

Tiger setback amid peace move. (1994, November 27). *The Sunday times.*

Amudan alias Malli dies in military ambush Tiger setback amid peace move

By our Military Analyst

On the afternoon of Saturday, November 19, a senior government official on an extremely hush-hush mission arrived at Palali airbase in the Jaffna Peninsula aboard a special air force flight.

He went by road to Kankesanthurai, and boarded a Navy Fast Attack Craft which swiftly put out to sea, in the direction of LTTE-held Point Pedro.

It stopped a few miles out, and an official of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which escorts government foodstuffs to Point Pedro, was summoned to come out in another small boat, to meet the official.

The surprised ICRC man was given a sealed letter, to be handed over to the LTTE leadership.

The official, his mission accomplished, immediately hurried back to Colombo.

The government has so far refused to even acknowledge the fact that a message was sent to the Tigers, so its exact contents are not known.

But according to LTTE theoretician Dr. Anton Basingham who spoke on Tiger radio two days later, the government in its letter, has asked the Tigers to agree to a new week-long ceasefire, followed by a second for two weeks.

The Tigers, he said, were agreeable to the proposals. But Basingham, presumably speaking on behalf of the Tiger high command, also demanded that an investigation be held into what he called atrocities committed by the military during last week's six day cessation of hostilities.

At the cabinet press briefing on Thursday, three senior cabinet ministers answered media queries on the subject by

professing ignorance on the whole matter.

Media and Tourism Minister Dharmasiri Senanayake, Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister and Finance Deputy Minister Dr. G. L. Peiris and Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar said they knew nothing of any message to the Tigers, or a ceasefire, or the resumption of peace talks.

The government has gone to great pains to keep contacts with the LTTE on a low key, and last week's developments clearly showed that it is walking a tightrope in order not to anger the Tigers into going on the warpath in earnest, while at the same time trying to keep the military happy that there will be no concessions to the Tigers such as a ceasefire.

One problem cropped up shortly before dawn on Thursday, November 17, when a small unit of soldiers lying in ambush about one kilometre from the army camp at Kottikutuvai, south of Mullaitivu, saw two LTTE cadres moving stealthily towards them.

The soldiers opened fire, killing one. The second was wounded, but managed to get away. A T-56 assault rifle, 29 rounds of 7.62 millimetre ammunition and a cyanide capsule were recovered.

Upon examining the body, the troops quickly realised that this was no ordinary Tiger they had killed.

It later proved to be none other than Lieutenant Colonel Aduman alias 'Malli', the second in command of the Tigers' intelligence wing.

When the LTTE high command heard of Aduman's death, they were furious.

Not only had the clash occurred at a time when the Tigers were strictly conforming to their self-declared one-sided ceasefire, but the soldiers had chopped the head off Maduman's

body, and taken it back with them for identification.

This beheading of senior Tigers is quite a common practice for identification purposes, but in this case, it enraged the LTTE.

In the early hours of the next day, Friday, November 18, navy sentries at Karainagar, the navy's northern command headquarters on Karaitivu island off the Jaffna Peninsula, fired on what they believed were several frogmen of the dreaded Sea Tigers, who were pushing a barrel shaped object towards the base.

It is not known whether the Tigers were killed or simply swam away, but they left the barrel behind, which was recovered by a navy craft after day-break.

The barrel turned out to contain 50 kilograms of neatly packed high explosives.

Navy officers were understandably alarmed. There are few defences against such underwater attacks by 'suicide bombers. During the past three months, the LTTE has sunk four craft in this manner: the navy's largest warship, the offshore patrol craft Sagarawardena off Mannar; the merchant vessel Ocean Trader off Vettikalkeri; and the warship A 516 and a tugboat inside Kankesanthurai harbour.

Although no major navy vessels are left at the Karainagar pier for safety reasons, there are always a few small craft there which would have been destroyed by such a large amount of explosives. In addition, the pier itself would have been destroyed, denying the navy its most vital base in the north.

In fact, only 11 days before that, the landing craft Pabatha had only been saved from a similar end by two alert sentries, able to see Victor and Herath,

who blew up a frogman and his mine only yards away from the ship at Vettikalkeri. Both sentries subsequently received field promotions to the rank of leading seaman.

Late that afternoon, a navy listening post, which had intercepted the command to Tiger cadres to stop all operations for seven days, intercepted an order from Velupillai Prabhakaran to all his men, to resume hostilities immediately.

Although it was only the sixth day of the week-long ceasefire, Prabhakaran said that the government's non-response to the ceasefire, and the army's 'atrocities' during this time had forced him to call off the cessation of hostilities.

Amazingly, Aduman's death was not publicised by the government. The defence ministry merely said in its usual daily communique that one Tiger had been killed, without identifying who it was.

But even more curious is the fact that nothing at all was said about the incident at Karainagar until four days had elapsed. This too was confined to a brief account, stating merely that the explosives had been recovered, without saying that it had clearly been an LTTE attack which took place during the ceasefire.

This is due to the fact that ceasefires are touchy subjects as far as the army is concerned. Every time there has been a ceasefire on both sides, the Tigers have built up their forces, and scouted the terrain and defences of military camps in preparation for future attacks on these camps, quite openly, knowing that they will not be shot by the army because of the ceasefire.

So the government went to great pains to stay silent about the ceasefire, and the two major military clashes which occurred during that time.

On the one hand it did not want to antagonize the Tigers into staging more devastating attacks, and on the other, it did not want the army to lose faith thinking that the government is giving away too much to the Tigers.

Meanwhile, the controversial Rs. 3.5 billion Russian arms deal has taken a new twist.

The air force last week called open tenders for three Russian Antonov transport planes and six large Russian helicopters.

The navy also called closed tenders for two large gunboats, one of which is to replace the sunken Sagarawardena.

This effectively means that the suspended Russian deal cannot go ahead, since the forces can't possibly buy so many aircraft and vessels because the country can't afford it.

However, surprisingly, there has been no announcement from the government on the final fate of the deal, even though the previous government paid ten percent of the money, amounting to Rs. 350 million. The few armoured personnel carriers which were delivered before the deal was suspended, were found to be defective.

In other words, the government has still not told the country whether it is going to recover the money already paid, and how it can be done, and whether the deal is finally off.

Meanwhile, in the first fatality on the government side since November 11, a soldier was killed on Tuesday on Kays island by an army sentry, in a tragic case of misidentification.

The soldier had apparently gone outside the camp to have a bath, and was returning when a sentry, believing him to be an LTTE infiltrator in the darkness, shot him dead.

Gunning for Prabhakaran

By our Defence Correspondent

Velupillai Prabhakaran, the LTTE supremo, celebrated his fortieth birthday, yesterday.

According to many astrologers, the coming year will witness the violent death of Prabhakaran. But, Prabhakaran, has defied death since he threw home made bombs to disrupt the celebrations at the Duraipappah stadium in Jaffna in 1970.

For nearly quarter century, Prabhakaran has been a successful fugitive. He and his band of rebels have successfully faced the professional armies of two nations - Sri Lanka and India.

Today, it is not secret that so many parties are actively working towards his death. India through its intelligence arm, RAW, has been trying to liquidate Prabhakaran.

Since the deinduction of the Indian army, RAW has been sending Sri Lanka Tamil operatives trained in the use of fire arms and explosives to kill Prabhakaran. Up to now, RAW has been only successful in creating a division between Prabhakaran and Mahattaya.

More recently, RAW operations have intensified. According to a senior Indian diplomat who wished to remain anonymous, 'The Government of India sees the elimination of Prabhakaran a nightmare.

Further, the security guidelines forbid even a Special District Commander (SDC) meeting Prabhakaran with his personal weapon. The SDC is the highest

India, this will be a costly operation. There are other options India is pursuing.

This could be interpreted more as an effort by RAW or to conduct a limited military operation with Israeli assistance, as advocated recently by a senior Indian leader in New Delhi.

The Government of Sri Lanka did not seriously think of assassinating Prabhakaran until the Sri Lanka army came under the command of General Cecil Waidyaratne, an unconventional strategist behind the victory over JVP's ninjas war. Many attempts, either to eliminate Prabhakaran or Pottu Amman failed, primarily because of the defence bureaucracy's interests lay elsewhere.

Since, the parliamentary victory of the People's Alliance, all covert operations to eliminate Prabhakaran ceased. Such operations, even though are considered top secret, require approval at political level.

Though the EPRLF, PLOTE, EPDP, TELO and the EROS wished Prabhakaran dead in revenge for the thousands of anti-LTTE cadres killed by LTTE on the instructions of Prabhakaran, none of these groups has been daring enough to conduct such an operation.

Prabhakaran's personal security at the hands of 'Brigadier' Soranam, is very tight. He is being guarded day and night by three rings of security. This makes the elimination of Prabhakaran a nightmare.

Further, the security guidelines forbid even a Special District Commander (SDC) meeting Prabhakaran with his personal weapon. The SDC is the highest

rank, next to the military commander of the LTTE, which is currently being held by Balraj, a one-time close associate of Mahattaya.

The only possibility of killing Prabhakaran, according to a senior Army officer, is by an air strike based on prior intelligence or from within the organization. While the possibility of Prabhakaran dying from an air strike is low, it is likely that he may be eliminated from within, particularly after the Mahattaya episode.

What makes Prabhakaran a great guerrilla leader? Today, no guerrilla leader can claim the responsibility for eliminating two heads of government. In addition to assassinating Gandhi and Premadasa, Prabhakaran has also killed several potential presidents - Ranjan Wijeratne, Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake.

Similarly, no guerrilla leader can claim the responsibility for fighting continuously for over a decade and still controlling territory. This includes the fourth largest army - the Indian security forces, and a small but highly trained army - the Sri Lankan security forces.

Prabhakaran has proved that there is no leader as despise as he is, firstly by effectively disclaiming all the civilian lives his movement has taken. Further, Prabhakaran, has proved that he is not willing to compromise his avowed goal of Eelam - firstly by fighting India - the very government which financed, trained, and armed them from 1983 to 1986, and secondly the Premadasa regime.