

Tiger attempt to build air arm. (1994, November 20). *The Island*.

# TIGERS ATTEMPT TO BUILD AIR ARM

Sri Lanka defence authorities are studying reports of attempts made by the LTTE to develop an Air Wing for its military operations.

Reports said that a batch of 20 Tigers belonging to the LTTE's nascent air arm — the Air Tigers (Vaan Palihai) have recently finished a course in assembling and operating glider-type, light, single-seater aircraft capable of carrying a small payload of explosives and are soon expected to be in Jaffna, a Colombo-based ex-Tamil armed group leader quoting Indian intelligence sources said.

India's external intelligence agency which has been monitoring this development has come by

evidence indicating that the first Air Tiger target may be in Tamil Nadu — an airborne suicide attack to wipe out the key witnesses in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, he said.

Parts for assembling at least five light glider-type single-seater aircraft may have already arrived with an arms shipment mid this year, sources claimed.

Meanwhile, the directorate of military intelligence has received reports of an airstrip under construction near the Iranamadu Tank in the Wannai region.

According to these reports, a large number of civilians have been regularly drawn into service by the LTTE to work at the site after dark.

The LTTE's English language publication from London however, claimed in its latest issue that the government had stopped the supply of tar meant for repairing roads in the north fearing that the tar would be utilised for the Iranamadu Air strip.

Other reports, however, said that the light aircraft could even take off and land in playgrounds. The aircraft could be powered even with motor cycle engines sources said.

The LTTE has so far been severely handicapped because of the superiority in the air of the Sri Lankan armed forces. Already they have developed the naval arm 'Sea Tigers' who have launched several successful attacks against the Sri Lankan navy.

If they could pose a threat to the Air Force they could severely hamper ground operations of the army sources said. The light aircraft will not have much potential in destruction of buildings in camps of the security forces but could be deployed to destroy strategic equipment and structures, sources said.