

**Remarks of the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, P.C.
Chief Justice of Canada
at the Vimy Award Dinner**

**November 14, 2008
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Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. Distingués invités, Mesdames et Messieurs. It is a great honour to be here tonight as we present the Vimy Award to a highly accomplished and well-deserving recipient, General Rick Hillier.

The Vimy award recognizes a Canadian who has made an outstanding contribution to the defence and security of Canada, and the preservation of our democratic values. Cette distinction se veut un hommage à la bravoure et aux sacrifices des soldats canadiens qui ont remporté la bataille de la crête de Vimy en 1917. So it is fitting this evening to reflect on the role of the Canadian Armed forces.

In the 91 years since the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the nature of the threats to Canada's security and the security of other democratic nations has changed. In the past, the main threat to security was a major confrontation between states. In the 20th century, such major international conflicts included the First World War, the Second World War, and the Cold War.

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The tragic events of September 11, 2001 marked a change - a change in the world and consequently, a change in how the world's nations, including Canada, face the challenge of national security. Although this change had been brewing for at least a decade before, the terrorist assaults of 9/11 made clear to the Canadian public what many in the military had already perceived - a new threat to peaceful and stable societies.

This threat arises not from direct conflict between states, but from fragile states wrestling with domestic constitutional crises, and other forms of political and social disorder. Elle est alimentée par l'instabilité causée par les États délinquents ou en voie de délinquance qui souffrent d'une structure gouvernementale défaillante. Where states fail to furnish basic goods of education, security, and justice, instability, lawlessness and terrorism cannot be far behind.

Our honouree tonight, General Rick Hillier, a jouer un rôle important en faisant face aux défis de notre monde "post onze septembre". He has led Canadian military's response to these new security challenges. He has helped to rebuild and modernize the Canadian Forces. At the same time, he has recognized that military force alone cannot prevail. He has been instrumental in the development of what is known as Canada's "3-D" approach to security: defence, diplomacy, and development. La défense, oui, mais associée à la diplomatie et au développement économique et social.

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An essential part of the “3-D” program - et un élément qui me touche de très près comme juge en chef - is promoting the rule of law. In states where rule by violence and terror has been the historic norm, we seek transition to responsible democratic government within parameters defined by law. Our Armed Forces are on the front lines of this effort to promote the rule of law, first and foremost, by addressing security threats, because without physical security it is impossible to pursue good governance, or rebuild an economy. But that is just the beginning, our military goes on to promote the rule of law by helping to rebuild institutions of government and physical infrastructure of war-ravaged states.

Helping failing states strengthen the rule of law within their boundaries is complex, difficult and sometimes dangerous work. It is arduous and slow. Cela demande du temps, du courage, de la détermination et de la force de caractère. It is not easy to change the opinions of leaders who understand governance by force better than by law. It may be even harder to convince a disaffected and frightened population to put its trust in the law and the ways of democracy.

General Hillier, you have contributed enormously to helping Canada meet these challenges. Ainsi, il est fort approprié que ce soit vous, General Hillier, qui receviez ce soir la Distinction honorifique Vimy 2008. This award recognizes your outstanding contribution to the defence and security of our nation, as well as the preservation of our democratic values. It stands as a testament to your vision and to your determination to make that vision, wherever it takes you, a reality.

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Much of your work, General Hillier, has been in foreign theatres. The year 2000 found you working in Bosnia-Herzegovina as commander of the NATO stabilization force's multinational division to reconstruct a country ravaged by war. 2003 took you to the command of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and the front line of the fight against terrorism. And in 2005, as Chief of the Defence Staff, you took command of the Canadian Armed Forces and shouldered the ultimate responsibility for our commitment in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Plus près de nous, in January 1998, you led Operation Recuperation, the Canadian Force's efforts in the aftermath of the ice storm – la crise du verglas – that swept Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. Under your supervision more than 15,000 troops repaired downed transmission lines, cleared roads and rescued people and animals. I share with many other Canadians, the welcome memory of Canadian soldiers hacking their way through the ice and snow to our front door, to ask if we were “O.K.”.

General Hillier, vous avez bien servi non seulement votre patrie, mais le monde entier. And, what is more, in the course of doing so, you have won a reputation as a “soldier's soldier”, a military leader who puts the welfare of his troops above all else. The men and women of the Canadian Forces are grateful for a soldier who has led them with loyalty and grace. Et le peuple du Canada vous remercie pour tous que vous avez accompli.

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It is an honour for me, General Hillier, to present you with this Award.

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