



WHO BETRAYED KITTU ?

Mystery surrounds the circumstances in which the Indian intelligence services came to know about the ship in which the senior leader of the LTTE, Sathasivam Krishnakumar better known as "Kittu" and nine other top military leaders of the Tamil Tigers were sailing on 13 January when the Indian Navy surrounded and demanded the surrender of those on board the ship.

As to who gave the information about the movement of the ship which was supposed to be in international waters of Indian ocean at the time it was spotted, and of its inmates to Indian intelligence has become a matter of intense speculation which includes that Kittu might have been betrayed by some source very close to the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran himself.

The LTTE's official statement reissued by the LTTE's international headquarters from 54 Tavistock Place in London states, "Ten of our fighters including our movement's senior leader and former Military Commander of the Jaffna District Colonel Kittu were waylaid in international waters by the Indian Navy on 13.10.93. Following the intimidation by the Indian Navy demanding their surrender, they died a heroes' death by committing suicide in a self-destructive heroic effort". The statement adds that Lt. Col.Kuttisri, Maj.Velan, Capt.Nayakan. Capt.Rosan, Capt.Jeeva, Capt. Gunaseelan, Lt.Nallavan, Lt.Thooyavan and Lt.Amuuian were the other military top cadres who died along with Kittu in this self-destructive exercise.

The ship was surrounded by the Indian Navy for three days and those on board refused to surrender and on 16 January committed suicide by swallowing caynide capsules before which they set fire to the ship which is reported to have exploded with the arms and ammunition which it was carrying. While the LTTE openly admits that Kittu and others committed suicide, its front organisation known as the International Federation of Tamils(IFT) composed of a few expatriate Tamils in London in a glossy leaflet, which manifestly carries the firm imprint of a Cambridge-based Tamil lawyer's input, have sought firstly to conceal the fact of their death being caused by a self-destructive suicide effort and secondly to accuse the Indian authorities of "international piracy" and of killing them!

The statements of both the LTTE and IFT claim that Kittu was on his way to Jaffna taking with him peace proposals that would have led to a ceasefire and direct negotiations with the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, and that he was engaged in this exercise in pursuance to LTTE's recent contacts with Sri Lankan government's representatives in a western capital.

Many doubt the veracity of this claim which leads to several questions: If he was on a peace mission, how come that there were on board the ship with him so many leading military cadres of the LTTE with him ? Where did Kittu join them ? From which port did they depart ? Was it from any one of the Indian coastal ports ? Or was it from another country ? What did the ship contain ? Was it carrying a large quantity sophisticated weapons the purchase for which Kittu carried out the deals when he was in Europe ?

It must be noted that Kittu was expelled by the British government in 1991 for carrying on activities of a "terrorist organisation" and for engaging in deals for purchase of arms for the LTTE. Even without having recourse to the appeal procedure against his expulsion, Kittu secretly slipped out of England, went to France and thereafter he was granted temporary stay in Switzerland from where also he was asked to leave. After his departure from Switzerland, Kittu's whereabouts had remained a mystery until the latest incident.

Kittu went to London from Colombo in 1989 when LTTE was having negotiations with the Sri Lankan government. The then LTTE's relationship with the government was so close and cuddly that Kittu on his arrival in London was received at the London airport by senior officials of the Sri Lanka High Commission in the UK. Though the ostensible purpose of his trip was to receive medical treatment for his amputated leg, which was blasted in a grenade attack on him in Jaffna in mysterious circumstances, Kittu soon became the head of LTTE's international secretariat in London from where he was used to issue statements and grant interviews on behalf of the LTTE.

It is said that Kittu's proposed return to Jaffna was viewed with suspicion and fear by some of those who have climbed to top positions in the LTTE leadership in Jaffna. Following the now well publicised rift between Prabhakaran and his deputy, Gopaldaswamy Mahendrarajaha alias Mahathaya, and the latter's downfall and virtual detention under "house arrest", Baby Subramaniam - a close kinsman of the LTTE leader and an accused charged in the Rajiv assassination case - has become the most powerful man in the LTTE next to Prabhakaran.

Since Kittu met his premature end having been engulfed in and consumed by the flames of his own creation in the waters of the Indian ocean, rumours are rife among Kittu loyalists that the Indian intelligence was tipped off about the movement of the ship in which Kittu was sailing by some of those in the present LTTE leadership who resented and feared his return with a ship-load of weapons and a new artificial leg fitted in a European country which would have enhanced his mobility that had been previously affected by the amputation of one of his legs following the mysterious grenade attack upon him.

In the late 1980's, as the LTTE's Commander of the Jaffna District, Kittu's supremacy was unquestioned and he is believed to have been very popular among the people and critical of LTTE supremo Prabhakaran for giving orders from abroad. This was the time when Prabhakaran was in Madras. It was widely believed that one reason for Prabhakaran's sudden decision to return to Jaffna then was to cut Kittu down to size and reassert his position as the unquestioned leader and Supreme Commander of the LTTE. Within a few months, on one fateful night, Kittu lost his leg in a mysterious grenade attack when he was returning after his routine visit to the home of a woman friend with whom Kittu was romantically associated.