

Most people will remember the 5th of February, 2003, when General Colin Powell stated at the United Nations - "My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we're giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence". He continued: "We also have satellite photos that indicate that banned materials have recently been moved from a number of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction facilities." These words were followed by images of trucks, supposedly mobile WMD labs, and he dramatically held a test tube in the air, supposedly filled with the Anthrax virus.

As things turned out, the highly scientific and sophisticated 'evidence' Powell produced against Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis had been fraudulently manufactured by the US and UK governments!

True to form, six years later the US and the UK are trying the same tactic again: this time on Sri Lanka, as revenge for ignoring their demands.

The American 'super' intelligence network is offering the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) with 'evidence' of war crimes in the form of satellite images acquired by the National Geo-spatial Intelligence Agency (NGA): a NGA spokesman, Marshal Hudson, is reported to have told the British Times newspaper that his agency had been monitoring Sri Lanka's conflict zone for the State Department and he has some 'evidence'!

They worked hard to secure the minimum number of signatures required to schedule a session of the UNHRC; having just managed 17 votes through possible collaboration of one or two puppet governments, coercion of others and of course, a certain level of bribery and corruption, now the long noses are attempting to gain as much out of this sneaky, nonsensical exercise as possible.

As with every move of the US, there are a number of fraudulent motives behind their campaign to call up a UNHRC meeting on Sri Lanka, as well as their offer of 'secret satellite intelligence'.. The motives include: the need to divert world attention from Afghanistan; spreading misinformation about the "intelligence capability" of the ruling military-industrial-scientific complex; justification of the "raison d'etre" of the NGA; and to influence the share price of the company that is providing the satellite services to NGA.

The US secret service infrastructure (its embassy and diplomatic network, other aid agency and NGO fronts) assisted by Reuters, AFP and AP spend as much time spreading misinformation as they do gathering information. This is done with the aim of misleading countries like China and Russia about their military capabilities.

The NGA's Marshall Hudson has boasted that the agency had been "monitoring the conflict zone" during the final stages of its battle against the LTTE, and had provided images to the State Department. He also boasts that the NGA has software which can recognise and analyse

differences between images "that could indicate damages from bombs or heavy artillery": this claim is simply ridiculous.

As an expert with over two decades of familiarity with the inner workings of the Western military and other intelligence apparatus, Ajith Randeniya states, " I can vouch that there is no practical way how any satellite image (of whatever resolution) could be used:

1. To pass judgment on the strength of the artillery used in a battle field
2. More importantly, to determine as to 'who' fired any such artillery

One only needs the most superficial knowledge about satellites and satellite images to understand the totally ridiculous nature of this bluff.

One of the best examples of the limitations of satellites as a spying tool came from India and Pakistan in 1998: America's intelligence agencies with satellites, communications intercepts, agents and analysts, were unable to detect India's Pokhran nuclear tests of 11 May 1998, or the subsequent Pakistani tests. The US Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman at the time, Richard Shelby, called it a "colossal failure" by the CIA. The explanation of the 'master of lying' the CIA Director at the time, was that India deliberately chose a period of frequent sandstorms to conduct the underground blasts!

In a nutshell, nothing much about satellite capability to monitor things on the surface of the Earth has changed since then, despite incremental increases in the resolution of images. The frequency of satellite cover is predictable and its imaging capability is seriously affected by natural factors.

Visible satellite images are essentially photographs of physical features and geographically referenced activities on the Earth from space, obtained as part of what the spy communities grandiosely call "geospatial intelligence".. Such images depend on visible light for clarity of detail and therefore obtainable during daylight hours only, and is affected greatly by the cloud cover. Infrared satellite technology that is used to overcome such problems is of no great help either due to the lower resolution of the images.

The utility of satellite images is, at best, limited to military mapping and planning missions only, when accompanied by extensive digital analysis and interpretation in the light of information from other sources; it is not useful for much else. Most satellite imagery needs to be supplemented with aerial photography which has higher resolution, but is more expensive to obtain. It is well known that the commercial aeroplanes flown by most Western airlines are discreetly fitted with spy cameras to obtain such data.

Hudson has admitted to the Times that the resolution of the satellite pictures did not exceed half a meter per pixel and did not allow night vision. However, he has hedged his bets by saying that the NGA used "software to recognise and analyse difference between images that could

indicate damages from bombs or heavy artillery". If they are planning to correlate something like the diameter of a speck in their "high-tech" image with the explosive power of artillery, they will only be kidding themselves!

In order to understand the fraud involved in the US promotion of such inexact technology for the purpose of determining whether the Sri Lankan government forces used heavy artillery, one needs to understand the background to the players and events involved.

The NGA, the prime culprit in this conspiracy, was formerly known as the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA), tasked with supporting the "state of readiness" of US military forces. NIMA was renamed NGA, and is currently located in Bethesda, Maryland, but will eventually be relocated in 2011 at the New Campus East to be constructed near Fort Belvoir, VA.

The US government's most ambitious spy satellite programme, "Future Imagery Architecture" (FIA), designed to equip the NGA with state-of-the-art imagery, failed after five years of R&D by Boeing, at a cost of more than \$10 billion, forcing the NGA to get its raw imagery from commercial operations. The NGA uses images from the GeoEye-1 commercial satellite that orbits the Earth 423 miles above. Moving at 4.5 miles per second, it passes over any given point on earth once every three days. This means that there is a gap of three days between any two photographs of the Sri Lankan battle zone the NGA will receive!

The NGA GeoEye-1 satellite is owned by a company named 'GeoEye' based in Dulles, Virginia, that sells imagery obtained through three Earth imaging satellites-GeoEye-1, IKONOS and OrbView-2, to the CIA, Departments of defense and Homeland Security, airlines and shipping lines and oil and gas companies.

They can't be serious in asking the UNHRC to commit people for "war crimes" based on images collected once every three days from an area so adjacent to the Bay of Bengal, a part of the Earth where dense cloud cover is normal as evidence to prove that they used more power than was necessary!

by Maj. Gen. (Retired) Kamal Fernando
Former Chief Signals Officer, Sri Lanka Army