
Air Force choppers escape LTTE missile attack: Sri Lanka

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Colombo (IANS) The Tamil Tigers Wednesday fired surface-to-air-missiles (SAM) at two Sri Lankan Air Force helicopters over the northern battle zone but the choppers narrowly escaped the attack, military authorities here said.

'Two Sri Lanka Air Force helicopters, engaged in assisting evacuation of army casualties in Puthukkudiyiruppu had a miraculous escape this morning (Wednesday) at 11.00 a.m. when the Tigers inside the 'No Fire Zone' fired anti-aircraft missiles on them,' the military said Wednesday. 'Both helicopters carrying injured soldiers, however, continued their mission despite the barrage of LTTE missiles,' the military said in a report, adding that the choppers with injured soldiers aboard arrived at their destinations as planned. The defence ministry quoting Air Force spokesman, Wing Commander Janaka Nanayakkara, said that the pilots of the Bell-212 choppers 'managed to take the injured personnel to safety from the risk imposed with evasive air manoeuvres (by) evading the missile attack'. 'LTTE terrorists have fired the missiles from the government declared No Fire Zone,' the air force spokesman said, citing pilots and technical sources. According to the military, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who are facing a multi-pronged military onslaught in their last strongholds in the north, continued to fire artillery and mortar fire towards the advancing troops. The guerrillas were firing from within the 'No-Fire-Zone', declared by the government for the safety of thousands of civilians trapped in the Mullaitivu war-zone. The military said that the LTTE has now been boxed into a mere 28 square kilometer land area in the north-eastern Mullaitivu district. The number of civilians fleeing the rebel-held areas defying LTTE orders was on the rise and over 53,700 internally displaced people (IDPs) have already entered the government-held areas since the beginning of 2009. These IDPs are temporarily housed in welfare centres and villages in the northern Vavuniya and Jaffna districts. Indo Asian News Service Courtesy: yahoo.com