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India quietly steps up arms aid to Lanka

15 Oct 2007, 0000 hrs IST, Rajat Pandit, TNN

NEW DELHI: Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapakse may publicly say India's "moral support" is all that his country requires to tackle its bloody ethnic strife but behind closed doors, Colombo continues to seek "more" military hardware and software from New Delhi. India, on its part, is not shying away from stepping up arms supplies to Sri Lanka, with the latest example being more automatic 40mm L-70 close range anti-aircraft guns to guard against aerial strikes by LTTE.

"The Ordnance Factory Board, for instance, has just received another \$40,000 order for supply of L-70 gun barrels to Sri Lanka. Among other things, four 'Indra' low-flying detection radars have already been supplied to Sri Lanka," said a source. That's not all. Playing upon India's fears about China and Pakistan making strategic inroads into Sri Lanka, Colombo has asked New Delhi to supply more air defence weapons and radars, artillery guns, Nishant UAVs and even laser designators for PGMs (precision-guided munitions).

Interestingly, even as Rajapakse was headed for New Delhi on Friday, there were reports from Colombo that a couple of remote-controlled miniature aircraft were seized from a LTTE vessel. Contending that the aircraft were to be used as deadly missiles after being loaded with explosives, Sri Lankan officials claimed that LTTE continued to use TN for its arms smuggling activities.

While India has been providing "largely defensive" equipment to Sri Lanka till now, sources said the supply of "some clearly offensive weapons" could not be ruled out since India does not want China or Pakistan to step into the vacuum, much like what happened in Myanmar in the 1990s. An indicator of this unease in the Indian defence establishment had come earlier this year when national security advisor M K Narayanan had publicly asked Sri Lanka to refrain from seeking arms from China or Pakistan.

The remarks had created a furore in Lanka, especially since Narayanan had added that India would not provide weapons with offensive capabilities to the island nation. The government, of course, has to keep political sensitivities in Tamil Nadu in mind all the time as far as weapon deliveries to Sri Lanka are concerned, with its partner DMK frequently voicing its concern over the plight of Tamils in the island nation.

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இந்த செய்தி பொய் என்றால், இந்த "பொய்"ச்செய்தியை வெளியிட்ட நிறுவனத்திற்கு இதுவரை எந்த காங்கிரஸ்காரனும் கண்டனமோ மறுப்போ தெரிவிக்கவில்லையே...? ஏன்...?

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