
Sri Lanka scoffs at new Tamil exiled government

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By C. Bryson Hull

COLOMBO, June 17 (Reuters) - The remnants of the Tamil Tigers have vowed to form a government in exile to push their separatist cause, which Sri Lanka on Wednesday called an "hallucination" and another illegal attempt to violate its unitary status. The decision came less than a month after the Sri Lankan military finally crushed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in a 25-year civil war, and President Mahinda Rajapaksa declared Sri Lanka reunified.

Selvarajah Pathmanathan, the top remaining LTTE leader, in a voice clip e-mailed on Tuesday signed off on the formation of a committee to create a "provisional transnational government of Tamil Eelam to take forward the next phase of the struggle". Tamil Eelam was the name for the separate state the LTTE fought to create for Sri Lanka's Tamils, and what it had called the areas of northern and eastern Sri Lanka it had ruled until the end of the war. Reacting to the announcement, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama said "imagination will lead to hallucinations" and said the country had stepped up efforts to have Pathmanathan, known as KP, arrested. "I have carried personally the arrest warrants for KP and handed them over to my counterparts in several countries and I expect the earliest arrest of KP. He will stand trial in the judicial system in our country," Bogollagama told reporters. Pathmanathan spent most of his career building and operating the LTTE's weapons and smuggling networks, and is wanted by Interpol. IN HIDING He is believed to have control over the LTTE's substantial financial assets and is thought to be in hiding somewhere in southeast Asia under one of his many assumed names. Pathmanathan named a committee, to be led by former LTTE peace negotiator Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran, which is expected to form a plan by the end of the year to create the government. "We call all Tamil people and Tamil organisations to provide this committee their wholehearted support and assistance," Pathmanathan said. Pathmanathan is the highest-ranking LTTE member believed still alive after most of the leadership including founder Vellupillai Prabhakaran were killed in a cataclysmic final battle. Rajiva Wijesinha, the head of Sri Lanka's peace secretariat, said the plan was an attempt by the "rump of the LTTE" to keep its control over Tamil politics in Sri Lanka. "It is an effort by the Tigers to pursue yet another illegal action, and I only hope the world won't react positively," Wijesinha said. "The real problem is it puts pressure on the democratic Tamil parties." In his announcement, Pathmanathan said the Tamil National Alliance, a grouping of Tamil parties long known as its front, would remain so. Col. R. Hariharan, a security analyst who was head of military intelligence for India's 1987-1990 peacekeeping mission to Sri Lanka, said the plan was more likely an effort to harness the financial resources the LTTE left all over the world. "It is more connected with recouping the Tigers assets," he said. "Nobody will recognise it in any case, but some countries might tolerate this kind of thing. There are kinds of ghost governments in existence." (Editing by David Fox) Courtesy: reuters.com