

Sri Lanka police seize over 90 car number plates

Tuesday, 06 February 2007

Sri Lankan police seized 91 vehicle number plates from a train in a Tamil-majority northeastern town, the military said today, sparking some concern in the capital that Tamil rebels could be planning a car bomb attack.

Military Spokesman Brig Prasad Samarasinghe, however, said it was still unclear exactly where the plates were being taken or what their intended use was.

"We don't know what their plan is, but we are investigating, but the number plates were found in Trincomalee on a train that had originated in Colombo," he said, correcting an earlier report that the train was heading to the capital. The plates were found during a routine check of the train yesterday evening as Sri Lankans celebrated their 59th independence day. Four people all ethnic Tamil men were arrested after a search of the train, Samarasinghe said.

Although Samarasinghe dismissed earlier reports that the plates could have been used by Tamil Tiger rebels in a suicide car bombing, the news alarmed Colombo, which has frequently been targeted by the insurgents in their decades-long civil war.

Security was tightened in the capital, where there was already an increased troop presence on the roads due to Independence Day celebrations.

Earlier, suspected Tamil Tiger rebels killed a Sri Lankan soldier during a raid on a northern security post early today in Vavuniya, the last government-held town ahead of rebel territory. The Defence Ministry said Tamil Tigers raided the post before dawn, killing one soldier and wounding three.