



APDR

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DEFENCE 'MAGIC' EXERCISE TALISMAN SABRE 2009 LESSONS LEARNED FROM SRI LANKA

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PERTH

How Sri Lanka Won the Unwinnable War

The Sri Lankan navy uses Super Dvoras for counter-insurgency.
Credit: IAI

Considered to be one of Asia's longest running conflicts, the Sri Lankan civil war officially ended on 19 May 2009, with the Sri Lankan military recapturing all LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) controlled territory and killing its leadership. Arguably, the defeat of one of the world's most militarily advanced terrorist organisations has dispelled the long sustained myth of LTTE's invincibility and that Sri Lanka's insurgency was not winnable.

The process of military transformation first began during the latter stages of the Norwegian-brokered Ceasefire Agreement (2002-2006), which brought the LTTE and Sri Lankan government to the negotiation table. However, two failed attempts at negotiations and LTTE's ceasefire violations – which included the assassination of the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister and attempted assassination of the commander of the army – revealed LTTE's intentions to recommence its war of secession. As far as the military was concerned, it entered the ceasefire lacking purpose and had little support from the nation's political leadership at the time. However, this changed dramatically when President Mahinda Rajapakse was elected to office in November 2005. Soon after this, the President appointed his brother, Gotabaya Rajapakse (a retired Lieutenant Colonel) to the key

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position of Defence Secretary. The leadership style of Gotabaya Rajapakse was disciplined, pragmatic and results oriented, which instilled confidence among his military commanders that the LTTE could be militarily defeated. As such, a uniquely ‘Rajapakse Doctrine’ was adopted that markedly differed from predecessors, which Gotabaya Rajapakse articulated: “The hallmarks of the new radical approach included the appointment of tried

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In line with his new policy, Gotabaya Rajapakse in turn appointed competent and experienced commanders to lead each military arm, namely the Sri Lanka Army [SLA], Sri Lanka Navy [SLN] and the Sri Lanka Air Force, emphasising merit over seniority in promotion. Gotabaya Rajapakse initiated unprecedented co-operation and support amongst the three services, especially in intelligence gathering, sharing and joint operations. The defence budget was significantly increased to accommodate numerical expansion, new weaponry and enhanced firepower. A concerted public relations campaign was launched to restore the battered image of the military, which galvanised widespread public support like never before.

Anticipating the prospect of renewed hostilities, the military drafted a number of contingent strategies to counter the LTTE. When Eelam War 4 (c.2006-2009) commenced in July 2006, the military was suitably prepared and achieved rapid battlefield successes – which spurred it to continue operations to recapture the entire Eastern Province by July 2007. The loss of the Eastern Province considerably weakened the LTTE, which deprived it of a vital recruitment ground, revenue from taxation and badly damaged its military prestige. The defeat of the LTTE in the Eastern Province further strengthened President Mahinda Rajapakse's popularity and support for the war effort. This enabled the President to oversee the massive expansion of the military, which recruited almost 2,000-3,000 new recruits per month. Subsequently, the focus of operations moved towards the Northern Province, the LTTE heartland. After almost two years of campaigning, the military succeeded in completely encircling the LTTE in a tiny sliver of territory on the island's Northeastern coastline, where the last internecine battle was fought to a conclusion. LTTE attempts to stave off defeat by using over 295,000 trapped civilians as human shields at best delayed its otherwise crushing defeat.

The success of Sri Lanka's military's strategy can be attributed to a range of factors. Politically, the Sri Lankan government had enormous domestic support; India supported Sri Lanka's military campaign; and

China and Russia supported Sri Lanka in the United Nations Security Council. Strategically, the revised land warfare doctrine sought to inflict heavy enemy casualties; depriving LTTE control of territory, coastline and safe havens; deploying adequate reserves to secure captured territory; advancing along multiple thrust lines, maneuvering and encircling LTTE strong points; continuing military operations without pause; and accepting heavy casualties to achieve objectives. The cumulative impact of the military strategy denied the LTTE room to maneuver on land or sea, leaving it on the defensive and unable to regain the initiative or successfully regroup. Tactically, there was a major focus towards small unit infantry operations; snipers accounted for over 1,000 confirmed kills; and covert special forces operations behind enemy lines successfully eliminated dozens of senior LTTE leaders. Unlike previous phases of the conflict, special forces units routinely staged daring attacks behind enemy lines and provided real-time battlefield intelligence, a point confirmed by SLA commander, General Sarath Fonseka: “There was a time when our commandos and special forces would not advance more than six kilometres into jungles from our forward lines. We have managed to change that and today they advance fifty to sixty kilometres to carry out operations.”

Additionally, the SLN played a significant role and reoriented its approach to defeat the Sea Tigers, the formidable LTTE maritime wing. The ‘Small Boat Concept’ was introduced in 2006, where hundreds of indigenously produced high-speed and heavily armed inshore patrol craft entered service to counter the threat posed by Sea Tiger swarming and suicide tactics. Hence, the SLN dominated the coastal waters off Sri Lanka which led to heavy Sea Tiger losses; in 2006 there were 21 engagements with the SLN each lasting nearly 12 hours; in 2007 there were eleven;

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and only two in 2008. Also, the SLN steadily dominated LTTE sea lines of communication, where from 2006-2008, eight LTTE warehouse ships were sunk in international waters which were transporting vital warlike supplies. As affirmed by the SLN commander, Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda: “These vessels were carrying over 80,000 artillery rounds, over 100,000 mortar rounds, a bullet-proof jeep probably earmarked for the LTTE leader, three aircraft in dismantled form, torpedoes and surface-to-air missiles. There were also a large number of underwater swimmer-delivery vehicles and a large quantity of diving equipment. There were radar equipment as well as Outboard Motors with higher horse power.”

By defeating the LTTE, Sri Lanka brought an end to the civil war which plagued the island nation since 1983 and killed over 90,000 people. Since July 2006, the military claims to have killed over 22,000 LTTE combatants and admits the loss of 6,261 military personnel killed and 29,551 wounded. Clearly, the military victory is an important turning point, yet the more complex task of winning the peace shall be the real challenge that lies ahead. **APDR**

KYM BERGMANN

CANBERRA

Thales awarded contract to renew French Government’s network security equipment

Thales have announced that after several months of competition, the DGA – the French Defense Procurement Agency – has awarded Thales a contract to renew the Government’s range of network security equipment guaranteeing national sovereignty over the next fifteen years.

The contract provides for the roll-out, in 2013, of a first batch of 12,000 encrypters together with in-service support.

Thales have been actively marketing their Government security credentials, including in Australia.

The company says this contract is a major step for Thales, which has been selected for all three phases of the project. These are:

- development and mass production of the range of equipment,
- roll-out of the equipment (first batch of 12,000 encrypters in 2013),
- in-service support for all integrated equipment.

The equipment is designed to meet the whole gamut of end-user needs in French Army staff and Government offices.

In addition to its high performance (up to 1Gb per second for ultra-fast broadband), this new range will save considerable amounts of space as all of the encrypters, irrespective of use, will be integrated into a single system.

According to Sylvie Ghez, Director of the Information Systems Security domain, Thales Land & Joint systems : “Our great experience and highly specialized expertise in cryptography, Government security, network protocols and communications architecture, as well as our resources in the design and production of telecommunications and security equipment have enabled Thales to win this contract, which follows on perfectly from the equipment already supplied to the Government.”

Thales also say they leverage their expertise – unique in France – in IP network protection through its strong involvement in international working parties on the subject of network protocol security and is a recognized major player in the field.