
Charity in Tiger control: police

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Dossier Released; Tamil group told to raise \$7M, Mounties allege Stewart Bell, National Post Published: Thursday, April 16, 2009 The Tamil Tigers directly controlled a Canadian registered non-profit organization that fundraised and produced propaganda for the Sri Lankan guerrillas, according to RCMP documents released yesterday. The documents allege that the director of the Toronto based World Tamil Movement of Ontario was personally appointed by the leader of the Tamil Tigers, Velupillai Prabhakaran, who is wanted by Interpol for terrorism. In addition, the documents claim the World Tamil Movement was told in 2005 to help raise \$7-million to finance the purchase of anti-aircraft missiles and artillery needed to fight a war for Tamil independence. The hundreds of pages of seized documents and unproven police allegations are the result of Project Osaluki, an RCMP counterterrorism investigation into the Ontario fund-raising activities of the Tamil Tigers. Documents concerning a related investigation in Quebec were released last week. The papers were filed in Federal Court in Ottawa as part of a government effort to dismantle the World Tamil Movement, which the RCMP says is the Canadian financial and propaganda support wing of the Tamil Tigers. Reached at home in Scarborough yesterday, the current president of the World Tamil Movement, Sitta Sittampalam, declined to answer questions about the allegations. "No comment," he said. The dossier's release comes as protesters waving red flags bearing the Tamil Tigers emblem demonstrate on Parliament Hill to demand that Canada do more to pressure Sri Lanka into calling a ceasefire. The Sri Lankan forces have cornered the Tamil Tigers in a small pocket of coastal jungle, but the United Nations is concerned about the more than 100,000 civilians in the war zone. The government called a two-day ceasefire on the weekend for New Year's celebrations but has rejected international calls for a permanent truce. The rebels said they are willing to negotiate but refuse to lay down arms. Both sides stand accused of human rights abuses. The UN and NGOs say the government has been shelling civilian-populated areas, while the rebels have been holding Tamil civilians as human shields and shooting at those attempting to flee. The Tamil Tigers have long been accused of financing their separatist war with money collected in Canada, some of it raised using pressure tactics amounting to extortion. The World Tamil Movement has denied any involvement in fundraising for the rebels, also known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or LTTE. But in an interview with RCMP officers in 2004, Mariyathas Manuel, then the president of the WTM, admitted he had met Mr. Prabhakaran in Sri Lanka and that the guerrilla leader had selected him to run the WTM office in Toronto. "I believe that this shows that the LTTE is in direct control of the operation of the WTM," RCMP Corporal David Kim wrote in an affidavit. "This relationship between the LTTE and WTM is so direct that his appointment as the WTM president was decided by the LTTE." In his interview with police, Mr. Manuel said the WTM supported, but were not members of, the Tamil Tigers. "They are fighting, so we are supporting them," he said, according to a transcript filed in court. Asked if the Canadian group supported the Tamil Tigers financially, Mr. Manuel replied: "Yeah. Financially, yeah. And also we are supporting LTTE too for the propaganda." However, he said the money was strictly for humanitarian aid. But Cpl. Kim said police had found a 2001 fundraising letter asking Canadian Tamils to "please contribute to the maximum extent so that we continue to maintain our strength in the war front." The letter was printed on WTM letterhead, was signed World Tamil Movement and provided the group's Toronto phone number. Police also found a password-protected disc in the WTM office in Toronto. It contained a document named "Armscost," which listed the prices of various military items needed by the rebels. It was written in 2005, as a ceasefire was collapsing. "At this time of the end of peace, situation has arisen to prepare for the next stage of war," it read. "We are giving below, for you as well, some of the Army machinery that are required, for the next stage of the Eelam [Homeland] war: Anti-Aircraft missiles -- One Crore Rupees [\$122,000], canon or artillery -- One Crore Rupees [\$122,000], speedboats -Five Crore Rupees [\$609,000], aircraft -- Twenty Crore Rupees [\$2.4-million], helicopter -- Thirty Crore Rupees [\$3.7-million]. With this in mind, please speedup and undertake your fundraising initiatives." RCMP forensic accounting reports allege that between 2002 and 2006, the WTM in Toronto wired almost \$3-million to overseas accounts. Most of the money went to a bank account in Malaysia. Wrote Cpl. Kim, the funds raised by the WTM in Canada "have been transmitted to the LTTE for the benefit of the LTTE which is a listed terrorist group in Canada." The financial reports also note that close to \$500,000 was sent to a group called Social and Economic Organization for Tamils, or SEDOT. Cpl. Kim wrote that the Sri Lankan army had recently found the underground bunker of Tamil Tigers leader Prabhakaran, and that it was located in a SEDOT village. "I believe funds collected by the WTM were collected under the direction of the LTTE and that documents seized from the WTM indicate that the purpose of collections was for the LTTE objective of an independent state," Cpl. Kim wrote. The Canadian government placed the World Tamil Movement on its official list of terrorist entities last June, calling it a front for the Tamil Tigers and accusing it of using threats and intimidation to elicit donations from Canadians of Sri Lankan origin. The government is now using the Anti-Terrorism Act to attempt to take over the WTM's buildings, bank accounts and other property. But the court must first approve the forfeitures and the Montreal branch of the World Tamil Movement has indicated it intends to appeal to the Supreme Court if necessary. Courtesy: Nationalpost.com , Nationalpost.com