

## What to Do or What Can GOSL Do with the Big Military?

a. Sri Lanka Army: A distraught army in a dilemma-a politicized and divided army, more than ever, by an army commander who might be punch-drunk (or suffering from Dementia pugilistica-It is also called, chronic traumatic brain injury associated with boxing (CTBI-B), due to the tau protein buildup then we must feel sorry for him), an ex-army commander who could not control his mouth, be tactful and wanted to realize self-actualization overnight and a Defense Secretary who is profit seeking and politically powerful. They all have shamelessly been politicking in uniform or in office. They all are equally culpable for the sorry state of affairs in the army and the dilemma faced by its rank and file. I do not want to talk about the officer corps as it is so sordid, beyond description. I do not want describe the politicians' hand or the contribution in this respect as there are involved in an officer's life ever since one is selected as an officer cadet. An officer candidate has to get letters of 'endorsement' from the MP in power from the electorate and his henchmen.

The options or Courses of Action (CoAs) available are as follows:

1. To continue to slide down on the slippery slope and end up in the dustbin of history as a good-for-nothing, undisciplined, unprofessional, political militia rather than well recognized, respected and endearing professional army every Sri Lankan could admire and be proud of.
2. Regain the lost prestige and professionalism and assert it as the best army on the planet earth, pound for pound, technology aside. It has the total package, I think, to be an expeditionary army well sought after-except the proper military leadership required – No Apparatchiks need to apply! Only leaders who technically and tactically proficient, fair and firm in peace and inexorable in war.

The way to realize the 2nd Course of action is so easy given the literacy rate, educational levels, technical and tactical proficiency of the current army and or full life time exposure to terrorism and an insurgency as a soldier.

Sri Lanka Army is the only army in the world to have its commandoes and Special Forces who have nothing but the battle experience, not only against terrorists but insurgents as well, from Private to Major General(Prassanna-SF) (Mahesh-SF till recently) (Raj-Colonel-SF-a few years back) (Priyantha-Col-CDO), ever since they joined the military. There is no army on earth with such a coveted wealth of experience, and the quality of that experience was manifest when the LTTE was defeated in less than three years and is crystal clear when one sees, day in day out, the superpowers are struggling to effectively deal with terrorism ever since 9/11.

By using the above credentials Sri Lanka army can make it an expeditionary force that United Nations, Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and African Union (AU) or some other country (Maldives?) will call upon Sri Lanka to help out with in a disaster stricken or war ravaged country. That way Sri Lanka can get international recognitions; win friends to get help, when needed, at UN; some change, experience and exposure for personnel; FOREX for Sri Lanka

and a lot of extra money for personnel and their families to name a few benefits.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs must deploy the best and smart diplomats to skillfully negotiate, work out modalities, and secure a real good compensation package for SLA rather than kowtowing to demands or pressures that emanate from whatever quarters then sell a contingent of valiant and experienced but poor army personnel for a song!

To be an expeditionary army, SLA has to do following:

1. Improve the command of English or the English knowledge of officers and especially rank and file.
  2. Make them computer literate. No more in the world literacy rate, 3Rs, is measured or gauged with ability to read, write and do arithmetic. It is 3R&C now-Read, Write, Arithmetic and Computer Literacy!
  3. Instill in them the good reading habits-for self-improvement, Situational Awareness and Situational Understanding. As I have said elsewhere; Knowledge is power!
  4. Instill discipline in officers and soldiers and keep them away from politics.
  5. Use diplomats who have served in 'target' countries to give Cross Culture Communication training to troops in a contingent before its possible deployment.
  6. At least to simulate hot and cold environment in the other parts of the world train the army in Anuradpura during the hottest months and in Nuwara-eliya during the coldest.
  7. Train! Train! Train! Realistic training with possible scenarios in 'joint' environment-with Navy, Air Force, Police and other government agencies like Disaster Management and Health Ministry personnel. Have MOD updated "Operation Cloud Burst", "Operation Shock" Operations orders for contemporary Sri Lanka. Does MOD have updated operation orders for all the essential services of Sri Lanka and have MOD conducted simulated training? If not, why, wait till the horse has bolted to close the stable? Have written and Sweat more in peace to bleed less in war!
  8. "We Will Go Anywhere - We Will Anything – Jeyanthan Brigade Sri Lanka Army"
- b. Sri Lanka Navy; Hear it from me, Sri Lanka Navy is no different than army in divided loyalties but it is not visible to general public as much, it existed as Silva vs. Fernando camp, Cadet Entry (Mohan J) Vs. Direct Entry (Mohan S), Mohan W Vs. Wasantha, now it is Ananda Vs. Royal camp.

Options or COAs for Sri Lanka Navy is the same as for the army.

1. To sink

2. To sail from sea to the shining sea! From East to West, Sri Lanka Navy is the best! To be blue water navy, SLN has to consider in addition to what I have described from 1 to 7 under Sri Lanka army. I am not sure GOSL realize the potential of Sri Lanka Navy except continue politicize it by appointing henchmen to top positions and humiliating Army using the Navy HQ as a brig or dungeon for political purposes for Army officers. I am no fan of SF. Why I am concerned is the humiliation and bad blood created in this ugly issue, which has unimaginable repercussions in the cordial relationship among sister services officers in the long run. Why can't SF be kept in 'house arrest' in 'Hotel Galadari' and guarded by STF as GOSL then did to the LTTE delegation of mass murders in town in peace garb for peace talks in 80s? The distance from NHQ rather the gate by Kleppenbergh House; the official residence of Commander of Navy to Hotel Galadari is mere 60 meters.

During the humanitarian war SLN was in the forefront of medical services provided to the civilians who were sick or injured on the battlefield. I do not think any other navy in the world that has had to handle the volume or the quantity of patients that SLN did manage to handle during the humanitarian operations and final war. Those skills are perishable and the valuable experience gained, maybe, only possible once in a naval rating's life time, would lose over time.

Did MFA or its diplomats give thoughts to this, or did SLN navy Flag Officers lean forward and come up with a proposal to undertake a turnkey project to wipe out the Somali pirate menace along the sea lines of communication along the Somali coast and HOA (Horn of Africa)? Did SLN intimate their ability, readiness and willingness to tackle and get rid of this problem for good to US AFRICOM (AFRICAN COMMAND) through PACOM (PACIFIC COMMAND)? If it didn't, may I ask, WHY? Do not tell me those Flag Officers have been smoking and drinking the duty free stuff afloat personnel get on monthly basis and watching 'Maskada' (Triple X-XXX-rated movies) on board ships since 18 May 2009, as they used to do in 80s, instead of being pro-active or leaning forward!

SLN should also consider some serious water scooter training as it would come in handy one day.

This is how SLN can operate and win the fight against Somali pirates: Station OPVs (Off-shore Patrol Vessels) SLNS Sayura, SLNS Samudura, SLNS Sagara and SLNS Sayurala as 'motherships' ordering to take turns to pull watches and attach a sizable squadron of small boats or arrow boats to the motherships. Initiate a very good Information Operations campaign with short video clips and storyboards of SLN's sea battles with tigers through international media such as CNN, Reuters, AP and BBC to tell in stern and unequivocal terms that SLN has defeated the most ruthless, fanatical and innovative sea tigers and black sea tigers in sea battles, and ask Somali pirates 'test' SLN if they dare.

Tell the world that SLN means business and not democracy or due process on a platter for pirates who threaten lives and commerce at sea. Tell UN boldly using the best and brightest diplomats that SLN's ROES (Rules of Engagement) are very simple. If a suspected boat does not heed signals from SLN to stop immediately, then SLN will open fire on a suspected boat to sink it with occupants, sending a strong signal that the due process for the culprits can be expected only at the Davy Jones' Locker. If UN wants to vacillate and dither in their policies in this regard, if UN wants SLN to pussy foot with the pirate and pacify international community,

then request UN another nation to pull the mission. Then I will guarantee Somali pirates will terrorize the shipping along Somali coast till the end of this world!

The most important benefit or outcome of this will be, other than stature and standing in the world that Sri Lanka can request or will get or be able to get helicopters, night vision goggles, sniper rifles, boats and whatnot from other nations free of charge. How many of you know this; US has given equipment with military use to Iran, an alleged member of the axis of evil, or Iranian border guards help them do duty efficiently in arresting drug flow or the drug runners along Afghanistan border, or to Pakistani Army and Frontier Corps in their fight against Al Qaeda and Taliban? By the way Kingdom Saudi Arabia needs to safe guard their supertankers. They will you grant money to Sri Lanka to do a good job instead of paying hefty ransoms to the Somali pirates.

My experience with other countries is that if you take initiative, are dedicated or do a selfless and wonderful job, they admire you, they support you and they compensate you. I have seen living examples!

c. Sri Lanka Air Force-The division in the SLAF is based on General Duties branch and rest of other branches. Reason for this is SLAF pilots belong to GD branch and only a pilot can become an Air Force commander though the SLAF act says a fit and proper person can be appointed the Commander of Air Force.

Since 80s I have known a lot of SLAF pilots. I have flown with them in the cockpit on observer missions. Sadly, the most of them I have known are no more, the list so long, and only a few remain. Now in my new life I happen to read the biographies of retiring pilots of an air force in another country. They retire after 20, 30 or 40 of honorable service to their country. The most important factor or the nearest and dearest one, except family, to a pilot is the number of flying hours he has accumulated over the years flying fixed wing or rotary aircraft.

When I was young and my pilot friends were flight lieutenants, into 5 years of their service in the air force, they had almost three thousand flying hours. When I used to tease them; hey, you are a pilot you must be dating a very beautiful and rich HFC (Holy Family convent) chick or Visakian, they replied very friendly "What are you talking about? We are not pilots, machang (buddy)! We are 'Taxi Drivers'!" It said a lot about their very hectic life then, and I could visualize it during the humanitarian operations and final war. The other thing we must never forget is that this new generation of young pilots' almost every single flying hour, unless they are VIP pilots, was flown in combat, that means under enemy fire from LMGs, Five Zeros, RPGs, and MANPADS! What the most of the other nations' pilots did in their whole service lives was troop transport (PAX movement) or ferrying cargo. That was also in PEACE time!

SLAF is also capable of becoming an expeditionary air force, at least providing pilots and personnel. The inventory of air force is not built up to give up transport planes or cargo helicopters to missions overseas as they are needed here. The other issue is as C-130s SLAF has are old and in not good shape for very long hauls or journeys.

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