

Sri Lanka

Intense fighting between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) raged for the second consecutive year during 2007, and in its fifth year of operation the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), originally mandated to oversee a 2002 cease-fire between the two, observed and reported on the conflict. The intense fighting, aside from inflicting considerable military, rebel, and civilian casualties, also set off a large-scale humanitarian disaster on the island. The violence displaced some 200,000 civilians and severely constrained the regular flow of critical humanitarian aid. In light of the precarious security situation, the SLMM's role as a mere observer mission has increasingly come into question.

After decades of civil war between the government and the LTTE—a struggle over Sinhalese-Tamil ethnic identity and autonomy in the north—a cease-fire between the two sides was agreed in February 2002. The SLMM, comprised of monitors from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland, was established to oversee the cessation of military operations, separation of forces, and the free movement of personnel and nonmilitary goods. The mission is headquartered in Colombo and maintains six district offices, a liaison office in Killinochchi, and points of contact in the north and east. District offices operate mobile units and patrol in their areas of responsibility. The SLMM has the authority to respond to complaints throughout Sri Lanka, but relies on the parties for access, information, and security.

Following the election of hard-line anti-Tamil president Mahinda Rajapakse in November 2005, and tensions that arose in the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami, the LTTE dramatically increased attacks on government military elements, prompting reprisals by gov-

Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM)	
• Authorization and Start Date	22 February 2002
• Head of Mission	Major-General Lars Johan Sjølvberg (Norway)
• Budget	\$7 million (October 2006–September 2007)
• Strength as of 30 September 2007	Military Observers: 35

ernment forces. Since then the conflict has become more violent and the environment within which the SLMM is to operate has been constrained. The Norwegian-mediated peace talks that resumed in 2006 after a three-year hiatus have dissolved and show no sign of resumption. After being placed on the EU's list of international terrorist organizations in June 2006, the LTTE demanded that all SLMM monitors from EU countries withdraw from the mission, which they did by the end of August, bringing the mission's strength down to thirty from its mandated sixty.

By the occasion of the SLMM's fifth operational anniversary in February 2007, its weekly reports read more like war tallies than the lists of cease-fire violations it recorded during its first three years. The ongoing civil war has shone a light not only on the SLMM's limited investigative capacity, but also on the parties' disregard for the cease-fire and its related oversight mechanism. While the SLMM maintained its commitment to assisting the government and the LTTE in finding a solution to the conflict, the mission was rendered ineffectual and left the country when the Sri Lankan government withdrew from the ceasefire in early 2008.