

## Maintaining National Security: Role of Sri Lankan Military during COVID-19

National security means the ability of a state to cater for the protection and defence of its citizenry. It is closely associated with the rights of citizens and the responsibility of the state towards them. Every government should give priority to national security. Initially the primary focus was on focusing on military security but now it encompasses a wide range of non-military dimensions such as economic security, food security, energy security, and environmental security. As Theresa May, the Prime Minister of Great Britain has mentioned "National Security is the first duty of the government". Every country's main duty is to maintain national security and in that case, the military is one of the main tools to protect citizens, nourishing the survival of the states as well as combatting crimes and threats. Everyone needs oxygen to breathe subsequently every nation needs to have an accurate policy to maintain national security since it is the shield of the country.

Sri Lanka is the pearl of the Indian Ocean and today faces a range of security threats easily due to its geostrategic location. Coming almost exactly ten years after the end of Sri Lanka's civil war which pitted government forces against a Tamil insurgency led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – Easter Sunday's Islamic State-inspired bombings shook a country struggling to find its way toward a stable peace. Sri Lanka suffered a disorienting blow on Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019, when a series of suicide bombings killed over 250 and injured hundreds of more Christian worshippers and foreign tourists. The seven coordinated bombings targeted three Christian churches – in the capital Colombo, north of Colombo in Negombo, and in the eastern town of Batticaloa – and three high-end hotels in Colombo, and later a small guesthouse south of the capital. This became a massive Extremist's violence in Sri Lanka but the previous government's immediate reaction to the attacks was confused and ignored. Due to the weakness of the former 'regime, tremendous downfall happened in intelligence.

services. As a result, many people were killed. But the new president's regime identified the weak points of the former regime and initiated new strategic policies to counter these threats.

Covid-19 is an ongoing global health crisis and one of the major threats for the Sri Lankan government after the Easter attack by extremists. Government with the support of the Health ministry and Tri-forces, identified new clusters using human intelligence and formed superior strategies. Sri Lankan government together with the military initiated new precautionary measures while protecting citizens' rights and democracy. She rapidly mobilized its minimum resources to control the ongoing pandemic with the support of the efficient state-funded health services and the defense professionals under the visionary and able leadership of the President. This paper tries to identify how the Sri Lanka military maintains national security during COVID-19 and what kind of strategies were taken by them using military capabilities to mitigate crimes while combatting the health crisis to ensure a secure and safe country.

Sri Lanka was one of the countries that successfully secured good healthcare at low cost. She closely monitored the pandemic's movement right after the first case appeared in the nation and using human intelligence Tri-forces tracked any potential COVID-19 suspects and send them directly to the quarantine centers. While the entire world is engulfed in COVID-19 fear, the Sri Lankan Government, which is taking all possible precautionary measures to contain the virus, has also taken serious measures to combat crimes and threats.

"Proactive intervention to prevent any outbreak of COVID-19 within Sri Lanka" is the vision of His Excellency the President Gotabaya Rajapakse. The government of Sri Lanka acted well before the pandemic hit the region. HE the President, appointed Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva, as the Head of National Operation Centre for



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Prevention of COVID-19 Outbreak (NOCCPCO) together with the Chief of Defence Staff and Commander of the Army and Medical Specialist Dr. Anil Jasinghe, Director General of Health Services, with their handful of experts taking risk forward, and introduced new strategies to protect people from this health crisis.

National Task Force was appointed by the government and they implemented the new approach called 3T (Testing, Tracing, and Treatment) to combat this pandemic. Sri Lanka has no plans to have foreign troops deployed in the country to combat the pandemic. The Island nation's military and police showed their capabilities in tackling the pandemic. According to the Defence Secretary Kamal Gunaratne "Our military has already shown their expertise and professionalism in handling the emergency created under the coronavirus threat".

Sri Lankan military was at the forefront of the COVID-19 prevention operations. Also, Sri Lanka's intelligence agencies have been used to trace people who are closely associated with Corona virus-positive patients and the military had rapidly established more quarantine centers around the country and have been praised for their efficiency and the excellent facilities. As of 23rd March, forty-five quarantine centers had been built in the country by the Sri Lanka Army, Kandakadu, Punani, Galikanda, Meeyankulan, Welikanda are some of the quarantine centers in Sri Lanka. While Police have managed the curfew and the military has shouldered the responsibility for the national response from contract tracing to running quarantine centers.

Read full article here: <http://www.insssl.lk/index.php?id=253>

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