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## **Sri Lanka Says Bombs Rebel Naval Base in New Strike**

By Reuters

COLOMBO — Sri Lankan jets bombed a Tamil Tiger naval base in the north of the island on Thursday in a third consecutive day of air strikes despite United Nations calls for an end to the fighting.

The military said the Tiger base in the rebel-controlled Mullaittivu area had been destroyed in the bombardment, which followed a similar raid in the east on Wednesday.

It has vowed to dislodge the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam from their eastern stronghold, accusing the rebels of firing on them despite a 2002 ceasefire that international monitors say now exists only on paper.

The aerial bombings have become the latest flashpoint in the fighting between military and Tiger rebels who want to carve out a separate homeland for minority Tamils in the north and east.

On Tuesday, the U.N. urged both sides to stop fighting and to protect civilians after it said an air strike by government forces earlier in the day in northwestern Sri Lanka had killed 14 people. The rebels said six of the dead were children.

But the military denied hitting civilian settlements in that raid in Mannar district, and accused the Tigers of spreading false information to win international sympathy.

More than 3,000 people were killed in ambushes, suicide bombings and clashes last year alone, a level of violence that stoked fears of full-scale renewal of a civil war that has claimed more than 65,000 lives over two decades.

On Thursday, the Tamil Tigers detonated a mine in the northern town of Vavuniya, killing a soldier and wounding two, a military spokesman said.

Separately, the government said it had arranged for a ship to carry food supplies from India to the northern Jaffna peninsula which has been cut off since August following closure of the island's main north-south highway.

The ship carrying 2,675 metric tons of essential items was due in Jaffna

later on Thursday, Sri Lankan deputy high commissioner to India P.M.Amza said in the southern Indian city of Chennai.

“We wanted to ensure that the people do not suffer from shortages after the Tigers ordered 4,000-odd private shops to shut down in the peninsula,” Amza said.

The Tigers have been demanding that the government reopen the A-9 highway, which runs through rebel territory to the peninsula.

The government says that rebel artillery fire makes the road unsafe and that the Tigers have been moving troops and munitions on it and raising war funds by levying a “tax” on vehicles passing along it.

The government denies any shortages in Jaffna, saying it was sending supplies through air and by sea.

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