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Crimes to come in the tsunami zone

Abstract
Extract:
They say that a major disaster can bring warring parties to peace. This form of political warming was evidenced after the Izmit earthquake of 1999 when Turkish and Greek relations improved. Currently in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, it is hoped that a similar trend can proceed for the northern Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka and the North-Sumatran Free Aceh Rebel Movement on Indonesia.

Keywords
disaster, tsunami zone, children, illegal activities
VIEWPOINTS:

Crimes to Come in the Tsunami Zone

by Karsten von Hoesslin*

They say that a major disaster can bring warring parties to peace. This form of political warming was evidenced after the Izmit earthquake of 1999 when Turkish and Greek relations improved. Currently in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, it is hoped that a similar trend can proceed for the northern Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka and the North-Sumatran Free Aceh Rebel Movement on Indonesia.

However, there is also a genuine fear that regions struck by a natural disaster can spin into a state of anarchy. This was dreaded with respect to the thousands of parentless children in the tsunami zone. There was concern that the illegal movement of children would become a serious problem. In response, governments implemented special travel regulations and posted military guards at camps to protect children from disappearing.

Equally disturbing was the unexplored risk of children being integrated into potential illegal activities via syndicated or gang movements. Parentless, children may find gangs a substitution for the family unit, given that gangs stick together and look after another. The obvious problem is that gangs commit illegal activities for survival. In Sri Lanka, the Tamil Tigers have recruited child soldiers in the past, while presently there is no better selection of potential child soldiers than the parentless victims of the tsunami.

In Indonesia, the East Asian financial crisis of 1997 led to unprecedented levels of unemployment, which in turn, forced many people to engage in illegal activities, either the "robin-hood" style of communitarian gangs or as members of criminal syndicates, which in turn provided them with food, shelter, and a relative income. The types of crimes that increased were the age-old trade of sea piracy, and illegal drug, human, and small arms smuggling. Indonesia's tsunami orphans may follow a similar path for survival. With a mangled economy, little government resources, and a quasi war zone, orphans could find security in gangs.

An increase of child soldiers in northern Sri Lanka and an increase in illegal maritime activities off Indonesia's waters in the years to come should be anticipated. This is an unfortunate example of natural disasters creating troubles in already insecure areas. Fortunately, this broken arrow may be straightened if governments take note of the problem as quickly as possible.

Under-funded and over-extended, this will be no easy task for governments. The international community can be of assistance but when it comes to subduing domestic illegal activities with international consequences, regional governments are hesitant to except too much help due to sovereignty issues. At this point, the best solution is simply recognize that this will be a serious problem in the future and securing the tsunami orphans should be a key priority for regional governments and the international community.

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