

Weekly Country Report

Sri Lanka

28 April – 4 May 2008

Fighting continued in northern Sri Lanka this week where security forces were able to capture the LTTE's "One – Eight Base" Parayakulam, Mannar on 30 April 2008. According to military sources, intercepted LTTE communication had revealed that 42 LTTE cadres were killed while 38 were injured. The casualty figure for the military was said to be six. The Air Force's MI24 helicopter gunships were also used in the offensive to destroy two LTTE gun positions in Karukkukulam and Chalampikulam.¹ On 4 May 2008, Sri Lankan Air Force jets bombed a suspected LTTE target in northern Sri Lanka. The target is believed to be a supply and storage depot of the LTTE which was located in the Puthukudirippu area in Mullaitivu.²

In other related news, three individuals were arrested in the UK for providing financial support for the LTTE. It is believed that they had also provided the group with weapons and equipment manuals. The three males were arrested at different locations in Newton and Mitcham.³ The arrests were made "on suspicion of the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism." They are being held at Paddington Green police station in central London for questioning. The arrests were made in relation to a long term investigation looking into funding and procurement activity in support of terrorism overseas.⁴

Also this week the Sri Lankan government announced that it has set up a Task Force Committee for Northern Development. The committee obtained cabinet approval on 30 April. The committee is a prelude to the Northern Provincial Council Election. Its functions would cover Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mannar Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu.⁵ Although this is a positive development and is likely to aid in the government's counter-insurgency initiatives, given the level of violence in the north, it is doubtful the committee will be of much use in the short run. Even though certain areas in Mannar have been captured the overall security situation in the north still appears to be volatile.

¹"LTTE's "18 Base" falls to troops; 42 terrorists killed, 38 wounded – Mannar" *The Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence* 30 April 2008. http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20080430_10

²"Sri Lankan Air Force pounds rebel target" *China View* 4 May 2008. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-05/04/content_8105223.htm

³"3 men arrested in UK for funding Tamil Tigers" *Sify News* 30 April 2008. <http://sify.com/news/fullstory.php?id=14659205>

⁴"UK police hold three in Tamil Tigers investigation" *Reuters* 29 April 2008. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idUKARM93698720080429>

⁵Ananth Palakidnar "Govt's next target: Development of North" *Sunday Observer* 4 May 2008. <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2008/05/04/pol01.asp>

Also this week Sri Lankan newspapers quoted Sri Lankan intelligence sources stated that the LTTE had transported at least three shipments of military hardware to areas under their control over the past two months. Last week the LTTE was able to beat down the military's advance where it was alleged that 160 soldiers were killed. Between 2003 and 2007 the Sri Lankan Navy destroyed ten ships owned and used by the LTTE to procure weapons and ammunition to for the group in Sri Lanka. It was widely believed that most of the logistics fleet had been destroyed, crippling the organization. However the LTTE's use of heavy artillery against Sri Lankan forces in Welioya, Mannar and Muhamalai, is believed to have been due to their weapons stocks being replenished.⁶

⁶P. Karunakaran "LTTE unloaded three shiploads of arms in two months: Report" *Thaindian News* 4 May 2008. http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/world-news/lte-unloaded-three-shiploads-of-arms-in-two-months-report_10045011.html