mr. Genuis, you have the floor.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I want to focus my questions on the issue of sanctions.

We know that the Putin regime is not focused on the good of Russia as a nation. It's focused on its own well-being, and Vladimir Putin himself is very concerned about amassing wealth at the expense of the Russian people. We've heard from the Ukrainian community, as well as, in particular, Russian dissidents, about how much more of an effect we could have if we were targeting the personal wealth of the regime, if we were specifically sanctioning those individuals who hold Putin's wealth.

Alexei Navalny has published a list of key individuals who are holders and investors of Putin's personal wealth. He has shared the fact that he thinks sanctions up until now have not been sufficiently effective because we have not been sufficiently targeting and sanctioning those individuals who are decision-makers and holders of the regime's wealth.

I have this list of eight individuals who Navalny has suggested are key people in terms of holding Putin's wealth and are key targets for sanctioning, if we are going to really deter aggressive action by the Russian regime. I want to go through a few of these names.

• (1615)

Roman Abramovich is one of the names on that list. He is not sanctioned.

Could any of the witnesses share any light about Mr. Abramovich and why he has not been sanctioned by Canada and whether the government is considering sanctioning him?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

I'm sorry. I'm getting feedback.

Can you hear me, Mr. Chair?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): We can hear you.

It's Mr. Genuis, though.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Okay.

Thank you for that question.

I cannot speak to that individual case. However, what I want to say is that we are very actively engaged with our like-minded partners to design and implement a robust set of sanctions that would be quickly deployed should Russia choose a military path, and that those sanctions would represent very serious consequences and would incur very serious costs on Russia.

Mr. Chair—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Could I just jump in and ask specifically with respect to Navalny's list...? I'll name some of the other names.

Maybe you don't want to speak individually about them, but if you could speak to whether this list is part of the discussion and efforts to target Putin's personal wealth, other names that are on this list that are not sanctioned are: Denis Bortnikov, Igor Shuvalov, Vladimir Solovyov, and Alisher Usmanov.

Is this list from Alexei Navalny part of the discussions?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, we are involved in discussions with our allies about what the shape of the sanctions list could look like. Those conversations are in confidence and have a deterrent value of their own, which we would wish to preserve at this stage, so I'm unable to give the member further information on the list he's referring to at this time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Can you help me understand, though, what the deterrent value is if you're not stating that list? Maybe I'm missing something, but it seems that it would have more deterrent value if you said that we are prepared to sanction these specific individu-

als, freeze their assets, or even if, in light of the aggressive action already being taken—the aggressive posturing—you started the process. After all, these holders of Putin's wealth are accountable for many crimes already committed against Ukraine's sovereignty and against the Russian people, so why not name names and start down the road of sanctioning already to strengthen that deterrent effect?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You have one minute.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Thank you.

Naming names has the effect of signalling intent. Signalling intent can give an opportunity for money to be moved around, etc. There's greater deterrence in ambiguity at this time.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

Just in the time I have left, is the government discussing with allies excluding Russia from the SWIFT international payment system?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, all options are on the table in the financial domain and in the sanctions domain. SWIFT has been the subject of discussion in the media, and I can tell you that SWIFT has also come up amongst allies.

• (1620)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, do I have time left?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): No.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Okay.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

We will move now to Mr. Oliphant, who has a five-minute round.

Mr. Oliphant, you have the floor.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to begin by first thanking the witnesses for their time with us. It's very helpful for us.

I also want to thank our analysts for preparing very extensive notes for our study, which I read last night and found very helpful, so to Allison and B.J., thank you for the work that you always do, but this was particularly helpful for me.

The one shortcoming I would say in the note—and I think I'm going to be asking for a little bit of joint effort between our officials who are here today and the Library analysts—is the need for a bit more work on the sanctions issue that was just raised by Mr. Genuis.

He's raising some important points, and I think some background on our sanctions regimes would be helpful for this committee, because it is often thrown about with a lot of rhetoric but without a lot of understanding.

I would like to give Ms. Hulan a bit longer time to talk about, again, the difference between the special economic measures and the sanctions that came out that were amended at the time Parliament adopted unanimously the Magnitsky measures, and the difficulty perhaps—I don't want to anticipate the answer—in applying Magnitsky in a pre-emptive way. My understanding—and you may correct me if I'm wrong—is that the Magnitsky sanctions are on individuals, not states or entities, and are directly related to human rights abuses as opposed to, say, a military incursion and illegal operation.

I will start with Ms. Hulan, and then I may come back with a request for a note from Global Affairs on sanctions and then some work from the analysts on helping us understand what Global Affairs tells us.

Go ahead, Ms. Hulan.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Canada has three sanctions regimes. We have the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, which is often referred to as the Magnitsky regime. We have the Special Economic Measures Act and we have the United Nations Act.

I won't dwell on the UN Act. This is the act under which we are empowered to enact any sanctions that are imposed by the United Nations Security Council, as we are legally obligated to do as a UN member.

The difference between the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act and SEMA is.... There's some overlap, but there are real differences.

I will put it this way: The Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act is limited to individuals, and it is related exclusively to human rights and corruption. SEMA can also enable us to level sanctions on individuals and also has a human rights trigger; however, under SEMA, Canada can also sanction a state and can apply some prohibitions at the state level. It can also sanction entities as well as institutions, so states, their institutions, organizations, businesses and large outfits like that. Where the JVCFOA is limited to individuals, SEMA has a variety of provisions that allow us to target either individuals, entities, or even states.

As the member has correctly noted, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act has a human rights trigger and a corruption trigger. In SEMA we also have an international peace and security trigger. A grave breach of international peace and security that is likely to result in a serious international crisis is grounds under SEMA for initiating—

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you. We could go on for a long time, but I'm going to stop you there, because I want to push a little further on this.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs recently said that part of her deterring activities with respect to this potential crisis is to ensure that Russia is aware that we have already sanctioned 440 Russian individuals and entities since 2014; however, she is prepared and within half a day would be able to exercise further sanctions as part of a multilateral engagement with others.

Is that the best way for us to do sanctions, multilaterally with others and in a coordinated fashion?

• (1625)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): It's a very interesting question, Mr. Oliphant, but unfortunately your time is up.

I don't know if we can ask for the answer to be submitted in writing or perhaps one of our next questioners will circle back to that topic.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I'd be happy, Mr. Chair, if we could get an answer on sanctions in writing from our officials in the future.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Is that acceptable, Ms. Hulan?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: The answer to the question that has just been posed is yes. It is also, yes, we can provide a written answer in the future.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you.

The next round goes to Mr. Bergeron.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I'll have to keep it short. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to follow up on Ms. Hulan's response. I'd like to thank her again for it as well.

The Russians and Belarusians claim that Russia is in Belarus as part of a joint exercise.

First, is this an acceptable response, given that, as you just said a few moments ago, Russia justified the presence of its military last year by saying that it was there for exercises?

Second, last week, at our meeting on January 27, I asked whether it was possible to know the content of the response to the Russian demands. I was told that we couldn't be told the content. However, these responses were given to the whole Spanish population through a leak in the newspaper *El País*.

How can Spanish people have more access to information that Canadian parliamentarians can't obtain from their government?

[*English*]

Ms. Heidi Hulan: The Belarusian government, I believe, has said that they have invited Russian troops into their country. I would like to fact-check that to be certain but I believe it to be the case. I'm not aware of comments about exercises. However, I would note that the Russian government has offered no explanation for its troops in Belarus, and that is notable to us.

On the documents, I think it's well known that both NATO and the United States have presented papers to the Russian authorities in response to their demands. The papers that you mention, including the U.S. paper, have been consulted with Canada in confidence. We are not at liberty to discuss diplomatic actions of other governments that are discussed with us in confidence, but I can speak later to some of the substance of the NATO paper if that is of interest.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Ms. Hulan.

Ms. McPherson, you have two and half minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Again, thank you to our witnesses for all of these responses.

Some people in this committee and some members of our Parliament have been calling on the government to provide lethal weapons to Ukraine. I have some concerns about that, obviously.

Do you believe there are risks to providing those lethal weapons to Ukraine? This applies in terms of keeping track of those weapons, but more importantly, I'd like some information on how Russia would perceive that. Would they perceive that as an escalation instead of a de-escalation? Could I get some feedback on that, please?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: I'd like to turn in a moment to my colleague, Sandra McCardell, on the question of Russian perceptions. In fact, I will turn right now to my colleague, Sandra, on that issue.

• (1630)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You have the floor, Ms. McCardell.

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The approach that we are taking right now is to focus on diplomacy as the primary track. That is the way that the situation is going to be resolved. It depends very much on our having a strong and unified position with our allies and for putting, visible to the Russians, strong deterrents.

That is the message we want to take. Certainly, we want to ensure that we do not take actions that could in any way provoke the situation that we are trying to avoid. Certainly there is an important role for us in continuing to communicate with our European allies and to ensure that the consensus across Europe with our partners is towards robust support for Ukraine and robust deterrence of Russian aggression.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

The Canadian government has announced that it is creating an action team that will be based out of Global Affairs Canada. I would like some information on who will be involved in that and when they expect it to begin.

Sandra, you have the floor.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm very pleased to say that there is, in fact, a great deal of action under way in support of Ukraine right now. The function of that team is already in place. We have close coordination across govern-

ment with Global Affairs and across a number of divisions of our department, such as those you have heard from today that work on sanctions, diplomacy, consular services, mission security and regional security. As well, we coordinate on a weekly basis, and in other fora more frequently, with other departments such as National Defence, Finance, IRCC and others as required.

We have mobilized a team here in headquarters to put in place those measures we've discussed, such as robust diplomacy and robust deterrence—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Ms. McCardell. Sorry, I have to move on to our next questioner.

Next up is Mr. Aboultaif.

You have the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Good afternoon, witnesses.

Lieutenant-Colonel Luc-Frederic Gilbert told CBC news that the Canadian military was forced to relocate about 30% of its 200 trainers in Ukraine to bases west of the Dnieper River because of the threat of Russian invasion.

How does that deter Russians from invading? Would they not be more likely to hold off on invading if they knew they would have to face the Canadian troops?

The question is for Major General Prévost. If the department and Ms. McCardell would like to weigh in on it, that would be great.

MGen Paul Prévost: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

As I mentioned in our opening remarks, we are relocating some of our troops based on the security situation on the ground. We do that in discussions with our partners, the Ukrainians, obviously. There was little activity going out east of the Dnieper River. Most of our training was west of the Dnieper River already.

This training will continue as long as the conditions allow that training can continue. We're more worried about our troops' security at this point than the mission. The Canadian mission is a training mission. It's not a combat mission. The only deterrent effect of that mission is the fact that we actually train Ukrainians to better defend themselves and to be more professional and effective operationally. That is the deterrent effect of our mission.

The reason we are moving those troops and continuing our training will be adjusted in time as the security situation allows.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

Could the department weigh in on this, please?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: I don't think I have anything to add to the answer that has been provided by the major-general.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: The Canadian presence there with the trainers, although it's symbolic, shows the Russians that we are more serious than ever to ensure that they don't do anything to invade, or it at least to increase the chances of doing so.

I'd like to see a further commitment if things escalate further. What would that look like, Major-General?

● (1635)

MGen Paul Prévost: I would start by saying that it's not only symbolic. The work we've been doing since 2015 in training 32,000 troops has been incredible. The skills we've provided to the Ukrainian security forces will serve them now and well into the future. It's not only symbolic; it is an important contribution that Canada has made.

As we've mentioned, this mission is the most important training mission that we have on the ground. In terms of increasing this commitment, the government has already announced last week that we are doubling that mission. We're sending a contingent of around 60 troops as we speak to continue that training output. We will continue to build the institution in many ways over the years to come.

This is the commitment the government has made at this time and it's not symbolic. It is a significant contribution that we have provided since 2015 to this country.

I hope this answered the question.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, do I have any more time?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You have about a minute and a half remaining.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: That's very good.

I'll continue with the major-general. Do you believe that our troops on the ground are well equipped? What are the chances to increase the quality and quantity, if we're not up to the stage where we can defend ourselves beyond the training that you have provided?

MGen Paul Prévost: Our troops are equipped for self-protection. It is a training mission, as we mentioned, and always has been. There is no intent to use this mission as a combat mission.

We will use the intelligence we have. We're watching this minute by minute, and we are positioning our forces to make sure that they stay safe. We're confident that we have good contingencies in place for the movement of those troops, and we'll continue to adjust to make sure they stay well protected.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Mr. Aboultaif.

Next up, we have Dr. Fry.

You have the floor for five minutes.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

These are very clear answers, and I want to congratulate the two departments for being very clear, because this is an important issue.

I'm not going to ask you what your intentions are, because that would be giving up your strategic position and your tactics, etc. I understand that.

I want to go back to something that Mr. Chong asked about, which is very important. We're talking here about allies. NATO has, what, 20 nations? However, the OSCE has 57 nations. How much

can you depend on the allies in the OSCE, given that we have central Asia, which is disentangling itself from Russian influence?

What about the Minsk process? What's happening there? The Minsk process has been going on since Crimea, and it has not moved. There have been no assurances from Russia that it will do what it says it will. Now Russia is seeking assurances from everybody that we will do what we say we're going to, when you can't trust Russia to do what it says it's going to. Russia broke assurances with the Budapest assurances on Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

Where do you think countries like Kazakhstan, the central Asian countries...? Germany cannot be discounted, as Mr. Chong said, because Germany is saying what it would do, but it is extremely dependent on oil and gas coming from Russia and has been playing that sitting-on-the-fence game. It's neither here nor there.

If you decide to move forward with sanctions, will you get the support? I don't want you to name what countries, but do you really believe that you will get the support of everyone? What are we going to do about the Baltic states that are now particularly at risk, especially the NATO ones like Latvia and Lithuania? What is our plan to protect those states?

I have one last question and then I'll let you answer.

Major-General, you talked about how we have troops and they're not going to be from Operation Unifier. Where are your troops coming from? Is it going to be your NATO troops that you're going to use?

Where does Turkey stand in all this? It is a NATO member, and Turkey has been playing footsie under the table with Russia. I want to know about the strength of the so-called allies around the table, especially at the OSCE.

● (1640)

Ms. Heidi Hulan: I had the great honour to serve as Canada's deputy ambassador to NATO for four years, and subsequently in Vienna as ambassador.

Discussions among allies, when we share a common security vision, are always going to be different from tables like the OSCE, where we share a room with those that have sometimes quite starkly different visions than we do with respect to basic principles, etc., as we are seeing play out in Ukraine and on its borders right now. I would say that those are expected differences.

With respect to sanctions and what it will take to have effective sanctions, we've seen in other parts of the world in the past—Iran and North Korea come to mind—that the power of sanctions is in shared action. It's shared particularly between those members that sit around the NATO table. That is the bulk of Europe and it's the United States and Canada.

What I can tell you is that NATO allies have been united in saying there will be severe consequences, including financial consequences, for Russia if they choose a military path, even as we hold the option of dialogue open.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Ms. Hulan, excuse me. I'm sorry to cut you off.

I want to be very clear. NATO is not only made up of quote-unquote Europe. Turkey is there. What is Turkey's position with regard to Russia? How would Turkey agree with the kinds of things that NATO wants to agree with? Can you depend on Turkey? Can you depend on Germany?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: NATO allies have been united and steadfast, and they're speaking with one voice, not only with respect to the importance of dialogue and deterrence, but also with respect to the possibility of major consequences should Russia choose a military option.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): That's four minutes, 55 seconds, but I think we'll move on.

Thank you for your—

Hon. Hedy Fry: Do I have five seconds? Can I use it?

Sorry, I'm just joking.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You can bank five seconds for the next time. How's that?

Thank you very much, Dr. Fry.

That is the end of round two. We're going to move on to the third round now. We're making very good time today.

First up in the third round is Mr. Chong.

You have the floor for five minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Assistant Deputy Minister Hulan, if I heard you correctly earlier, you said that the solution will ultimately be diplomatic.

All of us know that the Europe of the 20th century is replete with examples of where diplomacy did not work. We as a country know well the price that was paid. The solution in those examples was ultimately and unfortunately a military one.

How can you be so confident that the solution is ultimately diplomatic, and what analysis has led the government to that conclusion?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, even conflicts with a clear military victor end with some form of diplomacy to shape what comes after. I would make this as a general point.

With respect to what is going on in Ukraine, what I'd like to say is that NATO, the U.S.A., our colleagues and allies, continue to seek ways to de-escalate, because we consider the risk of armed conflict to be very real here. We are conscious that the consequences and cost of such a conflict would be paid not only in military costs in the treasury, but also in human misery that always flows from armed conflict.

Our focus right now continues to be on finding diplomatic paths. There are a number of tracks under way. I would say that is a good thing. We hope that Russia chooses one of them.

• (1645)

Hon. Michael Chong: I'll finish with a comment on the government's position on its decision not to grant Ukraine's request for lethal weapons. It seems to me there's a bit of incongruity. The government has said that it's firmly committed to Ukraine joining NATO. Recently, Minister Joly confirmed that.

Article 5 of the NATO treaty states:

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against [all of them] and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

In other words, the government says that it wants to see Ukraine as a NATO member. If Ukraine were a NATO member, such an attack on Ukraine would be deemed an attack on Canada, and if such attack occurs, Canada would assist Ukraine, including the use of armed force.

If the government is so firmly committed to Ukraine's NATO membership as it's recently confirmed with all the consequences that that entails, including coming to Ukraine's assistance with armed force, it's confounding why Canada today is not coming to Ukraine's assistance by providing lethal defensive weapons. I think that is an incongruity in the government's position. On the one hand it says it wants Ukraine as part of NATO. It's firmly committed to that course of action, which entails that Canada will come to Ukraine's defence in the case of an attack on Ukraine by Russia. On the other hand it's not willing to provide lethal defensive weapons today to Ukraine.

I think there's an incongruity here in the policy. The Americans and the British have a congruent policy, and it's something that the Canadian government needs to address.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all I have to say.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Next on our questioners list we have Mr. Ehsassi.

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

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Allow me to join my colleagues in thanking the witnesses for appearing before us. It has been very helpful.

As has been noted both by the witnesses and by my colleagues, we have been witnessing a lot of robust diplomacy taking place in the past several weeks. This is obviously a situation that is of the utmost importance to Canadians.

Given the robust diplomacy that has been going on, first of all I'd like to ask the two witnesses for their assessment. I'll start with Ms. Hulan.

Is it your opinion that Russia is genuinely interested in dialogue and diplomacy at this point?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, we don't know if Russia is serious about diplomacy, but we are. Russia has a choice between meaningful dialogue or risking very severe consequences should they choose military action. That is our message to Russia.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Over the course of the past week, have there been periods where you've found they are more engaged in those discussions?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: There are discussions ongoing between Moscow and NATO, and Moscow and Washington. Those discussions have not failed. They have not shown a lot of progress to date, but they are ongoing and we are investing in them.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you, Ms. Hulan.

Major-General, can we have some comments from you as well as to whether, in your professional opinion, Russia is genuinely interested in dialogue at this point?

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, I'll actually side, obviously, with my colleague from Global Affairs.

We don't know. At the same time, we're very hopeful. That is what I'll add here.

• (1650)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: As we've all been poring over the news, I think the United States is engaged in very public diplomacy on this issue. They have repeatedly stated that there will be massive consequences should Russia illegally invade Ukraine. President Biden is also on record publicly as having said there will be swift, severe and united responses.

Insofar as our country is concerned, either through those multi-lateral fora or more directly on a bilateral level, have we ever indicated to Russian authorities what some of the contemplated measures will be that Canada is willing to take?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, Canada talks to the Russians at the OSCE. We've been talking to the Russians at NATO. We've been talking to the Russians in capital through our embassy. My colleague might have something to say about that, but we have been very clear: We are preparing and are prepared to institute significant financial sanctions, including with respect to the financial sector, should Russia choose a military path forward.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Whether it be privately through private channels or publicly, have we been specific as to what consequences will flow should Russia invade Ukraine? Have we specifically indicated to the Russian authorities what have been some of those measures?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Like the United States, which has indicated that the financial measures would be sweeping and significant, we have said to the Russians, including publicly through our minister [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] are to institute a major package of sanctions and other economic measures should Russia choose a military path forward.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: I'm just asking whether we've been specific or ambiguous. That's the only question I have.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: As was answered earlier, we see value at this stage in not being too specific about what our plans are.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you for that.

Now if I could move to another issue that obviously is of concern to members of this committee, I understand that 440 individuals are subject to sanctions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Mr. Ehsassi, I'm sorry to interrupt but your five minutes is up.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): We have to move on to our next questioner, unfortunately, but fortunately for them.

Thank you.

Next up is Mr. Bergeron.

You have the floor for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We often hear the Minister of Foreign Affairs and senior officials in her department say that the Atlantic Alliance allies are completely united. During Monday's take-note debate, the minister explained that this was why the Prime Minister didn't pick up the telephone to talk to President Putin. It seems that the Normandy Format, meaning France and England, has been retained for this type of discussion with the Russians.

I want to delve further into the question asked by our colleague, Hedy Fry.

According to Al-Jazeera, Mr. Erdogan has offered to mediate. He would even suggest the possibility of peace negotiations taking place in Ankara.

Doesn't this show that this apparent unity, which we keep proclaiming as if to convince ourselves, is somewhat inconsistent? For example, we know that not all the allies in the Atlantic Alliance are enthusiastic about Ukraine's possible membership in NATO.

• (1655)

[*English*]

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, I really want to underscore the point that NATO's unity is very strong. That is not to say that NATO allies bring to their discussions exactly the same perspectives on every issue, nor do they bring to bear the same assets for resolving issues that arise. Ideas do get discussed at NATO. Differences of opinion between allies are aired in confidence, but when NATO moves, it moves together.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: I have one final question, Mr. Chair.

How does the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development view the upcoming meeting between Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin during the Beijing Olympics?

[*English*]

Ms. Heidi Hulan: With your permission, I would like to turn to my colleague Sandra McCardell to answer that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Unfortunately, the round ended about 20 seconds ago, Mr. Bergeron. I think we're going to have some time to get into round four, though, because we're making pretty good time. You'll have an opportunity to ask another question.

Next up is Ms. McPherson for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to follow up.

Ms. Hulan, you spoke about severe economic sanctions if Russia did escalate this conflict. Will those consider sanctions on Russian sovereign debt? I think my colleague Mr. Genuis had asked this as well, but can you provide any information on whether the SWIFT international payment system would also be impacted by those sanctions?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: The kinds of options that are available in terms of economic measures include sanctions against individuals, entities or states. They also include various export control measures, import-export bans, measures on dealing in foreign currencies of certain types, etc. They do include things like the SWIFT payment system. All of these items remain on the table and are being discussed, although I can tell you that the precise shape of the package that would be instituted is the subject of ongoing discussions precisely because allies need to move in concert.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Could you tell me if there is a role for the peace and stabilization operations program in this current crisis and, if so, what would that be?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: The peace and stabilization operations program continues to operate at this time. Actually, the fruits of its work, in terms of the security sector reform that it has supported with its emphasis on police and defence sectors is particularly important at this time.

The program continues to work on projects related to countering disinformation, which is very relevant to the current crisis, supporting the Minsk process, which is also very relevant to the current crisis, and peaceful resolution to the crisis generally. As I mentioned before, a lot of the work of the program focuses on women, peace and security.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Ms. McPherson.

Next up we have Mr. Genuis for five minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll begin by following up on my previous comments. I did not mean in any way to imply that these sanctions against the individuals on Navalny's list would be only pre-emptive. They would be responses to threats to international peace and security and human rights violations that have already occurred. It's precisely why Russian dissidents are calling for these sanctions. If we were applying sanctions aggressively against Putin's allies and those holding his wealth, that would deter future actions by showing that we were serious about past actions.

I also question this discussion about the number of people who are sanctioned. We sanctioned all of these people. The most important thing with sanctions is that we're targeting the regime's wealth, that we're targeting those powerful actors, and creating real consequences for decision-makers. You can sanction many people without necessarily sanctioning the right people.

I would ask our witnesses, whoever the most appropriate person to respond is, why we have not already sanctioned some of these individuals on Navalny's list, the individuals who are holding Vladimir Putin's personal wealth and investing it abroad.

• (1700)

Ms. Heidi Hulan: I can tell you that, as a matter of sanctions, I'm not in a position to speak to the specific list you have before you. What I can tell you is that we have one of the most robust sanctions regimes in the world. When it comes to the post-Crimea situation, we have 440 individuals and entities in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and associated efforts to undermine Ukraine.

We're actively engaged with partners going forward, and the sanctions package we are prepared to introduce would be robust.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you. That's similar to the answers we've heard before.

I wonder if you would be able to provide follow-up information to the committee in writing about the specific individuals who Alexei Navalny has recommended. It may be there is certain information you would not wish to be shared publicly, but perhaps you would be willing to provide some more detailed information about the discussions around sanctions on an in camera basis in writing. Is that something you'd be prepared to do?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, with your permission, I'd like to consult within our ministry to see what is appropriate to be shared with the members of the committee, either in writing or in camera.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much. If you could follow up with the committee either way and let us know the results of those discussions, it would be greatly appreciated.

I want to follow up on a very good question from Mr. Bergeron that we didn't have time to hear the answer to with respect to the relationship between the regimes in Russia and China.

What is China's position with respect to a possible further invasion of Ukraine? Is there any dialogue going on involving China between the Putin regime and the Chinese regime, between NATO allies and China? Is there any dialogue happening there that you're aware of and what is their position?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, I'd like to turn to my colleague Sandra McCardell for this question, please.

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Certainly, and we've been aware for quite some time that there is a strong and growing relationship between China and Russia. There is a complicity of authoritarian regimes very much in counterpoint to our own democracies. We're conscious of the relationship between China and Russia, and it's one of the many reasons that we are as engaged as we are in Ukraine.

There is, of course, Ukraine. There is, of course, the regional implications of this which are tremendously grave, but there is also a broader strategic question globally that we need to be attentive to. In short, we are watching very closely what is happening between Russia and China, and we are conscious that any support China's giving to Russia will be very much counter to the positions of our own unified group of democracies.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Very quickly if it's possible, do you see a sense in which Ukraine could provide a precedent for Taiwan, or that there's a potential linkage in how those situations could play out?

Ms. Sandra McCardell: I think we're very attentive to the geostrategic implications of what's happening in Ukraine.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

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

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to thank you and echo my colleagues' sentiments toward all of the panellists. You have great depth in this and have provided great insight.

I might switch gears a bit to a different perspective of asking questions.

I want to know what is Ukraine's own military capacity and level of preparedness to face a Russian aggressor. Are they prepared? What's their military size and capacity? Can somebody enlighten me? Maybe the major-general can do that.

• (1705)

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, I'll answer broadly.

Obviously, in terms of capacity, Ukraine is much smaller than Russia. In terms of capability, they're better, and they've been getting better for a long time. They're obviously watching this space carefully. I cannot provide an assessment, a comparative between the two, but in pure size, there's obviously a big difference and in terms of capability also.

That's all I can provide as an answer at this time.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you. The reason I ask is I've seen a few [*Inaudible—Editor*] they want weapons, but they can fight, themselves. That's why I wanted to know if their ability to defend themselves is strong. I'm not asking for anything that's confidential in that regard, but that's what I was getting at.

I also want to know how many U.S. soldiers or reinforcements are in the region. Is there a strong presence along with other NATO forces in that region that can come to Ukraine's defence if need be?

MGen Paul Prévost: Maybe I can answer that question, Mr. Chair.

The U.S. has a presence. They have a training mission also in Ukraine and they follow similar approaches to those we're taking. They're going to continue to train with the Ukrainians and they're following the situation as well in terms of positioning their forces accordingly.

There was an announcement yesterday, and in the last week as well—it's a public news release—on how they are reinforcing the eastern flank of NATO, not necessarily to fight in Ukraine, but at least they are reinforcing their positions in Romania and Poland, as was announced yesterday from the Pentagon.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: This question is Ms. Hulan.

It may be in an interesting question and there may be an answer or not.

What has Russia officially stated as their reason for having 100,000 troops at the Ukrainian border?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, what's interesting is that Russia has not stated why they have 100,000 troops on the border with Ukraine. The Russian position is that their troop movements inside their own country are their own business.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Chair, could I ask another question?

Mr. Marty Morantz: You have another minute and a half, so you're good.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Perfect.

Ms. Hulan, has the Canadian government assessed the impact to date of the sanctions related to Russia? If so, what did that assessment determine?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Can you hear me, Mr. Chair?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Yes, I can hear you. There is some feedback somewhere though. Maybe a microphone is open.

Please, give it a try.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Thank you.

Look, our assessment is that post-Crimea sanctions have had a big impact. I would like to turn to my colleague Sandra McCardell for additional texture. This is measured in Russia's efforts to have those sanctions lifted in recent years.

Our assessment is that sanctions are always best when they are pursued jointly amongst countries with economies that have the ability to make an impact.

Sandra, I don't know if you would like to add to that.

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think that our action, in concert with our allies—the United States, the U.K. and the European Union—of putting sanctions in place on Russia has been a very strong message from the international community.

Russia's actions are unacceptable in Crimea. They're unacceptable with respect to Mr. Navalny, and they're unacceptable with respect to Donbass as well.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you.

We're up to round five. What I'd like to do is have six rounds of two and a half minutes. That will take us to roughly 5:25, and then we have a small bit of committee business to conclude after we let our witnesses go.

If that's okay with everyone, I'd like to proceed on that basis.

First up is Mr. Genuis.

You have the floor for two and a half minutes.

• (1710)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Chair, the question is mine.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I'm sorry. I was looking—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That's okay, I'll yield my time to Mr. Aboultaif.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I'm sorry, Mr. Aboultaif. You have the floor for two and a half minutes.

My apologies.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: That's okay.

I'll make it easy and stay on the sanctions.

Since the illegal annexation of Crimea, Canada has sanctioned more than 440 individuals and entities, imposing asset freezes and other prohibitions. Since then, eight years after the European and the U.S. sanctions, Russians now may feel that they are sanction-proof. For example, their central bank reserve, which is what we call a rainy day fund, reached an all-time high in 2020 and 2021 to \$630 billion, and their national wealth fund was worth about \$180 billion by the end of that year.

What reason do we have to believe that sanctions won't produce more shrugs from Russian authorities? How can we believe that sanctions are going to be effectively applied?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, there is no doubt that Russia is in a stronger financial position than it was a couple of decades ago, for the reasons that have been indicated.

Sanctions can still bite, though. We live in a globalized world, and a country like Russia needs to trade. I would say that we are very actively engaged with our partners to make sure that sanctions and other economic measures would be coordinated and would be painful, and even a country with the ability to withstand significant sanctions cannot withstand significant sanctions indefinitely.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Sanctions bite, but can sanctions stop invasions?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: We are focused on the dual track of diplomacy, dialogue and deterrence. The credible threat of sanctions well organized in advance amongst significant economies forms a significant part of that deterrence package.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Mr. Aboultaif.

Ms. Bendayan, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Hulan, you mentioned earlier in your testimony widespread Russian disinformation and Russian propaganda. Unfortunately, that propaganda is leaking into Canada as well. I've even seen it on the social media of some of our opposition colleagues.

What are we seeing as the main vehicles of Russian disinformation in Ukraine but also outside the Ukraine?

Perhaps I could invite you, given that the chair has given me only two and a half minutes, to provide that answer in writing, Ms. Hulan.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: I'd like to invite Sandra McCardell to give a first response and, if necessary, we can follow up in writing.

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Mr. Chair, certainly Russia's campaign of disinformation and propaganda is well known and well developed. We've certainly seen it active in Ukraine, and we see it active in neighbouring countries.

As you'll note from the announcement of just a few days ago, Canada intends to support Ukraine on cybersecurity and cyber-operations. I think that will be a very effective way to help us to address, in this very vulnerable country, Russia's campaign to destabilize.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

I'd like to ask a second question, if I have enough time left.

Earlier in the meeting, my very kind colleague, Mr. Bergeron, seemed to downplay the Russian threat to Ukraine by stating that the Ukrainian government itself said that it didn't believe that an invasion was imminent.

[*English*]

My question arising from this is that from a lay perspective, if Ukraine were to announce that an invasion was imminent in their view, it would cause widespread panic.

In your expert view, what would be the impacts on the Ukrainian economy and, in particular, their financial system should the Ukrainian government announce to its population that an invasion was imminent?

• (1715)

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, I'll turn to my colleague Sandra McCardell to respond to that, but I'll note that—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: I'll turn to my colleague Sandra McCardell to respond.

Ms. Sandra McCardell: As my colleague was about to say, when Minister Joly visited Ukraine, even the threat of instability was already having a significant impact on the economy. Obviously, an invasion will have all kinds of grave consequences.

That's in part why we've already announced an offer of a sovereign loan to Ukraine of \$120 million to help shore up Ukraine. Among the allies that we've mentioned, there's a great concern and understanding of the importance of providing Ukraine with economic support during a difficult time. We'll continue to have those discussions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you.

Next is Mr. Bergeron.

You have the floor for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to say to my colleague, Ms. Bendayan, that when the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom cry wolf as they're doing now, it has exactly the same impact on the Ukrainian economy. That's probably one reason why Ukraine is asking us to tone it down a bit and take a more conciliatory approach. We must avoid going overboard, because it significantly affects the Ukrainian people.

The same is true of the decision to remove non-essential personnel from the embassy. Only a very small number of countries have done so, namely, the United States and the United Kingdom, again, as well as Australia and Canada. The other allies are staying put to show their support for Ukraine by their presence.

I want to address the question asked by my colleague, Michael Chong, about Ukraine's membership in NATO. When she went to Kyiv, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that we were still in favour of it, of course, but that further improvements were needed in terms of democracy. I'd like some clarification on that. I must say that the Atlantic Alliance countries involved seem to have different expectations, to the point that Ukraine feels that the deadline is being pushed back indefinitely. The Ukrainian Prime Minister has expressed some impatience about this.

Is there a real plan to admit Ukraine to NATO, or is the goal to postpone its membership indefinitely to avoid having to deal with the Russian threat?

[*English*]

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Mr. Chair, I know time is tight, so I want to be extremely clear.

Canada strongly supports Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. In order to become a member of NATO, you need to meet certain standards set forth by NATO, and Ukraine has been working along that path. They have sought our assistance and co-operation in doing so, and it has been our pleasure to be involved with them.

That is the purpose of much of our engagement in that country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

Ms. McPherson, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This will be my last intervention tonight, so I want to focus on the Canadians who are in Ukraine at the moment. I'd like to know what is being done to ensure the safety of Canadian citizens in Ukraine, in particular, if the situation changes. If the situation on the ground changes quite rapidly, what measures have been put in place to make sure that Canadian citizens in Ukraine are safe?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: My colleague Julie Sunday will answer that question.

Ms. Julie Sunday (Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Consular, Security and Emergency Management, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you.

Mr. Chair, we recently elevated our global travel advisory to the highest level to inform Canadians to avoid all travel to Ukraine. We are urging Canadians to leave due to ongoing Russian threats and the risk of armed conflict. A really critical element of our planning is having them depart while commercial options are still available. At the moment there are numerous commercial flight options and also numerous road and rail departure options.

That said, if conditions were to deteriorate rapidly, we are also looking at possible assisted departure options where the primary route out of Ukraine would be to Poland. We are undertaking significant work with our embassy in Warsaw to ensure there will be support for Canadians at border checkpoints, and to facilitate onward travel.

We're very focused on ensuring Canadians are able to depart safely from Ukraine.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Knowing that people in the embassy have had to leave Ukraine and have already left, has that impacted our ability to notice things on the ground? Also, what has the impact been on Ukraine? How did they feel about that withdrawal?

Ms. Julie Sunday: Mr. Chair, the honourable member is correct. In January we did approve the departure of diplomatic dependants and non-essential employees. That said, we have also added some consular security and emergency operations staff to the mission to be able to bolster our capacity to provide services to Canadians in those key areas. Our mission in Kyiv is fully open and operational and providing all of that consular support right now.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you.

Unfortunately, I have a very short time. Sorry about that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): We have Mr. Chong for two and a half minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to focus on what hard-power tools we have to counter Russia's threats to eastern Europe. We've talked about lethal defensive weapons for Ukraine. I'd like to talk about energy.

Russia's military is not the only tool of hard power it has to intimidate Europe and Ukraine. It can cut off natural gas supplies to Europe. Russia supplies 40% of Europe's gas. In the last week there have been numerous reports that the Biden administration has been talking to numerous countries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia about stepping up natural gas production to Europe in the event of a Russian invasion of Ukraine. Some of these reports have indicated that the government, the Biden administration, has been talking to countries like Norway and Qatar, for example. Canada has not been mentioned in these reports.

Is the government part of any discussions with the Biden administration about providing additional natural gas in the event Russia cuts supplies to Europe?

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Sandra McCardell.

Ms. Sandra McCardell: Mr. Chair, the question of energy is an extremely important one as we look at putting in place measures that will bite into Russia. Clearly there are measures that will affect Russia. It will also have an important bounce-back on our allies in Europe. This issue was raised when Minister Joly was in Brussels and in Paris.

We're certainly aware of the situation and are very sensitive to the impact on Europeans, particularly in winter. We have discussed this with the United States. I do know that Natural Resources Canada has been looking into Canada's position in this area. I can't provide a detailed answer, but I can say that our export capacity LNG is quite limited. A first survey of the resources indicates that, being winter, much of the capacity for liquefaction is already at its top level. There certainly will need to be international coordination if we come to the point that that kind of support is required.

Hon. Michael Chong: It's interesting—

• (1720)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you very much.

I'm sorry, Mr. Chong. Two and a half minutes goes by really quickly.

Hon. Michael Chong: It does. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Mr. Oliphant, you have the last round of the day. For two and a half minutes, the floor is yours.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll begin by thanking the officials. It's no secret that at times I've been disappointed by officials coming before committee, but today I have been absolutely impressed with all your work. Thank you for your transparency, your willingness to engage and your openness to help us as a committee understand what's going on.

In my head, I have a bunch of words beginning with “d”: diplomacy, dialogue and deterrence. I want to close on defence, which is not my area.

I want to give Major-General Prévost a chance to talk about the fact that this is not a symbolic activity that we're engaged in but a very real activity, the extension of Operation Unifier, as well as to talk a bit on Operation Reassurance, which is a tandem operation in the region, ensuring stability. Canadians—maybe five, but a few Canadians—are watching our hearing today and I want you to have the chance to talk about the importance of the military work we are engaging in.

A lot of people are focused on hardware, and in fact, are fixated on it. I'm focused on training, on engagement, on the frigate that we have with NATO and on operations Reassurance and Unifier. Could you close with a brief explanation of why this is important work we're doing?

• (1725)

MGen Paul Prévost: Mr. Chair, we've talked a lot about what we do under Operation Unifier, a very important contribution from Canada, and I thank the members of the committee for inviting us today to talk about it. We're proud of the work they do, and hopefully it will help the committee and Canadians understand this.

This is a mission that has been ongoing for seven years to train over 30,000 troops in Ukraine. That training will last, and we're moving now into institution building with Ukraine as well to have lasting effects. Gender perspective is part of this. Education and democratic institutions are part of this. That's the important work we do in Operation Unifier in Ukraine.

I thank the member as well for introducing Operation Reassurance, which is the mission we do in NATO to reinforce the eastern flank of NATO. Right now, Canada is the lead in Latvia of nine nations on a very important multinational brigade called eFP Latvia, as a deterrent and reassurance in Latvia.

We also have the frigate that the members talked about. Right now, HMCS *Montréal* is sailing across the Atlantic to be part of Standing NATO Maritime Group 2. We also periodically have F-18s that provide air policing in Romania.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I hate to interrupt, but we're quite a way beyond the two and a half minutes.

That brings our questioning to an end for this afternoon. I thank our witnesses very much. It has been a very interesting and informative afternoon.

Thank you for the information you've provided. I know it's a very sensitive situation and you've done your best to inform the committee and all those who are watching as best as you can. We can't thank you enough as a committee for that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Chair, quickly on a point of order, there were some requests for documents around sanctions and maybe other issues. Are you going to be able to follow up with the witnesses and report back to the committee? Do you have a sense of the time frame that would be realistic for that?

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you. I'll just defer to the clerk for that.

Madam Clerk.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Erica Pereira): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly we can do that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you very much.

If there are no other points of order, I will release our witnesses.

Thank you very much for being here and for the information you provided today. Have a great day.

I'd like the committee members to stay, though, as we do have a small bit of committee business to complete before the meeting wraps up.

Ms. Heidi Hulan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): You're welcome.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I just want to let you know that a couple of members here have flights to catch, so if we can be as efficient on this as possible in the next couple of minutes, I would appreciate that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I am one of those members, so I agree with you. Thank you for that.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, I move the adoption of all the proposed budgets that have been sent to us.

(Motions agreed to)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): It was a good meeting.

Everyone have a great weekend. Take care.

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