

o. Sniper or Marksman Training: When Sri Lanka military officers ushering in the New Year 2006 while dancing in New Year 'eve parties with their 'date', girl friend, own wife or disgracefully somebody else's, like an ex-SLAF commander did in star hotels in the city with an air force widow, the then LTTE Northern Region Commander, Theepan, was distributing trophies to top marksmen and women from Sothiya Brigade, Malathy Brigade, Kutti Sri Mortar Brigade, Charles Anthony Special Brigade and LTTE Military Academy in a marksmanship competition organized by the LTTE Military Academy.

On a prior occasion (on 25 April 2005) the 100 meter sharpshooting competitions marked the fourth day of events celebrating the fifth anniversary of the fall of Sri Lanka Army's (SLA's) Elephant Pass garrison on 22 April 2000, with LTTE's Col Theepan, supervising the day's events at the LTTE schoolhouse. Theepan was quoted saying: "A sniper's job is to deliver discriminatory, accurate rifle fire against targets which cannot be engaged successfully by the regular rifleman because of range, size, location, fleeting nature, or visibility. Our cadres chosen for such training develop basic infantry skills to a high degree of perfection. The competition highlights the importance of snipers and allows our cadres to show their marksmanship."

Sadly Sri Lankan military officers did not hear it 'loud and clear' as they were taking Dispirin and Aspirin for hang over and were worrying whether they transmitted to or got STD from 'loved ones'! I had to alert some of my friends about this unusual event on 'a January 01st'!

SLA started paying more attention to sniper training as it started to pay dividends, and more and more snipers were needed in the new modified 'combined' squad structure. You might have heard SLA was talking about having had to rush the snipers in training from the SLA Marksmen Training Unit in Diyathalawa to the Wannu battlefield. It is 'Juba' the sniper who causes havoc in Iraq and it was Corporal W.I. Ranjith Premasiri alias 'Nero' of SLA who was responsible for the deaths of more than 180 Tiger cadres, before his demise on 28 April 2009.

Here is another big hit scored by a sniper of Sri Lanka Army instilling terror and fear in the hearts and minds of LTTE leadership. A Senior Commander of LTTE in the East, Commander Ramanan, the Deputy Head of the LTTE Military wing of the Batticaloa district, was felled by a bullet fired by a sniper of Sri Lanka Army (SLA) around 1730hours (5:30p.m.) on 21 May 2006 at Vavunathivu Forward Defence Line (FDL), 5 km southwest of Batticaloa.

a. State Department vide supra Defence Department (MFA VS MOD): I am not sure about this; the people who bashed some countries left and right have they themselves noticed next when they wrote angry comments and editorials against those countries. Here are some names: David Milliband, Carl Bildt, 'Hila' Clinton, Bernard Kouchner, Stephen Smith, Lawrence Cannon or Erik Solheim, and what do they have in common? They have either served or are serving in a State department or a Ministry of foreign Affairs in their respective country. What did they do to GOSL? They used strong arm tactics by diplomatic means to discourage Sri Lanka from wiping out the scourge of LTTE terrorism from Sri Lanka forever and tried to give oxygen to murderous Prabhakaran and his gang of killers.

Here are some other names: Robert Gates, Peter Mackay, Anne-Grete Strøm-Erichsen, Sten

Tolgfors, Bob Ainsworth and John Faulkner. What do they have in common? They are serving in a Department of Defense (DOD) or Ministry of Defence (MOD) in their respective country. Have you ever heard of these names or seen in the Sri Lankan newspapers or news websites with regard to making adverse comments against the operations against LTTE? No! Not at all! You may ask, why? In the final war the top generals of other countries were monitoring the Sri Lanka Security Forces' daily successes against the so-called invincible ruthless terrorist group, LTTE, very closely and with interest and briefing their Defense Minister or Defence Secretary on the shrinking Wannai footprint of the LTTE or the area controlled by tigers, from a size of 50 map sheets to one sliver, an area that of one map sheet.

The warriors in the military and DOD or MOD personnel of those countries were so elated that a small nation in the Indian Ocean was registering the total success against terrorism in recent history and at the same time wondering why technologically superior nations were not winning or not seeing a light at the end of the tunnel! These warriors also wanted to help Sri Lanka by way of providing equipment, training and advanced technology but these state department officials or the Foreign Ministry officials were behaving exactly like the proverbial dog in the manger.

Some unpatriotic Sri Lankans and prominent LTTE sympathizers, the likes of Jehan, Paki, Bahu, the media organizations like FMM, and INGOs and local NGOs supported and encouraged by likes of RSF, MSF or AI amply strengthened the hands of the officials in DOS and MFA in the case against GOSL, therefore the DOD or MOD personnel did not have wiggle room to help Sri Lanka publically in any way, shape or form. But I assume there were some 'very secure programs' to help Sri Lanka, which we would never know as those are national secrets for both countries.

There is no better example to cite the positive views of US DOD now towards Sri Lanka other than the recent Joint Humanitarian Exercise conducted by U.S. and Sri Lankan militaries with help from Special Operations Command- Pacific [SOC (P)] and the Disaster Management Centre and the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition, and the current US Defense Attaché's comment, "U.S. and Sri Lanka have a long tradition of cooperation. We hope this partnership can be expanded."

There was another positive sign, the incipient change of heart in DOS (Department of State) for good in this year US DOD's Sinhala and Tamil New Year's greeting!

"For the 'first time' in 'decades', Sri Lankans from all parts of the island 'can celebrate together' in a 'peaceful 'and 'united' country "(the emphasis added)!

Now it is the absolute duty of the smart diplomats, if any left, of MFA to nurture and cultivate it to full fruition than allowing it to wilt in no time!

p. The Tale of Three Udawattas-Individual Contribution in the Final War: As an example to explain things better on one's individual contribution in the final war I present this episode or tale of three Udawattes. They were a major general, a commodore, and a sergeant. Two of them have the same initial in their first names and two of them studied at Sri Sumangala Maha Vidyalaya, Panadura. One led an army Division that took heavy casualties, another volunteered

to take out bunkers and fought valiantly until he was killed, the other came from Naval Dockyard, TCO to Champianpattu, (CHOP-CHange of OPerations) boarded a FAC and in exuberance bear hugged 'Disa' who came from Karainagar, JFN, while others onboard cheered on as the cameras of state TV were rolling. What a coincidence that the state TV cameras happened to be right there or awaiting them on high seas!

In the final war, for that matter, right throughout the Drealam wars, there were true heroes, unsung heroes and the media savvy rascals in uniform. In my tale of three Udawattes only one out of the three would go down in history, only one Udawatte would remain in our collective memory. That is Sergeant Namal Udawatte of Sri Lanka Army. And his unofficial citation reads like this: "In the course of fierce fighting and clashes one of the finest and experienced fighting men was lost to the Army. Sergeant Namal Udawatte who became a hero in the capture of the Akkarayankulam Bund few months back, when he successfully led an eight-man team to capture three bunkers being manned by LTTE. The LTTE fiercely and successfully resisted all previous attempts to overrun this bunker line. Sgt. Udawatte accomplished that task at Akkarayankulam by volunteering to lead his team as a Corporal. Because of that daring achievement he was elevated to the rank of sergeant."

q. Contributions of Officers the Minorities: Why are the contributions and very personal sacrifices of officers of the minority communities in the military easily, conveniently and ungratefully forgotten? Why are these who contributed immensely to Sri Lanka's national security are not talked about, mentioned with gratitude or felicitated to the frenzied levels that other 'media savvy' generals are elevated or treated? Is it just because they are not from the majority Sinhalese community? It is a very ungrateful act if we do not show regard, respect towards or appreciate the immense contribution of versatile military officers from the other communities in Sri Lanka, who were very instrumental in the defeat of LTTE. I am going to disclose or mention some names here because they are no more and paid the ultimate price. They are IP Bastaimpillai of CID, Col Rizlie Lafir of SF, Col Tuvan Nizam Mutaliph of MI, Lt Cdr Bahar of Navy, to name a few.

I am going to discuss here about a living one and his contribution, just to show him that there are at least some grateful people left in this world to recognize officers like him. We know Sri Lankans are, the first to invent and perfect the 'condom theory' and so famous to use a person, abuse and then kick him to the curb.

There was so much hype about the clearing operations in the east and who the hero was or who the heroes were. Even in a Fundamental Rights case it was said that a particular army officer was in charge and under his command the east was cleared (I am not talking about alleged 'treasure hunting' later). The names of some other army officers were 'promoted' or very favourably mentioned in the write ups.

If you ask a counter-terrorism specialist who knew about the strengths, defenses, deployment of LTTE cadres or the terrain in the east he would tell you if you could clear the 'Kanchi' jungle and secured Kanchikuda Aru then clearing LTTE from the East was not that of a difficult task. This officer who went to a Sinhala school in Colombo, can read, speak, write many a language, has set so many records throughout his career, has the most cordial or best of relations among

sister services and other agencies, has had access at very young age and at a junior rank to the most sensitive places in Sri Lanka, has served in diplomatic appointments, has saved Sri Lanka with his presence of mind from international embarrassment rather censure due to the 'Prawn Farm' deaths during the Manmunai operation by STF in January 1987 (He went to the local head of the Prawn Farm, which was multi-national project and grabbed his Wedding Album and showed to the wider world the photos taken on his wedding day with 'Kummarappan', who was having his arm around the local manager of the farm to prove the LTTE connections to the farm, and 'case closed' then and there!).

The most important thing about this officer is his unmatched humility, humbleness and down to earth attitude. This officer planned the 'Kanch Op' or Kanchikuda Aru Operation that was a resounding success. Soon the troops were having a shower at Ram's Guest House and taking photos at the LTTE Tharavai martyrs cemetery in the east. The elated troops were posing for photos, right around the 'Eternal Flame of Sacrifice' distinguished forever by Special Task Force commandoes. That was the pre-cursor for clearing the east, Batticaloa, Ampara up to Thoppigala. He does not seek publicity or personal glory. He is so media shy.

You might remember, later a politician commented about taking Thoppigala was no big deal, Thoppigala was a piece of real estate and the amount or resources used to claim it was not worth the effort etc. If you consider the casualties in clearing the east it was minimal as the LTTE could not send reinforcement over land routes as 'Kanchi was well secured after the 'Kanchi Op'.

Here are some excerpts from an operational briefing and motivational speech given by this non-Sinhalese counter-terrorism specialist to troops before 'Kanchi Ops' commenced.

"East is the granary of Sri Lanka. This was one of the several major reasons why the LTTE was concentrating in the East. The others being to stretch the SLSF resources, conduit to the South as a launching pad for attacks, recruitment base, financial base, to exhibit to the world that the LTTE is spread over the N & E, the traditional homeland concept, the Tamil-speaking concept involving the Muslim people, etc."

"If and when the East is strangulated and with Karuna out, the LTTE would be struggling with scarcity of oxygen for sustenance "

"Kanchi Kudichchi Aru was discovered during the reign of King Dutugemunu when he marched from Magama to confront Elara in NCP. When the Troops discovered a natural watering hole after a long trek and relaxed, the Troops were offered 'Porridge / Kanchi' by the Tamil Natives to Dutugemunu and his Troops. That is how the name, Kanchi (Porridge) biwwe (Kudichchi) wewa (Aru). It is fertile ground with an uninterrupted supply of water throughout the year. Kanchi provides a conduit for the interaction and interconnection between the Tamil, Muslim and Sinhala areas. A launching pad for attacks in Yala, Moneragala, and this is the area where ASP Ivan Boteju and the 600 surrendered Police Officers were massacred and dumped into mass graves by the LTTE on 11 Jun 1990." After hearing this speech STF commandos were ready to go to avenge the deaths of their surrendered comrades and bring a closure to the bereft families! STF commandos did it in style with minimal casualties!

Why I am so concerned is that he is not given the due recognition because he is not Sinhalese. One thing and that is the most important thing Sinhalese should never forget, I say again, never forget; the contribution, versatility, and sort of indispensable rather instrumental nature of the dead officers I have mentioned elsewhere and this living officer in the fight against LTTE. Without their contributions, for sure, GOSL would NEVER have defeated the LTTE. These officers could, speak, read and write tigers' language, blend with or work against tigers without arousing suspicion. GOSL did not have capable Tamil speaking Sinhalese officers in numbers or abundance to successfully deploy against LTTE. Sinhalese should never forget that, whatever the successes Sri Lanka Security Forces have ever scored, the vast majority of them were due to these very loyal and selfless other community officers. There were more Sinhalese traitors in the army or the military than the very few traitors from other communities in the intelligence field or in the other services. I always remember these non-Sinhalese officers in gratitude! I salute them with respect!

~ srilankaguardian.org ~