**As UN Delays on War Crimes in Sri Lanka, New Ambassador Criticizes Press and "Blogging Privilege," Colombo Style**

By Matthew Russell Lee

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The Inner City Press

Original Source: *http://www.innercitypress.com/sri3unfollow051010.html*

UNITED NATIONS, May 10 -- Sixty six days after UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he would name a panel of experts to advise him about possible war crimes in Sri Lanka, Inner City Press on May 10 asked Ban's spokesman Martin Nesirky about reports that the panel would only be named, if at all, after his political advisor Lynn Pascoe is allowed to visit by the government. Video here, from Minute 7:44.

Nesirky responded that the UN's "wheels are still in motion." Inner City Press asked if the Sri Lankan government has put the brakes on the UN's wheels. Nesirky said, "Ask the government of Sri Lanka."

Barely an hour later, Sri Lanka's new Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN wrote a letter to Inner City Press, cc-ing a UN reporters' group:

From: PA2DPR

To: Matthew.Lee [at] innercitypress.com

Date: Mon, May 10, 2010 at 1:25 PM

Mr. Mathew [sic] Russell Lee, Report, Inner City Press

Dear Sir, Pl. find attached, a letter addressed to you by Mr. Bandula Jayasekara, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka.

Hemantha Perera, PA to DPR

10th May, 2010

Ref. Media/2010

Mr. Mathew [sic] Russell Lee, Reporter

Inner City Press, Room: S-453A [sic]

UN Headquarters, New York N.Y. 10017

Dear Sir,

This refers to the question posed by you to Mr. Martin Nesirky, Spokesperson for UNSG at the UN daily noon briefing held on 7.5.2010 “In the last 24 hours the Defence Minister, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, has said that anyone that would seek to testify about war crimes by the Sri Lankan Government should be put to death. It’s a capital offence and it’s treason”.

We have inquired into this matter and Mr. Rajapaksa has not, I repeat not, made such a statement. Your question is not based on fact, and is patently mischievous, misleading and incorrect.

We kindly request you to reproduce this letter for the sake of fair play. As a man of integrity, in the media, you should not mislead the people who read your blog. You should not abuse the position of blogging privilege. I sincerely hope you would uphold the ethics of blogging.

Thank you,

Bandula Jayasekara

Deputy Permanent Representative

There is no problem with publishing the letter -- the letter's and its cc's goal are not clear -- but there is equally no problem with providing the basis of the question: it is on the Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence's own web site.

Under the a heading "Traitors should be given Capital punishment," a May 7 posting recited that

"'Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa says anyone seeking to undermine Sri Lanka's sovereignty should be treated as a traitor regardless of his or her position. It will be a grave blunder on the government's part to pave the way for the so-called international community to interfere in Sri Lanka, he says. The Defence Ministry says that any Sri Lankan promoting an agenda which is detrimental to the country is nothing but a traitor who should be ready to face the consequences. Defence Secretary Rajapaksa told The Island in a brief interview that traitors deserved capital punishment."

This was also reported by Agence France Presse, which was linked to in Inner City Press' article:

"Fonseka has accused the president's brother, defence secretary Gotabhaya, of ordering the execution of surrendering rebels, a charge he has vehemently rejected. In an interview published Thursday, Gotabhaya said Fonseka was planning to use his parliamentary position to "fast track" and force an international war crimes investigation against Sri Lanka. 'Any Sri Lankan promoting an agenda which is detrimental to the country is nothing but a traitor...,' said Gotabhaya. 'Traitors deserve capital punishment and no one should shed crocodile tears for them," he told the privately-run Island newspaper. 'Those bent on destabilising the country would now exploit Fonseka's parliamentary privileges to fast track their sinister campaign (for a war crimes probe).'"

Has the Sri Lankan government or its UN Mission sought a correction from AFP, or from the Island, or from its own web site? (In fact, this appears for now 149 times on the Internet, click here.)

Or is the goal to extend the type of attempted intimidation of the media the Rajapaksa administration practices in Sri Lanka to the United Nations, emboldened by Ban Ki-moon's two month delay in naming the war crimes advisory panel he said he would name? Watch this site.

Footnote: when Bandula Jayasekara arrived at the UN as Palitha Kohona's deputy, Kohona threw a reception in Sri Lanka's high rise apartment. Bandula Jayasekara told Inner City Press that he used to be a journalist, is now a "new school diplomat" and that he would let it all hang out. Apparently he is, with his call to "not abuse the position of blogging privilege." Or what?