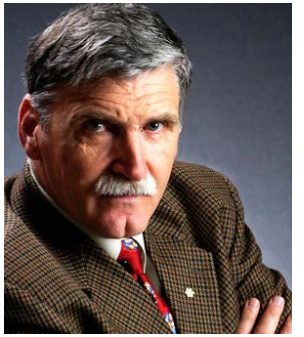

## Lieutenant-General The Hon. Roméo A. Dallaire

Senator

# A NEW CONCEPTUAL BASE FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION

Chairman: **Noble Chummar**
President, The Empire Club of Canada

**Head Table Guests**

Tom McKaig, Adjunct Professor, University of Guelph, Author for McGraw-Hill Publishers, and Director, The Empire Club of Canada; Jaxson Khan, Student, University of Western Ontario; Capt. The Rev. Neil Thomsen, Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Reformation, Kitchener, and Regimental Chaplain, Royal Highland Fusiliers of Canada, Kitchener and Cambridge; John Thompson, Emeritus and Contributor, Mackenzie Institute; Beth-Anne Thomas, Canadian Brand Manager, Glenfiddich Single Malt Scotch; Bill White, Chairman, IBK Capital Corp., and Director, The Empire Club of Canada; Yevgenia Casale, Chief Idea Realization Expert, Pras Publishing; Alan Bell, President, Mackenzie Institute; and Ted Griffith, Senior Vice-President, Apex Public Relations and 2nd Vice- President, The Empire Club of Canada.

**Introduction by Ted Griffith**

Canadians have a different relationship to their military from say the Americans or the British.

For Americans, the military is a source of national pride, glory, and, dare I say, a misplaced source of certainty glorified by Hollywood and embraced in town squares, monuments, and media stories of courage and heartbreak. While Americans don't love war, they do love their warriors.

For the Brits, their military has a history of glory dating back centuries. Yet, unlike the Americans, their stories are mostly about their leaders, their lords and commanders. And, for at least the men of the royal family, military service is as fundamental to their upbringing as is schooling at Eton.

For Canadians, however, our relationship is confused. For while we admire the brave role our military played in both World Wars and the Korean conflict, the latter part of last century was dominated by the notion of "peace keeper."

Peacekeeping sounds like a very good thing. Risk-free. Even easy. After all, the term connotes that two warring factions have some sort of peace agreement and the job of the peacekeepers—that is, the Canadian military—is to make sure everyone stays in their place. You—over there. And you—over there. And both of you— keep it that way. Now—what's for dinner?

Our guest today knows this is not the case.

If the notion of war is black and white, then peace is shades of grey and red. Peacekeeping may indeed be the most challenging of all the demands we ask of our military. Which is the source, I think, of the confused relationship that we Canadians have with our military.

War has heroes. War has winners and losers and death and wounds and the wringing hands of loved ones at home. Peacekeeping, on the other hand, tends to only get noticed when the peace starts to fail. When something goes wrong.

No one in the world knows the challenges of peacekeeping more than our guest today Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire. He is most widely known as having served as the Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda. While the mission is generally regarded as a failure, General Dallaire's role is recognized as heroic, as he managed through the extreme limitations of the imposed rules of engagement that, if I recall correctly, allowed troops to fight back with what the general called "everything we've got—if everything means a well-sharpened pencil."

General Dallaire is the founder of the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, a Senior Fellow at the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, and Co-Director of the Will to Intervene project.



He is also the author of the book "Shake Hands with the Devil" and the recipient of so many awards and citations that to list them all would take the better part of this luncheon. He is also a senator, which demonstrates that he's not perfect.

Yet suffice to say, in a country where our heroes tend to score goals, he is one of Canada's truest heroes.

**Roméo Dallaire**

Thank you Mr. Griffin and thank you members of the Empire Club for offering me the opportunity to speak to colleagues and friends in a world that has become more and more complex and ambiguous with regard to conflict and conflict resolution, let alone conflict prevention. I am speaking on the one hand as a soldier and secondly as a retired general and an apprentice politician. As the U.S. Marine colleagues of mine taught me, I am going to power talk my way through this lunch.

I am also quite enamoured by the fact that I am speaking here as the patron of Wounded Warriors, which I think McKenzie is supporting. I am a wounded warrior myself, have a son who is a Captain in the Army, who is also a wounded warrior, and am the son of a wounded World War II veteran. I also have a father-in-law, who served in that war. So it's close to home.

But what brought it just that much closer is that Glenfiddich is supporting Wounded Warriors and I do love scotch. I think it is very innovative that we have a great drink to support wounded warriors.

I am also proud to stand before you as a spokesman for those who are injured in these conflicts and for a group that's trying to reduce the possibility of injury, particularly when facing some of the very, very ruthless belligerents that are out there in these conflict zones, who are going against the protocol on child rights and recruiting youth below the age of 18 and using them as the primary weapon of war in those conflicts. When I was doing my Senior Fellow at the Kennedy School, I launched a research

program on how to eliminate a weapons system that was introduced in the late ’80s in Mozambique that has now become one of the primary weapon systems in many of the civil wars, imploding nations, failing states that are occurring right now around the world. That is the use of young boys and girls in the primary task of fighting those conflicts. We are talking about over 250,000 of them at any one time in over 30 conflicts or military forces around the world and about 40 per cent of them are girls.

When I was in Sierra Leone negotiating and getting kids out of the rebel forces at the ebbing part of that war, I could get 10 boys for every girl out of the bush, because girls were far more useful than boys. They are not only up front doing the evil things that these adults are imposing upon them, but they are also in those male-dominated societies doing all the logistics, all the bivouacs and so on. They are also the sex slaves and bush wives of the commanders. So girls were far more useful; however, the impact on them was even more catastrophic than for boys because we could rehabilitate and reintegrate a boy because it was the warrior thing. Societies would take them back and communities would be more attuned to them and adjust to it. But the girls, because they had been soiled, were refused and shunned by the community and they often had a child or two so you can imagine the long-term impact of these conflicts on them in those countries. The recent operation in Mali is an example where we’ve seen forces facing a rebel type of force where the recruitment of child soldiers was extensive; we’re talking close to 10,000, of which an estimated 1,000 were casualties. We are killing kids around the world because adults are using them as the primary weapon system in small arms proliferation. A nine-year-old can be very effective with an AK-47.

This brought me close to the child soldier, but also close to a particular dimension of the wounded warriors and that is, “What creates these wounds?” What is the most prevalent wound that we are now seeing in these very complex and ambiguous missions?



They have nothing to do with the old classic NATO Euro-centric force on force where a couple of million professional soldiers were facing a couple of million others. Well that ended in 1989 and we find ourselves in a whole bunch of other types of conflicts that are not less ruthless. On the contrary, many of them have become even more ruthless as the belligerents are less and less inclined to follow humanitarian law or the laws of armed conflict. They have no problems using the civilian population as both an instrument of war and a tool to gain power. In Rwanda, 20 years ago, the extremists moved over four million people. They literally moved four million people. They also slaughtered nearly a million in doing it, all in 100 days. The world watched it and no one was really interested.

When the genocide commenced, and they entered my headquarters to debrief me, they would say, “General, we are not going to send anybody to reinforce you.” I would say, “Well why not?” and they would say, “Well there is nothing here.” I would say, “What do you mean”? They would say, “Rwanda is of no consequence; it’s not in a strategic position, there are no strategic resources, and there is no oil or anything of that nature. The only things here are human beings and maybe there are too many of them anyway.” The only things here are human beings. That didn’t carry the day.

Since then Canada brought in “responsibility to protect” and got the world to agree to it in 2005. Look at the conflicts that are still ongoing today. Conflicts like Syria are not conflicts where we can go in and blast our way through it as we did in Libya and left significant insecurity in the region. It has to be a far more sophisticated use of things, like responsibility to protect, preventing mass atrocities of people, and getting in there and separating the forces, early enough that you need a minimum of force. We poured 67,000 into ex-Yugoslavia. So why can’t we pour 67,000 into Syria, if we need that many as a separation force to produce a ceasefire, so we are able to negotiate, stop the bloodletting,

protect the civilians and ultimately throw the right people in jail through the International Criminal Court.

That requires a lot of statesmanship and I would argue there is quite a dearth of that right now. There is a lot of political managing, but not much statesmanship. Middle powers like Canada need to be in the forefront, on the ground. We don't carry the baggage of big powers and may have more room to manoeuvre with the African Union, with the Arab League and so on, without giving them an ulterior motive, other than simply wanting to bring stability and protection to civilians.

The wounds of this type of complex and ambiguous mission have created a generation of veterans still serving and not serving that are walking wounded. We have coined "Operational Stress Injury" in Canada as the catchall phrase of the impact of the traumas of operations in the civil wars, where you are faced constantly with ethical, moral and legal dilemmas for which we have no set answers. There are no tactics for many of the problems that we face when civilians are caught up in the midst of a civil war, where extremism is playing by none of the rules. You are constrained often by your own national assets that you are not willing to commit in order to take casualties. Our fear of casualties is in fact a dominant decision maker. We were out of Afghanistan far too early, not because it cost us an arm and a leg, but because it cost us 158 killed, about 650 severely injured and close to 5,000 who are injured psychologically. That's why we are out.

The problem is that we haven't really done that assessment to the full. The real assessment is that we are probably closer to 200 killed. Why? Because those who have been injured psychologically through what is known as post-traumatic stress disorder have been taking their own lives. The boards of inquiry have proved that their suicides were directly related to the injury of post-traumatic stress. Last week, from my old regiment, a 21-year-old, who was in Afghanistan and was caught up in a fire-fight with a forward observation group in the artillery,



simply could not handle it. Even though he was trying to work through it with medication and therapy he hung himself. Last Monday, we put flowers on the grave of a Major Luc Racine, who was one of the 12 Canadian officers to reinforce my mission. They reinforced my mission during the genocide by keeping two Hercules aircraft flying that permitted us to evacuate our injured and get some resources in. He committed suicide five years ago, 14 years after the mission, and this was directly related to the traumas lived there.

The injuries of post-traumatic stress on these soldiers, if not caught early, exacerbate and become much more difficult and complex to handle. We are now seeing that those who are injured, even though they are getting certain levels of care, create a significant impact on their families. The impact comes from two sides. One side is the fact that families live the mission with us now. My mother-in-law, when I came back from Rwanda, said she would have never survived World War II if she had had to go through what my family went through. My father-in-law commanded an infantry regiment in World War II and she knew nothing of what was going on over there. There was censorship, very poor communications and the whole country was at war. So they were able to handle it in that way. But today our families live the missions with us because the media is everywhere and soon the media will be in the trench where that soldier is going to get a bullet between his eyeballs. Media are going to give us a play-byplay description of it. They are providing that information and our families are concerned all the time whether we are being injured or captured or killed or whatever. So when they come back from these missions they have been stressed out, they have lived through some very complex traumas as you have, but there is a disconnect here. That disconnect is the fact that although the military are being handled by the federal government through either Veterans Affairs or Department of National Defence if they are still serving, families are not getting therapy, medication

and peer support, which is crucial. The families are in the hands of the provincial system and there isn't one provincial system that isn't smothered under the demands of psychiatric help and mental illness demands. So the families are left hanging. It's one thing to help the soldier, but if you are not helping the family, you are not achieving your aim. So that's got to be looked at.

I gave a presentation at a new entity called The Military Mental Health Institute—25 Canadian universities being led by Queens and the Royal Military College, looking at how to reduce this type of injury, how to handle it in the field and then ultimately how to be more effective in treating it. I presented a paper in which teenage children of those who are injured are now committing suicide because they can't live within the family where the pressures and stressors are so massive. You don't know what might happen one day to another. The schools are not attuned to this. They are not getting any special treatment and they are often shy about the impact of this injury. It often leads to alcoholism or drugs or other sorts of extreme scenarios. They tend to keep it inside; they have been killing themselves.

If you are committing soldiers in this era, you are now committing the families whether you like it or not, and the families better start falling under the rubric of Veterans Affairs and National Defence because you cannot disconnect them anymore. So are we still behind the eight ball? We are still trying to grasp the full nature of these injuries, but we have come an incredibly long way.

I went public in 1997, that I was injured by post-traumatic stress. It came about because I had, as a two-star general, to give a press conference on why 11 soldiers had committed suicide in one regiment that had been deployed. I said that there was a whole series of circumstances, and the mission was only one component of it. I knew damn well that the mission had been the overriding factor that triggered all the others and why they had killed themselves and why families were breaking up and why we were losing superb soldiers, who were being thrown in jail



because they were in bar fights or simply abandoned in the street.

This injury, as we are trying to grasp it, needs innovative ideas. It needs innovative approaches. This is where Wounded Warriors has been coming to the fore, more than the system, which tends to want to have all the technical Is dotted and Ts crossed and so on and fundamental assessments done which can take decades. We don't have decades because we are losing soldiers left, right and centre and destroying so many families. We need innovative approaches that we can field and that we can assess and we can adjust, in a timely fashion. So Wounded Warriors comes in with dogs, canine support. One of the most demanding dimensions of being injured with PTSD is that you tend to feel alone and you don't want to talk. The actual grey cells have been shocked and you are trying to realign how to handle stress, how to handle groups, how to handle communications. If you don't have a peer support person, a person who is willing to sit there for four hours and listen to you talk and cry and laugh without asking a stupid question, then what have you got? What warmth do you have? What other entity alive do you have that might give you some solace and some reason to want to maybe continue, not just to exist but possibly even want to live, to go beyond what the minimum of that injury may impose upon you. Dogs have proved to be extraordinary loyal companions. Out West, Wounded Warriors is working with horses. I am not a horsy type guy. I am from Montreal. The gang out West finds it pretty useful, so why not. It's extraordinary how those huge animals have a relationship with human beings. It is permitting them to remove the pressure of that injury, that hurt that has physical impacts. The day after I left Rwanda, my left shoulder/arm was completely paralyzed. Four months later it disappeared. After all kinds of scans and this and that and so on, they found nothing. It was purely stress.

We need innovative thinkers. We need innovative approaches. We need timely support to handle the legacy of Afghanistan, but also 20 years of peacekeeping, peacemaking of conflict resolutions

that we have been engaged in since the First Gulf War in 1991. The Canadian Forces, for the last 25 years, has been a military in the field hoping to come back to garrison to lick its wounds, contrary to the bulk of my career during the Cold War, where we were a garrison military prepared to deploy to war. The system didn't recognize that and took decades to bring in some of the solutions. We are discovering that some of the solutions are not still within, but are from without to influence us, and Wounded Warriors is one of those entities. The Child Soldier Initiative, which I am leading, is in Sierra Leone. We are in Central Africa. We are looking at the drug wars in South America and ultimately even looking at this country where children are being recruited for overseas or being recruited in gangs.

One of the reasons we are looking at it is because how many children can a soldier kill without coming back home and being not able to look at his own? The only doctrine out there is you treat them as combatants and you use lethal force in self-defence or within the operational context. Be it a girl 13 or a boy 15, if they are in a combat scenario that is your responsibility, that's the only doctrine. We are arguing that we can stop the recruitment and we can also make the children a liability to adults who want to use them. We are creating casualties between the ears of our soldiers who are committed to these missions facing these kids and ultimately being significantly traumatized.

Here is a small example. This week I was at the Royal Military College discussing with the commandant a number of subjects and one was to continue to encourage the support from officer cadets. Twelve officer cadets in 2011 organized a walk up Kilimanjaro. They collected $32,000. They needed $12,000 to handle the logistics. So they gave a cheque of $20,000 to my research on child soldiers. They said, "If we can help you reduce the threats that are out there to us, when we in the future will be commanding troops, and reduce the possibility of injuries, then maybe that makes sense," and it does.



So ladies and gentlemen, investing in taking care of our current generation of veterans who are wounded is an investment in preventing that same wound being so catastrophic in the next round, because we will have learned. We will have used innovative approaches. That's why we need Wounded Warriors to fund and to innovate and to give us the metrics needed to change policy. We are still in Afghanistan with the last of our forces coming back within the next couple of months. We will be straddled with the injuries of that war, not only the physical but the psychological injuries for decades to come. So Veterans Canada, the Department of National Defence, and the Canadian population, yes we invest in trying to prevent, yes we invest when we deploy, yes we invest in order to ensure we can win, but we had better be prepared to invest so they don't come home wounded and don't end up destroying themselves and their families because of what we asked them to do.

Thank you very much.

The appreciation of the meeting was expressed by Alan Bell, President, Mackenzie Institute.