

Air Power as a Tool for Disaster Management - A Sri Lankan Experience

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ABSTRACT

Search and Rescue Forces (SARF) primary role is to rescue aircrew that have ejected or crash-landed their aircraft. But most of SARF's operational missions are spent in its secondary role, conducting civil search and rescue. This entails the rescue of civilians from the sea, on mountains, from flooded regions or other locations of disaster.

Sri Lanka Air Force, being an air arm of the third world country, the inventory number of air craft's and persons may be comparatively small. Yet the dedication, valor and professionalism of the air men during the battle and peace proved that they are to be recon with their counterparts in the world. My intention here is to identify the role played by the Sri Lankan Air Force during natural hazardous situations such as Asian Tsunami, Maritime rescue and flood situations.

During the Asian Tsunami SLAF has flown more than six thousand sorties of air transportation, casualty evacuation operations, search and rescue missions and cargo/medical distribution operations with its meager inventory of air craft. Air Force also deployed medical and dental teams to treat people; they maintained and fed refugee camps, soon after the northern war. The missions, equipment and air craft capabilities under the very capable hands of SLAF pilots are discussed here. Apart from the above the lessons learnt are documented for future references too.
