

Forces brace for more assaults. (1993, December 05). *The Island*.

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Forces brace for more assaults

by Shamindra Fernando

The security forces in the North are bracing themselves for LTTE assaults against Mullaithivu and Elephant Pass under the cover of current bad weather conditions. Security officials in Colombo said that intelligence reports from the North indicated major Tiger build-ups around these two relatively isolated army-held enclaves. Officials believe the LTTE has targeted these positions as most vulnerable especially because rough seas and thick monsoon cloud cover at present could prevent adequate reinforcement and supply.

The LTTE is expected to try to repeat the strategy it used against the similarly isolated Pooneryn bases where the pre-dawn Tiger assault was launched

under, the cover of heavy rain.

Strong winds, daily showers, cloudy skies in the Mullaithivu and Jaffna districts were described by defence sources as "ideal conditions" for a major LTTE attack.

Military officers admitted that the Tigers were aware of the difficulty in providing air and naval gunfire support to the ground troops in bad weather.

The existing weather conditions are likely to continue for the next five to six weeks, according to security sources.

President D. B. Wijetunga, with a view to meeting the increased threat posed by the Tigers in the North, has appointed Army Chief of Staff Major General Garry de Silva as Director of Operations in the North

and Brigadier Asoka Jayawardena as Joint Operations Commander for the Kifnochchi and the Jaffna district. "We have introduced a series of security measures in the North", a Army headquarters spokesman said.

The Tigers have meanwhile ordered stepped up attacks in the East, defence officials believe. More than a dozen security forces personnel were killed and several others wounded in recent attacks in the East.

Civilians arriving in Vavuniya from Jaffna say that the LTTE appeared to be preparing for yet another strike in the North.

The attacks in the East were to divert the attention of the authorities from the heavy LTTE build up in the North, security sources warned.