

Beat: News

Nearly 100 died in attack in China; Xinjiang on July 28, officials say

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USPA News - Nearly 100 people, including 37 civilians, were killed last Monday when dozens of militants carried out an attack in China's western region of Xinjiang, the regional government disclosed on Sunday, making it some of the region's worst violence in years. The attack took place on Monday morning in Shache County in Xinjiang's far south, but the violence only became public on Tuesday, when the state-run Xinhua news agency said "dozens" of civilians had been killed.

The regional government disclosed on Sunday that a total of 96 people had been killed. It happened when a group armed with knives and axes attacked a police station and government offices in Elixku Township, after which the group moved to Huangdi Township, where they attacked civilians. They also set up roadblocks and stopped vehicles, stabbing passengers and "forcing" some civilians to join them in carrying out the attack, Xinhua said. The Xinjiang government said 37 civilians were killed, 13 people were injured, and 31 vehicles were damaged, of which six were set on fire. When security forces responded, 59 attackers were killed and 215 people allegedly involved in the attack were taken into custody. Machetes, axes and banners with slogans calling for jihad were seized. "This was a case of a serious, violent terrorist attack which was linked to both domestic and foreign terrorist organizations. The attack was organized, premeditated, carefully planned, and of an evil nature," the local government said in Sunday's statement. It said 35 of the civilian victims were migrant Han Chinese settlers, while the other two were Uighur Muslims. It was not immediately known why it took so long for China to disclose the large number of casualties, but similar reports in the past have also been delayed in apparent attempts to avoid significant news coverage. Tuesday's initial report on the Xinhua news agency was followed almost immediately with a second article that condemned the violence and justified the shoot-to-kill practice by police. Xinjiang has been the scene of bloody attacks over the past year. Security forces announced a year-long crackdown on Xinjiang terrorism in May 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. 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 also 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 2009 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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