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Is whistle-blowing an exercise of a fundamental right to freedom from corruption? - 4

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Local chess — much room for improvement - 19

FBI MI5 agent tells Dublin Court

Real IRA tried to develop links with LTTE

by Dushy Ranetunge

A trial held in Dublin in the Irish Republic on June 2003 has revealed attempts by the Real IRA (Irish Republican Army) to develop links with the Iraqis and the Tamil Tigers.

The trial was that of Michael McKevitt, a reputed leader of the Real IRA.

According to a statement of the witness McKevitt, who had also hoped to obtain state sponsorship for his organisation, sent representatives to human rights convention in Geneva hoping to make contacts.

The LTTE frequently held "human rights" protests opposite the UN in Geneva and it seems that this "human rights" forum had emerged as a convenient venue to make contact with other terrorist groups.

David Rupert, an agent for the FBI and MI5, giving evidence said a British investigation was launched after he reported McKevitt discussing Iraq.

McKevitt, was charged with being a member of the Real IRA and with directing terrorism. He is the first person to be charged under legislation introduced after the Omagh bomb attack in 1998, when 29 people were killed. Rupert (51) said McKevitt told him of possible contacts with the Tamil Tigers and said it was "unfortunate" his organisation did not have suicide bombers.

Rupert further said: "He (McKevitt) had told him that he had contact with a lady with Irish connections, who had links with the Tamil Tigers.

Deirdre McConnel of an Irish Catholic background, with all the related historical baggage of the IRA and the Irish struggle had been active in the LTTE for a number of years. She is at present working as a LTTE humanitarian lobbyist in the LTTE led front, the Tamil Centre for Human Rights (TCHR). The Manchester branch of the TCHR was at 88 College Road, Manchester, M16 8FH. UK. This was also her home address. She was previously attached to the notoriously radical and leftist Manchester Teachers Union.

Deirdre McConnel's long association with the LTTE and service to the terrorist cause has made her a trusted and valuable operative for the organisation, which sent her on various missions all over the world. When the LTTE boatyard with a mini submarine was discovered by Thai authorities, the LTTE sent her to Phuket in Thailand. Christy Reginald Lawrence, a Sri Lankan Tamil refugee who had a Norwegian passport, operated the boatyard. Her mission to Thailand was to secure the release of Christy Reginald Lawrence and her "advice" as the representative from a "human rights organisation from the UK" to the Thai authorities was to release him or deport him to Norway and not to Sri Lanka is clear evidence of the level of trust and confidence the LTTE has placed in her.

During the late 1990s, when Mr. S. K. Wickermasinghe was Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to the Court of St. James, Deirdre McConnel and Ms. Eliza Mann (Sri Lankan Tamil) tried unsuccessfully to meet Foreign Ministry officials in the Republic of Ireland to brief them of their particular brand of human rights relating to Sri Lanka.

Other than contact with the LTTE via Deirdre McConnel, McKevitt and Rupert had also discussed the possibility of Iraqi sponsorship. Rupert said his subsequent role was to keep his "ear to the ground" for this type of state sponsorship would happen, McKevitt told him he "suspected that they would come knocking on the door looking to make contact". Rupert said that in late 2000, as he drove around the Carlingford Lock area with McKevitt, the accused man pointed to a spot where the IRA"had killed 19 British soldiers" and went on to detail how it was done.

He also pointed out a British naval cruiser in the middle of the lock which had been "a provocation" to republican groups and it had long been contemplated how to do damage it. "This was soon after the American ship bombing in the Yemen (the USS Cole). He said it was unfortunate for the IRA- Oglaigh na hEireann - that they didn't have any suicide bombers to ram an explosive device into it.

A combination picture shows two photos of Uday Hussein, in an undated file photo (L) and after his death (R), released by the U.S. government in Baghdad on July 24, 2003. REUTERS

A combination picture shows two photos of Qusay Hussein, in a file photo when Qusay was elected to the leadership of the ruling Baath Party on May 17, 2001 (L) and after his death (R) in a photo released by the U.S. government in Baghdad on July 24, 2003. REUTERS

In view of LTTE terrorism

'Drop India-Sri Lanka land bridge project' - Jayalalitha

by Our Special Correspondent

The Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, today despatched two letters to the Prime Minister, A. B. Vajpayee, asking him to drop the proposal to construct a land bridge between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, as it would "jeopardise" India's security, and to initiate steps to take on lease the Katchatheevu islands in the Palk Bay to help fishermen from the State.

She also urged that the proposed ferry service between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka be put off, as it was not an opportune time.

In one of the letters, a copy of which was released to the media here, she said she was "totally against" the land bridge project and insisted that the matter be viewed not as one of "economic cooperation" between the two countries but as a "vital issue concerning the security of Tamil Nadu and India".

Giving reasons for her objection, she said the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam brought the "gun culture and, worse still, the horror of suicide bombing" into the peaceful State. Though peace talks between Tigers and the island Government were in progress, "the LTTE had always found some pretext to revert to its patented brand of ugly terrorism after a quiet phase of peace negotiations. "When this was the track record of the LTTE, it would be premature and unwise to contemplate any land bridge between the two countries.

Ms. Jayalalithaa pointed out that the Union Planning Commission had on August 12 last sent a letter to the Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary, indicating that a joint statement was issued by the Ministry of External Affairs following a meeting of the Prime Ministers of India and Sri Lanka on June 11, 2002. Subsequently, an inter-ministerial level meeting decided to take up a pre-feasibility study and invite the State Government's comments on the proposal.

Continued on page 6

Gang led by minister's son assaults constable

by Norman Palihawadana

Areserve police constable attached to the Cinnamon Gardens police had been assaulted by a gang led by the son of Minister of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Refugees, Dr. Jayalath Jayawardena in the early hours of the 25th morning, Cinnamon Gardens police said.

This police constable identified as M. Bandara had been admitted to the Colombo National Hospital with serious injuries to his ear.

Investigations revealed that the constable was on duty near St. Bridget's Convent when the gang had arrived to put up posters in the area.

The constable had advised them not to paste posters on the convent wall.

The gang had left and returend a few minutes later and assaulted the PC causing injury to his ear. The constable had run away firing in the air to frighten the gang.

The gang had arrived in a Dolphin van and a double cab.

Minister Dr. Jayalath Jayawardena has informed the police to inquire into the matter.

The police team investigating this incident was expected to record statement of the minister's son yesterday.

See pix on page 2

Businessman nabbed with mortar gun

by Norman Palihawadana

A businessman in Bindunuwewa, Bandarawela had been arrested and the 60 mili metre mortar gun in his possession taken into custody last Thursday (24) by a special team of the Badulla police.

On questioning the suspect it had been revealed that while he and his wife were on a tour in Jaffna district the mortar gun had been brought hidden in his vehicle.

He was being questioned further as the police was suspicious as to how he could evade the army and LTTE checkpoints in bringing this mortar gun.

Revenue Authority will improve tax collection — Choksy

Finance Minister K. N. Choksy yesterday told the Parliament that the establishment of Revenue Authority will improve both tax administration and collection.

"It is being so structured that it will ensure the maximum possible collection of revenue possible to the state. It is a step in the direction. No valid reason whatever has been put forward against its establishment," he said.

In his reply to the Opposition Leader Mahinda Rajapakshe's special statement to the Parliament on Tuesday (22), the Finance Minister said:

I desire to reply to the Statement made by the Leader of the Opposition in this House on 22nd July 2003, in respect of collection of the Value Added Tax and the establishment of the proposed Revenue Authority.

To start with, I unequivocally repudiate on behalf of the Government the opposition's allegation of inefficient and irresponsible fiscal management by the United National Front Government.

A few hard facts alone are sufficient to rebut this allegation.

In December 2001, when the People's Alliance Government relinquished office consequent upon its defeat at the General Election, it left behind the undernoted economic legacy:

- A negative growth of 1.3% for the year 2001
- A budget deficit of 10.8%
- Inflation at 14.2%
- A public debt of 1,450 billion
- Government borrowings of Rs. 35 billion from the local banking industry.
- Rs. 41 billion owing from Government-owned Corporations to the local banking system

Continued on page 6

Statistical error

In the news item we published yesterday "NJC wants CBK to demerge N-E" (Page 01), it was said, "According to the census of 1981, the population of the three ethnic groups in the Eastern Province have been recorded as 25% Sinhala, 33% Muslims and 62% Tamils."

These statistics are erroneous.

We only published the Presidential Secretariat press release in full.

Weather

SEVILI
GALVANIZERS and ALUMINIUM Sheets

There will be scattered showers with fairly strong winds at times in the Western, Central, Sabaragamuwa and Southern provinces.
There will be scattered showers in the seas off Western and Southern coasts.
Generally, wind direction will be southwesterly to westerly over the western and southern seas and southwesterly elsewhere. The speed will be between 20 - 40 km/h. Occasionally the wind speed will be strenghened up to 50 km/h in the sea areas off western and southern coasts.
Sea areas off south and west coasts will be fairly rough.

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