

Pin-pricks against Security Forces in East amidst quiet week. (1995, August 27). Sunday observer.

Pin-pricks against Security Forces in East amidst a quiet week

Another relatively quiet week seemed about to pass on to join the previous others in August at the time of writing on Friday.

The pin-prick harassing attacks against the security forces in the North-East by the Tigers and the gunning down of the odd Tiger cadre continued in the East while the military mounted limited operations to dominate the area captured in the recent operation code named 'Leap Forward'.

In the latest limited operations to be launched by the military in the north early in the week, about 2,500 soldiers from the Palaly military enclave attacked Tiger position in Chanknai, well ahead of the military defended locality.

The military claimed that three rebel cadres were killed and 17 wounded for the loss of one of their own killed and 15 wounded. The rebel radio, 'Voice of the Tigers' announced that 12 civilians were killed and 20 seriously wounded when the military started firing shells from Karainagar, Palaly and Madagal. It also said that the dead included women and children from the Mallakam West area.

With the exception of the slight discrepancy in the numbers killed and the areas named, the incidents appeared to be one and the same to the layman. The areas named however were not in close proximity pointed out those familiar with Jaffna. While Mallakam was almost on the front door step of the area captured in 'Operation Leap Forward' Chanknai was some distance away from the military FDLs they pointed out. They also pointed out that the civilians gave a wide berth to the areas just outside the

military FDLs.

Meanwhile, in the East, the rebels carried out an attack against the telecommunication tower at Akkaraiyattu in Ampara by blasting one of the legs of the tower. The tower, however, was repaired the following day without much disruption being caused to the communication traffic.

The Special Task Force who are in charge of the area had their pint of blood in turn on Thursday night when they shot dead the Tiger's town leader for Akkaraiyattu in an ambush. The man identified as Nizam was killed along with another yet to be identified rebel cadre at about 11.45 pm. Two T-56 weapons were also recovered from the dead LTTE men.

As the ground situation remained such, both the military and the rebels appeared to ponder what each other were planning next, in the war torn chess board that is the North East.

The widespread knowledge, that the military was planning a major offensive against Jaffna, the heartland of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) with troops drawn from the East, seemed to grow with press reports from the Trincomalee area of the closure of more and more military camps in the remote areas of this North-Eastern coastal region.

Meanwhile, the information of an LTTE build up in Muttur, south of Trincomalee, for the past few weeks fuelled speculation as to what the group led by Karuna, the rebel's eastern leader, is really upto in the area as no major

attacks have been carried out against the military in the area.

Speculation in some quarters indicated the possibility of the Tigers biding their time to go into action simultaneously with the military starting its offensive in the North. Another school of thought was that the Tiger build up was carried out to force the military hand close down some of its smaller detachments in the area, as was done in the case of some camps in Batticaloa, to prevent them from being overrun by the rebels.

Military analysts point out 'waiting' as the most probable action the Tigers are bound to carry out at this stage, marking their presence with 'pin prick' harassment attack against the odd military patrol the rebels are bound to hide their time till the security forces 'get into gear' in their expected major offensive operation in the North.

Analysts point out that such a situation would leave only the soldiers in a handful of army camps the Special Task Force and the Homeguards in the East to ward off murderous rebel attacks not only against themselves but also against the defenceless villagers in the areas.

Once the operation gets into full swing in the North trying down thousands of troops, and the onset of the North East monsoon retarding any swift transfer of troops back to the East by sea the Tigers could open up a second front in the East, point out analysts.

"They have vowed this, Eelam war III, to be the most brutal and final and little would stand between them and those hundreds of thousands of Sinhala and Muslim villages

stretching down from Trincomalee to Ampara", said one adding that the Tigers could bring political pressure down on the government by executing a few well planned attacks against the villages.

"With the government's thin majority in Parliament, political pressure, which is more than the military pressure, in the east could be brought down upon it by the rebels to win major concessions," he added.

While such was the situation in the North-East, drama was unfolding in Colombo last week with the arrests and detention of about 35 Army, and STF intelligence operatives along with some of their informants by the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) in connection with the floating unidentified corpses found in Jayawardanapura, Moratuwa and Alawwa since May.

Except the perpetrators of the odious crimes, many others, who were reminded of the not so distant past when the state machinery was bused by some individuals to do away with innocent persons, during the 1988-90 period, were happy with the CID's ability to get at those suspected of being behind the recent killings.

But there are those who disagree and many are from the intelligence community who feel that the Investigators 'botched up' and exposed part of the city's intelligence system to the LTTE operatives and their sympathisers in their effort at solving the mystery behind the unidentified

bodies that was the 'mass round up' of not only operatives of two different establishments but their informants indicate that the investigators did a kaphazard job without being fully aware of those involved in the crimes or the damage they were doing to the intelligence network covering the city.

Added to this is the detaining of almost all vehicles used by these organisations for covert surveillance in the city. The vehicles including jeeps and trucks have been dusted for fingerprints that may show that the victims may have been transported in them.

According to police sources, of the 35 detained including officers of both the Army and Police, only 11 are under arrest while the rest have been brought in for questioning. While agreeing that the killers, whoever they may be have to be brought to justice, those of the community argue...

Community members agree that causing political embarrassment to the government or personal gain or both may be the motivation behind the killings and the likelihood some members of the military or the police carrying it out is much more than an ordinary gang.

"But, does the end justify the means", asked one member adding that the inability of the investigators to get at the specific men concerned not only exposed those doing a dedicated job amidst danger but also a chink in the armour that has been covering the city of Colombo.