

# China defines terrorism to win global support

By CHARLES HUTZLER, Associated Press – 1 day ago

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BEIJING (AP) — China's legislature authorized new guidelines Saturday to define and combat terrorism, inching closer to international practices as the nation grapples with a sporadically violent rebellion in Central Asian border lands.

The resolution clearly sets China's legal definition of terrorism and the steps for formally declaring groups and individuals terrorists and for freezing their assets. The measure should help law enforcement prosecute terrorists differently from other criminals and to promote international cooperation on terrorism, said Li Shouwei, a criminal law expert for the legislature.

"Our country faces a real threat from terrorist activities, and the long-term, complex and sharp counterterrorism struggle is increasingly prominent," Li told reporters after the legislative session.

Separatist sentiment among Uighurs, a Turkic and traditionally Muslim ethnic group, in China's western Xinjiang region has occasionally erupted in riots, bombings and other acts of violence. Despite pouring in billions of dollars in investment and the migration of millions of Han Chinese into the largely poor, remote territory, China has been unable to squelch the violence. A raid on a police station and an arson-stabbing attack took place in July.

Many attacks seem unsophisticated and directed against symbols of Chinese government power, like court houses or troop barracks. The government and some security experts say that the violence is becoming more indiscriminate and is being carried out by militants trained and based across the border in Pakistan and with possible links to other radical Islamic groups.

"Increasingly the Chinese government has realized it must work with international partners to fight the existing terrorist threat to China," said Rohan Gunaratna, a terrorism expert at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.

While Beijing has sought for much of the past decade to link the situation in Xinjiang with the broader U.S.-led efforts to fight jihadist groups, Chinese methods have often undercut its quest for wider support. Instead of prosecuting Uighurs as terrorists, authorities have preferred to accuse them of "endangering national security," charges frequently used against political dissidents.

Beijing has also restricted the practice of Islam and bandied the terrorist label against the Dalai Lama and supporters of the Tibetan Buddhist leader who oppose Chinese rule.

In a measure of its uneasiness with Beijing, the U.S. government refused to turn over Uighurs captured in Afghanistan and interned at Guantanamo Bay, though it repatriated the captured nationals of many other countries.

Pakistan, which abuts Xinjiang and is a long-term ally of China, generally assists Beijing in trying to clamp down on militant Uighur separatists. But the most radical groups, the Turkistan Islamic Party and its East Turkistan Islamic Movement offshoot, operate in Pakistan's tribal areas where Islamabad is unable or unwilling to act.

Gunaratna, the terrorism expert, said Beijing realizes it needs intelligence from Gulf coast countries, Germany and others to better deal with the Uighur threat.

The terrorism resolution is intended to bridge gaps between China and other countries. It defines terrorism as an act whose "goal is to create terror in society, harm public security or threaten national institutions and international organizations and by using violence, sabotage, intimidation and other methods to cause or intend to cause human casualties, great loss to property, harm to public infrastructure, chaos to the social order and other severe social damage."

Li, the criminal law expert, said the definition roughly aligned with those of other countries. Agencies involved in counterterrorism will apply that definition to determine which groups or individuals should be placed on terrorist lists, and once listed the government will freeze their assets, according to the resolution.

More importantly, Li said, the resolution helps to make sure that terrorists are charged as such and not with other crimes — an apparent reference to the prevailing practice of using state security charges instead of terrorism.

"By defining terrorist activities more clearly in regulations, it makes it easier to distinguish in practice terrorist crimes from other crimes," Li told reporters.

The measure itself is unlikely to end all differences. A host of government agencies, Communist Party bodies and the military are involved in counterterrorism and Xinjiang. Li suggested that

differences among competing bodies meant that "the time is not mature for enacting a full counterterrorism law."

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