

French fast attack craft for the Navy. (1993, December 05). *The Island.*

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French fast attack craft for the Navy

by Shamindra Ferdinando

Sri Lanka last week took delivery of her first French built Fast Attack Craft. The 21 metre long FAC manufactured by Simmone Marine, a prominent French ship building agency, arrived on board a huge transport ship in the early hours of Friday (3). The patrol boat has

The vessels would strengthen Navy's South Korean and Israeli built FACs now operating in the north-east waters.

The new French FACs join the campaign against the Tigers just weeks after the Tigers blew up an Israeli manufactured FAC off Point Pedro killing a dozen personnel. Defence sources said the FACs had been

Nagathevanthural he claimed while clearly indicating there was no immediate plans to reestablish a Navy base there.

Nagathevanthural base responsible for destroying boats operating in the disputed Jaffna lagoon does not exist anymore.

Informed sources said that the Navy was likely to order more patrol vessels

rupt sections within the military to get more commissions. They said the government must acquire weapons suitable for Sri Lankan conditions.

But sadly some powerful sections have been engaged in buying weapons from certain firms because they receive commissions although those weapons were not suitable for op-



been built by Simmone Marine with the collaboration of the Colombo Drydocks, a joint venture between Sri Lanka and the Japanese Onomichi Company.

Industry sources said that four new FACs had been ordered for the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN). The patrol boat which arrived here last week was the first of the four vessels ordered by the previous administration.

The four FACs would cost Sri Lanka Rs. 360 million sources said. The second boat from France is expected late January next year. "We are keen to further increase our involvement in the supply of vessels to the Navy," a Drydocks spokesman said.

ordered prior to the recent debacle. The Navy had lost one FAC, and six inshore patrol craft within the past few weeks in the northern area of operations. And a year before another inshore patrol craft was lost in a Sea Tiger raid at Mandathivu.

Another inshore patrol craft had been badly damaged in a confrontation with the Sea Tigers in the disputed Jaffna lagoon last September. Defence analysts said that the government must quickly take steps to acquire new vessels for the Navy. There was an immediate need to replace what the Navy lost in Nagathevanthural, Jaffna lagoon and the Point Pedro battles.

including inshore patrol craft to replace what it had lost recently, increase its strength and particularly to meet the threat posed by Sea Tiger operations.

Sea Tigers have been acquiring new vessels, training hundreds of new men and women, improving and expanding operations and especially introducing new fighting methods to challenge the Navy's vessels.

"We could not afford to suffer any more losses in vessels," one source said.

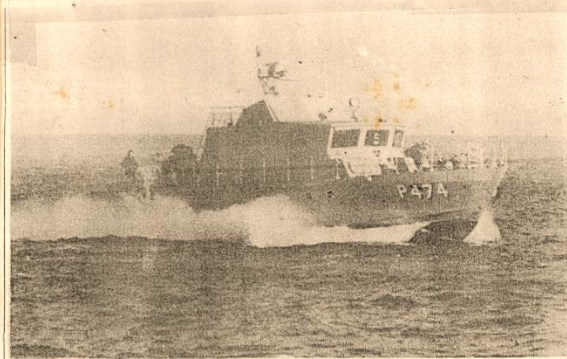
It is claimed that the Val Devi operation had failed to destroy the Sea Tiger vessels or effectively reduce their operational capabilities. The Army

operations purposes analysts said.

While the government was trying to re-build the Army and Navy strength and restore morale among troops the Tigers struck again this time in the East.

Eight soldiers including a junior officer were shot dead in the Trincomalee district and the attackers withdrew before the arrival of reinforcements. The ill-fated patrolmen had been without any communication sets to call for immediate help, informed sources said.

Junior officers said that there was a huge shortage in communication sets. The foot soldier is not properly armed with the necessary arms and



Industry sources said the French ship builders have given technology to Sri Lanka thus allowing the Colombo Drydocks to build the two remaining patrol vessels here.

Simmone Marine had trained some 16 Sri Lankans, including two engineers, in the art of building fighting vessels. Industry sources said the Colombo Drydocks has started building the remaining vessels with the French trained personnel playing a key role.

The vessels would be ready by June next year. The four vessels had been ordered by the government more than a year ago defence sources said.

The Nagathevanthural battle alone resulted in the loss of five inshore patrol craft, radar, communication equipment, small arms and the strategic Nagathevanthural Navy base itself. Despite the Army's ability to retake Pooneryn after suffering its biggest defeat in the Eelam war nothing has been done to reestablish the Nagathevanthural Navy base which is part of the Army Navy defences in the vital Pooneryn sector.

"No firm decision has been taken on Nagathevanthural," an authoritative military spokesman admitted last week. However there was no Tiger presence at

lost 118 personnel including eight officers and two Main Battle Tanks (MBTs), in the Val Devi Operation.

The current efforts were to restore Navy's authority in the northern waters and improve Army's armoured fighting units as quickly as possible. The Army needs to acquire new armoured fighting vehicles including Main Battle Tanks in view of the recent losses it suffered in the north.

The government has been forced to allocate more for defence purposes next year. Analysts said that moves to acquire new arms, ammunition and defence equipment must not help cor-

equipment to wage war they said.

There is a shortage of many items — from food to ammunition.

Analysts said that the failure to appoint a permanent minister for defence has worsened the situation. There was no link between the political leadership and the security forces they said. "We need someone like late Ranjan Wijeratne," one source said.

It was Ranjan Wijeratne who first announced plans to build up an Army of 100,000 officers and men. But the late President did not want to increase the numbers at that time.