

**LANDMINES AND THE OTTAWA TREATY**

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**DINNER**

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**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Good evening everyone, it is a pleasure to speak before you tonight. For over 100 years, Rotary Clubs around the world have brought together business and professional leaders to focus their efforts on worthy, humanitarian causes. With over 1 million members worldwide, the work done by Rotary Club members has made a real difference in the lives of those less fortunate. Though Rotarians have a variety of causes they chose to focus on at any one time, I have been asked tonight to speak on the persistent issue of landmines.

In my opinion, landmines are one of the most insidious weapons of war ever devised. Landmines continue to kill and maim long after a conflict has ended, and it is their method of destruction that singles these weapons out for particular disdain.

There are generally two types of landmine: an anti-tank mine that aims to demobilize a vehicle, and anti-personnel mines, which target people. It is the later that will be my focus today.

An antipersonnel landmine's sole purpose is to indiscriminately kill or main a human being. They are triggered by pressure, or a tripwire, and explode on the spot. They are typically buried only about 15 cm below the ground, if they are buried at all.

The most commonly deployed antipersonnel mine is the Explosive Blast Effect type. The designed outcome is not only to maim, but to see that the remaining portion of the limb becomes infected, resulting in further amputation or death.

There is also the Bouncing Anti-personnel Landmine, commonly referred to as “bouncing betties.” These mines can be activated by pressure or a tripwire. Once triggered, a charge shoots the mine into the air. This is followed by a further explosion, which shoots out razor sharp metal fragments that can travel as far as 100 meters in a 360 degree radius.

If any of you went to see the Invictus Games here in Toronto, you no doubt saw some brave men and women who had fallen victim to a landmine, most likely an Improvised Explosive Device, or an IED. They are able to compete in such events because of advancements in technology and physiotherapy. These individuals sacrificed a great deal for their country, and it is only right that they are looked after when they return. And yet the women and men we saw at the Invictus Games, the soldiers, they represent only a minority of landmine casualties. In fact, nearly 80% of landmine victims are civilians. That is because landmines remain a threat long after the shooting has stopped. Some can stay active for up to 50 years after being armed.

Making matters worse, an overwhelming majority of these victims are from poor countries. They often cannot afford a wheel chair, or prosthetics. They do not have ready access to the necessary medical care and physical therapy that is required to recover from an attack. It is a cruel legacy these weapons leave behind; when a country is trying to get back on its feet following a conflict, that is when they present the

biggest threat. Be it to a farmer tilling a field; a vendor heading down a road taking goods to market; or even a child collecting scrap metal to raise money for their family.

Horrifically, it is children who make up 40% of all landmine victims. Given their smaller stature, they are also twice as likely to die from an encounter.

These statistics are shocking, and they allow you comprehend the scale of the problem. But they cannot convey the horrors experienced by the individuals who make up these numbers. For that, I will read you an excerpt from a report produced by Doctors Without Borders in 1997:

*The shock of the explosion, which means you feel nothing for a few minutes; then the pain flooding over your body; the wait for help, lying in the minefield, losing blood; the sight of your shattered and jagged bones sticking out from the end of your leg; the wondering if you will live or die; the likely amputation; the possibility of infection of the wounds and the bone; the impossibility of a disabled person finding a job; the shame of being a burden to family and community; the reduced likelihood of marriage, and children.*

In short, these weapons are a scourge on humanity and should be treated as such. So what can be done to eradicate them?

An important step toward this end was taken 20 years ago. It was in December of 1997 that 122 countries descended on our nation's capital to sign the, "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction;" or, as it is commonly referred to, the Ottawa Treaty. Through this landmark treaty, every signatory has agreed to:

- never use, develop or acquire antipersonnel landmines;
- destroy any stockpiles of these weapons within 4 years;
- clear mined areas in their territory within 10 years; and
- assist in education and support in other mine affected areas.

The Ottawa Treaty was the result of decades of hard work by advocacy groups and dedicated individuals. Together, they led an international campaign to highlight the horrors of these weapons and change public perceptions.

A great deal of credit belongs to the International Campaign to End Landmines, which was founded in 1992 and was headed by eventual Nobel Peace Prize winner Jody Williams. Were it not for their efforts, the Ottawa Treaty would never have come about. Their work rallied popular opinion behind political leaders like Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy,

who publicly denounced the use of landmines and encouraged governments around the world to do the same.

In fact, while I do not believe that this treaty could have happened without the leadership of my friend and former colleague, he would never have succeeded were it not for the foundations laid by these concerned individuals, working together for a common cause.

Canada has been given a good deal of credit for making the Ottawa Treaty a reality, and rightfully so. Allied with advocacy groups, we provided the international leadership that was needed to push other governments to do what was right.

Given these Canadian ties to the Ottawa Treaty, it is easy to forget that even we had to be convinced to join this cause. As should come as no surprise, militaries around the world were not keen to give up a weapon of war; this included the Canadian Forces. As late as September of 1995 - only two years before we signed the Treaty - the official government position was that if Canada was to maintain a combat ready force, landmines must remain available.

Fortunately, things were not so cut and dry behind the scenes. While the Department of National Defence maintained that there should not be a complete ban, those at the Department of Foreign Affairs were becoming increasingly unhappy with the government's position.

At this time, the public campaign to ban landmines was quickening in pace, and Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs was being flooded by a letter writing campaign. Never say that such campaigns do not work, because Minister Andre Oullette – Mr. Axworthy's predecessor at the department - became convinced that the only way forward was for Canada to reverse its policy on landmines.

Given these internal and external pressures, it would not be long before the government changed its position. By January of 1996, the Defence Department had publicly admitted that they had not deployed landmines in combat since the Korean War. That same month, the government announced that Canada would be placing a complete moratorium on the use, production, trade and export of anti-personnel landmines.

Later that year the first Ottawa conference was held, with official participation from only 50 nations. This first meeting did not produce a treaty. Rather, it marked the beginning of what we now call the Ottawa process.

More specifically, I believe this process began with a speech by Minister Lloyd Axworthy, who at the end of the meeting challenged all in attendance when he said, and I quote:

*"I am convinced that we cannot wait for a universal treaty. I am convinced that we can start now, even though we may have to proceed with a treaty that does not, in the*

*first instance, include all of the states of the world.*

*Such a treaty can be a powerful force that establishes the moral norm – that the production, use, stockpiling, and transfer of antipersonnel mines is to be banned forever....*

*“And so today I commit Canada to this goal, to work with our global partners to prepare a treaty that can be signed by December 1997 and implemented by the year 2000. I invite and challenge all of you to join with us to attain that goal....*

*“I am convinced that the real possibility of a treaty by a fixed date – not some far-off hope for an agreement at some date in an uncertain future – will exploit the unprecedented momentum that we now enjoy, and will make it easier for countries to take the necessary national decisions that will make our group larger. It will make our movement stronger and the chances of success better.”*

From that moment on, the Ottawa Process would only gain momentum. Elections in both France and the UK brought in

governments who were favorable to a complete ban. Work by public figures such as Princess Diana was crystalizing public opinion against the use of landmines. Governments around the world were beginning to feel the pressure. When it was time to return to Ottawa in December of '97, 122 countries were ready to sign.

By this time I had been appointed as Minister of National Defence, and government policy was firmly against the use of landmines, a policy that received my full support. I am happy to say that if there was any resistance from the Canadian Armed Forces to eliminating our stockpile of these weapons, it was gone by this time. The Treaty was approved in the House of Commons and the Senate without a dissenting vote. This was a unified endeavor.

Since that time, 162 nations have since signed and ratified the Treaty. The number of countries that manufacture landmines has fallen from 50 to 11. Thirty countries which were once heavily mined are now considered mine free.

Of course, this success would be impossible were it not for the work of people on the ground. Proudly, Canadians have been at forefront of these demining efforts and have become recognized experts in this field. For example, the Canadian government has recently announced that a team of Canadian military engineers will begin training Iraqi forces on how to safely remove landmines and other booby-traps left behind by ISIS.

It goes without saying that the process of defusing and removing a landmine is complicated and risky. During a conflict, it is often easier to fire ordinance at a known mine field or use heavy, specially designed equipment. But these methods are combat specific. They are done hastily and are not intended to rid an area of landmines completely. Once a conflict has ended, these destructive and imperfect methods are not an option. Mines must be detected and destroyed, most often by hand.

When I was Defence Minister, I was able to see for myself these brave men and women in action. Clearing an area of landmines begins with a survey. More often than not, this is conducted using nothing more than man power and a metal detector, though trained dogs are sometimes used. Please note that these animals are not sent out to detonate a mine, but only to detect it. Not only would that be cruel, but it is also an investment to train them – the cost runs at about \$40,000 per animal. It is in no one's interest to see them die.

When a mine is detected, a marker is placed. Once there is confidence that every mine in an area has been marked, the dangerous task of deactivating them can begin. This work can be done by troops or civilian workers. In both instances, their options are limited. Mines can be disarmed, or they can be burned without causing an explosion. In either case, direct contact with the mine is required. Workers are provided with protective equipment such as Kevlar vests and facemasks, but nothing that can fully guarantee their safety. One de-miner is

killed and two injured for every 5000 successfully removed mines. This is dangerous work, but it is work that they are proud of, and their efforts have spared tens of thousands of lives.

This work - as important as it is - should not have to go on forever. The ultimate goal of the Ottawa Treaty is to see countries around the world abandon the use and manufacture of landmines, and we are still far from that end.

There are still 34 countries who have not signed the Treaty. This includes three members of the UN Security council – Russia, China and the United States. Groups like ISIS for instance care little for international norms. It has also been reported that recently, the military in Myanmar has planted landmines along the border with Bangladesh as a part of their brutal campaign against the Rohingya.

Nor are landmines the only danger in a post conflict area. Cluster bombs present a threat similar to that of landmines. These bombs expel “bomblets” over a wide area. The bomblets, which can be the size and shape of a baseball, sometimes fail to explode and can remain armed for some time.

The threat posed by these weapons gave rise to the Cluster Munitions Convention, which was inspired by the Ottawa Treaty and shares the same goals. The convention was opened for signing in 2008, but to date, 78 countries have still not

signed on. This includes major military powers like China, the United States, Russia, Israel and Turkey.

Worryingly, 6,461 people were known to have been wounded or killed by land mines and other explosive remnants of war in 2015. That was a 75 percent increase from 2014, and the highest reported casualty total since 2006. This upward tick in casualties corresponds with a marked decline in the funding of de-mining groups. Removing landmines is an expensive endeavor. A landmine can cost as little as \$3 to install and as much as \$1000 to remove.

Perhaps it is because of the relative success of the Ottawa Treaty that funding has fallen, but we must not become complacent. It is important that we pressure our government and governments around the world to honour their commitments to the Ottawa Treaty and adequately fund demining efforts in afflicted areas. There are also a number of private organizations that are worthy of our financial support. Here in Canada, the Canadian Land Mine Foundation does excellent work around the world. This and other anti-landmine groups have set 2025 as the target date for the removal of all landmines in countries that are a part of the Treaty. They need our support to reach that goal.

As Canadians, we can feel proud of the role our country played in making the Ottawa Treaty a reality. We have made so much progress in the 20 years since the Treaty was signed. But there is still more work to be done. There are still millions of

landmines armed and ready to explode in at least 64 countries. Roughly 18 people a day accidentally trigger one of these weapons. There is an 80% chance it will be a civilian. Of these, more than 1 in 3 will be a child who has a 50-50 chance of dying from the explosion.

Removing them all will be difficult, but not impossible. The Ottawa Treaty would never have come about were it not for the work of dedicated, hardworking people who took on this cause. Twenty years later, this “Night of a Thousand Dinners” is an excellent example of how individuals like the Rotarians of District of 7070 carry on this tradition and continue to make a difference.

The Ottawa Treaty will forever be associated with Canada and the good work we do. It is in our interests to see it succeed. With your help, I have every confidence that we will witness the end of these cruel and unnecessary weapons in our lifetime.

Thank you.