
Tamil Tigers taught me to be a suicide bomber. Then I got my O-levels, decided I didn't want to die

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By Neil Armstrong A former Tamil Tiger child soldier has given a shocking insight into the abuses perpetrated by separatist rebels, revealing how he was taken by Tamil fighters to a terror training camp at the age of 12, forced to undergo a gruelling daily 17-hour training regime and brainwashed into becoming a suicide bomber.

In an extraordinary and unprecedented interview with Mail on Sunday special correspondent Edna Fernandes, Thayalan, now 17, admitted: 'I was ready to kill by the time training was finished.' And it was only when he got his O-level results – including six As and two Bs – that he decided to do something positive with his life and defected from the suicide squad. Thayalan's revelations shed light on the tactics of the rebel group that pioneered the use of the suicide bomb, a technique copied by Islamic terrorists. When his parents were killed in an army bombing raid, Thayalan was taken into a Tamil Tiger orphanage. 'We lived with the cause from the beginning,' he said. 'I learned about the struggle for a Tamil homeland. They told us that armed struggle was the way to achieve liberation.' At 12, he was sent to a military training camp in the jungle, where 120 children spent their school holidays undergoing weapons training from 4am to 9pm each day. At 16, he chose to become a suicide bomber and was trained by the Black Tiger suicide squad. But as he waited for his mission, he got his O-level results. 'I couldn't believe my grades – six As, two Bs, two Cs,' he said. 'I realised I could do something with my life. I decided I didn't want to die.' Eventually, he was apprehended by the Sri Lankan intelligence authorities and taken to an austere rehabilitation camp, where he renounced his allegiance to the Tigers and is now studying for his A-levels. He hopes to go on to do an engineering degree. Edna Fernandes was the only journalist granted access to the terrorist rehabilitation camps set up by the Sri Lankan government. She also visited one of the Tamil civilian refugee centres the Sri Lankan authorities call 'welfare villages' but which some critics label 'concentration camps'. She was the first – and possibly last – reporter to do so after the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry announced on Friday that it would no longer allow journalists into the camps. Her exclusive dispatch from the Sri Lankan capital Colombo reveals some of the harrowing personal stories behind the 25-year civil war. The Sri Lankan army believes it is on the brink of defeating the rebels. It has refused a ceasefire and is confident of defeating the fighters it views as terrorists, although both sides have been accused of atrocities by observers. Courtesy: dailymail.co.uk