

US strongly condemns massacre of villagers. (1995, October 29)
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WASHINGTON, Saturday - The United States yesterday condemned "in the strongest terms" attacks by Tamil Tiger guerrillas on Sri Lankan villages, and urged the Tigers and the Colombo government to protect civilians in their conflict.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said that over the past week, "brutal attacks" by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on a string of villages in eastern Sri Lanka had led to the murder of over 100 innocent civilians.

"The United States condemns in the strongest terms these massacres and calls on the LTTE to

cease all such attacks immediately," Burns said in a statement.

The LTTE massacred 24 Sinhalese villagers on Thursday in a raid on remote hamlets in northeastern Weli Oya, and killed 90 mostly Sinhalese villagers in raids in the east and northeast over the weekend.

The rebels have not admitted responsibility for the attacks.

The U.S. statement made no direct reference to a major offensive which the Sri Lankan government has been mounting for the past 10 days against Tiger strongholds, in which the army says more than 500 rebels have been killed. But it urged the gov-

ernment of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to "take all possible steps to protect civilians in the on-going conflict and to cooperate fully with the relief agencies who are assisting persons displaced by the fighting".

It said Washington continued to support a negotiated political settlement of the long-standing conflict and welcomed the Sri Lankan government's August 3 announcement of proposals for constitutional reform.

"We believe this proposal constitutes a solid basis for a constructive dialogue on finding a peaceful solution to this tragic conflict," Burns said. -(Reuter)