

# DailyMirror

Saturday, November 14, 2009

## LTTE not only armed, trained ULFA too: Former rebel



New Delhi : On top of revelations that the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) bought arms from the Tamil Tigers, a former ULFA leader now says the Assamese separatist group also got military training from the Sri Lankan rebels.

Former ULFA spokesman Sunil Nath said that a small ULFA team from the northeast Indian border state went to Jaffna in Sri Lanka in the early 1990s when the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) controlled the northern peninsula.

"We got in touch with the LTTE through a Tamil Nadu politician," Sunil Nath told IANS in a telephonic interview from Assam. "He (the politician) in turn contacted the LTTE."

According to Sunil Nath, who has since quit the ULFA and is now a journalist, two Assamese guerrillas were picked to spend some time getting training from the LTTE.

But the ULFA men returned to India within a week. According to another former ULFA militant who is now a businessman, they came back ahead of time "because the LTTE training was too tough for us".

Sunil Nath said the ULFA delegation in Jaffna also met Mahattaya, then the number two in the LTTE. The Tigers executed Mahattaya in 1994 on charges of being an Indian spy.

The LTTE, which the Sri Lankan military defeated in May this year ending one of the world's longest running armed conflicts, has claimed repeatedly that it never interfered in India's internal affairs. Indian officials have always contested the LTTE claim. The ULFA seeks to secede oil-rich Assam from India.

Sunil Nath said that when the ULFA men returned to India by sea, an LTTE guerrilla accompanied them and went on to travel to ULFA camps in Assam.

"The LTTE guy was in his 20s," he said. "I also met him. We had some discussions."

While Sunil Nath could not name the LTTE man who visited the ULFA camps, Indian official sources said the Tiger was later based in Karnataka under an assumed identity.

However, he fell from the LTTE's grace and hurriedly flew out to Europe, where he now lives.

Sunil Nath's comments followed the discovery last month of an ULFA document stating the group paid Rs.2.3 million to the LTTE to buy weapons from them.

The document was one of several related to ULFA's financial transactions that the Indian Army's 19

Kumaon Regiment seized along with a large cache of weapons and explosives buried in a pit in a forest in the district of Tinsukia Oct 19.

The discovery included 35 kg of RDX explosives, one AK-56 rifle, a grenade launcher, four pen pistols, a carbine machine gun, two 9 mm pistols, detonators and a huge quantity of ammunition and assorted weapons.

When the army found the document listing the ULFA-LTTE links, a former ULFA member, Prabal Neog, had claimed that "three thin Tamil men" came to their camp in Assam in the early 1990s.

But Sunil Nath insisted that only one LTTE member came with the ULFA guerrillas returning from Sri Lanka.

Besides training and selling weapons to the ULFA, Indian officials say the LTTE also trained young men from Tamil Nadu to become insurgents. All of them were, however, arrested in the crackdown on the Tigers following the assassination of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991 by an LTTE suicide bomber. **(IANS)**