

Upended Tigers and Opium-Drugged Lions

by Ramtanu Maitra

Feb. 3—On Jan. 25, as the Sri Lankan Army moved in to capture Mullaitivu town, the military capital of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), better known as the Tamil Tigers, it became evident that this 15,000-strong terrorist army will be homeless within weeks.

In London, the first overseas headquarters of the Tigers, set up in 1984, the crisis is now at hand. Her Majesty's Service, which has maintained these terror-warriors for more than two decades, in hopes of gaining access to a port in the Tamil-majority area, to establish a British naval presence in the Indian Ocean adjacent to India, is finding its dreams vanishing in thin air.

We present here a case study of but one element of London's hydra-headed international terrorist apparatus.

The routing of the Tigers by the Sri Lankan military and capture of Mullaitivu, the strongest Sea Tiger (seawing of the LTTE) base, and the last of the urban settlements under the Tigers' control, has put the Gordon Brown government on the spot. The Tigers had been hoping that London would intervene against its former colonial subjects to stop the war and save the warriors. But Sri Lanka, with close ties to China, India, and the United States, put the derelict British on notice and carried out a relentless military campaign to oust what some "experts" considered for years to be an "invincible" force.

Pinch Hitting for the Terrorists

Even with the handwriting on the wall, the opium-drugged British lion did not stop whimpering. Addressing a Tamil diaspora meeting, jointly organized by the All Party Sri Lanka Parliamentary Group and British Tamil Forum (BTF) at the Westminster Parliament on Jan. 27, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband and Lord Mark Malloch-Brown wrung their hands in anguish.



TamilNet

Tamil Tiger supremo Vellupillai Pirbhakaran is shown here paying homage to a photo of the late Anton Balasingham, a British intelligence agent, and “theoretician” and political advisor to the LTTE. Since Balasingham’s death in 2006, his wife Adele has become the Tigers’ spokesperson.

Miliband sounded desperate when he said Sri Lanka should go for a political solution that safeguards the rights of the Tamil community.

“We are calling for every right of the Tamil people; political, cultural, and religious rights are respected. We are serious in our attempts. We also call for open access for journalists. But the first step is to stop the killings. We will use every possible tool available to us to stop the killings,” Miliband said, with the sanctimoniousness for which the Foreign Office is famous.

To begin with, Miliband knows that Colombo was going after a group of militants, acknowledged by most nations, other than such British “half-crown” colonies as Australia, as terrorists, and that the Tigers do not represent the Tamil community of Sri Lanka. Miliband’s lying comes naturally to him: It is part of the training bestowed on him by Her Majesty’s Service.

But, Miliband did issue a veiled threat when he said: “We will use every possible tool available to stop the killings.” The world is aware of what tools London has used to make the Tigers as powerful as they have been.

‘Terroristan’ on Display

A few days before the Sri Lankan military captured the Tigers’ Mullaitivu base, the trial of Arunachalam

Chrishanthakumar, known as “Shanthan,” came to the Kingston Crown Court in South West London. Shanthan, widely known as the “numero uno” Tiger operator in Britain, was first questioned in 2004, when he was caught buying military uniforms and equipment at an army surplus store in Southsea, Hampshire, England; he was not arrested.

The surplus items on his shopping list included 250 pairs of combat boots, 251 army-style ponchos, 30 machetes, 152 trenching spades, and 110 pairs of U.S. military handcuffs, according to court records.

Shanthan was arrested for the first time in 2007, under the U.K. Terrorism Act 2000, and subsequently released. He was re-arrested in 2008. Of note: Britain

had proscribed the Tigers as a terrorist group in 2001. Why, then, was Shanthan not arrested in 2001?

During the trial following his 2008 arrest, it came to light that Shanthan was not simply a Tiger; he was also an agent of MI5, the British national security service. This case has an eerie similarity to that of Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, who was recruited by MI6 (foreign intelligence service) and sent to Kosovo in the 1990s. Later, Omar Saeed was sent to join the jihadis in Pakistan, where he kidnapped and slit the throat of the *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Daniel Pearl. Evidently, these were the kind of “tools” Miliband was threatening to use in Sri Lanka to protect the empire’s interests.

At the trial of Shanthan and three other Tigers, at the Kingston Crown Court, Jonathan Laidlaw QC prosecuting, said the men were among 300,000 Tamils living in Britain, and added: “As you might expect because of this country’s close links with Sri Lanka and the large Tamil community which lives in the U.K., the authorities through its agencies such as Special Branch, held regular meetings with [Shanthan].”

Between 2004 and 2007, the Special Branch (the U.K. investigative unit) continued to meet Shanthan; in 2007, his home in Norbury, South London was raided. Shanthan was found to be in possession of

equipment which could be used in improvised explosive devices (IEDs), along with high-powered magnets of the type used to attach limpet mines to Sri Lankan Naval vessels.

The Kingston Court also exhibited two lists found with Shanthan, which included equipment that could be used to track boats and plans to manufacture in Taiwan 7,500 printed circuit boards with timing and switching functions that could have been used for a “nefarious purpose,” the court was told.

Laidlaw said: “Shanthan as head of the LTTE in London was the co-coordinator of the procurement exercise. He was in contact with senior LTTE figures in Sri Lanka, receiving their orders and requests and, on occasions, buying equipment himself.”

Britain’s Undeclared War Against Sri Lanka

In other words, British intelligence, the paid functionaries of Her Majesty’s Service, was conducting warfare against the Sri Lankan government, by providing the Sri Lankan terrorist group with the weapons to endanger the nation’s security.

But the Shanthan case was only the proverbial tip of the iceberg. The link between the British establishment/security services and the Tigers does not begin or end with Shanthan’s procurement of military equipment as an MI5 agent. In fact, Britain had long been one of the most important centers for the Tigers’ fundraising activities, others being some of the British “half-crown” colonies—Australia, Canada, Norway, and South Africa.

One of the most important elements in this operation was bring to London Anton Balasingham, the “theoretician” of the Tigers, and asset of the British intelligence services. Balasingham, whose wife Adele is Australian and holds a British passport, was often in the Tiger-zone to meet the group’s supremo, Vellupillai Pirbhakaran, who also held a British passport. Despite the fact that Balasingham was negotiating on behalf of the Tigers for a ceasefire with Colombo, as late as 2006, and the Tigers were proscribed as a terrorist organization by Britain, he remained free from 1999, when he moved to London with his wife, until 2006, when he died. It is evident that Balasingham was acting as a liaison for the British establishment, passing on valuable information to Pirbhakaran.

Since Balasingham’s death, Adele, who was involved in the peace talks, as the secretary of the LTTE delegation, has become the spokeswoman for the

LTTE, and was reported holding occasional fundraising events in England.

A former Indian cabinet minister, Dr. Subramaniam Swamy, went on record saying: “Balasingham was a terrorist who at least once has publicly and arrogantly relished the assassination of [former Indian Prime Minister] Rajiv Gandhi. In 1995 he had warned the then President of Sri Lanka, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, that she would face the same fate as Rajiv Gandhi if she confronted the LTTE.”

London’s Drug Mercenaries for Hire

It is almost a certainty that neither the upending of the Tigers in Sri Lanka, nor the death of Balasingham, nor the arrest and exposé of Shanthan will sever the links between Her Majesty’s Service and the Tigers. While these developments may bring about a lower level of threat to Sri Lanka, there may be a greater threat to other nations in the crosshairs of Britain and the Tigers. The collaboration would continue because British officials and diplomats have often visited Vanni (the heart of the Tamil-dominated area in northern Sri Lanka) and met Tiger leaders in Kilinochchi, the “capital” of the Tigers, now under control of the Sri Lankan military.

In a unique report on the financial operations of the LTTE, the August 2007 issue of *Jane’s Intelligence Review* wrote that, with financial and procurement structures well organized and strategically positioned around the globe, the group has a profit margin that would be the envy of any multinational corporation—some US\$200 to 300 million per year. While some of this amount comes from the Tamil expatriates worldwide, much of it is generated through drug trafficking, gun running, smuggling of contraband items, and even running prostitution rings.

In 2000, the Swiss French-language daily *Le Courrier* raised questions about LTTE fundraising in Switzerland, of nearly 1 million Swiss francs (US\$600,000) per month, in addition to using “drug money” to finance its 54 offices throughout the world, and to buy weapons. Further elaborating on the far-flung Tiger operation, the article said that the “Tamil Tiger octopus has long tentacles.”

In 1999, a Tamil commando was arrested in New Delhi after a shootout which led to the seizure of 14.5 kilograms of heroin. Further investigation by the Indian police revealed a network of drug traffickers which involved a Mumbai-based druglord, Ali Khan, and two

LTTE members.

By 1999, the LTTE's credentials as major drug traffickers had already been established. Studies by Indian diplomatic sources indicated the LTTE was operating freely inside Myanmar in the 1990s, making and distributing heroin. Investigations later provided alleged proof of collaboration between a section of the Myanmar military and the Tamil Tigers.

Over the years, Tamil drug smugglers with direct links to the Tigers have been arrested in Sri Lanka, India, Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, the United States, and Canada. Diplomats have concluded the Tamil Tigers' "independence" fight has become overshadowed by its outside businesses, first and foremost, drugs.

The drug money also played a major part in keeping the Tiger militia armed. However, the northern Sri Lankan port of Jaffna and a large pirate fleet maintained by the LTTE armed forces play a relatively minor role in the anti-Colombo war, compared to its role in drug trafficking. In the Indian state of Manipur, located in the northeast, bordering Myanmar, the LTTE has developed a base. This group of Tigers broke off from the Sri Lankan resistance, and instead, became a part and parcel of militias that bring in guns and drugs from Myanmar and Southeast Asia, and sell to various militant secessionist, ethnic, and jihadi groups that operate in northeastern India and Bangladesh.

There exist many reports of the Tigers using the drug money to purchase sophisticated weapons and ammunition, either directly from the Indian traffickers, or from their contract people in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Besides the submachine guns purchased from Israeli arms dealers, the LTTE is said to have gotten supplies from Afghanistan (U.S. and Soviet ground-to-air missiles), Ukraine (explosives), Cambodia, and Myanmar.

But beyond the traditional drug- and gun-running, the Tigers have been accused of running assassination squads in Europe, targeting dissident Tamils. Their objective is to control the Tamil diaspora in Europe, to collect money. This ring of Tamil Tigers, believed to be centered in Norway, attacks rival Tamils to prevent them from competing for the money in the diaspora.

It is evident that the estimated \$200-300 million raised annually from these activities, can corrupt many politicians and maintain many assassination squads. In Britain, the Tigers have continued to raise funds at func-

tions open to the public, and attended by British parliamentarians.

The British have facilitated fundraising for the Tiger terrorists on British soil, since 1984, and are in no mood to abandon them. The Tigers have openly held events in the U.K. to celebrate suicide bombers and fund their terror war against sovereign nations. British politicians attend these events in exchange for money and votes from terrorists and their dupes living in the U.K.

For instance, on Dec. 8, 2007, a row broke out over the attendance of three Labour Party MPs—the high-profile Keith Vaz, Virendra Sharma, and Joan Ryan—at a several-thousand-strong expatriate Tamil event, organized to pay respect to those who died in the "Tamil liberation struggle." Vaz jointly chairs the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils with Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes, who sent a message to the rally.

Threat to India

The LTTE has already launched an anti-India campaign through its websites. The campaign accuses India of not exercising its authority to pressure Colombo to call a ceasefire. The anger of the Tigers has been directed against the Indian government and the Congress (I) party, the largest party in the ruling coalition, UPA.

The objective of the Tigers ostensibly is to rev up the Tamils in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, across the Palk Straits, against India's refusal to protect the Tigers. A large section of Tamil expatriates living in Europe, Australia, South Africa, and Canada also seems to have joined the British-Tiger lobby, saying Colombo could not have succeeded in ousting the Tigers without military help from New Delhi.

A senior Indian intelligence official noted recently that the target of the most vicious campaign of the Tigers is Mrs. Sonia Gandhi. The Congress (I) is projected as the "Sonia Congress" and the "Dynasty Congress," and the government of India as the "Sonia Establishment."

The official pointed out that keeping in view the dangers of a negative impact of such attacks on the minds of irrational elements in the Tamil community, it would be prudent to strengthen the security for Mrs. Gandhi.

(For an earlier study of Britain's LTTE, see *EIR*, Oct. 13, 1995, also available at www.larouchepub.com/other/1995/2241_south_india_groups.html.)