
Sri Lanka launches massive manhunt to recover LTTE weapons

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E T B Sivapriyan/PTI / Colombo Having vanquished the LTTE, the Sri Lankan Army has launched a massive manhunt to recover their weapons, especially claymore mines and other destructive explosives, in the northern areas to facilitate the early resettlement of displaced Tamils in their towns and villages.

"The army fears that LTTE has buried stockpiles of explosives and weapons in the thick jungles of Wannu," military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara told visiting Indian journalists here. After having accounted for most of the top LTTE leadership in the just-concluded long military campaign, he said the military was now focused on tracing the whereabouts of the large number of "sleeper cells" of the Tigers. He said there are no signs of the presence of LTTE cadres in the northern areas liberated from the outfit last month. "We are recovering claymore mines, hand grenades and other ammunition which are either hidden or abandoned by the Tamil Tigers. We still suspect that there are huge quantities of weapons in the areas. We are searching the places thoroughly," he said. The spokesman said the displaced civilians cannot be resettled until the areas are completely demined and cleared of the weapons. Nanayakkara said the army believes that "second and third-rung" leaders of LTTE were present in different parts of the country, including capital Colombo. Nanayakkara said the army has got intelligence breakthroughs about the whereabouts of LTTE cadres and was making concerted efforts to nab them. "We suspect that the LTTE cadres may be in smaller groups in the eastern part of the country. They may have taken refuge in jungles in Batticaloa and Yala," he said. Nanayakkara said 9,100 LTTE cadres are in the Government's custody now. "These include self-confessed and people who were taken into custody." The military spokesman said there are millions of mines buried under the land and the troops have so far recovered 1.5 million landmines. "We believe the number will be high. The mines were not imported from other countries. They were manufactured by the LTTE in their areas. Organisations from India and other countries are helping us in demining the areas," he said and added that the troops were still recovering weapons from the eastern province. Nanayakkara said LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran was not wearing a cyanide capsule when he was killed by the troops. He said resettling displaced Tamils is not going to be an easy task. Courtesy: business-standard.com