

LTTE attacks Sri Lankan Navy detachment in Jaffna

The Sri Lankan Army Thursday said that a pre-dawn attack by the Tamil Tiger rebels on a naval detachment in an islet in the northern Jaffna peninsula was repulsed by a joint army-navy counter operation.

According to military spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara, the Tamil Tigers came in a flotilla of eight small boats and mounted an attack on navy and army troops deployed at Chiraththivu islet, located between Kurunagar and Mandaitivu, close to the northern town of Jaffna.

'The army and the navy troops swiftly reacted to the LTTE attack and repulsed their infiltration attempt into these small islets, destroying three LTTE boats and killing at least 15 LTTE cadres,' Nanayakkara told IANS over the phone.

He said four LTTE boats fled towards the rebel-held Pooneryn region while one capsized during the artillery attack by the army.

'One army soldier and two naval sailors were killed while one more sailor is missing in action. An extensive search operation is underway to clear the area and recover the capsized LTTE boat,' Nanayakkara said.

The defence ministry said troops also repulsed a second wave of offensives launched by LTTE rebels in six boats from the LTTE-held Pooneryn area shortly after the first attack, destroying three more LTTE boats and damaging another around 2 a.m.

Nanayakkara said that at least six civilians were killed and 20 others, including two children and a catholic clergy were wounded 'when the LTTE fired about 20 artillery shells towards the Jaffna coastal towns such as Pasaiyoor and Kurunagar Thursday morning'.

Meanwhile, the pro-LTTE Tamilnet website quoted LTTE sources as saying that 'at least 13 Sri Lanka Navy personnel were killed and many sailors wounded in the raid carried out by a special marine wing of the Sea Tigers'.

'The raid was launched at 1.25 a.m. and the camp was brought under LTTE control at 2.00 a.m. One 50 calibre machine gun, one radar equipment, one RPD LMG, one AK LMG, one 60 mm mortar, one 40 mm rocket launcher, four T-56 type-2 assault rifles were seized by the Sea Tigers,' the report on the website claimed.

The military spokesman, however, has rejected the claims by the rebels.

Independent verification of the battlefield casualties is not possible because journalists are barred from visiting the area.

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