

## Fight and flight-The LTTE's air cargo ambitions. (2008, November 13). *Jane's*.

### Fight and flight - The LTTE's air cargo ambitions

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Satellite imagery has revealed a number of runways in LTTE-controlled areas of Sri Lanka. This could either show civilian aspirations towards statehood or a desire to fly in weapons. *Jane's* looks at the evidence and suggests the latter is more likely.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is losing its war for an independent state in Sri Lanka. Since the effective resumption of the conflict in 2006, it has lost control of the Eastern Province and seen its forces slowly pushed back in the north. The LTTE's priority must now be to ensure a continued supply of arms and ammunition to prevent further defeats.

Given this situation and having suffered heavy losses to its ocean-going smuggling fleet, the LTTE now appears to be preparing to fly in supplies to its stronghold in northern Sri Lanka. Commercial satellite imagery obtained by *Jane's* confirms that between 2004 and 2007, the rebels constructed two airstrips that can handle cargo aircraft capable of transporting weapons from Central or Southeast Asia.

While the imagery does not confirm the airstrips are in use, the investment of significant resources suggests the LTTE has developed facilities that can serve air logistics needs at a critical time in its three-decade war with the Sri Lankan state. *Jane's* can also confirm that the LTTE has made at least one attempt to arrange for a consignment of artillery rounds to be flown in.

Image: Satellite imagery illustrates the evolution of Sri Lanka's Iranamadu airstrip. (Digital Globe)

