

India to begin pulling its troops from Sri Lanka. (1989, January 1).  
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## India to begin pulling its troops from Sri Lanka

COLOMBO (AP) — India will start pulling its peacekeeping troops out of Sri Lanka this week, the Indian government said yesterday.

The pullback is at the request of Sri Lankan president-elect Ranasinghe Premadasa, the government said.

Premadasa, who takes office today, promised during the election campaign to send the Indian soldiers home.

India sent about 50,000 troops to the Indian Ocean island in July 1987, hours after an accord was signed with the aim of ending an insurgency by Tamil rebels demanding a separate homeland in the north and east provinces of Sri Lanka.

India will withdraw two brigades in the next few days, the Indian High Commission in Colombo told a news conference.

"I cannot give you the mathematics of how many troops will be involved but from what I know from 2,000 to 3,000 troops, making up two brigades, will be withdrawn," High Commissioner H. M. Dixit said.

Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lanka's outgoing president Junius Jayewardene discussed the withdrawal Saturday during a summit of seven South Asian countries in Islamabad, Pakistan, Dixit said.

### Asian summit

Opponents of the peace accord had feared the Indian troops might remain on the island indefinitely.

"The withdrawal is being done because we respect the public sentiments in Sri Lanka, and this is sincere declaration that we have no intention of staying permanently in Sri Lanka," Dixit said.

India, the regional power, became involved in the conflict because 60 million Tamils living in nearby southern India are sympathetic to the rebels' cause. More than 626 Indian soldiers have died in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan Tamils, like Indian Tamils, are mostly Hindus. They make up 18 per cent of the island's 16 million people.

Tamils have long accused the predominantly Buddhist Sinhalese of denying them jobs, education and money for development. The Sinhalese, who make up 75 per cent of the country's population, control the government and the military.

Militant Tamils have been demanding an independent nation in the north and east provinces, where most Tamils live. They have rejected the Colombo government's offer of limited autonomy if they surrender their weapons and end the five-year-long guerrilla war that has left more than 8,500