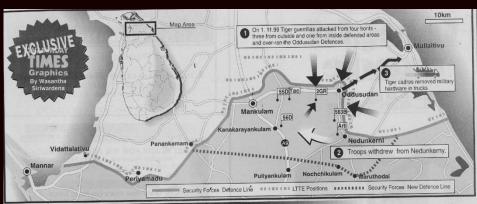
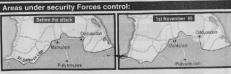
### Years of gains lost in days. (1999, November 07). The Sunday times.









# Years of gains lost in days

LTTE's unceasing waves more strategic than political





The Jungle Telegraph

#### Lost track

#### Rejected pronto

#### Honda Ekek

#### Really mad



## Years of gain ...

(Cont. from Pg. 11)

wards Odusuddan. Heavy mortar barrages and machine gun fire stalled the advance of he two columns. Both colis found the advance diffirult and were ordered to call it hands.

mander, Wanni, Major Genral Wasantha Perera, then deeided to bring in the Commando Regiment, Two squad-rons moved out from Puliyankulam, trekking 563 Brigade. Two more Squadrons set out through the same path headed for the 2GR headouariers.

eached the 563 Brigade and oined the men there. By then orders had arrived from the SF Headquarters wanni for the withdraw to Weli Ova. The other two Squadrons found it difficult to fight their way hrough to the 2GR headquar-

The Special Forces Squadons helped remove the Artil-ery pieces and moved them out. Later troops destroyed equipment. Some of the most valuable items including comnunications equipment were oaded into a South African built Buffel armoured vehicle. They included secure (encrypted) communication

got stuck in soggy terrain. Ef-Two battalions made an advance from Olumadu towards

got stuck in soggy terrain. Efforts to proceed beyond became impossible. Troops from Odusuddan, Another battalion the 563 Brigade radioed for Air Force assistance to destroy the Buffel, now loaded with valuable military cargo. SLAF aircraft were engaging targets in other areas. The vehicle and the items fell into Tiger guerrilla

The news brought about a

complete radio silence for hours. Frequencies and call works were changed due to fears that the LTTE, which sitive military items, could now listen in. Air Force Kfir jets and Mi-24 helicopter gunships engaging guerrilla ta came under heavy fire. It became clear that the LTTE Stand Off weapon - an unidentified anti-aircraft gun with air burst ammunition that could be adjusted to explode at various heights. This was how two Mi-24 helicop-Wednesday afternoon, troops from the 563 Brigade led by gade Commander, and some 100 troops reached the 56 Di-Headquarters at vision Kanakarayankulam

Coming under threat now Oya Defence complex. By Thursday, troops in defences fell back to Gajabapura. Later, with the help of redefences were re-established.

It was heading for the 56 Diision Headquarters in At least 25 guerrillas were Kanakarayankulam when it killed in confrontations in this

Commando and Special Forces Regiment, halted their

If this came as relief to senior security officials, there was disturbing news from the other flanks. Guerrillas continued their thrust towards Olumadu, ver-ran security forces held defences upto Ampakamam and later seized Mankulam Thereafter, they continued their thrust over-running

ing towards Puliyankulam. High ranking military sources said Tigers had transported to Mullaitivu more than 60 tractor/truck loads of mili tary hardware from the Odusuddan and neighbouring areas. They included small arms, ammunitions, anti permortar shells, two armoured rs, concertina wire and com munications equipment among others LTTE leader Velupillai some of his "senior and trusted" confidantes to conduct included Jeyam, Banu, Nagesh, Rabat, Theepan, Anton, Selvarai and Balrai, Three leading women cadre leaders involved have been ntified as Asha, Durga Malathi. Besides the LTTE's "fighting units," civilians co-opted to other "units" were also deployed. They included Uthavi Padai (Help Force), Ellai Force (Border Force) and Grami Force (village force). Intelligence sources say more

sector where troops, backed by than 1500 Tiger cadres took part in the attack on the Odusuddan defences and surrounding areas. Officials of a UN agency, now trapped in the Wanni, reported on radio to Colombo that they had spoken to some LTTE leaders about the latest attacks. One of them had explained that the aim was to drive the security forces away to defence positions that existed before "Operation Jaya

Sikurui. An LTTE press release from London on Friday night claimed the "military establish-ment and the State have, for political reasons, refused persion to the ICRC to accept the bodies of demised soldiers. the LTTE fighters have been cremating the dead sol-Officials at the On Hq of the Ministry of Defer had no comment. The LTTE attack on the Oddusudan-Nedunkerni sector should not have come as a surprise to the gence warned about it. It was a matter of time before the LTTE had to respond to the "Operation Unceasing Waves
3". They were all led by Army strategy of inching its
Karuna, the one time way into LTTE controlled ternitory through the Rivi Bla.
Lavam, Banu, Rivirasa and Watershed series
And indoing so of operations. And in doing so the Oddusudan-Nedunkerni to recapture as this sector together with the Weli Oya sec tor posed a land threat to Mullaitivu from the west and have laid a blockade off the res of Mullaitivu then this area that is of strategic importance to the LTTE would have been encircled on three sides

tance of the Mullaitivu area to war and not an innovational the LTTE is because it is stra- strategy by the LTTE. tegically adjacent and flanks

tending from Weli Oya through Vavuniya to Mankulam. Hence, the LTTE is able to apply pressure on the tie the Army to maintain force levels in defence, which it could otherwise use in offen sive operations elsewhere and Mullaitivu coast is important to the LTTE for many As a littoral, easily accessible to the main sea-lanes east of Sri ing area for arms smuggling. The Mullaitivu coast is, also central to the Trincomalee-Jaffna sea routes and affords terdict Navy traffic off shore. The Mullaitivu area also sup-ports a large population and is a source of human resources for the LTTE. For these reasons, the LTTE logically could bottles them in the Mullaitivu area in particular and the east-

Wanni in genera The timing of the LTTE offensive is aimed to maximise both tactical and political advantage. Tactically the LTTE not offering significant resistance to the series of Army operations that nibbled into ter ritory controlled by them compelled the Army to extend their the same conserved their man them into combat piece-meal To compel the enemy to extend their resources is an age old and

It is unlikely that the Army fell for that ruse. The senio officers are too experienced and trained for that. But the military was compelled to over extend themselves to satisfy olitical enthusiasm and the bloated ego of a politician in uniform is not a matter of con jecture. Certainly, political trumpeting each time extra neters were added to areas of military control lent more than faint credibility to the probability that political exigencies overdo military pragmatism in the planning of op erational strategy. Compoundng the disadvantages brought about by thinning resources on

the ground are the limitations to operations imposed by the monsoon weather conditions. The mobility of tanks and armoured vehicles and the movement of heavy artillery, which in the jungle terrain was always problematical, became further restricted by soggy ground conditions. The possession of tanks and armoured vehicles has been of great advantage to the Army The inability to now exploit

this advantage due to adverse monsoon conditions obviously is bonus to the LTTE. There is little doubt that the monsoon factor would have influ the military timing of this offensive. These basic realities should have prompted the military to strengthen their defenses and to organise themselves to overcome the disad-

powered opens grave ques-tions on the state of military preparedness, plans and lead

That the LTTE offensive has in a short time penetrated in depth to threaten Puliyankulam and isolate Mankulam exposes weaknesses in militay planning which require immediate cor rection. In the backdrop of Prabhakaran's birthday in November and the impending actions, in hindsight, amply in dicates that the timing of their initiatives, military or political are not haphazardly done but cance. This offensive is no dif-

sive was launched with the purpose of swaying the Sinhala electorate against the incumbent government. What matters to Prabhakaran is not which party or personality is in power. What matters to him is his position to call the shots in power politics. With the success he has achieved this time, he has militarily staked his claim to be the leader of the Tamils without running for election. His message to the merging political sce-narios in SrlaLanka and to other Tamil parties is loud and

clear military failure is one aspect. Its military significance is another. The military aspect is complimentary to the political programme in that the Security Forces must maintain the vantages imposed by ground writ of government. Failure and weather. That the Army's to do so weakens the political

In the land battle the impor- well tested tactic in guerrilla defenses were so easily over- position. This is not to subscribe to the debate of a mili-tary solution versus a political negotiation but rather to state the obvious that the in-struments of law and order must maintain the writ of the

> It is in that context that the nilitary losses in the Wanni have to be considered and those responsible for it, both politically and militarily, held accountable. Too many military debacles have been swept under the carpet. Courts of Inquiries have been appointed and these proceedings have not seen the light of day ome of those who are said to have been strictured have risen to dizzy heights. None appear to have been penalised It is not just the military who have to take responsibility but the political establishment as

The military are doing a commendable job inspite of some set backs. Political exigencies should not outweigh nilitary realities. However unless those accountable are held responsible, the rot will remain. The Government owes it to the Country to inthat led to this military reversal Even more, the Government and the nation owes it to the brave men and women in the security forces that debacles of this nature will not happen again. Equally important is the imperative need for politicians in uniform to desist from con litical gain using the brave mer