

16 civilians killed in Sri Lanka blast

At least 16 people were killed in an explosion in northern Sri Lanka Friday, rebel sources and local media reported.

A website close to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said 16 civilians were killed in a claymore mine attack that targeted a van in the rebel-held Kilinochchi district around 2.15 p.m.

The rebels claimed that the attack was carried out by Sri Lankan Army's Deep Penetration Unit (DPU), adding that four men, six women and six children were killed in the attack.

However, a local English newspaper, Daily Mirror, reported on its website that 17 people who were in a bus were killed in the explosion.

Government troops are currently battling the LTTE in the north with the aim of crushing the rebel group before the end of 2008.

The LTTE has been fighting the government since the mid-1980s to establish an independent homeland for the island's Tamil minorities, resulting in the death of more than 70,000 people in more than two decades of hostilities.

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