

Sri Lankan navy attacks rebels transporting weapons, killing around 70. (2006, September 25). *Associated press*.

## Sri Lankan navy attacks rebels transporting weapons, killing around 70

**Associated Press, Mon September 25, 2006 02:00 EDT . RUWAN WAARWEERAKOON - Associated Press Writer - COLOMBO, Sri Lanka - (AP)** The Sri Lankan navy said Monday it had sunk 11 Tamil Tiger rebel ships loaded with troops and weapons during a five-hour sea battle, killing around 70 separatists. The Tamil rebels began fighting in 1983 for a separate homeland in the north and east for Sri Lanka - 's largest ethnic minority. They have suffered defeats on both fronts in the recent escalation and vowed to retake land lost to the enemy.

Farther down the eastern coast, thousands of Muslims were fleeing the port town of Mutur, after leaflets were distributed warning of an imminent rebel attack. Around 1,400, including women and children, sought shelter on the nearby island of Kinniyai. Many more were prevented from leaving by authorities who said they had nothing to fear.

The exodus forced many to abandon observances of the Islamic fasting month, Ramadan, which began in Sri Lanka - on Sunday.

It was the second time since August that the mostly Muslim residents of Mutur have fled the town. They had returned home just two weeks ago after having been driven out by fighting between government forces and Tamil Tiger rebels.

AP writer Krishan Francis on Kinniyai contributed to this report