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Country Report on Terrorism 2020 - Chapter 1 - China (Hong Kong and Macau) - China

Overview: The PRC response to terrorism remained difficult to distinguish from the government and ruling Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP’s) suppression of peaceful activities that authorities deemed separatist or subversive in nature. The PRC’s counterterrorism attention remained on ethnic Uyghur so-called extremists, specifically alleging that the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) is the primary source of terrorism in Xinjiang. The United States, however, has seen no credible evidence for more than a decade that the group still exists and removed ETIM from the Terrorist Exclusion List in November based on this lack of evidence. The United States continued to list ETIM as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist under Executive Order 13224 to maintain compliance with its obligations under the UN 1267 Committee. Beijing inaccurately labeled the “Turkistan Islamic Party” (TIP) as ETIM. TIP is a violent extremist group active in Syria and Afghanistan that shares some characteristics with the PRC’s description of ETIM. Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities have faced extreme oppression at the hands of China’s authoritarian government, which has used counterterrorism as a pretext to commit genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang. The PRC since 2017 has detained more than one million predominantly Muslim Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other religious and ethnic minority groups in internment camps, where officials subject them to torture, forced labor, persecution, and coercive family planning, among other abuses. The PRC continued to expand law enforcement tools and enhance its military and counterterrorism capabilities to justify and improve its ability to carry out this repressive campaign, respond to threats faced as a result of the PRC’s increasing global economic footprint, and garner international support for its counterterrorism-related policies.

2020 Terrorist Incidents: PRC officials maintain that no violent terrorist incidents have occurred in the country since 2016 owing to their Xinjiang policies.

Chinese citizens abroad were affected by terrorist attacks not specifically directed against PRC policies:

- On February 6, Islamic State sympathizers in the Maldives stabbed three persons, including two Chinese citizens. On November 2, a Chinese citizen was killed and another person of Chinese ethnicity injured by a gunman in a terrorist attack in Vienna, Austria, for which the Islamic State claimed responsibility. Four persons were killed and 23 injured in the Vienna attack.

International terrorist-related incidents targeting China and its interests also occurred in 2020 involving PRC infrastructure projects associated with the One Belt One Road initiative.

- In October, four Pakistani military and private security personnel guarding Chinese facilities related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the One Belt One Road initiative were killed in an attack by Baloch separatists.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: The PRC continued to advance and defend its policies on fighting terrorism, which included the use of political “re-education” camps in Xinjiang under the guise of vocational training and education centers. Authorities forced detainees to learn Communist Party ideology, Mandarin Chinese, and ideas to counter “extremist thinking.” International media reported on the expansion of these camps and on the continued mass transfer of Uyghur workers both within Xinjiang and to other provinces in China to fill labor shortages, and described draconian detention conditions in the facilities, including torture. A September State Council white paper on Xinjiang, however, lauded the PRC’s poverty alleviation efforts in Xinjiang as a successful model for combating terrorism. Throughout the year, the PRC continued to enhance and develop its military and counterterrorism capabilities as well as leverage its domestic technology sector to bolster surveillance capabilities, including for counterterrorism goals.

In 2020, to meet various UNSCR requirements, the Chinese government began collecting Passenger Name Record data and has collected Advance Passenger Information data since 2019.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: The PRC is a member of FATF, APG, and the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (EAG). China served as FATF president from July 2019 to July 2020. Brazil, China, India, Russia, and South Africa (BRICS) regularly cooperate on the topic of terrorist financing and have proposed institutionalizing the Anti-Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) BRICS Council.

Country:

China

Countering Violent Extremism: The PRC continued to implement broad repressive campaigns in Xinjiang under the guise of countering what the Chinese government called extremism, including mass “re-education” and “vocational training” of Uyghurs and other Muslims. The United States assesses the goal of these policies is to repress and silence religious minorities. CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping delivered a keynote address at the Third CCP Central Symposium on Work related to Xinjiang in September, in which he said the CCP should continue to “originalize” Sinicization of Islam in Xinjiang. The PRC government’s broad definitions of terrorism, conflation of ~~http://www.usdoj.gov/ice/docket/cyberterrorism/~~ or belief and violent extremism, as well as its unclear definition of “cyber terrorism” continue to raise human rights concerns. The Department of State’s *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* contains further information on the topic.

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Regional and International Cooperation: The PRC continued to promote the United Nations as the primary international forum for counterterrorism, where it actively advances a repressive approach to counterterrorism. It engaged in a range of multilateral, regional, and bilateral fora, presenting itself as a global leader on counterterrorism. China continued to work through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure to pursue counterterrorism cooperation, including joint border operations, drills, and youth deradicalization efforts. In September, BRICS held a fifth Counterterrorism Working Group meeting and in November unveiled a new counterterrorism strategy. In bilateral and multilateral fora, the PRC cited terrorism concerns to counter international criticism of human rights abuses in Xinjiang and to justify repatriation requests and other law enforcement actions overseas. The PRC engages through bilateral channels with a variety of governments to aggressively lobby the forcible return of Uyghur and other ethnic and religious minority asylum seekers who fled repression in Xinjiang, often labeling these individuals as terrorists or violent extremists. During the year, units from the People’s Liberation Army and the People’s Armed Police held CT drills with a range of countries, including the September Kavkaz-2020 multinational antiterror strategic exercise in Russia.

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China is a member of the following organizations:

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum
- The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
- The East Asia Summit
- The Global Counter-Terrorism Forum
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Austrian Red Cross
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum
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