Beat: News

China executes 13 prisoners over Xinjiang terror attacks

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USPA News - Thirteen people were executed in China on Monday in connection with terrorist attacks and other violent crimes in the western region of Xinjiang, state-run media reported. Three other people were sentenced to death for their involvement in last year`s suicide car attack on Beijing`s Tiananmen Square.

The 13 people were convicted in seven separate cases, including one case in which three of the suspects participated in violent riots that broke out in Xinjiang on June 26, 2013. As many as 34 people were killed, including 24 police officers and civilians and 10 attackers, when mobs attacked a police station, hotel, and government building in Lukqun Township in Shanshan County of Turpan Prefecture. The six cases against the other ten convicts were not detailed in Monday`s report from the state-run Xinhua news agency. It said the group had been convicted on charges that included organizing, leading and participating in terrorist groups, murder, arson, theft, and illegal manufacturing, storage and transportation of explosives. The courts in Aksu, Turpan and Hotan prefectures said the convicts had plotted terrorist attacks, killed police officers, government officials and civilians, caused huge property losses, and seriously endangered public security. Xinhua said the death penalties against the group were approved by the Supreme People`s Court before they were carried out on Monday. "The execution of criminals involved in terrorist attacks and violent crimes answers the calls of all ethnic groups, deters criminal activities, and demonstrates the resolve of the Communist Party of China and the government in cracking down on terrorism," a spokesman for Xinjiang`s higher people`s court was quoted as saying by Xinhua. It is unknown how many people are executed in China each year as the government considers these figures to be a state secret, but the figure is believed to be in the thousands. Also on Monday, three people were sentenced to death by Urumqi Intermediate People`s Court for their role in last year`s suicide car attack on Tiananmen Square in Beijing. The attack happened on October 28 when a jeep drove into crowds near the entrance to the Forbidden City that bears a giant portrait of communist revolutionary leader Mao Zedong. Six people were killed, including the three suspects, while 39 others were injured. Xinhua said Husanjan Wuxur, Yusup Umarniyaz and Yusup Ahmat were convicted of organizing and leading a terrorist group and sentenced to death for their involvement in the Tiananmen Square attack. Another person was sentenced to life imprisonment while a fifth suspect was sentenced to 20 years in prison for participating in a terrorist group and endangering public security. Three more were given jail terms of 5 to 10 years. According to prosecutors, the three main suspects and a person identified as Usmen Hasan, all from the Xinjiang region, had repeatedly met from December 2012 to September 2013 to watch extremist videos together, plan terrorist attacks such as bomb blasts and killings in Beijing, and tried to obtain guns and explosives. They then traveled to Beijing on October 7, 2013, along with Hasan`s wife and mother. When in the Chinese capital, the group raised money to buy a car, gasoline, knives and gas masks and visited Tiananmen Square several times in preparation for their attack. On October 28, Hasan, along with his wife and mother, drove their jeep into crowds at the iconic square. The area of the attack is internationally best known for the massive pro-democracy protests that took place in June 1989 at Tiananmen Square. The protests turned deadly on June 4 of that year when troops and tanks cleared the square with live fire, resulting in the deaths of at least 241 people. Other sources have put that figure at close to or more than 1,000. The Tiananmen Square attack last year by a group from Xinjiang was followed by an attack on March 1 when a group of eight knife-wielding attackers went after a crowd at Kunming Railway Station, one of the largest railway stations in southwest China. A total of 29 people were killed and 143 others were injured. Other deadly attacks have since also taken place in Xinjiang. 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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