

Al Qaeda's Passage to China

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Watch the Muslim heads roll if Al Qaeda begins a campaign in China....

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In mid-September, Al Qaeda diverted a small but potent force from Iraq to a new mission: the opening of a new front in China. The unit was smuggled into the Chinese border town of Kushi in the Xinjiang Uygur province in November, after a meandering journey traced by DEBKA-Net-Weekly's counter-terror sources. There, the terrorists were quickly absorbed by the al Qaeda infrastructure of local Uygur Muslim extremist cells.

(See DEBKA Exclusive Map attached to this article.)

Their plan of campaign in the first stage was to reach Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai for strikes against US embassies and consulates, American firms operating in China and American tourists.

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(This al Qaeda group was previously revealed by DEBKA-Net-Weekly 229 on Nov. 11 [A Jihadist Airlift] as having set out from Baghdad between mid-September and early October, stopping over in Qatar and proceeding to Konduz in northern Afghanistan for special training.)

DEBKA-Net-Weekly's sources report the terrorists slipped north from Konduz into Tajikistan and onto the Kyrgyz section of the strategic Fergana Valley which straddles Central Asia. There, they rendezvoused at two places, Osh and Jalal-Abad close to the Kyrgyz-Uzbekistan border, establishing jumping-off points for both China and Central Asia.

The Islamist terrorists were guided from Konduz into Kyrgyzstan by armed men of al Qaeda's operational arm in Uzbekistan, the MUI, which also has tentacles in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as training camps in the Fergana Valley. The commander of these cells is Tahir Yuldashev, an old

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comrade of Osama bin Laden who fought alongside him in Afghanistan. In 2004, Yuldashev returned to Tashkent from the badlands of Pakistan's South Waziristan and was ordered to prepare facilities in Osh and Jalal–Abad for the incoming terrorist unit. His payment was a section of the force to boost his campaign against Uzbek president Karimov.

The unit from Konduz accordingly divided into two heads – the largest proceeding from Osh into China and fetching up in Kushi, while the second group assembled in Jalal–Abad, turned west and crossed into Uzbekistan to set up base in the Fergana town of Andijon.

American and British military and intelligence officials picked up the group's arrival at the Konduz training facility, but decided after consultation that the large–scale forces needed to eradicate the facility would be hard to muster. They therefore resolved to await events and meanwhile find out where the mysterious al Qaeda force was heading.

According to DEBKA–Net–Weekly's intelligence sources, Washington reported the arrival to Moscow, hoping the counter–terror–trained Russian Motorized Rifle Division 201 stationed in Uzbekistan would step in to wipe out the al Qaeda intruders. The Russians declined to take action, but said they would not object to Beijing sending Chinese troops over the border to tackle the incoming terrorists.

This was the first time Moscow had ever consented to the Chinese military stepping into Central Asian soil and joining the war on terror in that region.

Clearly, the Kremlin, which frowns on American military bases and movements in Central Asia, was not eager to pull American chestnuts out of the fire

The skirmishing between Washington, Moscow and Beijing over who should tackle the al Qaeda menace – if anyone – had the result of opening the door for al Qaeda to move a force across half the globe from Iraq to the Far East unhindered and plant it in western China and eastern Uzbekistan.

The Chinese government was caught totally unprepared and did its best to tune out the loud alarms sounded by Chinese military and security chiefs.

However, on November 9, the Chinese police alerted the US embassy in Beijing to a possible attack by Islamic rebels on luxury hotels throughout China. The US embassy accordingly advised American visitors to "review their plans" to stay at four– and five–star hotels in China over the coming week.

A sharper notice was issued in the southern Chinese town of Guangzhou relaying "credible information" that a terrorist threat may exist against official US government facilities in the city. American citizens in south China were advised to remain alert to possible threats.

China's Ministry of Public Security responded to these warnings, which were obviously sourced in Chinese police circles, with anger. A statement accused

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an unnamed "foreign citizen" of fabricating the so-called attack on four- and five-star hotels in China. The Chinese foreign ministry chipped in with, "Chinese public security has never issued such a warning for foreigners on the hotel issue," its spokesman told reporters. "Chinese hotels are safe!" he added.

US officials diplomatically withdrew their terror alert notice.

However, while Chinese officials are doing their utmost to calm fears that could affect the tourist industry, DEBKA-Net-Weekly's counter-terror sources affirm that a terror alert is indeed in force in Chinese cities.

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