

SUBJECT: Sri Lanka: Arming and Training the Insurgency

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External Distribution:

Ms. Sandra Charles

Director, Near East South Asia Region, International Security Affairs
Department of Defense, Room 4D765, Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301

Captain Edward Louis Christiansen, USN

Chief, South Asian Regional Plans and Policy Branch
Department of Defense, Room 2E973, Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301

Dr. Stephen Cohen

Policy Planning Staff
Department of State, Room 7311, Washington, DC 20520

Mr. James P. Covey

Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director,
Near East and South Asia Affairs, National Security Council
Old Executive Office Building, Room 351, Washington, DC 20500

Mr. Herbert Hagerty

Director, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh
Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs
Department of State, Room 5247, Washington, DC 20520

Mr. H. Allen Holmes

Director, Bureau of Political Military Affairs
Department of State, Room 7327, Washington, DC 20520

Mr. Philip S. Kaplan

Staff Director for Policy Planning Council
Department of State, Room 7316, Washington, DC 20520

Mr. Ron Lorton

Bureau of Intelligence and Research, South Asia Division
Department of State, Room 4636A, Washington, DC 20520

Mr. Michael MacMurray

Special Assistant for South Asia, International Security Affairs
Department of Defense, Room 4D765, Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301

Mr. Marc Palovitz

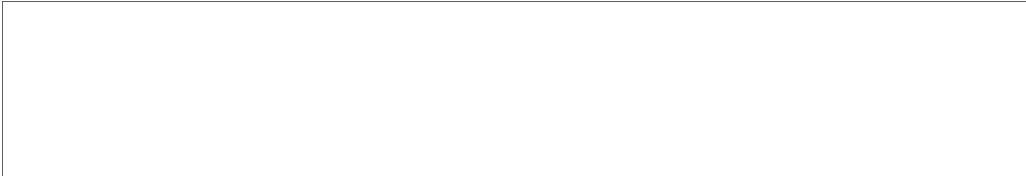
Special Assistant for South Asia, International Security Affairs,
Near Eastern-South Asian Region
Department of Defense, Room 4D765, Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301

Mr. Robert A. Peck

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs
Department of State, Room 6244, Washington, DC 20520

Mr. Christopher Ross
Director, Regional Affairs, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs
Department of State, Room 5254A, Washington, DC 20520

Mr. Grant Smith
Director, INS, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs
Department of State, Room 5251, Washington, DC 20520



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Mr. Darnell Whitt
Intelligence Adviser to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
Department of Defense, Room 4D840, Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301

Dr. Dov S. Zackheim
Deputy Assistant Under Secretary of Defense for Policy/Resources
Department of Defense, Room 3D777, Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301



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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

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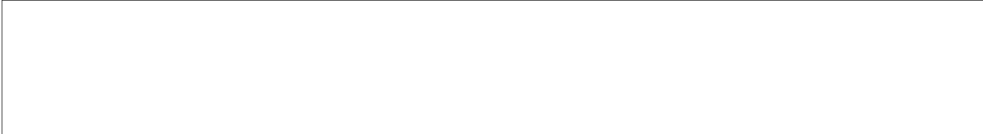
SRI LANKA: Arming and Training the Insurgency

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Summary

Tamil insurgents have amassed an arsenal of small arms, ammunition, and some crew-served weapons adequate to continue the insurgency at present levels. They are successfully raising funds abroad and have access to international arms markets as well as to training facilities and bases for arms smuggling in southern India.

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The arms pipeline is largely immune to Colombo's efforts to cut it and to any but exceptionally large-scale Indian interdiction efforts. Most insurgents have been trained by their own cadre and by ex-Indian Army officers. increased training is taking place in Sri Lanka.

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The Insurgents' Arsenal

Much of the insurgents' arms and equipment are old or second-hand, but we believe that they are of good quality and have been kept serviceable. Small-arms range from hand guns and World War II-era Japanese-made rifles to AK-47s and M-16s. [redacted] cite insurgent use of machine-guns, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, hand grenades, land mines, and explosives. [redacted]

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We do not believe that the insurgents have much sophisticated materiel. [redacted] the Tamils have acquired limited numbers of more advanced equipment, such as night-vision scopes, communications sets, and scuba gear. Colombo claims that one of its helicopters was brought down in Jaffna last March by an SA-7, but we cannot confirm that the insurgents have acquired such weapons. [redacted]

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[redacted]

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In our judgment, the insurgents' relatively unsophisticated arsenal is adequate for their present level of operations. Over the last six months, the most common tactics employed against government forces have been hand grenade or unmanned land mine ambushes. The insurgents mainly operate in small units--five to 15 men for ambushes--and engagements with the Sri Lankan military are usually confined to brief fire-fights. Press [redacted] reports also indicate the insurgents are able to withstand concerted government assaults and are capable of organizing upwards of 100 men for larger actions. [redacted]

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Aquiring Money and Arms

The insurgents' fundraising activities throughout the Tamil expatriate communities in South Asia, the Middle East, Western Europe, and the US are key in procuring arms. [redacted] the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), the largest and most politically radical of the five main insurgent groups, maintains offices or contacts in several Western European countries as well as Canada, Bahrain, and Brunei which it uses to raise money and spread propaganda. [redacted]

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The insurgents have augmented their war chest through extortion and bank robberies in Sri Lanka and by involvement in international drug trafficking. [redacted] major drug seizures and arrests of Tamil smugglers in the west last fall will result in a decrease in the insurgents' income through the narcotics trade, [redacted]

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reports of local Tamil civilians rebelling against insurgent extortion attempts suggest that their ability to draw on resources in northern Sri Lanka has been strained by the prolonged struggle. [redacted]

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[redacted] the Indians suspect, but cannot confirm, the Soviets have provided financial support to PLOTE. [redacted]

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[redacted] They believe these amounts could not have been raised through expatriates' contributions, bank robberies, or drug trafficking but must have been offset by the Soviets. [redacted]

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We believe that the insurgent groups buy most of their weapons and equipment in West European and Asian commercial arms markets and from private sources in India. [redacted] the insurgents have obtained arms in West Germany and the UK through Libyan and IRA contacts and in Thailand and Lebanon through PLO contacts. [redacted] these arms are collected in Hong Kong and then smuggled to Singapore and on to Madras. There, shipments are broken up and, along with arms acquired in India, put on smaller vessels for the final run into Sri Lanka. Some arms are obtained illegally in India with the help of expatriates and sympathetic Indian Tamils. [redacted]

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Tamil insurgents capture arms in Sri Lanka from the security forces and through raids on government armories, but captured arms appear to be only a minor portion of their arsenal. The possibility that the insurgents will obtain more sophisticated arms, such as anti-tank missiles and anti-aircraft guns, increases, however, as Colombo beefs up its own forces. [redacted]

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Training

Most insurgents have been trained by their own cadre and by ex-Indian Army officers in camps in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. As New Delhi began last summer to increase its Palk Strait patrolling and seize more Tamil arms shipments in Madras, however, the insurgents started shifting bases and training operations into rebel-held areas in Sri Lanka. [redacted]

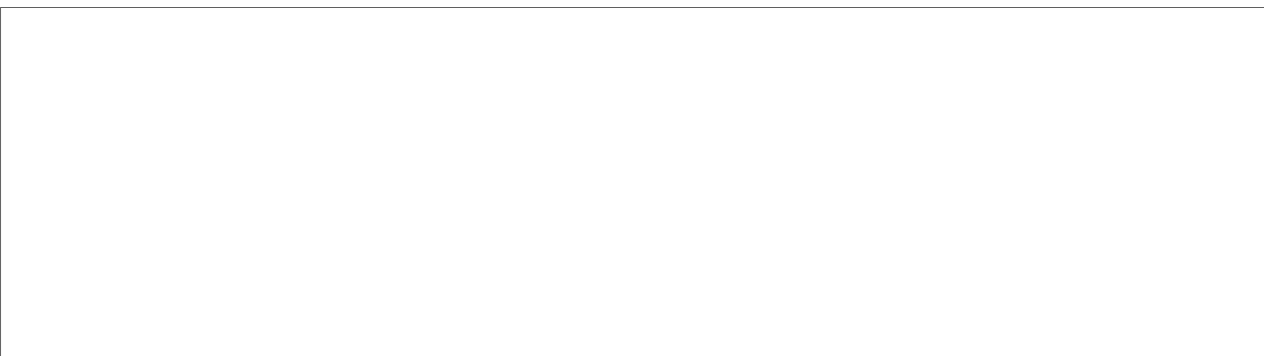
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US Embassy sources report some Tamil fighters have been trained in Lebanon by the PLO [redacted] Colombo believes PLO trainers are present in the Indian camps as well. We cannot confirm PLO trainers in either India or Sri Lanka, but press reports quote an insurgent leader as saying that "the PLO-trained boys have not exactly proved to be an asset to our armed strength. Our terrain and conditions are different." [redacted]

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Vulnerability of the Arms Pipeline

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Stopping Tamil arms smuggling operations in Madras also would be difficult because of the insurgents' wide contacts there and the susceptibility of the



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city's customs officials to bribery. [redacted]

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[redacted]
[redacted] Colombo's own interdiction efforts have been ineffective because of difficulties in identifying which boats among hundreds of fishing craft are engaged in gun-running. [redacted]

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If the Indians were again to blame the Tamils for a breakdown in the peace talks with Colombo and for increasing violence in Sri Lanka, New Delhi might increase efforts against insurgent activities. In the case of a stronger Indian crackdown, the insurgents would be forced to conserve resources. In our view, diminished resources would push the rebels into more attacks against civilians and non-military targets in the Sinhalese south, contingencies for which we think Colombo is ill-prepared. [redacted]

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[redacted]