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No chance of Prabhakaran fleeing by sea

Rafik Jalaldeen in Mullaitivu

Inching a step forward to escape by sea is a fading dream for LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and his associates. The Navy's highly fortified four defence lines are under operation without timeout.

A journey to the sea is a new experience for a journalist like me. What I witnessed was how hard these Naval troops are striving to protect the Motherland from terrorists amid unbearable heat, LTTE attacks and infiltrations. The sailors deployed in the seas off Mullaitivu to detect LTTE movements have not seen the shore for days. The sailors are silent fighters in the deep sea.



Naval troops are closely monitoring LTTE movements. Picture by Samantha Weerasiri

The LTTE cadres were militarily defeated from ground and sea. Their capabilities were weakened by the Security Forces. Hence, the exodus to the cleared areas.

The Northern coastal line extending from Kankasanthurai to Chundikulam and the Eastern coastal line from Point-Pedro to Kalmunai were cleared from LTTE movements. The Navy

has established highly fortified defence lines with high-tech leaving no room for the LTTE to escape.

To monitor the LTTE movements, the coastal line is fixed with radar facilities in Pulmodai, Kallarawa, Chenmalai, Chilawatte, Chalai and Chundikulam.

The Navy maintains continuous surveillance and patrols the North- Eastern seas. Naval fortifications have been tightened with multiple defence barriers consisting of Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs), Fast Gun Boats (FGBs), Fast Attack Craft (FACs), Rapid Action Boat Squadron (RABS) and the Special Boat Squadron (SBS).

Continuous shore based radar surveillance is also being carried out to compliment Naval units to prevent remaining LTTE cadres from launching desperate attacks on advancing Security Forces personnel and to cut off possible fleeing attempts of Tiger leaders trapped in the No Fire Zone.

The four Naval defence lines and deployments of the Navy are as follows. In the first defence line beginning from three nautical miles Arrows were deployed. In the second defence line, Inshore Patrol Crafts (IPCs) and in the third defence line Fast Attack Crafts (FACs) and Fast Gun Boats (FGBs) are deployed. The third defence line was divided into two. The last and fourth defence line deployed Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs).

These four defence lines were covered with Bolder Point from right and left sides. Therefore, the Mullaitivu sea is fully covered by the Navy without any loopholes.

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The round-the-clock vigilance maintained by alert Naval troops on continuous Naval patrol close to the now fast diminishing enemy stronghold, has been instrumental in thwarting LTTE's last-ditch desperate Sea Tiger attacks on ground troops. The Navy's patrol craft have recently been able to inflict heavy casualties on enemy cadre and vessel on four consecutive occasions.

While the Navy has strengthened its defensive, the LTTE has been weakened and its sea power disabled. This is a set back to the LTTE. The Security Forces in the last leg of the humanitarian operation have the LTTE confined to less than six sq km. With troops marching forward to complete their mission, the LTTE cadres are making desperate attempts to flee by sea.

Do they have a submarine fleet? If so, is it possible to flee it?

Commander Eastern Naval Area Rear Admiral Susitha Weeraskera totally denied LTTE's submarine capabilities.

He told the media team that the LTTE was trying to build a semi submersible vehicle with foreign aid. The submarine type vehicle which was found by troops was built by Mexican drug dealers to smuggle drugs to the United States. In fact, the LTTE does not possess a submarine. The LTTE leader cannot flee by a submarine.

A submarine can be used by connecting a powerful battery with rechargeable capacity. But this type of submarine cannot be used for the LTTE leader to escape to a long distance, destination.

The other type of submarine is one that has the oxygen facility to survive. To collect oxygen, the submarine should have connections with the surface. If the LTTE leader would use such submarine, it will be detected by Naval patrols and thermal cameras.

Rear Admiral Weerasekera challenged the LTTE leader to try fleeing by the sea and he said "our boys are waiting for you."

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