Cornered LTTE hits the city. (1995, October 22) The Sunday times.

THE SUNDAY TIMES, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1995 OP/ED

Incredible Censor

The man authorised by the Competent Authority (Government Censor) to approve "military related news" yesterday did the most incredible act of censoring -- he censored what the censor had earlier passed.

The government's own death toll figures of the Armed Services and the LTTE given by the Operational Headquarters of the **Defence Ministry in Operation Riviresa** were cut with a red ball point pen yesterday.

The same censor also cut a Sunday Times map depicting the successes of the Sri Lanka Army in Operation Riviresa and believe it or not the name of the Army Commander as well.

Cornered LTTE hits the city

ily the largest military campaign against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in recent times, "Operation Riviresa", was ac-complished within 72 hours last week

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(Censored) troops from the Sri Lanka Army's (Censored) moved out of the nèwly estab-lished defence lines off Navakkeeri-Punnal...tkattuvan ds Achchelu a distance

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Phase One of "Operation iresa" was launched hours ore dawn on October 10-7 ops backed by Main Battle Ks and supported by heavy lery thrust their way through a resistance. As the assault d and the mores ended and the process of consoli-dation began, more **Censored**)s diers including officers had died. ver were injured. There as no word from the LTTE on

the Operational Headquarters (Censored) the Operational Headquarters the Ministry of Defence said an October 17 "61 terrónists ere killed" and "over 250 ter-vrists wounded". There was, owever, no official word from e Ministry over subsequent Ti-of casualites.

Even before troops took the rst step on the much publicised, nuch awaited "Operation iviresa", to execute Govern-ent's plans to re-capture Jaffra, iger guerrills and made elabo-te preparations to counter a se-rity forces thrus. Facilitating is task was the exodus of some 0,000 civilians from the adamaratchth area - the result fiber precursor to be lates mil-000 civilians from the damaratchchi area -the result he precursor to the latest mili-y offensive, "Operation understrike" one and two. The ilians had abandoned their mes and moved to schools, irches and other places in enmaratchchi.

enmaratchchi. Tiger guerrillas placed mines (the path, the security forces glittheir way through and fired trars at arapid frequency. They o fired RPGs (Rocket Pro-led Grenades) thus badly dam-ng a battle tank and a buffel.



But the troops fought their way to achieve their objective. With the Censored

Butthe thoops fought their way to achieve their objective. With the first phase over the second seco Plant in Orugodawatie. The dar-ing open confrontation that led to the deaths of at least 21 security forces personnel was undoubt-edly a scathing indictment on security precautions in the City. It also portended a completely new dimension to threats of guer-rilla attacks on vulnerable points and VIPs in the city.

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But some of the assainar, Mem-selves werg abted ded. Usupected LTE assainars, Mem-selves werg abted as usupected LTE assainars, RepPD chummery, at Havelock, Red with the aim of killing its adverned Patiementrian Dougeas Devananda, a gutty young may who has brockly guards and a driver of his Rody guards and a driver and his Rody guards and a driver and his Rody guards and a driver and his Rody guards and there of his Rody guards and a strange of Teger gernlas (here were conflicting views on 100 a 0) anorthold attacks on the CRO Retroleant Corporations of Blorage tands & Kolonnawa on He Liquified Petroleum Gas istallation in Orugodawatte. Vongel and two civilians were kulled, Initial estimates of the any ere to strange of the liquing of the light one tange in the liquing of the liquing the county non security forces per-sonnel and two civilians were have the county's model (more has ball the county's model (mo The LTTE has continued to nount pressure on security forces in the Batticaloa, Amparai and rincomalee districts. Ir m use pattergites, Amparia and Trincomalee districts. In Batricalos south, (Cenored) there has been a build-up of LTTE cadres, particularly in areas close to the sector cover-end by the Special Task Force. In the sector cover pattern of the sector cover pattern of the sector cover pattern of the sector cover pattern points for Sea Tiger boats along the coast line. There had also been a build-up along the main Colombo-Trincomale highways, north of the Habarana area. (Censored) they had learn

kerosene has been destroyed. From the early hours of last Friday till aftérnoon yesterday, the attackers were on a spree caus-ing wanton destruction and en-gaing in sporadic gun battles with Police and security forces. While the security forces.

While this went on, the fires caused by explosions continued. Plumes of dark clouds blackened the bright sky.

Colombo-Trincomalechighway, north of the Habarna area. (Consorred) they had learnt of large groups of guerillas con-ducting reconnaisance and cross-ing this main supply route. But the most shocking of in-cidents increative weeks were those in the City of Colombo – ae-claimed may a time by sections of the defence establishment as being much safet in view of in-creased checkpoints, partolling and search operations. During the tenure of office of President Ranas inghe Premudasa, just when an LTFE delegation ysacconducting peace the bright sky. Concerned about the severe economic damageit wouldcause, Prime Minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, promptly tel-ephoned Indian Prime Minister, Narasimha Raoto seek help. Pre-mier Rao promptly responded by rushing an Indian fire fighting unit with equipment on an Indian Air Force aircraft.

As security forces and Police ght, to flush out the remaining tought, to flush out the remaining Tiger guerrillas at Kolonnawa, there was increasing concern in some sections of the Government over the efficacy of security in the City and suburbs. They fear the LTTE may continue with its campaign of violence. Hence, they say that more precautionary measures would be once index delegation was conducting peace talks with a Government delega-tion in the comfort of the luxuri-ous Colombo Hilton, Tiger as-sassins shot dead Appapillai Amirthalingam, the TUVF leader. ty that more precautionary res would become inevita-

Capturing Jaffna: the unconventional way

Unfortunately, until the Sri

have been fighting less t LTTE cadres in the East

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This can be viewed from what happened in mid and late 1987 after the induction of the IPKF to Sri Lanka. Operation Pawan was initiated with a four-pronged thrust into Jaffra city. It was a bloody battle and despite both the heavy. Fire power and the here monopower the LTE re-

the heavy fire power and the huge manpower, the LTTE re-treated strategically into the mainland and conducted regular raids into the peninsula.

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First, who will hold Jaffna? Do they have the manpower to control an area where the popu-lation will be friendlier to the LTTE.

LTTE. Second, will the Sri Lankan forces have sufficient manpower both to strike and control Jaffna, and then to conduct raids into the mainland to prevent the LTTE from destabilizing the preinsula?

ninsula? Third, what is the strategic vantage of holding Jaffna? The answers to these ques-ons are clear. The Sri Lankan

s than 600

The Sri Lankan Army Chief Lanka army was galvanized by the political leaders of the PA it hailed to deliver the goods. Had national security been left to the Sri Lankan generals, todate over 40,000 Sri Lankan troops would Censored has invited both praise and cri-cism. When (Censored) was appointed Army Chief January 1994 he made a sta-ment

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Although, both these state-ments gave great hope to the Sri Lankan public who are con-stantly living in hope, it created a wrong impression in the minus of the people that the war against the LTE can be brought up an end in two to three years. It also reflected the understanding of Sr Lankan military leaders of their comprehension of guerrilla warfare.

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The bottom line is clear. By being reactive and not provoca-tive, the Sri Lanka army allowed the LTTE to grow from an or-ganisation of handful members in 1974 to a movement of over 15,000 cadres.

When a national army en-gages a formidable guerrilla force like the LTTE,





When the LTTE retreats the jungles of Mullativu the Lankan troops streched out maximum, both in the penin and the East, will find it has win against the LTTE in a longed guerrilla warfare of paign. troops will be able to hold Jaffna with the assistance of rival Tamil groups such as EPDP. PLOTE, TELO and possible EPRLE and EROS. Unless these groups are under strict instructions to con-duct themselves in a disciplined manner, and the troops them-kelves are well managed, the Tamil public are bound ao sup-portie LTPE. What should be the cur government military strate Censored

portitie LTTE. It is history that the Jaffma peninsula has been under LTTE control from about tate 1985/ carly 1986 upto now with the exception of two years during which the IPKF controlled the peninsula. Therefore, the Sri Lankan troops and these rival groups will be in an unfriendly terrain.



Today the LTTE is harass ing the Sn Lankan forces in th North and the East, striking th border villages and massacrin civilians, and sending shorid bombers to Colombo, becaus the LTTE has been allowed to grow into a massive organisa one. The LTTE has virtually co-tated a de facto state.

ated a de facto state. The Sri Lankan strategy should be to waken both the military, political and economic capability of the LTTE. Towards this goal, the gov-ernment should fight the LTTE not only in the multitary plane but also in the political and 'econ-pomic plane. How can this be achieved? Velupillai Prabhakaran will ensure that if he does not control Jaffna, the Sri Lankan troops will neither control the East nor Jaffna. He will destabilize both these theatres. achieved? Militarily, the government troops should constantly, con duct operations with the aim of killing as many LTTE cadres as possible, demoralizing he exist-ing cadres and preventing new recruits from joining the LTTE Politically, the anexertment

Jafma. He will destantize both these theatres History has much to offer. With over 10000 operational troops and much more resources, the Indians could not destroy the LTTE from 1987 to 1989. Con-trary to some statements by Sri Lankan politicians and dons, re-cent records reveal that India was determined to destroy the LTTE hout it could not. For India, Sri Lanka was like America's Vietnam and the Af-ghanistan of the Soviets.

recruits from joining the LTTE. Politically, the government must not wait until the war is yover to implement the political package Noinsurgercy haften you in history, without poli-tically political political way for political autonomy to the famili political autonomy to the famili political autonomy to the famili political power in the govern-ment with the military po-sm. Economically, the govern-

an edges with the military of cration. The commically, the given-ment has the hereacracy of the resources to develop the Tamil areas that has been recov-ered from the grip of the LTTE. Unless the government depon-strates to the Tamils its sincerpity by giving them also equal co-ton of the grip of the LTTE of the war agains the LTTE can never be won. Who will live in the North even the the Tamils. This is the main reason, why populated areas like Jaffins should not be conduced fun-a conventional fashion. The Tamil conventional fashion. The Tamil conventional fashion the tamils account of the law the same reaction of the law the same remetion of the law test southers has governed by the same function of the law the same function of the law test southers has governed by the law test southers has been been been been been been to the law test southers has been been been been been been the law test southers the law test southers the law test southers the law test southers the strate law test southers has preventioned fashion. The government function of the law test southers has preventioned fashion the same functions of the law test southers has preventioned fashion the law test southers has been test sou

The Sri Lankan military lead ers must change their thinking they are fighting an unconven-tional and not a conventiona