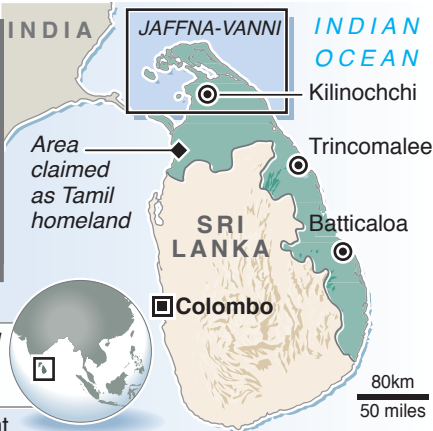
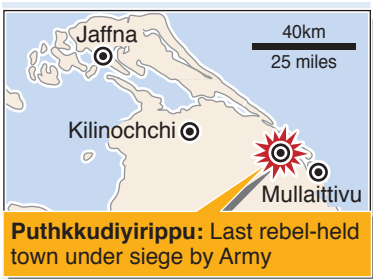


Tamil Tigers under siege in final stronghold

Up to 150,000 civilians are trapped in the war zone as the Sri Lankan Army closes in on the rebel Tamil Tigers in their last stronghold. However, even a military defeat is unlikely to stop the Tigers, who are expected to resort to an underground campaign of violence



HISTORY OF TAMIL TIGERS

- **1976: *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam* (LTTE) founded, seeking independence for ethnic Tamils**
- **1984-6:** Tigers absorb rival militant factions, killing their leaders
- **1987: *Indian Peacekeeping Force* clashes with LTTE after attempts to broker peace fail**
- **1990:** IPKF leaves Sri Lanka. Uneasy truce between government and Tigers
- **1991:** LTTE assassination of Indian Prime Minister **Rajiv Gandhi** shocks world
- **1993:** Sri Lankan President **Ranasinghe Premadasa** assassinated
- **2002:** LTTE gains control in much of north, but Norwegian-brokered peace talks collapse after Tigers refuse compromise, demanding total independence
- **2004:** Splinter group, led by LTTE lieutenant **Karuna**, sides with government
- **2005:** LTTE urges Tamils to boycott elections, ensuring victory of hard-liner **Mahinda Rajapaksa**. Crackdown on Tigers develops into full-scale war in 2006
- **More than 70,000 people have been killed since start of conflict in 1983**



Valupillai Prabhakaran, LTTE founder and leader