



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on National Defence

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 107

PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT

Monday, June 3, 2024

Chair: The Honourable John McKay



Standing Committee on National Defence

Monday, June 3, 2024

• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): Ladies and gentlemen, let's get started. I see quorum, and I'm sure it's 11:00 somewhere.

We have, in our final hour on the study we adopted concerning the defence of space, two witnesses. We have Dr. James Fergusson, senior research fellow at the Centre for Defence and Security Studies, department of political studies, University of Manitoba. By video conference, we have Dr. Jessica West, senior researcher at Project Ploughshares.

I think coming in virtually is a bit of a disadvantage, so I'm going to ask Dr. West if she would lead off with a five-minute opening statement. Then I'll turn to Dr. Fergusson.

With that, Dr. West, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Jessica West (Senior Researcher, Project Ploughshares): Thank you so much for having me here today to speak about the critical issue of space defence from a Canadian perspective.

As you have already heard from Brigadier-General Adamson, the Canadian military and indeed all Canadians across the country are deeply dependent on the countless capabilities that outer space provides. The nature and scope of potential threats to these capabilities are both diverse and growing. For these reasons, the 3 Canadian Space Division is tasked with defending and protecting satellites, but it is not clear what this looks like in practice. In this context, my remarks will focus on the need to avoid an overly militarized and weaponized response to defence challenges in outer space.

This concern does not negate the legitimate interests of the Canadian Armed Forces in outer space nor their role in safeguarding the ability of all Canadians to maintain the many benefits that we derive from space-based capabilities. However, a focus on defence must include efforts to prevent escalation of conflict and arms racing in outer space, and here's why.

First, the outer space environment is unique. Although increasingly referred to as a war-fighting domain like any other, outer space is fundamentally different from terrestrial domains. There is no distinct military zone or battlefield in outer space. It is a shared environment used by military, commercial and civilian entities from all around the world. War in space would have catastrophic ripple effects on all of these users, potentially disrupting the interconnected systems that underpin daily life around the world.

Such conflict risks long-lasting contamination of an already fragile outer space environment. Objects in space move at incredible speeds, meaning that debris from kinetic impacts spread through the orbital environment, posing threats for generations. When considering defence in this environment, space itself is often not the best vantage point for thinking about either offensive or defensive capabilities. Instead, the answers are often to be found through responses on the ground and other domains.

Second, the operating environment in outer space is the greatest source of insecurity. This environment is far away from earth, which makes the ability to detect and identify harmful capabilities or activities and differentiate them from the effects of natural hazards such as debris and space weather... This issue is exacerbated by a lack of political transparency and the dual-use nature of space technology, which can serve both benign and harmful purposes. The integration of commercial activities further blurs the lines. From a defence perspective, these sources of uncertainty increase the risk of misperception and unintended conflict.

Investment in capabilities for detection, resiliency and redundancy through collaboration with allies is important, but so too is awareness that such efforts often inspire adversaries to develop countermeasures, potentially accelerating arms racing dynamics. It is thus imperative that they be developed alongside efforts to contribute greater collective clarity and stability in the space environment.

Finally, good defence requires good governance. Militarized and inflammatory responses to perceived threats are propelling an arms race and risk geopolitical confrontation. Canada must resist such trends. Defence in outer space should not rely on tit-for-tat reactions to perceived insecurities or possible weapon systems.

Canada has a long-standing commitment to the international goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, or PAROS. Recently, this commitment has been supported through efforts to develop norms of responsible behaviour as a means of mitigating the current environment of insecurity and mistrust. The development of norms requires countries to lead by example to demonstrate the principles, values and behaviours that we promote. This includes upholding key tenets of the outer space treaty such as the non-contamination of the space environment and maintaining its peaceful nature. Defence activities are a key part of this effort.

Avoiding armed conflict is essential to protecting the environment, to safeguarding civilians and to ensuring that outer space remains a domain of peaceful co-operation. By focusing on good international collaboration and multidomain responses, Canada can help foster a secure and sustainable future in space.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. West.

Dr. Fergusson, you have five minutes.

• (1105)

Dr. James Fergusson (Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Defence and Security Studies, Department of Political Studies, University of Manitoba, As an Individual): Good morning.

A 1998 U.S. war game was stopped when the red team, Russia, facing catastrophic defeat, launched a coordinated nuclear strike against space assets. Space, for all intents and purposes, was functionally destroyed. As a result, the U.S. blue team military forces, dependent upon space, ground to a halt. It was further estimated that the attack would have resulted in an estimated 20-year global recession. The results would subsequently inform the congressionally mandated commission on space study, the Rumsfeld report, which warned of a future Pearl Harbor in space.

The probability of such an attack is relatively low, even in the case of a major war between the great powers of space-dependent states. Even so, the likelihood that limited strikes against space assets, whether in an attempt to disrupt or degrade electronic signals or to physically strike satellites, is relatively high. At the same time, the ability to defend space-based capabilities for national defence and economic reasons is extremely difficult but essential.

In no particular order, there are numerous answers and options available for the defence of access to space. The first, ironically, is not to defend per se, but to deter, which in turn can be assessed in two basic forms. One is existential in nature. Assuming that all states to a conflict are dependent upon space capabilities, all will be deterred from striking space capabilities. Common interests here set the foundation for an expansion of the existing space legal regime, centred on the outer space treaty. Problematic, however, is the fear of defection and cheating.

This fear underpins the other deterrence option, which implicitly coexists with the first. This is the threat to retaliate against an adversary who attacks our space capabilities by explicitly threatening their own space capabilities or other high-value assets.

Even with these in place, a state has incentives to develop capabilities as insurance against deterrence failure. Among these are redundancy and reconstitution. The former entails non-space backup systems capable of mitigating against the loss of space capabilities. The latter is the possession of a strategic reserve of space capabilities—satellites—that can be rapidly launched to replace lost capabilities.

With regard to satellite on-orbit measures, the first step is space domain awareness. Here the problem is not knowing what is on-orbit per se, but what the purpose is. Civil and commercial space capabilities are relatively easy to discern, as are many military dedicated satellites. However, satellites, which are nationally flagged,

may possess other functions that may be dormant, and, as with national civil air and maritime assets, can be mobilized during a time of crisis or war. This is the dual-use problem, in which military space capabilities and employment are much greater than the sum of dedicated military space capabilities. This reality provides on-orbit redundancy in which satellites can perform different functions, including replacing a destroyed satellite, although it also complicates significantly understanding intent and purpose.

It is also useful to differentiate among threats to space capabilities. The first is directly to the ground stations. The second is to electronic signals transmitted to and from satellites. Satellite signals are encrypted, although the extent to which existing encryption is sufficient to protect against disruption or degradation varies widely. Here resides the space version of the cybersecurity problem. As with this problem on earth, the problem of attribution and intent of electronic or cyber-attacks on satellites exists, even in peacetime.

All satellites are hardened to some degree to protect against the harsh environment of space. Hardening, however, beyond environmental protection to include defence against a nuclear strike is extremely costly relative to launch weight and the tight economic margins of commercial space, at least for now.

The second is direct threats to satellites and the capacity to manoeuvre out of harm's way, which has grown immensely over the last decades. However, this option is a double-edged sword. The capability to manoeuvre also enables the employment of a satellite as an anti-satellite weapon. The same applies to emerging on-orbit servicing satellites with robotic arms, of which the Canadarm on the space shuttle was the first example.

Canada, in terms of space defence, sits on the margins, notwithstanding a comparatively small but advanced space technology industry. Importantly, given the dual-use nature of, for example, the RADARSAT Constellation and planned military space investments identified around NORAD modernization, space defence must be carefully assessed alone and in conjunction with allies.

I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Fergusson and Dr. West.

This begins our six-minute round. We have Mr. Bezan, Mr. Fillmore, Madame Normandin and Ms. Mathysen.

Mr. Bezan, you have six minutes.

• (1110)

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

I want to thank our witnesses for joining us today.

Dr. Fergusson, I appreciate you painting the picture of what's at risk here knowing that the weaponization of space continues to accelerate.

Can you talk about the impact on NORAD operations if there was a nuclear attack in space against joint satellites that are controlled by Canada and the United States to support our defence and deterrence measures?

Dr. James Fergusson: The major impact is that NORAD would go blind.

NORAD depends on elements of the U.S. space surveillance network, to which we contribute one satellite. It contains access to information from the defence support program, which has infrared satellites in both geosynchronous and polar orbits that can identify all rocket or missile launches. That's followed by the ground-based ballistic missile early warning network, which is cued from the DSP. Taking out the DSP is a dangerous thing to do in other strategic considerations.

Basically, NORAD would be unable to see. It would be very difficult, if not highly improbable, for it to undertake its primary mission of aerospace warning, that is, integrated tactical warning and attack assessment, in which they notify national command authorities if the United States and Canada are under attack and what the nature of that attack is.

It would be catastrophic.

Mr. James Bezan: When you expand that, we're already running blind in our ability to push out the horizon so we can see things. Would the advent of the new over-the-horizon radar system be impacted, in your estimation? I know it's not up and running yet, but it's ground-based.

Dr. James Fergusson: You could threaten the ground-based over-the-horizon radars, but the loss of space entirely would not have a major effect on them because they're primarily interested in air-breathing threats. You have, on the margin, the question of hypersonics, which fly at roughly 50 kilometres an hour in what I call suborbital space—at high speeds. It's unclear to me whether the over-the-horizon system—and it would need to be cued to look at things—would be significantly affected. It's unclear whether the over-the-horizon radar can actually look.

The other thing I would add is that the United States has deployed an infrared system in low-earth orbit to deal with the problem of ballistic missile defence and, I suspect, the problem of hypersonic vehicles. That's another degree of redundancy for the American space surveillance system.

Mr. James Bezan: Aside from those assets, what else do we need to do, from a Canadian perspective, to augment what's happening in the United States under NORAD for better space deterrence?

A comment came up about an arms race in space. The Russians are putting nuclear weapons in space. The PRC has now landed on the far side of the moon. What does Canada need to be doing to more greatly enhance our ability to deter and defend North America?

Dr. James Fergusson: I think a few things are important. One is the next step that's being taken, which is adding a satellite to the Sapphire—the Sapphire 2 we could call it—for deep space surveillance, although it's primarily to surveil the vital geosynchronous orbit.

There has been some discussion, which would also be a good step, of going back to what we used to have in the sixties until the eighties. That would be two optical ground stations to facilitate the surveillance of space. There's no clear indication that this will proceed, but those would assist us.

In the context of NORAD, it's unclear to me what Canada could or could not do. It can do lots of things, but in terms of the surveillance of space, the key thing to know when space is under attack is what we might contribute to surveillance from space—the DSP system. That's to ensure there's enough redundancy, because that is key to being able to identify launches. Once you identify launches, you can quickly calculate where they're going—whether they're going into orbit or not or the orbital path they're going to take—and whether they're using a type of ballistic missile, such as a fractional orbital bombardment system with a depressed trajectory that needs to be tracked.

Mr. James Bezan: The depressed trajectory is different from high orbit, which is what BMD was built around. We're now looking at hypersonics that come in low and fast, but are still intercontinental.

• (1115)

Dr. James Fergusson: Yes, intercontinental ballistic missiles have a very high trajectory. They cut through low-earth orbit before they descend to earth. The depressed trajectory of a fractional orbital bombardment system is much flatter. A missile goes through the lower reaches of low-earth orbit before it reaches the target, so it partially enters into orbit before it descends on its target.

Mr. James Bezan: When we are looking at everything through a Canadian lens—we have a space command under the CAF—what type of investments do you recommend the Canadian Armed Forces should be making in our space command?

Dr. James Fergusson: The planned investments announced in 2022 and then reiterated in the defence policy update are a good step forward for a major contribution, particularly the defence enhanced surveillance from space project, which will be a military-dedicated RADARSAT capability. It will provide value for the defence of North America, as well as global value because of the nature of its orbital paths.

It's not that I think we can do much more than has already been planned. My concern is more about whether we will actually do it and about the commitments we make to allies about it.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. Fillmore, you have six minutes.

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Many thanks to today's witnesses. It's wonderful to see you both here.

I'd like to direct my questions to Ms. West of Project Ploughshares.

Ms. West, we understand the mission of Project Ploughshares. You're interested in researching peace and how to maintain it. In your research on space and space defence, are you working with other NGOs and United Nations bodies that are focused on space security and defence, and if so, how do you work with them?

Mrs. Jessica West: That's a wonderful question. Thank you, Mr. Fillmore.

I work extensively with other NGOs and with the Canadian Department of National Defence, where I've done research on how we can contribute to the development of norms of responsible behaviour, as well as future arms-control mechanisms and diplomatic initiatives, which is a whole-of-government effort.

I work extensively with Secure World Foundation on joint projects that are mostly related to norms and prevention of an arms race in outer space. I have participated extensively at the open-ended working group on the development of norms of responsible behaviour at the United Nations. I've also spoken informally—because that's all Russia allowed—to the group of governmental experts focused on new legal arrangements. My remarks have been focused on the development of transparency and communications measures that can help advance some of the efforts to get at new rules and demystify some of what's happening in orbit.

I've also been involved in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, with sponsorship from the Canadian government, to present the work that we have done over the years related to space security and how we know if space is secure or insecure, with security meaning the sustainability of the environment, the safety of operations and the security of assets in space and on the ground.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Is there any work you're undertaking that gets to the emerging impact of AI, other emerging technologies and cyber-connectivity that you would like to make the committee aware of with regard to space security?

Mrs. Jessica West: I have a colleague at Project Ploughshares, Branka Marijan, who does excellent work on AI. I've been involved through the Centre for International Governance Innovation on examining the space-cyber nexus, and I've been the editor of a series of essays.

I think it is really important to understand that outer space is intermingled with all kinds of emerging technology. That includes cyber, AI, quantum encryption, and quantum decryption in the future. Being able to tease out the impacts that these different technologies have I think is going to be important.

A key message I have is that it's going to make conflict escalation more probable and more difficult to prevent, especially if we don't work on better communication and transparency practices, simply because things are going to start moving faster. Decision-making is going to move faster, and windows for de-escalation, for communicating and for clarifying intentions and activities might become much smaller. That's going to be problematic if we don't

have good communication channels already in place with adversaries. We don't have good hotlines in place to try to clarify activities in orbit, which are necessary to interpret whether or not something is harmful, and to communicate our own senses of insecurity with regard to certain activities.

We also don't have great mechanisms for sharing a lot of the fantastic orbital information that we have in outer space beyond immediate allies, and I think that's really important for avoiding the tit-for-tat accusations that happen. As mentioned, there are concerns that Russia might be developing nuclear capabilities in space. It's hard to share information on that because it's intelligence and it's secret.

We also see accusations that come the other way, particularly from China and Russia. They accuse capabilities such as the U.S. mission extension vehicle, which is a satellite servicing capability, of being weapons. Without having information that can be accessed more broadly by the broader international community, it can be hard to differentiate these tit-for-tat accusations and know which ones are legitimate and which ones are not.

● (1120)

Mr. Andy Fillmore: I have a minute and a half left.

Communications, obviously, become a very important matter in maintaining security in space, and you identified some challenges when you made comments about Russia. Regarding the importance of having a good communications protocol, is there anything more you can tell us to characterize your conversations with Russia? What were they willing to share, or what did you divine is their interest or footing in this subject?

Mrs. Jessica West: Russia is not willing to share anything, really. Neither Russia nor China provides very much public access to any information it holds.

What are their intentions? The reason I emphasized avoiding heavily militarized or provocative responses is that from my perspective, Russia and China are both trying hard to depict the west as weaponizing outer space, and I see some of the responses that are pursued as playing into that hand.

Globally, it is essential at the United Nations that space remains peaceful. That is a fundamental goal of that body and of many state participants, and the perspective that there are active efforts in the west to weaponize space is driving a lot of conversation and competition among allies, diplomatic allies in particular, regarding some of these issues.

My perspective is that it's not clear what states are doing. It's clear that a lot of capabilities are being developed and technologies are being tested. It is not at all clear what the intentions are behind them and which ones will actually be developed, deployed and put into orbit, if any. That includes the intelligence on nuclear, as well as other potential kinetic capabilities.

Given that lack of clarity, we need to exercise leadership in trying to lower the volume.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fillmore.

For the benefit of witnesses, there's a high probability that Madame Normandin will speak in French, so if you switch to the French channel, that will be good.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin for six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, you seem to know me quite well.

I'd like to start by asking Ms. West a question.

You're saying that countries must lead by example to manage airspace; however, unfortunately, we know that not all countries respect the rule of law. I'd like to draw a parallel, for example, with nuclear deterrence. We'd all like to be able to achieve nuclear disarmament, but many voices point out that dissuasion is still necessary, given the context.

I'd like your opinion on the space issue. Do you believe that dissuasion is important? If so, what does that look like?

[*English*]

Mrs. Jessica West: Absolutely, and I'm leading by example. I want to point out that Canada was the first country to join the U.S.-led moratorium on destructive tests of anti-satellite weapons in space, so I think we're doing a good job on this.

I think dissuasion is a wonderful word. It's slightly different from deterrence. It brings in more political tools, to my mind, so thank you for that question.

I think resiliency and redundancy are really valuable for dissuasion. If you can reduce the value of a target and the impact that disrupting a specific capability would have, you dissuade targeting that capability. I think we're seeing the effect of that already with the gradual transition towards distributed space architecture and large constellations of satellites, where the capability of the system is distributed across many different objects in space and not concentrated in one. That also applies to distributed ground station architectures so you don't have one critical point or node in a space system.

I think we are seeing the value of that. Even if we talk about the potential fear that has been raised over nuclear weapons in space, it's aimed at the perception of an invulnerability being developed through resilience. That's why I think these capabilities go hand in hand with the diplomatic side. Canada's Department of National Defence has been a great participant, alongside Global Affairs, on the development of norms in outer space. I think we should continue along that trajectory.

I'm not sure how dissuasive weapons would be in outer space. It's a really bizarre environment where things are moving at incredible speeds. Orbital manoeuvres are not straightforward. I think there's a lot of opportunity for misperception, accidents and activities that can have a long-lasting detrimental effect on everybody in outer space, so the focus on having different systems on earth is valuable.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Perhaps something is lost in translation from French. The words “*dissuasion*” and “*deterrence*” have the same meaning.

I'd like you to tell me whether, in your opinion, deterrence is necessary.

I'd also like your opinion, Mr. Fergusson. In your opening remarks, you talked about deterrence. I'd like to ask you the same question: Are deterrents necessary in space and what does that look like?

The question is for both witnesses.

[*English*]

Dr. James Fergusson: Many of the points that my colleague answered I would agree with entirely. Redundancy and reconstitution are very vital, but the key thing to me about deterrence is the issue of the threat that the west—the United States—is going to make. Let's be blunt about it: This is about the United States; it's not about Canada. Yes, we signed on to the moratorium, but, of course, it was cost-free because we weren't going to do that anyway. It's virtual signalling by the government.

The key things are how and on what conditions you threaten your adversary to change their calculations. It's been a long debate within the deterrence literature that goes back to the 1950s. You might try to create a clear, certain environment by saying, “If you do A, we will do B, and we have the ability to do it”. Hence, our adversary knows exactly what's going to happen. Others say that it's better to leave it as uncertain. Vague is the way you need to deal with this, and it will affect the calculation of the adversary differently.

The problem is particularly when we get away from the physical side. Interestingly, when we talk about physical destruction and the orbit destruction of satellites, we talk about killing them with anti-satellite weapons when the real, bigger threat—and it's still a major threat—is the signals themselves. How do you protect them? When there are circumstances, what do you threaten to deter adversaries from going after them, degrading the signals, capturing a satellite through cyber-attack—all those types of things? That's extremely difficult, because no government has made clear, with satellites nationally flagged and particularly dedicated military satellites, under what circumstances this would be considered an act of war. That's in a very grey zone. For credible deterrence on the part of the west—the United States—they need to come to some clear understanding and ability to communicate, at least tacitly, with the Chinese, the Russians and India. We're not trying to deter India, but India has to be brought into this equation because it is a major space player.

That's the way I think we need to strengthen our deterrence capability. We already have the intercept capabilities; those already exist. Even though we talk about weaponizing in orbit, they all exist. Missile defence capabilities, ICBMs and SLBMs can all strike at space assets. They just have to be programmed differently.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

[*English*]

Ms. Mathysen, you have six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. West, I'm interested in continuing with you. I really appreciate you coming to this committee to talk to us about the importance of the diplomatic work that's necessary.

This was just stated by the other witness, and I certainly appreciate the perspective: How do you threaten your adversary to deter their actions? This is something the world has seen time and time again, so I'd like your perspective on it. It seems to me that we keep doing the same old thing over and over again and it continues to get us into a bigger and bigger mess.

Could I have your perspective on that? Where do you see a balance between the threatening of adversaries and the open communications that you were talking about?

• (1130)

Mrs. Jessica West: I agree that it tends to lead to a bigger and bigger mess down the line, because states respond in turn and you have an escalation of threat.

Deterrence is hard in space. NATO is currently undergoing, I believe under Canadian leadership, a study of defence in outer space. My input on that process is that it's not working very well, precisely because of a lot of the factors that Dr. Fergusson raised. We're not just talking about one kind of action that you're trying to deter in outer space. There are many different ways of interfering with space systems. They can target satellites, they can target the communication links or they can target ground stations and the computer systems, so trying to deter everything is difficult.

I think we need to be very careful about the priorities for deterrence, focusing on command and control of military capabilities, nuclear systems and kinetic attacks. They lead to long-lasting environmental devastation, which is in no one's interest. We also have to not just think about the threat side of that. I appreciate that Dr. Fergusson raised those two approaches—very specific or very vague. Right now, it's leaning towards the very vague. We will respond in any domain and at any time of our choosing, so it's not clear what's going to happen if something happens to our capabilities in outer space.

I will note, however, that the United States and Russia have both linked interference with certain critical space systems to extended nuclear deterrence, so they have raised the prospect that they would respond with nuclear weapons. I think that's dangerous, and it points to the risk of escalation in outer space, which can escalate way beyond the space environment back down to earth and all the way to nuclear weapons.

I think if we're trying to become less vulnerable, invulnerability is not possible, but we can reduce vulnerabilities through having redundant capabilities on earth and in space. They can include having interoperability with allies so that if systems go down you can use

something else and having architectures in space that are distributed and difficult to disrupt. Those are absolutely essential, not only because they can withstand some of the escalatory challenges that can come with deterrence, but also because they help provide protection against natural threats in the space environment, which are also significant. We had wonderful solar storms. I'm hoping some of you saw the northern lights or the auroras from the storm we had, but there were effects on GPS.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I think they're coming again.

Mrs. Jessica West: They are, and they have an impact on space systems and earth. Investments in these kinds of resilient physical capabilities can also aid with protection against the natural threats we face.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: The sharing of those technologies would be such an incredible signal for open communication and peace building.

Mrs. Jessica West: Yes, and we are doing a good job on a lot of this. I actually don't have a lot of qualms about Canada in space. I know there's probably a desire for more funding, for more capability and for doing what we've committed to do, but I think Canada has been doing quite well with what we have and with our priorities.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I want to shift a bit. We've talked a lot in this committee about the privatization of space. I have a significant concern—and I know many have a significant concern too—with, as an example, Elon Musk already having one of the largest single satellite consultation companies. It is now signing really significant contracts with the Americans, and we saw his role with Russia and Ukraine in that regard.

What does that say about the monopolization and privatization of space? What concerns does Canada need to have in terms of autonomy and national security when we're talking about privatization?

Mrs. Jessica West: I think having a single provider be so essential to a military or national capability is not an example of having redundant and resilient systems. Canada is addressing this in part. We have good manufacturing and have our own dedicated communications and earth observation systems. We're also developing a dedicated launch capability, so I think there is an emergence of existing capabilities.

One challenge with the commercialization of space and the increasing reliance on commercial actors for military capabilities is that it can put civilian users at risk. Not differentiating between the civilian and commercial side and military systems means that if there is conflict, they're all mixed up and they can be targeted. We see this in the context of Ukraine, where commercial capabilities that are involved in the conflict are themselves targets of jamming and cyber-interference in particular. Putting thought towards the implications of the mixing of users and capabilities, particularly as space itself becomes more of a target of war fighting, is going to be very important because that can drag others into the conflict.

• (1135)

The Chair: Thank you. We'll have to leave it there.

That completes our first six-minute round, colleagues. We're getting back to the same old problem of 25 minutes' worth of questions in a little more than 20 minutes. I'd like to do a full round. In the event that there's a motion to be put forward, I ask the colleague who might be putting it forward to wait until we complete the full round because we control our time afterwards.

With that, I'll turn to Mrs. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Commercial companies now have satellites that detect electronic signals emitted by ships with their transponders turned off and have GPS jammers. How do you see the defence relationships changing between commercially acquired military intelligence and the military itself?

Dr. James Fergusson: I don't see it changing because what we aren't aware of is the deep relationships that have long existed. To give you an example, during the 1991 Gulf War, which is considered the first space war, 80% to 85% of space capabilities came from the commercial sector. In addition, at the time, the United States went to all the commercial surveillance-from-space companies and bought up all their data so the Iraqis couldn't get it.

Elon Musk is in the news, but what we don't know, because it's highly classified, is that.... Because space asset satellites are nationally flagged under the registration convention or as an add-on to the outer space treaty, the government, as it does with defence export controls, places certain restrictions on these states. Because the state is a significant user, or a commercial client, if you will, it has significant leverage over what commercial satellites are and are not able to do and, in most cases, who they are able to sell to and who, under export control regulations, they will not be allowed to sell to or access. This is already fairly well established. The details, of course, we don't hear about, partially for intellectual property reasons and other commercial reasons.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Then you're not aware of any black market for intel from satellites. That does not exist. I mean a commercial vendor is selling it to a nation that would not otherwise be allowed to receive the information.

Dr. James Fergusson: I don't know of any. One can speculate that probably on the margins there are, but as with defence export controls, to violate national law is extremely dangerous in the margins of commercial space. Basically, for the major space companies at least, until you get more and bigger private players from other countries in this game, the costs of being caught and what will happen to you are much too high, including for Elon Musk, so I'm not greatly concerned about it.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: There's going to be a significant gap in satellite-based awareness through NORAD because our RADARSAT satellites will outlive their useful lifespans—they'll outrun them—before they can be replaced. Is there any opportunity for existing commercial satellites to have a dual use so that we can gain eyes on the Arctic where that gap is going to be created?

Dr. James Fergusson: I'm not an expert on this, but I don't think so.

First of all, RADARSAT is not a NORAD-supporting asset at all. Part of the reason is that the delay between taking radar pictures and when you can see them is, I think, a one-day or two-day delay, and that's not very useful militarily. Advanced RADARSAT technology, which is supposedly the defence-enhanced system, will shrink that down, but it will be dedicated to the military. The civilian commercial side is probably not going to get access to any of that information.

I don't think, in my view, this is a significant issue per se. It's a problem, but I can't see how in the current climate.... Again, we can't control how the Russians, the Chinese and the Indians do a deal with their companies, although we know that the Chinese and the Russians are hand in glove, if you will, with their industries, which is always a problem for us. We're less transparent about it.

• (1140)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Did you say that NavCan is the controller of the satellites that are deemed for military use?

Dr. James Fergusson: If you want RADARSAT.... I'll give you a better example. Sapphire, the only military-dedicated satellite we have, is controlled for the military, but it is flown by MDA Space. We have no experience in flight except for military personnel who get seconded to the American space system.

The Chair: Unfortunately, you have about six seconds.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Militarily speaking, how does the successful landing of China's unmanned rocket on the far side of the moon impact us defence-wise?

The Chair: Now you no longer have six seconds. You'll have to work that back in with some other answer.

Mr. Collins, you have five minutes.

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to our witnesses.

Dr. West, I'll start with you. Other witnesses at committee have talked about a wild west scenario in space such that there's a lot of activity without structured international agreements. You talked about pursuing the development of norms, and Dr. Fergusson just talked about the relationship between China, Russia and India. You referenced that Russia doesn't share a lot of information publicly.

What's on your mind as it relates to a blueprint for developing those norms when we have fractured relationships and communication channels specifically with Russia, China and India?

Mrs. Jessica West: I disagree that outer space is a wild west. I think it's one of those throwaway lines that people use to indicate that we have a lot of work to do on governance. We do have treaties and rules in place, and we have core principles, and I think those are fundamental to build on.

How to build the norms of responsible behaviour is challenging. Diplomatically, there's a significant rift within the United Nations not just on this issue but on almost all issues, so we're in a moment where we have to continue to put the ground pieces in place, or the building blocks. Holding the discussions and talking about what the priorities and perceived threats are is very important. There's a lot of work happening at the United Nations that is fundamental to this effort. Even if we don't have a formal agreement in place within the next year or so, it's shaping how countries think about outer space.

I think, though, what's really important for norms is that fundamentally they're about what we do, not what we put on paper. That's why I don't see it as nothing that, for example, Canada immediately joined the anti-satellite moratorium even though we might not have an intention of conducting such activities. Norms require walking the walk and talking the talk, demonstrating through your own actions what you expect others to do.

There's a lot of scope for developing what is normal when it comes to what I like to call uncomfortable military activities. In terms of the creeping of satellites close to other satellites, countries have an opportunity to engage in practices that would mitigate the risk of that behaviour, such as issuing prior notifications; foregoing stealth capabilities; setting, through their own behaviour, certain thresholds for safety when it comes to distance from other satellites; and speaking about the fact that they're doing that and see it as something responsible states do. We can speak with our actions at moments when we can't necessarily have great breakthroughs diplomatically at the United Nations.

Fundamentally, it's important to constantly reinforce the outer space treaty. It is not outdated; it is more relevant than ever. It is a collection of high-level principles that include not putting nuclear weapons in outer space. This is why so many meetings and discussions are happening right now, both formally and behind the scenes, related to potential nuclear threats in space. Diplomacy is the only way that is going to be prevented and dealt with. There is nothing you can do to defeat a nuclear weapon in space and to protect yourself in outer space; it's a space killer. Reinforcing key principles is absolutely important, and that's happening not just at the UN but also bilaterally with a lot of states. The United States is engaging heavily with India and China in particular to lean on Russia over some of these fears.

I would reiterate that it's about doing what you want other states to do and making clear that's what you're doing and why you're doing it, while continuing to engage and put the building blocks of future agreements in place at the United Nations so that when the political opportunity arises, those can move forward.

• (1145)

Mr. Chad Collins: Thanks, Dr. West.

Dr. Fergusson, I'll ask you the same question. Even with those structured agreements, you referenced in your opening the cheating that occurs in outer space. Can you comment on that?

Dr. James Fergusson: I agree with a lot of what Dr. West said, but there's a real problem: If wishes were horses, peasants would ride. That's an old saying my wife always uses.

If you go back to the origins of the outer space treaty, it was a bilateral deal that ended up in the UN, and everyone happily signed on when only the United States and the Soviet Union were actors in space. It was a deal over issues about transiting over, for intelligence reasons, both countries. The lesson of all that and the lesson of these arms control agreements—such as the 2002 notification agreement between the United States and Russia, which is basically defunct now—is that unless you have the great powers on board, you're going nowhere.

China, Russia—I'm not sure about India—and even the United States are really not interested in codifying. For the Americans, the fundamental reason is that, through their experience during the heyday of arms control in the 1970s and 1980s, they kept finding the Russians were cheating all the time. They have no reliance, and the United States, despite what many people think, is a country guided by the rule of law. The fear of the Americans is that if we have deep international regulations, we will be handicapped and handcuffed, but our adversaries will not be handcuffed.

If I could quickly add one thing, don't misunderstand that there are probably a series of tacit agreements between the major space players on go and no-go behaviours and zones.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Collins.

Madame Normandin, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

My question is for Dr. Fergusson.

In February, you took part in a podcast along with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute where there was a discussion on the American space agency. During that discussion, someone—I don't know whether it was you—said the following:

[*English*]

...this is with space technology and we all know what's going on in space, mass and commercial investment, smaller and smaller satellites, more and more junk in space. There are a lot of issues that are going to play out. And that's one of the issues where, again, the space question, we're not really in a full alignment with the United States at all.

[*Translation*]

I'd like to hear your opinion on the National Space Council. Since its creation, are we now slightly more aligned with the United States? Are there any areas where we still differ? If so, are they military or commercial?

I'd like to know more about how aligned we are with the United States.

[English]

Dr. James Fergusson: That's a really important question and a really good question. I think I said those things, but I don't remember. I'm getting old.

Our commercial entities, our aerospace industry and our space industry are closely aligned with those in the United States. They survive because of their access to the American space industry, the close links between companies and the integration of our economies. It's a simple reality. The government, however, is not very closely aligned with the U.S. on the issue of space. There have been numerous examples. My colleague hinted at and raised them. If you have Canada leading a NATO study on the defence of space, you have a problem, because the key actor here is the United States. They see things about space very differently from us.

It would certainly be nice if Canada had a space policy, a space strategy and a real, coherent approach to space, which we do not have and have never had. The key thing here, in my view, is that the Canadian strategy is to do little bilateral things with elements of the U.S. Space Force and the Space Command right now—that's all we've done—to keep us insulated from the other, bigger issues that the Americans are talking about.

I'll give you an example. There's a large faction in the United States that says the outer space treaty is problematic because it doesn't define what an orbit is. We don't even know. There's no legal definition of where space starts, and that's fine with them. It gives them the leeway to do what they want.

The danger of what you're talking about is that we have a tendency, because of what I would call a knee-jerk response from Canada about our relations with the United States, to try to always show that we're co-operating at an arm's-length distance, particularly for domestic and international political reasons.

• (1150)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

Ms. Mathysen, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you.

Further to the conversation on the idea that no one wins on the nuclear path, no one wins as it's a complete obliteration. I often think that, ultimately, there is only one winner in this, and it is the companies that built weapons in the first place.

Ms. West, could you comment on that? Also, there have been a lot of conversations about the national space council, and I have concerns about that. Is a smaller conversation far better than a NATO-led conversation or a UN-led conversation? Are there more controls in terms of commercialization, or is there more influence of commercialization on those smaller conversations?

Mrs. Jessica West: I'll begin with the space council. I'm still waiting to see how it functions and what it does. I wasn't privy to the earlier conversations. My understanding is that a lot of it is focused on having one place to have a conversation in Canada, because space cuts across so many different ministerial responsibilities and departments. I think that's valuable; we need that visibility. We need to think whole of government on space, as this conversation is showing.

On nuclear and no one wins, I would absolutely agree. I'm not sure how realistic the nuclear threat will be, or if it will be one of those deterrent capabilities in the background the way we see on earth. However, the threat is always there.

I want to point out that Canada has a lot of military co-operation with the United States in space. We're one of a handful of countries that are part of CSpOC, the Combined Space Operations Center, with the United States. We are also a participant in Operation Olympic Defender, which is specifically focused on this question of defence of objects and satellites in outer space.

I think maybe we've shifted over the years toward closer military co-operation on space issues than we used to. Again, I think being part of these conversations is important, because it gives Canada a voice and leverage. We have to exercise that voice and lead with our capabilities and actions in the multiple different fora where these conversations are happening.

I think NATO is an important place to be talking about this. Because of the current geopolitical climate in which we find ourselves, that grouping of states is influential. I'm not sure it matters who's leading the deterrence study. It's more of a political thing. However, NATO has declared outer space a military domain. That has raised a lot of questions, so this is about what they mean.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we'll have to leave the answer there.

Next, for five minutes, we'll have some combination of Allison and Bezan.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

To both our witnesses, thank you very much for being here.

We talked about Canada's limited ability to make a difference. Where should Canada contribute with the international partners, probably more specifically with the U.S., given the fact that we're really not a player at the table? Where should we be spending our money or focusing? Where would we get the biggest bang for the buck?

Dr. James Fergusson: Right now, the biggest bang for the buck would be the defence enhanced surveillance from space RADARSAT capability. If you go back 30 years, while we were developing RADARSAT, the United States was investing a lot of money in trying to develop it as well. They failed and Congress cancelled it. The United States, as far as I understand, thinks this is a fantastic capability if it's developed and brought into a real-time capability not just for North American defence operations but also for operations on a global basis.

The key thing, if there's a strategy in Canada—and it's really embedded in the military, not in the government—is this: What small number of key assets can we provide that can open the door to greater information and knowledge from the U.S. on its leading space capabilities as the leading space power? That's how you do it.

As Dr. West pointed out, if you look at our relationship with the United States and go back in time to when we were doing basically nothing, I can tell you that the U.S. Space Command, as it was known back then, basically kicked us out the door in a variety of different ways. As we started to contribute significant capabilities.... Sapphire is significant, but it's a one-off. A constellation of Sapphire would be a major contribution. That's how the doors open. That's how we get more influence and more access instead of the U.S. filtering everything out from us.

• (1155)

Mr. Dean Allison: Thank you.

I'll turn my time over to Mr. Kelly.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): How many minutes do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have three minutes.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Great.

Dr. Fergusson, in response to a previous question, you said there were tacit "go and no-go" agreements on behaviours between the great powers. Can you list what some of those are that you believe are tacitly agreed to?

Dr. James Fergusson: The first and perhaps most important one is geosynchronous orbit, particularly the DSP. The Russians and the Chinese have both developed a similar global capability. The extent to which it gives you full coverage, I don't know.

In the case of the DSP, if anyone attempted to strike it, that would automatically be interpreted as a preliminary to a strategic nuclear strike on earth: We're going to blind our opponent, and then we're going to launch. That becomes extremely dangerous.

Of course, it's classified; no one's going to tell you, because if we made a quiet deal with the Russians, and even with the Chinese today, and it went public, it would be a major embarrassment for the government given the policies particularly in the United States, but in Canada as well. That seems to be a logical tacit agreement.

Remember, it's not about war in space; it's about the nature of terrestrial warfare and the outcomes and fears of terrestrial warfare, which will drive actors to strike at space. We're not going to have a war just in space. That makes no sense at all.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Okay, thanks. I'm running out of time.

I have one more question.

Mrs. Gallant asked a question in her final few seconds, and I wonder if maybe you could address it. She talked about China's landing on the far side of the moon. Is the appearance of a stake in the ground just a demonstration of capability? Is there military significance? Are there mineral extraction implications? What do we make of this?

Dr. James Fergusson: Fundamentally, it's a demonstration of equality: "We are the People's Republic of China. We can do what the United States can do. In fact, now we're ahead of them." It's about prestige and humiliating us. If you go back to the space race between the Soviet Union and the United States, a lot of that was simply a race to the moon for reasons of prestige.

Mr. Pat Kelly: It's an exhibition of hubris more than anything else.

Dr. James Fergusson: Yes.

The Chair: Not that hubris ever happens around here.

Ms. Lapointe, you have five minutes.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll be sharing my time this morning with my colleague MP Fillmore.

Dr. West, in your opening comments you talked about how the uncertainty around space defence brings with it an increase in a number of potential risks. Can you expand on those risks and on what we can do to manage or mitigate them?

Mrs. Jessica West: There are a lot of activities in outer space that are ambiguous. We don't have tacit agreements on some of the more important ones that are happening, such as satellites that get up close and inspect, image or creep up. We're not really sure what other capabilities they have. Do they have eavesdropping capabilities? Do they have a jammer? Could they have a laser capability? Not knowing causes escalatory responses. The noise we're hearing from the United States on this suggests there are no tacit agreements on safe distances and on how to engage in these practices.

I think the way to mitigate this is to start having better transparency practices that can make some military activities safer, such as, for instance, if you're trying to inspect another satellite, giving prior notification so that you don't have an accident and the other operator doesn't respond in a way that increases the likelihood of an accident. Again, things are moving very quickly, and if you have uncoordinated, close-proximity activities in space, you can easily collide. You can also have misperceptions about certain sensitive capabilities. I think other states understand which satellites are particularly essential to defence. Professor Fergusson mentioned the DSP.

Early warning capabilities are a great example, so you don't get up close and personal with some of those really sensitive capabilities when the reaction might be quite drastic on earth. There's a lot we can do. It will take time, in particular because some of these are new capabilities. How they work in practice takes time to sort out.

• (1200)

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Dr. Fergusson, Dr. West said, "good defence requires good governance". I'd be curious to hear what you think good governance is.

Dr. James Fergusson: I'm not sure how to answer that, to be honest with you. Good governance is a function of consistency in government policy and in behaviour. We might not like what they're doing, but as long as they're consistent, that to me is good governance.

In the context of the international system—or the international community, as we misleadingly call it—the problem is the tendency to think that somehow it's like a parliament. It's not a parliament. It's a collection of sovereign states, and it has always been a collection of sovereign states. States will do what is in their interests. They will defect when they have to. They'll adhere and use that for political reasons when they have to.

I'm not concerned about good governance, only in the sense that in Canada for space we don't have governance, or at least we don't have good governance. The national council is not new. It's not going to go very far, I'm pretty sure, because it has no authority. Until some meat is put on its bones to really coordinate national space policy, it's simply taking the old interdepartmental space committee, giving it a label and saying, “Look, we're doing something again.”

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Fillmore.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

We're making excellent progress on the space study. We've heard from a number of witnesses about the importance and timeliness of the study. So far, we've heard from 16 witnesses. We have about 20 witnesses yet to be heard.

I'd like to engage my colleagues in a discussion about adding additional meetings by moving the following motion:

That, given the Standing Committee on National Defence has heard 16 witnesses, with 20 to be heard, in relation to its study on the Defence of Space, the committee add two additional meetings.

That's in accordance with the flexibility built into the original study motion.

The Chair: The motion is in order. It's relevant to the subject matter being discussed here today.

We have essentially two motions, one that Mr. Bezan has given notice of, which is in order, and yours, which is in order. We can debate them. Given that, I want to release the witnesses, if that's acceptable. Then we can proceed in order, first with Mr. Fillmore and then with Mr. Bezan.

I want to thank you for your contribution. This has been a really interesting study, and I have a feeling that we've just scratched the surface. In conversation with other people off-line, shall we say, there has been quite an interest in the study, so thank you, Dr. West and Dr. Fergusson. I anticipate we may see you both again.

With that, I will release you as witnesses, and we'll deal with Mr. Fillmore's motion, which, as I said, is in order.

Mr. Fillmore, do you wish to speak to it?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: No. I think my position is known. I welcome other people's feedback.

The Chair: Madame Normandin.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

In terms of next steps, I'd like the clerk to tell us what the committee's calendar looks like from now until the House recesses in June.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Andrew Wilson): Of course, Ms. Normandin.

Our next two meetings will be devoted to drafting instructions for the report on rising domestic operational deployments and challenges for the Canadian Armed Forces.

[English]

Then on June 12, 17 and 19, we planned for the defence policy update. However, as always, I am at the mercy of the committee, and if the committee wishes to prioritize other things, we can move things around.

• (1205)

The Chair: Go ahead, Pat.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Just briefly—because I don't want to argue this for long—I think we've probably had enough on this. We've heard from diverse witnesses. I think we have enough for a report. I wouldn't want to get to the point of redundancy or satiating some curiosities without getting to material pieces that would go into solid recommendations. I think we've probably had enough on this study.

Mr. Chair, since it's material to the comment in your introduction on the relationship to Mr. Bezan's motion, and to the clerk's point about the number of meetings left, we have a report to consider on Wednesday, which we'll finish considering in the second hour. We'll have four meetings after that, one of which we'll probably need in order to finish the other report, leaving us three meetings, which we were already planning to use for the DPU. The threat analysis contained in Mr. Bezan's motion is related to the DPU and is material to the timing of that.

I would just as soon conclude the space study with the witnesses we've heard—we probably won't get to a report till the fall—and carry on with using the remaining meetings we have to deal with the threat analysis and the DPU and how they relate.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: I'm of like mind. I think we've had some very good witnesses. We had a lot of great testimony.

I'm not sure if the witnesses who are left will add any more value to the study. I think all of us are getting, through the questions we've had, a pretty good idea of what we expect to see in a report: where the deficiencies are in space from a Canadian perspective and where we can add value. I'm not sure if Mr. Fillmore has specific witnesses he didn't get to call or who weren't available. That's always part of the calculation. Not every witness put on the list is available or willing to come before committee.

I think we can close on a very strong note today with the witnesses we've had. It's time to start pulling the report together.

The Chair: We'll go to Ms. Mathysen, then to Mr. Fillmore.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you.

I don't have any problem with potentially two additional meetings. I am interested, obviously, in sticking to our calendar. We worked well together in the subcommittee to ensure that we agreed to move forward in the way we planned. I also have the concerns Mr. Kelly raised about getting to the other reports and making sure they are finished. They've been outstanding for quite some time. However, I don't have any problem with the extension by two meetings, and I would suggest there's no specific timeline for ensuring they're in the fall.

I would like a bit of an update. We agreed that we would try to travel for this study to broaden our understanding of it. Whenever that's happening and however it plays into those future meetings, I think travel could be quite helpful. However, I think this is a conversation we could have in the meetings in the fall. Let's finish off what we already agreed to finish off, as per the subcommittee's recommendations.

The Chair: Just for the committee's consideration, we applied for travel on this study. We have not heard back as to whether we're going to receive the funds.

For argument's sake, we can disaggregate the timing of the extension from the merits of the motion. I don't know whether Mr. Fillmore was thinking of this, but certainly the chair was not thinking that we'd try to get it in the remaining time frame in June. It would be pushed off to the fall sometime.

Anyway, Mr. Fillmore, do you want finish it off? Then we'll have a sense of that.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Thank you.

I appreciate the perspectives of members—very much so.

If we think back to the content of the original motion, it talked about the importance of space in protecting Canada's national security and northern sovereignty. It pointed to the way we work and fulfill our obligations with our international partners. It also pointed to the importance of Canada building and maintaining strong leadership in industry when it comes to space.

We've heard some perspectives on those three categories. I would never say that we've heard the full, rounded-out perspective on all three of them. However, what we have heard very clearly from witnesses so far is the tremendous urgency and importance of this study. In fact, a witness today, Dr. Fergusson, said that if we don't get space right, all the other things we're trying to do don't matter, because they all hinges on space and we're behind on space.

To me, there's nothing more important this committee could be working on. To make it one of our shortest studies and lightest reports would I think be a mistake we'll come to regret quite quickly. I would be happy to move the meetings into the fall session to make sure we do other things.

• (1210)

The Chair: Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Perfect, that answers my question. I too was wondering whether it was necessary to prioritize the meetings at the expense, in particular, of the discussion we need to have on Canada's defence policy update. Given that this will be a hot topic at the summit in Washington in July, it would have been a shame not to stick to the calendar the subcommittee had already succeeded in establishing, at Ms. Mathysen's request.

If it has to be postponed until September, after our trip, then we'll determine whether the committee needs to hear from any particular witnesses. If it's confirmed that it will happen once we return in the fall, I agree with the proposal, but I wouldn't want it to undo the work we've already done on the calendar.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are there any other contributions? No.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: We will try to shape this to accommodate as many needs as we possibly can.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chair, how likely is it that we'll get the witnesses some of us have requested? It's going to take more lead time than what they've been given, that's all.

I'll defer to my colleague.

The Chair: If I am to understand this motion, you'll have plenty of lead time. We're not going to do this for months.

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I want to move to the following motion, which I gave notice of in writing:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on January 31, 2022, the committee receive threat analysis briefings prior to the summer recess regarding the recent activities in the Baltic region by Russia and the recent destabilizing efforts of the People's Republic of China in the Indo-Pacific region.

I think this is current. We want to make sure that, as committee members, we're always aware of what is happening in the world and how it could affect the Canadian Armed Forces and national security here at home. We have been receiving the threat analysis, and we're about to start the study on the defence policy update, which technically got under way when the minister briefed us on the DPU about a month ago.

Based on Russia's activities in the last two weeks in the Baltic region.... Some of us on the committee were in Estonia last year on the bridge over the Narva River that separates Russia from Estonia, and all the navigation buoys that delineate the border between Russia and Estonia were removed by the Russian coast guard or their operatives. They are disputing that line within the Narva River, which has upset, of course, the Estonians and others. Additionally, they tabled a motion at their foreign affairs committee, and then took it to the Duma in Moscow, that said they were going to redraw the borders within the Baltic Sea, which would affect navigation for Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and others. It would ultimately give them a clearer way to protect St. Petersburg and get them greater access to Kaliningrad. I think we should get updated on what's happening there.

In the Indo-Pacific, we see the People's Liberation Army Navy being very aggressive in the South China Sea, especially around the east Thomas Shoal with the Philippines. They've made some advances toward islands in the Sea of Japan that are controlled by Japan. Of course, after the swearing in of Taiwan's new President, Lai Ching-te, they have been challenging and actually entering the economic zone, airspace and maritime space of Taiwan in the Strait of Taiwan. Also, the rhetoric that has come out of Beijing has been very toxic towards Taiwan, and it's something I haven't seen before. I'm suggesting that we have those briefings.

For your consideration, Mr. Chair, when we call witnesses, instead of going with departmental witnesses or witnesses from embassies to brief us on what's happening, it might be interesting to receive briefings from some of the international think tanks, like the Royal United Services Institute or RAND. They have offices around the world, so they can provide their policy analyses of what's happening within those two main regions and how they impact the Canadian Armed Forces. Of course, we have troops in Latvia, and we're sending another frigate off to the Indo-Pacific as part of the Indo-Pacific strategy.

• (1215)

The Chair: Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: At the risk of repeating myself, it's certainly not because I consider it uninteresting, let alone pointless, to undertake a study of the situation in the Baltic or Indo-Pacific region, but I wouldn't want it to happen at the expense of the planned meetings on the defence policy update.

We're heading into the NATO summit in Washington. On a national level, we will no doubt want to make certain recommendations for this summit. I wouldn't want us to fail to do that because we won't be studying the defence policy update. I like the idea of doing a risk analysis study. On the other hand, it concerns a region that is a little further away and where we have less leeway in terms of what we can do, from a domestic point of view, and in terms of the position we take in anticipation of this summit, which is just around the corner.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Kelly.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Really quickly in response to Christine, the briefing Mr. Bezan is proposing will inform us so we are able to make better and more meaningful use of the DPU study we have. The two are intimately related; one informs the other. That's why it's being proposed.

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I tend to agree with Madame Normandin on this. I don't disagree with this motion either. I think doing it in the fall and staying on course with what we have planned will probably work out better in relation to what we're dealing with now and how the summer activity will shape what we go into with this briefing.

The Chair: I see Mr. Bezan and then Mr. Fillmore.

Mr. James Bezan: The DPU came out because the threat environment has changed. If we're going to do a proper job of studying the DPU, we'd better make sure we're aware of all the current challenges the Canadian Armed Forces is facing, which Canada as a whole needs to consider. That includes going to the NATO summit in Washington.

I think this is more than relevant, as it impacts all of those discussions and allows us to have a better focus when we start the DPU study. This should come first, and the DPU should come right after it. Hopefully, everybody sees the value of this, because it is important to our overall ability as a committee to do our work.

The Chair: I see Mr. Fillmore and then Mrs. Gallant.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Thanks, Chair.

Yes, I completely agree. I think I speak for my colleagues when I say we agree with you on the importance of what you're trying to uncover here. However, for the same reasons that we've deferred the additional meetings on the space study until the fall, it's important that we be consistent. There are other things on the committee's agenda between now and when we rise in three very short weeks that also require our urgent attention.

I'd like to move an amendment to the motion that simply eliminates the timeline and eliminates specifically the words "prior to the summer recess".

• (1220)

The Chair: Okay. The amendment is in order.

Mrs. Gallant, go ahead.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Quite frankly, as to waiting until the fall, a lot has happened since our last briefing. Ideally, we should be getting a briefing every week. That's how significant the changes that are happening are. If the military doesn't want to come, the different departments at GAC could. We could get briefings from GAC on Taiwan and the Baltic region and everything in between.

I would note that when the NATO Parliamentary Assembly travels, prior to each of its meetings, it gets full briefings. It gets more than we're getting in this committee.

The Chair: Madame Normandin, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Bezan mentioned that this study was also part of the defence policy update.

Couldn't some witnesses do double duty and tell us both about the state of the threats and how an updated defence policy would address those threats?

That way, we'd kill two birds with one stone. If these two issues are supposed to be so intertwined, perhaps some people know them equally well.

Do we have any idea of the kind of witness who could talk about both issues at the same time?

[*English*]

The Chair: Let me speak as chair before I call on the amendment.

When the motion was originally proposed by Mr. Bezan, the idea in the back of my head was that we would use part or all of our first DPU update to, I'll say, refresh our understanding of the threat, because the two go together—the policy and the threat. I hadn't articulated this to anyone, but we've set three meetings on the DPU. If you made the DPU or threat analysis your number one meeting and added one more after that on the DPU, you'd basically accomplish the same thing. Whether it's done before we rise is another question, but things are happening very quickly indeed.

The other concern I have is that there's likely going to be elevated kinetic risk to our own people, particularly in Europe, over the course of the summer months, because that's when the bulk of the fighting occurs. Optimally we'd have an abundance of time, but here we have to make choices.

Are there any other comments?

Go ahead, Christine.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: In that case, could we follow the predetermined agenda, including the defence policy update, but specifically invite witnesses to the initial meeting who will also be able to provide us with a risk analysis? That way, we could combine both parts of the proposal.

If that's possible, I think it would be the best compromise.

[*English*]

The Chair: I can link the two, but I can't do it within the confines of the motion.

Mr. Clerk, give me some guidance here. Can we take the motion as amended? Would it still accommodate us doing the threat analysis in the first meeting?

The Clerk: It would be part of your prerogative, Chair.

The Chair: I have a prerogative. Who knew? There we are.

● (1225)

Mr. James Bezan: If you want to split the first meeting, you kill two birds with one stone. You satisfy the motion and kick off with the threat analysis as it applies to the DPU. That would be fine.

The Chair: I don't know. I'm not even sure I trust myself with any prerogatives.

Where we're at is that we have an amendment on the floor. We have to vote on the amendment first, and then we vote on the main motion. The amendment on the floor removes “prior to the summer recess”.

All those in favour of removing that?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: Subject to the chair's prerogative, we might still try to get it in.

With that, we've covered off our motions. I always enjoy the opportunity to subvert committee will.

We're going to suspend while we go in camera. Hopefully we'll move through what we have to do in camera expeditiously and therefore have time freed up magically.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>