

**Island, 21 July 2009**

**Commission declares Sencholai a justifiable Military Target  
Air Force exonerated**

**No orphanage:LTTE training camp**

**UNICEF exposed for a blatant lie**

**The Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCOI) headed by  
Nissanka Udalagama, former Supreme Court Judge, has  
comprehensively cleared the Air Force of any Human Rights  
violations.**

PCOI declared Naddalamottankulam training centre falsely called Sencholai orphanage by the LTTE was a camp situated in jungle area where school children were forcibly taken by the LTTE for training purposes.

The air raid took place on August 14, 2006 and by that time the LTTE had commenced a series of attacks on the Security Forces under the cover of the CFA and the retaliatory action by the Air Force was justified as Sencholai was a military target.

The Commission found the LTTE responsible for indirectly causing the death and injury to the school children by exposing them to the risk of air attack at a LTTE training facility in a jungle area.

Several international NGOs alleged that Security Forces were guilty of killing innocent schoolchildren. A UNICEF report from New York alleged the 51 children staying overnight at the bombed compound attending a first aid course were "innocent victims of violence".

The Commission report filed after recording evidence of the children in the jungle camp will greatly affect the credibility of the UNICEF in rushing to wrong conclusions according to human rights lawyers. They point out that UNICEF swallowed the LTTE bait without due verification and therefore will have to face hard questions.

Counsels Gomin Dayasri with Mrs Manoli Jinadasa appeared for the Air Force. Yasantha Kodagoda with Lakmali Karunnanayake led evidence for the Commission.

The Commission report quotes D.B. S. Jeyaraj, who in his column stated "LTTE went to town initially saying that its orphanage 'Sencholai' had been bombed and orphaned children killed. As more information came to light Tigers began changing stance. As more details were revealed it became clear that the LTTE had not been stating the whole truth".

LTTE had visited schools and ordered children to participate in the training programme threatening them that otherwise they will not be permitted to continue their studies in schools or tuition classes leaving the children with no option. LTTE buses took them to the camp in the jungle. The camps were guarded by women cadres carrying guns. The girls stated their parents had raised objection with the LTTE for taking children to training camps but in vain.

According to the Commission report the children were made to undergo a course of strenuous exercises under an LTTE flag, first aid training, and guard and watch duty. They were shown LTTE films of bombs being dropped and parents weeping for the loss of children.

The report says the girls testified that after exercise Sister Venilla briefed them on the LTTE structure, Great Heroes day and success stories of the LTTE, policy of the LTTE of waging war to win a separate state.

The report quotes "Sister Venilla showed how to dismantle a gun, clean it and re assemble it. In the afternoon, there were exercises and students were trained to follow commands using the baton as a gun".

A senior Wing Commander of the Air Force, testifying before the Commission, said that the target had been selected with great care and caution after scrutinising images from Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs), satellite photographs and field intelligence reports from ground sources. It had been established beyond any doubt that the

place was a major training complex of the LTTE. The post attack disclosures via a UAV confirmed it was a training camp with pictures of smoke emanating from ammunition dumps and other inflammable material.

The Wing Commander disclosed photographs of post liberation evidence revealing plaques with NO ENTRY boards on the site, huge water tanks camouflaged with jungle green paint, small cell like rooms for black tigers, production unit for cyanide capsules and storage space for ammunition.

The Commission has observed that the tragedy could have been prevented if the principals of schools or parents had informed the Department of Education of terrorist activity but the brutality of the LTTE was such neither parents or principals dared to do so for fear of reprisals.