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THE ISLAND Army death toll for 1992 rises to 1045

by Shamindra Ferdinando

The army death toll this year rose to 1045 on Thursday evening when 42 regular soldiers including two junior officers were killed at Kovil Point and Kakkuthuduwai in the Welioya region, a military spokesman said.

The officers were identified as Lieutenant Gunatilleke and Second Lieutenant Perera of the sixth battalion of the Ceylon Light Infantry (CLI) regiment.

Military sources said the Tigers numbering over 250 had launched simultaneous attacks on route clearing parties from Kovil Point and Kakkuthuduwai detachments at about 4.45 p.m. while engaging both camps successfully preventing the reinforcements from moving in quickly to aid the troops under attack.

The attackers had removed nearly all weapons,

ammunition, communication equipment and grenades belonging to the dead men. However over a dozen soldiers had escaped with injuries, sources said.

A Joint Operations Command spokesman said 17 Tigers had been confirmed killed in the army fire. The Tiger dead included Major Senkolan and Captain Killi, he said. The JOC believes the number of Tiger casualties, both killed and wounded could be nearly 40.

Analysts consider the Thursday's attack as a one of four main attacks on the Army this year. The killings of 52 soldiers at Katupotha, seizure of the armoury of the Koddakadu camp after killing 13 soldiers, overrunning of the Iddikadu defencee killing 47 soldiers were the three major incidents prior to the Thursday's debacle.