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## Sri Lanka : Plan B

Wednesday, 29 April 2009

Last Updated Wednesday, 29 April 2009

The LTTE is trying to use 20,000 or more Tamil civilians as human shields and hostages, in an eight square kilometre enclave along a beach in northeast Sri Lanka. All this is an attempt to avoid defeat at the hands of the army, which is intent on capturing or killing any LTTE leaders remaining there. If the LTTE can somehow get a ceasefire, it can retain control of some territory, and rebuild its forces and resume the war. The government also fears that there is an LTTE Plan B, which involves getting as many LTTE leaders and experienced operatives out of the small "safe zone" in the northeast, while pretending to be civilian refugees, and into the general population. There, the LTTE would resume their terror attacks, again with the goal of rebuilding their strength and resuming their separatist war.

The government has been screening the 200,000 or so Tamil refugees from the last year (and especially the last few months) of fighting, looking for LTTE officials and key operatives. Many have been found, but the government screeners have also found that the Tamil civilians remain terrified of the LTTE, and believe that any cooperation with the government will lead to punishment by the LTTE eventually. Many, if not most, Sri Lankan Tamils believe that the LTTE will survive defeat in the current battle. This is because the LTTE ran a police state in northern Sri Lanka for the last two decades, all in the name of Tamil unity and resistance to the rule of the Sinhalese majority. The LTTE preached self-sacrifice and a suicidal attitude towards combat. The LTTE used large doses of indoctrination and fear to make Tamils believe that their only option was to obey, or at least fear, the LTTE. Many Tamils were put off by this, but fear of punishment kept them quiet. Some are speaking out now that the LTTE government is shattered, but everyone knows that the LTTE is far from over. The LTTE leaders who have been captured recently confirm, this, even though some of these men are disillusioned with their entire LTTE experience. The prospects of the LTTE getting a ceasefire are low. International pressure and threats of withholding aid or imposing sanctions have led the government to halt the use of artillery, mortars and aerial bombs. But the LTTE are still using their mortars, and blaming the government. The army is now fighting from tree to tree and bunker to bunker against the thousand or so remaining LTTE fighters. Bunkers often have a dozen or more civilians in them, along with a few LTTE gunmen. This makes it difficult to use grenades, or even rifles, to clear the bunkers without injuring civilians. The LTTE is making maximum use of human shields, believing that they have nothing to lose by getting more Tamil civilians killed, and might even pull off a miracle (a ceasefire and "get out of jail" deal with the government). The LTTE tactics have already led to over 10,000 civilian casualties in the last three months. But the government insists that the army won't stop until all the civilians are safe, and all the LTTE members are dead or disarmed. The government is not allowing UN aid workers into the combat zone, partly because of all the evidence the army has found, in recently captured territory, of UN collusion with the LTTE. It's often the case that aid workers have to cooperate with armed groups to survive and operate in combat zones. But the government believes that the UN crossed the line because of the extent that the UN aid workers helped the LTTE war effort. Six LTTE ships, including four suicide bomb boats, approached the safe zone on the northeast coast, and were sunk by a navy patrol boats, killing at least 25 LTTE men. April 27, 2009: An LTTE boat approached the safe zone on the northeast coast, and was sunk by a navy patrol boat, killing at least four LTTE men. Courtesy: strategypage.com