

General Vance, Chief of the Defence Staff, speaking the Conference of Defence Associations Institute Conference on Security and Defence, 19 February 2016

RICHARD EVRAIRE: Bonjour, tout le monde, mesdames et messieurs, distingués invités. J'ai le très grand plaisir de vous présenter notre premier conférencier d'honneur de cette deuxième journée de notre Conférence d'Ottawa, un personnage que vous connaissez tous depuis très longtemps, j'en suis sûr, mais certainement depuis – et davantage depuis sa nomination au poste de chef d'état-major de la Défense.

Ladies and gentlemen, the CDA and the CDA Institute are deeply honoured and grateful to our keynote this morning for having found the time to brief us as only he can on the state of the Canadian Armed Forces. Please join me in welcoming General Vance. (Applause.)

GEN JONATHAN VANCE: Bon matin, tout le monde. Good morning, one and all. Just let me get set up here. I'd like to – j'aimerais remercier Richard pour l'introduction chaleureux. Merci beaucoup. To all present today, government and military officials from around the world, in Canada, welcome, ladies and gentlemen.

I'd like to highlight the presence this morning of three important allied senior people. General Tom Middendorp, The Netherlands, CHOD. Tom, welcome. General Gratien Maire, la Force aérienne française, le vice-chef d'état-major de la France. And Lieutenant General Mark Poffley from the UK, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff. Welcome, gentlemen. Glad to have you here. (Applause.)

This is my – they tried to put the number in here, so I'm going to say the umpteenth time I've been to the Ottawa conference, but it's the first time as your Chief of Defence Staff. And so I used to really enjoy coming to these. (Laughter.) It's better coming to these things when you don't have to speak, but actually, I'm delighted to speak today, in truth, and want to help all understand where the armed forces are today, where we're going in the future and happy to talk about Operation Impact. And I will take lots of questions at the end of this very, very long, tedious speech. And you'll see that they've got these things up here. I've never used these before, but I believe they're called hard question blockers. (Laughter.) And so that's good. I'm glad they're here.

It's a privilege, honestly, to be standing before you today representing my brothers and sisters in the profession of arms in Canada and indeed as a strong partner in alliances and coalitions around the world. I understand you've already had a very productive first day. Certainly, the Minister was active yesterday and after, and I will attempt to do my best to provide some value-added to the subject of national security strategies and the future of conflict.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again and I'll keep saying it, that with over 1,400 of our military personnel deployed around the world and more to come, I'm grateful to CDA and the Institute for the continuous, continued effort to engage, educate and raise the level of debate in Canada so we do have a voice out there that allows for wise and useful discussion on what we undertake in the security and defence realms.

I'd like to start with a few quick notes on Operation Impact, and I do so hoping to clarify for you; perhaps you could consider it a bit of a glossary of terms. When we say Iraqi security forces, there's been some confusion out there, I think. Iraqi security forces is in due deference to the Government of Iraq. We look at Iraqi security forces as all forces involved in the operations against ISIL, be they Iraqi,

Sunni, Shia or Kurd. And so as we attempt to describe our efforts, we do so with respect for the Government of Iraq and what they are trying to do.

Canada's refocused military mission will absolutely focus principally in terms of the ground operations in the train, advise and assist role with Kurd forces in the north. I think that has been plain as we've discussed this, but I just want to make certain we understand it.

I'd also like to speak briefly about the nature of train, advise and assist missions. Much has been said and debated and discussed about the realms of combat and non-combat operations. I think that train, advise and assist missions are new, and I think perhaps some are having trouble with the concept of how to do a train, advise and assist mission. How do you characterize it? How do you classify it? How do you pigeonhole it so that you get all the clarity that you want out of it?

Well, like so many of our operations, and you know, I refer you to Doug Bland's article this morning, if you haven't read it, in fact, the spectrum of warfare, the spectrum of conflict contains a great number of gradients of activity and things that you can do inside conflict zones and to be as you are a party to a conflict.

Just like many peacekeeping operations, peace support operations that we have experienced that have never been classified as combat operations, yet we experience fighting in them. We have lost casualty – we've lost people, suffered casualties in peace support operations. And we do so in an environment where the national intent, the purpose of the mission is defined as through its task and its role to contribute to the conflict in a positive way to try and achieve an outcome.

Yet if we are attacked, we defend ourselves, and so fighting can erupt. And we don't, in that context, fall into the trap of trying to somehow describe it as something other than a peace support operation.

A train, advise and assist mission is absolutely conducted inside a theatre of conflict, a theatre of war. There are people at war. We are a lawful armed conflict, but we are using a technique that is relatively new born of the lessons of Afghanistan, born of the knowledge that it is better for local and indigenous forces to actually achieve the sovereignty aims of their state than it is for others to come in and hand it to them. It's better to work with partners and even better to enable them to be successful.

And in this case, distinguished by the intent and the tasks of the mission, a train, advise and assist mission, it clearly falls into the non-combat realm, whereas a combat mission, largely distinguished by the fact that we are the principal combatant, we are fighting with Canadian troops or Canadian assets to achieve military objectives the ground in an offensive manner, by all means that would be classically described as a combat mission.

In this case, under the broad lexicon – and some people may be uncomfortable with the lexicon, and that's too bad for the fact is that we have a great deal of experience working in and through a non-combat realm where the intent is to support others to achieve their objectives. And in this case, our intent is to support those who are in combat, who are at war. And yes, it has been clear that it will be dangerous. It is clear that on occasion, to defend ourselves or defend those who we are with, we will have to fight. And we will do so strictly for the purpose of them achieving their objectives by training them, advising them and assisting them in the best way we can.

I'm happy to take questions on this of course after the fact, but to be clear, the words fighting, action, engaging the enemy and combat are synonymous in attempting to describe tactical events — there's no question about it. But they are not synonymous at all with a mission's intent or its purpose and in this case to train, advise and assist those who are locked into an existential struggle.

Operation Impact is a non-combat mission by virtue of withdrawing the F-18s. We are not conducting deliberate offensive operations and by virtue of the fact that the roles, missions and tasks assigned to the force are to train, advise and assist Iraqi security forces. We will provide improved intelligence to the coalition to support coalition operations and provide support to coalition strike operations with air-to-air refuelling and intelligence.

I hope that helps. I'm happy to take questions on that after my speech.

To further update you on Operation Impact — you've heard me say it before — the coalition continues. We have to keep in mind that we're a part of a coalition. We don't have discrete battle space that is our own. We do not operate independently of a coalition, and in fact, we're all in it together. The coalition continues to target, successfully, ISIL's personnel, their infrastructure, their command and control nodes, their equipment and supply routes, but the coalition is also intensifying along all lines of effort, including non-strike roles, particularly in the train, advise and assist effort to try and ensure that local and indigenous forces are in fact the ones to achieve the success. And this is not done simply because it's our idea; it's theirs too. They want to be successful. In fact, they have successfully countered ISIL attacks throughout Iraq, including on our — the area where we are in, in the Kurd-held northern front lines.

So to date, the coalition in its efforts has prevented ISIL from manoeuvring in large — freely in large numbers. They will try again to do so, and they will be thwarted. They've been halted militarily in Iraq. The world — we know that. But the mission as it is right now for the coalition — halt, degrade and ultimately dismantle and defeat — is underway. Our F-18s helped in the halt and started to degrade.

Next is the dismantle and the dismantle means ground forces, well-trained, well-advised, well-assisted ground forces. ISIL leadership is increasingly and more effectively being targeted, and we're going to help with that through our intelligence. Earlier this year, Iraqi security forces launched significant offensive operations in Baiji and Ramadi with good results. They're improving, which I'm pleased to say is in part because of the train, advise and assist role as well as the combat support provided by air power.

Last week, the government announced a refocused approach to our military contribution, and it's a wider effort. And in fact many in this room have sought more comprehensive approaches to warfare. Many of you who I know very well see a comprehensive approach as being more useful. I think the government announced — you know, in the military terms and the ones for the part of the mission I'll be speaking of, emphasize — I'll emphasize the military side, but is a comprehensive regional approach, which I am grateful for. It makes sense and it's part of our doctrine.

So in the mission itself, we're providing different support. It's not one force providing one effort, and it never has been. Our F-18s have never been assigned in direct close support solely to our forces ever. Some serious myths out there.

On the 16th, 17th and 18th of December when the Peshmerga line was penetrated by an ISIL attack and Canadian Forces helped them defend and reestablish the line, people thought that it was our F-18s that did all the work. It wasn't. It was French Rafales that came in. And that's the nature of coalition operations. Our forces will not be uncovered. There is coalition air power sufficient to provide the air cover for defensive operations and the offensive operations necessary to target ISIL — period.

So here's what we're going to do. On a coalition level, theatre-wide, we're going to support targeting and intelligence to better queue and plan strike operations to further degrade ISIL. We'll do that with the two CP-140 ISR aircraft and additional personnel into our headquarters that will be better positioned with more analysis to provide target folders into the coalition for consideration for strike.

We're going to support the air campaign with the refueller — it's a valuable asset.

We're going to establish a military liaison team in the Ministries of Defence and the Interior in Baghdad. And in fact, we'll have the general officer that will lead that. Those of you who were familiar with the SAT in Afghanistan, it'll be similar to that, but not exactly like that, to provide liaison, important liaison to the Iraqi ministries.

And we'll provide general staff throughout the coalition and coalition headquarters to add, you know, expert Canadian staff officers to the mix — more than we have now.

Another area we'll be working on is the coalition train, advise and assist mission in the north. Now everybody takes their piece. We started in the north, and we're continuing in the north. It makes some sense. We developed some relationships there, and it's critical terrain. We don't want another part of Iraq to destabilize. We want to hold what's been held and take back from ISIL more. In this case, based on the battle space geometry, if you will, and the objectives of the Peshmerga, it's largely a defensive role, but it will be key — key — in the ultimate dealings that will go, the ultimate operations that will go on in Mosul.

And in the months and maybe even years to come, as the Mosul battle develops, Canada will be with the Kurdish forces on key terrain to ensure that ISIL is contained. Retaining territory, defending against ISIL, training, advising and assisting them, so they can conduct the offensive operations they need to to defend themselves well. That's what we're about. It will offer the Iraqi security forces and the coalition writ large a position of strength to have on that hard shoulder, and we'll improve their skills to contribute to the whole. We'll offer medical support.

We're going to add intelligence assets into the north. I'm not going to get into all the description of what they are. I know there's lots of people just dying to find out just exactly what we're going to do in every little bit, but you know, some of it's operational security, and I think that needs to be respected because if we tell you, ISIL knows about it too. But adding to our intelligence capacity in the north will improve targeting of ISIL leadership and ISIL operations.

We're also going to support our own forces more thoroughly. We're going to have to add some command and control capacity to the north. We're going to add medical capacity to the north, and we're going to add the helicopters to ensure that we have general transport capability over a wider area — speed sometimes counts — and we have our own capability to evacuate casualties should we need to.

On a regional effort, we're going to contribute militarily to the region by adding further to the capacity-building efforts in Jordan and Lebanon. We're still scoping those out, but our intent is to try to do our best to try to add to regional stability.

So at this point, I think we should all ponder what's happened to date, and I would like to take a moment, as the Minister did yesterday, to express my thanks and perhaps on behalf of all of us our thanks to those personnel who will be returning home soon from Operation Impact.

Our F-18s and Canada responded to an urgent crisis. Baghdad was in the sights of ISIL. We responded. We helped the coalition do exactly what it intended to do: stop them, start the degradation of them. The degradation continues, and they were a part of that. They stopped ISIL with our coalition partners. We've been hurting them. That's a good thing. And they're returning home proud, and we should be proud of them and I think we should all give them a great round of applause right now. (Applause.)

I'd like to turn now to notre révision de la politique de la défense. We've got a defence policy review ahead of us. C'est un moment particulièrement important pour avoir cette discussion puisque le gouvernement entame une révision de la politique de la défense. Les Forces armées canadiennes ont beaucoup de travail à faire dans le cadre de cet examen.

En collaboration avec les employés et les intervenants de la Défense nationale, dont plusieurs d'entre vous ici présents, cet examen amènera le gouvernement à énoncer sa vision quant au futur des Forces armées canadiennes sur le plan d'équipe, la capacité des rôles et des missions. J'ai hâte de prendre part à cette discussion, et j'aimerais vous faire part de certaines idées à ce sujet aujourd'hui.

I want to tell you a little bit about what I'm thinking as we ponder a defence policy review. There are many things in this review that will go over ground that Canada has gone over before as we pondered our defence and our role in the world. Our core mission, the defence of Canada, is unlikely to change. Our contribution to continental security, I suspect is unlikely to change. And the discretionary capability of the government to be able to contribute with armed forces into international peace and security efforts outside of Canada is unlikely to change.

But I think we've got to think deeply about this, and I hope all of you who are so inclined participate in the outreach that will come as a result of this review. And I note that Fery has already written a very useful document, and I hope others contribute to the discussion. We will actively seek opinion.

But as I think about my role in defending Canada, I honestly almost every day have to ask, you know, what does that really mean? Territorial is pretty straightforward. The continent, in terms of supporting the security of the continent with NORAD, but abroad, what do we mean about operations abroad? Are we going to attack threats before they attack us? Are we going to be – how engaged will we be? And for what purpose and at what point in the spectrum of conflict will we get involved? Are we always going to be responding to the worst case emergency scenario where it's very difficult to fix? Or are we going to try to get slightly less of that to ensure stability? The best defence is certainly done offshore, it's been said for many years in Canada, but it may not best be done at the point in time where the crisis is at its worst.

What about cyber space? Where does that start and end in terms of defence of Canada? Where does the border between at home and abroad end and begin? We've got to think about those issues.

Are we going to focus – what changes do we need to ponder in terms of our own approach and our ability to respond? We need to be more agile. We need to be more lethal, precise, integrated, interoperable. We need to be able to engage successfully at different points in the spectrum of conflict. We need to work with others, coalition, allies and other government departments, but ultimately, I must be in a position to offer a range of options for the Government of Canada to consider. And regardless whether we're at home or abroad, those options are ones that cannot fail.

So que doivent accomplir les Forces armées canadiennes? What does the Canadian Forces need to accomplish? Les missions militaires avec des victoires nettement définies ne constituent plus la règle. We don't get clear cut wins anymore. It's not that easy. A lot of us, perhaps all of us, still have a great deal of the DNA from previous wars where military victories were possible in clear cut ways. You won. You could win a war. You could celebrate intermediate steps along the way. You landed on a beach. You took – you crossed a river. You successfully won the day. It was more straightforward for people to understand and keep up with.

That's certainly not the case today, and we need to understand that. We need to understand that problems that the military are involved in today, our militaries that are involved in today don't lend themselves those quick victories. In many cases, if you've deployed the military to solve a problem, you're already in the worst case scenario and perhaps it's such a wicked problem that it can't be solved and won't be solved by military force alone.

Now we say that a lot, and when – I just hate it when people quote that back to me: "Hey, you're not going to win this by military force alone." I know; I said that first. (Laughter and applause.) But it's true. Not me. People smarter than me said that first, but it has been said. So we need to think of other ways, other times, other conditions to deploy and use the force.

We know that the cost of fighting, our engagement, our action, our combat in lives, resources and time is immense. And conflicts become intractable, and the conflicts today are more so. We are dealing with conflicts that are millennia in the making.

So what do we need to think about? What do we need to consider? We have to think about conflict prevention more clearly and more thoroughly. We have to think about conflict management. What are our objectives? We need to think about harm reduction to our own force and to places where we operate. And we need to think clearly about conflict termination. How do conflicts come to an end or our part in them?

The simple straightforward deter, defend, defeat, hey, I love it, but some people are not deterred. And sometimes, it's other who are defending and we're supporting them in that. And to assure a defeat when it's not entirely up to Canada to determine if a defeat will occur, we are – we cast our lot in with others, sometimes through partners, sometimes coalitions. So how do we envisage conflict termination?

I'm certainly looking at the world right now as I ponder advice to government. Do we try to keep stable what is already stable and how do you do that? Do we make stable that which is not and how do you do that? Where do we operate to manage, to contain or to limit harm and spread of problems and how do we do that?

Increasingly, nations like Canada, sophisticated militaries are best used in the enabling role, and that's what you're seeing play out before you in places like Iraq. Enable the training, advise, assist and provide the necessary combat support functions to ensure that they thrive, they prevail.

We need to also understand that we need to support the processes to achieve conflict termination conditions, be they political or otherwise. Wider efforts. We have to actually start living and acting on the notion of the comprehensive approach, the whole-of-government approach, the 3D. And we need to be able to supervise, disengage and support once we've achieved the conditions necessary. So deter, defend, defeat or any of the other simple, linear, straightforward methods are good and they're valuable against some foes, some enemies, but such clarity is rare in the world today.

I think conflict prevention is the most desirable, but the hardest to achieve. We have to identify the threats early. We have to correctly predict the evolution of the problem and to achieve a timely intervention with the potential of blood and treasure being on the line is a challenging, difficult decision to make, particularly when there are all sorts of other worse problems going on around you. I know worse's not a right word, but there you go. My old prof, Jim Boutilier was about to criticize me, I'm sure.

Prevention is ideal. The longer problems fester, the longer ISIL is left unmolested as it pops up somewhere, the more likely that the solution to certainly the military part of the problem will be harder and bloodier. We do not have a good track record necessarily around the world, in the western world in conflict prevention. We did a great conflict prevention job during the Cold War, but ever since then it's difficult. We've tried.

If conflicts can't be prevented, then we must consider how they are managed. Yes, I want to win as well as any one of you. It would be good to find that win, and we try. Believe me, we try to find the win, the success that returns stability to a region, but as you know — and this audience more than most — it's hard to achieve. So if they can't be prevented, how must they be managed? Local conflicts aren't good, but they're better than ones that spread and affect regions. There's ranges of options available through prevention of spread, counter aggression, no kidding, combat operations to try and destroy that which is trying to spread, sanctions and embargos, coalition-building and many more options available to us. But they don't necessarily close the deal, so we need to look at this and understand it. And options for conflict management are absolutely a mix of political, military and other instruments of power.

I want to talk a little bit about harm reduction; it's important in what we do. We need to achieve our operations. We need to achieve success in our operations. I think we need to be held accountable and we need to do a better job when we go on the ground to achieve the things that we say we're going to achieve. We need to be pressed by our governments and our populations to actually do what we say we're going to do. It's hard, but I think it's necessary. And I think it's necessary for one very critical reason. The use of military force is becoming increasingly indecisive. It doesn't provide that decisive, as I described earlier, the win. And in fact, the use of military force in such ventures or operations like train, advise and assist is indirect in many ways. I've described it as non-combat.

So in this vein, I believe you and our public perhaps may start to wonder what's the point? What's the value? Are we achieving what we say we're going to achieve? I think it's that we define those objectives correctly and achieve them. Now that may sound like motherhood, but I'm concerned for the profession of arms, for the idea of the use of military force if everywhere we seem to go it gets worse. We can't point to, yeah, we said we were going to do that and we did it.

Well, I'm happy to say that I think in this case, in Iraq specifically, we said we were going to stop ISIL, and we did. Now it's metastasizing elsewhere, but we were contributing to the military stop in Iraq.

Back to harm reduction. If we're conducting military operations that have this indecisive quality to them and at the same time we harm civilians, harm our troops, harm infrastructure such that rebuilding is more difficult, and on it goes, then it further discredits the effort altogether. We need to be precise. And to be precise, we need the intelligence to operate. We need to know. We need to understand.

That's not easy to do. We need to understand at a level that lends itself to being there early, to make certain that when you enter into a conflict zone, you don't make friends with all the wrong people as you try to gather opponents to that which you are fighting. We could be accused of that.

Conflict termination is even more challenging, and in fact, some conflicts don't terminate, they simply freeze. And I suppose that's better than a hot conflict, but nonetheless, conflict termination must be our objective. That involves operations to destroy, degrade or defeat an adversary, no question about it, but it involves diplomacy, democratic institutions, humanitarian assistance, economic development, the provision of security. I've long said that security at the end of a gun is not security at all; it's armed defence. If we want to bring stability and security to places, they've got to be able to do it themselves. People have got to be stakeholders in their own security. We can't hand that to them. They have to earn it, and they have to be partners with it.

So as we contemplate going into conflicts, we need to contemplate deeply how these conflicts may terminate. And we won't know all the answers before we start. Let me say that again. We won't know all the answers before we start. Sometimes, you learn as you go, but you know it's important to start.

Campaign planning is an art. It's the operational art. There's some science to it, but it's an art. We have to learn and accept that there will be an awful lot of inexactness as we take initial steps into a conflict, but we must keep our eye on the ball.

So how do we get there? You've heard my Minister, our Minister talk about this a lot, and that's the intelligence function. We do need to get better at preparing ground that we will operate on militarily with intelligence. Modern conflicts depend on ever-increasingly important useful intelligence across a full range of intelligence products.

So all forms of intelligence-gathering — human, signals intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance — all of that must work and we must work with trusted allies to produce a picture that informs what we're going to do and what we think we can get done. We need to understand.

I'd like to see us develop better understandings of conflict before we enter them. Think before we shoot. I think Canada's good at this. I think Canada picks its battle wisely, but we also have to be able to work as a valuable coalition partner, add our voice, add our expertise to what may be in the art of the possible. And so we try to do that, and I think we will continue to try to do that, to be a part of the planning and the execution at the idea level, not just at the execution level.

We must understand, and I spend every day making certain that Canada's strategic objectives can be achieved by what we do tactically.

I coined a term some time ago called contribution warfare. We need to be wary of that. We need to be wary of contributing forces without having a necessary, selfish, national interest in what they do and what they achieve as a result of what they do — the outcomes. It's good to contribute and be with our allies, but I think we can ask more of our forces in terms of their accountability to Canada, to Canadians and to ourselves. There's no point in going somewhere and simply spending time and hoping for a positive outcome. We need to be better at that.

So as your Chief of Defence Staff, I'm going to be working on all of that as we ponder the defence policy review. How is it that we will structure and organize to achieve the broader objectives of government?

I'd like to turn now to some subjects, as I wrap up here, that are near and dear to my heart and that is the whole notion of institutional excellence. I know it's often all about operations and the tactical military things that we do. The fact is probably the most important role that I play as Chief of Defence Staff is the steward of this institution, of the Canadian Forces and the steward of the profession of arms in Canada. I think we need to do better at taking care of our people. We need to spend the money necessary to take care of our people. We cannot let personnel support, we cannot let care of anybody be a residual to be invested elsewhere. We have to take care of them first.

I launched Operation Honour last July. Anybody here not know about Operation Honour? Put your hand up. You know, it's pretty straightforward to me that Operation Honour sits within a wider effort to do better by our people, to provide a workplace that's safe and supportive. And I know that sounds odd for perhaps for some to hear a military person say that, given what we do for a living, but the fact is if you don't have confidence in your teammates, if you don't have confidence in the institution that you're in, if you don't feel like you're being supported, you are absolutely not going to be as motivated or as focused in operations as you should be.

So I've made it clear to everyone that harmful behaviour of any sort is unacceptable to our own. Warriors treat each other well. They always have and always will. In fact, we even treat the other side's warriors well when they put their hands up. That is our ethos. That is our culture. Those are our values, and I'm reinforcing that.

I'm also wanting to increase all manner of diversity in the armed forces to better reflect the Canadian public. It's important. We are of the public. I've asked General Whitecross to increase the percentage, through recruiting and retention, increase the percentage of women in the armed forces by one percent per year over the next 10 years till we reach 25 percent. If we don't make it a task, if I don't give an order, it's not going to get done. We can't just hope that it happens. We're going to try hard to meet our diversity targets in the same way, and I'm going to treat the way we deal with our people as an operation.

I'd like also to talk a little bit about transition. We have a large number of people in the armed forces. Well, we all transition at some point. Most of you did successfully transition out of uniform. I would like people to transition out of uniform healthy, happy and move on to second careers or happy retirement, whatever they want. But the fact is that many don't. Many don't transition successfully because they're hurt, they're wounded, they can't recover.

So we will be changing the JPSU structure, the structure that is in place to support ill and injured as their either recover and go back to work or transition successfully outside – out of the armed forces. I'm

going to put more effort at it. So all the reporting about I was going to close things down, we're going to actually put more effort into it. I'm going to make IPSCs units with commanding officers that are succession planned. And I'm going to ask the three-stars, the service chiefs to take direct control of their people as they transition, to support them.

General Whitecross, as the Chief of Military Personnel, will ensure that the policy base is solid, so that it's a seamless transition as you leave the armed forces and go into a Veterans Affairs world.

We need to do better by our people and the injuries that are people are suffering today don't lend themselves necessarily to easy fixes, and they're all different. And so they need customized care. Each individual has to have a transition plan. We've got to not play lip service to this; we actually have to do it.

We have to continue to work to improve support to our families, whether it's through programs to ensure employment for spouses or employment for people who are transitioning to those who are trying to make ends meet as they move across the country, suffering changes to different markets that they're in, we have to look at our lives through the lens of our most vulnerable and of those people who need our support the most.

All of this will contribute incredibly to our readiness for future operations.

So from training to procurement to taking care of our people to ensuring that transition occurs successfully, being ready for operations is what we're about and being ready for the operations that will come and not wishing for ones that have gone past is what we're about.

And it's not just the armed forces. It's the defence team — regular, reserve, civilians. It's all of us together. And increasingly, and happily — I'm happy to report, increasingly, whole-of-government. As we work together, we are not fighting each other for resources, we're looking clear eyed at what we need to do and make the right decisions to move ahead.

So I'm going to wrap up here now, and hopefully, these hard questions deflectors are working. So as I wrap up, there are — you may perceive that there may be some uncertainty in my mind about how things will go. There's not. I'm certain that we'll wrestle with these problems as best we can. The nature of conflict, although at its very base probably remains the same and is enduring, but how conflicts manifest themselves and what adversaries do is changing, and we're going to change with it. And we cannot possibly be in a position to hope it were otherwise.

I don't try ever to fight the last war and nor do my people. We can't fully predict all the threats we'll face, but we need to be ready for a broad range of them. And at the end of the day, as you know, we are the force of ultimate and last resort for the government to use. Whenever the Government of Canada has called on the Canadian Armed Forces, the Canadian Armed Forces has answered the call, and I assure you that I will do everything in my power to ensure that that statement will be as true in the next 20 years as it is today.

It is, and always will be, an incredible privilege to serve alongside my general flag officers and the personnel of the armed forces. I note the presence here today of the Commander of the Army Marquis Hainse, Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy Vice-Admiral Norman, the Deputy Commander of the

RCAF General Meinzinger. It's a privilege to serve alongside these people. And it's a privilege to be your Chief of Defence Staff.

Thank you. (Applause.)

Sure, I'll take as many questions – I thought I would use up all the time, so there would be no time for questions but – no, please, ask the questions.

QUESTION: Yes, General, Lee Berthiaume from The Ottawa Citizen. I apologize for asking a question. I understand you're not scrumming after, so I thought I'd take this opportunity.

GEN VANCE: How did you know that? That was a secret.

QUESTION: We've got sources.

GEN VANCE: Yeah, speaking of those sources, everybody who – those sources, I want you to stop, please. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: I wanted to ask you about your definition of combat. You've talked about it a lot today, and I'm wondering if you are – how you would respond to those who suggest you're changing or framing the definition of combat to fit the government's definition of combat as it's laid out in its mission.

GEN VANCE: I haven't heard anybody suggest that, Lee, unless you just did, and I reject it totally.

QUESTION: I guess I just did.

GEN VANCE: Okay, well, I reject it. I'm the expert in what is combat and non-combat. Thanks for your question. (Applause.) Next question. See, the deflectors work. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: We'll try again and see if they really work. Yves Brodeur, former Ambassador of Canada at NATO. General, congratulations. And good luck. You have a tough job. I'm here. Yeah.

GEN VANCE: Hi, Yves.

QUESTION: So they do work. They do protect you. The question, actually, I'd like to bring you back a bit to the defence policy review, and it seems to me that somehow there has to be a logic in how you approach this from a whole-of-government perspective. It's hard to define a defence policy review if you don't have a clear sense of what your foreign policy objectives are and writ large, so I include into that development policy and everything else. And I know it's early days, you're just starting to actually think about how this is going to work, to happen, but I'd be interested in listening to you explaining a bit how you intend to integrate the foreign policy objectives once we have them into the defence policy review, leaving aside the more traditional roles that you have to play which are outside, perhaps, of the foreign policy permit. So if you have any thoughts on that, I'd be interested to hear. Thank you.

GEN VANCE: Thanks, Yves. Good to see you. And to you, congratulations on a tour de force performance as our Ambassador to NATO. Thank you. Welcome home. Good to have you back. (Applause.)

So my sense is that – and the government has made clear thus far is that this will be an inclusive effort with lots of reaching out to stakeholders and some structure put in place to ensure that we are receiving advice and opinion and interest from outside of Defence to formulate this defence policy review. So that'll be one vector in.

I think as well this will not be put together in isolation just by Defence. I think there will be a wider whole-of-government effort that will ultimately decide, and I believe that cabinet will ultimately decide on the nature and form and all the rest associated with the defence policy review, and therefore, there will be active participation by other ministers in it.

Although there may not be – I mean it's not my department, but there may not be something as elaborate a written foreign policy document, foreign policy objectives will be included in the defence policy review and how they are articulated to us will likely be through the close collaboration that we undertake with either central agencies or with Global Affairs Canada. So I'm confident that it will occur despite there perhaps not being something as formal as a foreign policy review.

QUESTION: Thanks. Dave Perry, Canadian Global Affairs Institute. Sir, I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about how you personally envision being able to put time and effort into some of these institutional things, particularly the defence policy review, given that we're now taking on a higher tempo of operations. How do you personally look about your engagement with that process?

GEN VANCE: Well, I'll be busy. (Laughter.) So the great thing about the Canadian Armed Forces, I mean I've got an operational commander who's going to manage most of this day to day, Lieutenant-General Steve Bowes. I don't know if Steve's here today. But you know, so he'll handle most of the heavy lifting. Brigadier-General Mike Rouleau, Commander of Special Forces Command, will also be intimately involved in the command and control of daily operations. And I tell you, it's – although it sounds like I do operations all the time, in fact, I spend most of my time working on the institutional piece. I just look really busy in the operational domain, but it's – I do what I have to do, providing advice to government and setting conditions for the planning, but after that, I – on a daily basis, I spend most of my time looking after the institution.

QUESTION: My name is Aaron Edwards. I'm a student at NPSIA studying conflict analysis, so it's reassuring to hear you talk about management and termination in the way that you did, my question being twofold, I suppose. Looking at the mission in Afghanistan, I'm wondering how you expect the methods and the measures of effectiveness and success to change going into Iraq. And also, if you perceive this kind of mission occurring in Libya in the near future. Thank you.

GEN VANCE: Setting measures of effectiveness between different campaigns, Afghanistan and Iraq, quite different. Different enemy, different methods, different affiliation with the population, but there are still some similarities. A fairly fractured political dynamic that can cause problems. Certainly the regional issues surrounding Iraq are probably more prevalent and urgent than the ones that were present in Afghanistan.

The coalition has done great work in establishing the objectives. Timing is difficult because you need to earn those objectives, and sometimes the enemy doesn't cooperate, but nonetheless, the – what is most clear to us is the military defeat of ISIL in Iraq is critical, but can't simply be done by dealing straight on with them in Iraq. There needs to be a more global approach that cuts off financing, that deals with command and control out of Raqqa, that deals with the regional issue. And that's why I think

a whole-of-government effort that attempts to wrap its arms around the region is better than having a simple military one.

As it goes for the campaign right now, it's largely designed at creating the capacity in the Iraqi security forces to hold what they've taken or retaken and take more. The measures of effectiveness there are fairly obvious. The timelines are not. And so I think we have to be patient as we work through and with partners that need to develop the capacity to function.

And I think that's a similar dynamic that was in Afghanistan, a slightly different start point, I would suggest, but I think that there are the similarities in terms of putting the sovereignty of their nation back into their hands. And so that's an ultimate measure and on the way can be measured by numbers of forces available, successive combat operations and so on.

EVRAIRE: We have a second final question here.

GEN VANCE: A second final question.

QUESTION: Milan Fortner, War Studies Department, RMC.

GEN VANCE: Sorry, say that again.

QUESTION: My name is Milan Fortner at the War Studies Department at RMC.

GEN VANCE: Okay. Hi.

QUESTION: What are we looking for in the future after we do this training and assist mission? Are we setting up Iraq for an unhappy secession or in sort of more past terms are we – how many Afghan trained – or how many Canadian-trained Afghan Kandaks are going to end up as the personal retinue for an Uzbek warlord in 10 years' time?

GEN VANCE: That's kind of a pejorative question, don't you think?

QUESTION: Well, of course.

GEN VANCE: You're assuming – you're assuming a negative outcome. First of all, I didn't finish off this question what happens in Libya, but it sort of speaks to your question of what happens – what happens next in the region. In terms of the broader global effort, ISIL, you know, the analogy of cancer is being used. The tumour, the ISIL core in Iraq and Syria needs to be dealt with, needs to be excised, needs to be eliminated. Harder in Syria than in Iraq, but nonetheless needs to be done. But it's metastasizing. It's metastasizing to Libya. It's metastasizing to the Sinai. It will metastasize elsewhere. And I think that there will be a great deal of attention paid to places like Libya.

The challenge for us, of course, is as we ponder legitimate operations, there are – there's basis in law for why and how we would participate as Canadian Armed Forces. And so a legitimate government in place that invites you in to support, that's one. And of course UN Security Council resolutions are another. NATO resolutions, and so on.

So I think that we'll see is – or what we're aiming for, as we support the Kurds is where they are and where we are with them, we seek stability while we all support a wider effort for that government to create the unitary state that it wants to.

To somehow characterize our work in the train, advise, assist or equip function as somehow only setting things up for success – for failure in the future because those elements to be trained will somehow now be better adversaries to their home government is something that I reject. They are all fighting a clear and present danger now. The alternative is to not fight that clear and present danger, and in your world where we do nothing, perhaps we've got ISIL running Baghdad. So we have to deal with it step by step.

The fact that there are – there is a desire to have Afghan security forces, to go back to your analogy of the Kandaks, somehow in a position to be unhelpful in the security of their country and working for local warlords, I mean that, I suppose, can happen, and it does, but it doesn't mean that we don't produce a Kandak in the first place.

So Libya, I think, you know, watch this space. I mean I think the international community is very interested in Libya. I don't know whether or not we will be involved militarily, but we will certainly be involved somehow because Libya sits at a crossroads of some very important and dangerous things that are happening in the world that are affecting Europe, it's affecting Africa, it's affecting even our forces deployed in the MFO in Sinai. So keep your eye peeled.

EVRAIRE: (Off microphone.) Ladies and gentlemen, at the microphones, listen up, one final question over here. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Thank you so much. (Crosstalk.)

GEN VANCE: Make this a good one, please. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Okay, I'll try. So the Liberal government, when they were in third party, talked about and now in government it's in the mandate letters, a committee of parliamentarians who will do oversight for national security and intelligence bodies. I'm wondering if you have some comments on that, what you envision the relationship will be from your perspective. Obviously, there's a lot unknown, but also, if you have comments on internally what oversight's going to look like and if that's a priority for you.

GEN VANCE: Okay. Well, obviously, anything that would – any sort of process, any political oversight, any involvement by Canadian leadership — political or otherwise, but particularly political — all party better than not, that has a stake in the success of the armed forces, that has a stake in the capacity of the armed forces to function, other countries do it. We do it to a certain degree through our parliamentary committees, but I, for one, welcome, I mean absolutely, categorically welcome anything that would place Parliament and government and the political level closer and more involved in the armed forces of its country. There is no greater expression of care and concern for your armed forces than to be involved. So I absolutely welcome it.

I'm getting the hook, I think, here. (Laughter.)

EVRAIRE: Mesdames et messieurs, la Conférence d'Ottawa ne serait pas considérée comme réussite à moins que le chef d'état-major de la Défense puisse trouver le temps nécessaire pour nous présenter sa pensée sur le poste qu'il occupe.

We are extremely grateful, CDS, for the time that you've taken. The Ottawa Conference would simply, I don't think, be considered a real success unless your participation was on our program. We thank you ever so much.

Allow me on behalf of the regular and associate member associations of our organization as well as the members of the CDA Institute and all other participants to our conference this morning, allow me to offer you our sincere good wishes for the remainder of already a very successful term as Chief of Defence Staff. And be assured of the support of our organizations in whatever you undertake.

Thank you. (Applause.)