

## &#36;500 million missing in tsunami aid funds

by UPI

UNITED NATIONS -- The anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International in Sri Lanka said there is no explanation for more than \$500 million in missing tsunami relief funds. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Integrated Regional Information Networks released a statement Friday saying Transparency International Sri Lanka has "no precise evidence to explain the missing sum of (nearly \$535 million)." TISL said there is a gap in the amount distributed by aid agencies and the amount spent on reconstruction projects geared toward damages from the Dec. 24, 2004 tsunami that killed nearly 250,000 people and devastated thousands of acres of land. A Sri Lankan spokesman said the government did better than other nations effected by the tsunami and claimed "an overall 80 percent success" rate with reconstruction efforts. TISL alleges the Sri Lankan government used the funds "for other purposes," but Sri Lankan officials say the figures reflect mismanaged accounting practices by foreign aid agencies. TISL admitted the "overall picture on finances is ambiguous" due to a lack of government audits on tsunami aid. Sri Lankan officials say independent audits and financial reviews do not point to accounting irregularities.

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