



**ATTACK IN TIANANMEN SQUARE:
AN ACT OF TERROR OR VOICE OF SUPPRESSED?**

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28 Oct 2013 attack in Tiananmen Square resulting in death of five persons underlined a new challenge which is likely to alter China's internal and external security approaches to combating terror. The incident was especially embarrassing for the stability-obsessed party, given the billions of dollars it spends every year on domestic security, not only in Xinjiang but across the country, and that the crash happened in the heart of Beijing. According to a top terrorism experts of Beijing, terrorist outfit the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) was behind the Monday's attack. Terror attack left five people killed and 40 injured. The fact that the attacks were attributable to ETIM was confirmed by Meng Jianzhu. Meng Jianzhu is the head of a powerful commission for Political and Legal Affairs. The commission sits on 25 member Politburo and controls the security apparatus and courts in China. ETIM has in the past campaigned for independence for one of the minorities 'Uighurs'. Uighurs is the Turkik group native to Xinjiang. The group (ETIM) has claimed responsibility for several attacks in the past. There are close to 55 minority ethnic groups in China. Han is the majority ethnic group which constitutes more than 80 percent of China's population.

The Uyghurs are a predominantly Muslim ethnic group who live in Xinjiang, an area the size of Iran that is rich in natural resources, including oil. The province shares borders with Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Uyghurs, who speak a language related to Turkish, regard themselves as culturally and ethnically close to central Asia, despite a long history of Chinese rule. Since

the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1912, Xinjiang, which means "new frontier" in Chinese, has enjoyed varying levels of autonomy.

In 1933, the rebels declared independence and created the short-lived Islamic Republic of East Turkistan. The Chinese Communist Party took over the territory in 1949 and in 1955 it was declared an autonomous region, giving it a status similar to that of Tibet, which lies to the south of Xinjiang. Over the decades, waves of Han Chinese migrants arrived in the region, displacing Uyghurs from their traditional lands and fueling tensions. Xinjiang is now home to more than 8 million Han Chinese, up from 220,000 in 1949, and 10 million Uyghurs. The newcomers take most of the new jobs, and unemployment among Uyghurs is high. They complain of discrimination and harsh treatment by security forces, despite official promises of equal rights and ethnic harmony. Activists say that a campaign is being waged to weaken the Uyghurs' religious and cultural traditions and that the education system undermines use of the Uyghur language.

Further probing into the details of the group responsible for the specific attack, it emerged that eight people comprising three families and one individual had set this group up in September to plan the attack. They even conducted at least three scouting missions on Tiananmen Square. The group had in its kitty an acquired fund of 40,000 Yuan. They were also in possession of Tibetan knives and 400 litres of petrol. The group is reported to belong to 'Hotan'. Hotan is a city close to the border with Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) and is situated in south of Xinjiang. Over the years ETIM had incited, organized and committed terrorist attacks. The group was also instrumental in spreading the ideas of violence and terrorism. The Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement to this effect on 1 November 2013.

The attack is deemed to be the most direct and real threat to China's security. It could also have ramifications for neighbouring countries and regions. Actual reach and capabilities of ETIM are not yet ascertained. It is however can be said with certainty that the attack was a result of highly organized preparations and well rehearsed activity. ETIM is believed to be based in South, Central and West Asia having connections with many other

terrorist groups. The new challenge for china security apparatus is to make every effort to break the terrorist momentum. They need of the hour is to make emergency plans. Recurrence of similar incidents can be prevented only through effective plans based on credible intelligence and ensuring their efficacious implementation.

Xinjiang officials have asserted that needle of suspicion points towards ETIM's overseas members for fomenting trouble in Hotan. The group is reported to have their masterminds in Pakistani camps. This issue has become an irritant in otherwise all-weather relationship between China and Pakistan. Chinese officials have expressed their discontentment in private regarding Pakistan's inability to crack down on terror groups. Despite these roadblocks Beijing goes ahead with deepening strategic ties with Islamabad.



In this photo, paramilitary policemen, back, guard a street in Beijing as people wait at a bus stop near the Tiananmen Gate. Here a sport utility vehicle veered into a crowd and then crashed and caught fire on Monday 28 Oct 2013. Imprinted flags with religious slogans were found in the SUV used in the attack and at the temporary lodgings of five arrested suspects.

Five suspects were detained in deadly crash in Tiananmen Square. The attack -- in which five people died and more than forty were hurt -- was "carefully planned, organized and premeditated," police said on their official Weibo account online. Working with police in northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Beijing police captured the suspects. Usmen Hasan; his mother, Kuwanhan Reyim; and his wife, Gulkiz Gini, drove a jeep bearing a Xinjiang license plate into a crowd in the famed square at noon on Monday,

killing five people and injuring another 40. The jeep then crashed into a guardrail of Jinshui Bridge across the moat of the Forbidden City. All three of the jeep's occupants died when they set gasoline afire, the spokesman said. The other two fatalities were tourists; a woman from the Philippines and a Chinese man. Police found gasoline, two knives and steel sticks "as well as a flag with extremist religious content" in the jeep. In addition, authorities found knives and a "jihad" flag in the temporary residence of the five detained suspects, it added.

Following the attack, the military chief of China's western Xinjiang region has been removed from the top Party body overseeing the region, State media reported on 3 November 2013, less than a week after the terror attack in Tiananmen Square. People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Peng Yong was no longer serving on the Communist Party of China's (CPC) Standing Committee in Xinjiang – the top ruling party agency for the region. General Peng was appointed to the CPC's 370-member Central Committee, following the leadership change. Though China's security apparatus seems to be in total command of the situation but whether it would be able to face the challenge of addressing discontentment of the Uighurs minority ethnic group and preclude further terror attacks remains to be seen.

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