
Has LTTE executed its military spokesman?

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IANAS NEW DELHI: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers may have killed their high-profile military spokesman on charges of being a "traitor" when they began suffering heavily early this year, Tamil sources say.

Speculation that Irasiah Ilanthirayan alias Marshall has been executed has been doing the rounds of Tamil circles for around a month. The sources now say that he could have been done away with in January. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has not commented on the whereabouts of Ilanthirayan or his fate. There have been no references to him for some months in the media sympathetic to the LTTE. Ilanthirayan, who was adept in English and Tamil, was based in the LTTE territory in Sri Lanka's north when Colombo started a major offensive from late 2008, forcing the Tigers to cede land they had held for long years. According to the Tamil activists who spoke to IANS from Sri Lanka, Ilanthirayan was accused of being linked to the Sri Lankan intelligence and of plotting against the LTTE. The LTTE intelligence wing would have carried out his execution, the sources say. In the ultra-secretive LTTE, Ilanthirayan emerged as a valuable media source from August 2006 as fighting escalated between the military and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka's eastern province. Proactive by nature, he interacted with journalists in Sri Lanka and abroad, at times making friendly and informal telephone calls too. Ilanthirayan also kept in touch with MPs from the pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance (TNA). None of the MPs have heard from him for months. Although he was supposed to deal only with military matters, he took questions from journalists on other issues as well. He could be contacted on telephone as well as email. It was Ilanthirayan who announced the appointment of B. Nadesan as the LTTE's political head in November 2007 after incumbent S.P. Tamilchelvan died in a stunning Sri Lankan air raid. His last major public statement was made in May 2008 when he claimed the death of 30 Sri Lankan soldiers and the capture of weapons from the military following heavy fighting in Mannar. If reports about Ilanthirayan's execution are true, then he must be the most high profile LTTE personality to be purged violently within, following a string of killings in the wake of the split in the Tigers in March-April 2004. Since its formation in 1976, the LTTE has killed a large number of Tamils it has accused of betraying its cause. In August 1993, the LTTE arrested its then number two, known as Mahattaya, and many of his supporters on charges of being Indian spies. He was executed in December 1994. Paranoid about infiltration into its ranks, the LTTE does not take kindly to unauthorised contacts by its members with outsiders. Even those allowed to interact with the outside world are closely monitored. Any act, seen as treachery by the LTTE, is neither forgotten nor forgiven. Courtesy: Expressbuzz.com