# Sri Lanka's Military

# Sri Lanka's Military:

## The Search For A Mission

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# CHAPTER 1

## SRI LANKA'S MILITARY: THE SEARCH FOR A MISSION

### INTRODUCTION

This book's purpose is to explain the military's search for a mission and its changing definition that determined its operations, doctrine and tactics, command and organization, equipment purchases, and personnel management. The book concludes with an assessment of the military's future mission and its capability to accomplish the mission.

Since Sri Lanka's independence in 1947, the military had a mission to defend the country from external and internal threats. The government's initial concern was invasion by India. The military's original focus was to have a defense force capable of meeting any external threat until assistance arrived from Britain as guaranteed by the 1947 Defence and External Affairs Agreement. As the threat of an external invasion disappeared, so did the military's "combat" mission.

In reality, the military was never capable of conducting even that limited mission. In fact, throughout the first three and a half decades of the country's existence, Sri Lanka's military did not have a legitimate military combat mission, but served as a quasi police force – providing assistance to the real police force when

called upon by the government. When the Sri Lanka Jaffna Tamils revolted in 1983, the military's mission was refocused on the insurgency. It was completely unprepared and unable to defend the country against an internal threat.

This research assesses the impact of the government's use of the military throughout the past 56 years and how it shaped the military's mission -- resulting in changes to the military's organization, doctrine, equipment purchases, recruitment, and training. The paper concludes with an assessment of the military's future mission and its capability to accomplish the mission.

The study of the military's search for a mission is important because Sri Lanka is just one of the many countries in the world that has a military without a legitimate external defense mission. The increase in U.S. military deployments to relatively unknown areas will result in U.S. forces entering these countries. By understanding the development of the military and its "perceived" mission, the U.S. will be better capable of working with the military.

## SCOPE

This book examines how internal politics, international agreements, and ethnic conflict caused Sri Lanka's military to adopt variety of missions. The book focuses on the military's operations, command and organization, doctrine and tactics, equipment purchases, and personnel management. Studying these areas allows for an assessment of the military's future mission and a detailed analysis of its capability to accomplish it.

The mission of the Sri Lankan military will change over the next six years, 2004-2010, because of the eventual signing of a peace agreement between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This agreement will leave the military without a mission. This book analyzes what the new

mission will be and what the future Sri Lankan military will look like.

Key questions answered within this book are:

1. How did the Sri Lankan military develop as it did? What were the identifiable forces for change?
2. What is the current military force structure and how has it changed since Independence in 1947?
3. What will be the military's mission after the ethnic conflict ends?
4. What impact will the end of the ethnic conflict have on the military?
5. What role will the Sri Lankan military have in the future?
6. What military force structure is required for Sri Lanka in the future?

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used is a single case study using structured historical data and analysis to derive specific findings. The hypothesis is that the military's focus and force structure has changed because of changes in mission definition. Intensive research and data analysis was required to support the hypothesis.

Data and information came from books, periodicals, websites, interviews, and official government publications. While collecting this data, it was necessary to examine the data carefully to ensure that the information was valid and reliable. It was difficult to control for validity and reliability because some of the evidence was seemingly contradictory or incomplete. Information that was not specifically verifiable was either not included, or noted as such.

The hypothesis that Sri Lanka's military has continuously searched for a mission since the country's independence was confirmed based on research and interviews. The research concludes that domestic peace will have an impact on the

military's mission and affect its future operations, command and organization, doctrine and tactics, equipment purchases, and personnel management. The Sri Lankan military will initially turn its attention outward to national security issues and away from domestic concerns. But without a legitimate external threat, the military will assume the mantle of providing domestic assistance to the people and become incapable of defending the country against any threat – external or internal.

## LIMITATIONS

The lack of detailed information on Sri Lanka's military forces, both past and present, constitutes a constraint familiar to all researchers investigating international militaries. This book uses six major sources and over one-hundred and thirty secondary sources. The major sources are Sri Lanka Army's *50 Years On: 1949 – 1999*; Sri Lanka's Air Force's *Wings of Sri Lanka (1951 – 2001)*; G. B. Keerawella and Lt. Cmd. S. Hemachandre's *Ceylon Navy: Enhanced Role and New Challenges*; Jane's *Sentinel: Security Assessment – South Asia*, the International Institute for Strategic Studies *Military Balance* 1972 – 1973 to 2002 – 2003 annual reference books; and email interviews with Padman Mendis, the Sri Lanka Air Force commander from 1970 to 1975. The intent was to cross-check quantifiable data through multiple secondary sources to ensure accuracy.

## SRI LANKA'S BACKGROUND

Chapters 2 and 3 are on Sri Lanka's background. Chapter 2 focuses on Sri Lanka's background and discusses its geography and infrastructure. Chapter 3 discusses the country's pre-independence history, and society. It is important to understand how each of these areas influenced the development of the country's military. The country's geography and infrastructure affects the military's operations and imposes limitations on

their doctrine, tactics, and equipment. The pre-independence history is important since the military likely adopted its doctrine, tactics, training, and initial weapon systems based on its colonial heritage. Understanding the country's society is critical because many conflicts are the result of clashes between groups of differing cultures or religion. Although there is a plethora of sources available, the issues are their detail and accuracy.

For the geographic section, two country studies and two declassified Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) National Intelligence Surveys (NIS) served as primary sources. The intent of using four primary sources was to provide a balance between the sources to determine as much as possible the ground truth since each source failed to "show" the complete picture. Two country studies, *Sri Lanka: A Country Study* edited by Russell R. Ross and *Sri Lanka: A Survey* edited by K.M. de Silva, although old, provided accurate details. The two NISs, *Ceylon: Military Geography* and *Ceylon: Military Geographic Regions*, provide key military analysis. A map of Sri Lanka, produced in 1998 by *International Travel Maps*, served as a secondary source and provided the detail necessary to complete the section on the geographic background.

For data on the infrastructure, Jane's *Sentinel: Security Assessment – South Asia* and the Sri Lanka map by *International Travel Maps* were the primary sources. The secondary sources, which provided detail in their specific areas, were the Department of Census and Statistics' *Statistical Profile: A Statistical Compendium to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Independence in Sri Lanka*, Jane's *World Railways*, Colin Pielow's *Guide to Port Entry*, and Fairplay's *Ports Guide 1999 – 2000*.

For information concerning the country's pre-independence history, the two country studies, along with S. U. Kodikara's *Indo-Ceylon Relations since Independence* were the primary sources. One secondary source, P. V. J. Jayasekera's article "Changing Role of Sri Lanka in British Defence Strategy in the

Indian Ocean," in *Security Dilemma of a Small State, Part One: Sri Lanka in the South Asian Context* supplemented the primary sources.

For data concerning Sri Lanka's society, the two country studies, along with Jayasekera's article, were the primary sources. The secondary sources were Kodikara's *Indo-Ceylon Relations since Independence*, George Frerks and Mathijs van Leeuwen's "The Netherlands and Sri Lanka: Dutch Policies and Interventions with regard to the Conflict in Sri Lanka" article, and Jane's *Sentinel: Security Assessment – South Asia*.

## DEVELOPMENT OF SRI LANKA'S MILITARY

Chapters 4 through 10 cover the colonial forces and the growth and development of Sri Lanka's army, air force, and navy. There are five main sources and over 130 secondary sources. The main sources are Sri Lanka Army's *50 Years On: 1949 – 1999*, Sri Lanka's Air Force's *Wings of Sri Lanka (1951 – 2001)*, G. B. Keerawella and Lt. Cmd. S. Hemachandre's *Ceylon Navy: Enhanced Role and New Challenges*, Jane's *Sentinel: Security Assessment – South Asia*, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) thirty-one annual *Military Balance* books from the 1972 – 1973 issue to the 2002 – 2003 issue, and email interviews with Padman Mendis, the Sri Lanka Air Force commander from 1970 to 1975.

Two of the primary sources, those published by the Sri Lankan government, may be biased on some topics and the secondary sources provide additional verification of the data in these sources. The IISS annual reports are well respected in the international community, but since they rely on the release of data from the host nations and not on independent research, it is not always accurate. Furthermore, the primary sources do not always provide enough detail and the secondary sources complement them and provide key details often left out of the primary sources.

## SUMMARY

Chapter 11 is the summary.  It discuses the findings of the research and discusses the future of Sri Lanka's army, air force, and navy.  The majority of the data is based on analysis of the research conducted in Chapters 2 through Chapter 10.  A primary source, a senior Sri Lankan army general who request to remain anonymous, provided insights on the future of the country's military forces.

# CHAPTER 2

## GEOGRAPHY AND INFRASTRURES

The geographic location and infrastructure play an important role in the formation of Sri Lanka's military. Its strategic geographic location off India's southeast coast poses the greatest external threat to Sri Lanka – an invasion by India or Pakistan. Sri Lanka's geography influenced its transportation infrastructure, and shaped the development of the military forces. This chapter will discuss how each of these two factors influenced the growth and development of the country.

### GEOGRAPHY

Sri Lanka's location in the Indian Ocean, astride the primary sea lines of communication, made the country strategically militarily valuable from 1505 to 1947. During this time, the colonial powers of Portugal, the Netherlands, and England wanted Ceylon in order to control the Indian Ocean. Each of these countries faced difficulties in subduing the native personnel due to the country's rugged physical environment.

The country is approximately 273 miles from north to south and 137 miles east to west and shaped like a teardrop. The total area of the island is approximately 25,332 square miles. Its 840-mile long coastline has a considerable number of lagoons and

inlets, with Trincomalee Bay (located on the western side of the island) being one of the best natural harbors in the world. There are few offshore islands except in the northwest where a chain of tiny islands, known as Adam's Bridge, separate it from mainland India.[1]

Sri Lanka is a tropical, humid country with two distinct geographic regions, the interior mountains and hills region, and the forested plains and hills region. Both regions offer excellent cover and concealment while severely limiting off-road movement, allowing guerrilla units to effectively operate against a military tied to transportation network.[2]

The interior mountain and hills region, located mainly in the southern region, occupies approximately 40 percent of the island and is cooler than the rest of the island. This region is rugged and has extensive forests and thickets. Heavy rainfall and low cloud-cover are common. Swift and turbulent streams run through the area. Large towns are few and a network of roads and rails link them together. The region's topography makes it generally unsuitable for any military operations other than dismounted infantry operations.[3]

The interior mountain and hills region is rugged and has extensive forests, thickets, heavy rainfall, and clouds. Swift and turbulent streams run through the area. Large towns are few and a network of roads and rails link them together. Militarily, the region's topography makes it generally unsuited for anything other than dismounted infantry operations.[4]

The forested plains and hills region covers the northern half of the island and continue round the southern half of the country along the coast. The area is almost a continuous plain with dense forests and thickets and seasonally intermittent streams. Towns are more common in this area and they are generally well connected by roads. The larger towns have rail connections. The topography of this region makes it generally unsuited for operations off the main and secondary road network.[5]

Sri Lanka's location astride the main sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean, its natural harbor at Trincomalee, and its proximity to India give the island a strategic value to other countries when war, or the danger of war, threaten the area. The island's topography makes it unsuitable for most military operations except for guerilla / insurgency types.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Sri Lanka's Army (SLA) relies almost completely on the country's commercial road / rail network for internal movement – only using air and sea avenues when necessary. Sri Lanka's Air Force (SLAF) relies on six major and eleven minor military airbases (spread throughout the country). Four of these airbases are co-located at civilian airfields and the SLAF uses the remaining two civilian airfields if necessary. The Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) uses nine ports, five of which are civilian dual-usage ports.[6]

The country has approximately 17,000 miles of paved roads and over 20,000 miles of gravel roads that connect most of the regions of the island. The army, mainly wheeled, depends on these roads since off-road travel is difficult in most areas of the country. There are approximately 900 miles of railroad radiating outward from Colombo, which the army and air force depend on for specialized movement needs.

Between 1947 and 1997, the railroad capability decreased and there was no growth in rail miles and the number of locomotives fell by nearly 40 percent. The zero-sum growth in rail miles has not seriously affected the military since the existing lines still connect the majority of the army's bases. The reduction in number of locomotives has also not affected the military since during times of emergency the military has precedence.[7]

Sri Lanka five commercial airports are Batticaloa, Colombo, Gal Oya, Jaffna, Palai, and Trincomalee. Only at the Colombo airport, with a 3,350-meter runway, can large military cargo planes or jets land. The other airports are for internal use only

and best suited for smaller military planes and helicopters.[8]

Sri Lanka's five dual-usage commercial seaports are located in the cities of Colombo, Galle, Jaffna, Kankesanturai, and Trincomalee. Colombo, the country's most active port with 21 quays, can accommodate any of the SLN's ships. The SLN's Headquarters and its Western Naval Command Headquarters are both located there. Galle's port is smaller with two berths and two quays and can handle any SLN ship. In addition, the Naval Recruitment Training Center is located there. The port at Jaffna does not have any quays,[9] but with a draft of 3.7 meters, is deep enough to handle any of the SLN's ships (but the navy's largest ship, the *Sarayu*, which draws 3.4 meters, is unlikely to use the facilities). The port at Kankesanturai has one berth and can accommodate any of the SLN's ships. The navy does not use it except on a contingency basis because of the conflict with the LTTE. The port of Trincomalee is in a large natural harbor and has three coves; Malay Cove, Cod Bay, and China Bay, with a total of four jetties that can handle ships up to 227 meters drawing 13.0 meters. In addition, there is good anchorage and shelter in almost any part of the harbor during fair weather; during monsoons, anchorages are best in the northeast section of the harbor. This port can handle any of the SLN's ships and the bay holds the navy's main base.[10]

In summary, Sri Lanka's infrastructure compares favorably to most third world countries. The road and rail network, designed to connect major towns and cities, links the army, air force, and naval bases. Although the main roads facilitate military movement throughout the districts, they do not cover the entire country. This forces the military to rely on secondary roads – making the majority of the country unsuitable for large-scale ground military operations. The air network, with the exception of Colombo's large airport, is composed of smaller airfields for internal transport only and can only provide limited support to the SLAF. The port system is capable of providing support to the SLN as required.

# CHAPTER 3

## HISTORY AND CULTURE / SOCIETY

The country's history, and culture / society of Sri Lanka's (formerly Ceylon) play an important role in the formation of Sri Lanka's military. Colonial history, during which Europeans subjugated the populace for over 400 years, ensured that the indigenous personnel would not develop either a warrior ethos or a military tradition. Sri Lanka's culture and society is shaped by five ethnic groups that have differences in religion, language, and heritage. This represents a deep rift between two ethnic groups - resulting in internecine war lasting over 20 years. This chapter will discuss how each of these factors influenced the growth and development of the military force.

### PRE-INDEPENDENCE HISTORY

The recorded history of Sri Lanka began with the arrival of Aryan colonists led by Prince Vijaya from northeast India in 504 BCE and the subjugation of the original aboriginal inhabitants, the Veddahs. Vijaya encouraged emigration from the India sub-continent and thus began the realm of the Sinhala – Vijaya's patrimonial name. The Sinhala dynasty reigned over the northern part of the island for several centuries without any outside influence because the "Northern Indian empires of ancient

times rarely extended to the southern extremity of the Indian peninsula."[11]  In the 3rd century BCE, Emperor Ashoka[12] sent his son, the Buddhist monk Mahindra, to Ceylon.  The Sinhala king, and subsequently the people, converted to Buddhism.[13]

The next phase in Ceylon's history began in the 3rd century A.D. when Hindu Tamils from southern India invaded the island. The Tamils gained control of the northern section of the island, forcing the Sinhalese Buddhists south.  For the next 11 centuries, the Sinhalese and the Tamils struggled for control of the island. The Tamils defeated the Sinhalese most of the time and forced them southwards.  By 1250, most Sinhalese lived in the southern part of the island.[14]

The first recorded invasions of a non-Indian force occurred when Malaysians invaded the island twice in the 13th century, trying to seize the sacred Buddhist Tooth and Alms Bowl relics. This was the beginning of outside influence marking the next seven centuries.[15]

The 16th century brought a change for both Sinhalese and Tamils as they fell under the influence of the colonial empires. Portugal, the Netherlands, and Britain, in turn, sought to control the island due to its strategic location.  These colonial empires "were based essentially on naval supremacy.  But sea-power was dependent upon possession of strategic bases  … [and Ceylon's] value as a colony was considerably enhanced by virtue of her strategic location in relation to India and the India Ocean area, and because she possessed two valuable naval bases in Colombo and Trincomalee."[16]

In addition to the country's strategic value, the island was important commercially and the colonial powers exploited and exported the country's domestic agricultural products and gems.

The Portuguese landed in southern Ceylon in 1505.  For the next 75 years, the Portuguese, who believed that Ceylon was key to their interest in the Indian sub-continent, controlled Colombo and a few other coastal areas in the southern part of

the island.  The Portuguese slowly expanded their control and the Sinhalese began to resist foreign rule.  The Sinhalese nearly drove the Portuguese from the island several times, but since the Portuguese could board their ships and defend themselves with their cannons, they withstood the attacks.  When the 16th century ended, the Portuguese dominated most of the island.  Only portions of the Kingdom of Jaffna (Tamils) and the Kingdom of Kandy (Sinhalese) remained independent.  In 1619, Portuguese forces defeated the Tamils; forever ending their independent status on the island.[17]

In the early years of the 17th century, the Dutch challenged the Portuguese for control of the Indian Ocean.  "The Dutch attributed great strategic importance to Sri Lanka [Ceylon] in the control of the Indian Ocean commerce and particularly in the context of the struggle to oust the Portuguese from Asia."[18] The Dutch and the Kingdom of Kandy formed an alliance in 1638 to force the Portuguese from the island.  Twenty years later, they accomplished their goal.  The Dutch viewed Ceylon differently than the Portuguese since they were more interested in the commercial aspect of the island than its strategic location.  "The king of Kandy soon realized that he had replaced one foe with another and proceeded to incite rebellion in the lowlands where the Dutch held sway."[19]  The Kingdom of Kandy remained virtually independent but isolated and controlled the central portion of the island and most of the southeastern portion.[20]

In 1796, the British attacked the Dutch force on the island and defeated them.  The British believed that "Ceylon [was] integral to the defense of India; [and that] it was a vital link in Britain's sea communications with the Far East and with Australia."[21]  By 1798, Britain made the entire island a crown colony, with the exception of the still independent Kingdom of Kandy.  Kandy's independence finally ended when the British occupied the kingdom in 1803.  With the defeat of the French in Europe, Britain no longer feared for the defense of India and Ceylon lost its strategic importance.[22]

World War II again made Ceylon strategically important as it became key to India's defense and it served as an important base for Allied South East Asia Command (ASEAC).  After the war, the British, unable to maintain their vast empire, granted independence on 4 February 1948.[23]

In summary, during the majority of Ceylon's history warfare plagued the island.  During the pre-colonial period, for approximately 1,800 years, Sinhalese and Tamils fought for control of the island: the Hindus slowly pushing the Buddhists south.   During the colonial period, Europeans subjugated both ethnic groups and imposed their rule on the indigenous personnel.  The Sinhalese and the Tamils both resisted European rule.  Since they maintained their hatred for each other, the two ethnic groups failed to unite their forces and drive the Europeans from the country.

## SOCIETY

Sri Lanka's population of over 19 million is comprised of five major ethnic groups: Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, and Veddahs.  Ethnic divisions are not marked by race or physical appearance, but by language and religious identity.[24]

Prior to independence, a Select Committee of the Ceylonese State Council met in 1946 to determine the official language of the soon to be independent state.  One of the key statements in their report was "Language and Religion are the two chains of bronze that, throughout the passage of the years, unite past generations to the present, and these ever-lengthening links constitute the Fatherland."[25]  The committee decided that both Sinhalese and Tamil would be official languages – with equal status.  The committee recommended that, starting on 1 January 1957, English would cease to be the language of administration and that Sinhalese and Tamil take its place.[26]

About 74 percent of Sri Lankans are of Sinhalese descent, speak Sinhala, are Buddhist, and live in the center (Kurunegala,

Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura) of the island or the more densely populated southwestern (Latara, Galle) sections. During Britain's colonial rule, the Sinhalese Buddhists resented cultural domination and did not want their children to have an English education because they felt that it would erode their culture. This resulted in the British not employing them; this led to their being under-represented in the colonial system and ensured them a low standard of living.[27]

Approximately 18 percent of the country's population are Tamil. The Tamils, represent nearly one-fifth of the population and are divided into two distinct groups, the Sri Lankan (Jaffna Tamils) and the Indian Tamils. The Jaffna Tamils, represent approximately 12.5 percent of nation's population trace their lineage to the Tamil invasions from India of 300 AD. They live mainly in the northern and eastern (Batticaloa, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya) districts. Christian missionaries from Europe settled among the Jaffna Tamils during colonial rule. This association benefited the Tamils enormously because they received better educations that made them eligible for clerical jobs and a higher standard of living under the British Empire.

The Indian Tamils represent about 5.5 percent of the country's population. They trace their heritage to the colonial period when they migrated to Sri Lanka from the Indian province of Tamil Nadu to work on the tea plantations during British rule. The Indian Tamils are heavily concentrated in the highland (Badulla and Nuwara Eliya) districts. Since they lived on settlements separate from the Jaffna Tamils, the Indian Tamils did not become an integral part of the greater Tamil society. This resulted in both the Sinhalese and Jaffna Tamils viewing them as "foreigners".[28]

Approximately 7 percent of the population is Muslim. The Muslims do not have a majority in any district but have large minorities in two districts (Mannar and Amparai).[29]

The remaining 2 percent of the Sri Lankan population are Burghers. The term "Burghers" signifies permanent residents of the country who trace their ancestry to Portugal or the

Netherlands. The Burghers, proud of their origins, distance themselves from most Sri Lankans by immersing themselves in European culture. The majority of the Burghers live in urban areas (70 percent live in Colombo) and are Christian.[30]

The Veddah (less than 1 percent) are the indigenous inhabitants of Sri Lanka. They have not been able to preserve their language or customs.[31]

Five different ethnic groups are concentrated in areas depending on where they settled historically. When different ethnic groups live in the same area, they tend to reside in separate villages or in different neighborhoods. Because of Britain's "divide-and-rule" policies, English authorities in Sri Lanka favored the Jaffna Tamils at the expense of the Sinhalese. After independence, this resulted in the Sinhalese wanting to restore their language and culture to "its rightful place of prominence and dominance."[32] After Independence, the Ceylonese government passed several laws that eased the way for Sinhalese into positions formerly held by Jaffna Tamils and limited the chances of Jaffna Tamils to gain others. This was the beginning of ethnic problems that mark the majority of the country's recent history.[33]

## SUMMARY

Sri Lanka's geographic location, transportation infrastructure, colonial history, and culture / society all played a role in the formation of Sri Lanka's military. Although each aspect has contributed a unique portion to the growth of the country's military force, to understand the complete development of the military, all aspects must be viewed together.

Sri Lanka's strategic location off India's southeast coast, has posed the greatest external threat to Sri Lanka – an invasion by India. Sri Lanka's geography influenced its transportation infrastructure and limited the capability, and shaped the development, of the military forces. Its topography helped ensure that lightly armed indigenous personnel conducting guerilla /

insurgencies could defend their territory for long periods before suffering defeat.

The settlement of Sinhalese and subsequent Tamil invasions ensured that the two ethnic groups would develop a mistrust of each other.  British occupation lasting over 150 years not only inhibited the development of a warrior ethos or tradition, but also fueled the mistrust of the Sinhalese over the Tamils and caused a backlash of anti-Tamilism after independence.  To this day, many Sinhalese regard Tamils "as both inferior and dangerously resourceful."[34]  This relationship between the two groups caused the military to believe that its greatest threat was not external, but internal internecine warfare.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE MILITARY OF THE 1940s

This chapter will discuss Ceylon's colonial forces, its post-1947 dependence on foreign forces for assistance and protection, and the formation of the first Ceylonese military forces. An understanding of Ceylon's colonial forces is necessary to realize why the three services began as "ceremonial" forces rather than "combat" forces. This chapter helps explain the military's British foundation and its pattern of development.

### COLONIAL FORCES

**Army**

In 1796, British officers commanded Ceylon's indigenous colonial army, the Ceylon Rifle Regiment (CRR). Malays, who were part of the British Empire, formed 11 of the 16 CRR companies because the British did not view Sinhalese and Tamils as warriors. In 1874, the British decided there was no need for an indigenous military force and they disbanded the CRR, leaving Ceylon without an indigenous military force. The majority of the Malays became Ceylon's first police officers.[35]

In 1881, the British formed the Ceylon Light Infantry Volunteers (CLIV) with 210 European and 156 Ceylonese soldiers under the honorary command of the Prince of Wales.

The CLIV, like the CRR, was led by Europeans; the indigenous personnel served as common soldiers while the officer cadre was "entirely composed of Europeans, principally members of the plantation and mercantile communities." Burghers, viewed by the British as being more reliable, steady, and sociable (a critical requirement in a volunteer force more gentlemanly than martial) made up the majority of the unit while Tamils and Sinhalese, who were said to "lack spirit, [and] can never be depended upon to join in numbers"[36] comprised only a small percentage of the CLIV. Although the CLIV was ethnically heterogeneous, the majority of the companies were homogeneous.[37]

In the late 1880 and early 1890s, the CLIV expanded to include the artillery, medical, and mounted infantry units. The CLIV's first combat operation occurred when the Ceylon Mounted Infantry took part in the Boer War.[38]

In 1910, the CLIV was renamed the Ceylon Defence Force (CDF). The CDF was comprised mainly of soldiers and officers from the middle class, since they were the only ones who had the required education and enough spare time to conduct training. The British did not believe the CDF capable of conducting combat operations and thought their only role during war would be in non-combat positions – freeing British soldiers to fight.[39]

In 1914, CDF mobilized in response to World War I. The Ceylon Artillery Volunteers, now known as the Ceylon Garrison Artillery, mounted artillery pieces overlooking Colombo while the Ceylon Volunteer Infantry placed units around the city to secure it from enemy attack. The British rejected the CDF's offer to send 100 troops overseas as a unit, but many individual members joined the British forces. In total, 118 Ceylonese fought in World War I under British command.[40]

Although the British did not want the CDF fighting, they did not mind them performing guard duties. In 1915, the CDF replaced Indian forces guarding a POW camp until the German prisoners moved to Australia later that year. In 1918, they relieved Indian troops guarding Colombo. After the war, these men (three officers

and 200 men) continued to guard Colombo (more ceremonial than a real "guard" force) until the start of World War II.[41]

During World War II, the British, still not believing the Ceylonese capable of defending their own island, ordered Indian troops to Ceylon to protect it from a Japanese invasion. The RAF patrolled the approaches to the island from a multitude of airstrips that it built. In October 1943, the Allies established the Southeast Asian Command (SEAC) in Kandy. SEAC's responsibility for the coordination of allied air and land units for the China and Burma campaigns increased Ceylon's strategic importance during the war. The CDF, numbering nearly 15,000 troops (645 officers), served as non-combatants, allowing other allied forces to conduct combat operations elsewhere in theater. Also, since the British believed that "Ceylonese officers of these units are not yet qualified to hold many of the responsible posts although they make good subordinates,"[42] the units were commanded by the British.[43]

With the defeat of the Japanese, Ceylon's strategic importance diminished and the CDF demobilized most of its soldiers. The force reorganized for peacetime duties.

In 1947, some of the CDF soldiers "were recalled from leave in order to aid the civil power in dealing with a major crisis in the trade union field. . . . [and this experience was] valuable in taking control of disturbed areas, making judgments as to the degree of force to be used and, in any case, assisting the civil police in the maintenance of law and order."[44]

The experience gained by the soldiers who served in World War II and the subsequent civil crisis was important since it provided them with core knowledge of military operations. It also provided the country with men ready to serve the country in the advent of independence.

## Air Force

During British rule, the Royal Air Force defended the island and no Ceylonese men were eligible to join the RAF. Therefore,

Ceylon did not have any colonial experience to draw upon when they formed the Royal Ceylon Air Force (RCyAF).

**Navy**

Britain's Royal Navy was responsible for the maritime security of Ceylon because the "Indian Ocean was practically a British lake from the time the British defeated the French in the early nineteenth century. . . . [and] there was no need for Ceylon to have a naval force of its own."  In February 1940, the Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (CRNVR) "was established in order to meet the war-time security requirements."[45]  Local Sinhalese and Tamils received training by the Royal Navy.  In 1943, Britain assumed command of the unit and provided its 926 sailors with 10 ships (minesweepers and patrol crafts) to protect the approaches to Ceylon's harbors, escort ships to India, and conduct search and rescue operations.  After the war, CRNVR (downsized to 100 men without a ship) reverted to Ceylonese control.[46]

## INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

The Ceylonese government, knowing that the formation of a military would take time, saw an immediate need for a "viable defense shield" and believed they had two options: finding a regional ally (India or Pakistan) or finding an outside ally (Britain).  An alliance with India was not an option since D. S. Senanayake, Ceylon's first prime minister, believed "that the most likely threat to its independence would come from India"[47] based on his belief that India wanted to absorb Ceylon.  Even though India's Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru stated that "some people fear that the great country India might want to develop or sort of absorb Ceylon.  I assure you that if any people have any such idea it is completely wrong,"[48] Senanayake still feared annexation and decided that it was wise to join the British Commonwealth to protect Ceylon from another country.[49]

Britain viewed Ceylon as vital in its line of communication with Australia and New Zealand and agreed to a defense arrangement. On 11 November 1947, the two countries signed the "Defence and External Affairs Agreement." This agreement ensured that both countries would provide military assistance for each other for the security of their territories. Britain could base military forces on Ceylon as required and the British would assist in the training and development of the Ceylon armed forces. This aspect of the agreement was especially important since it allowed Britain to help train, equip, and even command the three military services in their formative years.[50]

The Ceylonese government recognized that its military was unable to defend the country from attack because both the army and navy were small and there was no air force. The Prime Minster had to ensure that the "defense forces were professionally equipped to meet our overall defence needs. . . . [which] meant the creation of a Regular Army . . . suitably trained and equipped."[51] Unfortunately, Ceylon's economic situation did not allow the government to spend much money on the military; instead of equipping them with modern weapons the three services relied on World War II vintage arms.

## THE ARMY

### Significant Events

On 10 October 1949, Act No. 17 of 1949[52] created the Royal Ceylon Army with both regular and volunteer forces. The most significant event during this period was the basic formation of an army out of a colonial force. This force lacked martial traditions because it had not fought in any battles and its "units had not been able to build pride based on long service or difficult campaigns."[53]

### Mission

The Army Act stated the army was to provide "for the defence of Ceylon in the time of war, or for the prevention or suppression

of any rebellion, insurrection or other civil disturbance in Ceylon."[54]   Section 23 of the Act allowed the army to perform non-military duties if there was a threat to "deprive the people of Ceylon, or a substantial portion of them, of the essentials of life by interfering with the supply and distribution of food, water, fuel, or light, or with the means of transport and communication."[55] This section is critical in the development of the army.  The commanders believed the army's immediate mission was to assist police, ensure protection of Colombo's port, provide static guards, and conduct ceremonial duties.  This set the stage for a future military that focused inward, not outward.[56]

### Operations
During the period following independence, the Ceylon Light Infantry Battalion assisted the police in internal security duties and ceremonial duties.  Although there was no threat, the Aircraft / Coast Artillery Regiment guarded the coast and airspace.[57]

### Doctrine and Tactics
The Ceylon army inherited British World War I doctrine and tactics that centered on static and trench warfare.  Since there was no need to protect the country from invasion, deal with internecine confrontations, or deploy troops off the island, there was no need to devote time and energy into the development of new doctrine or tactics at this time.  The army, which did not fight the mobile warfare of World War II, believed those from World War I fit their limited needs.[58]

### Command and Organization
The Ceylon government realized the need for senior British leadership.  After negotiations with Britain, Brigadier Roderick Sinclair, a British officer seconded to Ceylon initially as a military advisor, became the Commander of the Army.  Brigadier Sinclair's first appointment of a Ceylonese soldier in the command structure was Lieutenant Colonel Anton Muttukumaru as the Chief of Staff of the Army.[59]

The first units in the Ceylon Army were an anti-aircraft / coast artillery regiment, the Ceylon Light Infantry Regiment, a signal squadron, two engineer units, a medical unit, a service unit, a military police unit, and a recruit and training unit.  The army adopted Britain's regimental system – each infantry battalion would belong to a traditional "regiment" but the regiment would not have command authority over the unit.  The regiment would primarily have regular army battalions, but could also have volunteer battalions.  A headquarters provided the command element to co-ordinate training and administer units.[60]

Initially the army planned to billet the troops in the buildings where they were traditionally associated.  The infantry was at Echelon Barracks in Colombo and the artillery was at Rockhouse in Mutwal (overlooking Colombo's harbor).  The other units would use former British Army camps.  However, the government decided that it would not "permit units to be located in buildings situation in the centre of the city like Echelon Barracks.  Accordingly, it was decided that, except for units whose operational commitments dictated their continued occupation of accommodation in Colombo, units would be provided accommodation outside Colombo."[61]

Therefore, the government chose a site outside Colombo that would accommodate barracks, unit buildings, infantry, artillery, and engineer training areas – the Pangonda Cantonment.[62]

With the formation of the army, the CDF became the Volunteer Force and each regular army unit had a parallel volunteer unit. The Volunteers could not "be called out on active service unless the Regular Force . . . are considered . . . to be inadequate for that purpose."[63]  The reserve force comprised an anti-aircraft / coast artillery regiment, a light infantry unit, a signal unit, an engineer unit, a medical unit, a service unit, and a cadet unit.[64]

### Weapon Procurement and Existing Weapons
Two factors explain why the army did not procure any weapons during its first year of existence; Ceylon had no external enemies

and the army had a limited budget.  The army's initial duty was assisting the police.  "There was no need to have sophisticated weaponry for this purpose."[65]

The first units in the Ceylon Army inherited British World War II vintage equipment: Lee Enfield rifles and carbines, Bren light machine guns, Sterling submachine guns, 12 light and 8 heavy mortars, and 24 anti-aircraft guns.  These weapons were insignificant for the defense of the country but well suited for a ceremonial army with no enemies whose main duty was assisting the police.[66]

### Personnel

Initially, there was some thought of the Ceylon military having British officers and senior non-commissioned officers, as well as their Ceylonese counterparts, serve in the Ceylonese Army. However, the Ceylonese wanted an indigenous force.  Britain believed that the army needed British leadership and rejected the concept of a completely Ceylonese military.  They argued for, and the Ceylon Army adopted, a policy of having "a force led by those who had already served in the Ceylon-raised British army units and the C.D.F. during the war.  The composition of this body of men, moreover, was such as to encourage the belief that they generally harbored little hostility to Britain and would thus be easy to work with, should need for military cooperation become exigent again."[67]

Statistics for the army are not available but there are records of the numbers of infantry and artillery officers.  In the infantry, officer distribution did not accurately represent the ethnic composition of the country.  The Sinhalese were under-represented while the Burghers were over-represented. Christians dominated the army, comprising over 50 percent.[68]

The distribution of the enlisted soldiers transferring from the CDF was approximately 70 percent Sinhalese, 11 percent Muslim, 10 percent Tamil, 7 percent Burgher / Eurasian, and 2 percent from other ethnic groups.  This fairly represented the ethnic composition of the country.[69]

The ramifications of this integration meant that some Sinhalese soldiers, previously commanded by British officers in the CDF, were now under the command of Tamils and Burghers – an aspect most Sinhalese found unbearable.

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

Since Britain believed the army's cadre needed military experience, the Ceylonese decided that the nucleus of the army would be soldiers with CDF experience. Fresh recruits from the recruiting centers in Colombo, Kandy, Galle, Jaffna, Kurunegala, and Ratnapura matched the ethnic composition of the country fairly well. On 13 October 1949 (three days after their selection), 12 soldiers left Ceylon to attend Britain's Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.[70]

On 10 October 1949, the Army Recruit Training Depot at Diyatalawa opened. The army focused on organization rather than training in its first several months. Commanding officers spent their time working with their junior officers, warrant officers, and non-commissioned officers preparing to receive the new recruits into their units. Since the army needed to be able "to undertake 'frontline' duties in peace and war"[71] even though they were not fully organized or properly trained, they planned to handle situations as they arose and to integrate the recruits quickly into the units if needed.[72]

### Summary

In summary, the 1940s was a period of building an army from a society that did not have a military tradition. Warfare was not the army's mission in the 1940s and it was incapable of performing anything but ceremonial or static guard. The army's officer corps did not accurately reflect the ethnic or religious composition of the country. Although at the time this fact was considered immaterial, later it would cause serious repercussions in the society.

## THE AIR FORCE

The government of Ceylon knew that the country needed an Air Force. Prime Minister Seneanayake stated that Ceylon would not "be able to withstand the attack of a powerful foe, but we would be in a position to do so, if we have sufficiently developed our defence so as to hold of an enemy attack until we get the assistance of a powerful friend."[73] On 9 August 1949, the government of Ceylon passed Bill No. 41. This bill requested authorization to raise an air force that would protect the country in time of war or when a war was likely to occur. It did not include a section comparable to Section 23 of the Army Act of 1949, so the Air Force could not perform non-military duties except during declared national emergencies. However, "in all cases of aid to the civil power, the Government declared a State of Emergency and called out the three Services to do so."[74] The government officially formed the RCyAF on 3 October 1949. On 2 March 1951. Group Captain Graham Clerke Bladon, ex-British Royal Air Force, was its first commander.[75]

## THE NAVY

When Ceylon gained its independence, the country was in a relatively benign strategic environment. The rapid deterioration of relations between India and Pakistan indicated that Ceylon might had to have some defense capability because control of the island by either country would affect both countries' strategic options. Britain realized Ceylon would be unable to protect itself. Likewise, Ceylon leaders knew that "the defence of the country is one of the primary obligations of an independent state . . . [and that they were] in a specially dangerous position, because we are in one of the strategic highways of the world. The country that captures Ceylon would dominate the Indian Ocean. Nor is it only a question of protecting ourselves. . . . [I]f we have no imports for three months, we would starve, and we have therefore to protect our sea and air communications."[76]

Although Ceylon's leaders understood the strategic importance of having a navy, there was a notable absence of an immediate threat and along with the need to conserve money; this led them to rely on Britain to assist in defending the nation. The Ceylon government believed that Britain was obligated to provide assistance under the Defence and External Affairs Agreement, but the Act itself does not require Britain to provide any material aid – only "military assistance." Britain informed Ceylon that the Royal Navy would not provide 100 percent of the country's security needs and that Ceylon must at least match the military aid provided by the Royal Navy. While the government considered this request, the decade ended without Ceylon creating a navy.[77]

## CONCLUSION

Before gaining independence, Ceylon relied on the British for its security. After becoming an independent country, Ceylon's leaders did not see a significant need for defense expenditures because they did not view the country as being under immediate threat from another country. Furthermore, they believed that Britain would continue to assist in its defense; the Defence and External Affairs Agreement substantiated this. The initial efforts were not to create an army capable of defending the nation from outside influence, but simply to create a ceremonial force designed after the British Army. The leaders also recognized the need for an air force and a navy designed to assist the army in defending the country, but the decade ended without the formation of either.

# CHAPTER 5

## THE MILITARY OF THE 1950s

In 1950, Ceylon had a ceremonial army incapable of defending the country. Its navy did not have any ships and the air force lacked aircraft, pilots, and technicians. This chapter will discuss the changes in Ceylon's military during the 1950s.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

There were several events in the 1950s that contributed to the growth and development of Ceylon's military. Among these were: Indian emigrants landing near Mannar, a trade union strike in 1953, the riots following the introduction of the Sinhala Only Bill in 1957, the movement to change the ethnic makeup of the military services in favor of the Sinhalese, the abrogation of the defense agreement with Great Britain, and the decision not to join the South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO).

From 1950 to 1959, the defense budget allotted the army an average of 61 percent throughout the decade, the navy averaged 23 percent and the air force 16 percent. The army's higher rates in 1951 and 1952 are due to the formation of the army. The air force's percentage rose in the first four years and then remained relatively even throughout the rest of the decade and is indicative of its initial formation and its steady procurement program. The navy's initial budget represents its formation.[78]

## THE ARMY

### Mission

The army's mission in the 1950s remained one of assisting police and protecting the port of Colombo.  In the late 1950s, an amendment to the Army Act allowed the deployment of soldiers in non-military duties since the government envisioned using engineer units for numerous infrastructure projects - including the improvement of roads and the building of governmental buildings.[79]

### Operations

During the 1950s, the army conducted seven operations.  It is important to note that the majority of the army's operations were against uprising by Ceylonese citizens, both Sinhalese and Tamils, and none were conventional military operations.[80]

- Ops Monty, later called Task Force for Anti Illicit Immigration – TFAII, involved the capture of illegal Indian emigrants. This operation began on 16 July 1952 and lasted throughout the rest of the decade.
- In 1953, the regular army, along with mobilized volunteer units, put down striking trade unionists.  This was the first time the army came to the assistance of the police.
- In June 1956, the army stopped Jaffna Tamils, upset over the pending Sinhala Only Bill, from causing a civil disturbance in the Gal Oya valley, which was inhabited by both Tamils and Sinhalese.
- In 1957, the army restored order after the Sinhalese began harassing Jaffna Tamils protesting the passage of the Sinhala Only Bill.
- A second deployment in 1957 involved soldiers helping the citizens in a humanitarian mission after heavy rains caused massive flooding.
- In 1958, both the regular army and the volunteer forces restored civil order after Sinhalese and Jaffna Tamils began

fighting each other throughout the country after the passage of the Sinhala Only Bill.
- In the final operation of the decade (date unknown), the army assisted the police in finding and destroying illegal marijuana plantations.

### Doctrine

From 1950 to 1956, the army's doctrine focused on fighting a conventional war in open country.  In 1956, the doctrine changed to reflect jungle and anti-guerilla operations.  In 1958, after the riots between the Tamils and the Sinhalese, General Anton Muttukumaru suggested to the Prime Minister that the army should create four regions to ease operational control and be better prepared to defend the country.   It appears that he believed that the main threat came from the people - not from a foreign force.  Therefore, he planned on placing an artillery regiment in the north where problems with the Jaffna Tamils were likely; an infantry battalion in the central region where he thought the Indian Tamils might cause problems; and an armor unit in the south where he believed trade unionist posed the greatest threat.  The fourth region would be at Paganda where the reserve forces would be located.  Clearly, Muttukumaru saw the army more as a tool against the people than against foreign aggressors.[81]

### Command and Organization

During the 1950s, the army two infantry regiments, the Sri Lanka Light Infantry and the Sri Lanka Sinha Regiment. Infantry units raised during the 1950s belonged to one of these two regiments.  In the 1950s, several new units formed using cadre from existing units as nuclei.  Units included armored reconnaissance, infantry, artillery, and service support.[82]

All of the units were under the direct control of the Ceylon army's headquarters and no subordinate command and control units existed.  The formation of the four regions suggested

by General Muttukumaru would have created the subordinate commands required for better command of the troops.[83]

Prime Minster Sir John Kotelawa feared civil unrest and believed there was a need for "loyal" units to support the government.  On 1 September 1955, he ordered the activation of two Sinhalese infantry units, the Raja Rata Rifles (Kandy) and the Ruhunu Regiment (Galle and Matara).  At the same time, the government federalized the Railway Department (RD) and the Post and Telegraph Department (PTD) and turned them into volunteer military units.  Mobilization of these units would occur during strikes and the men would have to serve the government - not the unions.  In 1956, newly elected Prime Minister Bandaranaike disbanded the RD and the PTD.  He also wanted to disband the two new infantry units since he believed that they were disloyal during the election and that they were too regionally based.  He feared that the precedent of creating regional units would lead to the creation of "Tamil only" units in the Jaffna region.  General Muttukumaru argued that the disbandment of these units would result in there being an insufficient number of troops in the event of a crisis.  The two men compromised and the units were disbanded, but the 1st Battalion, Ceylon Sinha Regiment (which used the Raja Rata unit as its nuclei) formed on 1 October 1956.  The Ceylon Sinha Regiment was the country's second infantry regiment.[84]

On 5 July 1959, because the government was having difficulty finding enough labor to harvest the sugar canes in Kantalia, it created a Pioneer Corps.  The government believed that "it was important to have these troops to meet the requirements in maintaining essential services as strikes and workers unrest was a common phenomenon."[85]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

Ceylon did not join SEATO. Membership would have required the military to upgrade its equipment and the government believed that there was no need to purchase  modern equipment.

Instead, the army procured an unknown number of British Saracen armored cars and approximately 15 Ferret scout cars for its Armoured Reconnaissance Unit.[86]

The only weapons listed in Ceylon's inventory were World War II vintage rifles and carbines, machine guns, light and heavy mortars, and 3.7-inch anti-aircraft guns. The army also had tracked Bren Gun carriers[87]

## Personnel

Ethnically and religiously, the army's officer corps did not match the country's demographics. In 1956, the army's officers were 50 percent Sinhalese, 20 percent Jaffna Tamils, and 20 percent Burghers, and 10 percent non-Burgher Europeans. Based on 1953 census[88] (Sinhalese 80 percent, Jaffna Tamils 11 percent, and Burgers and Eurasians less than 1 percent), the Sinhalese were under-represented and Jaffna Tamils and Burghers over-represented.[89]

Religiously, Christians composed 50 percent of the army, Buddhist 40 percent, and Hindus 10 percent. Based on the 1953 census (Christians 9 percent, Buddhists 64 percent, and Hindus 20 percent), Christians were over-represented and the other two religions under-represented.

Since the Sinhalese Buddhist majority was under-represented, the government decided to "change the ethnic make-up of the services in favour of the Sinhalese."[90] This led to several government ordered re-organizations that caused problems within the officer corps between the different ethnic groups.[91]

## Retention, Recruitment, and Training

Although there is no information about army basic recruitment during the 1950s, there is information on the recruitment of cadets to Sandhurst. During the 1950s, there were 83 cadets selected to attend the military academy (51 from 1950 to 1955 and 32 from 1957 to 1960). Once again, the ethnic representation did not match the country's ethnic and religious demography: Sinhalese

Buddhist were under-represented and both Jaffna Tamils and Burghers were over-represented. The Sinhalese Buddhist majority was under-represented and the government decided to recruit more Sinhalese officers. The plan failed and the number of Sinhalese officers actually decreased to roughly 50 percent. There were two reasons: 1) an unbalanced representation in the major secondary schools which were feeder schools for the entrance of potential candidates to Sandhurst, and 2) Sinhalese Buddhist families did not view the military as a proper career.[92]

In January 1950, the instructors of the Recruit Training Depot received "a complete course of training under the British [Army] Training Team."[93] These instructors (non-commissioned officers) included Sinhalese, Tamil, and English speakers. On 30 January 1950, the first recruits arrived at the training depot. Training included parade ground drills, weapon skills, map reading, and physical training. The Recruit Training Depot, while mainly focused on training recruits, also conducted some short courses for NCOs. Ceylon was allotted only six positions at Sandhurst each year, so the government decided in the late 1950s that the army could commission qualified university graduates. A few of these officers went to England or Belgium for short courses and then joined the army as Lieutenants. Most of these cadets received their training locally due to a shortage of money.[94]

Unit training in the early years of the decade included physical training, basic infantry training, jungle training, map reading, and marksmanship. To assist in the jungle training, the UK sent a training team to the country to instruct the Ceylonese units on how to live and fight in the jungle. The training also included improvised river crossings, patrols, ambushes, supply by air, and first aid.[95]

In February 1954, Ceylon conducted its first collective training during Exercise Tyro. The exercise took place in the jungles of Tanamalwila and involved the 1st Ceylon Light Infantry Battalion moving across part of the country to "repel" an invading force. From 1957 to 1959, the 1st Ceylon Light

Infantry Battalion conducted platoon training focusing on anti-terrorists and internal security. A second exercise, held in 1959 in the Ranna area, involved two infantry battalions conducting an "advance to contact."[96]

### Summary

In the early 1950s, the army was capable of conducting small unit (company and below) operations; by the end of the decade it could operate as a battalion, at least during an exercise. It remained mainly a ceremonial force with outdated equipment. The government's readiness to engage the army in anti-trade union activities and other activities against unarmed opponents gave the soldiers the opportunity to become accustomed to using force against the country's citizens. It did nothing to sharpen its combat skills.

The army of the 1950s was closely tied to the ceremonial force of the 1940s. It did not face any major threats during the decade and, because of Ceylon's tight budget, new weapons were not necessary. Additionally, the lack of a perceived threat ensured that the post-World War II British doctrine remained. Lastly, the government's willingness to use the military to quell ethnic tensions instead of seeking peaceful solutions may have indicated their desire to ensure tensions between Tamils and Sinhalese remained.

## THE AIR FORCE

### Mission

The air force's stated mission during the decade was to protect the country. In reality, its mission during the 1950 was to patrol the coastline for illegal immigrants, conduct humanitarian missions, and transport personnel and equipment. Additionally, elements of the air force assisted in maintaining law and order during declared national emergencies.

**Operations**

During the 1950s, the RCyAF conducted six missions.  The use of RCyAF personnel in the 1953 and 1958 operations was a change of pace for the airmen.  The men did not object to the missions, but they enjoyed it and felt that they were being useful. Other than these occasional calls to duty, it was a peacetime Air Force and after their basic and trade training a sense or boredom could creep in. However, the skilled tradesmen like aircraft technicians etc did feel that they were being misused.[97]

The majority of the air force's operations in this period were conducted against illegal immigration, in support of humanitarian missions, and assisting police.  None were conventional military operations.[98]

- Beginning in 1952 and lasting throughout the decade, the RCyAF supported the Ceylon Army as part of Ops Monty / TAFII by conducting reconnaissance patrols.
- Airmen helped maintain law and order by conducting foot patrols in Colombo in January 1953, in the Jaffna area in 1957, and again in Colombo in June 1959.
- In December 1957, the RCyAF provided humanitarian assistance during the floods by using Doves to drop food, blankets, and supplies while Dragonfly helicopters conducted rescue missions.
- In the final operation of the decade (date unknown), the air force assisted the army and police by using a Dragonfly to spot the illegal marijuana plantations.

**Doctrine and Tactics**

Throughout the 1950s, the RCyAF struggled to become a recognized military force capable of "at least hold[ing] up an invading force of the enemy until assistance arrives from a bigger country with whom we have an alliance."[99]  The air force's doctrine should have revolved around the creation of a fighting force but instead doctrine and tactics centered on the use of transport and reconnaissance aircraft, not on fighters.[100]

### Command and Organization

The RCyAF, headquartered in Colombo, operated out of Katunayaka airfield (south of Colombo) and China Bay (Trincomalee).  In 1953, its first wing became operational as a training unit.  In 1954, a regiment squadron formed with the primary task of defending its airfields and a secondary task of performing internal security operations during national emergencies.  On 1 September 1957, the RCyAF dissolved its wing and created two squadrons.  The 1st Squadron (Training) had Chipmunks and Balliols.  The 2nd Squadron (Operations) had Oxfords, Doves, Pioneers, and Dragonfly.  The 2nd Squadron gained four De Havilland Herons in 1959.  Although the Katunayake and China Bay airfields became the property of the RCyAF on 1 November 1957 when the Ceylon / UK Defence Agreement ended, the RAF remained at Katunayake until they moved to the Maldives in 1960 and at China Bay.  They withdrew the aircraft in 1959 and the technical personnel in July 1960.  In 1959, a special unit composed of infantrymen formed at Diyatalawa for ceremonial functions.[101]

### Weapon Procurement and Existing Weapons

Since the RCyAF did not inherit aircraft from Britain, they purchased them.  The air force determined that its first requirement was to purchase 27 training planes.  Between 1952 and 1953, it bought 12 Chipmunks, 12 Boulton Paul Balloiols, and 3 Airspeed Oxfords.  The second requirement was for operations and the RCyAF purchased 26 aircraft between 1955 to 1959; two Sikorsky S-52 Dragonfly helicopters (1955), six de Havilland Doves (December 1955 – 1958), four Prestwick Pioneer - Scottish Aviation Twin Pioneer C. C. 2 (two in 1955 and two in 1958), twelve Hunting-Percival Jet Provost T.51 (1959), and four DH Heron (1959 – 1960).  The Doves were the main operational aircraft of the RCyAF and "were intended primarily for internal communications and for patrols north-west of the island to intercept illegal immigrants from mainland India."[102]

Due to a multitude of small airstrips dispersed throughout the island, Ceylon purchased the Pioneers, which conduct short take offs and landings (STOL).[103]

In 1952, the RCyAF ordered five de Havilland Vampires because, "in keeping with the defence policy at that time [and] in keeping with Commonwealth arrangements, Ceylon was to provide one wing of fighters."[104] In a peaceful environment, the government decided that jet fighters were unnecessary and when the fighters arrived in 1955, the crates remained on the docks until returned to the Britain in exchange for the Doves (December 1955 – 1958). The de Havillan Company was not willing to refund the money and insisted that the RCyAF use the funding to purchase other aircraft. The desire of the RCyAF leaders to have jet aircraft remained. The purchase of Jet Provosts in 1959 gave the RCyAF the capability of conducting combat operations and gave Ceylon the distinction of being the first country outside of Britain to have these aircrafts in an armed version.[105]

During the 1950s, some of the planes were lost due to mechanical problems or crashes. By the end of the decade, the RCyAF had twelve Chipmunks, three Doves, three Pioneers, twelve Jet Provost, four Herons, and two S51 helicopters. The RCyAF also had "some gliders but they were non-effective under the weather conditions in Sri Lanka."[106] The Oxfords were phased out in 1958 and Balliols went into storage in 1959.[107]

### Personnel

The first problem the air force faced was that there were no Ceylonese pilots or anyone who had air force training. The 1947 Defence Treaty stated that Britain would assist Ceylon with developing an armed force. Group Captain Graham Clerke Bladon and other British officers arrived in 1951 to help create the air force. The air force had to rely totally on recruitment to fill its ranks.[108]

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

When the government first advertised trainee pilot positions, 200 men applied for the 12 positions. "The personnel nucleus of the new service was provided by the recruiting of Sinhalese and Tamils that had been members of the British forces during WWII."[109] By the end of the decade, there were 20 pilots and 840 men in the air force.[110]

In 1951, the Diyatalawa training unit became operational and focused on training the Ceylonese using standard RAF training plans. Throughout the decade, the RCyAF's "object was to have a nucleus of highly trainined personnel that could be diluted with numbers if the need arose."[111] The air force slowly expanded in size and a new pilot training wing was set up at Katunayake in 1951. Also in 1951, three men went to Britain for three years of flight training. Two completed the course. Due to budgetary constraints, only six more men went to Britain for flight training. Ten additional men stayed at Katunayake and they received their training from qualified RAF flight instructors seconded to the RCyAF. [112]

The RCyAF also recruited technicians and administrators. The first group of aircraft technicians went to the RAF's School of Technical Training at Halton in 1951 and additional groups attended Halton every four months. Additional apprentices went to RAF Cranwell for Radio and Ground Radar courses or to RAF Hereford for administrative courses. A total of 106 apprentices graduated from these schools.[113]

### Summary

The RCyAF of the 1950s was not a fighting force, neither offensively nor defensively. Its planes patrolled the coastline for illicit immigrants, conducted humanitarian missions, transported personnel and equipment, and conducted formation flying and aerobatics. Furthermore, elements of the air force assisted in maintaining law and order in 1953 and 1958, more in the role of a police force than those normally associated with an air force.

"The first 10 years was a slow but gradual training process. It was meant to create a base of trained personnel who could be inducted at short notice for any major operational task within the constraints of finances available."[114]

## THE NAVY

### The Formation
Ceylon did not have a navy during the first three years of its existence from 1947 to 1950.  On 9 December 1950, the government passed the Ceylon Navy Act.  Men from the Ceylon Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (CRNVR) formed the nuclei of the Royal Ceylon Navy.  The HMCeyS *Viyaya* was its only ship until it purchased more in 1955.[115]

### Mission
The initial mission of the navy was "the defense of the port of Colombo and inshore and coastal mine clearance."[116]  Soon afterwards, the government added the mission of preventing illegal immigration and smuggling across the Palk Strait.  In addition, the navy had to protect Ceylon fisheries, conduct search and rescue operations, and provide disaster assistance.  It also performed civil defense functions.[117]

### Operations
The first mission of the navy was to assist the army in 1952 in Operation WETBACK - the stopping of illegal immigration from India.  The minesweeper *Vijaya* attempted to conduct patrols in the Palk Strait.  The *Vijaya* was too large and the navy had to take over control of light patrol craft from the Customs and Fisheries service in order to conduct the required patrols.[118]

### Doctrine and Tactics
Initially, Ceylon planned on creating a force of three frigates, twelve coastal minesweepers, and six seaward defense boats.

This proved to be both costly and over ambitious and the plan changed to the creation of a minesweeping flotilla of six ships. *Vijaya*'s failure to stop the flow of immigrants across the Palk Strait led to the abandonment of the minesweeping flotilla scheme. The focus changed to a seaward defense of the island, particularly the city of Colombo.[119]

### Command and Organization

On 15 September 1955, the navy established a base (HMCyS *Elara*) at Karainager in northern Ceylon. Its location reflected the navy's role in preventing illegal immigration. When the British forces left the island in 1957, the navy took over Trincomalee Naval Base, the communication center at Welisara, and a naval training center at Diyatalawa. During the decade, there were no subordinate commands; all of the ships received their orders directly from the naval headquarters in Colombo.[120]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

When the government created the navy, it expected Britain to cover the initial cost of purchasing ships. Britain insisted that any aid it sent would have to be matched by an equal sum from Ceylon. There was no external threat and the British navy was still present in the Indian Ocean, so the Ceylonese government decided not to spend any money on ships. In 1950, Britain permanently loaned Ceylon a minesweeper which the Ceylon Navy renamed the HMCeyS *Viyaya*. In 1955, Britain transferred a seaward defense boat to Ceylon.[121]

The navy's first purchase occurred in 1955 when it ordered six coastal patrol boats (at least two were unarmed) from the Korody Marine Corporation in Venice, Italy. In 1957, the navy purchased an oceangoing tug from Britain.

The end of the 1947 Defence Agreement resulted in a reduction of British ships in the Indian Ocean. Commodore G. R. M. (Royce) de Mel, the Ceylonese navy commander, pressured the government to increase the navy's size and capabilities in order

to protect the country's offshore interests.  The government still did not want to spend much money and de Mel resorted to purchasing a used minesweeper from the UK and two old frigates from Israel.  In addition to these ships, the navy also had 24 smaller patrol craft operating in the shallow waters of Palk Bay and the Palk Straits.[122]

### Personnel
The navy's initial complement of men in December 1950 was six officers and sixty sailors who had been part of the CRNVR. Since the Defence Treaty stated that the UK would assist Ceylon with any military assistance that may be required towards the development of an armed force, Captain William Banks, seconded from the Royal Navy, became the first commander of the Ceylon Navy.  Commander de Mel was the senior Ceylonese officer.[123]

### Retention, Recruitment and Training
During the first two years, the navy grew slowly.  It had only 35 officers and 458 sailors in 1955.  The numbers dramatically increased between 1955 and 1958, to 136 officers and 1,650 sailors.  By the end of the decade, it had approximately 150 officers and 1,800 sailors.  It is important to note that the navy tried to distance itself from the Sinhalese recruitment policy favored by the government, that of recruiting Sinhalese over Tamils.  However, it still had retention and recruiting problems because the non-Sinhalese personnel feared they would not have a future in the Sinhalese dominated military and were unwilling to join the navy.[124]

The agreement with Britain allowed Ceylon to send naval officers to the British Royal Naval College Dartmouth for training.  The sailors received their training at the Diyatalawa Naval Academy.  Operation WETBACK provided the navy with its first joint service operation and gave its junior personnel much needed training.  The navy also took part in several joint

Commonwealth exercises hosted at Trincomalee during the 1950's.[125]

The government did not believe in spending much money on the navy and this adversely affected the procurement of fuel and spare parts. This in turn affected readiness because Ceylon could not afford to pay foreign nations for experienced technical personnel and the ships were not always sea-ready.[126]

**Summary**

During the 1950s, the navy struggled over its role. The requirement was to defend Colombo and the nation's interest but its mission involved stopping illegal immigrants. The government did not want to give it enough money to purchase the required ships; it had to accomplish its mission the best it could with run-down ships and small boats that were not suited for stopping illegal immigrants. In practicality, the navy was more for "show" than for "force."

## CONCLUSION

Illegal immigration, strikes, and riots all contributed to the growth and development of the military during the 1950s. The army was mainly ceremonial and not a combat force. It conducted primarily civilian or police missions. The air force had no colonial force as a base on which to build and spent the majority of the decade training pilots and airmen while relying on the British to provide air protection. It was not until the end of the 1947 Defence Treaty that the air force realized that it might have to defend Ceyon and it took steps to increase its chance of survival by purchasing jet fighters. When the air force became involved in operations, they were either humanitarian or involved using airmen as policemen - rather than as a military force. Throughout the 1950s, the navy had the most difficult mission. It was required to protect the country's borders while not allowed to purchase appropriate ships.

The 1950s was a period of growth for all three services, not as a military force but as a militarized police force. A major reason for the military's failure to turn into a combat force was its lack of a perceived enemy. This left the military inessential and furthered its misuse by civilian authorities.

# CHAPTER 6

## THE MILITARY OF THE 1960s

In 1960, Ceylon's military was incapable of defending the country. The army was mainly a ceremonial force with antiquated weapons. The air force had only recently purchased fighters and was untested in air-to-air combat. The navy had three old, large ships and twenty-four small patrol boats and could not defend the approaches to the country's ports. This chapter will discuss changes in the military services during the 1960s.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Two coup attempts during the 1960s caused the Ceylonese government to question the loyalty of the military. These attempts led to a reduction of weapon procurement and training as the prime minister sought to ensure that the military was incapable of removing the legitimate government from power.

On 27 January 1962, several senior officers in the army, navy, and police attempted a coup d'etat. The leaders believed that the government was responsible for the beginnings of the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict, economic stagnation, and political instability. Their objective was to replace Prime Minister Srimavo Bandaranaike with a council of former prime ministers and then hold an election to name a new prime minister.[127]

In 1966, following the defeat of Prime Minister Bandaranaike and the victory of the United National Party (UNP) coalition, another coup was staged. This coup attempt was composed primarily of Buddhists in the army "intent on protecting the Sinhalese-Buddhist identity of the armed service from possible dilution by the new government."[128] The government acquitted all of the accused.[129]

The army received the majority of the defense allocations throughout the decade, averaging 54 percent. The air force averaged 25 percent and the navy 21 percent. Throughout the decade, the allocations for each service remained fairly constant, never varying more than five percent from the average.[130]

## THE ARMY

### Mission

Although there was no stated change in the army's mission of the 1960s, it appears to have changed from its original mission to "guard the coast and airspace of the island [and to] assist the police in internal security duties, for static guards and ceremonial duty,"[131] to being simply a force to assist the police.

### Operations

During the 1960s, the army conducted seven missions. These operations, which were police and not "true" military missions, detracted from the army's ability to conduct combat training – leaving the army incapable of defending the country.[132]

- The army continued to conduct the TFAII mission throughout the 1960s.[133] After the 1962 coup attempt, the government wanted to limit prolonged contact between army and police units and the units began rotating through the area for three-month periods. Although the mission was constantly taking men out of their battalions and not allowing them routine training, it did have benefits. Some of these included learning how to operate at night, map reading, and establishing several

"permanent" camps in the northern and eastern sections of the country.

- On 15 April 1961, the army sent over 300 soldiers to Jaffna to counter a peaceful Jaffna Tamil civil disobedience campaign. The army brutalized the peaceful protesters and on 17 April the government ordered a State of Emergency; the military began a two-year long occupation of the Northern and Eastern provinces (where the majority of the Jaffna Tamils lived).
- On 18 December 1961, the government ordered another State of Emergency when workers at Colombo Port went on strike. Regular and volunteer forces, along with the Pioneer Corps, took over the unloading of ships until the strike ended a month later. The military had over 14,000 men working the port during the strike.
- On 5 January 1962, the army sent nine platoons to Colombo to quell a civil disturbance organized by the trade union.
- In December 1967, the army deployed troops to Bulathkohupitiya, Runanwella, and Kegalle to prevent unrest during an Estate Strike.
- On 24 December 1967, the army sent a battalion to Colombo to patrol the streets due to civil disturbances. This mission ended on 18 January 1968.
- The decade ended with soldiers conducting a "plough shares for guns" campaign in which soldiers farmed instead of trained for war.

**Doctrine and Tactics**

As a result of the changing domestic scene and the failed coups, the government decided to review its defense policy and asked the governments of Canada and Yugoslavia to send teams to make recommendations on defense policy. As a result of this study, the nation changed its defense strategy. The military "was to resort to 'guerrilla warfare' in the event of an invasion as the forces did not have the wherewithal and the country could not afford large forces to face an enemy attack. On the other hand,

if 'guerrilla forces' were formed by a dissident element counter guerrilla measures were to be adopted."[134]

The guerrilla training did not occur since the army was used extensively in the late 1960s in national development and food production roles.[135]

### Command and Organization

During the 1960s, the army had two infantry regiments, the Sri Lanka Light Infantry and the Sri Lanka Sinha Regiment. Infantry units raised during the 1950s belonged to one of these two regiments.[136]  These regiments were ceremonial groupings of units and they did not have any command relationship.  All units were under direct control of the army's headquarters and no subordinate command units existed.

The 1962 coup attempt led to several unit changes.  Of the 16-army officers involved in the coup, eight were officers from two of the three artillery units.  This caused Prime Minister Bandaranaike to distrust these units[137] and she ordered the entire artillery corps disbanded on 25 April 1962.  The following day, the 4th Regiment Ceylon Artillery formed, commanded by loyal officers from the 1st and 3rd regiments.[138]

On 7 December 1962, the army formed a third infantry regiment – the Gemunu Watch.  Also on that day, the three infantry units were re-organized into the Corps of Infantry. Almost immediately after its formation, problems arose between the units revolving around uniforms and seniority because each unit wanted to maintain its identity.  On 21 April 1968, the commander of the army ordered the unit disbanded.[139]

Since several of the officers in the 1962 coup attempt were in the volunteer engineer unit and the volunteer signals unit, Bandaranaike disbanded them also.  A volunteer battalion of the new regular infantry regiment, two battalions of the National Guard (first indication of a force named National Guard), and an engineer unit (Development & Construction) were formed. On 1 June 1963, the Ceylon Army National Defence Corps

disbanded.    After  the  1964  coup  attempt,  the  government
disbanded the reserve headquarters and the units likely received
their directions from the regular army headquarters.[140]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

Conflicting  reports  exist  concerning  Ceylon's  weapons
procurement during the 1960s.   The Stockholm International
Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported that Ceylon acquired
15 Ferret armored fighting vehicles from the United Kingdom in
1960, but other reports indicate that they acquired these vehicles
in the 1950s.   Also reported is the acquisition of 12 Daimler
Dingo reconnaissance vehicles and 18 Ferrets (instead of the 15
reported by SIPRI).   The army purchased 990 semi-automatic
rifles from Australia (1969 – 1970).[141]

During  the  1960s,  the  army  appears  to  have  had  Daimler
DINGO  reconnaissance  vehicles,  Saracen  armored  cars,  and
Ferret scout cars.  They may have still had the tracked Bren Gun
carriers at the beginning of the decade, but at the end of the
decade, their inventory does not list them.  The army continued
to use World War II vintage rifles, machine guns, heavy and light
mortars, and 3.7-inch anti-aircraft guns.[142]

### Personnel

In 1961, fewer than half of the commissioned officers were
Sinhalese.    President  Bandaranike,  a  Sinhalese  Buddhist,
wanted more Sinhalese Buddhists in the officer corps to give
them greater influence in the running of the armed services.  A
major shift in "the ethnic and religious composition of the . . .
army officer corps became evident almost as soon as she came
to power."[143]  This shift in officer personnel may have influenced
the coup attempt of 1962 since the coups leaders believed that
the Bandaranike government was responsible for the beginnings
of  the  Sinhalese-Tamil  conflict  through  the  passing  of  the
Sinhala Only Bill.   In 1966, the army had 5,300 men and it
remained at this strength throughout the decade.   Given the

ethnic composition of the army, based on the recruitment policy (see Retention, Recruitment, and Training), it is likely that the percentage of Sinhalese Buddhists grew dramatically while the number of Jaffna Tamils and Burghers decreased.  The number of men in the reserves are not listed in available sources.[144]

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

In 1962, a policy of recruiting only from the Sinhalese Buddhist community was instituted.  This was the beginning of an ethnically pure army and caused Tamils and other ethnic groups to believe they were viewed as "second-class citizens" who could not even be trusted to protect the country.  No records involving retention or recruitment are available.[145]

Training records for the entire army are not available, but records from the 1st Ceylon Light Infantry Battalion may be indicative of the training of the infantry units prior to the failed 1962 coup.  From 1960 to the first half of 1961, the 1st Ceylon Light Infantry Battalion conducted a six-week anti-terrorist operations that culminated in a four-day exercise.  This exercise tested the battalion's ability to fight a terrorist force operating in the jungle.  To complement the training, two senior officers went to Yugoslavia for training in guerilla operations and an unknown number of senior NCOs traveled to Malaya for training in jungle operations.  After completing this training, the battalion training focused on counter threats to internal security.  While the infantry conducted its jungle training, the armor unit concentrated its training on increasing its ability to deploy.[146]

After the first coup in 1962, the government decided to stop large-scale exercises. The government feared that by allowing the units to conduct the training that they would be more capable of over-throwing the government.  For the rest of the decade, only company-size training was allowed.  This restriction not only decreased the ability of units to train together, but it also limited the training opportunities of battalion and higher headquarters.[147]

In the 1960s, the army began sending mid and senior-grade officers to Indian, Pakistani, and Australian schools. These schools included India's Defence Services Staff College and the military academy, Pakistan's military academy, and Australia's Army Staff College. It does not appear that the training was designed to increase Ceylon's ability to conduct multi-national operations; rather, the training was simply more cost effective than sending the officers to European military schools. Due to budgetary constraints, the government decided in 1968 that it would no longer send cadets overseas and the Army Training Center created an officer cadet school.[148]

### Summary

The two coup attempts of the 1960s devastated the army. The Prime Minster ordered units disbanded. At the start of the decade, the army was capable of conducting battalion-size operations – at least in training. By the end of the decade, it was unlikely that the army could conduct anything larger than company size operations due to the training restrictions placed on it.

The army maintained its capability to conduct small-unit level police / customs operations. Much of the army's jungle and guerrilla training did not occur since the government used the army to assist in national development instead. This lack of jungle training might have been beneficial against the JVP uprising of the early 1970s.

## THE AIR FORCE

### Mission

During the 1960s, the air force's official mission remained unchanged – to protect the country in time of war. In reality, during the decade it was "primarily [used] for internal security purposes"[149] and could not defend the country from a foreign attack.

### Operations
During the 1960s, the RCyAF conducted two missions – neither of them combat related.
- Throughout the decade, the RCyAF continued to conduct reconnaissance missions in support of the TFAII operations.
- In 1962, the government used the air force to arrest and secure the coup suspects.  The government trusted the air force with this mission since none of its men were involved in the attempt.[150]

### Doctrine and Tactics
The majority of the early leaders of the RCyAF received their training in Britain. Therefore, the basic doctrine and tactics remained British in nature; they were only slightly modified to fit the needs of a smaller air force with limited equipment.[151]

### Command and Organization
On 13 November 1962, Bkanayake Rohan Amarasekera became Ceylon's first Air Vice Marshal and assumed command of the RCyAF.  Before 1962, the RCyAF renovated the airbase at China Bay to make room for the growing number of men trained there.  The air force deactivated Puttalam, Koggala, Sigiriya, and Vavuniya airbases, but continued to perform limited maintenance on them.  This enabled the RCyAF to use the airfields during exercises or states of emergency.  In 1968, the No.4 helicopter flight, with the three Bell Jet Rangers, became operational.[152]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Equipment
In the first several years of the decade, the RCyAF placed the Jet Provosts into storage because the government did not perceive a threat requiring these aircraft.  The lack of a threat, coupled with poor economic conditions throughout the first eight years of the decade, resulted in the RCyAF stopping its procurement program.  In 1968, after a budgetary increase, Ceylon purchased its only aircraft in the decade: three Bell Jet Rangers helicopters from the USA.[153]

The number of aircraft fell from 56 in 1959 to 38 in 1966 and to 35 at the end of the decade. Some of the losses were due to accidents, but the majority of them were because the planes were taken out of service. In 1969, the air force had approximately nine Chipmunks, eight Jet Provosts (in storage), five Doves, four Herons, three Pioneer (being phased out), two Dragonflys (being phased out), three Bell Jet Ranger helicopters, and one Hiller helicopter.[154]

### Personnel

In the first half of the 1960s, the officers who were taking over the RCyAF went to the UK to attend a staff course. Group Captain Amarasekera, who assumed command of the RCyAF in 1962, had recently graduated from Britain's Imperial Defence College in 1961. In 1962, "the period of seconded RAF officers came to an end, [and] they were replaced by Sri Lankans who by their training performance and experience were considered capable to hold these appointments."[155] By the end of 1966, the British personnel returned to Britain and the RCyAF was entirely Ceylonese.

Because of the Sinhala Only Law of 1957, Sinhala became the working language in the air force, thus relegating Tamils into a "second-class" status unless they spoke Sinhala. English remained the primary language for all external correspondence and Sinhala was used mainly in administration and disciplinary activities involving the enlisted ranks as they did not speak English.

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

In 1960, there were only 840 men in the air force. In 1966, the number of airmen increased to 1,600 men and remained at that level throughout the rest of the decade.[156]

After the RAF trainers left, most of the officers went to Britain, India, or Pakisan for training instead of going to Katunayake. After 1963, when the Number 1 Squadron (Flying Training

School) moved to China Bay, most of the training occurred on Ceylon.[157]

The Jet Provost's main purpose was to serve as a training aircraft. It introduced the pilots to jet technology. This would prove useful in the future. "This came in handy in 1971 when the [JVP] insurgency broke out and the Russians gave us a squadron of MiG 15 / 17. We trained and sent the Russian [pilots] back in 1 months time."[158]

### Summary

During the 1960s, there was no change in the RCyAF's operational capabilities and the RCyAF still was not a fighting force. Its aircraft conducted reconnaissance patrols, search and rescue operations, short- and long-range transport, and VIP transportation. It role in TFAII and in assisting the government during the coup showed that the air force was still more of a police force than an actual air force.[159]

## THE NAVY

### Mission

During the 1960s, the navy's mission focused on stopping smuggling and the flow of illegal immigrants across the Palk Strait than on defending the country from an external attack.[160]

### Operations

During the 1960s, the Ceylonese navy conducted three missions – none of them combat related.

- Throughout the decade, the navy continued to conduct anti-immigration patrols in the relatively shallow Palk Bay, Palk Strait, and west and northwest coasts. In the early 1960s, the navy was not very successful since its ships could not operate in the shallow waters. When the navy began using the shallow draft Thorneycrofts in 1966, it was more successful since these ships could easily navigate the uncharted waters.[161]

- In 1960, two ships went on a flag showing cruise in east and southeast Asia; planning on visiting Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Port Swettenham, and Panang. Unfortunately, one ship suffered engine problems in Hong Kong and the other ship had to continue the cruise on its own. Both ships eventually returned to Colombo together. When they returned, the Ceylonese police met them and accused the crews of smuggling arms and ammunition back to the island. Although no weapons were found, the police found an illegal cache of liquor. The government ordered the liquor dumped at sea, but the crew managed to sell the liquor instead.[162]
- In April 1965, the navy sent its reservists to help the police and army units stationed in the area suppress a Tamil civil disobedience campaign in the Jaffna region. Of note is that the government sent only naval forces; not soldiers or airmen as was usually the case.[163]

### Doctrine and Tactics

With the change in focus, the navy "began to question the value of its larger units,"[164] including two frigates bought in 1959. The navy realized that it needed to acquire ships with a shallow draft if it wanted to stop and board many small ships illegally traveling to the island. This led to the purchase of the Thorneycrofts. For the remainder of the decade, although the navy still had a few large ships, it would focus exclusively on becoming a small ship force.[165]

### Command and Organization

In the late 1960s, there were two Thorneycrofts squadrons, one at Kalpitiya and the other at Karainager. The navy's older and larger ships were at Trincomalee Harbor and Colombo since they continued to conduct coastal patrolling, but not anti-smuggling or anti-illicit immigration operations.[166]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

The government's difficult economic situation during the 1960s and the lack of a need for large ships ensured that there were no unnecessary expenditures beyond those required to keep the small boat flotilla and the personnel to man them. An increase in the navy's budget from 1966 to 1968 was a result of the government's recognition of the need to purchase the Thorneycrofts.[167]

In 1960, the second ex-Israeli frigate, which the navy purchased in 1959, arrived at Colombo. This ship, like its sister ship, required an extensive overhaul before being able to conduct any type of operation – and then was too large to use in the anti-smuggling operation. In 1965, the navy ordered two British Thorneycroft (also known as Vosper Type 101) patrol craft. These ships were ideal for the Palk Strait mission since they were capable of traveling at 25 knots and had nautical radars, radio-communication facilities, and searchlights. In 1966, Ceylon ordered an additional seven ships and by 1968 it had twenty-one of these ships, which were built in Singapore and assembled in Ceylon.[168]

With the change in mission, the navy decided to dispose of one of its frigates and its newer minesweeper. Both were sold for scrap in 1964. A cyclone struck Trincomalee Harbor on 22 December 1964, sinking the navy's seaward defense boat and flooding the remaining minesweeper. It was also scrapped. When the decade ended, the navy had a frigate and 27 patrol boats. The frigate became the headquarters ship, as well as a training vessel, but in reality it was more symbolic than functional. Additionally, two reports state that Ceylon experimented with hydrofoils for TFAII operations but no other information on Ceylon's hydrofoils is available.[169]

### Personnel

At the beginning of the 1960s, the navy had approximately 150 officers and 1,800 sailors. During the first two years, the

navy increased its personnel strength to 156 officers and 1,848 sailors. Nine officers had their commissions withdrawn and nine other officers retired because of the illegal alcohol scandal. Between 1960 and 1966, 21 other officers retired. In 1966, the navy's manpower was 117 officers and 1,863 sailors. The decrease in large ships may have contributed to the decrease in the number of naval officers. With an increase in small patrol crafts (Thorneycrofts), the navy grew and in 1969 there were approximately 2,400 men (officers and enlisted) in the navy.[170]

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

From 1962 to 1966, few enlisted sailors joined the navy. Starting in the mid-1960s, many of the navy's first generation of officers and sailors (who had served in the CRNVR) retired. This led to a recruitment program beginning in 1966 that enlisted approximately 400 officers and junior sailors into the navy by the end of the decade.[171]

The freeze on manpower and equipment of the early 1960s reduced the need for training. In 1966, with the change of mission and the addition of the Thorneycroft fleet, training in the new craft commenced and officers and enlisted sailors began training at the Naval and Maritime Academy. Additionally, some sub-lieutenants went to India for further training.[172]

### Summary

The restated role of the navy and the subsequent purchase of smaller ships while scrapping larger ships, ensured that it could only conduct brown-water operations. Furthermore, since the small Thorneycrofts did not have any large caliber weapons, the navy was unable to protect the country against a foreign navy.[173]

## CONCLUSION

The failed coup attempts, the lack of an enemy, and the country's financial insecurity imposed limitations on the

military, significantly affecting its ability to defend the country.
The army continued to be a mainly ceremonial force and most
of its missions were police, not militarily, oriented.  The army's
ability to defend the country decreased during the decade, ending
with a "ploughshares for guns" mission.  The air force spent the
majority of the decade conducting flights and using its troops in
missions unrelated to the defense of the country.  Its continued
role in TFAII demonstrated that the air force was still more of
a police force than an actual air force.  The navy with its small
Thorneycroft fleet was barely able to stem the tide of illegal
immigrants, let alone defend the country.  It was a brown-water
navy in the truest sense of the word - with no power projection
at all.

The 1950s left the military inessential and vulnerable for
governmental misuse.  The 1960s continued this trend; the
military remained a force incapable of defending the country.

# CHAPTER 7

## THE MILITARY OF THE 1970s

In 1970, Ceylon's military was incapable of defending the country. The army was a ceremonial force. The air force had no combat experience and its fighters were in storage. The navy was a brown-water fleet with lightly armed small ships; barely able to stop illegal immigration, let alone protect the country from an invasion. This chapter will discuss the development and changes of the military services during the 1970s.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

In the early 1970s, the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) "People's Liberation Front" held a demonstration at the U.S. Embassy in Colombo protesting U.S. actions in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The demonstration became increasingly violent and bombs were thrown at the embassy. The violence spread and people began looting and burning other buildings within the city.

The government declared a countrywide State of Emergency on 16 March 1971. On 5 April 1971, several thousand insurgents attacked police stations throughout the island. For the first several days the insurgents were successful and "official (probably understated) figures claim that about 60 members of

the police and armed forces were killed."[174] After several months of vicious fighting, government forces defeated the insurgents. Several thousand insurgents died and between 12,000 to 18,000 were interned.[175]

In 1971, in order to meet its immediate arms requirements to counter the JVP insurgency, Ceylon accepted military aid from China and the USSR. This was the first military aid accepted from communist countries. China gave the country a $6 million grant, allowing it to purchase five patrol gunboats, twelve artillery peaces, and numerous small arms. The USSR sent Ceylon nearly $2 million worth of military equipment: six MiG fighters, two helicopters, ten BTR-152s, spare parts, and ammunition. Most reports state that Ceylon requested the aid from the USSR. VAM Paddy Mendis, commander of the RCyAF in 1971, stated the Soviets palmed off the equipment on Ceylon and that the Ceylon government did not ask for it and that they were upset when we sent their 200 men back home after only two months.[176]

In 1972, Ceylon renounced its Dominion Status with Britain in favor of a republic with a President selected by Parliament. On 22 May 1972, the country changed its name to The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

In 1976, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) wanted an independent country for the Jaffna Tamils and a small scale insurgence began forming in the Northern Province. Their first act of insurgency occurred on 7 April 1978 when they ambushed four policemen in Jaffna. Limited violence continued throughout following two months. In May 1978, Sri Lanka's government banned the LTTE. The LTTE retaliated in September by blowing up an Air Ceylon aircraft at the Colombo international airport. The government responded by passing the Prevention of Terrorism Act and a declared a state of emergency in July 1979.[177]

The army received the majority of the defense allocations throughout the decade - averaging 57 percent. The air force and

navy both average 21.5 percent.  The army's higher than average rates in 1971 and 1972 are results of the JVP uprising while its increase in 1975 is likely due to purchases of military equipment and a return to training.  The air force's main deviation occurred in 1978 when it purchased two helicopters and modified three Dakota DC-3s.  The navy's most significant change occurred in 1974 as it was purchasing and ordering ships.[178]

## THE ARMY

### Mission

In 1977, the army's stated mission was officially changed to include defending Sri Lanka against aggression by internal forces and to participate in non-military duties as ordered by the Government especially those connected with national development and in the maintenance of essential services.  The army was already doing both of these missions, the government only made the missions official.[179]

### Operations

During the 1970s, the army conducted four major missions and a number of minor ones.

The army continued to conduct the TFAII mission throughout the 1970s, continuing to rotate units to limit their contact with the police.

- Starting in March 1971 and lasting several months, the army conducted a counter-insurgency operation against the JVP. The army had conducted jungle and anti-terrorist operations in the 1960s, but it lacked combat experience and was undermanned and grossly ill equipped to confront the JVP but since the insurgents decided to operate in the cities and villages, they were easily isolated from their base of support, the local populace.

After two weeks of fighting, the government regained control of most of the country.  Isolated fighting occurring in various

parts of the country until the end of 1973.  The government killed approximately 10,000 and incarcerated another 18,000 insurgents.  The army was accused of using excessive force in quelling the uprising.  Since the government believed that the JVP might conduct another uprising, emergency rule remained in place for six years – to 1977.[180]

- In 1973, there was a shortage of foreign exchange that curtailed the importation of food.  Since the JVP threat had diminished, "it was once again decided to employ the Army in national development and food production."[181]  The army remained extensively engaged in farming until 1976 when it reduced resumed normal military training.[182]

- Throughout the rest of the decade, the army was heavily involved in non-traditional national defense related missions: patrolling roads and rails to secure them against highway robbers; conducting national development work; preventing illicit timber felling, and performing humanitarian relief duties.

- After the LTTE blew up an Air Ceylon aircraft at the Colombo international airport in September 1978, the government passing the Prevention of Terrorism Act.  Problems with the LTTE continued and a State of Emergency was declared in July 1979.  This resulted in a large portion of the army deploying to the Jaffna Tamil dominated Northern and Eastern Provinces to enforce the Prevention of Terrorism Act against Jaffna Tamils.[183]


### Doctrine and Tactics

The army focused on internal security and counter-revolutionary / counter-insurgency warfare during the 1970s. There is no indication that the army developed any new doctrine or tactics at this time to deal with revolutionary or insurgency warfare.

**Command and Organization**

In the early 1970s the army reorganized into six Area Commands to allow "decentralized participation of troops in the aid to civil power for the preservation of law and order."[184]

Each command had units assigned to it, but some of these units were not located in the command's area of operations. This arrangement gave rise to numerous administrative and command problems. Lt. Gen. Perera, commenting on his command of the Southern Command area, stated "I had the 4 Regiment Ceylon Artillery (stationed and headquarted in Panagoda), 2 (V) GW in Galle, and 3 (V) BW in Matara under my command. Whilst the two volunteer units were correctly located within my area of command, the regular unit was not. Being in Panagoda they got orders direct from Army HQ and the Commander Western Command Panagoda and I was in the dark until copies of these orders reached me."[185]

The army ordered several studies of its organization in 1978. All of the studies stated that the army needed another reorganization, but differed in recommendations. None of the recommendations were followed. Lt. Gen. Perera stated: "Sri Lanka did not require stereotyped army organisations to meet an external threat. The main threat was internal. The organizations therefore had to be flexible to meet local threats and be convertible to orthodox organisations if and when the need arose."[186]

In 1970, Ceylon had three infantry regiments, an artillery unit, and an armor unit. Between 1972 and 1974, the army manipulated its unit structure slightly, and by 1975, settled on having one active duty infantry brigade with three infantry battalions, a reconnaissance regiment (assessed to be the former armor corps), and an artillery regiment.[187]

Sometime near the end of the decade (likely after September 1978), Prime Minister J. R. Jayewardene wanted to increase the international role of the Katunayake International Airport in order to boost tourism. He decided the army needed a special unit to provide for the airport's security. The army took a

platoon from each regular infantry battalion and trained and equipped the soldiers for the new role.  The battalions often sent soldiers of questionable quality and the unit did not meet the prime minister's approval.  The army decided to form a separate Commando Squadron, headquartered at Ganemulla (near the airport).  Soldiers were specially recruited to serve in this unit.  In order to enhance the capability of the unit, several men received parachutist training in India and the British Army sent a Special Air Service team to Sri Lanka to assist in training.[188]

In 1978, Lt. Gen, Perera stated that he "had in mind to introduce women to serve in the Army as I found that a large number of men who could be employed in a combat role were tied down to work which could easily be carried out by women e.g., nursing, clerical and communications."[189]  On 1 September 1979, the Women's Corps formed to serve in combat support roles. [190]

In 1971, the government formed the National Service Regiment composed of middle-aged soldiers that the government believed would be more loyal than the youth of the period.  The unit's initial mission was guarding suspected JVP insurgents and later they conducted various non-combatant duties.  The government disbanded the unit in 1977.[191]

While the end strength of the reserve remained constant, the number of battalions changed from seven in 1978 to five in 1979. After the formation of the "Headquarters Volunteer Force," most of the units fell under its command but some remained under temporary control of the regional commands for better operational control.  Since there were more missions than the regular army could handle, approximately 1,000 to 1,500 volunteers served on active duty during the later part of the 1970s.[192]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

Because of the JVP uprising, Ceylon received military assistance from a variety of countries.  Some were donations; others were bought at "friendship prices" from Australia,

Britain, China, India, Pakistan, USA, USSR, and Yugoslavia. The majority of the weapons came during the uprising or immediately after. After 1975, the increase was not sustained "despite the perceptible change in the politics of the north of the island and the beginning of a threat from Tamil separatist forces operation from there." [193]   In total, the army received 40,500 rifles, semi-automatic rifles, and automatic rifles (17,500 rifles and 18,000 automatic rifles from China in 1971 – 1972 and 5,000 semi-automatic rifles from Australia in 1976 - 1977) during the decade. The army received 58 mortars and artillery guns / howitzers (12 light mortars from USSR, 16 Yugoslav 76-mm mountain guns, and at least 30 Chinese 85-mm field guns). In 1972, USSR donated 10 BTR-152s. In 1975, the army purchased 18 Ferrets from the UK. The U.S. was the source for 80 light trucks (1.5 tons) between 1976 – 1978. This influx of differing weapon types caused logistical problems, especially ammunition supply and weapon maintenance.[194]

In addition to the arms procured during the 1970s, Sri Lanka continued to use its existing Daimler DINGO reconnaissance vehicles, Ferret armored fighting vehicles, and approximately 350 trucks (¼-ton to 6-ton) throughout the decade. Although it did receive Chinese small arms, the army maintained its WW II vintage rifles in its reserve and support units. The army also maintained its supply of older machine guns, light mortars, and small caliber anti-aircraft guns (which were obsolete and inadequate).[195]

In 1974, according to U.S. intelligence, the army had 10 mortars of at least 100mm, 54 mortars smaller than 100mm, 24 air-defense guns between 20 – 57mm, and 64 armored vehicles. None of these numbers reflect those publicly released. The Sri Lankan government did not release any numbers on mortars and only listed 28 armored vehicles. The air-defense weapons are assessed to be 40mm air defense guns that were not publicly listed until 1981.[196]

In 1978, Lt. Gen Perera stated "more than 30% of the total vehicular strength of the Army is over fifteen years old. Progressive replacement of the older vehicles is essential as the mobility of the Army, especially during periods of emergency when wide scale deployment and subsequent logistical backing of deployed personnel will depend entirely on the roadworthiness of the vehicles. . . . The specialized military equipment in specialized units such as Armour, Artillery and Engineers is outdated and in most instances over 20 years of age. Re-equipment of these arms is necessary. . . . Small Arms and other ancillary equipment and the provision of ammunition has to be standardised. A wide variety of equipment was obtained after the emergency and maintaining these and obtaining their spares requirements is a logisticians nightmare now."[197]

### Personnel
From 1968 to 1971, the Ceylonese Army grew from 5,300 men to approximately 8,500 men. In 1974, the army had 8,900 men in it and its strength remained at this level for the rest of the decade. Additionally, there were 12,000 reservists throughout the decade. An insignificant number of the soldiers were Tamils or Muslims.[198]

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training
No records indicate any problems with recruitment or retention during the 1970s and that the army's limited growth resulted in minimal recruitment.

In the first part of the decade, the army conducted collective training at the platoon level. Because the threat of insurgent operations, company training was not conceivable. Platoon training focused on jungle warfare, platoon defense, and counter-insurgency operations. In the 1st Ceylon Infantry Battalion's annual report for 1973, the commander stated "no collective training was done in the Battalion during this year due to heavy guard and op duties. The Battalion last did Company training

in 1969 and plt training in 1972. The large number of new soldiers who have joined the Battalion since 1972 have not been afforded the opportunity to be trained collectively. It is strongly recommended that the Battalion be given an opportunity to conduct at least platoon trg as a minimum requirement, by relieving it of some of its duties."[199]

By the end of the decade, almost every soldier was trained in platoon level internal security and counter-revolutionary warfare techniques. The limitations emplaced after the 1962 attempted coup prevented the units from conducting any collective training larger than a company-size and this had an adverse effect of the army's readiness.[200]

On 1 January 1978, the army began weapon-training – the first to occur since 1972. During this six-year period, the majority of the soldiers did not train in rifle marksmanship; often because of a lack of ammunition. In October 1978, the artillery regiment practiced indirect firing for the first time in its nearly three decades of existence.[201]

The army's command knew that the men were not adequately trained and the Army's Annual Report for 1978 stated that "The preparedness of the Army for conventional operations is not satisfactory. This is mainly because of the lack of weapons and equipment of a suitable type for this type of operation. It has also not been possible to carry out training in thee tasks on account of the duties, which the Army has been called upon to perform. Although it is not envisaged that the Army will be called upon to engage in this type of operation in the immediate future, training in conventional operations is considered an extremely important facet of training as the basic foundation of all military operations I taught during training for conventional operations."[202]

**Summary**

In the beginning of the decade, it was unlikely that the army could operate in anything over a company-size element because of the restrictions placed upon large-scale training exercises.

This lack of training opportunities and the inability of the army to operate in anything larger than company-size units was a major factor in the JVP early successes.  Once the army was more organized, its anti-terrorists training of the 1960s proved valuable and the army quickly subdued the JVP insurrectionists.

Overall, the army's preparedness for conventional operations suffered throughout the decade since the majority of the missions were non-military.  The army had only a token capability to defend the country against external attack.  It was organized and trained mainly as an internal security force.  As such, the army was capable of maintaining internal security during normal conditions.

## THE AIR FORCE

### Mission

By 1977, the air force's primary mission was assisting the navy in anti-smuggling operations and providing air support to the Army in its internal security operations.[203]

### Operations

During the 1970s, the air force conducted one combat operation and four non-combat missions.

- Within hours of the beginning of the JVP insurrection, the air force responded by ordering its airmen to provide security at its airfields and at temporary air bases set up in almost every town more than fifty miles from Colombo.  During the first day of the insurrection, a group of 50 unarmed airmen conducting illicit immigration duties in Mannar received orders to go to Katunayaka – the major RCyAF airbase.  JVP insurgents shunted the train to a sideline.  A helicopter found the missing train and delivered arms and munitions to the unarmed men. The men proceeded to the Kurunegala Police Station, fifteen miles away, and became the nucleus for the military forces in the Kurunegala District.[204]

While the majority of the air force served in ground support missions, six pilots, rotating shifts in three Bell 206A helicopters, airlifted over 36,500 pounds of ammunition to the besieged police stations during the first five days of the uprising. Throughout the rest of month, the helicopters transported over 900 army troops and over 100,000 pounds of equipment throughout the island. The helicopters also conducted ground attack operations by placing men with Bren guns and hand grenades on each flight.[205]

In addition to the helicopters, the air force deployed Doves and Jet Provosts against the insurgents. Three Doves conducted supply missions while five Jet Provosts at China Bay were pulled out of storage. On 9 April 1971, the Provosts began air-to-ground attacks against the insurgents. The Provost, armed with 60-lb rockets (acquired from abroad), were effective weapons against insurgent concentrations.[206]

By 8 March 1971, it was clear that the insurgency was not going to be put down as quickly as the government hoped. Air Vice Marshall Padman Mendis knew the three helicopters could not continue flying 12-hours day for very long before they required significant repairs and the RCyAF did not have the necessary spare parts. Ceylon asked the U.S. for supply parts and they responded by sending the parts on 12 April on a C-141. These parts allowed the helicopters to continue flying for the rest of the month. Mendis realized that the RCyAF could not sustain the air resupply effort by itself and the Ceylonese government requested foreign assistance. Pakistan and India each sent Albuettes (along with their crews). On 17 April 1971, the U.S. gave Ceylon six Bell 47-G helicopters armed with 7.62mm machineguns. On 22 April, five days after the Bell 47-Gs arrived, RCyAF pilots were using them in combat missions against the insurgents. Also, on the 22nd, an AN-22 transport aircraft carrying two KA-26 rescue helicopters and six MiGs (-15s and –17s) arrived from Russia – along with 200 trainers

and ground crew.  The Provost pilots quickly transitioned to the MiGs and began flying combat missions in them.[207]

Additionally, the Prime Minister asked India to send troops to protect Katunayake Air Base – these troops stayed for over three months, providing security while the RCyAF airmen fought the insurgents elsewhere on the island.[208]

By the end of April, the government's security forces had the insurgency under control.  The air force began running three "rehabilitation" camps for youths caught up in the JVP conflict.  These camps were located at Ridiyagama, Wirawila, and Mirigama.[209]

The air force conducted three public assistance missions in the 1970s.  In 1974, it delivered the Ministry of Education's examinations throughout the country because railroad workers were on strike and it transported polio vaccines from Delhi, India to Colombo.  In the late 1970s, it used one of the DC-3s to seed the clouds in order to produce rain for the drought stricken country.[210]

The air force had a number of helicopters that it was not using and its commander decided to use them to raise cash to supplement its budget.  In 1972, No. 4 Squadron (Helicopter) began operating a commercial transportation service called Helitours.  This service, catering to foreign tourists, proved to be very popular.  Not only did it raise money for the purchase of spare parts but it improved pilot proficiency and gave the air force a major morale boost.  In 1973, the SLAF added a Convair 440 to the program.[211]

### Doctrine and Tactics

After the JVP uprising, during which the RCyAF showed its ability to change from the existing British doctrine and tactics to unconventional ones, the air force returned to its peacetime posture.  From 1972 to the end of the decade, the focus of the air force was on assisting the civil authorities - not on combat operations.  Of unique importance is that in 1979, eight years

after the JVP uprising and a year after the LTTE attack on the Colombo Airport, AVM Goonetileke sent a report to the President "concerning the expansion and equipping of the SLAF to meet potential terrorist threats."[212]  It appeared that changing doctrine was not of signicant importance to the air force's leaders.

### Command and Organization

During the 1970s, the Sri Lankan Air Force (SLAF) underwent several organizational changes.  Three new units formed during the first half of the decade:  No. 4 Helicopter Squadron (Bell Jet Rangers and KA-26s), No. 5 Helicopter Squadron (Bell 47-Gs), and No. 6 Squadron (MiGs).  Although there was no need for combat operations, both No. 5 and No. 6 squadrons remained "were kept in operation for pilot continuation training until spares ran out."[213]  No. 4 Squadron was very active and provided VIP transport, reconnassance flights, cargo flights, Air/Sea and Jungle rescue, and evacuation flights.  No. 1 Squadron continued in its mission as a Flying Training School and was absorbe into the Air Force Academy.  No. 2 Squadron continued in its mission as a transport unit using Doves, Herons, and Pioneers.  No. 3 Squadron continued conducting reconnaissance patrols from China Bay using Cessnas.[214]

From 1978 to 1979, the SLAF was again reorganized.  By the end of the decade, the SLAF had only three squadrons; No. 1 (training), No. 2 (transport), and No. 3 (helicopter).  The SLAF also restored a number of World War II era airports spread out throughout the country to meet future insurgent threats.[215]

The Volunteer Corp of the RCyAF formed on 14 April 1971.  In 1974, it had 1,100 men in four squadrons of Air Force Regiment (unclear duties) and a squadron for airfield construction.  The number of airmen remained constant until 1977 when its numbers fell to 750 men.  In 1978, it again had 1,100 men and the decade ended with the force having 1,000 personnel.[216]

**Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons**

Reports on the procurement of weapons during the early 1970s differ but the majority of the reports indicate that during the 1971 insurgency, the government turned to the Soviet Union for sophisticated weaponry and received five MiG-15s, one MiG–17, and two Ka-26 helicopters.  VAM Mendis states that the "Russians foisted the MiGs and the KA-26s on us.  They were not asked for but given on there own probably to keep pace with the US and Britain." [217]

Reports state that both Britain and the U.S. contributed aircraft to fight the counter-insurgency operation:  Britain gave five Jet Provosts and the U.S. sent six Bell 47 G (Jet Ranger) helicopters.  Mendis states that "The Bell 47 Gs were gifted by the USA to Sri Lanka but not until 1972.  The Brits did not give us Jet Provosts, we had purchased them in the 60s[218] and they were in storage when the insurgency broke out."[219]  The U.S. also gave Sri Lanka six Cessna 150 that the air force used for training.

Due these "gifts", the air force did not purchase any aircraft until 1978 when it bought two Dauphin SA 365 helicopters for VIP transport duties.  Additionally, during the latter part of the decade, the SLAF gained, and refitted, three Dakota DC-3s for transport usage that Air Ceylon discarded.[220]

The Sri Lanka Air Force had 31 aircraft in 1971 but none were combat ready.  The eight Jet Provost were in storage and the remaining 23 aircraft were either trainers or transport. Throughout the decade, the number and types of aircraft varied from year, along with the mission the SLAF assigned them. Sometimes the Jet Provost are listed as trainers, other times they are listed as fighters.  This is the case for most of the aircraft and is indicative of the flux occurring in the force regarding the exact mission of the SLAF.  Shortly after the insurgency, the SLAF placed the Jet Provosts, MiGs, Bell 47-Gs, and Ka-26s into storage.  By the end of the decade, the air force had 33 fixed-wing aircraft and 15 rotary-wing aircraft.  Seven were combat

aircraft, the remaining were for training, communication, or transport.[221]

### Personnel

In 1971, the Air Force had approximately 1,400 men and by 1976, it had 3,100 personnel: an increase of nearly 50 percent. Out of these 3,100 men, 43 were pilots. By 1978, the SLAF decreased its strength to 2,000 personnel: a strength it maintained the rest of the decade.[222]

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

No records indicate any problems with recruitment or retention during the 1970s and it is assumed that the lack of growth in the air force resulted in minimal recruitment.

The No. 1 Flying Training School, operating out of China Bay, began conducting advance flying training for cadets and conducted the training of qualified pilots to Flying Instructor category. By the end of the decade, budgetary restraints significantly limited the flying hours of the pilots, especially in jets because fuel was scarce and expensive. The main training during this time was the Helitour operation.[223]

### Summary

Throughout the 1970s, the government relied on the SLAF's light transport aircraft and helicopters to provide transport, liaison work, and cargo-hauling functions to the police and military facilities spread out throughout the island. The road / rail network was not developed enough to accommodate the movement of the supplies.[224]

The SLAF transport fleet is capable of supporting a platoon size operation and this is adequate to meet Sri Lanka's modest military transport needs. Its helicopter force can adequately assist in anti-insurgency and anti-smuggling operations and the prevention of illegal immigration operations. The air force proved its capability to play a part in the defense the country in

1971 against the JVP insurgents.  During the rest of the decade, the air force, with no real mission during peacetime, resorted to conducting tours of the island to help raise money and to fight boredom among its pilots.  Budgetary constraints limited flying hours and the air force was unable to purchase modern aircraft. The lack of a perceived enemy severely hurt the air force's readiness.

## THE NAVY

### Mission
Throughout most of the 1970s, the principle mission of the navy continued to be against smuggling and illicit immigration. The increase in the territorial water boundary from six to twelve nautical miles also entailed an additional mission to protect fisheries out to 200 nautical miles.[225]

### Operations
The navy only conducted two operations during the 1970s, neither of which were combat related.
• Throughout the early 1970s, the navy continued its anti-immigration patrols and, based on its record of apprehensions, its performance was satisfactory.  By the late 1970s, seven Thornycrofts were no longer in service and the remaining fourteen were suffering from old age and unable adequately conduct patrols.  Apprehension rate fell dramatically.  The addition of five ex-Chinese patrol boats was not sufficient to stop the illegal immigration traffic from India.[226]
• When the navy received reports in 1971 that the JVP were conducting gun-running and receiving support from outside of the country, it was unable to stop it with its "Thorneycroft fleet" and aging frigate.  The government asked India and Pakistan for support in patrolling the waters off the island. In April 1971, India sent three ships.  While "no material assistance was received from outside sources,"[227] at the time

it was believed that the JVP were receiving external support from North Korea via the sea. The government's request for outside help was a major embarrassment for the navy because they could not even fulfill its primary mission of defending the country.[228]

## Doctrine and Tactics

With the aging of the "Thorneycroft" fleet and the government's call on India and Pakistan for support during the JVP uprising, the navy realized that it needed to acquire larger shallow draft ships in order to protect the country's coastline. This led to a change in doctrine towards larger ships capable of not only conducting patrols, but also protecting the country – if the need ever arose.

## Command and Organization

The navy was incapable of providing sea-based command and control over its ships since they were all too small to handle to proper equipment and manning. Therefore, after receiving orders, ships conducted routine patrols. If an emergency arose, captains would have to rely on ships near them to help solve the crisis.[229]

## Weapons Procurement and Weapon Systems

The Sri Lanka Navy received two Shanghai class patrol craft from China in 1972. These ships were considerably larger than the Thorneycrofts and carried a battery of guns. In 1973, the navy bought three additional Shanghai patrol crafts. The purchase of the patrol crafts allowed the navy to conduct patrols along the west and northern coasts, but they were too small to provide the navy with an off-shore capability. In 1975, the navy purchased a Soviet class "Mol" patrol craft to replace its aging frigate. In 1977, the navy purchased five Soviet patrol boats to assist in its anti-immigration patrols. Sri Lanka purchased these ships at "Friendship Prices."

With the additional responsibility of protecting the offshore fisheries, the navy needed even larger and more capable ships but the price, even at "friendship prices" was too much for its budget.  In June 1976, the government ordered four 66-foot coastal patrol crafts from the Colombo Dockyard.  In 1978, it ordered several more of these ships.  At the time, it was more as a political decision to keep the dockyard busy than as a positive step in increasing Sri Lanka's ability to produce the larger ships that it required to protect its fisheries.  However, it would prove useful in the 1980s.[230]

When the decade began, the navy had one frigate and twenty-seven patrol crafts. The frigate was non-operational by 1976 and disposed of in 1978.  Seven of the Thorneycrofts were also no longer fit for sea duty and were disposed of between 1978 and 1979.  Additionally, in 1979 one of the Thorneycrofts was lost at sea.  At the end of the decade, the navy had twenty-seven patrol crafts and five patrol boats; along with numerous smaller boats.[231]

### Personnel

At the beginning of the 1970s, the navy had approximately 2,400 officers and sailors.  By 1972, the navy had reduced its ranks by 100 but this reduction was short-lived and two years later it again numbered 2,400 – a strength it retained throughout the remainder of the decade.  The increase in larger ships and the decrease in Thornycrofts had no effect on the overall number of sailors.[232]

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

No records indicate any problems with recruitment or retention during the 1970s and it is assessed that the lack of growth in the navy resulted in a stagnant force with minimal recruitment.  A 1980 report stated that the "naval service has been the beneficiary of the best possible recruit personnel, and has been quite selective in recruitment of its personnel."[233]

There are no available records that discuss naval training during the decade, but a report from the 1980s stated that one of the problems in the navy's logistical support system during the 1970s was insufficient maintenance training.  The navy only had one mission during the 1970's – patrolling the coast for illegal immigrants and it is doubtful that any combat training occurred.[234]

**Summary**

The navy in 1971 was under-manned, under equipped, and incapable of patrolling and sealing off the nation's coast with its small "Thorneycroft navy."  When called upon to protect the country, the navy was unable to do so.  The purchase of the additional ships allowed the navy to conduct patrols along the west and northern coasts, but they were too small to provide the navy with any real off-shore capability and the navy did not have any off-shore command and control capability.  Throughout the 1970s, the navy carried out non-combat operations and its ships were appropriate for civil defense and ceremonial functions, but not for protecting the country.

## CONCLUSION

The armed forces of Sri Lanka are capable of little more than providing support to the civil authorities during periods of internal unrest.  The army ended the 1960s conducting a "ploughshares for guns" mission and in 1975 it resumed the mission.  Its other missions were police, not military oriented.  This was indicative of the value the government placed on the army.  The air force spent the majority of the decade conducting tourist flights, raising money for spare parts and ensuring the pilots had at least some flight training.  The navy proved that it was ineffective at defending the country when the government had to ask for outside help during the JVP uprising.  It was barely able to stop

illegal immigrants from reaching the country - let alone defend
the country from regional powers.

The 1950s left the military combat unessential and vulnerable
for governmental exploitation. The 1960s continued this trend
and the military remained a force incapable of defending the
country. The military remained unchanged throughout the 1970s
– still unable to defend the country.

# CHAPTER 8

## THE MILITARY OF THE 1980s

In 1980, Sri Lanka's military was capable of little more than providing support to the civil authorities during periods of internal unrest. The army's missions remained police, not military oriented. The air force's fighters were in storage and its primary mission was conducting tours of the island for foreign visitors. The navy could barely stop illegal immigrants from reaching the country from India. This chapter will discuss the development of the military services during the 1980s.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

"In 1981, the government believed that the country's threats were mainly from internal sources, which could manifest itself as Labour unrest; . . . communal or religious disharmony caused by dissident elements; student unrest and secessionist movement aimed at dismembering the country. The external threat could arise from a foreign country coming to the aid of dissident elements."[235]

By the early 1980s, many Jaffna Tamils wanted to secede from Sri Lanka and form their own Tamil State of Eelam in the northern and eastern portions of the island. There were five main groups of insurgents: Eelam Revolutionary Organization

and Supporters (EROS), Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) and the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and "Each group tends to specialize. The Liberation Tigers are fighters; TELO specialized in spectacular coups, such as blowing up troop trains; EROS concentrated on economic sabotage; PLOTE's tactics were to harass the Government and individual leaders by threat, blackmail and political pressure."[236] TULF was the political group and included members of parliament. It is important to note that the groups did not necessarily work together and that as the insurgency became more violent, the LTTE became the dominant group – going so far as to eradicate the other groups.[237]

In June 1981, as the Jaffna Tamils were becoming more active, the government declared what would be the first of a series of States of Emergency in the Jaffna area. A major problem in stopping Jaffna Tamils was their ability to operate from bases in the Tamil Nadu Province of India. Sri Lanka asked the Indian government to stop providing the Jaffna Tamils with a "safe haven," but because India depended on the good will of the Tamil Nadu provincial government, India decided not to support Sri Lanka's request. Consequently, the Sri Lankan government turned to the military to solve the crisis.[238]

Early in July 1983, the State of Emergency in the Jaffna region was effectively continuous. President J. R. Jayewardene stated, "I am not worried about the opinion of the Jaffna [Tamil] people . . . Now we can't think of them. Not about their lives or their opinions of us."[239] Two weeks later, on 23 July 1983, Jaffna Tamils extremists ambushed an army patrol at Thirunelveli in Jaffna. Thirteen Sinhalese soldiers died. "This single incident created a new dimension in the northern conflict in Sri Lanka and also affected the country's image adversely."[240] For the next two weeks, communal violence was rampant and riots erupted throughout the country – resulting in the death of over 400 Jaffna

Tamils by Sinhalese civilians. The government stood by and let the violence go unchecked: the military was not mobilized to stop the bloodshed. The *Economist* reported "Two weeks ago Tamils' owned 60 percent of the wholesale trade and 80 percent of the retail trade in the capital. Today it is gone."[241] A period of relative calm followed the ethnic killings as the army increased its patrols in the Tamil dominated Northern and Eastern Provinces.[242]

On 30 July 1987, the first elements of the India Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) arrived in northern Sri Lanka. India's involvement in Sri Lanka during the 1980s is confusing and requires an explanation. India's two million Tamils actively supported the Jaffna Tamils and most of the insurgent's supplies arrived via small ships from Tamil Nadu. The LTTE also used Tamil Nadu as a "safe harbor" to conduct training. The Indian government knew of the activities and covertly supported them via its intelligence community. India labeled the support "humanitarian assistance." India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi thought that by supporting the Jaffna Tamils, she was preventing an uprising by the citizens of Tamil Nadu. While supporting the insurgents, India's government was also working with Sri Lanka's government to find "an accommodation which would lure the LTTE to the peace process." This was successful and Sri Lanka declared a unilateral ceasefire – scheduled to last from 11 April to 22 April 1987. The Jaffna Tamils abruptly ended a cease-fire by conducting two bombings: the first on 17 April and the second on 21 April. Sri Lanka's military retaliated on 26 May and launched an operation to "clear areas in the Jaffna Peninsula . . . whilst causing maximum damage to the terrorists ad their infrastructure."[243] As the SLA began defeating the LTTE, India became more worried that the war would spread to Tamil Nadu. India stepped up its "humanitarian" missions while working politically to end the conflict by convincing Sri Lanka to allow the Indian Army to send in peacekeepers. On 3 June 1987, the SLAN intercepted an Indian fishing fleet of 21 boats, carrying

humanitarian aid, in transit to Jaffna and sent it back to Tamil Nadu. The next day, after the Indian government informed the Sri Lankan envoy in Delhi that "any resistance would be met by force,"[244] the Indian Air Force sent six AN-32s, escorted by four Mirage 2000 fighters, over Sri Lanka and air-drop food parcels. Sri Lanka, rebuffed by the U.S. and USSR for help in ending the conflict, realized it had to rely on India. On 29 July 1987, the governments of India and Sri Lanka signed the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord. The next day the first elements of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) troops arrived in the north.[245]

This Indo-Lanka Peace Accord allowed India to deploy 100,000 troops into the northern area in June in an attempt to disarm the Tamils and enforce a peace agreement between the Sinhalese and the insurgents. After only three months of peace, the LTTE began fighting the IPKF. After two years of fighting, the IPKF was unable to defeat the LTTE. In the fall of 1989, Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadsa, who gained power in 1988 and opposed the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord, asked India to withdraw the IPKF from Sri Lanka. India initially refused and Premadasa began conducting covert operations with the LTTE and even supplied them in order to facilitate IPKF defeats and force their withdrawal from the country. Finally, on 30 March 1990, the majority of the IPKF left Sri Lanka, leaving behind a small, but heavily armed force that the LTTE destroyed within a few weeks. The defeat of the IPFK by a numerically inferior force with less sophisticated equipment embarrassed India and the New Delhi government vowed to stay out of ethnic conflict. After the IPKF withdrew, the President and the LTTE conducted peace talks. This marked the official end of Eelam War I.[246]

In March 1985, Sri Lanka set up a training center at Chilaw, 25 miles north of Colombo, to serve as a voluntary training center for youths recruited into the armed services. In addition, early in 1985, the U.S. government offered to train Sri Lanka's Army, Air Force, and Navy officers in the U.S. under International

Military Education and Training program. The training would occur in 1986.[247]

The army received the majority of the defense allocations throughout the decade - averaging 52 percent. The air force averaged 21 and navy averaged 27 percent. The army's decrease in 1983 and 1984 were a result of increased navy (1983) and air force (1984) spending. The army's increase in 1985 allowed it to purchase necessary weapons, increase its size, and conduct operations against the Jaffna Tamils. The air force's deviation occurred in 1984 when it purchased approximately 22 aircraft. The navy's deviation in 1983 allowed it to purchase command and control ships in 1984.[248]

## THE ARMY

### Mission

The army's mission remained one of protecting the country from both external and internal threats. Between 1980 and 1983, the army focused on non-combat missions. Starting in 1983, the army's primary mission was counter-insurgency.

### Operations

During the 1980s, the Army fought two wars, one against the Jaffna Tamils, the other against the Sinhalese JVP.

- In July 1982, communal riots occurred throughout the Galle district. The army deployed a task force (battalion size) and within a month, the situation had returned to normal. The army was withdrawn.[249]
- After the July 1983 riots, the army increased its patrolling and imposed a curfew. Under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (July 1979), the security forces (which included both the police and the army) began arresting Tamils suspected of supporting the insurgency. Between August 1983 and June 1985, the army and the LTTE had numerous skirmishes but no major battles. During this time, the army, incapable of

defeating the insurgents in battle, destroyed Jaffna Tamil villages.[250]

- On 18 June 1985, the two forces called a cease-fire. The LTTE used the cease-fire to build bunkers and assume control of the road from the mainland to the Jaffna Peninsula. In December 1985, the government ended cease-fire when the army attempted to launch a campaign to regain control of the Jaffna Peninsula. The army discovered that the LTTE had gained a significant amount of weaponry from India and that "every camp in the Peninsula was under virtual siege and moving out of the base itself was a major operation."[251]

- On 17 May 1986, the army attempted to relieve the besieged camps in the Jaffna Peninsula. The offensive was repulsed by the LTTE and the camps remained under siege.[252]

- On 6 February 1987, the army launched OP LIBERATION. The SLA, with 5,000 troops, conducted a full-scale invasion of Jaffna and liberated a considerable amount of territory. This was Sri Lanka's first divisional size operation. The army now had to not only fight the LTTE, but also "engage in civilian administration in the newly liberated areas."[253] The SLA was slowly defeating the Jaffna Tamils. Their success was short lived as the IPKF arrived on 30 July 1987 and the SLA withdrew its troops from the North and Eastern Provinces.[254]

- Starting shortly after the arrival of the IPKF on 30 July 1987, the JVP declared war on the Sri Lankan government, using "the presence of the IPKF to justify their armed action to topple to Government."[255] The JVP, "most of whose members are from Sri Lanka's Sinhalese majority"[256] avoid direct contact with the army and use a terror campaign against the government's leaders instead. Between August 1987 and August 1989, the JVP killed over 200 members of the ruling United National Party.

- By the end of 1988, the JVP terror campaign had reached unprecedented levels and in some cases, the army was co-located at police stations in order to ensure the protection of

the policemen.  "The JVP had grown in size so quickly by the end of 1988 that practically the entire 33,000 strong Sri Lankan army, including 9,000 of the 12,000 men normally stationed in the north, was redeployed to the south and central-west to help contain the virulent guerrillas."[257]  In July 1989, "the JVP made a fatal error.  It called on the security forces to desert and threatened to kill the families of servicemen who refused.  The plan backfired and galvanized the security forces in a desire to crush the JVP."[258]  With tactic government approval, the military and police formed night-time death squads that patrolled the countryside, killing anyone though might be a supporting the JVP.  Local journalists and diplomats estimate about 30,000 Sinhalese died, while the European Parliament believes that the number was closer to 60,000 by the fall of 1999.[259]

### Doctrine and Tactics

On 29 December 1980, a training and operations directive stated that the army needed to be able to conduct "high intensity internal security operations; low intensity counter revolutionary operations; counter terrorist and anti urban terrorist operations with special force; and low intensity conventional operations."[260]  Because of the 23 July 1983 ambush, the Army realized that it needed new tactics and equipment to effectively combat the Jaffna Tamil terrorists.  The army temporarily considered buying tanks to replace the wheeled armored cars that bogged down in the soft sand of northern Sri Lanka, but the purchase was cancelled in favor of buying more armored cars.[261]

### Command and Organization

In 1980, Lt. Gen. Perera reorganized the army into five infantry based Task Forces – each having one regular and two volunteer infantry battalions.[262]  The battalions were broken up into company size cantonments throughout the country since each task force was responsible for a region of the country.  The

bulk of the troops were deployed island wide to combat gangsters and highway robberies and a considerable force was deployed to the north to assist the police in containing the activities of the Jaffna Tamil terrorist organizations.  However, only one volunteer battalion had its full complement and thee recruits were not well trained or equipped.  The regular battalions, which were to have 730 men, were usually under strength and in times of crisis, navy and air force personnel were often used to raise their strength.[263]

The army did not place its artillery, engineer, and signal units directly in the TFs.  Instead, the army kept these units separate from the TFs and command and control of the units remained at Army HQ.  The units were allocated to the various TFs as required.[264]

When Lt. Gen. Perera retired in 1981, Major General Tissa Weeratunga, faced a deteriorating situation in the north.  A police station in the north was overrun in October 1982 and a large quantity of arms and ammunition removed by Jaffna Tamil terrorists.  Weeratunga believed that the area could be better controlled through Area Commands and he disbanded the task forces and the five area commands: Northern, North Central, Central, Southeastern, and Southern were reinstituted.[265]

In 1983 the 1st Battalion, Raja Rata Rifles and the 1st Batalion of the Vijayabahu Infantry Regiment amalgamated into the Gajaba Regiment.  The regiment rapidly expanded due to the conflict with the LTTE and later the JVP.[266]

In 1985, four new infantry battalions, an artillery regiment, and a Special Forces (SF) regiment.  The SF regiment was designed to operate deep in the jungle for extended periods of time.  In 1987, four regular army and one volunteer battalion formed.[267]

In May 1988 the army created three area commands to supervise counterinsurgency operations: Central Area Command, Southern Command, and Northeastern Command. Since the Northeastern Command area was occupied by the

IPKF, only two division headquarters were created.  The 1st Division had its headquarters as Panagoda and was responsible for the districts of Amparai, Kandy, Kuruvita, and Matara.  The division had four brigades with a total of six regular and six volunteer battalions – each battalion having approximately 900 to 1,200 men; considerably larger than the size of the 1981 battalions.  The 2nd Division, headquartered at Anuradhapua was responsible for the Northern and Eastern districts of Palaly, Jaffna, Trincomalee, Vavuniya, and Puttlam.  It also had four brigades and six regular and six volunteer battalions.  The IPFK was deployed in the Jaffna controlled areas of the two provinces, so the division could only exercise control over the Sinhalese controlled areas.  Uniquely, the troops were not deployed under the above mentioned formations during operations, but were grouped mainly for administration purposes only.[268]

In 1988, the army resurrected the Vijayabahu Infantry Regiment (with one regular and one volunteer battalion), and formed a reconnaissance unit, a light artillery unit (mortars), and several combat support and combat service support units.  By the end of the decade, the army had six regular and five reserve infantry battalions, one regular and one reserve reconnaissance battalion, three regular and one reserve artillery battalions, one air defense battalion, and two engineer battalions.[269]

As a result of the new divisional organization, the government divided the island into two area commands and twenty-one sectors.  Each area command would have 12,000 troops and when the reorganization is complete, each sector will have a full battalion of troops dedicated to its defense.  The Colombo District was under the direct authority of Army Headquarters.[270]

In 1980, the reserve had eleven infantry battalions, supporting services, and the Pioneer Corps.  In 1981, two additional infantry battalions increased the reserves to thirteen battalions.  However, in 1982 there was a decrease to ten infantry battalions.  In 1985 the army activated most of the reserve units – approximately 26,000 men.

**Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons**

In 1983, the army was woefully inadequate in weaponry. There was no single infantry rifle due to the influx of weapons during the JVP uprising in 1971. Heavier weapons included old Vickers machineguns, mortars (Soviet 82-mm, British 2- and 3-inch, and Yugoslavian 120-mm). The armored vehicles included 15 Ferret Scout cars, 12 Ferret turreted armored cars, and six Salidin armored cars. Artillery included 12 Soviet 85-mm and 4Yugoslavian 76-mm guns.[271]

As a result of the 23 July 1983 ambush, the army command decided that it needed better equipment in order to protect the soldiers and research began on locally produced armored vehicles based on a Japanese truck chassis – these vehicles were known as Unicorn. The majority of the Unicorns began service in 1986. In the meantime, the army imported Shorland and Hotspur armored vehicles. Violence escalated in the north and the terrorists were using 50 – 100 kilogram landmines – which no armored vehicle in the Sri Lanka inventory could withstand. Therefore, the army purchased Buffels from South Africa and modified the Unicorn to match the capabilities of the Buffels.[272]

In January 1985, Minister Athulathmudali visited the U.S. to ask for weapons. The U.S. refused the request since the government believed that the "army was either about to mutiny or to mount a coup to remove the civilian government."[273] Athulathmudali decided to visit Britain, Israel, Italy, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, and Yugoslavia for assistance. It is uncertain which governments agreed to supply the Sri Lankan military with arms or in what quantities, but by October, arms and equipment were arriving in Sri Lanka. These included light armored vehicles, mortars, various types of rifles, automatic weapons, ammunition, uniforms, boots, helmets, and flak-jackets.[274]

By the end of the decade, all but two the infantry battalions were armed with Chinese T-56s (similar to the AK-47), T-81s (which

could fire rifle grenades), and light machineguns; the other two battalions had Belgium carbines and automatic weapons. The infantry battalions also had numerous German *Granatpistolen* grenade launchers, and some 40-mm six-shot grenade launchers. Each platoon had RPG-7s and 60-mm mortars. Battalion level weapons varied on the units mission and availability. Typical weapons including two .50 Browning heavy machineguns, ten 81-mm mortars, and four 106-mm recoilless rifles.[275]

The decade closed with the army having 45 reconnaissance vehicles (Salidin, Ferret, and Dingo), 154 armored personnel carriers (BTR-152, Samil, Buffel, and Unicorn), at least 46 artillery pieces (76-mm Yugoslavian M-48 mountain guns, 85-mm Chinese Type 30, and an unknown number of 25-pounders, 105-mm, and 120-mm), 48 air defense guns, and an unknown number of smaller weapon systems, to include mortars and recoilless rifles.[276]

### Personnel

In 1980, the Sri Lankan Army had grown from 8,900 men (1979) to over 10,000. The army maintained this number until 1982 when grew to 11,000 men. At the beginning of 1985, the army had approximately 16,000 soldiers in it. Starting in January, the army "will be increased by 2000 every two months. . . . to man the 14 new camps that are being opened in the strife torn northern province."[277] By 1986 the army had 30,000 men in it and by 1987 it had climbed to 40,000 men and it stayed at this number throughout the rest of the decade. Approximately half the force was volunteer. The army was almost completely Sinhalese during the 1980s. Very few Tamils or Muslims joined the service. From 15 October 1981 to 27 December 1989, approximately 921 soldiers died; of which the majority died fighting the Jaffna Tamil separatists.[278]

Late in 1980, the SLA began allowing women to join the military. The women will only be allowed in non-combat positions and not permitted to work during the night – working

only between 0600 and 1700.  The first 50 recruits graduated 4 February 1981.[279]

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

In the years prior to 1983, the army trained extensively in the jungles.  After the anti-Tamil riots of 1983, and as ethnic insurgency increased in the north, the army increased its urban warfare training.  Infantry units deploying into the northern and eastern provinces underwent an intensive two-month course in which their physical and individual skills, then their collective skills were developed.  By 1986, President Jayawardene believed the army was better trained than it had been and that it would soon be able to defeat the Jaffna Tamil terrorists.  In the late 1980s, the army began to conduct Tamil language courses so that its men could better communicate with the Tamil civilians and aid in intelligence-gathering.  The army wanted to recruit five battalions of Tamils, mainly from the north and east and not from the Jaffna region, since several of the Tamil militant groups are now part of the Sri Lankan political system, but the response was poor.[280]

Many foreign countries held anti-terrorist operations in Sri Lanka during the mid- to late-1980s.  The government hired some private organizations to provide special anti-terrorism training.  Much of the training focused on urban fighting and jungle warfare.[281]

Under an enhanced military assistance program, Pakistan trained 38 military instructors.  Previously, Pakistan had only trained Sri Lankan officers at Pakistani schools.  The instructors, after completing their schooling in Pakistan, will be deployed to the new training camps.  These instructors will help train 3,500 youths into soldiers.[282]

### Summary

At the beginning of the decade, the army could not defend the country against external attack.   It was organized and

trained mainly as an internal security force but it was "small, ill-equipped and ill-conditioned for a counter-insurgency role, despite spasmodic previous experience of operating in aid of the civil power."[283]

Between 1985 and 1986, the army attempted to defeat the Jaffna Tamils, but was unable to because it was too small and it lacked the required modern equipment. After the purchase of more modern equipment, the army nearly defeated the Jaffna Tamils but the intervention of India forced Sri Lanka to halt its attacks.

During its campaign against the JVP, the army initially was a guard force since the insurgents focused on terror tactics rather than conventional combat. After the JVP threatened the families of the soldiers, the army became a killing tool of the President – killing anyone the soldiers thought might be a JVP supporter.

Throughout the decade, the army changed from a ceremonial force incapable of defending the country to a reasonably well-equipped force capable of halting insurgencies with unconventional tactics. The army remained incapable of protecting the country from external threat.

## THE AIR FORCE

### Mission

The mission of the SLAF before 1986 was no different from that of the late 1970s. It was to assist the Navy in anti-smuggling operations and provide the Army with air support for its internal security operations. From 1986 to mid-1987 the SLAF conducted attacks against the LTTE terrorists. From mid-1987 to the end of the decade, the air force's mission reverted back to largely transporting soldiers and supplies and assisting both the Sri Lankan and the Indian navies patrolling the seas off Sri Lanka.[284]

**Operations**

During the 1980s, the air force conducted two combat and one non-combat operations.

In 1986, the Tamils siege of the SLA bases forced the army to rely on the SLAF to ferry troops and supplies after the LTTE gained control of the main route.  The SLAF also flew reconnaissance missions and provided close air support with its Siai Marchett's and Bell helicopters, bombing the Jaffna district. They also provided causality evacuation and reconnaissance.[285]

In 1987, during OP Liberation the SLAF configured four planes (SVRO, Y-12, and Heron) to serve as bombers – dropping fragmentation and anti-personnel bombs up to 1,000 kilograms. The six Siai Marhetti SF 260s conducted rocket attacks and strafing missions against LTTE positions.  Two Bell 212 helicopters served as gunships and provided close air support. Five planes (AVRO, Y-12s, and Doves) and eight helicopters transported personnel and goods throughout the country as needed.  Other planes and helicopters conducted reconnaissance, medical evacuation, and air observation missions.[286]

The Helitours program started in the 1970s continued uninterrupted until 1984, when it was stopped for operational requirements.  The program resumed in 1985, stopped in 1986 and restarted early in 1987.  However, after the increase of fighting the program ended in 1987.[287]

**Doctrine and Tactics**

Prior to 1985, AVM Dick Perera "attempted to alert his superiors to the needs of the Air Force, in terms of acquiring modern aircraft to replace the ageing fleet" because he saw the threat of terrorism growing, the main role remained transport and reconnaissance and no change in doctrine or tactics occurred."[288] The lessons of the 1971 JVP insurgency were ignored.  It wasn't until 1986, as the conflict was intensifying, that the air force realized that "the days of air transport and reconnaissance only were fast receding and the Air Force was thrust more and more

into a punitive role, taking an active combat stance [leading to a new] definition of its core mission."[289]

Central in the government's new security efforts were six SIAI-Marchetti SF-260 turboprop trainers used for rocket attacks and strafing. Additionally, the Bell 212 and 412 helicopters to served as gunships and as transport vehicles for commando assault operations. Government forces reportedly also used helicopters on "bombing" missions; frequently operating without conventional bombs, airmen dropped hand grenades stuffed in wine glasses so that the lever would not be released until the glass shattered on the ground. The Chinese Y-12 turboprop transport aircraft, equipped with bomb racks fitted to carry up to 1,000 kilograms of fragmentation and antipersonnel bombs, improved the SLAF effectiveness.

### Command and Organization

When the decade began, the SLAF had three squadrons; No. 1 Training (Chipmunks and Cessnas) at China Bay, No. 2 Transport (Doves, Herons, Convair 440 and the Avro HS748) at Katunayake, and No. 3 Helicopter (Bell Jet Rangers, KA-26s, Bell 47-Gs, and Dauphin 365s) at Katunayake. In 1985, No 2. Squadron moved to Ratmalana due to an increase in the commercial aspect of the Katunayake airport. Throughout the early half of the decade, the three squadrons remained functionally the same, with just the new aircraft added to them and older aircraft being disposed of. Prior to 1986, the No. 1 Training Squadron became the No. 1 FTW (Flight Training Wing). In 1988, a maritime squadron formed at China Bay using planes from the No. 1 FTW and the No. 2 Transport Squadron. In 1988, the No. 1 FTW relocated to Anuradhapura. At the end of the decade, No. 1 FTW was using Cessnas and Saia Macheti SF 260s based at Anuradhapura, No. 2 Transport Squadron was using Cessna 421C, Beech King Air, Avro HS748, Y-8, and Y-12 based at Ratmalana, No. 3 Maritime Squadron was using Cessnas and Bell 212 helicopters based at China Bay, and No. 4 Helicopter Squadron was using Bell

Jet Rangers, Bell 212s, Bell 412s, and Dauphin 365C based at Katunayake.[290]

During 1984 - 1986, the SLAF began reactivating fourteen disused World War II Allied South East Asia Command airfields that were scattered throughout the country. The airfields were resurfaced and "used to supplement the training facilities of the Air Force in addition to being used for quick reinforcement of troops and supplies in troubled areas in case of emergency problems arose with any aircraft or in case of another insurgency threat.[291]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

From 1983 to 1985, the SLAF acquired 7 airplanes (three Siai Marchetti SF 260, two Cessnas, one AVRO HS748, and one Beech King) and 15 helicopters (eleven Bell 212 and four Bell 412). The Siai Machetti SF 260 were capable of light ground attack and armed reconnaissance and the nine Bell 212 could be converted to attack helicopters while the four Bell 412 could be converted to armed helicopters. The other aircraft were for transport. In 1986, the SLAF added three Bell 212, one BAe 748 (transport), five Siai Machettie SF 260, and two Y-12 (transports capable of landing on grass fields) aircrafts. In 1987, it purchased four more Y-12s and two Y-8 (heavy transport aircraft that could hold more than 150 troops).[292]

In 1985, the Chipmunks, which had been in service since the founding of the air force, were phased out. By the late 1980s, the DC3, Heron, and Dove aircraft also ceased to operate. In 1985, the Jet Provosts and the Soviet MiGs were in long-term storage and written off as unserviceable.[293]

By the end of the decade, the air force had 43 fixed-wing aircraft and 27 rotary-wing aircraft. Twenty-four were combat aircraft, the remaining were for training, transport, or reconnaissance.

### Personnel

In 1980, the SLAF had 2,100 airmen. In 1987, the SLAF had 3,700 men in it. It maintained this number throughout the rest of

the decade. The majority of the growth was the activation of its approximately 1,000 reservists during the mid-1980s when the ethnic disturbances drew the service into its major, long-term security role.[294]

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

From 1981 to 1984, the SLAF "saw the exodus of skilled aircraft technicians leaving in search of the petro-dollar in West Asia. Consequently, flying and technical training was carried out on a priority basis."[295] With the increase in insurgent activities in the mid-1980s, the air force stepped up its training activities, bringing in foreign pilots to assist in the helicopter-training program. Rumors that Pakistani and British pilots were flying helicopter gunships against the Jaffna Tamils were denied by both Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Keenie Meenie Services (KMS), an off-shore based company with offices in London, did hire contractors to provide military service to Sri Lanka. Several former-UK pilots worked for KMS in Sri Lanka. These men, hired by the company to train SLAF officers, conducted combat operations against the LTTE from 1986 to 1987.[296]

### Summary

Throughout the first half of the decade, the air force was incapable of protecting the country from an external attack and could only assist the army by conducting transport and reconnaissance missions. After it purchased, and modified, Siai Marchett's airplanes and Bell helicopters, it was able to provided close air support and small-scale bombings. Because of the nature of the threat during the decade (internal rather than external), the SLAF purchased mostly attack helicopters and smaller planes instead of fighters. At the end of the decade, the SLAF was focused on supporting the government's anti-insurgency missions. It was not capable of defending the country from an external attack.

## THE NAVY

### Mission

Throughout the early years of the 1980s, the principle mission of the navy continued to be against smuggling, illicit immigration, and fisheries protection.  The increase of Jaffna Tamil insurgency operations forced the navy to shift its mission towards preventing the terrorists resupply from Tamil Nadu and interdiction of their movement to and from the Jaffna Peninsula to the Eastern Provinces.

### Operations

Up until mid-1984, the small SLN patrol boats focused on stopping smuggling and illicit immigration.  The larger ships protected the fisheries.  Between 1984 and July 1987, the navy began actively patrolling the Palk Strait and the Palk Bay in an attempt to stop resupply of the Jaffna Tamils.  In May 1984, the SLN established a naval blockade along its eastern boundary in a further attempt to stop the resupply from Tamil Nadu.  In November 1984, the government banned all fishing in the northern area.  Intensive patrols resulted in the patrol boats, armed with automatic weapons, interdicting 1 – 3 insurgent boats per month – usually killing the Tamils guerillas outright at a cost of 4 to 60 insurgents with each attack.  Since Indian fishermen objected to Sri Lanka's interference in their livelihood, they insisted on receiving naval protection.  India deployed additional ships to the area.  Since the Indian navy would not stop the LTTE ships, their presence hindered the SLN's operation.

On 11 January 1985, the Indian Navy seized a SLN patrol boat that the Indians claimed was firing on Indian fishing vessels within Indian territorial waters.  The patrol boat was released, but the incident "was an indication of India's refusal to interfere with the insurgent operations."  Sri Lanka, with no intention of challenging India's naval power, sensibly did not attempt to arm its ships with any weapon systems that would threaten the Indian

navy. After a series of meetings, both sides agreed to a system of joint patrols, which after proving to be futile, forced Sri Lanka to come up with a better way to stop the insurgent ships. Although a large number of LTTE ships were taken or destroyed by the SLN, the overall goal of crippling the LTTE support system failed.[297]

The SLN, operating in conjunction with the Indian Navy, continued patrolling the Palk Strait and Bay during the India-Lanka Peace Accords and during the JVP uprising, the navy began patrolling the west and south coast to limit the insurrectionists access to weapons and supplies.[298]

### Doctrine and Tactics

In the early 1980s, the navy changed its doctrine. It began to focus on protecting the coastline using its larger ships. These locally produced ships were "as cheap and as unsophisticated as could be compatible with their employment."[299]   By 1984, the SLN was able to effectively conduct surveillance along the northern coastline.  Their patrols were effective during the day, but the hundreds of small fishing vessels in the Palk Strait made apprehension at night or during times of low visibility impossible.[300]

The Jaffna Tamils used light 32-foot fiberglass dinghies fitted with up to three 80-horsepower engines (capable of up to 35 knots) to conduct resupply runs from Tamil Nadu and to travel back and forth from the Eastern Province when the government closed the roads.  Therefore, the SLN had to devise doctrine and tactics to stop the insurgents use of this method of transportation. With this in mind, on 1 April 1984, the navy created a special Naval Surveillance Zone (NSZ) within Sri Lankan coastal waters around the northwest, north, and east coast.  The NSZ extended 100 yards out to sea and all entry into it was banned unless permission was given by the local police station.[301]

While the SLN had a strategy for stopping the terrorists, it was not very effective.  Their doctrine involved using the command

ships and tenders as mother ships from which smaller ships (Cougers) would operate.  These larger ships were extremely slow and lacked radars capable of detecting ships beyond 4 miles (in calm water).  Additionally, the Cougars could only operate in calm water, making them relatively ineffective.  More importantly, the navy tended to position these ships in static locations that the LTTE militants could easily avoid.[302]

### Command and Organization

In 1984, there was a command and control problem for the SLN's ships operating in the Palk Strait and Palk Bay since the SLN did not have fixed bases along the north coast.  The navy solved the problem by purchasing and / or leasing six merchant vessels.  The ships served as Command and HQ Ships.  Reforms in the command structure also led to the need for smaller fast patrol boats (34- and 44-foot boats) that could operate directly from the command ships and other large ships that the navy purchased.   Along with these Command ships, Sri Lanka decided to divide the coastline into three command areas: North (Mannar to Mullaitivu), East (Mullaitivu to Gret Basses Reef), and West (Great Bases Reef to Mannar).  A Southern Command is expected to be set up.  At the same time, the navy became to work more closely with the SLAF and the Army: especially in assisting the army in the insertion of commando forces onto Tamil held lands.[303]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

Building on an original fleet of mostly British ships, the government took aggressive steps to expand its sources of supply and at the same time develop a domestic shipbuilding industry sufficient to meet national defense needs.  As a result, the Colombo dockyards began production of the 40-ton Pradeepa coastal patrol craft in 1980, followed by the 330-ton Jayasagara large patrol craft.  In 1980, the SLA ordered additional 66-foot coastal patrol crafts from the Colombo Dockyard and in 1981

it ordered two 130-foot boats. Additional smaller boats were also constructed at the same time. The navy ordered five small patrol crafts from the Colombo Dockyards for delivery in 1983 and 1984. In August 1984, the navy purchased three RO-RO merchant ships and in October 1984, it purchased three general cargo ships. These ships served as command and control headquarters and as command tenders for a fleet of fibreglass dinghies. In 1984, the navy ordered four Chine inshore patrol craft but there are no records show their delivery.[304]

The effectiveness of the NSZ depended on the ability of the SLN to intercept the LTTE ships and the aging Chinese ships and it purchased two Dvora class patrol boats equipped with two 20 mm guns and surface-search radars from Israel in 1984. So effective were these ships that it purchased four more in that year and six more in 1988. The SLN also purchased three South Korean Killer class patrol boats in 1988. To help cover the many small creeks, the navy bought ten British Cougar-class In-shore patrol crafts in 1984 - 1985. Nine more, built locally, were delivered in 1988. The Cougars were carried on-board the command ships and tenders and used as interceptors – but their inability to operate in any thing other than calm water greatly diminishes their effectiveness. The navy purchased two landing crafts in October 1985 to facilitate supplying the army when the land-based lines of communications was interrupted. In 1987, the SLN acquired two fast personnel carriers to assist in the movement of troops.[305]

In late 1987, the navy had a fleet of approximately seventy vessels, more than half of them coastal patrol craft. While the SLN wanted larger vessels, possibly ones from which it could launch helicopters, it still needed shallow-draft vessels suitable for surveying purposes in the Palk Strait. Once charted, larger ships would be able to navigate its coral reefs.[306]

### Personnel

In 1980, the Sri Lankan Navy had 2,887 men in its regular force, 582 in its volunteer force, and 131 in its reserves. This

number stay constant until 1984 when it increased by 121 regulars and 206 reservists.  The following year, the force began a more rapid increase and by 1989 there were 7,000 men in its regular force, 1,100 in the volunteers, but only 99 in the reserves.[307]

In late 1984 or early January 1985, the SLA opened its ranks to women, allowing 50 women to enter its naval academy.  The women had already undergone a month's training in the Army's Wormen's Corps.  The navy did not plan to send the female recruits to sea, but the women did receive weapons training.[308]

### Recruitment, Retention, and Training

No records indicate any problems with recruitment or retention during the 1980s.  The only report of training involved the SNL sending trainers to Israel to learn how to operate the Dvora's it purchased in late 1984 or early 1985.[309]

### Summary

The navy in 1981 was not much different than that of 1971, it was still under-manned, under equipped, and incapable of patrolling and sealing off the nation's coast"  It was unable to effectively stop the resupply of the Jaffna Tamils and the purchase of the additional ships, which were often slower than the small fiberglass ships used by the insurgents, were ill-suited for the mission.  Throughout most of the decade, the navy conducted combat patrols that were ineffective due to their static nature and they relatively weak armaments on-board the ships.  Their command and control was woefully inadequate at the start of the decade and the acquirement of the six command and tender ships did not alleviate the problem.

## CONCLUSION

The armed forces of Sri Lanka remain incapable of defending the country from an external attack.  The army and the air force are solely focused on conducting counter-insurgency operations

and have constructed their forces to best deal with these threats. The navy has also focused on the insurgent threat, but because of their need to stop insurgent ships, they have developed a limited capability to interdict hostile craft at sea.

The army entered the decade unprepared for war because its men were more useful to the government as farmers than as soldiers. Because of the two insurrections, the army has grown "more mature" and is now able to conduct conventional combat operations against domestic enemy forces.

The air force began the decade conducting tourist flights and as soon as combat ended, it attempted to return to this role. The air force increased its number of combat aircraft significantly, but these aircraft are not for external threats and are hard to use against an unconventional enemy force operating in small groups.

The navy proved that it was capable of stopping unarmed boats from reaching the island. Like the other services, the navy remains unable to defend the country against an external force.

The 1950s left the military combat unessential and vulnerable for governmental misuse in non-military missions. The 1960s continued this trend and the military remained a force incapable of defending the country. The military remained unchanged throughout the 1970s – still unable to defend the country. The military of the 1980s proved that it could fight an unconventional war, and by wantonly killing anyone it perceived as a threat, it could win a war.

# CHAPTER 9

## THE MILITARY OF THE 1990s

In 1990, Sri Lanka's military forces were incapable of defending the country from an external attack. The army and the air force spent the majority of the 1980s fighting two insurgencies – the Jaffna Tamils and the JVP. Both services ensured their forces were capable to deal with these low-level threats. The navy also focused on the insurgent threat, but because of the need to stop insurgent ships, they developed a limited capability to interdict hostile craft at sea. This chapter will discuss the growth of the military services during the 1990s.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Three significant events occurred during the 1990s. The first was the withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Force on 30 March 1990. The second was the subsequent start of ethnic conflict between the Jaffna Tamils and the Sinhalese government. The third was the assassination of India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

After the withdraw of the IPFK, the LTTE began "exposing their true stripes [and] in most instances third to enter in conflict with the Army as well as the other two services and the police."[310] The goal of the LTTE was to rid the Northern and Eastern

Provinces of Sri Lankan forces (military and police). When the IPKF withdrew, the army had a few troops in the north, but not enough to limit the LTTE's intentions. The LTTE gradually took control of the North and Northeast sections of the country. Because the Sri Lanka's government was seeking to maintain peace with the Jaffna Tamils, the military ensured that LTTE provocations did not lead to conflict. Furthermore, the army was very weak in this area with only a small number of troops in the north and three infantry battalions in the Eastern Province. The army's officers became diplomats as the LTTE became more intolerable in the demands.[311]

In June 1990, the situation in Batticaloa district was tense because the LTTE was obstructing the movements of the army and interfering with the Police. On 11 June, the LTTE surrounded the Batticaloa Police Station and took it over. On the same day, the LTTE ambushed an army vehicle in Kalmunai (Batticaloa District). This was the beginning of Eelam War II.[312]

The government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE agreed to a cease-fire starting on 8 January 1995. For 100 days, the two sides negotiated. The cease-fire allowed the LTTE to "reorganise, resupply, recruit, retrain, rearm, and redeploy."[313] On 18 April 1995, the LTTE delegation left the negotiating table. The next day, LTTE frogmen destroyed two naval gunboats at the Trincomalee Naval Base, starting Eelam War III.[314]

The assassination of "Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 led to the Indian government proscribing the LTTE." India's Prime Minister Inder Gujral policy concerning Sri Lanka to help the country as possible; this is in stark contrast to its stance from 1950 to 1990 when it "was accused of acting in a hegemonic fashion."[315] The increased openness between the two governments has led to increased cooperation between the two navies and increased schooling for senior officers.

The army received the majority of the defense allocations throughout the decade - averaging 66 percent. The air force averaged 15 and navy averaged 19 percent. The budget remained

relatively even throughout the first seven years of the decade with all of the services annual budget's remaining within 10 percent of their average. The army's large percentage of the budget was a result of the Eelam Wars. The army grew dramatically during the decade, both in manpower and equipment. Since the navy and air force played a more limited role, their percentage was smaller.[316]

## THE ARMY

### Mission

The army's mission remained one of protecting the country from both external and internal threats. Between 1990 and 1999, the army's primary mission was counter-insurgency operations against the LTTE.

### Operations

During the 1990s, the Army fought two wars, Eelam War II and Eelam War III.

- Beginning in late 1989 and continuing into the first half if 1990, the LTTE "dug trenches and built bunkers near army camps, apparently in preparation for an attack."[317] Eelam War II began in June 1990 when the LTTE attacked police stations and army camps in the Batticaloa District. The police surrendered. Army units refused and the LTTE, secure in their bunkers, laid landmines around the majority of the camps, limiting the SLA's movement. The army reinforced most of the camps by air lifting troops to them. Aircraft were not able to deliver aid to all of the camps so two infantry brigades eventually delivered the supplies.[318]

In July 1990, the SLA, working in conjunction with the SLN and SLAF, conducted Operation Trividabalaya. The LTTE was laying siege to Jaffna Fort and the mission of the Task Force (TF) was to capture key terrain around Jaffna Fort and on the outlying islands in order to establish a brigade sector for

subsequent operations and relieve the men in the fort. Naval ships transported the soldiers and provided fire support. The air force provided ground-attack fighters, transport aircraft, and helicopters; both troop carriers and gunships. After capturing the area around Jaffna Fort and relieving the men in the fort, the TF attempted to capture the city of Jaffna. The TF was unsuccessful and withdrew. The force was able to recover a large supply of gold, arms, and ammunition that the government stored in the fort. If the Jaffna Tamils had captured the fort, it would have been a windfall for the LTTE. This was the first time the army landed troops by both land and air.[319]

During early September 1990, the Sri Lankan government launched Operation Sea Breeze. This operation involved land, naval, and sea forces. Two battalions, one Special Forces and one light infantry, was to clear the immediate vicinity of Mullaitivu camp and evacuate the casualties. Helicopters landed a Special Forces squadron while the remained of the two battalions landed by sea. The operation was a success.[320]

On 10 July 1991, the LTTE attacked the "Elephant Pass Army Camp which was strategically located at the entrance to the Jaffna Peninsula."[321] Since the only land route to the peninsula is through Elephant Pass, capturing it would have given the LTTE an uninterrupted flow into and out of the peninsula. After the LTTE laid siege to the camp, the SLA launched Operation Balavegaya to reinforce the garrison forces and halt the LTTE attack. The government conducted an amphibious landing with two brigades (four battalions with a total of 8,000 men). The LTTE put up a stiff resistance for 24 days and an additional nine infantry battalions were required to relieve the Elephant Pass Army Camp. For the next two years, the LTTE conducted intermittent battles over Elephant Pass, but the pass remained in SLA control.[322]

Operation Sathbala, conducted in May 1992, was a result of a change in SLA strategy. The government decided that if the "East is deprived to the LTTE, [then the] Eelam concept is killed."[323]

A squadron of eight tanks took part in the operation – the first time the SLA used tanks. Five infantry battalions attacked south to Alampil and established a base. Three additional battalions joined the base and a TF of six battalions attacked west to link up with forces at Elephant Pass. The operation was successful and the SLA frontage stretched from the east to the west coasts and cut off LTTE's land routes to and from the Jaffna Peninsula.[324]

In the spring of 1994, the army was preparing to conduct a massive attack against Jaffna or Kilinochchi. The SLA massed troops and equipment for almost three months south of Elephant Pass. When General Elections were announced in May 1994, the planned operation was postponed. The army began conducting small scale operations against the LTTE in the east and made it safe enough that elections were held in the province.[325]

- After the LTTE started Eelam War III, the "government decided to conduct an all out offensive against the LTTE terrorist."[326]

Although the army wanted to conduct offensive operations against the LTTE, it had to postpone any plans because the LTTE acted first by attacking three SLA bases on 29 July 1995. The LTTE attempted to conduct an amphibious assault, but the army, with the help of the navy, repulsed the attack.[327]

Before the army could launch its major operations, it launched three limited operations starting on 1 October 1995. These operations were codenamed Shake Hand 1, 2, and 3. The goal of these operations was to expand the area around Palaly. The 51st, 52nd, and 53rd Divisions each took turns expanding the Palaly area.[328]

Operation Riviresa began on 17 October 1995. The objective of the operation was to cut the Jaffna Peninsula off from the rest of the island. The attack commenced from the concentration area south of Palaly (on the northeast coast) to Jaffna (on the southeast coast) – a distance of approximately 12 miles. The LTTE put up a stiff resistance since it had some of its major infrastructure facilities in the area. Adverse weather conditions

slowed the attack for ten days and the heavy rains limited the use of armor and mortars (the base plates could not be firmly bedded for accurate fire).  On 2 December 1995, troops entered Jaffna.  The three divisions took 47 days to conduct the attack.  When they arrived in Jaffna, it had been stripped of everything valuable and most of the citizens had fled the town.  By May 1996, the army had control of the rest of the Jaffna Peninsula and most of the 250,000 citizens returned to their homes.[329]

On 18 July 1996, the LTTE attacked the SLA base at Mulathivu.  After overrunning the base, the LTTE captured two 122-mm howitzers and 903 shells.  This put most of the SLA bases in the northeast within reach of LTTE artillery.  The LTTE also captured 43 mortar tubes (of various caliber), a 106-mm recoilless rifle (with 59 shells), over 4,500 mortar rounds, approximately 3,000 grenades, over 4,000 mines, and over 800 40mm rocket propelled grenades.  The SLA army lost 1,344 men defending the base; the LTTE lost 315.  The LTTE destroyed the camp before returning to their hiding places.[330]

After securing the western Jaffna Peninsula, the SLA launched a series of smaller operations southwards.  These operations, aimed at expanding government control over LTTE area, were generally successful.  By the spring of 1997, the army controlled the majority of the entire Jaffna Peninsula.  The LTTE still controlled a large portion of the Northern Province and the SLA did not have a road linking the Jaffna Peninsula with its main forces south of the Northern Province.  Supplies had to be transferred by air or sea.

In May 1997, the SLA launched Operation Jaya Sikurui.  "Its declared aim was to open a land-based main supply route to Jaffna by recapturing some 74km of the A-9 highway not under government control."[331]   During 18 months of harsh battle, the government secured 40 km of highway.  Over 3,500 soldiers died and another 9,700 wounded.  The operation ended December 1998 – unsuccessfully.[332]

The LTTE, on 27 September 1998 the LTTE attacked the SLA base at Kilonochchi. The SLA attempted to reinforce the base from its Elephant Pass base with two infantry battalions. The LTTE defenses prevented the reinforcement. By 29 September, the LTTE had control of the base. Losses totaled 975 SLA soldiers and 717 LTTE soldiers.[333]

In early 1999, the SLA launched a campaign on the eastern and western flanks of A-9. After regaining 1,000 square kilometers, the government announced that the war was 96 percent complete. Military fortifications were built in the recaptured areas but the forces were spread out with gaps between the units.[334]

In October 1999, the LTTE attacked SLA bases near Trincomalee. LTTE forces quickly gained control over Vanni and parts of the region surrounding Trincomalee.[335]

In November 1999, the LTTE attacked the recently formed SLA positions, overrunning a number of the bases – including the HQs of the 55th and 56 Divisions. The LTTE not only took back more than 1,000 square kilometers of area, but it also seized millions of dollars in military equipment.[336]

In response to the LTTE victory, the SLA sent the 53rd Division to Elephant Pass, which also is the home of the 54th Division. The SLA goal is to maintain control of the two Jaffna Tamil areas still under its control: the northern Jaffna Peninsula and its southern Elephant Pass section.[337]

On 11 December 1999, the LTTE attacked SLA forces near Elephant Pass. They captured the southern tip of the army's defenses and forced SLA troops from their supply landing point. During the attack, the LTTE did not resort to its usual practice of overwhelming the SLA with bodies, but instead used artillery, multiple barrel rocket launchers, mortars, and anti-tank guided missiles. The LTTE changed its tactics.[338]

### Doctrine and Tactics

Because of the JVP uprising during the late 1980s, the army of 1990 was focused on low intensity combat. On 16 November

1991, Lt. General Waidyaratne stated "In order to activate speedy victory we have to adopt a far more aggressive attitude [and] conventional concepts should be avoided to outdo the terrorist fighting the guerrilla war. We have to adopt different tactics and strategies. . . . The three main theatres are the Eastern jungles, jungles in the Wanni and the open terrain in the Jaffna peninsula. Whatever the tactics and strategies of the enemy are, we, have to be on the offensive in both the North and the east."[339]

The rapid rise of the LTTE had caused the army to shift their doctrine and tactics to a high intensity environment.[340]

Lt. Gen. Waidyaratne knew that the SLA could not conduct two major campaigns at the same time. As a part of a new doctrine, Lt. Gen. Waidyaratne decided to cut the Eastern section of the country off from the Northern section and then defeat East, where the economic sustenance of the Jaffna Tamils was. After defeating the LTTE in the East, the SLA would attack the Northern Section and defeat the insurgents there. Operation Sathbala was the first operation conducted under this new doctrine.[341]

Before Eelam War III, the SLA concentrated mainly on holding its defense in the North and conducting operations in the East. With the start of the new war, "it was decided to concentrate on conducting offensive operations in the northern area."[342] The government believed that without holding Jaffna that all of its SLA camps were vulnerable. Plans for the defeat of the LTTE on the Jaffna Peninsula were drawn up, but after a detailed assessment of the situation, the SLA decided that it first needed to expand its perimeters at Palaly to give the army a wide bridgehead with more options. Because of the need for additional troops in the North, the SLA requested, and received, permission to reduce the number of troops in the East.[343]

### Command and Organization

In 1990, the army created a 3rd Division. The divisional headquarters was in Kandy and its three brigades were located

in Northwestern, Central, and Uva Provnices respectively.  The formation of the 3rd Division lad to a re-designation of the areas of responsibility for the other two divisions.  The 1st Division was now responsible for the Western, Sabaragumuwa, and Southern Provinces.  The 2nd Division was responsible for the security in the Northern, North Central, and Eastern Provinces.[344]

In 1994, the army had three divisions and four Task Forces (TF): 1st Division had six brigades, 2nd Division had four brigades, 3rd Division had three brigades, TF 1 had three brigades, TF 2 had five brigades, TF 3 had 3 brigades, and TF 4 had three brigades.  All of the brigades were infantry except for those in TF 4.  TF 4 had a mechanized brigade, an airmobile brigade, and two regiments of Commandos and two regiments of Special Forces.  The Task Forces are located in 2nd Divisions area of responsibility serve as local commands for subordinate combat units.[345]

The army created 24 regular and volunteer infantry battalions between 1990 and 1995.  These battalions joined the existing 27 regular and volunteer battalions in the five regiments.[346]

In mid 1995, the army created three divisions from these task forces; 51, 52, and 53 division.  TF 4 became the 53 Division but the exact change in infantry battalions from the remaining TFs to the other two divisions is unclear.  All three of the divisions' areas of operations were in the north and eastern sections of the country.[347]

During the second half of the decade, the army formed three additional divisions to combat the LTTE; 54th Division (early 1996), 55th Division (late 1996), and 56th Division (October 1997).  Each division had three infantry brigades.  Armor and artillery remained separate brigades.[348]

At the beginning of the decade, the active army three division headquarters, six infantry brigades, and five infantry battalions and six reserve infantry battalions.  The army also had one reconnaissance battalion and two field artillery battalions.  By the end of the decade, the army had ten divisions, one mechanized

infantry brigade, one airmobile brigade, twenty-three infantry brigades with 39 battalions, one independent Special Forces regiment with three battalions, one commando regiment with two battalions, one armor regiment with six battalions, three armed reconnaissance battalions, and an artillery regiment of seven battalions.

The volunteer force began the decade with six infantry battalions, one reconnaissance battalion, and one field artillery battalion. At the end of the decade, the army had one armor battalion, two artillery battalions, 18 infantry battalions, a National Guard with 19 battalions, a Pioneer Corps.

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

Within the first year of Eelam War II, the army realized that it needed better equipment to fight the LTTE. The older weapons were not only vulnerable to mechanical problems, but it was also difficult to acquire ammunition. The army sought to purchase weapons from Western countries, but because these countries wanted to limit the escalation of the conflict, most countries refused to sell Sri Lanka weapons. Therefore, the SLA had to turn to the former Soviet countries and China for used weapon systems. "The trouble with an entirely new source . . . is that time is required for training before the forces can become operational and the supply of spares ay not be assured."[349] The army's wheeled armored vehicles increased its mobility, but cross-country movement necessitated tracked vehicles. Lt. Gen. Hamilton Wanasingha, the SLA commander, decided that the army needed a regiment of Chinese T-85 infantry fighting vehicles (IFV) to fulfill the SLA's need for better cross-country mobility. By August 1991, the SLA had approximately 20 of these tracked IFVs. Lt. Gen. Wanasingha also desired the artillery regiment to have guns with a longer range in order to become less reliant on the SLAF to ward off attacks on isolated camps. The SLA quickly purchased 12 Type 59-1 field guns (130 mm). Likewise, Lt. Gen. Wanasingha wanted tanks to

provide the necessary firepower when needed and on 14 October 1991, the SLA received 25 T-54/55 tanks purchased from Poland which became operational in 1992.[350]

In 1989, the army had 45 reconnaissance vehicles, 154 armored personnel carriers, and over 46 artillery pieces. Within the first year of the new decade, the number of armored personnel carriers fell to 92. The reason for this decrease is unclear. During the remainder of the decade, the army purchased a considerable number of equipment. The largest gain occurred in 1992 when the army purchased 53 Unicorn, 37 Buffel, and 41 Saracen. During 1992, the army also stopped reporting its 40 Samil-20 APCs.[351]

### Personnel

In 1990, the Sri Lankan Army had 50,000 men and approximately half the force were active duty volunteers. This is an increase of 10,000 men from its active duty strength of 40,000 in 1989. The army continued to grow in strength (1991 – 70,000, 1992 – 89,000, 1993 – 90,000) until 1994 when it had 105,000 troops, including 42,000 active reservists. In 1996, the army's strength fell to between 90 – 95,000 men. It remained at this strength throughout the remainder of the decade.[352]

During Eelam War II, the army lost 3,531 men. During the cease-fire from 8 January 1995 to 18 April 1995, only two men died. From the beginning of Eelam War III on 19 April 1995 to 1 July 1999, the army lost an additional 6,180 soldiers. Total losses during the decade were 9711 soldiers killed and an unknown number wounded.[353] The number of killed soldiers is equal to approximately 10 percent of the army's strength.[354]

Desertion plagued the army throughout the 1990s. By 1997, approximately 15,000 soldiers had deserted. Amnesty offers throughout the years only brought some back into the army. The hard lifestyle of the army, coupled with the likelihood of death or injury, made deserting a common occurrence.[355]

**Retention, Recruitment, and Training**

In the second quarter of 1996, the SLA sought to recruit 10,000 troops.  Only 1,800 applicants applied.  The low turn out of recruits, who generally are from the lower or working class, prompted the government to consider conscription.  The government ultimately decided against mandatory service and continued to rely on volunteers.  In 1999, the government attempted to recruit 20,000 soldiers, but once again the actual number of volunteers was much lower than hoped for.  Men and women were hesitant to join the SLA, preferring the safer SLAF or the SLN.  Although supposedly having 95,000 soldiers in 1999, it was much smaller since an estimated 20 percent of the troops are deserted but still on the manning rosters.  The government announced an amnesty program, but it was of little success.[356]

In 1991, special emphasis was given to jungle training and an intensive program was designed to make every soldier fully combat effective.  Special training was carried out to train the infantry companies as a group in order to increase their combat readiness.[357]

The army recognized that the LTTE often took advantage of the inexperience of the junior leaders.  Because of weaknesses identified during the first three years of the war, the training program was revolutionized.  One of the major problems was the lack of proper junior leadership training.  The SLA planned to train its 7,000 to 10,000 junior leaders (officers and NCOs) through a course focusing on small unit operations.[358]

In 1994, the army commander realized that units were still not properly trained in jungle and guerrilla warfare and he directed that every battalion receive jungle training.  He also realized that the units did not know how to fight in built up areas (FIBUA) and he ordered the battalions to conduct FIBUA training.[359]

By the end of the decade, senior SLA officers had improved their skills considerably because of their attendance at foreign military schools; to include Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and the

U.S. Additionally, U.S. Army Special Forces and Navy Seals have provided training several times during the decade.[360]

In 1993, the SLA had trained 10,000 recruits in one month – the largest number ever trained. However, the training did not seem very productive since the LTTE killed 119 in the same month and 241 two months later. In 1994, the length of training increased to a minimum of 14 weeks with more emphasis on counter insurgency and weapon training than on "the ceremonials." As of 1996, the training for infantrymen, the largest percentage of troops in the SLA, was just 13 weeks.[361]

### Summary

At the beginning of the decade, the army was caught unaware when the LTTE resumed their attacks against the Sinhalese-controlled government. Throughout the first half of the decade, the SLA and the LTTE struggled for control of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The numerically larger and superior equipped SLA slowly defeated the LTTE although they did suffer several serious losses. The cease-fire forced the SLA to halt their advance and allowed the LTTE time to reorganized and rearm. When the LTTE broke the cease-fire, the SLA was again caught by surprise. The LTTE were significantly better armed and able to defend their territory.

The war with the LTTE forced the SLA to adopt new tactics and focus on unconventional warfare. The war also forced the army to rapidly expand from 50,000 in 1990 to approximately 95,000 by the end of the decade. This required the recruitment of additional soldiers, usually from the poorer class, into the army. The recruitment of poorer citizens caused two problems – the soldiers were less educated and they not dedicated to the cause and often ended up deserting. However, by recruiting poorer citizens, the country's economy began to depend on the army to provide employment for many of its lower-class citizens.

## THE AIR FORCE

### Mission

During the 1990s, the SLAF's mission focused on supporting the SLA and the SLN during the war against the LTTE. The air force also transported soldiers and supplies throughout the country to cut off SLA forces.

### Operations

During the 1990s, the air force conducted combat missions during both Eelam War II and Eelam War III. The SLAF also continue to conduct its Helitours operation.

During Eelam War II, the SLAF conducted transport, bombing, strafing, reconnaissance, and causality evacuation missions. When the LTTE commenced their attack in June 1990, the SLAF provided close air support and conduct ground attack missions. The number of missions flown between 1990 and 1991 is not available.[362] In 1992, the SLAF conducted 28 missions. In 1993, the SLAF flew only 30 missions against the LTTE. In 1994, the number fell to 20 missions. Helicopters provided tactical transport.[363]

In 1992, the SLAF provided ground security on the Suhadagama to Kanniya road and also protection of villages in the Trincomalee, Vavuniya, and Ampara Districts. The SLAF deployed approximately 2,070 men, many from the SLAF Regiment, but others from the technical ranks. This mission lasted until the SLA relieved the SLAF of the duty in the later half of 1994[364]

The SLAF continued to conduct its Helitours operation throughout the early 1990 and up to at least 1994. It remained both a training aid and a monetary venture for the SLAF – bringing in one percent of the SLAF's 1994 budget.[365]

During Eelam War III, the SLAF continued to provide transport, reconnaissance, casualty evacuation, and resupply missions with its helicopters and transport aircraft. The resupply

missions were critical since the SLA was cut off and relied completely on the SLAF and the SLN to bring in the required supplies.[366]

In regards to combat missions, in 1995, the SLAF conducted 25 missions in support of the SLA, most of them during Operation Riviresa during which the newly acquired Mi-24s played an important role. In 1996, the SLAF flew 19 missions in support of the SLA. In 1997, the SLAF greatly increased its support to the conflict and the Kfir jets flew 232 missions, the Mi-24s flew 127 missions, and the Pucara's 13 missions. In 1998, the scale of SLAF involvement diminished at it only flew 20 missions.[367]

In 1996, Colombo's fire department was found lacking after a LTTE attack on the Central Bank. The government ordered the SLAF to take over the service. The SLAF reorganized and trained the firemen and this increased their fire fighting capability. As of 2000, the SLAF remained responsible for the fire fighting in Colombo.[368]

During the 1990s, the SLAF flew a total of 293 attack missions engaging 665 targets in support of the nine operations in the northern theater of operations. The SLAF also carried nearly 400,000 passengers and over 5.5 million kilograms of cargo.[369]

### Doctrine and Tactics

Before the purchase and modifications of the F7 jet fighters in 1991, the SLAF used its Y-12 transport planes as bombers and rolled barrels packed with explosives out of the cargo hatch. With the arrival of the F7s, the Y-12s reverted to transports.[370]

Between 1990 and April 1995, the SLAF conducted its missions throughout the country without having to worry about losses. This changed when two Avro aircraft were shot down by LTTE anti-aircraft missiles, one on 28 April 1995 and the second one the following day. The SLAF halted almost all air operations while it "scrambled to equip its aircraft with a defence system against the missile threat [and] this proved an arduous and demoralizing exercise."[371]  While the SLAF was modifying

its aircraft, the SLA troop in the north stopped receiving rations until the SLN began bringing in the desperately needed supplies. The additional of Missile Approach Warning Systems was a slow process and in 1996, only nine transport planes were equipped with the system. Evasive tactics became the norm when flying near LTTE controlled areas – a new tactic to the 40+ year old SLAF.[372]

The introduction of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) changed the nature of the air war. "By 1996, the Air Force's dedicated attack capabilities lay largely with the Mi-24 helicopters, the F 7 Chinese jets, and the Pucaras – the last playing a waning role, at this point of time. (Bell 202s and other aircraft were modified to attack status.)"[373] The SAMs made the Mi-24s and Pucara's vulnerable. The F7s, which were primarily interceptors, were modified to drop bombs, two 250 kg bombs, from between 5,000 and 8,000 feet.[374]

This lack of sophisticated ground attack aircraft led to the purchase of Kfir fighters capable of carrying 8 – 10 bombs, along with other ordnance. More significantly, the accuracy of the Kfir was 8 meters – ideal for fighting the insurgents. The SLAF modified the Kfir to carry 250 kg, 500 kg, 1,000 kg bombs, and a 30 mm cannon was installed.[375]

During the 1998 LTTE attack on the SLA Kilinochchi base, the SLAF refrained from flying low because of LTTE's anti-aircraft fire. The Kfirs released their bombs from a high altitude that proved ineffective.[376]

### Command and Organization

Because of intensifying operational requirements, the SLAF introduced a Zonal Command System. The concept divided the country into four groupings of SLAF stations; Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Western Zones. Each Zone Commander was responsible for all air operations within their zone. The Zone Commanders liaised with their Army counterparts to ensure that the SLAF was ready to support all Army operations and respond

quickly during emergencies. The change to a Zonal Command System was the first time the SLAF divided the country into separate commands.[377]

On 1 February 1991, the No. 5 Jet Squadron, with three FT5/7 trainers and four FT7 ground attack aircraft became operational at Katunayake. The mission of the attack aircraft was to provide close air support for ground operations. When required, they would also serve as interceptors and reconnaissance aircraft.[378]

On 15 September, 1992, the No. 2 Transport Wing split into the No. 201 Heavy Transport Squadron (HS748, Y-8, and Cessna 421C aircraft) and No. 202 Light Transport Squadron (Y-12 and Beech King Air aircraft). On 15 March 1993, at Katunayake, the No. 6 Helicopter Squadron formed. The squadron had three Mi-17 heavy transport helicopters. In 1994, the No. 4 Helicopter Wing divided into two squadrons; No. 401 (Bell 212 and Jet Rangers) and No. 402 (Bell 412 and Jet Rangers). The No. 401 Squadron moved to Hingurakgoda in order to be closer to the front, while the No. 402 Squadron remained at Katunayake and catered to VIP movement. In 1994, the No. 5 Jet Squadron moved to China Bay in order to be closer to the operational area and provide quicker response when needed.[379]

Eelam War II ended with the SLAF having eight flying units:

No. 1 Flying Training Wing (Cessna's, Pucara's, and SF 260s) - Anuradhapura.

No. 201 Heavy Transport Squadron (Y-8, Avro, Cessna 421C) - Ratmalana.

No. 202 Light Transport Squadron (Y-12 and Beech King Air) - Ratmalana.

No. 3. Maritime Squadron (Cessna and Bell 212 helicopters) - China Bay.

No. 401 Helicopter Squadron (Bell 212 and Jet Rangers) – Hingurakgoda.

No. 402 Helicopter Squadron (Bell 412 and Jet Rangers) – Katunayake.

No. 5 Jet Squadron (FT5, FT7 and F7) – China Bay.
No. 6 Helicopter Squadron (Mi-17) – Vavuniya.

On 8 November 1995, the SLAF restructured its flying squadrons.  The major changes were No. 201 became No. 2, No. 202 became No. 8, No. 401 became No. 4, and No. 402 became No. 8.  Additionally, No. 9 Attack Helicopter Squadron (Mi-24) was based at Hingurakgoda and No. 10 Jet Squadron (Kfir) was based at Katunayake.[380]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

At the start of the decade, the air force had 35 fixed-wing aircraft and 23 rotary-wing aircraft.  Twenty-three were combat aircraft, the remaining were for training, transport, or reconnaissance. The SLAF did not have any jets; it decommissioned the last MiG-17 in 1980.[381]

In 1990, the SLAF purchased four Bell 212 helicopters, three Siai Marchetti SF 260s, and three Y-12s.  In order to provide jets to the SLAF, the first aircraft purchased were seven Chinese FT5/7 and F7 jet fighters in 1991.  The original purpose of the F7s was to provide "for air defense because of repeated violations of Sri Lankan airspace by aircraft believed to be Indian."[382]  The four F7's were quickly modified to use 30 mm cannons, 57 mm rocket launchers, 50 kg, 100 kg, and 250 kg bombs, and cameras. In 1992, the SLAF purchased one IA58 FMA Pucara ground attack aircraft.  The Pucara, capable of conducting STOL, was built purposefully for counterinsurgency operations.  In 1993, the SLAF purchased three additional Pucara.  In 1994, the SLAF bought another Pucara.  The arrival of the Pucara increased the SLAF's ground attack capabilities.[383]

In  1993, the SLAF purchased three Mi-17 transport helicopters.  The Mi-17s were initially based at Katunayake but due to the distance they had to fly, they were moved to Vavuniya in 1993.  In 1994, the air force purchased three more Mi-17s. In 1995, six more Mi-17 were purchased.  The Mi-17s gave the

SLAF a needed boost in their ability to transport soldiers since it can carry 24 men compared to the Bell-212 / 412 ability to carry 10 men.[384]

In 1995, the SLAF purchased three Mi-24s and three Antonov AN-32B transports. In 1996, the SLAF purchased six Kfir's and four additional AN-32Bs. In 1998, three MI-35, export versions of the Mi-24, were purchased. In 1999, the SLAF purchased two additional Mi-24s and two Mi-35s.[385]

In 1996, the SLAF purchased three Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). The UAVs proved invaluable in carrying out surveillance and "they soon became the SLAF's only source of reliable information and real time intelligence."[386] However, two of the UAVs were lost and were not replaced until 1999 when the SLAF purchased four additional UAVs.[387]

During the decade, the SLAF bought the 31 airplanes and 26 helicopters. SLAF lost one airplane during Eelam War II and thirteen airplanes and nine helicopters during Eelam War III. By the end of the decade, the SLAF had increased its number of fighters / counter-insurgency aircraft and attack helicopters from 9 and 13 respectively to 22 and 15 respectively.[388]

### Personnel

The decade began with the SLAF having 7,000 regular and 1,000 reservists. By 1993, the SLAF had 8,607 airmen (467 were officers). In 1992, the SLAF activated its reserve force of 1,972 airmen (116 officers) and there were approximately 10,500 airmen in 1992. The number settled at 10,000 in 1993 and it remained at this strength for the rest of the decade.[389]

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

The SLAF did not have a problem recruiting personnel during the 1990s. The majority of the Sinhalese men and women preferred joining the air force rather than the army. In early 1994, the air force had 65 pilots (and approximately 100 aircraft). By

1998, the SLAF had 150 pilots.  Since the SLAF was limited in its training capability during the war, the recruits went to Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, and Pakistan for training.[390]

### Summary

Throughout the decade, the SLAF's missions were to support the army and the navy.  The air force supported the army by providing close air support, transportation, and reconnaissance. The SLAF supported the navy through reconnaissance and close air support.  These missions do not train the air force for the defense of the country against a foreign force.

During the Eelam War I, the SLAF flew less than 100 missions; averaging 25 per year.  Helicopters provide more air support than airplanes since they can loiter in combat areas for longer periods and are more deadly against insurgent forces.  The helicopters also provide transport for the army.

The purchase of the Kfirs allowed the SLAF to increase its support of the SLA.  Yet, army officers believe that the jets are unnecessary because they are too fast and come from too far: limiting their ability to effectively coordinate attacks.  The army believes that the air force requires aircraft "that can fly low and hammer moving targets during battle."[391]

Throughout the decade, the air force was a transport force, not a real combat force.  The SLAF only flew an average of 25 combat missions per year.  During the same time period, it carried an average of 40,000 troops and 550,000 kg of supplies per year.

## THE NAVY

### Mission

Throughout the 1990s, the SLN's mission was to provide support to the SLA by transporting troops and supplies to their cut-off bases on the Jaffna Peninsula.  A secondary mission was to interdiction of the movement of the LTTE between the Jaffna

Peninsula and the Eastern Provinces.  A tertiary mission was to ensure the prevention of terrorist resupply from India.  The last two missions were easier after the Indian withdraw in 1990 "because the Indian government was no longer providing much support to the Tamils.  Monitoring traffic across Palk Strait remained intensely difficult, but it was no longer impossible."[392]

### Operations
During the 1990s, the navy conducted combat missions during both Eelam War II and Eelam War III.

During Eelam War II, the navy assisted the SLA in conducting amphibious assaults, transported troops to and from army bases, conduced casualty evacuation, performed reconnaissance and conducted patrols to limit the LTTEs access.  However, for most of Eelam War II, the navy was forced to adopt a defensive posture rather than an offensive one

In November 1993, the LTTE attacked the SLN base at Pooneryn.   and Five P-174 Water Jets were captured.  The P-174s are over 30 feet long, armed with a 12.7mm machinegun, are radar equipped, and have night vision equipment.  With the capture of Pooneryn, the LTTE had achieved complete control of Jaffna Lagoon.  In June 1994, the LTTE attacked the SLN base on Kairanger Island, west of the Jaffna peninsula.[393]

As the LTTE extended their operations along the coast, the SLN increased its patrols in an attempt to keep the LTTE under pressure and limit the movement of arms and personnel.  The LTTE responded by attacking the SLN ships with smaller high-speed boats filled with explosives.  On 16 August 1994, the SLN lost a command ship.  The following month, a patrol vessel was destroyed.  On 8 January 1995, a cease-fire went into affect.

On 19 April 1995, the LTTE attacked naval vessels in Trincomale Harbor, ending the cease-fire and starting Eelam War III. Two gunboats were lost and two patrol vessels damaged.[394]

The naval aspect of Eelam War III had a higher intensity than that of Eelam War I or II.  This was largely due to the increased

capabilities of the LTTE.  During the war, the navy continued its support to the army as well as trying to limit the LTTE's naval resupply.

The SLN's first major mission was not combat, but the support of the SLA troops in the North.  After the LTTE shot down two aircraft at the end of April 1995, the SLAF stopped resupply flights.  For three weeks, the SLA went without fresh rations.  In late May 1995, the SLN began bringing in supplies and rotating men in and out of the Northern area.  The Sea Tigers increased their attacks against the SLN and targeted the slow moving vessels carrying the supplies but the navy continued its resupply efforts.[395]

In July 1995, the SLN was "heavily engaged as the LTTE attempted to interrupt coastal traffic and protect is own supply vessels."[396]  On 16 July 1995, the SLN lost another command ship but the LTTE also lost four light craft.  On 29 August 1995, the LTTE sank two Dvora patrol craft.[397]

On 17 October 1995, the government launched Operation Riviresa and the LTTE lost several ships while attacking an SLN amphibious group near Mullaittuvu.  The SLN's landing craft was damaged, but remained capable of conducting its mission – offloading army troops.  The Black Sea Tigers responded by mining a cargo ship in Trincomalee Harbor – reminding the government that the harbor was vulnerable.  They also attacked the oil tank farm near Colombo, resulting in the destruction of 25 percent of the country's petroleum stockpile.[398]

After Jaffna fell on 5 December 1995, the SLN conducted numerous resupply missions for the army.  The LTTE recognized the importance of the SLN in supplying the SLA and on 31 March 1996, ten fast attack boats attacked a convoy from Trincomalee to Jaffna.  One Dvora was sunk by a suicide boat.

When the LTTE attacked Mullaitivu, the SLN, using two LCMs, supported the SLA landing of troops.  During the operation, the SLN reported over 100 Sea Tiger small boats in the area.  Four of the Sea Tigers boats attacked a SLN patrol boat

and, after one of the explosive laden boats rammed the patrol boat, the patrol boat sank, with a lost of 35 personnel.[399]

On 11 February 1999, the SLN, while enforcing a ban on all shipping to Jaffna Tamil held areas, intercepted two 32-foot LTTE boats.  Two Dvora's engaged the LTTE ships.  The LTTE boats received reinforcements from the nearby Sea Tiger base of Machchikuda.  A SLAF Mi-24 supported the navy and eventually, the SLN sunk one of the LTTE boats and seized the other – it was loaded with medical supplies.[400]

On 18 February 1999, the LTTE Sea Tigers, using eight to ten small boats, attacked the SLN installation at Kilali (north side of Jaffna lagoon).  The LTTE captured another P-174.[401]

### Doctrine and Tactics

The SLNs discovered that the LTTE had created its own naval force during the Indian occupation.  This force was designated the "Black Sea Tigers."  The LTTE was determined to protect the Jaffna peninsula and maintain movement of supplies via small boats. The Black Sea Tigers, by "combining a well co-ordinated radar and visual surveillance programme with a series of "wolf pack" operations by fast small craft, the Tamils began to take a heavy toll of the light [SLN] patrol boats."[402]  The LTTE tactics required the SLN to change its surveillance and response system by establishing sore radar stations, secure communications, and closer cooperation with the Indian navy.

### Command and Organization

In 1992, the SLN revised its command structure and a Southern Command headquarters at Tangaelle was established.[403]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

In 1990, the SLN purchased three patrol boats; one Shaldag and two 201 class boats (usually used for customs by other countries).  The Shaldag was made by an Israeli ship-builder and rejected by both the U.S. Navy and the Israeli Navy as being

unsuitable for their needs.  With a speed of 45 knots, the SLN decided that the boat would help combat the Black Sea Tigers. In 1991, it purchased two P-151 patrol boats (armed with a 12.7 mm machine gun), three Haizhui class (four 20 mm guns, four 14.5 m guns, two 37 mm anti-aircraft guns, two 25 mm ant-aircraft guns, and four 14.5 anti-aircraft guns) and a Yuqin class landing craft capable of hauling 46 tons.  In 1992, the SLN purchased four wooden P-111 coastal patrol crafts to operate from command vessels.

In order to combat the Black Sea Tigers, the SLA purchased four Sea Sentinel patrol boats in 1993.  The navy planned on buying nine more in 1996 and assembling them in Colombo, along with additional 96 others, but the navy cancelled the plan. In 1994, the SLN purchased ten additional P-151s, two additional P-111s, and a Kadula utility landing craft capable of transporting 54 troops (the navy already had two other Kadula class ships from the 1980s).  Another Yuqin was purchased in 1995.

Three Pegasus patrol boats, made in the U.S., armed with a 20 mm gun, two 12.7 machine guns, two 7.62 mm machine guns, and one grenade launcher were purchased in 1996.  An Yahai utility landing craft capable of carrying two tanks and 250 troops, two Haizjui, two new Dvora, and an additional Shaldag was also purchased.  In 1997, 12 additional P-151s, three Pegasus, two Shaldags, one Dvora, and an additional Yahai were purchased.  Another Shaldag and three more Haizhui joined the SLN in 1998.[404]

By the end of the decade, the SLN had lost or decommissioned 18 patrol boats (two Dvora in 1995, fifteen P-111 in 1995, one Belikawa in 1996, and one P-445 in 1996).  The navy also lost or decommissioned 16 patrol crafts (four Vosper in 1990, another Vosper in 1993, one Jayesagara in 1995, one Haizhui in 1995, and nine Pradeepa in 1996).

### Personnel

The air force's strength in 1990 was 8,100.  Because of Eelam War II, the SLN recruited additional soldiers and by 1993 it had

10,000 sailors.  It remained at this strength throughout the rest of the decade.[405]

### Recruitment, Retention, and Training
The navy did not have problems recruiting or retaining personnel during the 1990s.  Service in the navy, although having a longer obligation than the other two services, ten versus seven years, is safer.  The purchase of modern ships necessitated increased training.

### Summary
The primary missions for the SLN during Eelam War II was providing troop and supply transport for the SLA.  SLN ships were also used in several amphibious assaults.

The navy was unable to counter the small LTTE ships that operated in the shallow waters off northern Sri Lanka.  The boldness of the LTTE attack on numerous naval bases, and their stealing of SLN ships, is indicative of lax naval security.  The suicide ramming and sinking of several SLN ships proved that the navy could not protect its ships against a numerically inferior force equipped with small generally unarmed boats.  The navy was unable to protect the country from external aggression.

## CONCLUSION

The armed forces of Sri Lanka remain incapable of defending the country from an external attack.  The three services are completely focused on defeating the Jaffna Tamil insurgency.

The army entered the decade unprepared for war because its troops were used to fighting lightly armed insurgents.  The emergence of a more heavily armed LTTE with dedicated soldiers fighting for a clear objective proved that the government's military forces had met their match.

The army can conducting conventional combat operations against enemy forces but the LTTE preferred to fight unconventional battles.

The air force increased its number of combat aircraft significantly, particularly jets and helicopters.  However, the jets are not well suited for fighting an unconventional war against an enemy force operating in small mobile groups.

The navy demonstrated that it was capable of stopping unarmed boats from reaching the island, but it cannot stop even lightly armed ships during combat.  Neither can it stop attacks against its bases nor suicide attacks against its ships.  Like the other services, the navy is unable to defend the country against an external force.

The 1950s left the military combat unessential and vulnerable for governmental exploitation.  The 1960s continued this trend and the military remained a force incapable of defending the country.  The military remained unchanged throughout the 1970s – still unable to defend the country.  The military of the 1980s proved that it could fight an unconventional war, and by wantonly killing anyone it perceived as a threat, that it repress a conflict for a period of time.  The 1990s did not bring a change to the military.  It remains incapable of protecting the island from internal threat and is unprepared and ill-equipped for an external threat.

# CHAPTER 10

## THE MILITARY OF THE 2000s

In 2000, Sri Lanka's military forces were incapable of defending the country from an external attack. The three services spent the 1990s fighting the LTTE and configured their forces with the organization, manning, and equipment required to defeat the insurgents. This chapter will discuss the growth of the military services during the 2000s.

### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Four significant events occurred during the 1990s. The first was the increase of LTTE attacks on military bases. The second was the Sinhalese civilian's outlook on the domestic conflict. The third was the signing of a cease-fire between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE with the initiation of a Norwegian led mediation effort. The fourth was the short-lived breaking of the LTTE into two separate forces; each with its own goal.

The defeat of the SLA at Elephant Pass and the subsequent besiegement of Jaffna Town indicates that the LTTE is gaining strength and is willing to meet the SLA in conventional battles. Furthermore, the LTTE continues to acquire armor, artillery, and engineer equipment, making it more formable. The loss of Elephant Pass and the siege of Jaffna Town is demoralizing to

Sinhalese citizens and soldiers alike. The LTTE also attacked the SLN at Trincomalee and the international airport near Colombo. The LTTE was becoming bolder in its attacks. The attack on Colombo's airport forced Lloyd's of London to declare Sri Lanka a 'war-risk zone' and impose massive surcharges on all ships and aircraft arriving to the country.[406]

The Sinhalese majority are tired of paying for war. The defense budget for 2001 was an estimated $862 million; 22 percent of the country's total expenditure. "Analyst say that military spending could now exceed $1 billion, diverting more vital resources from poverty alleviation, healthcare, and schooling."[407] The Sinhalese believe that the military forces should have defeated the LTTE years ago. They witnessed first-hand the government brutality against the JVP in the late 1980s and they expected the government to defeat the LTTE insurgents the same way.[408]

The signing of a cease-fire between the Sri Lanka government and the LTTE is indicative that both sides are becoming tired of the conflict. The war has The bombing of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the subsequent Global War on Terror has forced the LTTE to recognize "how conspicuously untenable its position has become." Since the LTTE is now labeled a terrorist group by not only the U.S., but also the UK and Canada (the latter two have large Tamil diasporas), international funding is becoming harder to funnel to the LTTE. Its leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, "seems worried that his political game is virtually up in the wider global area."[409] This has caused the LTTE to lean towards negotiating with the Sri Lankan government.

On 3 March 2004, a Breakaway Tamil rebel group led by the Eastern Tamil Commander V. Muralitharan, broke from the main LTTE force. Muralitharan pulled his 6,000 fighters out of the 15,000-strong rebel army in a dispute over regional rivalry and political strategy. He alleged the northern-based leaders were considering a return to war and that eastern Tamils were treated as second-class in the rebel administration. On 9 April, the two rival LTTE forces began fighting each other; causing the

worst fighting in the country since the truce between the Jaffna Tamils and the Sri Lankan government halted the island's civil war two-years earlier.  The northern-based LTTE (the original LTTE) launched the attack on the breakaway rebels.  The rebels led by Muralitharan retreated south of a major east-west road that was controlled by the government, leaving the northern LTTE troops on the north and the breakaway rebels on the south.[410]   On 13 April, the northern LTTE force had defeated the breakaway rebels.  The leader, Muralitharan was offered protection by the Sri Lankan military.  General Lionel Balagalle, head of the SLA, stated, "We don't know where he is, but if he asks for protection, we can give him so."[411]  The offer could anger the main rebel group.  On 19 April, the LTTE reannounced  a general amnesty for guerrillas who sided with a renegade leader, a news report stated that the LTTE would not punish, victimize, or persecute anyone who has been associated with Muralitharan and in his traitorous activities.[412]

On 3 April 2004, a snap election was held four years earlier than necessary.  President Chanrika Kumaratunga called the election in order to end the in-fighting with her arch-rival Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe.  Kumaratunga, a hard-liner had often been at odds over the way the Prime Minster dealt with the Jaffna Tamils.  President Kumaratunga won the election and replaced Wickremsinghe with Mahinda Rajapakse, "a moderate who supports a negotiated settlement to the island's long-running ethnic conflict."[413]  Kumaratunga, on 7 April 2004, vowed on television to open peace talks with Tamil Tiger rebels. "Kumaratunga said her government had set out as a priority the need to revive peace negotiations with the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam but did not say how or when the discussions could start."  She said. "We have a truce for over two years without even starting to talk with the LTTE on the possible final solutions. This is not a happy situation for the country." "The new government is working on resuming peace talks with the LTTE."[414]  The LTTE also appear ready to talk as over 20

Tamils belonging to the Tamil Nationalist Alliance were elected into the parliament. "At the Tamil Tiger rebels' political wing headquarters in the city, a senior Tiger who goes by the name of Yalavan says there is no alternative to peace."[415] He stated that they have agreed to continue peace talks.[416]

## THE ARMY

### Mission

The army's mission remained unchanged: one of protecting the country from both external and internal threats. Between 2000 and 2003, the army's mission was counter-insurgency operations against the LTTE. In 2004, the SLA began considering sending troops on UN missions.[417]

### Operations

During the 1990s, the Army continued to fight the LTTE in Eelam War III. The war had numerous battles and the main ones are discussed below.

- On 27 April 2000, the SLA lost Elephant Pass. A LTTE force defeated 17,000 troops. The battle for the pass began on 11 December 1999 and lasted over four months. The 17,000 troops were evacuated from the Jaffna Peninsula. The defeat of the SLA "cut completely [the] already tenuous overland military supply lines from the south that had proved so difficult for the [SLA] to protect and guarantee."[418] The LTTE continued attacking westward and laid siege to the 35,000 SLA troops in Jaffna Town.
- On 25 April 2001, the SLA launched Operation Agni Kheila. Two depleted divisions, 53rd and 55th, took part in the operation aimed at recapturing Pallai, a village that lies along Highway 9 on the isthmus connecting the Jaffna peninsula to mainland Sri Lanka. Both divisions returned to the original defensive positions within 72 hours. The elite 53rd Division returned after only 24 hours. Deadly mortar and artillery fire, along

with a vast minefield, caused approximately 300 deaths and 1,900 wounded.[419]

- On 10 April 2004, the SLA was ordered "restore law and order in the island's east amid a fighting between Tamil Tiger factions." "The President directed the chief of defence staff and service commanders to visit the area and take all necessary steps to enforce law and order."[420] This included helping evacuate rebel casualties from both sides, but not interfering in their conflict. Since the government has no control over the area, the SLA "will be taking all necessary steps for the safety and security of the people in the government-controlled areas." "Soldiers would prevent the Tamil Tigers from trying to cross into government-held territory to get at the breakaway faction, which is now calling itself the Eastern Tigers."[421] The army positioned troops along the roadways in the eastern region and along the sea cliff to prevent landings by the mainstream LTTE at Panichachankani, where refugees were being cared for by the international relief organizations.[422]

### Doctrine and Tactics

The army is conducting a defensive war with its forces manning static defenses with occasional offensive operations. Its forces are incapable of defeating the LTTE with either conventional or unconventional tactics. Its doctrine continues to focus on conventional and counter-insurgency operations. However, the SLA is considering sending troops, to include new recruits, abroad for United Nations peacekeeping duties.[423]

### Command and Organization

The army did not made any organizational changes during the first three years of decade. It has three divisions headquarters, an armor brigade, an air mobile brigade, 33 infantry brigades, a Special Forces brigade, a commando brigade, four artillery regiments, and several support regiments. The infantry and artillery brigades have both regular and active volunteer battalions.[424]

## Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

In 2000, the army had 53 reconnaissance vehicles, 38 armored cars, 158 APCs, 25 tanks (18 were operational), 81 artillery pieces, 27 air defense weapons, and over 300 mortars.  In 2001, The SLA decided that it required additional firepower to support its armored cars and APCs so it purchased 40 tanks.  By 2002, the army reduced its number of reconnaissance vehicles and armored cars; both to 15 vehicles.  In order to provide its troops with more protection and greater mobility, the army increased its APC by approximately 70 percent in 2001, from 158 to 204.  In 2002, the army nearly doubled its artillery, from 97 in 2001 to 187 in 2002.

## Personnel

The army had between 90,000 and 95,000 soldiers in 2000 and 2001.  It was impossible to determine the exact strength due to the large number of desertions.  In 2002, the SLA's strength increased dramatically and it ended the year with approximately 118,000 soldiers.  Some of these soldiers were deserters who returned due to amnesty.  In April 2004, the SLA stated that "Upon recruitment to the Sri Lankan army, they [recruits] are entitled to receive training both at local and foreign levels and contribute to UN sponsored peacekeeping troops."[425]

## Retention, Recruitment, and Training

Although reported figures show a substantial increase in the army's strength, recruitment is extremely difficult.  Between February and March 2000, the army attempted to recruit 15,000 soldiers. Only 1,500 volunteered.  Retention is poor, in January 2000, over 5,000 soldiers serving in the north deserted.  The army offered amnesty for the deserters, 507 returned.  Regular amnesties (the army has offered nearly 20 amnesty's since 1990) "do more to encourage potential deserters than deter" because the soldiers know that they can always apply for amnesty if the need ever arises.  Most soldiers desert with their weapons.

"Deserters equal an increase in crime and have ties to the underworld."[426]  The deserters often return to the south (where the recruitment centers are) with tales of the army's failure and this makes recruitment more difficult.[427]  In September 2004, the SLA attempted to recruit more soldiers with a promise of higher pay, but the recruitment goal of 4,000 soldiers was not met.[428]

### Summary

After losing Elephant Pass to the LTTE and having its subsequent offensive campaign stopped after only 72 hours, the SLA decided that it needed additional firepower to defeat the LTTE.  During the next two years, while peace negotiations were occurring, the SLA increased its armor, APCs, and artillery. The SLA appears to be prepared to carry on the war against the LTTE, but the majority of the weapons purchased are located in southern Sri Lanka and are unable to directly support the troops in the north at this time.

## THE AIR FORCE

### Mission

During the 2000s, the air force's mission was to support the SLA and the SLN.  It provided close air support, (fixed- and rotary-wing), transport (fixed- and rotary-wing), and air assault support (rotary-wing) for the army.  It conducted maritime reconnaissance for the navy.[429]

### Operations

During the first thee years of the 21st century, the SLAF continued supporting the army and navy during Eelam War III.

On 24 June 2001, the LTTE attacked the country's only major international airport.  The suicide bombers destroyed five civilian aircraft and eight military aircraft (jets, helicopters, and trainers).[430]

Since the LTTE captured Elephant Pass and laid siege to Jaffna Town, the SLA has become increasing reliant on the SLAF for supplies. The only airbase in the area is Palali and the SLAF has lost several planes trying to supply the SLA. LTTE surface-to-air missiles makes flying into Palali extremely dangerous. The air force assisted the SLN by conducting reconnaissance flights off the northwestern coast.[431]

### Doctrine and Tactics

New acquisitions may modify the role of the SLAF jets. The addition of the MiG-27s will provide the SLAF with a low-level capability that the Kfirs are incapable of providing. The MiG-27s will also increase the country's ability to intercept aircraft violating Sri Lanka's airspace, similar to the 1987 incident with the Indian Air Force.

### Command and Organization

The SLAF is deployed in four zones. The northern zone has the No. 1 Flying Training Wing based at Anuradhapura and the No. 6 Helicopter Squadron at Vavuniya. The Palaly airbase is also in the northern zone but no aircraft are permanently based there. The western zone has the No. 4 VIP Helicopter Squadron, No. 5 Jet Squadron, and the No. 10 Jet Squadron at Katunayake. Airbases at Colombo and Ekala are also in the zone but without any permanently based aircraft. The southern zone has the No. 2 Heavy Helicopter Squadron and the No. 8 Light Helicopter Squadron at Ratmalana. The Katukurunda, Koggola, Wirawila, and Diyatalawa airbases are also part of the southern zone but without any aircraft based on them. The eastern zone has the No. 9 Attack Squadron and the No. 7 Helicopter Squadron at Hingurakgoda. The airbases at Chinabay, Batticaloa, and Ampara are in the eastern zone but are not permanent bases.[432]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

In 2000, the SLAF purchased 12 fighters (eight Kfirs and four MiG-27s), four

Mi-24s helicopters, and seven transports (two C-130s, two Y-12, and three AN-32).

In 2001, the air force purchased three fighters (two MiG-27s and one MiG-23) and one Mi-35 attack helicopter. The eight SF-260s became training aircraft. The SLAF lost one Kfir, two Mi-17s. and three AN-32 transports.

In 2002, the SLAF bought 10 Mi-35s and 10 transports (three AN-32s, five Cessna 150s, and three Bell 412). It lost six fighters (one F-7, one Kfir, two MiG-27, and two Pucaras), five Mi-24s, and two Y-12 transports.

The decade began with the SLAF having 34 fighters and 19 attack helicopters (up from 22 and 15 in 1999). During the next three years, the SLAF decreased its number of fighters to 22 but increased its attack helicopters to 24.[433]

### Personnel
The air force remained at its late 1990s level of 10,000 airmen until 2002 when it nearly doubled its size to 19,300 airmen.[434]

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training
The air force continues to have strong recruitment. Retention is high since the majority of the airmen never face combat. Desertions are extremely low.

Due to a dearth of pilots and a limited training establishment, most of the trainees are undergoing advance flight training in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The U.S. Air Force conducted several joint training exercises with the SLAF and the training focused on search and rescue, maintenance, and personal survival.[435]

### Summary
Throughout the first three years of the decade, the SLAF did not conduct any major combat operations. Its acquirement of MiG-27s increased its capability to conduct close air support, but the cease-fire has put any requirement for the aircraft on hold.

The SLAF nearly doubled in personnel, from 10,000 to 19,300. The use of jets was frowned upon by the SLA during the 1990s, and the increase in attack helicopters, may be indicative of the SLAFs willingness to change its doctrine in favor of rotary-wing instead of fixed-wing close support.

### THE NAVY

#### Mission

Throughout the 2000s, the SLN's primary mission was to "support the government's counter-terrorism efforts against the Tamil separatists guerrillas by guardingthe coastline, particularly in the island's north and east." A secondary mission was support of the SLA by transporting troops and supplies to their cut-off bases on the Jaffna Peninsula.[436]

#### Operations

During the 1990s, the navy conducted combat missions during both Eelam War II and Eelam War III.

Since 2000, the navy continued to assist the SLA by providing supplies to their cut-off forces on the Jaffna Peninsula.

On 23 October 2000, four LTTE Sea Tigers small crafts breached the SLN defenses at Trincomalee Harbor and, by using a suicide boat, sunk a commercial vessel and a SLN gunboat. The SLN destroyed the remaining three crafts. The ships used by the LTTE were 19 feet long and capable of reaching 50 knots – faster than the majority of the SLN ships.[437]

In April 2001, the SLN fought the LTTE Sea Tigers several times. The SLN intercepted one ship with a large stock of ammunition, to include artillery and mortar shells. The SLN attempted to halt a LTTE cargo ship off the northeastern coast and the ship headed out to sea. The SLN tracked the ship for about 150 miles but rough seas forced the SNL ships to return to port. In July 2002, the SLN seized three Tamil vessels transporting weapons to the northern section of the island.[438]

### Doctrine and Tactics

In 2000, Sri Lanka's government decided that the navy needed to be the first line of defense against the LTTE.  It believed that if the navy could stop the flow of weapons and ammunition to the LTTE that the army could defeat them.  In order to help accomplish this mission, the navy formed the air arm in 2001 based off the *Sukanya.*  The *Sukanya* can carry a helicopter to provide the SLN with a maritime surveillance capability.  The navy believes that by curtailing or disrupting the LTTE insurgents that it will make it difficult for the LTTE to wage war.[439]

### Command and Organization

The SLN has four regional headquarters; Colombo (NAV WEST), Boossa (NAV SOUTH), Trincomalee (NAV EAST), and Karanger (NAV NORTH).  Due to the limited naval role in fighting the LTTE, the SLN recently set up OM NOR CEN, a headquarters to command naval units performing defense measures on land; especially in areas recaptured from rebels.[440]

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

In 2000, the SLN purchased two additional *Shaldag* class patrol boats from Israel.  On 9 December 2000, the SLN commissioned the *Sarayu,* an Indian-built *Sukanya* class offshore patrol ship that can carry a helicopter.  In 2001, the navy purchased four additional patrol crafts (two *Hansaya* and two *Haizhui*-class patrol crafts).[441]

### Personnel

In 2000, the SLN had approximately 10,000 sailors, no change from 1999.  In 2001, the SLN increased its manpower by 80 percent to 18,000 sailors.  By 2003, the navy had approximately 20,600 sailors.[442]

### Recruitment, Retention, and Training

The navy did not have any problems recruiting or retaining personnel during the early years of the 21st century.  Service in

the navy remains favorable compared to that of the army and its increase in size in just three years is indicative of the ease in recruiting sailors.

In 2001, the navy decided that it required its own air capability. In December 2001, the SLN purchased the *Sarayu* patrol ship from India. The *Sarayu* is approximately the size of a small frigate and is the smallest type of ship capable of carrying a helicopter. In July 2001, the SLN sent its first "pilots" to the SLAF No. 1 Flying Training Wing to learn how to fly helicopters. The SLN also conducted several training exercises with the U.S. Navy.[443]

### Summary

The SLN's purchase of the *Sarayu* was designed to limit the effectiveness of the LTTE's small craft operating in the Palk Bay and Palk Strait. Yet, the ships draft will limit its ability to effectively patrol these areas. Instead, the *Sarayu* will patrol the area around Colombo or north of the island, areas where the LTTE's small ships do not operate. The purchase of the additional patrol crafts will help in the halting of LTTE transport ships much more than the *Sarayu*. The SLN wants to become a blue-water navy capable of defending its fisheries, but first the country must defeat the LTTE.

## CONCLUSION

Sri Lanka's armed forces are incapable of defending the country from an external attack. The three services remain focused on defeating the Jaffna Tamil insurgency.

The army entered the decade prepared to fight the LTTE and increasing its firepower. Although any improvement is a positive step, the SLA is not prepared to defend the country against an external threat. The current cease-fire has forced the troops back to their barracks where they are loosing their edge. Deserting is rampant throughout infantry units. The emergence of a more

heavily armed LTTE at the start of the decade caught the SLA by surprise (once again) and it is likely that the LTTE is continuing with its training and equipping while the SLA remains in their garrison locations.

The air force increased its number of attack helicopters.  This will allow the SLAF to conduct better close air support, if the war resumes.

The navy's purchase of a patrol ship and four patrol crafts will increase its ability to protect its fisheries if the war ends, but it still needs smaller, well-armed craft capable of stopping the LTTE's small ships.

The 1950s left the military combat unessential and vulnerable for governmental exploitation.  The 1960s continued this trend and the military remained a force incapable of defending the country.   The military remained unchanged throughout the 1970s – still unable to defend the country.  The military of the 1980s proved that it could fight an unconventional war, and by wantonly killing anyone it perceived as a threat, that it could win a war.  The 1990s did not bring a change to the military.  It remains incapable of protecting the island from internal threat and is unprepared and ill-equipped for an external threat.  The 2000s, with the prospect of peace likely, will cause the military forces to reexamine the purchases they have made throughout the years.  The military is designed to fight a counter-insurgency – not defend the country from an external threat.

# CHAPTER 11

## THE FUTURE?

This book has provided a chronologically arranged, analytically rigorous investigation of the changing missions and capabilities of Sri Lanka's military.

If the pattern of the past 55 years holds true, then after the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE sign a Peace Accord, the mission of the Sri Lankan military will change from counter-insurgency to defending the country. This agreement will have a significant impact on all aspects of Sri Lanka's military because changing threat perceptions will again lead to changing missions, doctrine and tactics, command and organization, equipment purchases, and personnel management.

In the short-term, peace will benefit the three services. The army will become a smaller and more lethal force through the acquisition of standardized modern equipment. The air force will focus on conducting training to prepare itself for defending the country from external threats and providing support to the army and navy. The navy will replace the army as the first-line of defense. It will defend the country from external threats and protect the economic interests of the country.

In the long-term, the lack of a "perceived enemy" will allow the government to argue that previously important operational requirements are now longer necessary and the defense budget

will be cut.  Additionally, the lack of an enemy will cause the services to place their combat systems in storage.  The army will revert to its 1970s role of supporting the police in quelling civil disturbances.  The SLAF will become a force only capable of proving transport.  The SLN, the country's first line of defense, will be incapable of defending the country from an external attack.  These changes will ensure that Sri Lanka's military finds itself in the same situation as its predecessors of 1983, 12 years after the JVP uprising: unable to defend the country.

The signing of the peace treaty will affect each of Sri Lanka's services differently.  Each services future operations, doctrines and tactics, command and organization, weapons procurement, and personnel administration will change.

## THE ARMY

### Mission
The mission of the army will not change.  It will remain that of protecting the country from both external and internal threats.

### Likely Operations
The army will conduct agricultural missions (as in the 1970s), assist in rebuilding the country (especially the engineer units), and assist the police during periods of internal unrest.  The SLA will volunteer to conduct UN peacekeeping missions.[444]

### Doctrine and Tactics
The SLA will change its doctrine from its current one based on fighting a counter-insurgency, to that of defending the country. Emphasis will be on developing a doctrine to fight a "modern war."  The SLA currently uses the British pre-World War II doctrine that focuses on trench warfare.  Sri Lankan officers who attended the U.S. Command and General Staff Course at Ft. Leavenworth during the 1990s are familiar with U.S. doctrine, but the Eelam War prevented the army from adopting any of

the modern concepts.  With an end to the war, the SLA can modernize its doctrine.  The new doctrine will focus on mobile warfare and joint operations.[445]

### Command and Organization

The army "has identified the need to restructure is forces."[446] The current structure of nine divisions operating either under the command of a Task Force commander or directly under the army commander will change.  Regional commanders, similar to Corps commanders, will assume command of all forces in the region.  Artillery, logistics, and signal units will fall under the command of the regional commanders.  The airmobile brigade, armor brigade, commando brigade, and Special Forces brigades will be independent commands directly under the command of the army commander.

The army will no longer need its nine infantry divisions with 33 infantry brigades.  The army will reduce the number of infantry units to 22 battalions; one for each administrative district.  This deployment is similar to that of the early 1980s, the last peaceful period before the conflict with the Jaffna Tamils, when the army had cantonments throughout the country.  Most of the battalions will be regular army, but some will be volunteer.  Units that are not essential, but still desirable (the airmobile brigade, armor brigade, artillery brigades, commando brigade, and the Special Forces brigade) will downsize.

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

The army will standardize and modernize its equipment. Purchases of air defense weapons is necessary to protect the country from a foreign attack because the SLA did not require air defense weapons during the Eelam Wars and the existing systems are outdated and in storage.[447]

The procurement of "any available weapon" will cease. The army will focus on one single family of weapon systems – Eastern European.

The majority of the army's tanks, armored infantry fighting vehicles, and artillery weapons will enter storage. Its armored personnel carriers and its reconnaissance vehicles will remain in service conducting non-combat missions.

Excess weapons and ammunition, especially those not of Eastern European manufacture or those locally produced, will be sold.

### Personnel

The army does not need 118,000 soldiers during peacetime. In 1982, the army had approximately 11,000 soldiers. The army will reduce its strength over a period of years. Its estimated 40,000 volunteers will be released from active duty. Additional soldiers will be released yearly as their enlistments end. By the end of the decade, the end strength will be approximately 20,000 soldiers.

Since the majority of its army is infantrymen who will not have a mission, the government will use them to assist in rebuilding the country.

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

Recruitment into the army will slow as the screening of applicants will increase and only the highest qualified will be allowed to join. Reenlistment will only be offered to quality soldiers.

Combat training will be reduced. Training will focus on modern mobile warfare and joint operations with the SLAF and the SLN to halt smuggling operations and prevent illicit immigration.

### Summary

The SLA will modernize its doctrine and tactics and acquire modern weapon systems. The army will reduce its manpower to meet the needs of a peacetime army. Training will incorporate the modernized tactics. Soldiers will deploy on UN peacekeeping

missions. The short-term result will be a smaller, more lethal army capable of defending the country from external and internal threats.

In the long-term, the government will cease to see a need to modernize the army in the absence of an external threat. This will cause the army to lose its combat experience and it will revert to its pre-Eelam War status of providing assistance to the police force. Ultimately, it will be unable to defend the country from an attack, either internal or external.

## THE AIR FORCE

### Mission

The air force's mission will not change. It will remain that of protecting the country from both external and internal threats.

### Likely Operations

The SLAF will support the army by providing it with rapid transport throughout the country during periods of internal unrest. The air force will support the navy by conducting surveillance patrols of the Economic Exclusion Zone and coastal areas. During floods, typhoons, or other natural disasters, the air force will conduct humanitarian missions to provide critical supplies and transportation to remote areas of the country.

### Doctrine and Tactics

The SLAF will change its doctrine to improve its capability of defending the country from an external threat. During the Eelam Wars, the air force lost over 20 aircraft to LTTE anti-aircraft fire and was often unable to support army forces due to LTTE air defenses; the SLAF will have to modify its doctrine and tactics to counter this limitation. Also during the Eelam Wars, SLA officers complained that the SLAF was not responsive enough to their needs; the SLAF will incorporate joint operations in its new doctrine.[448]

### Command and Organization

The overall organization of the SLAF will remain but the attack helicopter and close-air support squadrons will be disbanded because there is no need for these types of units. The SLAF will close airbases deemed unnecessary for a peace-time air force.

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

The air force will standardize its equipment. Currently, the SLAF has a combination of Chinese, European, Israeli, Soviet, and U.S. aircraft. The SLAF will focus on a single family of aircraft for each mission (transport, reconnaissance, and fighter). The close-air support aircraft and attack helicopters will enter storage. The government will sell excess aircraft and ammunition.

### Personnel

Currently, the SLAF has approximately 19,300 airmen. The reduction in attack helicopters and close-air support airplanes, along with a reduction in the need to main multiple airbases, will allow the SLAF to return to its 1990 level of approximately 7,000 men.

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

Recruitment into the air force will slow and applicants will undergo careful screening – allowing only the best qualified to join. Only the highest qualified airmen will be offered the opportunity to reenlist. The SLAF will conduct joint training with the SLA and the SLN to prevent illicit immigration and stop smuggling operations.

Air-to-air combat training will increase as the SLAF ensures it is capable of defending the country from external attack. Coastal patrolling will assist the navy in preventing smuggling and stopping illicit immigration. Long-range maritime reconnaissance training will assist the navy in enforcing the Economic Exclusion Zone.

**Summary**

The SLAF will modernize its doctrine and tactics so it can defend the country from an external threat. It will reduce its strength through normal attrition to that of a peacetime air force with modern weapon systems. Its transport aircraft, utility helicopters, and trainers will remain in use – mainly supporting the rebuilding of the country. Training will incorporate air-to-air combat and maritime patrols. In the short-term, the result will be a smaller force capable of supporting the army and navy in the defense of the country.

In the long-term, the absence of a threat will cause the SLAF to place its combat aircraft into storage and it will revert to its pre-Eelam War status of providing taxi service to the army and helping the police quell domestic issues. It will not be able to defend the country's airspace.

## THE NAVY

**Mission**

The navy's mission will not change. It will remain that of protecting the country from external threats and enforcement of the Economic Exclusion Zone.

**Likely Operations**

The SLN will revert to its operations of the 1980s; preventing illicit immigration, stopping smuggling, conducting search and rescue operations, and protecting the fisheries in the Economic Exclusion Zone.

**Doctrine and Tactics**

In 2000, the Sri Lankan government decided that the navy needed to be the first line of defense against the LTTE. The navy will now become the first line of defense against an external threat. The SLN needs to modify its doctrine and tactics to facilitate deep-water operations in order to fulfill this mission.

### Command and Organization

The SLN can transform to a peacetime navy with no overall command or organizational changes.

### Weapons Procurement and Existing Weapons

The navy will still have a requirement for many of its ships. The larger ships will be able to protect the country's offshore interests – especially the fisheries. The smaller ships will conduct coastal patrols. However, reports indicate that many of the present ships are suffering from neglect and will need extensive overhauling or scrapping.

### Personnel

In 1982, the year prior to Eelam War I, the navy had approximately 3,000 men and only a few ships. The SLN currently has over 20,000 sailors, of which 2,400 are reservists. The SLN will release the reservists from active duty. The remaining 17,000 sailors are required to man its fleet of over 100 ships (compared to 27 ships in 1982).

### Retention, Recruitment, and Training

Normal recruiting and retention will continue. Training will focus on joint operations with the SLAF and the SLA to combat the illicit immigration and smuggling operations.

### Summary

The SLN will modernize its doctrine and tactics so it can defend the country from an external threat and protect the economic interests of the country. Its smaller ships will patrol the coastal waters to stop smuggling and illicit immigration. The larger ships will enforce the Economic Exclusion Zone. The short-term result will be a navy capable of defending the country economic interests.

In the long-term, the absence of an external threat will cause the navy to reconsider the necessity of its combat ships and many

of them will be sold or decommissioned.  The navy will revert
to its 1970s status; under equipped and incapable of patrolling
and sealing off the country's coast; let alone able to protect the
country.

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[133] Of note is the fact that the soldiers only carried sticks.

[134] SLA, *Sri Lanka Army*, 167.

[135] SLA, *Sri Lanka Army*, 167.

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[140] Muttukumaru, 184; Silva, "Brigadier Wickremasooriya;" SLA, *Sri Lanka Army*, 94, 157, 634.

[141] Jacobs, 6; *The Arms Trade with the Third World*, 833; Muttukumaru, 189.

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[149] *The Reference Handbook of the Armed Forces of the World*, 2nd ed., n.p.

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[155] *The History of the Sri Lankan Air Force,* 32 – 33.

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[158] Mendis, email interview by the author, 26 March 2003.

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[164] Goldrick, 177.

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[166] Keerawella and Hemachandre, 3.

[167] Chowdhury and de Silva, 64; Goldrick, 178.

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[171] *Armed Forces of the World: A Reference Handbook*, 3rd ed., 44; Keerawella and Hemachandre, 2 - 3.

[172] Keerawella and Hemachandre, 3.

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