

● Int'l community never took tangible action against LTTE attacks on commercial ships

● Govt. moved 300 ship loads of supplies to Jaffna during *Eelam War IV*

● Onboard security can meet threat from pirates



Vice Admiral T.S.G. Samarasinghe

By SHAMINDRA FERDINANDO

Sri Lanka needs to closely watch the Indo-Lanka maritime boundary to thwart any future attempt to re-establish a clandestine sea line of communications between northern Sri Lanka and India. Maintaining surveillance on the Indian fishing fleet, as well as the local fishing population is essentially one of the most important factors in the overall naval strategy in a post-war era. Although the LTTE no longer posed a conventional military threat, Sri Lanka shouldn't be complacent, Navy Commander Vice Admiral T.S.G. Samarasinghe said.

The navy veteran went on to say that patrolling the seas is a formidable task, particularly in view of the ever increasing poaching by the Indian fishing fleet. In his presentation to the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC), he discussed both post and pre-war security scenarios in relation to naval operations, with the emphasis on humanitarian operations undertaken by the navy.

Producing technical and photographic evidence, Vice Admiral Samarasinghe explained that the LTTE had cleverly exploited the Indian fishing fleet to its advantage. The navy chief said that the LTTE never suspended its clandestine sea line of communications, even during the Norwegian-arranged CFA. He recalled the detection of an Indian trawler in Sri Lankan waters on February 6, 2003, carrying arms and ammunition.

Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said that at the time of the detection, there had been a Nordic member of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) onboard one of the SLN Fast Attack Craft (FAC) involved. The navy chief said: "...as we suspected this Indian trawler, we got the SLMM member to get on the trawler where he recovered ammunition and a 20 or 30 mm weapon. Those onboard the trawler threatened the SLMM member, forcing him to jump overboard. Although we rescued the foreigner, the LTTE blew up the trawler to avoid being apprehended."

Commenting on the formidable threat posed by the Sea Tigers on naval movements, particularly between Trincomalee and Kankesanthurai during the Eelam war IV, Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said that a substantial force had to be deployed to protect the troop carrier, Jetliner, which also accommodated civilians.

The navy had to deploy two Offshore

Vice Admiral T.S.G. Samarasinghe before LLRC:

Pivotal importance of continuous SLN watch on Indo-Lanka maritime boundary stressed

Patrol Vessels (OPVs), one Fast Gun Boat (FGB), 20 Fast Attack Craft (FACs), 22 Arrow Boats, two Inshore Patrol Craft (IPCs), one Mi 24 helicopter gunship and one Beech craft. The army placed artillery pieces along the coast on alert to provide gun fire support in case of an attack.

Vice Admiral Samarasinghe explained the difficulties faced by the men in policing waters, not only in north-eastern waters, but north-western waters as well.

Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said that had the war lasted, LTTE underwater fighting craft (submersibles) would have posed a grave threat. According to him, the LTTE had carried out its first suicide attack on an SLN vessel on May 4, 1991, in the Jaffna peninsula. He briefly explained the gradual LTTE build-up leading to the three-year-eelam war.

The war ended on May 19 last year.

Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said that throughout the war the government maintained a sea line of communication to the Jaffna peninsula, though the government lost the overland supply route in 1990.

According to the navy chief, there had been 300 ship loads of supplies sent for the civilians living in the Jaffna peninsula during the three-year long military offensive. The Commissioner General of Essential Services had handled this daunting task to move about 100 ship loads annually, Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said.

During this period the government also provided safe sea passage to over 200,000 civilians to move to and from the Jaffna peninsula.

Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said: "We never isolated the North from the South during the war," proudly declaring the navy maintained a sea line of communications throughout the war despite repeated Sea Tiger attacks.

During Eelam war IV ships carrying food and fuel for civilians didn't have ICRC protection

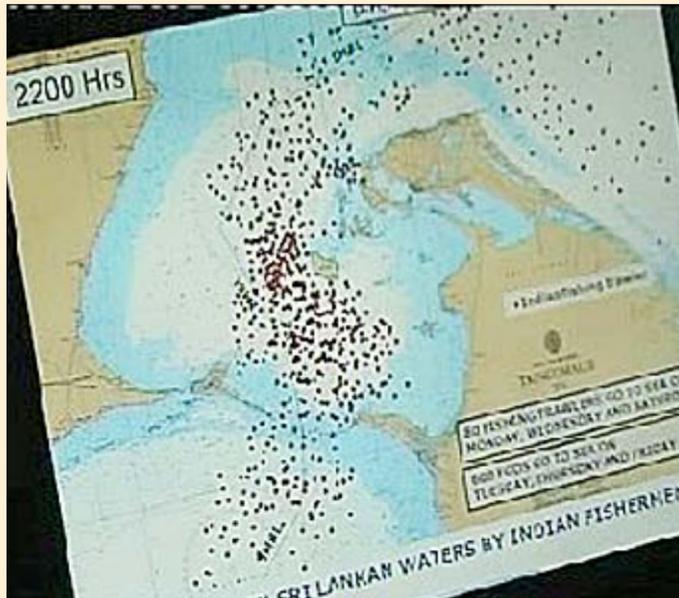
Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said that Sri Lanka ensured the safety of ships passing Sri Lanka. According to him about 150 ships take this route every day.

He recalled the LTTE attempts to cripple Galle and Colombo harbours at the height of the war.

On the directions of the government, the navy despite a threat posed by the LTTE, had brought large generators to Kankesanthurai and moved them to Chunnakam to ensure uninterrupted power supply to the people of Jaffna. KKS had to be used, though it was not equipped to accommodate heavy cargo as the government was in a hurry to provide electricity, the navy chief said.

He emphasized the importance of keeping sea lines of communications despite LTTE either destroying or damaging ships carrying cargo to the north.

Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said that the international community never took tangible action against the LTTE, though



it targeted ships. The seizure of Farah III is a case in point, he said, adding that the navy had to hunt down the 'LTTE floating arsenals' on the high seas after the LTTE shifted its major operations from India to several other countries in the region.

Ten LTTE vessels destroyed by the navy, had International Maritime Organisation's numbers, the navy Commander said adding that had the international community investigated, it could have identified those who registered the vessels.

During the period LTTE floating arms warehouses were destroyed he was the Director General Operations and Commander Eastern Naval Area, from 2006 to 2008.

The navy chief revealed that the navy had lost seven FACs each worth \$ 7 million and 13 merchant vessels during the fourth phase. He went on to explain the circumstances in which the LTTE had attacked a cargo vessel as late as November 22, 2008, using a semi-submersible craft packed with explosives.

Of the seven FACs lost in action, the last was on January 19, 2009, off Mullaitivu.

Commenting on the last stage of the ground offensive, Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said that over 700 boats carrying people, had escaped from areas under LTTE control as the army advanced towards the Mullaitivu coast. He explained the deployment of high tech equipment to identify LTTE craft trying to exploit the civilian exodus to its advantage. Touching on the measures taken by the navy to help civilians, Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said that the enemy successfully targeted two SLN vessels (small boats) taking cover of

civilians, though the navy reacted cautiously without resorting to indiscriminate fire.

We lost two vessels in attacks carried out by the LTTE taking advantage of civilians, though they expected the navy to fire indiscriminately we never did that.

Getting back to the Indian issue, Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said that over 500 Indian fishing craft poach in Sri Lankan waters on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Their presence could be exploited by terrorists, Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said, while recalling how the Sea Tigers had used Indian fishing fleet as a cover to operate across the Indo-Lanka maritime boundary and then take refuge among fishing villages along the north-western coast north of Mannar. The navy chief said that they had not been able to attack Sea Tiger craft after they reached the land due to the presence of civilians.

The officer told the LLRC identifying terrorists operating among fishermen was a tremendous task.

The navy chief recalled the LTTE suicide attack on a Dvora FAC (P 413) on Dec 26th 2007, just two nautical miles from the Indo-Lanka maritime boundary. Of the 14-man crew, only one survived. A grave looking navy chief said that fighting suicide cadres was mentally difficult task. "Those operating suicide boats may miss their targets. Then they will have to come back again." He said. He called the navy, who operated in what he called suicide craft infested waters, as gallant and courageous men.

He emphasized the importance of a permanent blockade of the clandestine Indian route to thwart any eventuality. The navy chief explained measures

adopted by the navy to ensure local fishermen could not engage in nefarious activities. Setting up of fishing marshalling points had helped the close monitoring of local boats in and out of Sri Lanka, he said, adding, however, that illegal movements still take place.

Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said that in the post-war era there could be serious disputes between Sri Lankan and Indian fishermen due to Indians poaching in Sri Lankan waters. He alleged that the situation had been worsened by the use of illegal fishing methods by the Indians.

He explained efforts taken by the navy on the Defence Ministry instructions, to gather data on all fishermen in a bid to meet their needs. Banks had been brought in to provide help to local fishermen and since the end of the war the fish production has increased.

Commenting on the last stages of the battle, the navy chief said that overland supply convoys had to be suspended on January 21, 2009, due to heavy fighting.

"The ICRC facilitated the effort obviously because the terrorists too agreed for their role. Beginning February 1, we moved food and medicine to the gradually shrinking area under LTTE control and brought back the sick and the wounded, including LTTE sympathizers and LTTE cadres." Vice Admiral Samarasinghe appreciated the support given by India to take care of those arriving in Pulmoddai. The Indian government deployed medical teams in support during the final phase of the fighting and then moved them to Vavuniya to help look after the war displaced.

The navy chief praised Tamil public servants, who helped the navy's efforts to bring in supplies and distribute them in Jaffna. He especially thanked Jaffna GA Ganesh and Tamil civilians from Karainagar and other coastal villages who had helped unload ships under tremendous difficulties during the war.

The navy went to the extent of deploying the Jetliner and FACs to transport civilians, sick and the wounded, regardless of regulations.

The navy chief recalled LTTE attacks on ships and how the LTTE had trapped two FACs which had moved to assist Irish Mona in LTTE waters.

The navy chief reminded the LLRC steps taken by security forces during the war to prevent attempts to smuggle bombs and explosives in to ships carrying food to the north. Ships taking goods to the North had to be checked thoroughly to thwart attempts to load bombs with supplies to destroy vessels.

Vice Admiral Samarasinghe emphasized the importance of deploying what he called onboard security teams to protect ships vulnerable to attack. The vessels carrying supplies for civilian in the Jaffna peninsula had such teams onboard to help thwart LTTE attacks, he said, adding that Sri Lanka had suggested to the UN that onboard security units could be the answer to the threat posed by pirates.

Vice Admiral Samarasinghe said that protection of harbours had been of critical importance to sustain the war against terrorism. Had they succeeded in disturbing harbour activity it would have caused an irreparable damage to the war effort, he said.

Although the navy had to prohibit fishing in some areas in the northern and eastern provinces as part of overall security measures, particularly to enhance security of harbours and other coastal installations, action was taken to allow fishing under the supervision of the navy. The restrictions particularly affected the fishing community in the North, he said, since the conclusion of the war there had been a marked improvement in fishing activity.

UNP...

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Committee's recommendation that the Party Convention be held before the end of November had been accepted by the Working Committee.

He predicted that there might be pandemonium at the convention to be held, if the crisis is not settled amicably in advance.

Gampaha District Parliamentarian and senior UNP'er Dr. Jayalath Jayawardene said that he had spoken to Wickremesinghe, Jayasuriya, Kabir Hashim, Dayasiri Jayasekera, Sugeewa Senasinghe and Thalatha Althukorale on the party crisis. He said that the dissidents only wanted to discuss 'urgent matters' with the leader and their request for a discussion was justifiable.

Dr. Jayawardene said that Wickremesinghe must give an early and convenient date for a group meeting to discuss urgent

issues affecting the party. He said that the dissidents must act with responsibility and not 'jump the gun'. The next Working Committee meeting of the UNP is scheduled for September 18 (Saturday).

Parliamentarian Dayasiri Jayasekera, when asked for his comments, said that he would 'wait and see' without doing anything 'nasty'.

A spokesman for the dissidents told *The Island* that UNP leader must give up the party leadership for the UNP to revive and that grassroots level politicians and UNP supporters were organising a protest opposite the UNP headquarters, Siri Kottha, in a bid to force Wickremesinghe to resign as leader.

Our attempts to contact Wickremesinghe failed as his security told us he did not want to speak to *The Island*.

SF's...

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Maj.Gen. Medawela said that on a request made by a family the army in the presence of the police recovered 25 gold biscuits in the Vanni. The Vavuniya police would be able to provide more information about the gold recovery, he said.

Government sources told The

Island that those rescued by the army in April from Puthumathalan had brought a large quantity of gold and cash with them. Had the Opposition contacted State and private banks in the north, it would have been able to ascertain the amount of gold and cash

deposited by civilians since May last year.

The Navy found in the possession of Sea Tiger leader Soosai's family Rs. 575,000 (US \$ 4,882.73) in cash and fifteen gold sovereigns when their boat was seized off Mullaitivu a few days before the final battle on

the Nanthikadal lagoon.

Military sources said that a large stock of gold worth Rs. 618.7 million recovered by the army in the Vanni east region had been handed over to the Bank of Ceylon and the People's Bank last November.

House...

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He said that owing to the price increase, sales had dropped by nearly 25 percent and they expected a further drop in the near future as the price of rice had dropped considerably.

He said that the cost of production had gone up with increases in the costs of fire-wood, labour, electricity/gas and rent. The Nation Building Tax (3

per cent) imposed by the government had also led to an increase in the cost of production, Jayawardena said.

The Cooperatives and Internal Trade Ministry spokesman told *The Island* that the recent price increase of bread by the bakery owners was unreasonable. He said when the price of a kilo of flour was

reduced by Rs. 10 in December 2009, the bakery owners had reduced bread price by only Rs. 3. He said: When a kilo of flour was increased by Rs. 3 bread was also increased by Rs. 3. He asked whether a kilo of flour was used to bake a 450 gm loaf of bread?

He further said that at the moment, the controlled price of

chicken with skin was Rs. 350 and traders sold (skinless chicken and parts, breast, thighs, legs) at various prices. He said that the ministry was determined to control the price of chicken with or without skin. Chicken (skinless) is sold at the moment at Rs. 520 per kilo and eggs have increased to Rs. 17

Lanka's...

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of the 18th Amendment in Sri Lanka. The amendment eliminates term limits for the president and expands the power of the president over independent institutions, including the elections, police, and human rights com-

missions, as well as the judiciary. The United States is concerned that this constitutional amendment weakens checks and balances and thus undermines the principles of constitutional democracy.

The United States calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to promote the principles of good governance, democracy, and independent State institutions. The United States looks to the government to take measures that

will strengthen democracy including appointing appropriately qualified officials to bolster independent institutions, increase transparency, enhance power sharing and dialogue, and promote national reconciliation.

Water...

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to use water from tube wells as water in Colombo was contaminated. However, he said the tube wells could not be detected easily and that his department would have to carry out raids search the eateries carefully. He said illegal tube wells would be closed and culprits brought to justice.

Dr. Kariyawasam revealed that out of the 36 water samples drawn from eating houses in Colombo so far, 20 had contained faecal matter as tube wells were in very close proximity to septic tanks.

Polish..

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Walesa, who was an electrician by trade, had no higher education. He became a trade-union activist once he began work at the Polish shipyard called Gdansk, (then, "Lenin"). He was thereafter persecuted by the Polish communist government which placed him under surveillance, and subsequently and threw him out of job in 1976. Thereafter, he was arrested several times. In 1980 he was involved in the negotiations leading to the ground-breaking "Gdansk Agreement" between the communist regime and the workers and co-founded the "Solidarity" union movement. Solidarity was outlawed and he was arrested, but he continued with his trade union activities led to the establishment of the 1989 Round Table Agreement resulting in the semi-free parliamentary elections in June 1989. This gave birth to the Solidarity-led government.

In 1990, Walesa successfully ran for the office of President of Poland and oversaw Poland's transformation from a communist to a post-communist state, but his popularity fell and in 1995, he narrowly lost the election. He now delivers lectures in Poland and abroad on history and politics.