Non-State Actors in Sri Lanka

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technologies—otherwise known as the proliferation of small arms—has three results. First, technological developments have provided for the manufacture of smaller and lighter weapons, which young soldiers can handle. Second, the Cold War, the time when two global superpowers could mostly regulate the distribution of available weapons, has come to an end, and many of the weapons of the former Soviet Republic have provided for "the wholesale flooding of redundancies, cheap but efficient weapons in Africa." Third, NSAs recruit and include girls alongside boys as soldiers. Vial and Steuver cite "confirmed reports of girls under the age of 18 in government forces, paramilitaries/militias and/or armed opposition groups in 36 countries between 1990 and 2000" and an additional 10 countries cened in the 2001 Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers Global Report, making a total of 46 countries out of 178 between 1990 and 2001.

Within a context as politically and economically unstable as Africa, the only means that many youth and the poor have towards achieving financial stability is through the military. Moreover, the need is real, as both NSAs and established governments continue recruiting soldiers, dangers implicit in the military life lead soldiers to other occupations and professions. NSAs have no alternative but to prey upon impressionable teenagers. Militaries of established governments and NSAs seek youth for two reasons: the young are able to fill the void left in the wake of casualties to older soldiers, and they are far more impressionable and willing to take chances than older, more seasoned and cautious soldiers. Although the international community has pressured established governments to raise the age of conscript-point and enlistment—some governments allow boys to enlist at age 15—these governments have resisted such pressure. And the larger point remains that even if state-sponsored governments were to increase their age of conscription, NSAs are already operating illegally and have no moral or legal obligation to refrain preying on children.

The Lord's Resistance Army

In Africa, the use of child soldiers is especially pressing as in the case of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), an NSA operating along the border between northern Uganda and the southern border of the Sudan. Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA, claims to be a medium of spiritual forces, and his unique charisma and ideology draw scores of followers and soldiers. The group largely operates upon the notion of terror, for it recruits children through abduction: boys as soldiers, girls as wives and concubines. Indigenous peoples to the Acholi land where the LRA operates are often displaced both by the NSA's movements and by the need to seek refuge at night in nearby towns where children are less likely to be abducted.

The LRA also provides an interesting point in the NSA situation in Africa in that it has received financial and military support over the course of the past 15 years from the dominant Muslim Sudanese government to the north of the Uganda. The Sudan's support of the LRA is the result of the Ugandan government's main support of the mainly Christian SPLA, another NSA operating in the south of the Sudan. Indeed, despite the thousands of miles that separate the two and the passage of some 15 years since the fall of the Soviet Union, the case of the Cold War points to how larger states competing for power allow for smaller insurgents to surge the world of diplomacy. So long as the international community and the countries involved fail to resolve their larger disputes, military action will be of lesser importance and innocent civilians will be left to pay the price.

Towards the Future

To discuss the issue of NSAs is to turn a blind eye to an already established threat: in the mine action community. As landmines provide a primary means of warfare and terrorism, it is imperative that mine action address the issue of NSAs' other impact upon innocent civilians lies is simply too great. As this article points out, in the case of the LRA, the international community is failing to act on the threats of both countries. Correlating children's use of landmines with the SAFW's trade reveals that indeed, the issue is not only a continental one, but the upheld of irresponsibility by the global community and those countries that once flooded the caches of both established governments and NSAs during the Cold War. Indeed, these fac-

ners have produced the humanitarian crisis in the Sudan, where innocent refugees are left to pick and choose escape routes among mines laden with landmines, chased by militaries with singular and sinister motives. As many politicians within the United States have already remarked upon the crisis of the Sudan as perhaps the next African genocide, it is important to remember that while these conflicts are not the direct result of international indirectness, they are at least the results of many years of indirect complicity. The SAFW trade has funded the ranks of local African communities and the potential results may well compound the guilt that already burdens the conscience of the international community.

* Photo via AP

References


Contact information
Christopher Hooper
E-mail: hooperc@jmu.edu

A female deminer places a dismantled landmine in the safety area of a minefield in Kibonchok on the northern perimeter of Sri Lanka.

Stock Between a Rock and a Hard Place

What happens when an irresistible force hits an immovable object? Something gives. Or does it? In the war torn country of Sri Lanka, there remains a constant clash between the country's government and non-state actor (NSA) groups that threaten the region and its people. The chief NSA that opposes the government is the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an insurgency group whose goal is to form an independent state for the 5.3 million Tamil people that make up the minority ethnic community.

Tension between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government has remained high since 1983 and over 9,500 people have lost their lives since 1996 alone. In recent years, efforts have been undertaken to control the use of AP mines from both government and non-state perpetrators. However, despite these efforts, AP mine use remains high because neither party wishes to risk its own safety. Major Priyadurai of the Sinhalese army (SLA) said, "We still need landmines to defend our bases. They provide us as well as an early warning of an enemy attack." While the army is currently removing mines, Priyadurai made his position clear, "Until there's a permanent, peaceful solution, we can't stop using mines."

Who are NSAs and What do They Want?

In countries where citizens sometimes express their views through violent actions, conflict is inevitable. The most common issues to arise are related to NSAs, defined by the Geneva Call as "any armed actor operating outside state control that uses force to achieve its political/strategic/political objectives. They include armed groups, rebel groups, liberation movements and de facto governments." NSAs plant landmines and fight police and government security forces in an effort to fulfill their military purposes, primarily to inflict fear and stress on the people. NSAs produce, stockpile and use mines, and it has been reported that NSAs and AP mines in at least 27 countries between 2001 and 2003.

Fatal Focus: Recent History of the LTTE Versus the Government

Between 2000 and 2001, relations between the LTTE and the Sri Lanka government went from bad to worse. Use of AP landmines and fighting increased, leading to higher numbers of casualties. United Nations mine action programs were terminated and Sri Lanka was encouraged to sign the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. Although Sri Lanka chose not to sign the convention, it did vote in favor of the pro-ban UN General Assembly resolution in
November 2009 and participated as an observer at several mine ban-related meetings. Heavy fighting between the LTTE and the government persisted throughout 2000–2001, with the exception of a five-month ceasefire. The government attempted to make a temporary truce from the LTTE and found exmilitary landmine experts, removing more than 1,000 AP mines in January 2001 alone.

In 2002, the Sri Lanka campaign entered into a partnership with Geneva Call and Landmine Action to promote a mine ban to both parliamentarians and the general public as part of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which was contingent upon the LTTE’s agreement. Following that meeting, in December 2002, Geneva Call representatives and chief adviser of political register Antone Buksbregt went along with the peace delegation of the LTTE in Bern, Switzerland, where the LTTE and they were seriously considering signing the convention. Although mine removal is a major threat, no reports of mine use by either the government or the LTTE since December 2001 have been made.

The northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka have received the highest level of landmine contamination. Areas affected include urban areas, roads, water sources and fertile agricultural land—aried when displaced people are returning but are in great need of land. Government estimates state that 1 million have been the approximate numbers of landmines planted, and the general belief is that the number has increased to several hundred thousand since the latter part of the 1990s. In 2003, the government estimated that 100,000 from 700,000 to 1 million mines were in the ground. HADA Task estimated that the army laid 900,000 mines in Jaffna and Kollalakulam, and the LTTE has estimated that more than two million mines have been planted.

The LTTE: Fighting for a Cause

The conflict that continues the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government has its roots in 1802, when the island of Sri Lanka fell under British rule. Maps of the time depicted an island of two contiguous Tamil in the northeast and Sinhala in the southwest and central areas. In 1833, the British government integrated native administrative processes failed but created a new administrative layer capable of governing the entire island. Despite efforts made by the new English-educated persons, the two separate groups could not be unified under one nation.

A provision known as Article 29, was made in 1948 that granted power to the Sinhalese Parliament to make laws for peace, security and good government. The Tamils were elected without any representation. The Tamils and the LTTE, a conditional policy was formed, the condition being that the ethnic majority Sinhalese would not discriminate against the Tamils, the ethnic minority. Violations of the policy occurred on several occasions, resulting in serious acts of discrimination. As means of preventing the Tamils from enacting their rights to end the domination policy, there

Sinhalese political parties lack a vote to end the policy and create a new Republic of Sri Lanka. Support for the Tonk was coming primarily from the Sinhalese provinces. Those votes from the Tamil region, for the most part, rejected the mandate.

As a result, the people of Tamil were faced under the regime of the Republican Constitution of 1972, a constitution formed without support from the people of the north-east. The Sri Lankan government continues claims ownership of those areas formerly belonging to the Tamils. According to the LTTE website, "Sri Lanka has no legislation or legal claim to reoccupy the north and east, the homeland of the Tamil—Tamils Edam.

The current conflict was born out of this legitimacy for the Tamil community for what they believe is their legal right of ownership of the land and our citizens of Sri Lanka.

From Peaceful Plans to Fatal Frustration

In the last 10 years, the LTTE has tried to establish a peaceful relationship with the Sri Lankan government. In 1954, LTTE officials offered solutions to the devastating conflict that destroyed lives and land for decades, but the negotiations between the LTTE and the government quickly stalled. The government ignored the sequels and conditions set forth by the LTTE that would allow for a cessation of day-to-day problems that tormented the Tamil people. These requests were simple and included a lift on the ban on fishing and an end to the destruction of schools which prevented the Tamils from receiving food and medicine.

Sri Lankan prisoners of war were released by the LTTE as an expression of the LTTE’s willingness to work things out. The LTTE also allowed that negotiations would not proceed until the day-to-day problems that the Tamil people were resolved. However, the LTTE and government were once again falling short of a mutual agreement, as the government did not pay the promised amount of the LTTE. In addition, once negotiations began, the government changed its mind and demanded that the conflict be solved before it would help the Tamil people.

Anti-vehicle mines, both factory-built and LTTE-constructed, also plague Sri Lanka.

Dear Mr. President... Landmines All Over the World Are Teamed with Death

The mine is a deadly killer. Long after conflicts are ended, its lingering head or innocent men are landed by something of which we hear little. Their family is never again reunited...

(Zola, Princes of Wales, 1907)

Dear Mr. President... is a Suwun Films' second feature film and is due to be completed sometime in 2005. Dear Mr. President... focuses on the issues of landmines, which were used exclusively by both sides during the conflict on the island of Sri Lanka. Many people conclude Sri Lanka to be a paradise on earth, but are unaware of the huge problem of minesfields and other unexploded bombs around conflict areas. The film is a follow-up to the first feature film, The Name of Buddha, about life in troubled Sri Lanka. This film was awarded for its hard-hitting treatment of the conflict.

The story takes place in present-day Sri Lanka. In the city around the town of Jaffna, a poor, poor man who has never been forced to flee from the fighting return to their village only to find that it has been turned into one giant killing field. You see the plight of Raja, a poor farmer who struggles to survive in the village. The story shows the people who are daily living in such a dangerous zone. It also shows the trauma caused to victims and their families.

Following a landmine accident that maims his daughter, Raja rents his house by helping a women's non-governmental organization (NGO) worker. This act sets into motion some devastating consequences.

In the story that villagers struggle to build a pagoda. They believe that building the pagoda will encourage trade with neighboring villages and will bring prosperity to their village. However, the hidden landmines claim victim after victim.

The filmmakers hope that this film will raise awareness among screenwriting audiences. The film also hopes to show how much clearance experts go about their job and bring hope to communities devastated by landmines. The film is to be made on location in India, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. So far, the film is in the early stages and has suffered slight setbacks with funding. However, the filmmakers feel that hope is within reach of so many landmine victims and that enthusiasm for the project, new financial backers will come forward.

The Suwun Films organizations have enrolled the film:

The Otiha, Princess of Wales, Movement
The International Campaign to Ban Landmines
Amnesty Network
Norwegian People's Aid
German Initiative to Ban Landmines
Swiss Foundation for Mine Action

Contact Information
Suwun Films
82 Rosebery Av
Manor Park
London E12 6ZV
United Kingdom
E-mail: Safe@suwunfilms.com

https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol8/iss2/28
government expressing its concerns. A temporary cease-fire was established, but the government repeatedly broke it, resulting in the deaths of Tamil people and LTTE members. As cited from the LTTE website, "The LTTE became convinced that the government was not sincerely interested in resolving the ethnic conflict by negotiation. The LTTE also became convinced that the government was not prepared to offer any substantial political framework that could satisfy the political aspirations of the Tamil people."

When deadlines placed by the LTTE were not taken seriously by the government, the LTTE again sent letters, released by the press, that gave the government dates on which armed conflict would resume if requests from the LTTE were not met. Finally, with one week before the LTTE resumed its conflict on April 19, 1995, the government feared the LTTE for the conflict and falsely portrayed the LTTE as being opposed to justice and a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The government feared the LTTE for the conflict and falsely portrayed the LTTE as being opposed to justice and a peaceful solution to the conflict. The LTTE was poised to attack. The government feared that if the LTTE attacked, it would initiate another round of war.

Although neither party has come forward to sign the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, there is a possibility of cooperation in the future. For example, the Sri Lankan government announced on July 13, 2004, that it would accede to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons as well as to Protocol II on mines booby traps and other devices, the protocol on incendiary weapons and protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. The LTTE has met with Genoa Call but has not engaged in negotiations.

Engaging Non-State Actors in the Fight Against Landmines: A Key to Negotiating Peace in Colombia

Introduction

Today, one of the populations in the world that suffers the most from landmine use by armed non-state actors (NSAs) is the population of Colombia. Since 2003, Genoa Call, a humanitar-

ian, independent and neutral international organization dedicated to engaging NSAs in a round table against anti-personal landmines, has established a line of communication with Colombian armed groups. With the support of the national government and the collaboration of the Colombian Campaign Against Landmines—a partner organization—representatives of Genoa Call have met with members of the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Colombia, other local and indigenous organizations, as well as members of the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional [ELN]) with the goal of finding a common solution to the problems posed by NSA landmine use.
assurance (QA) is undertaken during analysis. The results of that QA testing can be used to provide survey information to adjust the results of analysis, and to feed back into clearance requirements. The approach confers here represents a significant technical refinement of REST analysis over current use, without requiring anything more from an analysis centre than effective QA and regular data entry. When linked to automated analysis software, which is already available, these refinements indicate that REST is becoming a sophisticated multi-discard tool that should be considered for use by mine-clearance agencies worldwide.

Acknowledgements

The ideas presented here have evolved as a result of our involvement with the REST programme run by NPA in Angola. Thanks to Ignacio Leguer, Cole Sankey, Russ Vlazny, Andolouki Satchala, Al Cameron, Integrated

Qualified Dredger, Ian Mansfield and Tristram Back for many useful comments, suggestions and general support. Funding of this work was by NATO and the Department of International Development (UK).

Endnotes
EUDM–2 SOTC International Conference on Requirements and Methodology for Decision Support and Classification of Landmines and UXO.

Research, GICHD
The Avenue de la Paix
CH-1211 Geneva 1
Switzerland
Tel.: +41-22-9201676
Fax: +41-22-9201690
E-mail: Ian.McKenna@gichd.ch
Website: http://www.gichd.ch/
Rebecca SargISON Researcher, GICHD
Tel.: +41-22-9201658
Fax: +41-22-9201690
E-mail: r.sargison@yahooho.com

T he Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) published A Study of Mechanical Applications in Demining in June 2004. The study looked at the most suitable roles for machines in demining, examined the potential for machines to be considered a primary clearance tool, explained factors involved in protecting operators and presented a software model to help programme managers understand the cost-effectiveness of their mechanical auxiliaries. In 2005, the GICHD plans to release six more sub-studies related to mechanical demining. The following article explains some aspects of the operational roles where machines are currently employed.

Manual demining is the backbone of the mine clearance industry, but it is very slow and laborious. A significant amount of time, effort and money goes into the search for the ultimate solution to make demining faster. Ultimately, most of these solutions are aimed at supporting manual deminers by reducing suspect areas to areas where mines actually are, speeding up the process of detecting them or destroying mines individually once they have been located. Brilliant minds have been working on a multitude of possible solutions—mining beer or utilizing bio-detection to indicate the presence of explosive molecules. More advances in ground-penetrating radar, ultra-sonic vibration, kinematic magnetic induction systems, and other high-tech, sub-surface detection systems are continually becoming main. The science of vapor sampling is also used widely, and much research is involved into the safe detection of individual mines in situ using lasers or defragglement devices. All of these methods are ingenious but few of these prototypes systems are ready to be immediately deployed to minefields. Of those that are ready, extensive knowledge and training is required to make them work. Others might be effective but are unable to withstand the rigours of life in the field. However, there are already demining systems that greatly enhance performance. Some can detect all the major obstacles facing a manual deminer. Many of them have been on the scene for years and are continually improving. They are reasonably robust, and after comparatively little training, they can be used by personnel with even the most basic education. These are demining machines.