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• (0815)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I'd like to bring this meeting to order. It's 8:15 and I see quorum.

We have with us this morning General Jennie Carignan and Lieutenant-General Stephen Kelsey to update us on the mandate and priorities of the chief of the defence staff.

On behalf of the committee, I want to welcome you in particular, General Carignan, and also you, General Kelsey. This is your first time here as the chief and the vice-chief of the defence staff, and we wish you only the best. With that, we also hope that we have a really good working relationship at the committee. I hope you will see this as a friendly location and, hopefully, as a collaborative, constructive committee.

We look forward to what you have to say in the next five minutes, and then we'll go to our rounds of questions. Again, thank you for coming, and congratulations to both of you.

You have your five minutes.

[Translation]

General Jennie Carignan (Chief of the Defence Staff, Canadian Armed Forces, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, everyone.

[English]

This is my first appearance as the chief of the defence staff, and I want to begin by saying how much I value the work of this committee. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss my mandate and priorities for the Canadian Armed Forces. I'm joined today by the vice-chief of the defence staff, Lieutenant-General Stephen Kelsey.

[Translation]

We face a volatile and unpredictable global security environment.

This committee is well aware of the current circumstances, from wars in Ukraine and the Middle East to rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as climate change, disruptive technology and disinformation.

These threats require us to be vigilant and forward-thinking in the way that we approach defence.

[English]

We need to acknowledge that although from a defence and security perspective we have benefited from our geography in the past, the situation is changing, and we now have to transform our military to face expanding global threats, with our allies and partners.

I've had the privilege of serving alongside the members of the Canadian Armed Forces for the past 38 years, and now I have the privilege of leading them. They are skilled, courageous and dedicated beyond measure. Supporting and caring for our people must continue to be our top priority, and I'm committed to building on the work of my predecessors. That means focusing on the three R's: recruitment, retention and readiness.

[Translation]

Many of our allies face these issues as well. We need to get our forces back to full strength within five years. This is vital.

To do this, we need to continue modernizing how we recruit and whom we recruit. That means improving our processes without lowering our standards.

This means making a big push to recruit Canadians from all backgrounds, including opening the door to more permanent residents.

• (0820)

[English]

Diversity makes us more operationally effective, and we know that what worked in the past is not what will work in the future. We can't continue relying on the same thinking, the same mindset and the same processes or methodology, and we need to bring in new broader perspectives, approaches and ideas if we are going to solve the complex challenges of today and tomorrow.

On retention, we've stopped the downward trend and stabilized our numbers. We are making progress, but there's more to do. When we uphold the highest standards of conduct and performance, where our people can grow and thrive both professionally and personally, not only do we attract the best and the brightest, but we will also keep them as members of the forces.

We also need to be ready, always and for anything. Readiness is a constant, and it is a must.

[Translation]

The world is in a state of transition, and the same is true for the Canadian Forces. Outcomes aren't guaranteed. We must be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

[English]

Readiness means having a stronger and more diverse foundation of personnel with the required and relevant capabilities that meet the future of warfare, with the willingness to innovate, adapt and take risks, and it means collaborating with our allies and partners around the world.

[Translation]

This is particularly true when it comes to defending North America alongside the United States, both through the North American Aerospace Defense Command, or NORAD, and more generally through the collaboration of our Canadian Joint Operations Command and the United States Northern Command.

[English]

As you know, global interest in the Arctic is growing, including from our competitors and our adversaries, so we must be diligent in protecting and asserting Canadian sovereignty in the north.

I visited NORAD headquarters this week and saw first-hand how Canadian military members work seamlessly with their U.S. colleagues 24-7 to defend our shared continent. We need to continue to work closely through NORAD to detect, to deter and to defend against aerospace threats, and beyond NORAD, through our joint operations command and with U.S. NORTHCOM to monitor our combined maritime approaches.

For example, this past July, NORAD fighter jets from Canada and from the United States intercepted Russian and Chinese aircraft in international airspace near Alaska. In the same month, HMCS *Regina* shadowed a Chinese polar research vessel in the Bering Strait. As always, we must ensure our intercepts are carried out safely and professionally.

Mr. Chair, I know none of this is easy. We are transforming the Canadian Armed Forces while also fulfilling our growing obligations. That's like building and flying an airplane at the same time. We know what our challenges are, and we know what we need to do. I believe deeply in this institution and in what it stands for.

We will continue tackling this work with determination and resolve, and we will get it done.

Thank you. We are happy to take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Chief of Staff Carignan.

We will open the round with Mr. Bezan for six minutes.

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

Congratulations, General Carignan, on your appointment as CDS.

Welcome to you as well, General Kelsey. Welcome to the position.

I'm looking forward to our ongoing productive relationship.

Your predecessors have always talked very plainly and bluntly with the committee in explaining the threat environment that we're facing and the readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces. You mentioned your three R's: retention, recruitment and readiness. Let's drill down on that.

The last time General Eyre appeared here, he was talking about being 16,000 troops short of where we need to be at full strength, and there are a further 10,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are undertrained and undeployable.

Do you have an update on those numbers? Where are we today on how short we are and on how unprepared some of our members are?

Gen Jennie Carignan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In terms of regular forces members, we are now at 63,622, and in reserve forces there are 29,176, for a total of 92,798. That was as of August 31.

The numbers do vary on a daily basis, but overall, when we are looking at our numbers and at the rate of attrition, we are at a fairly balanced number for this past year. This year, we are looking at recruiting to our maximum number of 6,400. We are currently at 2,400 in terms of recruitment, with another 1,000 who have been made an offer to join. We are roughly halfway within our strategic intake targets this year, and we're tracking in that area.

• (0825)

Mr. James Bezan: As a clarification, on the 6,400 max recruit, you have 2,400 so far. Is that the maximum that we could put through basic training at this point in time?

Gen Jennie Carignan: At this point in time, it is, yes. We are currently exploring ways of increasing that number as well. I don't want to stop recruiting if more people come in. We can recruit them and can make offers for them to join the CAF.

We are exploring ways of expanding our basic military qualification as well as the rest of the qualifications in terms of the various trades that we need to train people in, post basic military training. We are in the middle of working this plan currently, but the strategic intake of 6,400 is what we are aiming for, at least for this year, and if we can, we'll go above that.

Mr. James Bezan: Let's balance that off against the outflow. How many members of the Canadian Armed Forces are leaving every year?

Gen Jennie Carignan: The number of 6,400 does account for the normal attrition we have, along with increasing the demands we see. Basically, the numbers are planned so that within the next five years we're going back to our numbers, to our full strength, and they do account for attrition as well, but if we can do it faster, this is what we're aiming for as well, at the same time.

Mr. James Bezan: We had Professor Rob Huebert here on Tuesday. He said that the state of military readiness in Canada hasn't been at this low a level since 1938, going into World War II.

You talked about readiness. We've talked about resources. The human resource is one side of that, and we're still short of brave women and men who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces. We need more great Canadians to step up and serve, but you're also dealing with a budget cut.

According to the numbers from the parliamentary library and the analysts we have at committee here, the actual expenditures under the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are now under 1% of GDP at 0.95%, and you're dealing with a budget cut, which General Eyre just said was more than challenging: It was essentially undermining the ability for the armed forces to maintain a level of readiness.

We're hearing stories about budget cuts impacting the maintenance and overhaul of military equipment and the ability to deploy that equipment, and we're also seeing the amount of training activity on the decline. Can you comment on how that budget is impacting day-to-day operations?

Gen Jennie Carignan: We are currently working on the way ahead for the path to the 2% new investments coming into defence. It's always a balance between being good custodians of public funds and increased investments. Increased investments will allow us to invest in our recruitment processes and will allow us to invest in what we say is the people space, in terms of housing, child care and so on. On top of that, they will allow us to create more operational readiness—the sustainment and all of that—so it's a balance between the two—

Mr. James Bezan: Those investments are going into housing when there's no money in the DPU or in the budget for military housing this year, next year or the year after that. It's all back-loaded, in three years' time, and even that doesn't build the 6,700 residential housing units that the Canadian Armed Forces are short of today.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave the question and the answer there.

Just as a point of clarification on the 6,400 number you used, is that a net number? On the number who are leaving and the number you're recruiting, are you 6,400 ahead at the end of the year?

• (0830)

Gen Jennie Carignan: No. The strategic intake plan is based on the forecasted level of attrition. We need to account on an annual basis for people who we are expecting will be leaving, and it's also based on the number of people we need for various trades within the forces. With all of that together, we come up with the number of 6,400 in terms of strategic intake.

It's also based on our capacity to train to basic military qualifications and then further down the training path for all of our personnel to bring them to their qualifications as well. It does account for that, and then the path we are on is that we want to come back to our full strength within the next five years. This is the number that will allow us to do that.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for that.

Unfortunately, I'm in this position, where I cannot ask further questions, but anyway....

There are those who wish I wasn't. Mr. Powlowski is not one of them.

You have six minutes.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): I was going to offer you my time if you wanted it.

Continuing on the issue of recruitment, the problem doesn't seem to be people not wanting to join. My understanding is that last year we had 70,000-plus applicants, and only about 4,000 were accepted. With PRs, 21,000 applied, and something like 70 were accepted.

You talked about not lowering standards, but what kinds of astronomical standards do we have that we're turning down 66,000 of 70,000 applicants, or they're just not getting through the process? What's the problem? What are we looking for that these people don't have?

Gen Jennie Carignan: This committee is well aware that recruiting is a complex affair. We need to understand that the number of 70,000 is the number of folks who have demonstrated a certain level of interest. A big proportion of them—I would say that the numbers we are tracking show 30%—is not coming back when we reach back out to them. It's not everybody who responds once we return to them to continue processing their files, so we are losing a certain amount at that moment.

This fall, we are reviewing the many, many processes and implementing—we are actually implementing—initiatives that will allow us to remove barriers and to create a more streamlined process for folks when they show up at the recruiting centre. For example, with regard to the security classification, it is important that the screening happens for Canadians who join the forces, but we are allowing for reliability status as an initial recruitment standard. Then, as people go through the basic military qualification, we keep working on their security level screening. That's a great advantage for our permanent residents, who have an international nexus to their file. We have to be able to track where they've been before and so on and so forth. That will enable our permanent residents to join as well, and we will keep working on their security levels and screening as they are undergoing initial training.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Thank you.

Someone who knew something about the system and the recruiting suggested that the problem was that every time some new problem comes up with somebody in the military, they add another requirement in terms of recruitment. As a result, over the years we've added on requirement after requirement, so now it's so difficult to get people to pass all these requirements. What do you think of that statement?

Number two is that I was also told that there is a four A's requirement, that if you have asthma, allergies, ADHD or anxiety, you don't qualify. It seems to me that this would exclude a whole lot of people who would be exceedingly qualified. For example, with regard to asthma, two or three of my six kids have asthma, but they had asthma as kids. They hardly ever have asthma anymore. It's not really an issue. However, the army would seemingly say that, no, they don't qualify, even though they might be stellar candidates.

So, I have two questions. The first is about too many requirements, and the second is about the medical requirements and the possibility of easing them.

• (0835)

Gen Jennie Carignan: The medical standard is another key screening area when we recruit folks to join the military. The medical standards are being reviewed as we speak, and by the end of this month we will be implementing and modernizing the approach to the medical standards. We realize that the diagnostic tools currently available in 2024 are greatly more sophisticated than they were 30, 40 or 50 years ago, hence the requirement to modernize our standards to ensure that we recruit the Canadians who are available for service. The four A's are definitely correct in terms of the areas we are currently looking at, but in the next couple of months we will be implementing new medical standards to account for the Canadians who are currently showing up at our door. Asthma or those types of conditions were not necessarily as strictly diagnosed many years ago. They are now, hence the need to review our medical standards.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Are the four A's going out?

Gen Jennie Carignan: Pardon me?

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Are you going to stop using the four A's requirement?

Gen Jennie Carignan: The four A's are, of course, being considered, but it's not one-size-fits-all, so there will be an evaluation of the file conducted that will, again, take the whole file into consideration, because this is not the only thing that needs to be considered as part of a potential candidate showing up at our door.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Powlowski.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): General Carignan and Lieutenant-General Kelsey, thank you for joining us, and congratulations on your appointments.

General Carignan, you said that the pool of permanent residents was a recruitment source. I gather that there have been issues around communication with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, regarding background checks.

Are these communication issues still ongoing? Have they been resolved?

Is the communication among the various departments better in this respect?

Gen Jennie Carignan: Certainly, the communication is ongoing. We're working closely with IRCC to combine and complement our efforts in order to speed up the recruitment process.

Of course, we aren't the only ones involved in this process. These collaborative efforts are crucial and still ongoing.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Rumour has it that the people deployed to Latvia may have to stay a bit longer than the six months originally planned.

I would like you to comment on this information, which we heard through the grapevine.

Is the level of recruitment or interest in subsequent rotations high enough to deploy the right number of troops each time for the Latvian operation?

Gen Jennie Carignan: This is a critical issue.

We're currently undergoing rapid expansion in Latvia. As our presence grows, we'll need to look at various ways to support this mission over the long term. We expect to be in Eastern Europe for a long time. This option will be considered.

We'll also need to look at other options, such as the capacity to increase troop numbers or a more permanent presence.

As we establish and expand our presence in Latvia, we'll be looking at various options to ensure that this mission is sustainable over the long term.

• (0840)

Ms. Christine Normandin: Have you identified any priorities for the equipment planned for deployment in Latvia?

Do these priorities relate more to certain types of operations, such as air operations or ground operations? What are these priorities?

Gen Jennie Carignan: As this committee knows, we want more ammunition on the ground, not only for ourselves, but also for the Ukrainian forces. This issue is critical.

In terms of forces deployed on the ground, some of our priorities include air defence and artillery capabilities. These capabilities are currently being implemented. We absolutely need them on the ground.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

My next question concerns the budget cuts that the armed forces faced a year ago. The new funding related to the defence policy update doesn't necessarily make up for these cuts.

What's actually happening on the ground? For example, we're hearing that units have had to limit exercises.

Are any issues arising on the ground as a direct and tangible result of the budget cuts made a year ago?

Gen Jennie Carignan: Overall, for the Canadian Forces, we're working on a long-term plan with the Department of Finance and Treasury Board to ensure that we manage our finances properly. At the same time, we're working on the plan for new investments. We need to strike a balance between the two.

I'll give the floor to the vice chief of the defence staff for further clarification.

Lieutenant-General Stephen Kelsey (Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, Canadian Armed Forces, Department of National Defence): Thank you for the question.

First, I just want to emphasize that we're spending every penny wisely. Of course, the armed forces are facing pressure related to training. However, it's all part of balancing force generation, recruit preparation and the training system.

The issue concerns operational readiness, personnel and the recruitment system. A person will undergo basic training and more advanced training afterwards.

The commander of the army wants much more money for training. However, it's a capacity issue. Of course, training is lacking in certain parts of the army. As the chief of the defence staff said, the priority is obviously recruitment and the ongoing process of preparing personnel. It's a continuum. The beginning matters, but so does the rest. We need to invest in non-commissioned officers, leaders and young officers to ensure that the process continues.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Normandin.

Ms. Mathysen, you have six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Well, I, too, want to welcome you.

General, it is quite wonderful to see you here. Your predecessor was happy to come and speak about some difficult issues, so I appreciate that you're here with us today at the beginning of your role. That extends to the lieutenant-general as well.

A lot of what we'll be focusing on in this committee in the fall, of course, is sexual trauma and misconduct within the military. There are a lot of conversations about this institution. It creates a lot of safety for others around the world, but it must be safe within for all of those who serve.

Can you share with this committee how you plan to make the Canadian Armed Forces a safer place to work?

● (0845)

[Translation]

Gen Jennie Carignan: I want to thank the member of Parliament for the question.

[English]

This is, of course, a priority area for us, because professional conduct in our organizational culture creates cohesive and combat-effective teams that can then be sent out to do some pretty difficult things in pretty difficult situations.

This is why our chief of professional conduct and culture will continue in terms of implementing our strategy and the various initiatives that are ongoing regarding management of complaints and grievances while ensuring we have a responsive system in that way. It's also using conflict as a way to build our teams. As we know, with over 125,000 people within defence, conflicts are happening. We want to make sure people can resolve and navigate conflict in a respectful manner.

Those efforts are a top priority, and they are currently ongoing via the chief professional conduct and culture and across our services, which are implementing, as well, their own initiatives to create strong and cohesive teams.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I'm certainly glad you mentioned the grievance system. I mean, we were talking about that within this committee, of course. We spoke with your predecessor about the responsibilities of the CDS in terms of being that final authority on grievance matters. There were conversations about that being far more streamlined and getting through the extreme backlog that existed in terms of grievances. They've had a lot of impact on continuation of service and on how people leave the service—their life as a veteran, afterwards.

How do you plan to continue? Are you going to keep along the same path that the previous CDS was discussing with this committee? How do you plan to tackle that long backlog issue?

Gen Jennie Carignan: We are continuing the modernization of our complaints system overall. The grievance management was addressed first. As you know, last February we introduced the digital form to streamline the process. We implemented as well the grievance committee. It does streamline the process, as you mentioned, in terms of making decisions more rapidly.

This fall we are introducing more advances into the digital space in terms of modernizing the case management system. It allows for better tracking for our case managers and for the complainants, to ensure that they understand where their grievance is at. It's also for the chain of command to be able to better manage and navigate that space with our members.

There's more to come this fall, but we have had consistent improvement over the complaints system overall. We will then be able to expand that further for all other forms of complaint.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: A lot has been discussed in terms of the CAF-DND class action on sexual misconduct, which had a number of deliverables. The five-year anniversary is coming up soon. We've heard a lot about the complex relationship with SM-SRC. A lot of it has been positive, and a lot of it has not been positive.

The review needs to be more than just that box-checking exercise. How do you plan to ensure that the review goes forward in a serious manner, with the trust that survivors need?

● (0850)

Gen Jennie Carignan: Mr. Chair—

The Chair: Unfortunately, Ms. Mathysen has left you with very few seconds to answer that question. Can you add that on to your second round of questions? That would be helpful.

We've completed our first round. We're now on to our second round.

Mr. Stewart, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, General Carignan and Lieutenant-General Kelsey. It's a pleasure to have you here. Thank you for the good work that you do and that the entire armed forces team does behind you.

I want to think back to last winter, when there was an announcement of rent hikes that were coming through for military housing and that were to be effective April 1. Around the same time, we saw stories about soldiers, sailors and air people who had either lived in their vehicles or were couch surfing for the lack of affordable housing, whether on base or off.

I just think about the destruction to morale that may have caused. I wonder what you saw on the ground from a morale standpoint when those rent hikes were announced.

Gen Jennie Carignan: The housing and accommodation issues for our personnel are a key point for us. It's extremely important. Having been moved more than 13 times, if my count is correct, we understand the need to provide proper support for our folks, who we are asking to serve and to move regularly as part of their duties.

We do understand the need, and we understand as well that the housing issues are also lived and experienced by Canadians overall, but we are putting forward many initiatives to facilitate housing and enable our members to be more mobile. Currently, we have a few things ongoing. We need to understand that we currently operate 11,700 residential houses in 27 different locations for our members. We are building 1,400 new homes over the next five years on various bases. We are renovating 2,500 units as well, to maintain our residential homes in good condition over many different bases across Canada.

This is also layered with benefits for our folks. The needs are very different depending on the families and their personal situations, so it's a layered approach. Not all members require the same types of supports as we are asking them to serve. We have the Canadian Forces housing differential as well. That has been implemented to enable our folks to move, and 28,000 CAF members are actually benefiting from it.

Not everything is perfect. We understand the difficulties that our members are encountering, but we are regularly gathering the feedback, understanding the experience and consistently striving at improving that situation for all of our members.

Mr. Don Stewart: Thank you.

I was wondering.... Sometimes it's hard for people to think about this in terms of the number of housing units. When we think about those 11,000 units, I think I saw in the DPU that we were short 7,000—around 7,000, usually 6,000 or 7,000—and there's \$295

million earmarked to be spent, I think, up until 2032-33. That works out to about \$1,800 per housing unit over that span of time.

When you think about that amount of money to build and to do 2,500 renos, and if we're short 6,000 units, does the government need to think about allocating more money to housing? Is that a way in which we can raise morale in the forces and a fairly low-cost way of doing it? At a time when we need the most out of our people, can we spend our money on our people? In the DPU, there were 36 recommendations, and 25% of them had to do with HR. To me, this is a key one.

Like I said, we need the most out of our people. Is this a great way to target that?

● (0855)

The Chair: Please answer very briefly.

Gen Jennie Carignan: Broadly speaking—and I'll ask the vice to come in on this one—for the first priority, as we harness the new investments, the people space is where we are going to be focusing our efforts. Housing is one of those. Sustainment is another one. All of that focus on people is where we want to go first in terms of foundational work that we want to do with our forces, but housing is one of the priorities, where we want to invest early in the process—

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

Mr. Collins, you have five minutes.

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

Welcome, Generals, to the committee.

General Carignan, I'd like to start with Ukraine first. Everyone's watching with interest where the U.S. is right now. It's going through its own election process. President Biden, I think, is poised today to provide more support for Ukraine with additional weapons and resources.

There are two different positions south of the border. We've heard President Trump talking about ending the conflict prior to his swearing in, if he wins. His vice-presidential nominee has been very blunt about his opposition to the war in Ukraine and providing U.S. support for it.

That same debate is certainly going to happen here when we go through our own election. There are different positions that our parties have here. We've been very clear in our support. There is one party that hasn't supported Ukraine and has ceased support when it comes to providing resources to the Ukrainians. Canadians will have an opportunity, just as the Americans have in the U.S., to comment on where they stand on it.

It leads me to the question of why we should care. I'm not going to ask you about the politics here in Canada or south of the border, but governments are providing support to Ukraine because it matters. Some might say it's a "faraway foreign land", but what happens in Ukraine and what Russia is doing in Ukraine matter to Canadians, and they matter to many other parts of the world.

Can you relate to the committee and share with us why Ukraine matters and why the support for Ukraine matters?

Gen Jennie Carignan: We just cannot let Mr. Putin redraw the borders in Europe. We just cannot let that happen. Why not? Because once will not be enough for him if success happens on the Russian side.

It's absolutely key that Ukraine is successful in protecting and keeping its territory. We absolutely need to support Ukraine in this fight, because it is our own fight as well. This is why, from my perspective.

It's because we need to preserve borders and international order, and this is not how we want nations to behave.

Mr. Chad Collins: Thanks, General.

It becomes increasingly hard to justify and rationalize support for Ukraine with constituents sometimes, because of what they read on social media. You mentioned in your opening remarks the challenges we have with disinformation. As a government, we deal with disinformation as well on all topics, whether it's climate change, support for Ukraine or other important issues that Canadians face.

Your predecessor was very clear about the threat that disinformation poses, not just to the Canadian Armed Forces and to our society but to our democratic institutions. That is wrapped up in that whole question related to Ukraine, and I receive it, unfortunately, on a regular basis from all parts of Canada. I try to relay to my constituents, from an educational perspective, that some of what they read on social media isn't true and is coming from foreign adversaries.

Can you talk about the challenges you face in your new position and how you plan to address those issues, whether they're related to Ukraine or otherwise?

Gen Jennie Carignan: Disinformation, Mr. Chair, is such a common issue that all democracies have to deal with in the current situation. The various exchanges I've had with our allied colleagues from NATO, and even in the Indo-Pacific over the last few weeks, were very informative in terms of how similarly we are dealing with those issues.

I think the seeding of that false information has a direct effect on the trust in our institutions and how people will react to or support very important, specific issues, such as Ukraine. It's important to raise awareness of our values and what they mean, and then keep that information at the forefront to counterbalance the misinformation that is out there.

There will not be one single thing that will address the misinformation; it will be the many tools at our disposal, because we can use the same technology and we can use the same means to ensure that our narrative, our messages and our values transpire through the same methodologies.

• (0900)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Collins.

Madame Normandin, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Carignan, you referred to the lack of recruitment and the shortage of personnel in certain trades.

I would like to hear your thoughts on priorities. Which trades are most urgently in need of recruitment right now?

Gen Jennie Carignan: Thank you for the question.

I'm thinking in particular of the naval trades. For example, we have a major need for marine technicians so that we can deploy our ships for various operations. For many technical trades, we have a significant need for personnel for both the air force and the army.

Often, people are more familiar with our operational trades. However, there are currently 107 trades in the Canadian Forces. We have a great need for personnel in many of our technical trades.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

Are any clear strategies in place to recruit and focus on specific target groups?

Gen Jennie Carignan: Mr. Chair, our recruitment services are quite active in various technical schools and communities where we see fewer people joining the forces.

Our services are currently active in certain locations and institutions to promote the trades in the forces that require personnel.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have 20 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would have liked to talk about transfers from the reserve forces to the regular forces. Unfortunately, I won't have time to get an answer.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Madame Mathysen, you have around two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I'll pick up on my question about that five-year review.

We commit that the review will be fulsome. It will be what survivors are calling for: having access to the information and documentation they need—the things they have been asking for, for quite some time.

Gen Jennie Carignan: I think a review is key to our program. A review, for us, is an opportunity to see whether our initiatives are actually providing the results and outcomes we want to see. It provides us, as well, with feedback on what it is that we need to keep doing and what it is that we need to be improving.

I'm absolutely behind it. I fully support the review taking place.

● (0905)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Can you go through the work going into that review or leading up to it?

Gen Jennie Carignan: We will need, first of all, to ensure our personnel are available to go over the various areas for review. It's about designing the work plan ahead in terms of interaction, and providing all the documentation and engagement required to ensure that the review has all the information it needs.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Just quickly, there's also been a study at this committee about contracting out and the overreliance upon contracting. There have been decades-long cuts to the salary or wage envelopes, which have increased contracting out.

Can you talk about what steps you're taking to work with base commanders—specifically Canadian Forces health services and real property operations—to reverse this trend toward privatization?

Gen Jennie Carignan: I think, for us, it's always about reaching out to the type of personnel we need to conduct different types of tasks. In cases where we need subject matter expertise that we don't have, we reach out to a specific type of consultant or contractor to do the work. In other cases, it's work done by... It's continuous, regular and permanent. Then we have a tendency to go to our public service. If it's typically military, we would turn towards...

Again, depending on the requirement and type of work, we use the proper means to deliver specific outcomes or results.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Gallant, you have five minutes.

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

Certainly, the \$345,000 the government spent on the Russian propaganda film *Russians at War* would have been better suited to getting equipment for our troops.

My questions will be for General Carignan.

What does “strategic recruitment” mean? Does it mean there are still quotas?

Gen Jennie Carignan: I'm not sure that I understand what “strategic recruitment” is.

For me, it's recruitment, pure and simple. We need to get our numbers back up to full strength, and we are aiming towards achieving our targets this year. If we can get beyond those, we will absolutely look at doing that as well. We have targets and anticipated numbers that we are looking at reaching. Again, depending on

who is showing up with what qualifications and potential... We are going to be recruiting across the full spectrum of Canadian diversity.

This is basically what we are looking at.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What are the targets?

Gen Jennie Carignan: For example, we are looking at achieving a 25% target in terms of women as part of our forces. We are looking at a global goal of 11.8% visible minorities and 3.5% indigenous people. We want to make sure, again, that we have a representation of all Canadians as part of our forces.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Do these quotas apply per trade?

Gen Jennie Carignan: No. These are the total numbers we are aiming for. Again, we want to give people a choice in terms of where they think they can best contribute to our forces.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: How will you confront the growing, unexpected threats posed by state actors such as Russia, China and Iran, and the non-state actors that persistently conduct cyber-attacks against our infrastructure, institutions and military?

Gen Jennie Carignan: After this committee, we will be officially standing up our cyber-command. Over the past 10 years, we have been growing this capability, and we are very proud of the work that has been achieved so far. Our cyber-capabilities have been contributed in many places—in Ukraine as well. We are extremely proud of the capacity we have been standing up and growing over the past 10 years.

Today, we will be officially standing up the command.

● (0910)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: How many people will there be in that command? What is the number of soldiers?

Gen Jennie Carignan: I don't have the numbers off the top of my head, and I don't think I can share—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Is it 20, 30 or 50?

Gen Jennie Carignan: Again, I don't think I can share those numbers.

What's important to us are the effects they are delivering.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: During his time, your predecessor was forced to deal with a very bad hand on defence spending for our armed forces, given the severe cuts this government has implemented.

How would you confront a minister were they to propose further cuts to defence, which would certainly further limit operational capabilities in our armed forces?

Gen Jennie Carignan: Our role is to balance all of those issues—what we are being asked to do versus the resources we are provided. It is clear that we need to sequence and prioritize. We won't be able to do everything at the same time. Again, my job as chief of the defence staff is to ensure we can deliver the capabilities with the funding envelope we are provided.

The Chair: Thank you. I cut you off a little early—15 seconds—but we'll try to make it up at some other point.

Ms. Lapointe, you have the final five minutes.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. I'll be sharing my time today with my colleague MP Lambropoulos.

[*Translation*]

Good morning, witnesses.

Last week, a panel of experts appeared before the committee to provide an update on the situation in Ukraine and the Baltic region. Marta Kepe, a senior defense analyst at RAND, said that Canada's highest priority was to protect large infrastructure systems from malevolent actors. She added that this constituted a major weakness for our country's security.

Can you describe your plans to address this threat?

Gen Jennie Carignan: Plans are in place to protect critical infrastructure.

There's always a review process to identify this critical infrastructure. This review can cover economic aspects, security aspects or defence inventories, strictly speaking.

We're working on this plan together with our American colleagues, who are part of NORAD's overall plan.

Based on various scenarios and situations, contingency plans are in place to protect this critical infrastructure.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

[*English*]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you to our witnesses for being here with us today.

I have a couple of questions related to recruitment. You said the goal for the year is 6,400. Does that year end in December, or is it a different year that you look at?

Gen Jennie Carignan: It's the fiscal year, so it's March 31, 2025.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Are there any legislative changes that could make your recruitment process a bit simpler and allow you to either recruit a greater number every year or make it quicker? That way, by the time you call people back, they haven't already found another job and it's a couple of years down the line, which is something we've heard.

Gen Jennie Carignan: For the moment, the changes we are implementing as of this fall are within our own control, so as far as we can tell, we don't see the requirement for legislative changes for the moment.

Of course, we are partnering with other government departments, such as immigration, to enable the process. The modernization and implementation of new initiatives, new methodologies and new processes are ongoing this fall.

I'm hopeful that, starting in January, we will see some changes in recruitment intake.

● (0915)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I know that in the beginning, IRCC was more reluctant to share information on files. Is that no longer the case? Has it been simplified? Has a solution been found?

Gen Jennie Carignan: Our organizations are consistently collaborating and talking to ensure the protection of privacy. All of these issues need to be considered as our folks collaborate to streamline the process, so our folks are consistently collaborating in this space.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Earlier this week, we spoke to academics who were of the opinion that we are not necessarily ready. They said that level of readiness has not been reached and we are not looking at the situation going on in the world as seriously as other countries in terms of readiness and being on a war footing.

What's your opinion of that, based on our current situation within the CAF?

Gen Jennie Carignan: This relates to the points I made in my introductory comments. We know we are at the transition point in our global security environment. We know our forces are not presently postured for the future. This is why we are undertaking a lot of changes internally to defence. It's because we need to restructure to be more adaptable and more responsive.

We are not only transforming internally; we're also setting the path forward to establish new capabilities that will put us in a better posture for the future.

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there. Thank you, Madame Lambropoulos.

Generals Carignan and Kelsey, on behalf of the committee, I want to thank you.

However, before I let you go, you can see there is a lot of interest, on the part of all the parties and of all the members, around recruitment and around how we're going to get there. I wonder, when you go back to your offices, if you could reflect on those questions and, if you will, sketch out the five-year plan to get there, because, as I understand the back-and-forth, it only brings us up to a previous standard of readiness and capability. The world is changing very quickly, as you appreciated in the last question and as you appreciated in your opening remarks. I think the committee would benefit from a point summary of how we're going to get from where we are to where we need to be, and maybe we could have some discussion about whether where we need to be is actually close enough to where we need to be.

I'm assuming from the nodding that is going on around the table here that if you could undertake to do that, it would be appreciated.

Again, this has been a really good start to what I hope is an ongoing dialogue. Everyone at this table has a sincere interest in making sure that our forces are as ready and as able as they can be.

I see a hand popping up.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I'm just wondering if the CDS would be able to provide funding amounts required in each step to get there.

The Chair: If that's possible, I'm sure we'd be interested.

With that, thank you.

We will suspend and re-empanel. Thank you again.

● (0915) _____ (Pause) _____

● (0925)

The Chair: We are on our second hour of our meeting this morning.

We have, as our guest representative, from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada, Harry Ho-jen Tseng, along with his colleagues, whom I'm assuming he will introduce.

This is a continuation of our study about the threat analysis on the Indo-Pacific.

Sir, go ahead for your opening five minutes, please.

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng (Representative, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada): Thank you very much.

Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

It is my great pleasure to be invited once again to share my views on the latest situation in the Taiwan Strait. I last appeared at this committee in September 2023, and the situation has been evolving and changing ever since.

In January of this year, Taiwan held its eighth direct presidential election. Mr. Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party won the election and took office on May 20. The people of Taiwan elected a president from the same political party for the third consecutive term and formed a new Legislative Yuan, which is our parliament, with no single party holding an absolute majority. This new political landscape is a testament to the will of our people: a democratic triumph achieved amid notable challenges, particularly the political pressure and foreign interference from China.

In the wake of the election, China seems to have stepped up interference in seeking to create a political stalemate in Taiwan. Shortly after the elections, China escalated its pressure by luring the Republic of Nauru, an island state in the Pacific, to cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan, and arbitrarily altered flight routes in the Taiwan Strait. Following the presidential inauguration on May 20, China conducted so-called punitive drills around Taiwan. Since then, Chinese warplanes and warships have been intruding into our ADIZ and nearby waters, sometimes crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait—a provocative move equally familiar to our neighbouring countries.

Nevertheless, facing the intensified political and military threats, we have exercised self-restraint and shown resolve to safeguard our democracy, peace and stability.

In our commitment to maintaining peace and stability, we have secured domestic consensus to reform our national defence system, extended mandatory military service to one year and increased our 2025 defence budget to 2.6% of GDP. It demonstrates our determination to strengthen self-defence and our belief that peace can be maintained only through strength.

In our commitment to protecting shared values, we dedicated ourselves to fortifying democratic alliances for collective deterrence. Since this year, we have seen public statements from the U.S., Japan, the G7, the European Union, NATO and Quad, all emphasizing the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Notably, the Canada-Australia defence relationship joint statement, as well as Canada's recently released defence report, have both echoed this sentiment.

Unfortunately, despite our self-restraint, we have encountered mounting Chinese pressure to exclude us from participating in international organizations. China, by distorting UN Resolution 2758 in line with its one China principle, has used it as a legal basis to further isolate Taiwan. In fact, Resolution 2758 does not mention Taiwan, does not address the political status of Taiwan, does not establish PRC sovereignty over Taiwan and does not preclude Taiwan from participating in the UN and its agencies.

To sum up, China has recently stepped up misinterpretation of UN Resolution 2758. It is part of China's legal warfare, or "lawfare", intended not only to prevent Taiwan's international participation but also to justify its potential aggression towards Taiwan in the future. If China is not stopped from distorting UN Resolution 2758, when military conflict happens in the Taiwan Strait it would be illegal for Canada to come and help Taiwan. I call on this committee to heed this critical issue and render support for democratic Taiwan.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer your questions.

● (0930)

The Chair: Thank you, Representative Tseng.

Mr. Allison, you have six minutes.

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

Thank you very much for being here today.

Taiwan is obviously a very proud leader of the semiconductor industry, and obviously semiconductors have led the charge when it comes to the tech revolution and now as we look at AI and where that's going.

My question for you is that as we look at this.... I know that TSMC is one of the largest companies in the world, but we see that American companies were actually selling advanced semiconductors to China, and now that's being blocked by the U.S. government. I'd love to know your thoughts on that.

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Indeed, TSMC is making more than 90% of the advanced chips in the world. As a matter of fact, we are part of the so-called export control regime that the U.S. has imposed, including Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Netherlands. Taiwan is part of that. The target of that is really the semiconductor, especially the advanced node semiconductor, being exported to China. This is very important.

You also mentioned the coming age of AI. AI can prosper and thrive only with very advanced semiconductors. Those are all semiconductors that are for the time being only produced by the TSMC. We are a very crucial player in terms of the coming age of AI. I think that there are more and more countries coming to recognize that.

Mr. Dean Allison: My question is in terms of the Chinese defence sector. Once again, AI is playing a bigger role in every sector, but certainly in defence.... I'd love to know what your thoughts are in terms of AI and the Chinese defence sector in terms of how that's progressing.

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: You must understand that even the mature node semiconductors, the chips, can be very widely applied in all kinds of applications, including missiles. It is not that China cannot develop its very advanced missiles or weapons without the TSMC helping it. It can do that. As a matter of fact, it's also been reported that Russia's only lifeline to sustain the war in Ukraine is China—that is, the semiconductors made by China. We think that the way to deter China is to stop sending semiconductors to China. We should do that, especially with the more advanced chips. The TSMC and Taiwan are co-operating with like-minded countries led by the United States, but doing that is not everything. China has the capability to make its own missiles with its own chips.

Mr. Dean Allison: Thank you.

You mentioned foreign interference from China. We're experiencing that here in Canada, as well, at many levels. Politically, we know that there are a number of members of Parliament, but it's also through the technology, whether it's university...and obviously through industry as well. Do you face the same types of challenges in Taiwan?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: The nature of the foreign interference from China is the same. I think it's all concerning our national security. The pattern may be very different, because in Taiwan we are facing Chinese foreign intervention on a daily basis. It doesn't happen only during the election time. It doesn't happen necessarily only during war time. Now, people will probably question whether now is peace time, because there are many things happening now. Even now, there is a lot of Chinese disinformation in Taiwan. They have a set of policies to spread disinformation in order to instigate

what we call cognitive warfare. This was particularly obvious during the presidential election in January this year. There are so many examples. I don't think I need to mention them one by one, but let me assure you that this is a very urgent and important matter that we face in Taiwan.

● (0935)

Mr. Dean Allison: I have only a minute left, and I know that others will be addressing this question.

How concerned are you about an imminent attack from China? I mean, there have been a lot of issues. You mentioned that, and you list all kinds of them. What would that do to your chip manufacturing industry?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Honestly, I don't think there is an imminent threat of war brewing. There is a difference between a long-term preparation for a war to break out, which is clearly written in their political report in the party congress, and a military drill. Military drills are meant to intimidate Taiwan, to intimidate our people. Many people in Taiwan wouldn't seem to be very much; nobody in Taiwan would panic when there is a military exercise, because they intend only to intimidate. If there is a hostile intention discerned in their military exercise, our response would be different. The response from the United States and Japan—the like-minded countries—would be different. I think there is no imminent threat, but there is an intention there, and they are preparing for it—

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

Thank you, Mr. Allison.

Ms. Lapointe, you have six minutes.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Thank you.

Hello, Your Excellency. I'm a rather new member to the committee, so I wasn't present when you appeared before this committee in September 2023.

I have reviewed the previous testimony from last year, when you said the following:

No region in the world is exempt from the geopolitical complexities we face today. What is happening in the Indo-Pacific is unavoidably related to what is taking place in other parts of the world and vice versa, notably in Ukraine, central Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

You went on to say:

The most unnerving geopolitical risks today are to be found in either the Russia-Ukraine war, the U.S.-China rivalry or the North Korean aggression and tension in the Taiwan Strait.

In your opinion, is the situation in the Indo-Pacific region different today? If so, in what ways is it different?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Thank you very much for your question, and thank you for referring back to what I said last year.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: I think if there is a difference, it can be seen as an incremental escalation of the threat. In terms of China, there is also one difference, very clearly, from what it was last year. That is the internal difficulties that China is facing today. By that I'm referring not only to economic difficulty, because economic difficulty can quickly switch to fiscal difficulty and social problems, and then to political problems in China. It can escalate very quickly, and that can affect their external behaviour.

I think we need to pay more attention to what's happening in the Indo-Pacific. I think that is exactly what many of the like-minded countries are doing now. I don't know if you have noticed, but in the past 24 hours, Japan, New Zealand and Australia have all sent their naval ships to transit through the Taiwan Strait. This is the first time we've seen that happen. It is the first time New Zealand has sent a naval ship to the Taiwan Strait. You may be surprised that this is also the first time Japan has done this on its own.

We know that we have the support of the world, because the situation there has been the focus of global attention, but we still have much more to do. We cannot afford to be complacent. We must be aware of that.

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: Can you tell us what the current situation is with China's "grey zone" tactics toward Taiwan? Has there been an escalation in frequency? From your perspective, what are the most concerning tactics they employ?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: The grey zone tactics, by definition, are actually a combination of all kinds of military or non-military threats that they can impose, in this case on Taiwan. It's a grey zone, so it's very difficult to see or regard them as war behaviour. This constrains the other foreign countries from reacting. If it's war behaviour, then perhaps international condemnation and sanctions would come immediately. China is trying to avoid that.

Again, Taiwan's situation is so unique. It's different from any other country's in terms of what you perceive as Chinese grey zone tactics. In Taiwan the grey zone tactics are a combination of their disinformation campaign, cyber-attacks and cognitive warfare. They create all kinds of scenarios to confuse society and confuse voters in order to nurture a candidate of their liking.

It's things like that. It's not what NSICOP has found out in Canada. It's one or two notches higher in Taiwan.

● (0940)

Ms. Viviane Lapointe: How does Taiwan navigate the increasing geopolitical competition between the U.S. and China in the Indo-Pacific? What role can diplomatic engagement with countries like Canada play in ensuring its security?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: I don't think "navigate" is the word I would use. We are a democratic country. Being a democratic country, we have already taken sides, so it is not that we navigate between the U.S. and China.

However, proximity is very important in geopolitical strategy. We are living beside a giant neighbour. We don't want to create any hostility or unnecessary tension across the strait, so we need to find a way to deal with our neighbour. This is why you find that politicians in Taiwan can sometimes appear to their supporters and get support. Otherwise, no....

Now, a very important, fundamental truth is this: In Taiwan, more than 85% of respondents to the questionnaire would prefer maintenance of the status quo. This gives you a sense that we just want the status quo.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

Ambassador Tseng, it's always a pleasure to see you. Thank you for joining us.

I would like to ask about the possibility of a blockade rather than a military invasion. As you said, a military invasion may not necessarily be imminent. However, a complete blockade of the island would be an issue, especially since I gather that the United States wouldn't consider it an act of war.

I want to hear your comments on the possibility of a blockade, and how the west can prevent or respond to it, if necessary.

[*English*]

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Thank you very much. The question is a very important one to ask.

I don't have any panaceas to cure this problem. Blockade is indeed one option China has to deal with Taiwan. They have already used a few live fire drill exercises. After Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, there was a blockade of almost a week. However, there are arguments of all kinds. Other experts believe that if your intention is to have Taiwan surrender, a blockade is not a viable approach, because you don't know how long that blockade needs to be sustained. Once you have a Chinese blockade, all of the countries that have shown concern for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait should respond immediately. It doesn't need to be an act of war for the international condemnation to come.

If a blockade is in that area.... The Taiwan Strait is the busiest strait in the world. More than 50% of containers in global trade go through the Taiwan Strait. It is definitely going to disrupt global trade and things like that. All countries will be affected. For us to counter a Chinese blockade, I think a very quick and concerted response from like-minded countries is paramount.

● (0945)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

I want to hear your views on the order of priority for Canada's support measures for Taiwan. For example, we could provide indirect military support by sending frigates to the Taiwan Strait. We could provide economic support by boosting various investments on both sides. We could also provide unofficial diplomatic support, given that there aren't any official diplomatic ties.

Which approach could Canada prioritize? What would help Taiwan the most?

[English]

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: That's also a very important question to ask.

When I look at Canada and think about what Canada can do to help Taiwan, I think that what you are already doing, sending your war ships to transit the Taiwan Strait, is very much appreciated. You have already done four transits after the issue of the Indo-Pacific strategy, more than one and a half years ago. That is very important, because the more countries show their intentions to keep the Taiwan Strait as international waters, the high sea, the more China will feel constraint, because China doesn't want to see the Taiwan Strait as international waters.

In terms of Canadian assistance to Taiwan, there are many other non-military approaches that you can render to Taiwan. I don't know if you have noticed, but recently there was a group of former security and defence officers from Canada visiting Taiwan. They came back last weekend and were already interviewed by the CBC program *Power & Politics*. They see Canada as very timid and very shy in terms of dealing with Taiwan. They were comparing what Canada was doing in those other countries, and in like-minded communities in western countries. There are many things that Canada can do. What was mentioned in that interview was the exchange of high-level visits.

That the Prime Minister and Governor General cannot visit Taiwan is understood, because maybe they carry the symbol of sovereignty. Regarding all the officials under them, there is no reason they cannot visit, because many other countries are doing that. If you can have higher officials visiting Taiwan, that would be very important to the Taiwanese people, because we want to know that we are not alone. Our people want to know that we are standing for a good cause, and that we have the support from like-minded countries. That's very important to us.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Normandin

Ms. Mathysen, you have six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: It's very good to always see you again at this committee.

You discussed UN Resolution 2758. The Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China met to discuss the perceived changes that may be occurring in that area.

Can you talk about the meeting that happened in July and what that meant to Taiwan?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: I believe members of this committee know about the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China. This is a cross-country parliamentary alliance reviewing what China is doing in the world and coming up with concerted efforts to safeguard democracy.

At the last meeting in late July in Taipei, it passed a model resolution to urge all those members to go back to their home countries and encourage their colleagues to pass similar resolutions in their respective parliaments. That is very important to us, because what we have read legalistically from UN Resolution 2758 is not what China has portrayed to the world. China has a very clear distortion of this resolution.

As I said in my opening remarks, that legal base should not be taken lightly, because legal warfare, or lawfare, is very important. China cares about its image. The Chinese want the world to know that what they are doing to Taiwan is in accordance with international law, and in their reading of it. We need to know that, in fact, this is entirely not what was stated in UN Resolution 2758. That is not its content.

I don't know if I have more time to explain this resolution; otherwise, I'll stop here.

● (0950)

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen has about three minutes left.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: You can certainly continue on with that, because I know that very recently, the Netherlands and Australia did that. They went back to their....

If you could expand on that, please continue. How does Canada have to move in the same direction? What are you working toward in terms of Canada doing the same thing?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Thank you.

This resolution was passed in October 1971 and mentioned only two things. It was a very simple, very short resolution.

Number one is to recognize the representative of the PRC as the legal representative of China at the UN. Number two is to expel the representative of Chiang Kai-shek from the seat they unlawfully occupy at the UN.

This is what is mentioned in the very short resolution. It does not mention Taiwan at all. It does not have any bearing on the UN members, and I don't think it sets up a political relationship with Taiwan at all. What I said is that it certainly does not preclude Taiwan from participating in the international organization at all.

Unfortunately, after 1971, when China was recognized by the countries in the world one after the other, the whole world subscribed to how China interpreted the resolution. Now, even more so, China is taking Resolution 2758 as being equivalent to its one China principle.

If you don't stop China from distorting this resolution, you are giving it carte blanche to do whatever it wants to Taiwan. It is a clear distortion of the world order.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Okay.

In terms of what you're seeing in that change.... After that meeting in July, there were two nations, as I said—Australia and the Netherlands—that went back.

What kind of dynamic has that created since then? What are you seeing?

Do you feel that more movement will occur? Those two things happened very quickly, but as we move forward....

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Many of my colleagues in different missions are reaching out to their counterparts, as I have been doing by meeting MPs and senators here in Ottawa. I try to explain to them that this is important, not only to Taiwan, but to you as well.

This has in no way violated your current policy. This is very important. Taiwan does not seek to change the status quo. We are not trying to abolish this resolution. We are only asking you to rectify what China has distorted. We are asking for the distortion to be rectified and changed. That's all.

I really hope Canada can follow this model resolution, as has happened in the Australian parliament and the Dutch parliament in the Netherlands. If a resolution or a motion can pass the House of Commons or the Senate, it will be very much appreciated, and it will be a big morale booster to Taiwan.

• (0955)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

That completes our first round. I think we can squeeze in a full 25-minute second round if we're tight and I don't have to interrupt people too much.

Mrs. Gallant, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Your Excellency, how would an actual armed attack on Taiwan by China impact Canadians here at home?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: This is a hypothetical question about China's attack on Taiwan: How would it affect Canada? First of all, I think that if we see the like-minded countries in the world as a body, as a family, you probably don't want the values you stand for to be challenged. If you ask this question, you could also ask this question: If Ukraine caved in to Putin, what would happen in Canada?

On the first side, it doesn't seem to cause any change in your life, but I think that's the thin end of the wedge. It can come to you because it is very clear that China's intention is not only Taiwan. If China wants to only deal with Taiwan, they don't need to prepare missiles, with thousands of them deployed on the east and west coasts. With all that range, they can shoot missiles well over Taiwan and reach somewhere else in the world, including your territory. They will not stop at Taiwan.

It is a challenge to the international rule of law; the rules-based international order is what they challenge. You probably don't want that, especially now that we are talking about a geopolitical reality that these countries are not acting alone. They are aligned with their peers. China is working with Russia. In the Ukraine theatre, there's Russia, North Korea, Iran. Now they call it the new axis of evil. There are things like that, so we should not single out any part of

the world, especially when China's intention is so well known, and they are trying to dominate all the international organizations and have their way through the international community. You don't want to see that happen. It's a very direct impact on Canada.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: In addition to transiting the Taiwan Strait, what can Canada do now to prevent China from invading Taiwan?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: We probably cannot say for sure how you can stop China from doing that, because, if this is an autocratic country and if everything can be decided by one person, when things become like that it's very unpredictable. It is not like the logic goes that way, and then you come to a conclusion. It can be so unpredictable. It is all depending on one person. This is why, when I say that China is having problems at home, it can quickly translate into some belligerent actions abroad. What you want to do, what I think is the best way, which is effective so far and is still continuing, is to have a collective deterrence.

Look, China meant to intimidate. Intimidation can be countered by deterrence, especially when this is a collective deterrence and a credible deterrence.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What does Taiwan need that Canada can provide in terms of military assistance?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: The U.S. is the only country that sells arms to Taiwan. If I want to ask Canada to follow suit, I may be asking for too much. You probably are not ready to do that, but there are many things we can do together. With Canada and Australia, you already have the two-plus-two meetings of the foreign minister and the defence minister, so let us follow. Let us be an observer to that, or we could have a deputy minister level of two plus two and things like that. There are many things we can do, because we have done only so much. I have all the friendships in Global Affairs, but I think I want to say to my friends in Global Affairs—some of them may be listening now—that there is much more we can do.

• (1000)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Would joint exercises be something we could do?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Joint exercises would be led by the U.S. Is that right?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: That's right.

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: We have our involvement in that, not like warships but together with the operation by personnel. Of course, if you can use all the international forums to speak up for Taiwan, we appreciate that very much. You are much stronger than you think you are, so we appreciate your assistance in any way.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gallant.

Madame Lalonde, go ahead for five minutes.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Thank you very much for being here. It's nice to see you.

You mentioned the greater presence of our partners and allies in the Taiwan Strait, and you made a brief reference to Canada's presence. I know there has certainly been an increased presence in the Indo-Pacific region, including in the South China Sea.

Last year, here in Canada, we watched as a Canadian military helicopter, our CH-148 Cyclone, was.... I'll describe this as being "buzzed" by two People's Liberation Army J-11s. It was clear, in our view—and I think in that of those who share our values—that this was an unprofessional and very unsafe activity.

Can you speak to our committee about the impact of this type of behaviour and whether our partners and allies are experiencing the same type of engagement in the region?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Everybody knows that war is the least desirable...so decision-makers in almost every country will try to prevent it from happening. However, war happens by accident. This kind of unprofessional contact can easily cause a mid-air collision, which has happened before. It happened in the year 2001 above the island of Hainan. That is not far off from how this helicopter encounter happened. To prevent that from happening.... It takes two to tango, though. You already made your intention very clearly known to the other side. If they choose to ignore your aspiration, you can do very little about it.

However, again, collective effort is very important. The strength of like-minded countries is that we are working with each other. China has no countries to work with. The countries they work with are cornered one way or another in different conflicts. Look at the collective strength of the blocks of like-minded countries—not only the "axis of evil" countries but also those countries that would befriend China at the UN. All together, their economic wealth cannot compare with that of our like-minded countries.

We are in a stronger place. We shouldn't act as if we are in a weaker place.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much.

My next question will be on diplomatic presence.

You talked about GAC and maybe listening.... Under Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy, how does Canada work with the U.S.? You mentioned Japan as a presence in the Indo-Pacific region. How do our partners engage in the region, and what does Canada's diplomatic presence there entail? How do we work closer and better, going forward, as always?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Thank you.

Honestly, I think the IPS that Canada issued in November 2022 is a very comprehensive and progressive policy. After all, it is unprecedented in Canada. You never had that kind of policy, one involving so many agencies and things like that. You have a very good road map as to how you want to engage in the Indo-Pacific region.

Canada is also very important in the G7, as well as in NATO. These strengths seem to be not so much perceived by the Canadian people. That is very unfortunate. You shouldn't always see yourself as a medium power. When you say that, you're thinking about the size of your population, but you are a rich country. You are second only to Russia in terms of territory. You are so rich in natural

sources. You haven't used all of your assets yet. This is why I think Canada should play a greater leadership role.

If you think your current leadership is not sufficient, you probably shouldn't just complain. You should take up greater leadership in the G7 and NATO and among like-minded countries. In that case, anything between Canada and Taiwan can loom large. I mean, our bilateral relationship would be upgraded to another level.

• (1005)

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Lalonde.

Madame Normandin, you have two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a number of questions. I'll focus on microprocessors, which serve as a type of insurance policy for Taiwan.

How much should Taiwan worry about the fact that China and other countries, including India, are also developing their microprocessor expertise?

One day, the expertise of these countries could surpass Taiwan's expertise. How could this change the situation?

[*English*]

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: We are not too worried about whether China will catch up or supersede Taiwan in terms of the chip manufacturing. As I said, China is still very strong at making the mature node chips, because they already have that supply chain. They already have an internal market of all kinds of electric appliances. They make the mature node chips, and there is a market to use them internally.

At the same time, that kind of chip may be only 50 nanometres, not mature at all, or not as advanced as 7 nanometres or even smaller, but those can be used in weaponry systems. That is the concern, but as I said, they didn't buy U.S. chips. The U.S. passed a law in October 2022—the CHIPS and Science Act—and then mobilized like-minded countries to work together. That is still going on. That effort reflects on the export control.

TSMC and other chip makers in Taiwan are not under the embargo or under the sanction with respect to exporting their chips to China, but those are the chips that China can make anyway, and certainly those more advanced chips that can only be made in Taiwan do not go to China at all.

China, because of this external pressure, is trying to really use the so-called whole-of-government approach to break the bottleneck. They want to have their own very advanced chips. They claim that they are able to make some—like 7-nanometre or 5-nanometre chips—but they are actually talking about making them in a lab.

The Chair: We're going to have to leave the answer there, unfortunately.

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Okay.

It's not business viable, not commercially viable.

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes, Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: The Civil Aviation Administration of China unilaterally changed the International Civil Aviation Organization's regulations in terms of certain flight routes. On January 30, they revoked the cross-strait agreements on certain flight routes. It's my understanding that it actually created a very dangerous situation. It jeopardized aviation safety, peace and stability.

Can you update the committee on what has occurred since then in terms of how that has undermined the strait and what has gone on since that decision of January 30?

• (1010)

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Thank you very much.

It's actually a very complicated story, but in fact it's part of their reaction to our presidential election. Our presidential election resulted in the election of the person least welcome by China. They took a series of actions, following our election, to punish Taiwan, and this was one of them. In this unilateral change of the flight routes in the middle of Taiwan Strait, which are already very close to the median line, they now make it even closer, and not only that but there is no southbound. In the Taiwan Strait, there is no southbound route: They actually reactivated another route—M503—in the middle of the Taiwan Strait.

Now, if they fly eastward from the coastal areas to connect to this M503, either to fly northbound or to fly southbound, they are actually coming to the middle of the Taiwan Strait without you being able to discern whether this is a passenger flight or a military warplane. That has already taken half the distance they need to cross the Taiwan Strait, squeezing our air defence zone, so it is very much a national security concern to us.

We brought this up to ICAO. ICAO seems to be unable to find anything to check Chinese behaviour. According to the ICAO regulations, any change of the flight routes should be informed or negotiated priorly with your adjacent FIR—flight information region—and that is Taipei's FIR.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: It's the fact that they didn't.

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: They didn't do that at all.

The Chair: I appreciate that this is a complicated question with a complicated answer, but two and a half minutes is, unfortunately, two and a half minutes. We are getting close to the time when we lose the room.

Next up is Mr. Bezan for five minutes.

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

Your Excellency, it's always great to see you. I appreciate your coming here and telling us how things are going.

Yesterday, it was reported that the People's Republic of China launched an intercontinental ballistic missile on Wednesday morning. It fell into the sea near French Polynesia. This is the first time since 1982 it's actually announced it's testing an ICBM.

Do you see this as a further escalation of hostilities in the region by the PRC?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: This news greatly surprised a lot of people, including me. Exactly what was the reason for this ICBM test being conducted?

There is one saying. I don't know how credible it is. Have you heard about the missile silo in Russia that imploded when they were trying to fire missiles from Russia to Ukraine? The silos exploded because of some malfunction. There's speculation that since earlier this year... You've heard about the rocket force in China, involving all kinds of corruption. The leadership of the rocket force in China has been purged. Quite a few generals have been taken into custody, and some have committed suicide. Xi Jinping may have wanted to see if there was some corruption in the rocket force by testing the ICBM. By doing this, he can also supervise the rocket force to do a better job. It reportedly happened in Russia, with the explosion of the silo. If that happens in China, you can see how many more—

• (1015)

Mr. James Bezan: Essentially, it's multi-purpose. First, it's to test the new rocket force; second, it's to escalate regional tensions; and third, it's to make sure that their missiles aren't archaic and dangerous sitting in the tubes.

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: One thing this testifies to is that you don't need an ICBM to invade Taiwan.

Mr. James Bezan: I'm talking about a regional escalation, more so than just Taiwan.

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: It can impact the U.S. and Canada.

Mr. James Bezan: I will just follow up on your comment that the PRC sees Canada as timid. You said it...

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: I didn't say the PRC sees Canada as timid. I said the group of former senior defence and security officers from Canada visited Taiwan, and after they returned to Canada, they said in an interview that Canada is—

Mr. James Bezan: Canada's support is timid.

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: —among the shyest of the western countries in dealing with Taiwan.

Mr. James Bezan: Okay. I appreciate that clarification. They're saying we're being too timid in how we approach Taiwan.

I've also heard from some of the diplomatic corps here. Look at the PLA's navy and the air force interactions with Canadian ships and Canadian aircraft, including helicopters and the maritime surveillance aircraft—the Auroras and the Cyclones. As Ms. Lalonde mentioned, there were very dangerous interactions and intercepts done by the PLA. According to other diplomats I've heard from, they were more aggressive than other nations have encountered when navigating the Taiwan Strait.

Would you agree that, for whatever reason, the PRC takes a more aggressive stance with Canada than it would if the United States, Australia, France or Germany sailed through?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Thank you very much.

It's actually a very interesting observation. Indeed, they didn't come to challenge.... They challenged the helicopter. Why on earth did they choose the Canadian helicopter or Canadian warships to show hostility to?

I don't know. Really, I don't know.

Mr. James Bezan: All we can do is speculate, based upon the comments from our former military and intelligence advisers—they were just recently in Taiwan, and we hope to have them at committee soon—that they just see Canada as being too weak.

The Chair: Mr. Powlowski, who could never be described as shy, now has five minutes.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: NATO recently said that China was enabling Russia's war against Ukraine. Certainly, if anyone understands the PRC, it's Taiwan.

All countries act in their own self-interest. China, probably more than most countries, acts in its own self-interest.

What is China gaining, either economically or politically, by enabling the war in Ukraine?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Every country has its own national interest, but for the Chinese Communist Party, this national interest is actually party interest.

Why is it that invading Taiwan, or why is the rhetoric of invading Taiwan in the interest of the Chinese Communist Party? It's because it needs a reason to show that its rule of China is legitimate. It used to be able to do that by giving the Chinese people economic benefits.

There seems to be an intangible social contract between the party and the Chinese people. It says to the Chinese people, "Forfeit your political rights to us, and the Chinese Communist Party will take care of your political participation and political rights. In return, we give you prosperity." This is what the Chinese Communist Party has been doing for decades. It actually was able to do that, and it's maybe one reason that corruption in China was so rampant.

This is how it is trying to convince the Chinese people that the Chinese Communist Party will take care of everything politically, but economically, the people get the benefit.

Now that it knows it is not able to sustain that economic benefit, it is creating another legitimate reason to continue to get the support of the Chinese people. This is nationalism and nationalistic feelings. One thing about that is actually Taiwan, because it sees

Taiwan not only as a renegade province but as a legacy of the Second World War. The Second World War is immediately connected to China's image of the so-called 100 years of humiliation.

It tries to justify what it does to the world as only asking for justice, because for the past 100 years, you have treated China with all kinds of unequal treaties. Now it is only asking for some fairness.

I hope you don't buy its argument, because this is all nonsense. If this is the case, why didn't it do that on day one of the PRC's establishment? It is only going to resort to this when other economic incentives can no longer be sustained. It's very easy to come up with all kinds of pretexts.

• (1020)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Do you think that part of the reason for China's support of Russia is that any victory by Russia emboldens them to be more aggressive against Taiwan?

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: I would agree with that.

I think that things are happening not in the way that Xi Jinping would have hoped they would happen. It was probably not only on his mind but on the minds of many people, including people in this room, that when the invasion happened on February 24, 2022, it would probably take only a few weeks or a few months for Putin to take up a chunk of the territory in Ukraine, and then that would be it. Fortunately, it didn't happen that way.

Now they have come to the juncture where they have to huddle even closer with each other, because they are already seen as one.

The Chair: You're done, even if you're not done.

Representative Tseng, I want to thank you once again for what's turning out to be an annual appearance before the committee. I don't know whether there will be a third annual appearance before the committee. We'll have to see. Some of us live in hope. On behalf of the committee, I just want to thank you for your enlightenment.

Just following up on Ms. Mathysen's question, there is an effort to get the IPAC resolution to a point of unanimous consent. For those of you who have some influence with those who might make those decisions, we'd encourage you to do so.

Colleagues, this does bring to a close our threat assessment on the Indo-Pacific. Frankly, I think we are a little on the light side on this threat assessment. I would be interested in off-the-line conversations as to whether there should be a follow-up to a very valuable, useful understanding of not only the threat to Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific, but what the implications are for Canada.

Mr. Bezan, it has to be very quick.

Mr. James Bezan: Just on that, Mr. Chair, I think it would be extremely helpful to invite the Canadian delegation that just returned to talk about this. I support that 100%.

The Chair: We can pursue that.

Next week, right off the top, is the report on housing. Presumably, that week we might also do the report on transparency, if we're efficient. We have commitments from Minister Blair to appear the following week, along with his officials, and Minister Saj-

jan and Minister Duclos following Thanksgiving. I think we have kind of a path forward. When Bill C-66 lands, it lands, and we'll make some adjustments accordingly.

Again, thank you so much. I appreciate this.

Dr. Harry Ho-jen Tseng: Thank you, members of the committee.

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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