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## News

### Tigers haven't given us any reason to be hopeful: US

US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald A. Camp last Wednesday drew the attention of the US Congressional Sub Committee on Asia and the Pacific, to a recent report by the US Human Rights Watch titled *Funding the 'final war' LTTE intimidation and extortion in the Tamil Diaspora*, which had detailed the manner in which the LTTE was receiving funds from the Tamil Diaspora.

Emphasising the role Tamil Diaspora funding played in sustaining the conflict in Sri Lanka, Camp said "their fundraising in the US, was forbidden by law in terms of the proscription against the LTTE as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO)".

The hearing titled "Unrest in South Asia: Recent Developments in Nepal and Sri Lanka" was held at the Rayburn Building on Capitol Hill in Washington DC. It was chaired by Congressman James A. Leach, of the Sub Committee on Asia and the Pacific, of the US House Committee on International Relations and attended by Congressman Brad and Congressman Eni F. H. Faleomavagea.

Opening the hearing Congressman Leach said "In Sri Lanka, despite relatively good economic fundamentals and a solid social welfare structure, the country has not taken off as another regional "tiger" principally because it remains mired in a multi-decade long civil war. Prospects for a permanent resolution of the conflict appear dim. Fortunately, 11th hour efforts by the Norwegian Government to broker a new round of negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, late last month, helped save the badly battered four-year old ceasefire agreement from likely collapse.

In his statement Camp, who was the sole witness at the hearing noted that, recently in Geneva, "The negotiators achieved two significant outcomes that should give the peace process in Sri Lanka a new momentum". They agreed to refrain from violence and uphold the ceasefire agreement. Given the difficulty involved in even convening this meeting and seeing it through to a conclusion, we consider it a significant achievement that both sides agreed to meet again in Geneva April 19-21. Mr. Camp hoped that "both sides will fully implement their commitments to build a level of confidence between them that will yield even more successful results in the next round of talks."

In the Question and Answer session that followed, questioned by Congressman Sherman whether there was a 'road map' that could be provided, as to what the LTTE should be doing to get off the terrorist list. Mr. Camp said the LTTE was put on that list as they committed terrorist offences. He said the US Government supported the legitimate Government of Sri Lanka and regard the LTTE as a terrorist organization. "If they were to renounce terrorism and stop carrying out such activities, then we could reconsider the proscription. They have not given us any reason to be hopeful about their motives so far," Mr. Camp said.

Responding to a follow up by Congressman Sherman as to what the difference was between terrorism and liberation war, and whether there wasn't a difference between the Al Qaida and George Washington, Mr. Camp said, the last time he looked it up, George Washington did not go and attack a building full of civilians. "The LTTE is infamous for their terrorist bombings", he added.

Responding to a question by Congressman Sherman as to "where Sri Lanka is headed", Mr. Camp said he "was a little more optimistic". After three years, the LTTE and the Government have sat down to talk. The Government in Sri Lanka is committed to a peaceful settlement. He said he was not in a position to verify

whether the Sri Lankan Government was supporting militant groups against the LTTE, but that recently in Geneva, the Sri Lanka Government agreed to ensure that there are no attacks on the LTTE by other armed groups.

Responding to Chairman Leach, who wondered whether the US should place greater emphasis on influencing the process and seek to play a more "consultative role", Mr. Camp said that in Sri Lanka "the Norwegian facilitation process is very active and that the US was strongly backing that".

Asked by Chairman Leach, "why unlike in Indonesia the Tsunami tragedy had not brought the two parties towards reconciliation in Sri Lanka", Mr. Camp said, there were high hopes initially and that there was a real attempt made by the Government to show the North and the East that it was concerned.

Despite some confusion, the two sides finally agreed to a mechanism on rehabilitation work in the North and the East, but a decision by the judiciary had suspended its operation. He said, "It would be wrong to say that assistance was not delivered to the North and the East". Aid did go through the UN and a large number of NGOs that were operating. Mr. Camp added, "While the US Government had a legal constraint in providing assistance to the LTTE, they did provide assistance to the area through NGOs". Mr. Camp said US funds were being channelled through the ADB to build the Colombo-Jaffna highway, to assist major infrastructure developments in the east coast. The US also provided assistance through the Colombo Plan and the private NGOs to Sri Lanka.

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