

Tamil migrant ship captained by Sri Lankan Sea Tiger leader: Terrorism expert

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Up to 200 Tamil refugees are expected in B.C. waters within the next few days aboard the M.V. Sun Sea, which was previously the M.V. Harin Panich show here.

Photograph by: Screengrab, marinetraffic.com

The man captaining a vessel carrying over 200 Tamil refugees and headed towards B.C. was the deputy to the captain of an earlier ship that arrived in Canada, an Asian-based terror expert says.

Prof. Rohan Gunaratna, an international terrorism expert and head of Singapore's International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, said the MV Sun Sea — earlier known as Harin Panich 19 — is captained by a Sri Lankan Sea Tiger leader and manned by a 24-member crew.

Gunaratna told the Sri Lanka Sunday Observer that 'Captain Vinod,' who heads the MV Sun Sea, is deputy to the captain who steered the Ocean Lady to Canada last October.

Last Oct. 16, the Ocean Lady — also known as the Easwary — arrived on the B.C. coast. All 76 people aboard claimed refugee status.

Thailand Navy sea patrols spotted MV Sun Sea, a vessel previously used for gun running, near the Exclusive Economic Zone of the country in April.

When the sailors tried to intercept the unidentified vessel, 'Captain Vinod' threatened that several illegal immigrants would throw themselves overboard if anyone tried to board his ship, Gunaratna said.

"Yes, there are a few dozen LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) leaders, members and helpers on board MV Sun Sea. For instance, the captain of the ship, Vinod, was earlier engaged in smuggling several thousand tons of arms, ammunition and explosives from North Korea to Sri Lanka," he said in an interview with the Sri Lanka Sunday Observer.

Gunaratna said an LTTE cell in the west organized both MV Ocean Lady and MV Sun Sea.

He said the LTTE cell is led by Shanmugasundaram Kanthaskaran (known as Karan, or Aruna in the UK) and Ravi Shankar Kanagarajah (also known as Sangili) in Canada. They are both members of the LTTE and served on the procurement and shipping branch of the LTTE.

Gunaratna said Sangili, who is now living in Canada, was captain of the LTTE merchant tanker Showa Maru.

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Undated photo of the Harin Panich 19, now renamed MV Sun Sea, a suspected migrant smuggling ship that has entered Canadian waters with over 200 people on board.

Photograph by: Geir Vinnes, PNG

