

Fresh troops link with Pooneryn forces. (1993, November 15) *The Daily news.*

Sporadic mortar fire, evacuation of wounded begins

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By Daryll de Silva

Tigers too take heavy losses

Two infantry companies of about 450 troops were landed by air in the Pooneryn sector during the early hours of Sunday morning, supplementing 800 sea-borne commandos and infantry safely landed on the western coast of the peninsula on Saturday, the defence ministry's operational headquarters said yesterday.

Having linked up, these troops had advanced into the Pooneryn camp which they reached around 2.30 p.m. yesterday after facing sporadic mortar fire from the LTTE, the latest situation report issued by military headquarters said.

Meanwhile, W.G. Gooneratne reporting from Palaly quoted official sources as saying the Tigers had fled and that the army was in complete control of the area. The injured, numbering 350, are being airlifted to various hospitals.

Yesterday, troops killed 120 terrorists. This brings the total number killed to 410, according to an intercepted LTTE radio message. Director, Operations, Air Commodore Anslem Peiris said.

Meanwhile, the ICRC has informed that due to the decomposed state of the dead bodies, the GA of Jaffna and Kilinochchi, were taking action to obtain

the ashes of the soldiers killed in action to be despatched to the closest army camps.

"Evacuation of the wounded has begun, with around 40 soldiers flown into the military hospital on Saturday night", a senior defence official said, adding that more were being ferried out by the hour. He was unable to give exact figures, but said official estimates of security forces losses were over 300 killed and over 400 wounded since the attacks on Pooneryn began Thursday morning.

"There is little or no fighting now, and it would appear that the attacking force has left the area after reinforcements were sent in. But we really can't say that the area is completely secured, because we don't know what the LTTE is up to. We have to assess the situation and not get lulled into a state of complacency", he said.

According to LTTE reports, the Tigers lost over 400 cadres, around 20 per cent senior cadres. The military hardware that fell into the Tiger hands is estimated to be in the region of Rs. 300 million, sources said.

"The country owes a tremendous debt to the junior officers and nameless soldiers who went to the rescue of Pooneryn", a senior officer said, recalling that US General Patton had once said: If they say I am good, it is because you men have been excellent.

Another senior northern zonal commander assessed the situation as turning out to be extremely serious for all military operations in the north, particularly on the peninsula.

"We have to remember that the LTTE now has possession of enough military hardware to equip a modern brigade, including artillery and armour. This poses a threat to any future operations, because the LTTE may now be able to hamper our aerial operations on which so much depends", he said.

He explained that the air force had the ability to ferry three platoons anywhere at any time using its Mi-17 helicopters. "But that is provided our pilots

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