



Armed Conflicts Report

Sri Lanka (1983 - first combat deaths)

Update: January 2009

Summary

Type of Conflict

Parties to the Conflict

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Number of Deaths

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Background

Arms Sources

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Summary:

2008 The government withdrew from the ceasefire pact with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in early 2008. This was followed by a massive military campaign to eliminate the LTTE militants by mid-2009. By year's end, the military offensive had pushed LTTE militants into a 30km pocket of land in northern Sri Lanka and had also trapped an estimated 250,000 civilians according to the Red Cross. Verification of the status of the civilians within the conflict zone was impossible due to the government's block of NGO and humanitarian aid workers' presence in the region but estimates have put the civilian death toll in the thousands.. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has had to negotiate the safe passage of civilians out of the government and LTTE controlled areas on a daily basis due to the risk of attack and lack of basic sanitary conditions.

2007 The fighting in Sri Lanka underwent dramatic changes this year. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) bombed a government airbase confirming suspicions that it was building an air fleet. The government cleared rebels from the Eastern provinces and gained control over lands that had been previously controlled by the LTTE for 13 years. Both sides have declared that the ceasefire has been violated and the increased fighting has seen more than 2 000 fighters and civilians killed. Fighting in the coming year is projected to increase as the government prepares to launch a military campaign targeting LTTE strongholds in the North. As a result of the fighting, the International Commission of the Red Cross discontinued operations which hampered the movement of ceasefire monitors as well as humanitarian assistance to the north.

2006 The intensity of fighting and attacks by both the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) increased dramatically, killing an estimated 3,200 people. Hope for a negotiated settlement to the conflict diminished, as the LTTE demanded that ceasefire observers from EU member states leave the country (after the EU banned the LTTE as a terrorist group), peace talks collapsed, and the leader of the LTTE called the peace process defunct. While war has not officially been declared and the ceasefire agreement still exists on paper, many have seen the events of 2006 as a return to civil war.

2005 The peace process threatened to collapse as negotiations remained stalled and fighting escalated killing at least 300 people. The LTTE increased attacks on government troops late in the year. Hard-line candidate Mahinda Rajapakse was elected President in November.

2004 Although a ceasefire between the government and rebels held for another year, a major split in the LTTE rebel group, attacks on civilians, and ethnic violence resulted in the deaths of over 45 people. President Kumaratunga's party narrowly won parliamentary elections in April but could not form a majority government.

Norway continued its role as a mediator but was unable to advance an agreement when a split in the government early in the year and a major rift in the LTTE stalled peace efforts. The LTTE released over 1,000 child soldiers loyal to a renegade commander, but still actively recruited children to serve in their "baby brigade". An upsurge in violence late in the year was halted by a December tsunami that killed over 200,000 people in the region. Sri Lanka was one of the most seriously effected countries, leading to calls from both the LTTE and government for international aid.

2003 The ceasefire signed by the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE in 2002 held for a second year, with only minor clashes reported between the two groups. However, peace talks collapsed in April and by year end the government and rebels remained at odds over key political issues.

2002 A ceasefire signed in February by the government and the rebels largely held with only limited fighting in the east. The two sides participated in Norwegian-mediated peace talks beginning in May and continuing throughout the year.

2001 Following a unilateral rebel cease-fire aimed at starting peace talks, the Sri Lankan government launched a major offensive against the rebels that left an estimated 300 of its soldiers dead with limited gains. In August, the government reversed itself and announced it would agree to peace talks and a cease-fire. The estimated death toll was the lowest for some years.

2000 Fighting escalated and in April the rebels overran the Elephant Pass base guarding the Jaffna peninsula (a rebel stronghold lost to the army in 1996), nearly recapturing the city of Jaffna. By September, government forces were fighting fiercely to recapture ground lost in earlier months. At least 2,400 people, mostly combatants, were killed this year, a similar number to deaths in 1999.

1999 Government forces launched a series of attacks on rebel positions in the north and west, only to face intensive counterattacks and loss of recently-won territory. More than 2,000 people, mostly combatants, died during the year, a level of violence similar to 1998.

1998 A protracted government ground offensive to link the Jaffna peninsula to the mainland suffered a major setback in September and was called off in December. Rebels also continued urban suicide bombings and naval attacks.

1997 During 1997 the conflict intensified due to a number of naval skirmishes and a major government offensive to link the mainland to recently captured territory in the Jaffna peninsula.

1996 The capture of the remainder of the Jaffna peninsula by government troops, two major battles at Mullaittivu and Kilinochchi, rebel bombings of civilian targets, and combatant attacks on civilians, extended a higher conflict intensity.

1995 Violence following the collapse of a three-month ceasefire culminated in a major government offensive that ousted rebels from the city of Jaffna in December.

Type of Conflict:

State formation

Parties to the Conflict:

1) Government security forces (under President Mahinda Rajapakse) consisting of:
Sri Lankan Armed Forces;
Police Special Task Force (STF); and
Civil Defence Forces (formerly the Home Guard Service).

There also are several Tamil groups opposed to the Tamil Tigers who have served as auxiliary forces for the Sri Lankan government throughout the conflict.

2) Rebels:

a) The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), led by Vellupillai Prabhakaran. Earlier estimates placed the

strength of the LTTE at well over 10,000 fighters but the government claims to have reduced this number to about 5,000. The UN Children's Fund currently reports 1,424 outstanding cases of child soldier recruitment.

"Lieutenant General Sarath Fonseka, an army chief, said on Saturday that government forces had reduced the LTTE's military strength by about two-thirds to 5,000, with about 200,000 civilians forced to provide logistical support. The government aims to wipe out the separatist group by the end of this year." [*Al Jazeera*, 20 July, 2008]

"In October the United Nations Children's Fund reported 1,424 outstanding cases of recruitment of child soldiers by the LTTE, including 108 still under age 18, and 133 by the TMVP, including 62 still under age 18." [Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009*]

b) Several breakaway factions of the LTTE have been engaging in violent infighting with the LTTE. They include: the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP), a LTTE faction led by Vinayagamorthy Muralitharan alias 'Colonel Karuna,' and Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan, alias "Pillaiyan," as well as the Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front. It is widely believed that the government supports the Karuna faction which split from the LTTE in 2004. A UN envoy to the country says the military have been helping Karuna members to abduct children as fighters and the Karuna have been cited for many cases of underage recruitment. Nordic truce monitors have also seen troop involvement in Karuna attacks, and many analysts speculate that the government is fostering the former rebels. There exist parallels between abductions in well guarded government controlled areas with disappearances executed by the government during the late 1980s when it crushed Marxist uprisings. This has intensified suspicions surrounding Karuna and government involvement. [Sources: Reuters, March 5, 2007; IRIN, June 19, 2007; BBC News, November 2, 2007]

There also are several Tamil groups opposed to the Tamil Tigers who have served as auxiliary forces for the Sri Lankan government throughout the conflict.

"The LTTE is a notorious repeat offender of child recruitment. It's a shame that government forces complicit with the Karuna group are now involved in the same ugly practice." [Brad Adams, HRW Asia, *BBC SINGHALA.com*, March 29, 2007]

"The present set of disappearances is creating a sense of terror, fear in all the island... There is a link between the faction from the east with the government. So there is some sort of an agreement not to interfere in this at a political level." [Basil Fernando, Executive Director of the Hong Kong-based Asian Human Rights Commission, *Reuters*, March 5, 2007]

"The complicity of the [Sri Lankan government] security forces with the Karuna group is common knowledge. It corrodes respect for rule of law and creates space for more abductions of children." [Alan Rock, Special Advisor to the UN in an article by Peter Forster, *The Telegraph*, November 14, 2006]

"Since Col Karuna split from the northern-based leadership of the Tamil Tigers in March, 2004, there have been frequent inter-rebel clashes. The Tamil Tigers accuse the government of backing the Karuna faction - a charge the authorities deny." [*BBC News*, May 13, 2005]

"While there exist no reliable estimates for the strength of Tiger rebels, figures between 6,000 to 16,000 have been mentioned in recent times." [*Agence France-Presse*, March 4, 2003]

"Since 1987...the Tigers have evolved from a band of 1000-2000 cadres into a force of 7000 capable of operating 'at all five spectra of conflict', according to a military analyst. They have a field army equivalent to three brigades, armed with artillery, armour, radios with encryption devices and other paraphernalia, which now fights on the Jaffna peninsula. They have a 1000-cadre guerrilla force in the Eastern Province, which specializes in ambushes and mortar attacks.... They have a global propaganda network of websites, broadcasters and newspapers, and a diplomatic wing. All this is paid for with contributions, mostly from expatriate Tamils, and profits from businesses, such as restaurants and shipping. The government guesses that the Tigers take in \$80 million a year." [*The Economist*, 7 October 2000]

Status of Fighting:

2008 With the assistance of paramilitary forces, the government of Sri Lanka reported that it has significantly reduced the LTTE's military capability through 2008. Reports by the government claim that a small pocket of fighters remain after being pushed north and have been trapped in a strip of land along with thousands of civilians. Reports on the status of the fighting have been increasingly difficult due to human rights defenders and journalists being intentionally targeted by both sides. Recruitment of child soldiers by the LTTE and TMVP remains to be a continual problem as hundreds have been recruited. Sri Lanka's army chief has publically announced the army's intention to defeat the Tamil Tiger militants by mid-2009.

"The Sri Lankan military had rung up a series of victories in its battles against the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in recent weeks. The Tigers found themselves cornered in a small strip of land in the northeast, where the Red Cross estimates 250,000 civilians are also trapped." [CBC, 9 February, 2009]

"The government used paramilitary groups to assist its military forces in fighting the LTTE. The Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP), led by breakaway LTTE eastern commanders Vinayagamurthi Muralitharan, alias "Karuna," and Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan, alias "Pillaiyan," operated mostly in the east." [U.S. Department of State, 25 February, 2009]

"The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has voiced alarm over the LTTE's stepped-up recruitment of child soldiers, having recorded some 6,000 such cases between 2003 and the end of last year." [UN News Centre, 5 March, 2009]

"Threats and attacks against human rights defenders and journalists worsened in 2008. On September 27, grenades were thrown at the house of human rights lawyer and executive director of Transparency International Sri Lanka, J.C. Weliamuna. According to the Free Media Movement, since 2005, 14 journalists have been killed, 7 abducted, and 13 arrested." [Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009*]

"There has also been an increase in the number of terrorist attacks in and around central Colombo, the capital city, where key military, political and economic facilities, and major hotels, are located. International media and commentators report that freedom of expression has been seriously diminished in Sri Lanka." [Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Sri Lanka Country Brief*, October 2008]

"Because of ongoing combat operations and the moving front line, tens of thousands of displaced civilians are concentrated in an area so small that there are serious concerns for their physical safety and living conditions, in particular in terms of hygiene. In addition, the ICRC has to negotiate safe passage over a distance of up to 30 kilometres between government- and LTTE-held areas with the parties every day." [International Committee of the Red Cross, 15 January, 2009]

"In July 2008, Sri Lanka's army chief, Lt-Gen. Sarath Fonseka, publically announced that the Tamil Tigers had lost their conventional fighting capability and would be defeated by mid 2009." [The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2009*, January 2009]

2007 The 2002 ceasefire continued to be violated by all parties involved in the conflict. The LTTE bombed a Sri Lankan air force base, using a light aircraft, making it the first militant group to acquire air power without external support. The government expelled rebels from their long-held strongholds in the Eastern Province and in September cleared rebels from Mannar, an area south of LTTE territory. The capture of Mannar is thought to be in preparation for the initiation of an intense military campaign by the government on LTTE strongholds in the North. It is expected that the LTTE will respond to the increase in military aggression by escalating their attacks in the rest of the country. All parties have been heavily criticized for human rights violations including the recruitment and use of child soldiers as well as attacks which target civilians. The International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC] has suspended operations at two crossing points which separate government held areas in the south, and rebel territory in the north, due to the fighting. Without the ICRC the military is forced to shut down border checkpoints, effectively stopping aid workers and ceasefire monitors from traveling between rebel and government held areas. The government has expressed commitment to eradicate the LTTE organization before engaging in future political dialogue with minority citizens. The LTTE also remains

committed to their goal of achieving independence through the use of force. There currently exists limited hope of finding a peaceful solution in the near future.

[Sources: IPS News, February 2, 2007, March 22, 2007; Reuters, March 26, 2007, April 19, 2007; BBC News, April 24, 2007; <http://atimes.com>, March 30, 2007; Associated Press, May 24, 2007; Agence France-Presse, September 25, 2007; Christian Science Monitor, October 4, 2007]

"Artillery shelling, aerial bombings and Claymore mines cause civilian casualties and damage to property, disrupting the lives of thousands. Forced recruitment of youth and children to replenish lost cadres persists." [statement released by the office of the UN Humanitarian Affairs Coordinator, July 20, 2007]

"Dealing a major blow to the Tiger hierarchy in the east, those military operations bring all of eastern Sri Lanka under government control for the first time after 13 years" [*Agence France-Presse*, July 11, 2007]

2006 Fighting escalated to a level unprecedented in the last decade of the conflict, resulting in the highest annual death toll since 1997. Fighting earlier in the year was isolated to the eastern regions of Trincomalee and Batticaloa, though it also spread to the northern Jaffa peninsula in August. Fighting included suicide bombings, artillery and mortar bomb fire, air strikes, and marine based attacks. Though war has not officially been declared, many have described the escalated fighting and grim prospects of the peace process as a return to civil war. Arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention, politically motivated killings, disappearances, suicide attacks, targeting of civilians and recruitment of child soldiers continued throughout the year.

"Credible sources reported human rights problems, including unlawful killings by government agents, high profile killings by unknown perpetrators, politically motivated killings by paramilitary forces associated with the government and the LTTE, and disappearances. Human rights monitors also reported arbitrary arrests and detention, poor prison conditions, denial of fair public trial, government corruption and lack of transparency, infringement of religious freedom, infringement of freedom of movement, and discrimination against minorities...The LTTE continued to control large sections of the north and east and engaged in politically motivated killings; suicide attacks; disappearances; torture; arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of fair public trial; arbitrary interference with privacy; denial of freedom of speech, press, and of assembly and association; and the recruitment of child soldiers." [*Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (Sri Lanka)*, U.S. State Department, March 6, 2007]

"Tamil Tiger rebels in Sri Lanka signaled a return to all-out war today when the group's leadership said efforts to find a negotiated settlement to the country's 23-year civil war were now 'defunct. ... Analysts said the speech marked a clear hardening of the rebel position from 12 months ago when Prabhakaran gave the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse a year to find a political solution or face renewed armed struggle." [Peter Foster, *The Telegraph*, November 28, 2006]

"Violence continued in Sri Lanka when a sea battle erupted off the island's northern coast, following a week of suicide bombings and other attacks that killed 250 people amid diplomatic pressure to resurrect a truce." [Amal Jayasinghe, October 20, 2006]

"The Sri Lankan army has suffered its worst casualties for four years after two days of clashes with Tamil Tiger rebels left nearly 129 soldiers dead and 300 wounded." [Peter Foster, *The Telegraph*, October 13, 2006]

"The opening of a second front on the northern Jaffna Peninsula—after three weeks of heavy fighting in the east—appears to mark the final unraveling of the ceasefire agreement signed in 2002." [Peter Foster, *The Telegraph*, August 14, 2006]

"When is a ceasefire no longer a ceasefire? That seems to be the question hanging over the island nation of Sri Lanka this week as both sides in the bloody dispute that has split the country for over two decades recommitted to the 2002 truce on Tuesday. Despite the pledges from the Sri Lankan government, predominantly Sinhalese Buddhists, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which is dedicated to the creation of a homeland for Sri Lanka's Hindu minority, to refrain from killing each other violence is quickly spiraling out of control." [*Spiegel Online*, June 20,

2006]

2005 Fighting between LTTE rebels and Sri Lankan troops in the north and east increased late in the year threatening to unravel an already precarious ceasefire agreement. Fighting included small scale clashes and a series of bombings carried out mainly by the LTTE. Factional fighting among Tamil rebels also continued.

"Suspected Tamil Tigers have carried out at least three attacks on soldiers and sailors in Jaffna and Mannar district recently. The attacks have raised fears of war in the country. The ceasefire agreement signed between the government and the Tamil Tigers in 2002 seems to be on the verge of collapsing." [*ISN Security Watch*, January 3, 2006]

"Two Tamil Tigers were killed in a clash between rebel factions in eastern Sri Lanka Monday as peace broker Norway scrambled to arrange a confidence-building tsunami aid deal, officials said. Sri Lankan military officials said the main Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) mounted an attack on a breakaway faction in the east of the island early Monday." [*Agence France-Presse*, March 21, 2005]

"Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels have warned that a truce with the government is under threat after the recent killing of one of its leaders. E Kaushalyan was the most senior Tiger killed since the ceasefire began in February 2002." [*BBC News*, February 22, 2005]

2004 The ceasefire between LTTE rebels and the government held and most violence and reported casualties resulted from clashes between rival parts of the LTTE. Attacks on civilian targets and interethnic violence were also reported. The collapse of peace talks in December resulted in a brief resumption of violence that was halted by a tsunami at the end of the year.

"Guerrilla factions exchanged heavy gunfire in north-eastern Sri Lanka Friday, in the first major clash since an unprecedented split in the Tamil Tiger movement...Fighters of the main Tamil Tiger movement and cadres controlled by a renegade regional commander fired mortars and small arms fire for nearly two hours across the Verugal river, the officials said." [*Agence France-Presse*, April 9, 2004]

2003 The ceasefire of February 2002 remained intact in 2003, with only a handful of minor skirmishes reported between government and rebel forces. Two clashes occurred at sea, killing approximately twenty rebels. Politically motivated violence, aimed primarily at opponents of the LTTE, resulted in over a dozen deaths. There were also reports of sectarian violence between Sri Lanka's Muslim and Tamil groups in the eastern region of the island. In spite of the LTTE's cooperation with a UNICEF-led child soldier demobilization program, there were reports of children being abducted to join the rebels. Landmines planted by both the government and rebel forces over the past two decades also continued to claim victims.

"Tamil Tiger rebels abducted 15 students to boost their ranks a day after freeing 49 child soldiers under a foreign-funded demobilization program, the monitors of Sri Lanka's truce said Monday. ... The SLMM [Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission] has reported more than 300 cases of child conscription by the LTTE in violation of the ceasefire." [*Agence France-Presse*, October 6, 2003]

2002 A February ceasefire held except for sporadic fighting in the east.

"The Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tiger rebels have signed a permanent ceasefire ending 19 years of civil war." [*BBC News*, February 22, 2002]

2001 In January the LTTE called a four month unilateral cease-fire with the Sri Lankan government during which the rebels claimed the government continued attacks, killing more than 160 of their fighters. Only hours after the cease-fire expired, the government launched a major offensive and in a four-day battle up to 300 soldiers and 33 rebels were killed, with the government making no major gains. In July the LTTE rebels carried out a raid against the international airport in Colombo, damaging numerous military and civilian aircraft.

"Separatist rebels firing guns and mortars attacked Sri Lanka's main airport and an air force base, shutting down the nation's only international air link in one of their boldest attacks ever near the

capital. After six hours of explosions and automatic weapons fire, police said all the guerillas were dead, and three had blown themselves up. 'The attack was very well planned', said Srinika Jayakody, a police officer. Nine guerillas and five military men were killed, while 12 troops, a Russian flight engineer for Sri Lankan Airlines and a Sri Lankan journalist were wounded, said military spokesman Sanath Karunaratne. He said eight military aircraft were damaged, two Israeli-made Kafir bombers, one MiG-27, three trainer aircraft and two helicopters. Sri Lankan Airlines said three of its 12 Airbus passenger planes were destroyed and two were damaged." [Associated Press, July 24, 2001]

"Sri Lanka's government has admitted that heavy artillery and mortar fire has compelled them to redeploy their troops in the troubled northern peninsula of Jaffna. According to military officials the 4-day long mission cost the lives of over 180 troops. Tamil Tiger rebels are saying that they have the bodies of 30 soldiers. Over 1,600 have been injured in the fighting and the government says its decision to redeploy troops is as a direct result of the high toll. The Tamils say 300 soldiers had been killed and 1,200 wounded. Rebel radio said 33 guerillas were killed in the fighting that erupted as government troops made a push for the town of Pallai hours after the LTTE allowed a four month unilateral cease-fire to expire." [CNW, May 10, 2001]

2000 From the beginning of the year, the war between the government and the LTTE entered an escalated phase. In April the rebels captured the Elephant Pass base guarding the Jaffna peninsula (a rebel stronghold lost to the army in 1996), nearly recapturing Jaffna as a series of government defeats brought the Tigers to within 20 miles of the northern capital. By September, government forces were fighting fiercely to recapture ground lost in the earlier months.

[Sources: Jane's Defence Weekly, 12 January 2000; Yahoo News, 24 April 2000; The Economist, 7 October 2000; The Times of India, 4 May 2000]

1999 Conflict between government forces and the rebel LTTE escalated, with the former initially carrying out a series of attacks and making gains in the north and west of the island. In November, the LTTE staged successful counterattacks and took nearly 1,000 square kilometres of territory that the government had won in recent years. By late December, the LTTE had established a presence near the strategic Elephant Pass that serves as a gateway to Jaffna.

1998 A protracted government ground offensive to link the Jaffna peninsula to the mainland suffered a major setback in September and was called off in December. Rebels also continued urban suicide bombings and naval attacks.

Number of Deaths:

Total: Estimates range from 70,000 to 100,000 conflict-related deaths in two decades of fighting. More than 5 200 people have been killed since the resumption of conflict in 2002.

"The rebels have fought since 1983 for a separate homeland after decades of marginalisation by governments controlled by the Sinhalese majority. More than 70,000 people have been killed in the civil war." [The Guardian, 3 February, 2009]

"Well over 65, 000 people have been killed in the conflict since 1983." [Simon Gardener, Reuters, November 8, 2006]

2008 Increased deaths were apparent in 2008 due to the Sri Lankan government's military push northward. The Sri Lankan army has claimed it has killed more than 5,000 LTTE fighters in 2008 alone. 446 government troops were said to be killed as a result of the fighting in mid- 2008 but statistics remain unverifiable due to a government block of all journalists and NGO's in the northern conflict area. Civilian casualties were estimated to range upward from over 400 and an estimated 250,000 civilians were trapped in the conflict zone with little means to escape the fighting. (South Asia Terrorism Portal cites 2008 numbers of 404 civilians, 1,314 government security forces, and 9,426 terrorists for a total of 11,144 deaths.) NGO and humanitarian assistance employees also constituted a portion of the death toll. 11 NGO and humanitarian workers were reportedly killed in 2008 while four were considered missing or disappeared and 10 arrested or detained.

"Sri Lanka's army claims to have killed more than 5,000 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

fighters in battles this year. The army says it has lost 446 of its own soldiers, but continues to advance on LTTE strongholds in the north of the island. However, the figures are impossible to independently verify as the government refuses journalists and NGOs access to the main areas of fighting in the north. The figures would mean that 25 LTTE fighters have died every day in 2008. The LTTE have not released any statistics of their own. [*Al Jazeera*, 20 July, 2008]

"NGO employees and other humanitarian assistance workers were killed by unknown assailants. As of September, of the 11 NGO and humanitarian workers killed, four were classified as missing or disappeared and 10 had been arrested or detained." [*U.S. Department of State*, 25 February, 2009]

"According to internationally respected monitoring organizations, after declining in mid-2007, the number of disappearances increased over the year to more than 500. On November 8, the chairman of the Presidential Commission on Disappearances, retired High Court Judge Mahanama Tilakaratne, stated that 1,100 persons missing or abducted in the past two years were still unaccounted for." [*U.S. Department of State*, 25 February, 2009]

"According to UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), civilians continue to lose their lives within the war zone, as well as in the no-fire area which has suffered shell strikes. The world body has no verifiable numbers due to lack of access for relief workers, but estimates that thousands have been killed and wounded." [*UN News Centre*, 5 March, 2009]

"Approximately eight hundred of the several thousand deaths associated with the hostilities between government security forces and the LTTE were civilian casualties as a result of artillery fire into populated areas, aerial bombings, land mines, and other military action." [*U.S. Department of State*, 25 February, 2009]

2007 The UN estimates that recent fighting has forced 500 000 people from their homes and affected more than 3 million Sri Lankans. It is estimated that more than 2 000 fighters and civilians were killed this year. There were close to 100 abductions and disappearances reported as of March in Colombo, Batticaloa and the Jaffna peninsula.

[Sources: *The Australian*, August 7, 2007; *Associated Press*, July 9, 2007; *Reuters*, March 5, 2007]

"All parties to the conflict in Sri Lanka are breaking international law by killing civilians, destroying homes and schools or by forcibly disappearing people" [Tim Paritt, Director of Asia Pacific Amnesty International, *Rueters*, April 3, 2007]

"Some 315 000 people have had to flee their homes due to the fighting since August 2006, the vast majority Tamils and Muslims. About 100 000 were displaced in March alone." [*The Australian*, August 7, 2007]

2006 An estimated 3,200 to 3,300 fighters and civilians were killed this year.

"A 2002 cease-fire temporarily took the steam out of the bloody civil war, but since last December, airstrikes, mine attacks, assassinations and heavy arms fire have killed more than 3,200 fighters and civilians." [*USA Today*, November 24, 2006]

2005 Over 300 people were killed this year. Approximately one third were civilians.

"[Brigadier Daya] Ratnayake said 44 soldiers, police and intelligence officers have been killed since the truce. Dozens of people have been killed in the east in recent months in attacks blamed largely on a feud between the mainstream Tigers and a breakaway faction." [Simon Gardner, *Reuters*, June 30, 2005]

"Since the beginning of the ceasefire between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in February 2002, an estimated 200 Tamils have been killed for apparently political reasons, though numerous such killings occurred prior to the ceasefire. As of November 2004, there had been 900 reports of abductions, of which almost 400 have been certified by the Norwegian-led Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) as violations of the ceasefire agreement. The

evidence available places responsibility for many of the killings on the Tamil Tigers. Most victims were considered to be LTTE opponents and in many cases there is circumstantial evidence of LTTE involvement, such as threats from LTTE members or agents prior to a killing. Other killings have been linked to persons loyal to Colonel Karuna, a Tamil Tiger commander who broke off from the LTTE in March 2004. A number of the victims were persons deemed to be supporters of one faction or the other." [Sri Lanka: End Killings and Abductions of Tamil Civilians', *Human Rights Watch*, May 24, 2005]

2004 More than 45 people were killed in clashes between rival rebel factions, interethnic violence, and suicide attacks on civilians. The majority of those killed were rebels.

"Sri Lanka's eastern area was the scene of more killings Saturday in the internecine clashes between Tamil Tiger rebel rival factions with two more deaths, defense officials said." [*Xinhua*, October 9, 2004]

"The two sides, at a crisis meeting arranged by the monitors, agreed to develop a system to share information after more than a dozen people were killed since April 25, including a government soldier and rebels." [*Agence France-Presse*, May 11, 2004]

2003 According to media reports, approximately 40 people were killed in the first 10 months of the year, with just over half of these deaths due to violence between government and rebel fighters.

"According to local human rights groups and Tamil political parties, at least thirty-eight people have been killed or were abducted and remain missing in politically motivated attacks against opponents of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) since ... [the signing of the] ceasefire agreement in February 2002." [*Human Rights Watch*, August 7, 2003]

2002 The conflict resulted in the deaths of an estimated 25 people this year, many of whom were civilians killed by government forces.

2001 The casualty rate was not as high as for the last few years, possibly due to the unilateral cease-fire initiated by the rebels. Even so, hundreds were reported killed and thousands wounded, mostly fighters on both sides.

2000 At least 2,400 people, mostly combatants, were killed this year.

"The fighting has killed 1,380 combatants on both sides since April." [*Associated Press*, 4 September 2000]

1999 More than 2,000 people, most of whom were combatants, were killed during the year.

1998 At least 2,000 combatants died in the September rebel attacks on government troops.

"The rebel offensive, the worst in the 17-year-long separatist war, resulted in over 1,500 government troops killed, 3,000 wounded and left more than 500 missing in action." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 13 January 1999, p26]

1997 Although independent reports were unavailable, government and rebel figures suggest as many as 4,000 people died in combat or from extra-judicial killings in 1997.

"There, in the Vanni jungle, government troops and guerrillas are locked in the longest and most costly battle of the war. ... At least 2,500 fighters on both sides have died in the Vanni offensive..." [*Globe and Mail*, November 6, 1997]

Political Developments:

2008 Early 2008 saw a formal withdrawal by the Sri Lankan government from the six-year long ceasefire pact that was created in 2002. The Sri Lankan government has since refused to enter any agreements with the LTTE militants. A political party made up of former Tamil Tigers claimed an

overwhelming victory in eastern Sri Lanka in the first elections to be held in the region in 10 years. In August, the government enacted a new emergency regulation that gives the secretary of defence power to detain persons for 18 months before bringing them before courts.

"President Mahinda Rajapaksa's administration notified mediator Norway late on Thursday it was formally scrapping a six-year ceasefire pact that fell apart on the ground in early 2006. Well over 5,000 people have been killed since then. The government has given a 14-day notice period, meaning the paper truce officially ends on Jan. 16." [*Reuters*, 7 January, 2008]

"The government's military strategy appeared to be to defeat them militarily by capturing their final stronghold in the north and then to negotiate a political settlement with the civilian Tamil community." [The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2009*, January 2009]

"With most communication to the north severed, the rebels could not be reached for comment. They have been accused of more than 200 suicide attacks and are listed as a terror group by the Canada, the United States and the European Union." [*CBC*, 9 February, 2009]

"A group of former Tamil Tiger rebels has won a landslide victory in the first elections to be held in eastern Sri Lanka for more than 10 years. The Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal party (TMVP), set up by renegade Tiger leader Col Karuna, won every local council in and around Batticaloa city. Human rights groups have accused the TMVP of waging a campaign of violence ahead of the voting." [*BBC*, 11 March, 2008]

"Notwithstanding the offer of a unilateral ceasefire by the Tamil Tigers during the South Asian Association for regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit in Colombo (26 July – 4 August 2008) the government refused to enter into any agreement with the militants." [The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2009*, January 2009]

2007 During an aid funding review, international donors concluded that, failing progress in peace negotiations, development would remain unsustainable in Sri Lanka. Threats to withhold aid were made by donors to encourage the government to resolve the conflict between itself and the LTTE. In response to the looming threat of attack by the military on territory in the north, the LTTE has been campaigning internationally to gain sympathy for their organization and has had some success in convincing humanitarian organizations to advocate on their behalf. The government released statements during the year saying that it would breach the terms of the 2002 ceasefire agreement if it felt it was necessary to safeguard national security and has asked that the agreement be reviewed and changed. Although the peace agreement is viewed to exist on paper only, it is believed that its official termination would lead to an increase in the intensity and brutality of the fighting. [Sources: IPS News, February 2, 2007; Reuters, April 3, 2007, May 31, 2007]

"The renewed and deepening conflict in Sri Lanka over the past six months or so looms over everything else that we might say here. There is no way to politely skirt this issue. As a major development partner to Sri Lanka, the World Bank would be failing if we did not place the conflict front and centre in our deliberations" [Praful Patel, World Bank Vice President for the South Asia Region, *Inter Press Service*, February 2, 2007]

"The government may abrogate it... due to the fact that the ground reality does not go in parallel with the CFA (ceasefire agreement)". [Keheliya Rambukwella, defence spokesman and government minister, Simon Gardner, *Reuters*, May 31, 2007]

"The LTTE leader has to publicly renounce the movement's politics of suicide and political killings as a first and important step in establishing its serious intent towards a negotiated political solution" (SLDF – Sri Lankan Democracy Forum) [*earthtimes.org*, December 6, 2007]

2006 Although February peace talks in Geneva raised optimism about the potential for negotiated settlement, the LTTE later postponed future talks indefinitely after an increase in ceasefire violations and renewed violence with the government. On May 30, the EU banned the LTTE as a terrorist organization, freezing its accounts and precipitating the LTTE demand that ceasefire members from EU states leave the country by September 1. Despite renewed efforts by ceasefire observers to restore the ceasefire truce, observers from Finland, Sweden

and Denmark were forced to leave, while observers from Iceland and Norway remain. Bowing to international pressure from foreign aid donors, LTTE and government representatives met for peace talks in Geneva in October, but these collapsed when the government refused the LTTE's demand to re-open a key North-South highway. Hopes for a peaceful resolution to the conflict were further thwarted in late November when the LTTE's leadership declared the peace process defunct. Increased violations of the ceasefire agreement led to a de facto breakdown of the agreement, although it technically still remains in effect on paper.

"Tamil Tiger rebels in Sri Lanka signaled a return to all-out war today when the group's leadership said efforts to find a negotiated settlement to the country's 23-year old civil war were now 'defunct'." [Peter Foster, *The Telegraph*, November 28, 2006]

"Norway's special envoy to the Sri Lankan peace process, Jon Janssen Bauer, was due to meet government and rebel leaders in the country in the last week of September as Oslo seeks to avert all-out war between the two rivals. The immediate concern is to follow up an offer by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to resume talks 'unconditionally'. The offer was made on the eve of a meeting in Brussels of Sri Lanka's major aid donors—the EU, Japan, Norway and the US—to review the situation. In a statement issued following the 11-12 September meeting, the donor co-chairs called on Colombo to agree to talks in Oslo in October. The statement drew an angry reaction from the Sri Lanka government. It said that Colomba was not consulted on the LTTE offer and regretted that the donor nations had issued their call without prior discussion." [Iqbal Athas, *Jane's Defense Weekly*, September 27, 2006]

"Sweden launched a fresh effort to salvage Sri Lanka's troubled truce as ceasefire monitors reported at least 900 people killed in a surge of ethnic violence since December. Swedish envoy Andres Oljelund met Sri Lankan officials here and was set to hold discussions with Tamil Tiger rebels ahead of a September 1 deadline for monitors from European Union member states to leave the island, officials said. The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) demanded that monitors from Denmark, Finland and Sweden get out after the European Union in May banned the guerillas as a terrorist organization." [AFP, July 19, 2006]

"A last-minute agreement by Sri Lanka's warring sides to curb violence is seen as a crucial deal which could save the fragile ceasefire but tensions could return if violence continues on the ground. Prior to the Geneva talks, few were optimistic about the possibility of a deal as both the government and the Tamil Tiger rebels argued from well entrenched positions. However, both appear to have shown flexibility in accommodating each other's views in the joint statement issued after the talks." [Ethirijan Anbarasan, *BBC News*, February 24, 2006]

2005 Following an agreement on the distribution of tsunami aid, peace talks between LTTE rebels and the Sri Lankan government remained stalled. In November, rebel leaders threatened to restart the war in 2006 if peace negotiations did not achieve "serious progress." The hard-line incumbent PM Mahinda Rajapakse became Sri Lanka's President after winning November elections pledging to take a tough line against the LTTE.

"Mahinda Rajapakse, the country's new president who is backed by hardliners opposed to any concession to the Tamil Tiger rebels, stated his position to the stalled peace process in his first speech to parliament on Friday. He rejected outright any demands for a separate Tamil homeland and also indicated that he would look to renegotiate a ceasefire that has been in place since February 2002. He also said a previous tsunami aid-sharing deal with the Tigers - currently halted by a Supreme Court order - would be scrapped and a new administrative mechanism introduced. On Sunday, the reclusive leader of the Tigers, Velupillai Prabhakaran, used the occasion of a rebel war memorial day to give the government an ultimatum. He said he would give the new president until next year to frame a political solution to the conflict, failing which the Tamil Tigers would 'intensify' their struggle." [BBC News, November 28, 2005]

"Under the agreement, Sinhala, Tamils and Muslims will share nearly \$3bn in aid pledged after the December tsunami. Representatives from all three communities will be responsible for reconstruction work at different administrative levels in the Tamil-dominated north and east...The tsunami relief structure gives legitimate powers to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to carry out relief and reconstruction work and will also test their political and administrative

structures." [Ethirajan Anbarasan, *BBC News*, June 27, 2005]

2004 A ceasefire between government forces and LTTE rebels held and Norway's efforts to mediate a peace agreement retained the start and stop pattern of previous years. Talks were stalled by a split in the Sri Lankan government early in the year and later by a new minority government that did not form a majority coalition until September. A major split in the LTTE also created problems for the peace process and LTTE rebels announced they would not resume peace talks until the war-damaged north and east of the country received international aid. More positively, the Sri Lankan government, for the first time, recognized the LTTE as the sole representative of the Tamil population. Hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans remained either refugees in other countries or displaced within Sri Lanka's borders. Although the LTTE demobilized over 1,000 child soldiers loyal to a renegade commander, they continued to recruit new child soldiers for their "baby brigade".

"Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels have stepped up recruiting hundreds of child soldiers amid renewed moves by peace broker Norway to revive stalled talks, officials and residents said Thursday. Tamil Tigers have begun enlisting young fighters in the northern Wanni district in the past two weeks after demobilising nearly 1,000 child soldiers who were loyal to a renegade commander, a local official said." [*Agence France-Presse*, May 6, 2004]

2003 The Tamil Tigers broke off peace talks with the government in April citing, inter alia, the failure of government forces to withdraw from, and the delayed reconstruction of, the rebel-controlled, north-eastern territory. The government in turn hinged the withdrawal of its troops upon the disarmament of rebel fighters, which the LTTE has thus far refused to do. Disagreements over the interim administration of the north-east of the island, prior to the creation of a permanent federal government structure governing the entire island, increased the divide between the government and rebels. Political unrest within the Sri Lankan government led to President Kumaratunga suspending parliament in November and declaring emergency rule, and further hindered peace negotiations. The Norwegian-led Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM), created by the February 2002 ceasefire agreement, continued to monitor the ceasefire, investigate violations and assist in the settlement of disputes.

"Tamil Tiger rebels yesterday rejected a government proposal to give them a role, but not control, in administering reconstruction aid for their strongholds in the north and east of the Indian Ocean island. ... But deep differences remain over the nature of the regime that will govern the [north-eastern] region - and oversee the distribution of foreign aid - while a final settlement is being negotiated. ... The two sides also have radically different views on a long-term political set-up, according to yesterday's rebel statement. 'While the Prime Minister envisages piecemeal reforms to the present constitution, the LTEE has proposed a radical transformation of the system of governance in Sri Lanka through ... a new, secular and equitable constitution which recognizes the Tamils' right to self-determination and homeland,' it said." [*globeandmail.com*, June 12, 2003]

2002 The two sides agreed to a ceasefire in February and to participate in peace talks mediated by Norway, and held in Norway and Thailand. The government lifted its ban on LTTE rebels in anticipation of the talks, permitting them to move freely throughout the country. In November, the LTTE agreed to stop recruiting child soldiers and a month later, in an unprecedented move toward peace, the rebels agreed to abandon demands for a separate state and accept regional autonomy and power-sharing through a federal system. The government and the LTTE issued a joint statement, the first of its kind in the country, asking 20 donor countries for political and financial support for the peace process.

"The government of Sri Lanka has lifted its ban on the Tamil Tiger rebel movement, paving the way for peace talks between the sides later this month. The rebels had insisted on recognition as a precondition for their attendance at the talks." [*BBC News*, September 4, 2002]

"Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels, banned as terrorists in five countries, including Canada, said yesterday they will stop recruiting children as guerillas and want to participate in democracy - ending a breakthrough round of peace talks that the government also labelled a success." [*globeandmail.com*, November 4, 2002]

"Sri Lanka's Government and Tamil Tiger rebels have agreed to share power in a federal system, to end 19 years of civil war on the island." [*BBC News*, December 5, 2002]

2001 The Sri Lankan rebel group LTTE announced a four month unilateral cease-fire at the beginning of the year in hopes of reviving stalled peace talks. The government rejected the cease-fire and in July issued a strong statement arguing the end to rebel insurgency was through full scale war. However, in August the government announced that it was ready for a cease-fire in order to start peace talks. Parliamentary elections in December ushered the right-wing United National Front into power under the leadership of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe.

"Tamil Tigers announced they were ending their four month old cease-fire and blamed the Sri Lankan government for the failure of peace efforts. The Liberation of Tigers of Tamil Eelam had declared a unilateral cease-fire on Christmas eve to push forward a Norwegian-brokered initiative to end the 18 year conflict. 'We are compelled to make this painful decision as a consequence of the hard-line, intransigent attitude of the Sri Lankan government which has not only refused to reciprocate positively to our peace gestures but intensified land, sea and air attacks causing heavy casualties on our side,' said the Tamil statement. The rebels said they had suffered more than 160 casualties and 400 injuries in government attacks while cease-fire continued." [CNN, April 23, 2001]

"In a strong worded statement the Sri Lankan government said it believes the only way to end the country's long rung Tamil insurgency is full scale war. 'It is the duty of the government to defend the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. It will do so by every means at its command,' the statement said." [CNN, July 2, 2001]

"The Sri Lankan foreign minister says the government plans to revive peace efforts with Tamil Tiger rebels. Amid an escalation of Tamil attacks, Colombo said it was ready for a mutually agreed cease-fire before peace talks begin, marking a dramatic shift from its earlier position." [CNN, August 30, 2001]

2000 Norway-mediated peace talks, due to start in February, were postponed as fighting intensified, resulting in major setbacks for the government. In June, the rebels formally rejected a Sri Lankan government proposal to end the war, in which amendments to the constitution offered greater autonomy to the provinces, including the Tamil dominated North and East. The rebels claimed the proposal did not provide a permanent solution to the Tamil national question. In August, Sri Lanka's parliament approved an additional \$356 million for the war, a 50 per cent increase to the defence budget. The governing People's Alliance won 107 out of 225 seats in Parliament in fall elections and President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga formed a new government after negotiating support from smaller parties. EU and British election monitoring teams found the elections flawed, but not enough to render the outcome illegitimate.

1999 In an election marred by serious irregularities, President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga was reelected on December 21, three days after an unsuccessful assassination attempt by an LTTE member.

1998 The separatist rebels responded to January local elections by assassinating two Jaffna mayors within four months. A government constitutional reform proposal to devolve political power to Tamil areas remained blocked by the parliamentary opposition.

1997 A government proposal of constitutional reforms and devolution of political power aimed at winning Tamil support was stalled at year end by lack of support from the parliamentary opposition.

1996 The government extended the state of emergency and delayed elections. Government proposals for a more decentralized federal structure with considerable powers devolved to the regions, including the northeast, were reviewed by a parliamentary committee and watered down in response to political opposition.

Background:

Since 1983 the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have led the fight for a separate northern and eastern state (where Tamils form the majority) against troops of the Sinhalese-dominated government. Although the war is not religiously-based, the combatants are separated by religion and culture; the minority (13 per cent of the population) Tamils are mostly Hindu and the majority (74 percent of the population) Sinhalese are mostly Buddhist. Additionally, Sri Lankan Muslims, which at 8 percent of the population form the second largest

minority group, have been increasingly drawn into the conflict in the north-eastern regions of the island.

The war has drawn in outside parties, and from 1987 to 1990 the Indian government made an unsuccessful military intervention which led to the assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Following the collapse of a three-month ceasefire in 1995, a major government offensive ousted rebels from the Jaffna peninsula in 1996. Since then rebel and government offensives and counteroffensives have kept control of the peninsular territory in flux. In 2000, a government peace proposal to amend the constitution to allow greater autonomy to the Tamil-dominated areas was rejected by the rebels. In 2002, the LTTE abandoned their demands for a separate state and agreed to accept regional autonomy. During Norwegian-brokered peace talks, the LTTE and the government agreed to power-sharing through the creation of a federal system. The situation seemed to improve after the 2002 cease-fire, as the decreased intensity of fighting attributed to the cease-fire agreement led to a drastic reduction in the number of annual deaths for the years following 2002. In 2006, however, hope for a negotiated settlement to the conflict dissipated after the LTTE declared the process defunct, and the country slid back into civil war. In 2007 the government released statements that the cease-fire agreement had been broken by both sides and that it needed to be either abandoned or re-evaluated. In 2008, the government withdrew from the cease-fire agreement and launched a military offensive against the LTTE forces.

“The government of Sri Lanka must end its deceptions, halt its military oppression, ethnic cleansing, and serious human rights violations, accept the aspirations of the Tamil people and come forward to find a resolution that is based on the right to self-determination of the Tamil people.” [LTTE, *Agence France-Presse*, September 25, 2007]

“Over the last two decades, Prebhakaran (LTTE leader) has been a consistent obstacle to both local and international efforts to find a political solution, beginning with the Indian efforts in the mid-80’s to the most recent effort by the Norwegians.” [SLDF (Sri Lankan Democracy Forum), *earthtimes.org*, December 6, 2007]

Arms Sources:

Government:

Recent suppliers of weapons to the Sri Lankan government include China, US, Russia, the UK, Ukraine, Slovakia, Czech Republic, India, Israel, Iran, Pakistan and Canada. The majority of the weapons were to be used against the LTTE rebels. In 2002, the United States began negotiating an Acquisition and Cross-Services Agreement with Sri Lanka which would allow US military forces to refuel at Sri Lankan bases during a war with Iraq and to procure food, fuel, ammunition and transport from Sri Lanka at domestic prices. Over the last 15 years, the government has purchased 23 aircraft, however only a limited number are still in operation. Its operational fleet includes three Chengdu Aircraft Industrial Corporation F-7BS, eight Israel Aerospace Industries Kfir C2/C7 and three MiG 27 fighter aircraft from Ukraine. The proposed defence budget for 2007 was approximately \$1.3 billion USD, which is double the 2006 budget. A \$10 billion USD deal was finalized with Ukraine in 2007 which includes the acquirement of four additional MiG27s and the repair and combat system upgrade of 4 Sri Lankan owned MiG-27 fighter aircraft. To finance the increased defence budget, the government will have to administer cutbacks in other areas.

[Source: *SIPRI Yearbook 2001 to 2005; The Military Balance 2000/2001 to 2004/2005; jdw.janes.com*, January 3, 2007]

“An arms trade campaigning group has criticised the sale of 10,000 military missiles by Slovakia to Sri Lanka. The three-metre missiles are designed to be dispatched from multiple rocket launchers.” [BBC News, 10 April, 2008]

“In order to find the money for this the government is going to have to make some cutbacks in public spending.” [Sunil Sirisena, Additional Secretary of Defence, *JDW, jdw.janes.com*, January 3, 2007]

“Sri Lanka has asked Pakistan to service its T-55 main battle tanks and C-130 transport aircraft as its security situation deteriorates. Talks on Colombo buying defence equipment worth about USD60 Million are also under way.” [Robert Karniol, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, June 14, 2006]

"Sri Lanka is to buy over USD 150 million of arms from Iran, the Sunday Times reported this week... 'Sri Lanka will procure military hardware and oil on concessionary terms. The deal is said to be worth over US \$150 million,' the Sunday Times said." [*TamilNet*, January 16, 2005]

"Sri Lanka and the USA have been discussing military cooperation for sometime now. The two countries have been negotiating an Acquisition and Cross-Service Agreement (ACSA) for several months. The ACSA would allow US forces to procure food, fuel, ammunition and transport in Sri Lanka at the same rates as those paid by Sri Lankan forces. Sri Lankan forces would enjoy similar facilities in the USA in the unlikely event of their troops, ships or aircraft passing through US bases." [*BBC News*, December 20, 2002]

"China pledged to provide military assistance to Sri Lanka in line with an agreement sealed during an ongoing visit to Beijing by Colombo's defence minister ... China is a key supplier of small arms and gun boats to the Sri Lankan military, which has been battling Tamil Tiger guerillas for the past three decades." [*Agence-France Presse*, June 13, 2002]

"Sri Lanka is to receive more than 40 T-55A2/AM2 MBTs, eight MT-55A bridgelayers, 16 VT-55 armoured recovery vehicles, three mobile workshop vehicles and 12 TATRA T815 tanks transporters. The package also includes 10,000 122mm rockets for 16 multi-barrelled rocket launchers which the Czech government donated to Sri Lanka earlier this year." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 19 July 2000]

"Sri Lanka is buying long-range artillery and assorted military hardware to stop rebels from retaking their former capital of Jaffna, sources close to the military said Sunday. Earlier this week, Sri Lankan military officials met with arms dealers from Russia, Britain, Pakistan, Iran, the Czech Republic, Israel and Singapore in Colombo." [*The Associated Press*, 30 April 2000]

Rebels:

The LTTE is reportedly funded by ex-patriate Tamils in Canada and the UK among others, and supported and armed by Tamils living in nearby countries like Malaysia and Singapore, and especially in the Tamil Nadu state of India. The LTTE have reportedly developed an extensive naval arms-smuggling network off the north and east coasts of the island. The LTTE uses captured weapons and weapons bought mostly on the southeast Asian black market, reportedly via a network of LTTE-owned or -backed companies. The LTTE became the first combatant organization to acquire air power without outside support. It is believed that the light-aircraft was disassembled and smuggled into the country on a cargo ship and then reassembled by the LTTE once inside the country. Caches found, which include flight as well as construction manuals and spare parts, support this speculation.

[Sources: *Reuters*, August 2, 2007; *IPS News*, February 2, 2007; *Jane's Country Risk*, 2007]

"We need aircraft quickly because we are receiving information that the LTTE is sending its pilots abroad for training... We are also worried that the LTTE is upgrading a number of small aircraft. We are worried about this". [Sunil Sirisena, Additional Secretary of Defence, *JDW*, *jdw.janes.com*, January 3, 2007]

"The Navy yesterday destroyed an LTTE trawler transporting a huge arms cargo off the Mannar seas... This is the fifth arms smuggling LTTE vessel detected and destroyed by the Navy within this year." [Ranil Wijayapala, *AFP*, October 15, 2006]

"[L]ate last month, the FBI arrested 12 US and Canadian citizens believed to be closely tied to the LTTE leadership for trying to purchase illegal arms from FBI agents posing as arms dealers. The arms included up to 100SA-18 surface-to-air missiles purportedly capable of shooting down Kfir jets as well as 500 AK-47 assault rifles. The men also wanted training from undercover agents to use those missiles, and offered to pay close to \$900,000 for the whole package. According to the FBI, these men also tried through a front organization to seek information to purchase other equipment like unmanned aerial vehicles for jamming radio and radar and global positioning system equipment. Although Washington declared the LTTE a terrorist organization in 1997, the group is believed to maintain networks in North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia that use Tamil expatriates overseas to acquire weapons." [Anuj Chopra, *The Christian Science Monitor*,

September 5, 2006]

"There have been several reports in the past of the LTEE smuggling weapons onboard large vessels which anchor off the island's Mullaitivu coast and pass them on to smaller fishing boats. Tiger guerrillas are also known to operate a fleet of merchant vessels. Last month, three men aboard an LTEE trawler blew themselves up after a Scandinavian [monitoring] team, ruled they were transporting an anti-aircraft gun." [*Agence France-Presse*, March 10, 2003]

"Much of the LTTE's equipment has been captured from the army." [Reuters, 24 April 2000]

"The Tigers, who once relied on India for weapons and training, have developed a vast international business network that continues to finance the war. Their fundraising efforts from Tamils in Canada, Britain and Australia are believed to be much smaller than their revenue from smuggling in Asia, Africa and the Middle East." [*The Globe and Mail*, 27 May 2000]

"These are some of the weapons in the arsenal of the Tamil Tigers ...: surface-to-air missiles from Cambodia, assault rifles from Afghanistan, mortar shells from the former Yugoslavia and Zimbabwe, and 60 tons of explosives from Ukraine." [*New York Times*, March 7, 1998]

The Sri Lankan government also claims that the LTTE obtains weapons via Cambodia and Thailand where the group is involved "in a variety of money-making schemes, including drug trafficking and the smuggling onward, of illegal immigrants." [Jane's Defence Weekly, 2 October 1996, p.16]

Other reports suggest Singapore is a major centre of LTTE arms procurement. [*Asiaweek*, July 26, 1996]

Economic Factors:

With the intensification of fighting throughout the 1990s, farming was no longer a reliable source of employment and income in rural areas such as Batticaloa. For the Tamils, movement to the south of the country is restricted and jobs are scarce. Overall, the deterioration of economic conditions, lack of opportunities and development are considered major factors in the drive for young Tamils to join the Tigers rebels. In an effort to address the country's underdevelopment and assist the peace process, \$4.5 billion was pledged by international donors in 2003. A tsunami in late 2004 destroyed much of the country's economic infrastructure and left much of Sri Lanka devastated. Attacks by the LTTE in the south have put pressure on the economy and caused tourism to decrease. The Sri Lankan Development Forum announced that new development assistance for 2007-2009 would total approximately \$4.5 billion. Despite an increase in development assistance a proposed increase in defence spending is likely to result in an increased national debt burden and worsen the current economic situation. The LTTE generates \$200-300 million per year through legal and illegal worldwide business operations to finance the costs of their organization.

[Sources: *Reuters*, June 10, 2003; *Far Easter Economic Review*, 1 June 2000; *Reuters*, March 26, 2007; *Reuters*, August 2, 2007]

"Approximately 800,000 Sri Lankans work abroad, 90 per cent in the Middle East, and send about AUD1 billion in remittances to Sri Lanka each year." [Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Sri Lanka Country Brief*, October 2008]

"Fighting, bombardment and a government economic blockade have left the [north-eastern] area with few passable roads and little more than a subsistence economy." [*globeandmail.com*, June 12, 2003]

"International donors pledged more than \$4.5 billion in aid to Sri Lanka on Tuesday, giving the island a major incentive to revive a flagging peace process ... A World Bank report found that about \$1.5 billion was needed to rebuild the Tamil-majority northeast region with another \$3 billion needed to implement a program to reduce poverty." [*Reuters*, June 10, 2003]

"Unemployment – among both Sinhalese and Tamil young people – has been a primary cause of Sri Lanka's bloodshed. Young men (and women) from country villages join one army or the other for lack of anything else to do. An estimated 700,000 people have left for southern Sri Lanka or abroad, where they have become a mainstay of the Tigers' finances." [*The Economist*, 7 October 2000]

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