

Army to replace paramilitary force in Sri Lanka's southeast

The Sri Lankan government has decided to replace the paramilitary Special Task Force (STF) by units of the regular army in southeast Sri Lanka, apparently in view of an increasing threat from Tamil Tiger guerrillas.

The regional media quoted the Sri Lankan military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakara as saying Thursday that it had been decided to withdraw the STF from Akkaraipattu in Amparai district and post them in sensitive areas behind the front lines in north Sri Lanka.

The Daily Mirror quoted a top police official as saying that the STF would vacate 10 camps in Amparai district and that these would be taken over by the regular army.

Unofficial sources said that the move was dictated by increasing Tamil Tiger activity in Akkaraipattu and other parts of the southeastern district of Amparai in recent months.

Stray units of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have been attacking STF camps in Amparai and also picking on army personnel and civilians in the adjacent Sinhalese-speaking Buttala-Kataragama area, spreading panic among the majority Sinhalese community.

As part of a major shake up in the police and the paramilitary forces, the government Thursday transferred the long-standing STF commandant and Deputy Inspector General of Police Nimal Lewke.

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