



Global Islamism Monitor No. 57

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CHINA'S CONTROVERSIAL ANTI-MUSLIM CAMPAIGN...

For nearly two years, the People's Republic of China has waged an extensive governmental crackdown in its westernmost province of Xinjiang - one that has targeted the region's Uighur Muslim minority through an array of extensive, and invasive, measures that have drawn ire from the international community. Human rights watchdog Amnesty International had detailed what amounts to "an intensifying government campaign of mass internment, intrusive surveillance, political indoctrination, and forced cultural assimilation" directed against the Uighurs, who Chinese officials worry are prone to radicalization. These restrictions range from prohibitions on public displays of religion, invasive monitoring of social activities among Chinese Muslims, and even constraints on Islamic diet and dress. But among the most egregious and far-reaching tactics adopted by local authorities has been the establishment of so-called "reeducation camps" throughout the region, which are now estimated to house upwards of one million Chinese citizens. (*Voice of America*, September 24, 2018)

...GETS LEGAL COVER

Despite growing international attention to, and outrage over, its policies in Xinjiang, the PRC is forging ahead with steps designed to formalize and expand its anti-Uighur campaign. To this end, authorities in Xinjiang recently instituted revisions to existing law permitting them to "educate and transform" those deemed to have been influenced by extremist ideology - thereby providing a legal basis for the "reeducation camps" (termed "vocational training centres" in official parlance) that have proliferated throughout the region. (*South China Morning Post*, October 10, 2018)

EGYPT'S SINAI STRATEGY GOES LOCAL

In its long-running efforts to secure the Sinai, Cairo is attempting a new tack. In recent weeks, the Egyptian military has reportedly been arming Bedouin tribesmen and using them to patrol the Peninsula. Tribesmen claim that their knowledge of the local area gives them an advantage in the ongoing campaign against the Islamic State affiliate that operates in the region. Previously, however, the Egyptian military had been wary of providing Bedouins with weapons, concerned about the extent of their loyalty to the Egyptian state. The current policy reflects a shift in those attitudes, and is part of a larger effort on the part of Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi to encourage the population of the Sinai to assume an active role in his government's counterterrorism fight. (*London Daily Mail*, September 27, 2018)

FEARS OF AN ISLAMIC STATE DRONE NAVY

ISIS may now be losing ground in Iraq and Syria, but the terror group is still innovating in its battlefield tactics - and raising worries in the West in the process. "There is an emergence in the Middle East with ISIS of using unmanned remotely controlled vessels that are packed with explosives, and that would pose a significant challenge," Lt. Cmdr. Devon Brennan, commander of the Coast Guard's Maritime Safety and Security Team, told reporters during a recent simulation in New York. In particular, U.S. policymakers are worried that the group could harness unmanned vessels laden with explosives against civilian soft targets, both on land or at sea.

"Usually our tactics are developed around the fact that we can get an individual to stop and comply, but if it's just a vessel that's being remotely controlled, and that person [controlling it] obviously has no fear for their life, it creates more of a difficult situation for us," Brennan explained. In response, the Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) bureau have launched a "combined effort" to pre-screen and proactively ascertain potential threats that could target U.S. ports. (*Business Insider*, October 5, 2018)

AL-QAEDA EXPANDS ITS AFRICAN PRESENCE

In September, al-Qaeda formally announced the establishment of a new African outpost in Burkina Faso in what terrorism experts say is a significant development highlighting the group's growing regional reach in Africa. The as-yet-unnamed cell is said to be an offshoot of al-Qaeda's Mali-based affiliate, known as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JMIN) - a group which, in and of itself, is a significant threat actor in the Sahel region. "JNIM presents a significant terrorism threat across the Sahel because it unites disparate extremist groups under one umbrella and actively targets regional governments and Western interests," says Samantha Reho, a spokesperson for the Pentagon's U.S Africa Command. "These networks leverage local ethnic grievances and poor economic conditions to recruit while also using violence to subdue the local populace." (*Fox News*, October 9, 2018)