

Report: Dozens die in Sri Lanka violence

by UPI

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka -- Sri Lankan officials Tuesday accused Tamil Tiger rebels of shelling a military base near a church, with six soldiers among those killed. The government said the rebels attacked the Thallady military base in Mannar district in the violence-ridden northern region, the Press Trust of India reported. Officials said the nearby St. Anthony's Church also was hit in the rebel shelling. Exact casualty figures in the incident were not available. The PTI report said dozens had died Tuesday in the ongoing fighting between the rebels and the military in the embattled northern region. Britain's Guardian quoted the Sri Lankan Defense Ministry as saying a dozen soldiers and more than 40 Tamil Tiger rebels had died in the battles, but added there has been no independent account of the fighting. The fighting has escalated sharply since the government officially withdrew from a cease-fire brokered by Norway in 2002. The report said Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka, who survived a suicide bombing 18 months ago, has been credited with the military's recent victories against the rebels with his policy of killing 10 rebels a day.

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