

Beat: Miscellaneous

China arrests 380 in month-long crackdown on Xinjiang terror

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USPA News - China has arrested more than 380 people and dismantled 32 groups in a month-long crackdown on "terrorism" in the country's western region of Xinjiang, which has been the scene of bloody attacks in recent months, state-run media reported on Monday. China announced a year-long crackdown on Xinjiang terrorism last month after two SUVs plowed into a crowd of early morning shoppers at an open air market in Urumqi, the capital of the restive region.

The attackers also tossed explosives at the crowds, killing 39 people and injuring nearly 100 others. By Monday, exactly a month after the crackdown was announced, authorities in Xinjiang had arrested more than 380 suspects and busted 32 gangs allegedly involved in terrorism or other extremist activities. Courts in the region also convicted 315 people of terrorism-related offenses during the first month, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. In addition to the arrests, police seized 264 explosive devices, 3.15 tonnes of explosives, and 357 illegal knives, said Wang Qianrong, the deputy head of the Xinjiang public security department. Police also confiscated around 100 computers and 1,700 books on terrorism and religious extremism during raids at 21 locations. Xinhua said six police officers were also killed during the operations, but the report provided no other details about the deaths. The news of the deaths came just two days after a group of attackers crashed a truck into a police station in Yecheng County of southern Xinjiang before setting off explosives. Only three officers were injured but 13 attackers were shot dead by police. Wang said the 315 people convicted during the first month of the crackdown were tried in 120 separate cases involving terrorist attacks, religious extremism, the manufacture of guns and explosives, spreading extremist propaganda, and illegally crossing international borders in connection with extremism or terrorism. The official also praised the help from the public, saying police had received more than 400 tips during the first month of the operation. The tips led investigators to 12 different terrorist and extremist groups, after which more than 80 suspects were taken into custody, Xinhua reported. Last week, 13 people were executed in connection with terrorist attacks and other violent crimes in Xinjiang. Three other people were also sentenced to death for their involvement in last year's suicide car attack on Tiananmen Square in Beijing, which resulted in the deaths of six people, including three attackers. An estimated eight million Uighurs are living in the Central Asian region of Xinjiang, which is officially known as China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. A large number of Uighur are reportedly unhappy about the large migrant Han Chinese settlers, accusing them of making their interests less important and generally disregarding their culture. Xinjiang was the scene of violent clashes between Uighur Muslims and Han Chinese in July 2009, leaving 197 people killed and more than 1,700 others injured. The riots were the region's worst ethnic clashes in decades and the violence only stopped when a large number of troops were deployed to the remote western region. Following the riots, China cut all communications from the region to the rest of the world, including international phone calls, text messaging, and the Internet. Thousands of additional security forces have since been deployed and thousands of 'riot-proof' closed-circuit television cameras have been set up in public places in an attempt to discourage any violence or unrest.

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