

Sri Lankan pres against military solution

by UPI

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka - Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa said Tuesday he is against a military solution to the decades-long Tamil ethnic conflict on the island nation. "I have never been for a military solution," Rajapaksa told reporters in the capital, Colombo. "I have been and will always want a political solution." Violence has escalated in recent years with the government currently involved in a campaign in the northern region to root out the Tamil Tigers, who have been fighting for a separate homeland for the Tamil speaking minority in the predominantly Buddhist nation. The issue has been further complicated by the government's decision last week to withdraw from the 2002 cease-fire agreement with the Tiger rebels brokered by Norway. The president said it is important for his nation to defeat "terrorism," adding, "There are no good terrorists and bad terrorists, all of them are terrorists," the official government Web site said. Rajapaksa said he had always been opposed to the ceasefire agreement. "I have consistently opposed it. The only difference was that I waited patiently for two years since the presidential election, hoping we would be able to have serious negotiations with the (rebels)," but the rebel group "showed it would continue to kill civilians to achieve its goal through terrorism, enjoying the advantages it had from the (cease-fire agreement)."

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