

Tigers smash naval base, army frontline north. (1993, November 12)
The Daily news.

Forces lose 200 men, weapons and craft in major setback

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By Daryll de Silva

The Sri Lanka Army and Navy suffered what was feared to be their biggest losses yesterday morning when a very large force of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) launched a major attack on the naval base at Nagatevanthurai and the army's forward defence of Pooneryn on the north-western neck of mainland Sri Lanka.

The Operational Headquarters of the Defence Ministry confirmed that the attack was launched at about 2 am yesterday, and came from both the Jaffna lagoon as well as the south of Pooneryn. It said losses were heavy on both sides, the security forces as well as the LTTE.

At noon yesterday, Ops. Hq. reported fierce fighting

was still continuing and that further communications would be issued as and when details became available. But senior military officials in Colombo hazarded the concerted guess that the security forces had lost around 200 men killed and wounded in action, while around 50 were feared missing.

The same informed sources said - on grounds of anonymity - that the naval bases at Nagatevanthurai had been completely overrun. They were unable to say what had happened to the five fast, inshore patrol craft stationed there. They reported that the fixed radar stations had been blown up, but could not say whether this was the act of the LTTE or naval personnel - the latter to prevent such vital equipment falling into LTTE hands.

One senior officer of the 3rd Gajaba Regiment had been confirmed killed by noon yesterday, but many other officers were also feared dead.

Communication links with the Pooneryn defences ceased to function effectively yesterday morning, due to the ongoing fighting. The air force, while retaliating wherever it could, was precluded from using its air

superiority to strafe and bomb the area because of the presence of army and navy ground forces.

Pooneryn lies approximately two miles south of the causeway linking the mainland with Karativu on the Jaffna peninsula. It is the same distance from Nagatevanthurai too, which lies to its north-east, on the Jaffna lagoon's south coast. The area is criss-crossed by a large stretch of forward defence lines, which the LTTE was reported to have attacked with all the arms at its disposal.

Losses of weapons to the security forces were also feared to be very high, and some officers were concerned that even battle tanks may have fallen into LTTE hands.

"We just don't know the score at yet. A true assessment of our losses will take a day or two," one senior defence official said.

(Contd. on page 14)