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 ended. Moreover, the United Nations and most countries of the former Soviet Republics 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 Sivaste 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 cited 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 untenable as Africa, it's the only means that many youth and the poor have towards achieving financial stability through military. Moreover, the need is natural, 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 rely upon impressionable teenagers. Militaries of established governments and NSAs seek youth for two reasons: the young are able to fill the void left by 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 expressed concerns about established governments to raise the age of conscription 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 ages of conscription, NSAs are already operating illegally and have no moral or legal obligation to resist prying on children.

The Lööf Resistance Army

In Africa, the use of child soldiers is especially pressing as in the case of the Lööf 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 Uganda. The Sudan's support of the LRA is the result of the Ugandan government's main support of the mainly Christian SPLM/A, 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 cost of the Cold War points to how larger states competing for power allow for smaller insurrections to shore up the methods 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 in their impact upon innocent civilian lives is simply too great. As this article points out in the case of the LRA, the international conflicts between such coun­tries as the Sudan and Uganda provide a fertile ground for a myriad of NSAs to exist and the interests of both countries. Correlating children's use of landmines with the SATWL trade reveals that indeed, the issue is not only a continental one, but the upheaval 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 fac­tors have produced the humanitarian crisis in the Sudan, where innocent refugees are left to pick and choose escape routes among mines laced with landmines, caused by militias 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 very the direct result of international indifference, they are at least the results of many years of indirect complicity. The U.S. has fueled 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


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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 insurrectionary group whose goal is to form an independent state for the 2.5 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 Points of the Sri Lankan army (SLA) and, "We still need landmines to defend our bases. They provide us with an early warning of an enemy attack." While the army is currently removing mines, Pritschi redefines his position: "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 in Sri Lanka are related to NSAs, defined by the Geneva Call as "any armed actor operating outside state control that uses force to achieve its political, quasi-political, or political objectives. They include armed groups, rebel groups, liberation movements, and facto governments." NSAs plant landmines and fight police and government security forces in an effort to fulfill their military pursuits, primarily to inflict fear and deter dissidents. By placing landmines, NSAs produce, stockpile, and use mines, and it has been reported that NSAs used 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 Lankan governments went from bad to worse. Use of AP landmines and fighting increased, leading to higher numbers of casualties. United Nations mine action awareness 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.
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 four-month ceasefire. The government attempted to seize territory from the LTTE and faced extensive landmines, 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 parties. The government's agreement to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention was contingent on the LTTE's agreement as well. Following that meeting, in December 2002, Geneva Call representatives and chief adviser and political negotiator Antoni Batistegui met with the peace delegation of the LTTE in Berne, Switzerland, where the LTTE and they were seriously considering signing the convention. Although, mine remains 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—areas where displaced people are returning but are in great need of assistance. Government estimates state that in May 1999, approximately 20,000–25,000 landmines were laid, and the general belief is that the number has increased to several hundred thousand since the latest report in 1999. In 2003, the government estimated that 700,000 to one million mines were in the ground. HALO Trust estimated that the army laid 900,000 mines in Jaffna and Kilinochchi, and the LTTE has estimated that more than two million mines have been planted.

The LTTE: Fighting for a Cause

The conflict that connects the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government has its roots in 1982, when the island of Sri Lanka fell under British rule. Maps of the time depicted an island of two communities Tamil in the northeast and Sinhala in the southwest and central areas. In 1833, the British government integrated internal administrative processes but failed to create a common law 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 constitution had been formed by this time, but it proved unpopular, giving the Sinhalese an advantage. According to the constitution, the British government encouraged the British, Legislative Council membership was based on communal representation with an agreed number of Sinhalese and Tamil present. However, between 1924 and 1931 the reality changed and a new proportion was set to 2:3 in favor of the Tamils. The Devanoville formula, developed to ensure that no single community, or any position to ensure all ethnic com-

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, however, felt that this new constitution, in addition to the new relationship between the Sinhalese and the Tamils, 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 a means of preventing the Tamils from exerting their rights to end the domination policy, there

Sinhala political parties bloc, a vote to end the policy and create a new Republic of Sri Lanka. Support for the republic would come primarily from the Sinhalese provinces. Those voters from the Tamil region, for the most part, rejected the mandate.

As a result, the people of Tamil were forced under the rule of the Republic Constitution of 1972; constitution formed without support from the people of the north-

The Sri Lankan government currently claims ownership of these areas formerly belonging to the Tamils. According to the LTTE website, "Sri Lanka has no legislation or legal claim to repossess the north and east, the homeland of the Tamil people." The current conflict was born out of this legiti-


city issue. Tamil community in this country believes in their legal rights of ownership of the earth and coastal areas 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 1994, LTTE officials offered solutions to the devastating conflict that destroyed lives and land for decades, but the government rejected the LTTE and the government quickly soared. The government ignored the reasons 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 development projects that prevented the Tamils from receiving food and medicine.

Sri Lankan prisoners of war were released by the LTTE in an attempt to persuade the government to stop fighting. The LTTE also insisted that negotiations would not pro-

continue until the day-to-day problems of the Tamil people were resolved. However, the LTTE and government were once again lacking a mutual agreement as a prerequisite to the future 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.

As time passed and the LTTE continued to feel ignored, the Tamil national leader, Mr. V. Prabhakaran, wrote several letters to the

Dear Mr. President:... Landmines All Over the World Are Tearing Apart the Jurisdiction of the United Nations

The mine is a silent killer. Long after conflicts are ended, its innocent victims are feared or are surrounded simply, in ignorance of which we hear little. Their family is never regained again. —Diana, Princess of Wales, 1997

Dear Mr. President... is Sasa Films' second feature film and it is a new completed version in 2009. Dear Mr. President... focuses on the kinds of landmines, which were used extremely by both sides during the conflicts on the island of Sri Lanka. Many people con-

sider Sri Lanka to be a paradise on earth, but unaware of the huge problems of landmines and other unexploded bombs around conflict areas. This film is a follow-up to the first feature film, in the Name of Buddha, about life in troubled Sri Lanka. This film was awarded several awards for its hard-hitting treatment of the conflict. The story takes place in present-day Sri Lanka. In the conflict, the poor people who were being forced to flee from the fighting return to their village only to find that it has been turned into one big destruction area. We follow the plight of Raju, a poor farmer who struggles to survive in the village. The story shows the problem of daily living in such a dangerous area. It also shows the trauma caused to victims and their families.

Following a landmine accident that takes his daughter's life, Raju wins his battle by mobilizing a women's anti-government organization (NGO) group. This act sets in motion some devastating con-

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

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

Jenna Enright, left, prepares a Tamil boy for surgery in Jaffna, north-western Sri Lanka.
government reassured 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 settlement 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 main objective left, the LTTE resumed struggle on April 19, 1993.

The government blamed the LTTE for the conflict and falsely portrayed the LTTE as being opposed to justice and a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The Here and Now

Although neither party has come forward to sign the Anti-Personal 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 adhere 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 Geneva Call but has not continued as of page 104.

**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, Geneva Call, a humanitarian, independent and neutral international organization dedicated to engaging NSAs in a land ban against anti-personnel 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 Geneva 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 a goal of finding a common solution to the problems posed by NSA landmine use.

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*Image 2: Colombian counter-insurgency troops take part in a training course to deal with landmine victims at El Espinal, Colombia.*

*Image 3: A landmine detection dog plays with its handler during their graduation ceremony at an army training school in Bello, Antioquia, 130 kilometers northwest of Medellín, Colombia.*
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 confounded here represents a significant technical refinement of BST analysis over current use, without requiring anything more from an analysis centre than effective QA and good data entry.

When linked to automated analysis software, which is already available, these refinements indicate that BST is becoming a sophisticated anti-missile tool that should be considered for use by non-clearance agencies worldwide.

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Endnotes


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The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) published A Study of Mechanical Applications in Detecting GICHD-Concepts in 2004. This study looked at the most suitable risks for machines in demining, examined the potential for machine 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 units. In 2005, the GICHD plans to release six more sub-modules related to mechanical demining. The following article explains some aspects of the operational tasks 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 safety 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 materials. New advances in ground-penetrating radar, ultrasonic vibration, kinematic magnetic induction systems, and other high-tech, sub-surface detection systems are continually being made. The science of vapour sampling is also used widely, and much research is invested in the safe detection of individual mines in situ using lasers or decontamination devices. All of these methods are ingenious. But few of these prototype systems are ready to be immediately deployed to minefields. Of those that are ready, expensive 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 mobile, and are compared to a little time thing, they can be used by personnel with even the most basic education. These are demining machines.

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