
War won't stop until Prabhakaran is taken, dead or alive: Gota tells Miliband and Kouchner

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"My problem is not what the LTTE will do to you," the Defence Secretary said laughing, "instead it is that should such a thing happen, we would not be able to take Prabhakaran as planned!" He said after thirty years, the time had come finally for Prabhakaran and other terrorist leaders to be captured dead or alive and the government would not stop until that end was achieved.

Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa yesterday rejected visiting British Foreign Secretary David Miliband's call for a ceasefire and access for aid workers to the civilian zone, and told him that the government would not stop its war on terror until the LTTE was crushed and its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran captured, dead or alive. According to highly placed sources, briefing a British delegation that included the British Foreign Secretary, British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Dr. Peter Hayes and two other diplomats, at the Foreign Ministry, yesterday morning the Defence Secretary did not mince his words, when he said it was Sri Lankan troops and civilians who had perished in the conflict and therefore the government was determined to finish off the LTTE. He said humanitarian concerns were only a ploy employed by some people to extricate Prabhakaran and his top leaders from the mess they had got into. He said a truce would only help the LTTE to regroup. "The only person who could stop this war," a plain-spoken Defence Secretary told the British dignitaries, "is only the President of Sri Lanka." The military had orders to either capture or destroy Prabhakaran and other top LTTE leaders, he added. Rajapaksa told the British delegation that since March 2009, over 200,000 persons had been rescued by the army. "On April 20 alone we secured the release of over 45,000 men, women and children from the clutches of the LTTE," he said promising to rescue the others shortly. He said the whole world had witnessed that rescue operation that the army had conducted without firing a single shot. When Miliband interrupted him to say that Britain had information that civilians had been harmed due to the army's firing, the Defence Secretary said Britain should not be duped by the disinformation campaign the LTTE was carrying out. "Even BBC is dishing out LTTE propaganda material without verification," he told Miliband. Miliband said his claim was not based on BBC reports but credible information elicited from sources in the LTTE-held no fire zone. Apparently annoyed, the Defence Secretary said anyone who knew the LTTE would not believe that any reliable information would emanate from that area under its jackboot. All the stories that were disseminated from the no fire zone, he told the British delegation, were all doctored by the LTTE for the consumption of the international community and the western media. "Do you think a terrorist group like the LTTE will allow anyone to express independent views detrimental to its cause?" he asked. The Defence Secretary said it was up to the British delegation to decide whether it should believe what a terrorist group said or what a responsible officer of a legitimate government told them. "The choice is yours," he said. Gota meets Kouchner After the British delegation left, Defence Secretary Rajapaksa met the visiting French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner at the same venue. Sources described Kouchner as more diplomatic than Miliband in his approach. Kouchner requested that the UN be given access to the civilian zone held by the LTTE. The Defence Secretary said no one was safe in that area and the government could not guarantee anyone's safety. Kouchner replied that he was prepared to visit the area himself. He said he would take the risk and go there. A smiling Rajapaksa told the French Foreign Minister that the LTTE was so desperate that he, too, would be taken hostage. "I don't mind that risk," Kouchner said. "My problem is not what the LTTE will do to you," the Defence Secretary said laughing, "instead it is that should such a thing happen, we would not be able to take Prabhakaran as planned!" He said after thirty years, the time had come finally for Prabhakaran and other terrorist leaders to be captured dead or alive and the government would not stop until that end was achieved. Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama, Attorney General Mohan Peiris and Foreign Secretary Dr. Palitha Kohona were also present at both meetings. Courtesy: Island.lk