

TRANSCRIPT --- STANDING COMMITTEE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 25 MAY 2009

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, I don't know what game we're playing today, but it's good to see you, Minister. I'm glad we're able to have you here and be able to ask questions. I'll get right to it.

I'm going to ask about a Canadian in Sudan--no surprise. The fact is, Minister, this committee has invited Abousfian Abdelrazik to come to committee. This is a very quick straightforward question. Will you allow him to come to committee? We've asked him to come to committee in person. I'm asking you very directly, Minister, will you issue a special travel document so that he can come before the Foreign Affairs Committee?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: It's nice to see you as well.

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's good to see you. I'm sorry it took so long.

L'hon. Lawrence Cannon: As members are aware, Mr. Dewar, for all the witnesses before the committee it's up to the clerk who executes the committee's requests. In this case I've been told that the clerk has been in touch with our mission in Khartoum and I think that the clerk does an excellent job in arranging the appearance of witnesses.

As my colleague is aware, Mr. Abdelrazik is on the United Nations' 1267 list as an individual associated with Al-Qaeda and is therefore subject to a travel ban and assets freeze. Therefore, this government strongly supports the fight against terrorism and takes seriously its international legal obligations to the United Nations. This includes our responsibilities when it comes to the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 1267

Mr. Paul Dewar: Is that a no?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: I've already indicated to you that's my response.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Then that's a no. I just want to be clear because you gave me--

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: I'll be very clear. It's a no.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I have to ask you this, Minister, because you know, or I hope you know, that the resolution 1267 that you referenced allows a Canadian, in this case, or a foreign national to return to their country of origin. Are you aware of that?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Let me respond by giving you some information as to that.

Mr. Dewar, if you keep cutting me off we're not going to have a constructive discussion.

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's a very straightforward question, Minister.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: I'm aware of Canada's obligations. I'm aware of the 1267 list. I'm also aware of what you have indicated to me, but that is of course not up to me. It's up to the 1267.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's not true. With respect, Minister, can I just let you know that we've received information that says you can allow him to come, but it's up to you though. We've heard that from the person who chairs 1267. In fact, Minister, you know, or you should know, that the way 1267 was designed, other countries have had their foreign nationals come.

Let me put it this way, Mr. Chair. We've had the RCMP, we've had CSIS, and we've had the Government of Sudan all clear Mr. Abdelrazik of any security risk. In fact, the only person who's standing in his way, with respect, Minister, is yourself. When a travel document was applied for--

The Chair: Mr. Dewar on a point of order.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Dewar, this committee and the steering committee told the clerk and everybody else to get us a legal opinion on 1267 of which you refused to go through that process.

Mr. Paul Dewar: No I didn't.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Let me finish. You fought through that motion--

The Chair: This is more debate.

The Minister has indicated that he would respond to Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I didn't finish though because I was interrupted, Chair, and I hope that hasn't eaten into my time.

The point, Minister, is that you have the capability of allowing him to have a travel document. What I was trying to ask you was if you have information that the RCMP doesn't seem to have because they have cleared him. When a travel document was requested it was you who turned him down, which is correct, and you know that, correct? You turned him down for a travel document.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: I refused an emergency pass, and I gave the explanation for the reason I refused an emergency passport.

Mr. Paul Dewar: You also understand that you could have granted him that, and the--

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Yes, I understand, but my position in this is quite clear. I will respect the 1267 determination. I will respect the decision that was taken by the 1267 committee. We have in the past, as a

government, transmitted a request to the 1267 committee led by Mr. Abdel-Razek's lawyer to be able to de-list him. He wasn't de-listed, and we, of course, continue to support the decision that was made by the 1267 committee and successor resolutions.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Cannon, I have--

L'hon. Lawrence Cannon: Let me finish. Mr. Dewar, if we're going to--

Mr. Paul Dewar: There are so many things we already know and you've already said--

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Well, then, if you're asking me questions that you already know, why are you asking me the questions?

Mr. Paul Dewar: You've already answered the question and you're moving into other territory.

I want to ask you this question. It's very important. Have you ever applied for an exemption for 1267 when it comes to Mr. Abdel-Razek?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Have I applied for an exemption myself?

Mr. Paul Dewar: The Government of Canada, have you, as a minister--

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Not me.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'll let you know. You have. You have had to. As a minister of the Crown, you have had to apply for an exemption for Mr. Abdel-Razek.

A voice: Why?

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'll tell you why. This is information that is available to anyone. I would hope the minister would know. He's been receiving \$100 a month and you had to apply for an exemption so he could receive that.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Okay, well, there you go. You're mixing things up here. Of course, yes, we asked the 1267 committee. We informed the 1267 committee that the individual has safe haven in our embassy and that we are indeed...what's the amount of money?

A voice: It's \$100 a month.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: That's right, yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'm glad you know that now--

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Thank you, Mr. Dewar.

The Chair: Well, apparently you didn't.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: No, Mr. Dewar, don't play games with me--

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'm not playing a game, Minister.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: If you're going to start playing games, Mr. Dewar, with me, and trying to belittle me and calling me a racist, like you did, that is not going to go anywhere.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I never called you a racist. I did not.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Yes, you did, sir, and you should apologize for that.

The Chair: Order.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Make all the accusations you want--

The Chair: Mr. Dewar, order, please.

Mr. Minister, on the previous question when you were interrupted you wanted time to finish on that. Maybe you are finished now.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: No, I'm finished.

This has to be a dialogue, Chair, and if, at every instance, I'm going to be interrupted, I cannot supply and give a proper answer.

Whether or not he disputes the length of my answer, whether or not he is not in agreement with my answer, that's up to my colleague, but I am giving our position.

I have said that we have not accepted an emergency passport. It is well documented. I explained to him why we did not accept that. He asked me whether or not I am aware that we are giving him the per diem, whether or not I'm aware he's in our embassy in Khartoum. Of course I am aware of that.

He is not going to get anywhere by belittling me and by calling me a racist like he did a couple of weeks ago.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That concludes--

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, I implore the Minister to at least to give--

The Chair: We are adjourned.