
False allegations will be laid to rest with the 'Factual Analysis Report'- Secretary Defence

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In Spanish "The false claims and allegations made by Tamil Diaspora together with the LTTE international network will be laid to rest with the release of the factual analysis reports, said Secretary Defence Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa. He expressed these views addressing the gathering at the launching of the report titled "Humanitarian Operation Factual Analysis July 2006 - May 2009," on Monday (Aug 01), at the Hilton Colombo. Secretary Defence further questioned, "Why should the government, which directly looked after the family of LTTE leaders, kill those who surrendered to the military?" "The sole purpose of these allegations is to discredit Sri Lanka and disrupt the prevailing peace in the country," he said commenting on the Channel-4 canard, "11,000 former LTTE cadres have been rehabilitated and reintegrated to society thus far. Medical supplies were released to the North even up to the last day of the humanitarian mission, which ended on May 18, 2009", he further stressed.

Full text of the speech delivered by Secretary Defence Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa at the release of the report, "Humanitarian Operation: Factual Analysis" on 01st August, 2011 at Hilton- Colombo. Religious Dignitaries Hon. G. L. Pieris, Minister of External Affairs Other Honourable Ministers Members of Parliament Excellences, the Ambassadors & High Commissioners of other nations Mr. Lalith Weeratunga, Secretary to the President Secretaries to Ministries Chief of Defence Staff Service Commanders Distinguished Guests Ladies and Gentlemen: Good morning. I would like to warmly welcome all of you and thank you for your presence here today. The purpose of today's event is to officially release the report that has been compiled by the Ministry of Defence on the Humanitarian Operation. The purpose of this report is to set out the factual background and operational context, which brought peace to Sri Lanka by liberating our people from the brutal terrorism of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the LTTE, in May 2009. The report begins with a detailed analysis of the LTTE, including its true nature, and its growth and sophistication over the years, and the threat it posed to all Sri Lankans. The LTTE was a vicious terrorist group that suppressed democracy in the areas it dominated, killed all its rivals and assassinated moderate Tamil politicians and intellectuals, and spread terror throughout Sri Lanka with its many attacks on innocent civilians. Raising funds through its international criminal network, the LTTE not only had the ability to use semi-conventional tactics on land, but also acquired sea and air dimensions to strengthen its offensive capability. The size and scale of the LTTE was equivalent to many conventional forces; any attempt to defeat it militarily required the proportionate use of force. Through the years, successive Governments of Sri Lanka attempted many solutions to the conflict, including military engagement as well as peace talks. The sincere efforts of the Governments to seek a solution through negotiation, however, were always sabotaged by the LTTE. Though it sought the refuge of ceasefires whenever it was weakened militarily, the LTTE had no interest in peace. This is made abundantly clear by its acts of brazen provocation during each ceasefire period, especially the last ceasefire from 2002 to 2006. The second part of this report begins by describing the resumption of hostilities in 2006. The closure of the Mavil Aru sluice gate by the LTTE in July of that year threatened a humanitarian disaster in the east, affecting many thousands of Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese civilians. The near simultaneous attacks launched on Security Forces positions made it clear that the closure of the Mavil Aru sluice gate was only the start of the LTTE's offensive. In the circumstances, the Government had no option but to launch a military operation to save the country from the LTTE menace. This section of the report charts the progress of that Humanitarian Operation. It also describes the many precautions taken by the Government to safeguard civilian lives during the period of hostilities, and the broader frameworks within which civilian rights were protected. The final part of the report is a brief overview of the consequences of the Humanitarian Operation, which shows a Sri Lanka that is finally at peace. The country is now rebuilding after suffering thirty long years of terrorism. Democracy has been restored to every part of the country, the North has almost completely been demined, nearly all internally displaced people have been resettled in their homes, normalcy has returned throughout the land and an economic revival is at hand. Sri Lanka has thirty years of lost opportunities to catch up on. While we will certainly engage with and account for the events of the past, our focus must be on the future. In this regard, it is disturbing to note that the rump of the LTTE organisation together with some in the Tamil Diaspora are still working to tarnish the image of this country, sow discord amongst our people, and drag Sri Lanka back into the past. They make various allegations against the conduct of the Humanitarian Operation, which have unfortunately been given far too much attention. These allegations are quite absurd. Take for instance the allegation that the Security Forces killed or gravely mistreated those who surrendered or were detained. This has been repeated loudly and repeated often, but it is not an accusation that stands up to scrutiny. By the end of the Humanitarian Operation more than 11,000 LTTE cadres surrendered to Security Forces. Despite the various acts of terrorism and mass murder they had committed, these cadres were not mistreated in any way. The 595 child soldiers who surrendered were reunited with their families within one year, while over 6,100 adult cadres were rehabilitated and released by June 2011. Most of the remaining cadres are undergoing further rehabilitation programmes and will be reintegrated to society when they are ready. Those culpable for atrocities at a higher level will be prosecuted through legal channels. The Government of Sri Lanka has taken the utmost care to look after not only those citizens who were oppressed by LTTE terrorism in the North and East, but even those who were directly connected with the LTTE. As the Humanitarian Operation was drawing to a close, the parents of LTTE leader Prabhakaran were among the IDPs who came over to Government controlled territory. Instead of being mistreated in any way, Prabhakaran's father and mother were treated with the utmost consideration and care until they passed away of natural causes in January 2010 and February 2011 respectively. The same consideration has been extended to the families of other LTTE leaders. Soosai was the leader of the Sea Tiger wing, one of the most influential leaders of the LTTE after Prabhakaran, and responsible for the deaths of so many Naval personnel. The Navy intercepted his wife and children, along with the family of another

senior LTTE leader Ruben, as they tried to leave Sri Lanka by boat at night during the last week of the Humanitarian Operation. From the time of their interception, these families have been well looked after by the Navy. Another example is the family of Tamilchelvan, who was an LTTE area commander who rose through the ranks to become the head of its so-called political wing. He was killed in a precision air strike carried out by the Air Force in November 2007. After his family identified themselves to the Security Forces in May 2009, the Government has looked after them. They are living comfortably in Colombo. Such courtesies were not only extended to the families of LTTE leaders, but also to former LTTE cadres themselves. George Master and Daya Master, who were full-time members of the LTTE also surrendered during the last stages of the Operation. They too were cared for. Why should a Government that extended such care to families so directly linked to the LTTE, and former LTTE cadres themselves, be accused of mistreating civilians who suffered because of the LTTE? Yet that is the accusation levelled against Sri Lanka by parties with vested interests. It is extremely unfortunate that there are some who get swayed by such malign and absurd accusations instead of paying attention to the facts. They have got carried away by the media hysteria generated by LTTE apologists, and have neglected to verify the true picture for themselves. Take for example this accusation of "up to 40,000 civilian casualties" occurring during the Humanitarian Operation. This is a vague accusation, based on even vaguer arithmetic, which keeps getting repeated without any sort of critical analysis by people who should know better. At various times during the Humanitarian Operation, various estimates were made by various parties about the overall population figure in the North. According to the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, the number was between 75,000 and 150,000. According to the UN Resident Coordinator, the number was between 120,000 and 180,000. According to the World Food Programme, the number was 210,000. According to the Government Agent in Mullaitivu, the number was 305,000. The largest estimate given is that last one, by the GA Mullaitivu. The registered number of IDPs at the end of the Humanitarian Operation was 294,000. Estimating the number of people who were in the North is a very complex task. A large number of people left Sri Lanka without going through legal channels during the period of the conflict. Approximately 100,000 people went to India by boat, including several LTTE cadres, and live there in camps. However, we do not have enough information to identify these people. Similarly, there are large numbers residing as refugees in places such as Indonesia, the Christmas Islands, Australia and Canada. Their names are unknown to us, and these countries do not release that information. To address this issue of initial population estimates, a comprehensive statistical analysis has been undertaken by the Government. This analysis is challenging. There is no census data for the North after 1981, and so many people fled LTTE controlled areas to the rest of Sri Lanka as well as other countries over the last three decades. Nevertheless, the Government is confident that a much more accurate estimate of the population in the North can be arrived at with the conclusion of this analysis. It is only then that this subject can be discussed with any accuracy. In the meantime, the Government has other sources it can rely on. In December 2009, the Government together with UNICEF launched a programme to trace the missing in the Northern Province. The Vavuniya Government Agent and the Probation and Childcare Commissioner in the Northern Province jointly established a Family Tracing and Reunification Unit with UNICEF assistance. This Unit undertook a comprehensive programme to catalogue all those who were missing, adults as well as children. Families were encouraged to report missing persons to a hotline, and any information available with the Government Agent, District Secretaries, Divisional Secretariats, hospital staff and police officers was also collected. As of 30th June 2011, 2,564 reports have been received. These relate to 1,888 adults and 676 children. It is important to note that the reports made by the parents of these missing children confirm that 64% of them were recruited by the LTTE. It is likely that the actual percentage is even higher. In this context, it is clear that the accusations levelled against Sri Lanka have little foundation. Why then, do they continue to recur? It is important to realise that although the LTTE has been militarily defeated in Sri Lanka, its international organisation remains largely intact to this day. As the report being released today demonstrates, the LTTE had at its disposal a vast international network that was active in many parts of the world. A significant component of that network was its propaganda arm. This continues to work actively, though often in disguise, to promote the separatist cause and discredit the Government of Sri Lanka. This network has funds at its disposal, and pushes its agenda through influential international figures and misled media outlets, which continue to accept and even promote this propaganda with very little objective examination. The most recent example of this is the report aired last week on Channel 4 in the United Kingdom. It features two men who are supposed to be army officers. Neither are they shown on screen, nor are their voices heard for even a few seconds, as is the practice in responsible journalism when unnamed individuals speak in interviews. Of the two names these people are given, Fernando is one of the commonest while Sasrutha is hardly ever heard of. The voice-overs made on the behalf of this pair allege that war crimes took place during the last days of the Humanitarian Operation. However, absolutely no evidence is given for these allegations, nor is there any proof that these so-called Army officers are even genuine people. Nevertheless, the voice-over goes on to describe these people as eyewitnesses. But what are they eyewitness to? The actual claim they are supposed to be making is that Shaveendra Silva told them that I had called him and instructed him to do certain things. This is absolutely false, and is a claim that Shaveendra has always categorically denied. These people making this claim are not eyewitnesses to anything, what they are saying is pure fabrication. The absurdity of their claim is even clearer when you analyse it a little more deeply and with some knowledge of how a military operates. There are rules and procedures for following orders that have been historically established. The only officers Shaveendra would give instructions to would be Brigade Commanders and Commanding Officers. None of these officers have left Sri Lanka. Who, then, are these shadowy figures that Channel 4 claims to have unearthed? What is their credibility? How can their absurd allegations be taken at face value? Have they an unexplored agenda? Another accusation made against Sri Lanka in this latest report concerns the alleged attempt made by two of the LTTE's political cadres to surrender to the Government through mediation by international figures. The report shows an interview with a British journalist who has always been extremely critical of Sri Lanka, who claims that assurances were given that these cadres could surrender. Whether assurances had been given or not, more than 11,000 LTTE cadres including several LTTE leaders have not only surrendered and have

been rehabilitated and reintegrated to society. But nobody has communicated anything to the responsible authorities about these two particular people that are being spoken of as surrendering on that particular day. As the Secretary Defence, I was certainly not contacted. Just like its recent so-called documentary, this continuing serial by Channel 4 simply promotes baseless accusations whose sole purpose is to discredit Sri Lanka. It is an attempt to tarnish this country's image and divide our people. It is an attempt to set back the peace that has been won after three painful decades. This is not reportage; it is propaganda. That supposedly respectable media channels are complicit in the separatist agenda is extremely disturbing. At a time when the media establishment in the UK is under heavy fire and is drawing the attention of British authorities for its lack of ethics, it seems Channel 4 is no exception. Another good example of propaganda pretending to be journalism concerns the allegations made about the supposedly deliberate shelling of hospitals. The doctors who served in those hospitals have stated very clearly that there was no deliberate shelling. This is supported by satellite evidence from before and after the period in which fighting took place near the hospitals. Unfortunately, the affidavits of the doctors at the scene are not given any attention by the so-called opinion makers. Instead, they focus exclusively on the comments the doctors were forced to make under duress by the LTTE. This is extremely disturbing and reveals a fundamental bias against the Government of Sri Lanka. The implication that the doctors were being truthful while held hostage by the LTTE, and are lying under Government pressure when they are free is frankly insulting. One of the other allegations made against Sri Lanka is that not enough food or aid was sent to the people in the North throughout the Humanitarian Operation. This is again an allegation with no basis in fact. At the start of the Humanitarian Operation, the Government of Sri Lanka set up the Consultative Committee on Humanitarian Assistance. This Committee, often called the CCHA, met regularly at the Ministry of Defence. It was chaired by Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe and had the participation of the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence. Ambassadors involved in the peace process as well as the Heads of International Organisations and NGOs involved in delivering aid regularly attended the meetings. All issues with regard to humanitarian assistance were discussed at these meetings, and immediate solutions were provided. There were no allegations at these meetings that not enough was being done; on the contrary, it was clear that the Government was making every effort possible to cope with an extremely complex and hazardous situation. Irrespective of how difficult things became, the Government did its utmost to make sure that the people suffering in the LTTE's clutches received the resources they so badly needed. International agencies such as the World Food Programme and the ICRC have records that attest to this. Even in the very last stages of the Humanitarian Operation, when the trapped population could not be reached by road, supplies were sent in through an ICRC ship that was escorted by the Sri Lanka Navy. Records of the ICRC show that medical supplies were delivered even on the 18th of May 2009, the day the Humanitarian Operation ended. However, instead of finding out these facts and consulting those who are in a position to reveal the truth, Sri Lanka's opponents continue to flog their stale old lies. Instead of being acknowledged as the LTTE apologists they are, these opponents of Sri Lanka are sometimes lionised for their strident comments. A good example of this is the treatment of Miss Damilvany Gnanakumar. This lady claims to have arrived in Sri Lanka to visit her relatives but was unable to leave due to the hostilities, and therefore volunteered to assist in the hospitals. While there, she claims she saw large numbers of casualties and surgery being carried out without anaesthesia even on children. Not only do the doctors at the hospital flatly refute these claims, but Miss Gnanakumar is known to have been an LTTE operative. She was recruited by Castro, the leader in charge of the LTTE's international operations, and worked at an LTTE front organisation in London before arriving in Sri Lanka in February 2008. While here, she underwent military training under Durga, a female leader of the LTTE. Miss Gnanakumar was no civilian volunteer but an LTTE cadre. The sad reality is that her word has been taken at face value. While the LTTE's propaganda machine continues to spin its lies, and such lax standards of journalism continue to prevail in the west, the narrative on Sri Lanka may continue to be obscured by vicious falsehoods. I sincerely hope that with the publication of this document, these falsehoods will be laid to rest once and for all, and that the world will see, beyond any doubt, that the Humanitarian Operation was just. Courtesy: Defence.lk