

SPECIAL REPORTS

'Gaza II' unfolding in the East

By Wayne Madsen

Online Journal Contributing Writer

May 8, 2009, 00:18

(WMR) -- The current offensive by the Sri Lankan government against the Tamil Tiger or Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebel movement has trapped tens of thousands of refugees in a coastal strip still held by the rebels.

Sri Lanka's military has been accused by human rights organizations of using massive firepower against the guerrillas that is resulting in civilian casualties. The comparison between Israel's brutal attack on the Gaza Strip and its killing of over 1,000 civilians and the wounding of many thousands of others and the Sri Lankan assault on a three-mile long coastal strip controlled by the Tamil Tigers have been made by a number of observers, including Australia's Green-Left Online in a [May 2 article by Sean O Floinn & Emma Clancy](#): "A largely defenseless people struggling to survive and hemmed in on a narrow strip of land, facing indiscriminate air strikes, assault from gun boats and cluster bombs by a well-equipped army, conjures up the image of the recent Israeli invasion of Palestine's Gaza Strip."

However, there is more to the comparisons between Israel's attack on the Gaza Strip and Sri Lanka's attack on the narrow strip of the Jaffna peninsula. In May 2000, a day after India refused to give Sri Lanka any military assistance in its war against the Tamil Tigers, Sri Lanka and Israel resumed diplomatic relations. Although the corporate media are focusing on Sri Lanka's military assistance from China, little mention is being made of the island nation's military links with Israel.

After the establishment of diplomatic ties between Jerusalem and Colombo, Israeli military technicians arrived to maintain Sri Lanka's Israeli-made Kfir fighter-bombers and Russian MiG-27 aircraft and provided Sri Lanka with Dvora fast naval attack craft. Israeli arms and ammunition also began flooding into Sri Lanka.

Soon, Israeli military advisers and "consultants" were regular visitors to Colombo's new Access Lanka Building, owned by relatives of Sri Lanka's top military officers. Among Israel's security exports to Sri Lanka was state-of-the-art electronic and imagery surveillance equipment. Israeli Air Force pilots reportedly flew Sri Lankan attack aircraft against Tamil Tiger targets on the Jaffna peninsula. Israeli military personnel were also reported to have taken part in Sri Lankan military attacks on Tamil units.

Due to Israel's military assistance to Sri Lanka, Palestinians reportedly began aiding the Tamils in the 1980s. It is also believed that Israel's Mossad recruited agents among Sri Lanka's large contingent of foreign workers in the Persian Gulf Arab states. There were also reports that Israelis were also providing weapons and training to Tamil guerrillas in order to maintain a "market" for Israeli arms suppliers in the civil war-wracked island nation.

On March 2, 2007, WMR reported: "WMR visited Phnom Penh, Cambodia and discovered that the Mossad and Cambodian criminal syndicate allies continue to obtain bought-back Cambodian weapons from Cambodian government warehouses and are selling them to guerrilla groups throughout Asia, including Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers, anti-Laotian Hmongs, the small anti-communist Free Vietnam Movement, and Burmese tribal guerrilla groups. WMR photographed a number of Zim shipping containers portside along the Mekong River in Phnom Penh. From this and other port facilities, including the port of Sihanoukville, bought-back Cambodian weapons, some originally provided to the Khmer Rouge by [Israeli tycoon Shaul] Eisenberg and the Chinese, are making their way to insurgent groups around Asia, possibly including Iraqi guerrillas battling U.S. forces in Iraq."

Tamil guerrillas have claimed to have destroyed an Israeli-made Sri Lankan fast naval attack craft,

perhaps reminiscent of Hezbollah's destruction of the *INS Hanit*, a Saar-V class missile corvette, which was deployed off the Lebanese coast during the 2006 Israeli attack on Lebanon, with a C-802 Iranian-made Noor missile.

Although Sri Lanka suspended diplomatic ties with Israel in 1970 over the failure of the Israelis to withdraw from illegally occupied Palestinian territory, however, operating an Interests Section within the U.S. embassy in Colombo, Israeli-Sri Lankan ties began to grow closer in the mid-1980s. Israel provided Sri Lanka with military advisers and established a special commando unit for the Sri Lankan police.

In 1990, Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa ordered the Israeli Interests Section at the U.S. embassy to close its doors and two Israeli diplomats in Colombo were ordered to leave. Premadasa was said to have come under pressure from Muslim ministers in his government. In 1990, Premadasa also ordered a government investigation of charges that Mossad was training both Sri Lankan and Tamil guerrilla forces.

On September 25, 1991, Reuters reported from Colombo: "Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, fighting against a campaign to have him impeached, yesterday accused the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad of plotting against him because he closed the Israeli interests section in the U.S. embassy. He spoke at the opening session of parliament."

On May 1, 1993, Premadasa was assassinated in Colombo during May Day festivities by a suicide bomber said to be a Tamil guerrilla. Twenty-three other people were killed in the blast. On May 28, 1993, Abdul Hameed Mohammed Azwer, Sri Lankan minister of state for Muslim affairs, said in Jeddah, "Israel was enraged by when they were expelled from Sri Lanka by Premadasa and I suspect the Mossad was behind the dastardly murder of this respected leader."

Those behind Premadasa's assassination remains an Asian "cold case." On September 23, 1997, Attorney General Sarath Silva released 18 Tamil suspects in the assassination of the president, citing lack of evidence. Silva declared the case would be officially deemed as "unsolved."

During a March 2009 trip to Israel by Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, talks were held with Israel's leading arms suppliers on increased military aid by the Israelis to Sri Lanka.

Israel continues to supply Sri Lanka with arms and military training even after the United States and Britain cut off military supplies to Sri Lanka over the government's human rights violations.

Previously published in the [Wayne Madsen Report](#).

Copyright © 2009 [WayneMadsenReport.com](#)

Wayne Madsen is a Washington, DC-based investigative journalist and nationally-distributed columnist. He is the editor and publisher of the [Wayne Madsen Report](#) (subscription required).

Copyright © 1998-2007 Online Journal
[Email Online Journal Editor](#)