



# HDI

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## Communiqué

THE HUMPTY DUMPTY  
INSTITUTE

Monthly Communiqué  
from Sri Lanka

June 2008

### **The HALO Trust uncovers Anti-Tank mine placed 20 years ago at HDI section.**

At the Atchuvely Industrial complex deminers of the HALO Trust uncovered an original Amman anti-tank mine on a HDI site on a road frequented daily by local vehicles. It is difficult to say why it had not detonated, most likely due to mechanical fault but it was located inside deep bedrock which may have prevented adequate pressure applied to it. The significance of this find is that the last AT mine found was in 2006. The AT mine recovered is believed to have been laid in 1987/88. There were tense moments as the mine was uncovered in case it was booby trapped. It was ultimately removed but could not be defuzed so that the explosives could be removed as it was sealed tight. The local brigade Commander was informed to allow them to destroy it immediately.

Being 600m from the current High Security Zone and Pallaly military base, Atchuvely would have been a key LTTE position to resist SLA movements to the south and east in late 1980s and early 90s. The mine laying was designed not only to prevent soldiers from advancing but vehicles as well preventing free access to the SLA to the Jaffna town which was held by the LTTE at the time. A local farmer explained that the LTTE actually closed the road leading along the southern edge with barbed wire and had posted a notice saying "Danger Anti-Tank Mines". This area is not highly cultivated compared to other areas as it was well know to be mined. The AT mines themselves indicate that this minefield is probably one of the oldest laid in the district and was done before the SLA captured Jaffna peninsula.

The HALO Trust has been in operation in Jaffna since the beginning of the Ceasefire Agreement in 2002. Since that time they have made great progress and have cleared over a million square meters of land. Although HDI started funding them since 2007 the work that HALO Trust has been involved in is to be recognized.

Area cleared manually -	1, 193,880 sq.m
Area cleared mechanically -	323,370 sq.m
Anti-Personnel mines cleared -	35,829 sq.m
Anti-Tank mines cleared -	27
Unexploded Ordnance cleared -	1,970
Stray Ammunition cleared -	1,378
Small Arms Ammunition cleared -	23,786

**MEET CALVIN RUYSEN – NEW PORGRAMME MANAGER HALO TRUST**



Calvin (R) removing a mine  
HDI  
with Steve- HDI



Calvin (L) on the field with Daniel-HDI



Calvin with Daniel & Steve-  
HDI

Calvin Ruysen is 30 years and is HALO's new Programme Manager in Jaffna. He was HALO's Operations Manager previously. He replaces Rory Forbes who has moved to the HALO programme in Afghanistan. Born in Boston England to an American mother and English father who has Dutch roots. His parents met in Kenya. His home is Spalding in England an area known as South Holland due to the landscape, large horticulture base (daffodils and Tulips) and large numbers of Dutch who settled there. Calvin went to Bedford School and then on to the University of Edinburgh in Scotland where he gained his MA (Hons) in Architecture! He then served in the Royal Marines for a year and then went on to more adventurous pursuits to Belize in Central America where he was the Country Manager for Trekforce. He joined HALO in 2007.

### **How has your exposure in different countries/ cultures influenced your professional life?**

My father traveled extensively in his youth, and as a child I was always traveling to visit family in Holland and the USA. At the age of 17, I had my first true expedition experience when I spent 3 months living and working in the Malaysian jungles this was followed by two months roughing it around Kenya. From there I have worked and traveled around the Americas, Asia, Africa, Middle East and Europe.

I have always tried to 'live' in countries rather than sample them as a passing tourist. Working alongside the local population allows a much greater degree of exposure and insight into the beliefs and customs of a people and is therefore inherently a more rewarding experience. Undoubtedly, those first trips of my youth to remote and challenging environments had a tremendous influence on me and wet my desire to continue to travel and work abroad. Also, being unsure of what will occur on any particular day, which is so often the case in developing countries, has the excitement not usually associated with the daily certainties and comfort one associates with my home, the UK.

I decided on leaving University, that although Architecture is an excellent profession, I did not wish to be office-bound. I wanted to push myself not just mentally but physically as well. I joined the Royal Marines Commandos with the long term intention of moving into Peace Keeping. Sadly due to injury, this was not to be so I headed overseas again and began running a UK charity's operations in Belize. Here I would instruct groups of up to 130 persons on jungle survival skills ranging from shelter construction to river crossings to identifying dangerous flora and fauna to helicopter evacuations. I would also conduct reconnaissance trips to establish new trekking routes, kayaking routes and project camp locations – some were 5 days from the nearest road. I would also establish projects with the Belize Forestry Department and local project partners to carry out scientific research and infrastructure development projects for the benefit of the local population and/or for conservation of naturally significant areas. Life in the jungle is unique and being immersed in nature and the lessons that nature can teach are truly rewarding.

My enjoyment of nature has always been as strong an influence on me as has different cultures and countries. I have always loved trekking whether that is in mountains or wadis or jungle. Moving through a place on foot, your senses are heightened and you take in the environment in real time. Nature enables you to feel human and being battered by is exhilarating.

## **Why leave Trekforce Expeditions and join HALO?**

The answer to this is two fold – firstly, the charity decided to close its doors and the Managing Director wanted to start running expeditions commercially. He asked me to be a roaming expedition manager worldwide with a lucrative income but I decided that commercialization was the wrong move to make. Secondly, I felt that I had gained and given as much as I could to the position and that I was in danger of becoming stale.

I had heard about HALO from a number of people. Firstly, I learnt that the Operations Manager at Trekforce, who had given me my job there had joined HALO. I got in touch with him and everything he told me hit all the right notes. Secondly, friends in and even the British High Commissioner in Belize had sung the praises of HALO whether they had seen HALO in action in Afghanistan or Angola. The job description sounded absolutely ideal and before I knew it I was up in Scotland sitting for an interview.

## **What have you done with HALO so far?**

My introduction to HALO are what dreams are made of! I started by having to deliver a new Land Rover to the HALO programme in Nagorno Karabakh. This involved driving the Land Rover from Scotland, all the way through Europe and into Asia. I had a co-driver, Willie, as far as Kosova and then I was guided through by HALO staff from the Kosova, Abkhazia and Nagorno Karabakh programmes.

I loved Nagorno Karabakh (NK) and was there for 5 months where I underwent initial training which included everything from learning to be a deminer to medical training to accident investigations. Whilst I was there, the programme Manager tasked me with setting up a survey team to establish as accurately as possible exactly the number and size of cluster bomb strikes affecting NK. This was an excellent experience, heading out on a daily basis in a small Russian Niva (car) to some highly remote and spectacular landscapes trying to identify the boundaries of these strikes.

I was then sent to Cambodia, where for three months I continued training and learnt about a new generation of detector and was exposed to the scale of operations on a large programme. I also spent much of my time evaluating the programme's three Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams looking at ways to improve their performance and carried out many demolitions to improve my practices and knowledge. I also had the rather unique opportunity given to me to spend time in a micro-light flying along the Thai/Cambodian border to identify areas where human activity was taking place close to a known mine line - the K5 which is 1,040 km in length! The idea being that by pin-pointing the areas being settled/used, HALO can concentrate its clearance as a priority to avoid potential accidents from occurring in the future. I was flying with an excellent risk taking Vietnam Vet American pilot who managed to lose our location and therefore our landing strip on more than one occasion!

## **What did you do as Operations Manager and how does it differ from the job of Programme Manager?**

Due to the situation in Jaffna, the two roles overlap completely. In the Programme Manager's absence which can be during leave or meetings in Colombo, the Operations Manager must take on the role of Programme Manager. The role is varied and it requires keeping tabs on all aspects of the operations and support elements of running the programme whether that be minefield management, finance, vehicle maintenance, liaison with Government, daily mine collection or writing reports. We are fortunate in that we always have top cover provided to us by our Desk Officer and other senior staff in our headquarters in Scotland to whom we report. They have all, with their decades of experience, seen and been involved in almost every situation and they are always at the end of a phone when advice and wisdom is sought.

The minefields are really where I love to be. Being outside, on the ground with the deminers

is what HALO is really about and minefields themselves and how to tackle them is always fascinating especially when there seems to be no particular logic to the mine laying which is so often the case we see currently on LTTE minefields. I am incredibly impressed with the work ethic of our deminers here in Sri Lanka. They are hard working, on their knees all day in the searing heat and they do a thorough job.

### **How do you see the land mine problem in Jaffna?**

The mine problem in Jaffna is a diminishing one in the areas accessible to the local civilian population. HALO has five future tasks remaining in Jaffna which shows that mine clearance in areas we have access to is rawing to a close. We should also be encouraged by the fact that last year there were zero civilian mine accidents.

This glowing picture is not however a completely fair reflection of the actual situation in Jaffna as there are mines in High Security Zones controlled by the military which are not open for clearance as yet. There has been some recent relaxing by the military as they have released a handful of tasks in or near the High Security Zones. The conundrum operators and donors are asking now is whether demining the High Security Zones is truly humanitarian demining?

The minefields we are currently working on are what we consider the low priority tasks which indicate that they re less heavily mined or not considered to have as significant a risk to the local population as minefields of a higher priority. What we are seeing on these minefields are many aging mines that have been triggered and have failed to initiate or have simply not stood the test of time having corroded significantly to prevent the mines from initiating. Although these mines must be cleared and still pose a danger due to their explosive content, we can be encouraged by the fact that many of these mines would not cause injury if stepped on.

The HALO Trust intends to complete its current and five future tasks this year and to then maintain a presence in Jaffna and Colombo to monitor the mine problem, and the political and security situation. The intention is to be at the ready to resume full operations when the appropriate time comes which would ideally be with a cessation of the war and the opening up of previously restricted mined land for the civilian population to re-inhabit.

**For more information on HDI's work, please contact Jeanne Samuel, the Director of the Sri Lanka Office of HDI, #05-03, East Tower, World**