

Foreign mercenaries seen among LTTE attackers. (1993, November 19). *The Island*.

Army captain wounded in Pooneryn battle reveals —

Foreign mercenaries seen among LTTE attackers

Suspected to be Israelis

by Anoj Dharmawardhana

An Army officer, who was wounded last week in the Pooneryn attack, claimed yesterday that he saw 'fair skinned foreigners', whom he identified as Israelis, among the LTTE rebels who carried out the attack.

Captain Primal De Soya, who was a unit commander of the Gajaba Regiment (3rd Battalion), said that he had seen the Israeli mercenaries while his mates had also told him about the presence of the foreigners.

They had also seen several of bodies of mercenaries lying around after the attack, he said.

"I was able to identify them as Israelis, as I undertook a training with Israeli instructors in 1987 in Anuradhapura", Capt. Primal De Soya said.

Speaking to the Press from his hospital bed at the Army hospital, he said that he had to travel halfway to Palaly, hanging on the crossbar of a helicopter, by his hands and feet.

The father of an one-and-half-year-old daughter, Capt. De Soya explained his dreadful experience. "At about 1.35 a.m. the rebels attacked Pooneryn base which comprised of more than 2000 soldiers. More than 6,000 invaders including Israelis, equipped with latest equipment attacked us. They had sophisticated radio sets and shoulder fired Rocket Propelled Guns fitted with night vision equipment that we have never seen before.

"Compared to that we had only 120 bullets each. We

had RPGs and mortars, but without rounds to use," Capt. de Soya said.

"The Army intelligence had found out that the Tigers were planning to destroy Pooneryn. We heard tractor sounds and tree felling sounds, at night. Our spot lights were sniped by LTTE snipers. There was intensified Tiger movement across Kilali lagoon.

"However we could not go and ambush them as we had a limited stock of ammunition to attack them. We were on stand-by", he said.

"Most of the soldiers who were killed were the ones who had come to Pooneryn just that day and who were new recruits," Capt. de Soya explained.

"The refugees, who were at a refugee camp nearby had assisted the LTTEers to infiltrate Pooneryn," he also alleged.

Explaining his escape after the attack, he said that he and about twenty others tried to get a helicopter to land. They had drawn a letter 'H' on the beach.

"We used two grenades to kill fish and to eat with a handful of rice that we had. However we were confident. The officers were playing cards leisurely. At one time we planned a suicidal attack, if it came to that. A corporal and two others swam ten miles from where we were, near Comar to the Mandaitivu Island.

"That was when the chopper came in. It circled several times and landed on a clearing. Then the recruits who were with us jumped into the chopper. I ran near it and asked for a radio set. I saw a radio set around the neck of a Navy Lieutenant commander inside the chopper and I grabbed it.

"Then the chopper started rising and I suddenly grabbed the crossbar and put my legs over it. Then my daughter and my wife came into my mind, and I was minded to go to Palaly", Capt., De Soya said.

Once I reached Palaly I ran to meet the Army nander. He told me to take a rest, but I declined and I him to give me ammunition and radio sets. He gave ,000 bullets and 4 radio sets. Then I had two tulls of rice and went back to Pooneryn with the ment", he said.