



NEWS

NEWS FEATURES

INTERVIEWS

POLITICAL COLUMN

THIS IS MY NATION

MILITARY MATTERS

EDITORIAL

SPORTS

CARTOON

BUSINESS

EYE - FEATURES

LETTERS

EVENTS

SOUL - YOUTH MAG

KIDS - NATION

ENTERTAINMENT

NATION SPECIAL



## Military Matters

[Wanni Operations Map](#)

### DO OR DIE BATTLE FOR LTTE

With the LTTE fast losing its territory which by yesterday, according to a top frontline commander was less than 450 kilometers, is raising some serious questions as to the whereabouts of Velupillai Prabhakaran and his senior leaders.

Even the captive population is managing to flee the region in large numbers. On Thursday alone 1069 civilians came across to cleared areas and within the last two weeks the total number of civilians who managed to flee from the Tiger clutches stood at nearly 3,000.

What these civilians have been reporting is that the LTTE administrative structure is in total disarray or non-existent,

with no senior leaders in sight anywhere. Gone are the days when senior leaders whisked about in Pajero type vehicles. Only low rung leaders are seen now moving about on motor cycles and that too on rare occasions.

This has led to speculation among some of the other Tamil groups that Prabhakaran and some of his senior leaders had already fled for destinations abroad. But the military feels that the Tiger leadership will fight to the end. If Prabhakaran does flee, the rest will abandon the fight as there is no line of designated succession and they are surrounded by overwhelming odds. Such an event could also lead to a fight among seniors to succeed.

They are facing overwhelming odds with at least seven army battle groups numbering about 50,000 combat-hardened troops now surrounding what remains of the Tiger held territory. Wanni Command alone has around 70,000 troops under it. Even the 53 Division which was earlier deployed in Jaffna and which fought its way downward with the 55 Division to liberate the neck of Jaffna, is now been stationed in Wanni, as a reserve unit holding a second line of defence.

#### Congratulations

Army Commander Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka this week visited the Jaffna Command Headquarters and the Wanni Command Headquarters, to congratulate his top commanders for their achievements and also to brief them on the coming end phase of serious fighting. On Wednesday he visited Jaffna Headquarters in the company of former Jaffna Commander Maj. Gen. G.A. Chandrasiri, who was rewarded the previous week with a service extension on the day he was to retire, for a job well done in giving lead to the defence of vital Jaffna peninsula for a continuous period of three years. On Friday he visited the Wanni Command. Here too he expressed his happiness over the performance of his men and especially called on his top commanders to prepare for a mass influx of civilians from Mullaitivu at any moment now and to be particularly aware of the possibility of LTTE fighters too infiltrating cleared areas with the flood of civilians. So the army will have an additional task of looking into the aspect of rehabilitating fleeing Tiger cadres.

But in the case of the senior Tiger leadership, Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa has already gone on record that they would be tried in courts for their grave crimes.

In the expectation of an exodus of civilians from Tiger captivity the Government this week went ahead with required preparations. Rehabilitation Minister Rishad Bathiudeen led a team to Vavuniya on Thursday to prepare the ground work for the setting up of three large camps to accommodate the IDP influx. In this regard the Government has also appointed a committee to go into all aspects of requirements. The coordination of this entire exercise has been entrusted to Presidential Advisor and MP Basil Rajapaksa because of the importance attached to such preparations.

As for what remains of the fight in the Wanni, the less than 450 sq. km. that remains to be recaptured includes, about 38 kilometers of coast line, eight kilometers of jungle from south to north and built up areas west to east.

All field commanders are quite comfortable and confident of taking the jungle stretches without much difficulty, but what they do not like is the built up regions, where about 200,000 civilians are held captive by the enemy as a human shield. There is fear the Tigers will make their last stand here, instead of choosing to fight elsewhere.

As for Tigers making a get away by sea is now an almost impossible option, especially with constant monitoring from air and sea. According to Navy Spokesman Commander D.K.P. Dassanayake, to cover the remaining coastline still under LTTE control between south of Chundikulam and Mullaitivu, the Navy has deployed six attack ships and 25 Dvoras. They are also supplemented by units of its Special Boat Squadron and the Rapid Action Boat Squadron.

The troops who have surrounded what remains of the Tiger fortress in the Wanni are now mainly recapturing areas that have been held by the Tigers almost from the early 1990s. By Friday some of these places like Dharmapuram and Ramanadhapuram were totally under the control of the army.

During the Operation Sathjaya in 1996, forces advancing from Paranthan advanced as far as Murasamoddai on the road to Mullaitivu, but this is the first time the army proceeded beyond that point.



Col. Suraj Bansajaya Commanded 58-3 Brigade, which comprises the Seventh Sinha Regiment led by Lt. Col. Kithsiri Liyanage, 11th Infantry headed by Lt. Col. Kithsiri Ekanayake, and Maj. Janaka Udowita led the Tenth Gajaba and recaptured Waddakachchi. They began the push into new territory for the first time in the history of the conflict. They were backed throughout by the Fifth Armoured Corp commanded by Lt. Col. Nihal Samarakoon.

The Seventh Sinha advanced from the north of Dharmapuram, while the 11th Infantry Regiment moved south of the A-35 road. As the troops entered the village, the LTTE cadres fled towards Viswamadu also forcing along the civil population in the same direction.

In this operation the 11th Light Infantry, however managed to capture alive one of Prabhakaran's body guards along with two other Tiger cadres. In Dharmapuram East the forces stumbled on a 30 foot deep bunker of the LTTE near one of its training camps. The bunker that can be reached by a stairwell is capable of holding up to 50 cadres. From outside it was camouflaged like a cadjan covered shack.

The 58 Division which took Dharmapuram on Thursday, advanced towards Viswamadu on Friday. Viswamadu is only about two kilometers from Dharmapuram and it is considered the heart of Tigers with one of the key hiding places of Prabhakaran. This Division, which began its march from Mannar along the Western Coast in November 2007 as Task Force 1, however ran into heavy LTTE resistance in Dharmapuram West late Friday. According to Military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara the Division suffered with 12 killed and 20 wounded in this heavily built up area. The Tiger casualties are not known, but they are believed to have also suffered heavy damages in the fighting.

Some units of the 58 Division are already within five kilometers of the Mulaitivu coast. During the last two weeks alone they had recovered bodies of 39 Tiger cadres killed in fighting with them.

Col. Aruna Ariyasinghe led 59-1 Brigade of the 59 Division is within 2.5 kilometers of Mulaitivu Town from the South. Lt. Col. Jayantha Gunaratne commanded 59-3 Brigade is about three kilometers of Pudukudyirippu from the eastern side.

The Task Force IV, Task Force II and Task Force III are nearing the southern approaches of Pudukudyirippu. The 57 Division under the command of Maj. Gen. Jagath Dias, is heading to Mullaitivu District from the West.

On Friday 57-1 Brigade led by Col. Harendra Ranasinghe and 57-2 Brigade successfully captured Ramanadhanpuram, the biggest populated town after Killinochchi.

Amidst heavy fighting, Lt. Col. Chandana Somaweera commanded Ninth Gajaba and Maj. Dinesh Udagama led Third Gajaba entered the town from several sides situated east of Killinochchi, Ramanadhanpuram which is spread over an area of about seven kilometers. The Ninth Gajaba which advanced along the centre of the town recovered the body of an enemy cadre and a machine gun.

The Third Gajaba took the town from the north and the Ninth Wijayaba from the south.

The Ninth Gajaba troops also made a surprise catch, when they stumbled into a woman Tiger major hiding in a house. Maj. Ilakshiya had told troops she was a leader in the Tiger bomb making division. It is believed that she had been laying booby traps for the advancing troops, when she herself got trapped inside the town,

#### **Advance resumed**

Lt. Col Indrajith Bandara led the 64-1 Brigade; coming under the Task Force IV which captured a training complex of the LTTE on the East of Muttiyankaddukulam Tank. Here the underground bunkers even contained a fully tiled bathroom. The 14 Sinha, 21 Sinha, and 20 Light Infantry over ran the complex and resumed their advance.

Lt. Col. Athula Ariyaratna led 62-2 Brigade coming under Task Force 11 commanded by Brig. Rohana Bandara has proceeded some four kilometers past the Muttiyankaddu Tank.

At Ariyaperumal, west of Pudukudyirippu troops found a large LTTE camp about a kilometer long and a kilometer wide. It appears to be a training camp used by their leaders. It included a pistol firing range, lecture halls and all other facilities. About two kilometers away from these camp troops also found a far more complex Tiger base in the thick jungle it had been deliberately sited in the midst of a maze of paths so that an outsider would not stumble into it easily. Even if one follows the correct path the entry into the camp is checked by a 12 foot high barbed wire fence.

The Eighth Sinha, Eighth Gajaba, Sixth Wijayaba, Seventh Signals and Eighth Signals Regiments were involved in operations in this sector. These troops are now within about five kilometers of Wiswamadu.

The main LTTE runway situated east of Iranamadu Tank was captured by the 63-2 Brigade of the Task Force 111 commanded by Brigadier Sathyapriya Liyanage.

The LTTE Airstrip at Ampakamam, approximately seven kilometers from Iranamadu had been captured earlier by the 63-2 Brigade under Colonel Subhashana Welikala. The 1200 meter-long runway had been linked to the Old Kandy Road and the LTTE had declared it a High Security Zone and protected it with high perimeter fence of about 12 barbed wires.

The 18 Vijayaba and 20 Sinha regiments advanced from two sides and the former broke through the fence. The Old Kandy Road had been carpeted to a distance of two kilometers to enhance the runway. When the armed forces launched the operation, the Tigers had dug up the carpet with bulldozers and destroyed the electric lighting system in the airstrip. The gates of the hanger were made of about 6 inches thick iron plates. There was evidence of damage caused to the airstrip by earlier air strikes.

When the 63-2 Brigade was approaching the airstrip, the LTTE reinforcements attempted to break through the security ring laid by the 63-1 Brigade under Lieutenant Colonel Priyantha Perera and 63-3 Brigade under Lieutenant Col. Prathap Tilakaratne, of the Task Force 111. The forces strategically vacated a part of the security ring allowing the Tiger reinforcements to break in only to be gunned down.

The reconnaissance units of the Task Force radioed the advancing forces about the presence of about 300 LTTE cadres in the area. Meanwhile a group of about 100 LTTE cadres attempted to launch a suicide attack and to break through the security ring where it was manned by about 25 soldiers. During the confrontation 29 terrorists and two soldiers were killed.

Following day (13) the area came under LTTE artillery fire in an attempt to halt the advancing forces. However the Iranamadu runway fell to the forces by Wednesday night The 63-2 Brigade had gunned down Tigers and captured a computer operator of the LTTE air force during the confrontations that lasted four days.

