

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION  
OF VETERANS IN  
UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING



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## THE THIN BLUE LINE/SUR LA CORDE RAIDE EN BLEU

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### **You are a Canadian Peacekeeper**

You are a Canadian peacekeeper.

You stand on the thin blue line between order and anarchy.

You are the symbol of future stability, the hope for an eventual peace, the guarantee of at least a temporary respite to a war-weary people.

Your presence is the greatest testimony of humanity's concern for humanity.

Just by observing at the right moment you make a difference.

Yours are the eyes that have stopped a column of tanks, ended a border raid, terminated a gun fight.

Just by talking at the right moment, you made a difference.

Yours is the voice of reason, the moderating influence in a region where moderation has long since been abandoned,

Just by being at the right place you made a difference.

Yours is the care that shows that, in some way the world cares.

Yours is the country that shows that sustainable peace is possible.

You are the prospect of security to a people that has known none.

You are the man or women in the middle.

You stand with arms outstretched preventing two neighbours from coming to blows.

You hold a bridge between two raging mobs hurling stones and insults at each other.

Without you, they would be exchanging bullets and canon fire.

While people push against you, and shout in anger, deep down they are truly glad that you are stopping them.

You stand on the edge of the precipice, holding back the avalanche of inhumanity.

You are the man or women in the middle.

You hold the strategic ground sought by both sides.

They respect your presence there only because you deny that very ground to the opposing side, their enemy.

You are a soldier (or civilian) without an enemy. War itself is your opponent.

Your greatest weapon is not your gun, but your integrity, though your gun may be essential.

Your best strategy is to be an example of courage in the face of violence.

Your truest guide is your conscience.

Your worthiest goal is to be a force for justice in the face of injustice.

You are the upholder of the rules in a land where rules are little respected.

You must sometimes draw a line in the sand and say, "this far and no further."

Your presence is a promise that should not be dismissed lightly,

Your presence is a guarantee that should not be dislodged easily.

After repeated challenge and in the face of fire,

You must hold firm to keep your dignity and save your mission.

You repel an attack, inflicting the minimum damage to accomplish your goal and render a lesson: you are not to be taken lightly.

You are a Canadian peacekeeper. What do you do?

You are the soldier on a patrol along a line of control in an eerie silence during an interlude in the fighting.

You are the sentinel who stands guard in a spot where your predecessor was shot.

You are the mariner who chases the smugglers and gun runners that feed the ravenous jaws of war with weapons of death and destruction.

You are the pilot who is the lifeline of a people, landing humanitarian supplies through a difficult manoeuvre to avoid gun fire on the approach.

You are the mediator who shows that there *is* a solution to a hopeless conflict.

You are the officer who can talk with all combatants and earn their respect.

You are the enforcer who shows that impunity has its limits.

You are the special forces agent in camouflage paint who plays sniper against the snipers.

You are the medic administering to a dying man in a stretcher.

You are the chaplain who shows that God can be honoured in many ways in a land with no history of religious tolerance or understanding.

You are the kind stranger who brings a parentless crying child to relatives.

You are the fellow human being who offers a shoulder to a tearful refugee.

You are a Canadian peacekeeper. What do you do?

You cut your way on recce through the dense jungles of central Africa.

You squeeze through tunnels in Central America to discover secret arms caches.

You patrol a no-man's land along a green line in Cyprus.

You share a laugh with a resident in Haiti

You share a tear with a resident of Rwanda.

All around is evidence of man's inhumanity to man:

Shattered windows and walls marked with bullet holes,

Heaps of rubble in which only children could find joy in play.

You are a Canadian peacekeeper.

You have known praise and acclaim,

Some of your commanders and compatriots have risen to national fame.

And some others once dishonoured the nation.

But besides this, what is hardest on your conscience

Is the feeling that, despite all your effort, you have not done enough.

Your conscience cries out for a solution to the painful conflict, an end to insanity, and return to normalcy.

In this you are not alone.

You are a peacekeeper among many other peacekeepers.

You are well trained, well educated, and well equipped but never sufficiently prepared, for the task of

peace is an onerous and never ending one.

Still you do your best.

You are the hope of a future peace, the embodiment of dreams of the next generation.

You are a citizen of the world. As well as a citizen of your nation.

You are a peacekeeper and a world keeper.

A servant of the peace and a force for peace,

You are a Canadian peacekeeper.

A. Walter Dorn, 11 November 2004