

Tigers set fire to army camp at Weli Oya. (1993, July 27). *The Island*.

Over 21 army men, 20 civilians killed

Tigers set fire to army camp at Weli Oya

by Norman Palihawadana and Shamindra Ferdinando

The Tigers overran the Janakapura Army camp yesterday, killing at least 21 soldiers and perhaps as many as 40 in the most devastating assault in this year.

At least 15 Sinhala settlers including some children were also killed when the attackers raided the nearby settlement, authoritative military officials said. Officials placed the number of soldiers wounded at 20.

Janakapura camp the biggest in the sensitive Weli Oya region was the first security forces base to fall into the Tiger hands this year officials admitted.

Last year terrorists overran Katupotha and Vetti-laikerni Army detachments killing about 65 soldiers and removing over 50 million worth arms, ammunition and vehicles.

Military sources said Janakapura was stormed after 'terrorists' rained their (Army) positions with mortars, rocket propelled grenades and other heavy weapons. After that the Tigers have bulldozed and burnt the camp before fleeing with a large number of weapons left by soldiers who vacated the camp.

Two separate groups of Tigers have launched

simultaneous attacks on Kokkuttoduwai and Kovilpoint Army camps.

Officials indicated that troops at Kokkuttoduwai and Kovilpoint have not suffered casualties in the fighting.

"The main attack was aimed at Janakapura", a senior officer said while admitting that the Army had been surprised.

Sources said the entire camp was destroyed in yesterday's fighting.

However the exact death toll was yet unclear military officials said.

Officers claimed that the Tigers have also suffered heavy casualties. Air Force helicopters and Argentine Pucara light ground attack planes launched from Anuradhapura have bombed Tiger positions and vehicles belonging to the raiders sources said.

"However the Tigers have been able to accomplish their mission despite losses", military officials admitted.

"Due to heavy concentration of terrorists, troops at Janakapura tactically pulled back to an alternative position", revealed a special communique issued by the Joint Operations Command (JOC) yesterday after-

noon.

The same communique claimed that operations were continuing in the area against terrorists.

With yesterday's losses the number of men (Army) killed this year has passed the 160 mark. In the first seven months of the last year the Army lost 674 personnel.

Meanwhile the Army yesterday afternoon started redeploying troops in the Janakapura area. Officers admitted that they have to rebuild the entire camp and other defences as the Tiger attack had completely destroyed everything.

Sources also said a large number of Sinhalese living in the area have also vacated their homes after the destruction of the camp.

Officers said that the attack definitely was the biggest carried out against a target in Weli Oya, home to thousands of Sinhala settlers.

They believe the attack was launched to mark the July 24 violence which resulted in the deaths of upto 3000 Tamils exactly a decade ago.

The Army was trying to ascertain the number of weapons, ammunition boxes, vehicles and other equipment lost in yesterday's battle.

ere are about 30,000 Tamil refugees in Madu Road man.

NGO relief to the refugees, said, sources in Anurad- said