LTTE purchases, a link with Cambodia

SRI LANKA

By Bertil Lintner

Recent fighting in Sri Lanka between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have prompted intelligence analysts to focus their attention on the rebels' sources of procurement. Previously, arms, ammunition and other equipment was shipped from ports in southern Thailand across to Sri Lanka. The munitions mostly came from the black market along the Cambodian border and were sold by private Thai arms dealers. Now, however, intelligence reports indicate that the LTTE has transferred much of its procurement activity to Cambodia itself.

The LTTE's primary arms buyer, Selvarajah Pathmanathan, who also uses the alias T S Kumaran and is nicknamed 'KP', has been seen in Phnom Penh, where a rebel 'safe-house' has been established at the Rani restaurant, which is owned and operated by Tamil rebels. The upper storey of the restaurant is a virtual arsenal, according to sources in Phnom Penh and downstairs a secretary handles professionally forged passports and visas.

The *Phnom Penh Post* reported in its 20 September issue that the LTTE is planning to buy SA-7 surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), B-40 rocket launchers, AK-47 assault rifles and explosives from 'unspecified Cambodian arms dealers'. It is thought that 40-50 LTTE cadres are operating in Phnom Penh and organising the export of munitions from Cambodia through the port of Koh Kong, a notorious haven for smugglers. According to persistent but unconfirmed reports, the LTTE may be purchasing heroin in Cambodia to sell abroad in order to raise money for their arms purchases.

Cambodia's flourishing black market in arms is a legacy of decades of civil war. China, Malaysia, Thailand and the West supported the resistance until a peace treaty was signed in Paris in October 1991, while the Soviet bloc supplied the government then in power with munitions, including heavy weapons and SAMs.

Arms siphoned off from these supplies before 1991 and munitions sold by corrupt Cambodian army officers, as well as 'demobilised' resistance forces operating after the Paris peace accords, have found their way not only to the LTTE but also to various rebel armies in Myanmar (Burma), Naga rebels in northeastern India, Sikh separatists in the Punjab and reportedly even Muslim groups in the southern Philippines.

The lack of any effective law enforcement in Cambodia, coupled with rampant corruption and the usual problem of unpaid soldiers, has nourished the country's booming trade in both guns and narcotics. Both the Sri Lankan and Indian authorities have urged the Cambodian government to clamp down on the LTTE's activities in Phnom Penh, although so far to no avail.



Weapons seized from the LTTE. *PA News*

The recent fighting in Sri Lanka has brought attention to the issue, however, and may lead to more pressure being exerted on the Cambodian authorities. The fighting ability of the LTTE was shown in early October, when Sri Lankan government troops attacked the northern town of Kilinochchi, the rebels' last northern stronghold and base for their political headquarters.

Even though the town fell after a few days of heavy fighting, losses were high on both sides. According to government figures, the Sri Lankan army lost 269 soldiers, including seven officers, in the offensive while more than 700 rebels were killed and over 800 wounded.

Diplomatic sources suggest that unless the rebel authorities take action to stop the LTTE's arms supply from Cambodia, the rebels will be able to continue the struggle. One analyst said that the loss of fixed positions such as Jaffna and Kilinochchi will merely force the LTTE to adopt new tactics: guerrilla warfare in the jungles and hills of northern Sri Lanka and terrorist attacks in southern towns.

Ref: *JIR, 'Tamil Tiger International', Oct 96.*

'Scud' development in North Korea

NORTH KOREA

By Bruce Blanche

South Korean sources using the Ministry of National Unification report that North Korea has the capacity to produce approximately 100 'Scud B' and '-C' missiles per year and has to date exported 400 missiles to Iran and Syria worth US$500 million. It has also exported missile development technology.

The 'Scud B' missile developed by North Korea in 1985 has a range of 320-340 km. Mass production commenced in 1986. The 500 km range 'Scud C' was developed in 1989 and in 1991 the North Koreans developed the No-dong 1 guided missile, a missile with a range of 1,000 km. During 1995 the Taep'o-dong 1 two-stage guided missile, with a range of 2,000 km, was developed. This missile can hit targets in Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong. The completion of the Taep'o-dong 2 missile is imminent. This weapon will have a range of 3,500 km.