

Police comb N'Eliya town searching for Tigers. (1993, November 19).
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by Leon Béranger in Nuwara Eliya

Hundreds of policemen some clad in combat style fatigues took up positions in and around the quiet farming town of N'Eliya following intelligence reports that activists of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelaam (LTTE) had infiltrated into the area.

The policemen drawn mainly from units in the district were also conducting a series of search operations on private households, hotels, guest houses, boardings and other lodgings, in what a senior police official described as "purely a preventive exercise."

"We do not want to offend any one since the Nuwara Eliya District is the home to many thousands of residents from the largest minority community," the official explained. However, he added, under the prevailing complexed situation one cannot take any chances. Therefore such preventive operations were essential.

He said several persons were taken in for questioning in the operations but did not give specific details on the numbers taken or whether

they were being detained. "It is the normal procedure that suspicious persons who are picked up are questioned and later released if there is no evidence to suggest that they are linked with any form of terrorism or subversion," the official further said.

Police intelligence sources said that Nuwara Eliya which has a maze of tourist guest houses and other similar lodgings which attract thousands of visitors each weekend could turn out to be a safe haven for persons with mischievous intentions. In addition such persons could easily mix with the visitors and go unnoticed while carrying out their subversive activities, the sources said.

They cited intelligence reports which suggested that the LTTE were probably planning to create some minor disturbances in the plantations with the aim of confusing the authorities who are already facing a tough situation in the North and East. They said the LTTE infiltrations were possibly made through the Uva region which borders the East