

US media ramps up anti-China campaign over Uyghur ‘human rights’

By Peter Symonds
28 November 2019

The escalating barrage of propaganda against China emanating from the US and its allies has stepped up another notch with the publication of leaked Chinese documents by the *New York Times* and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists on the oppressive measures employed against the Muslim Uyghur minority in the western province of Xinjiang.

The documents have been seized upon by the US media and politicians to vilify the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime and to ramp up demands for Washington to impose punitive measures on Beijing. Yesterday, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared that there was “overwhelming” evidence that the CCP was “committing human rights violations and abuses against individuals in mass detention.”

The *New York Times* has run several comments denouncing the Chinese regime following its article on November 16 detailing some aspects of the 24 documents that it obtained, including some 200 pages of internal speeches by Chinese President Xi Jinping and other leaders.

An editorial on November 18 entitled “This is not dystopian fiction. This is China,” declared that the documents echoed *1984* and *Brave New World* and branded the Chinese “reeducation” camps as “modern-day totalitarian brainwashing.” Another comment on the same day, “Beijing’s Secrets of Xinjiang,” criticized the West for being “largely silent” and declared that there was “no excuse for Western leaders, the World Bank or United Nations” for not speaking out.

All of this is to a script drawn up by the CIA and US State Department, with the media seeking to outbid one another in their lurid denunciations of China. A particularly filthy comment published in the *Washington Post* on November 3 was entitled “In China, every day is Kristallnacht.” It provocatively likened China’s cultural oppression and internment of ethnic Uyghurs to the Nazi genocide of Jews in which millions were murdered in concentration camps during World War II.

The *World Socialist Web Site* holds no brief for, and gives no political support whatsoever to, the CCP regime in Beijing. As it has implemented capitalist restoration from 1978 onwards, the CCP leadership has increasingly relied on the whipping up

of Chinese nationalism to try to cement its shaky social base. Its resort to greater Han chauvinism has alienated ethnic minorities not only in Xinjiang, but in Tibet and other areas, which has only deepened as it has responded to separatist sentiment and terrorist acts with police state repression.

Beijing’s attempts to portray its detention centres in Xinjiang as “re-education” facilities, together with its dismissal of the latest caches of leaked documents as fakes, are simply not credible. On the other hand, the way in which US imperialism and its allies are cynically exploiting the oppression of Uyghurs for their own reactionary purposes is expressed in the inflated claims about the documents.

Neither of the two batches of documents, insofar as they have been translated and published in English, support the claim, repeatedly made in the Western media, that at least one million Uyghurs are being detained in Chinese “reeducation camps.” The figure has the character of a big lie, endlessly recycled but not substantiated, other than on the basis of “estimates” by various “experts.”

The *New York Times* opened its pages to one such “expert”—Adrian Zenz—on November 24 to add his voice to the sensational claims being made about the “gigabytes of files, reams of reports, thousands of spreadsheets” demonstrating the mass internment in Xinjiang. He claims to have obtained his own “massive cache of government files”—that have not been made public as yet—on which he bases his own revised estimate of between 900,000 and 1.8 million people detained since 2017.

There is every reason to be cautious about accepting such “estimates” as good coin. Zenz is a German academic associated with a network of right-wing think tanks and publications that are connected to exile Uyghur organisations including the World Uyghur Congress and the American Uyghur Association, both of which are funded by the CIA front, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). He is a lecturer at the European School of Culture and Theology in Germany and a senior fellow at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington. He is featured by media such as Radio Free Asia (the US State Department propaganda outlet) and *Bitter Winter*, published by the Italian-based Center for Studies in New Religions (see: “The New York Times and

its Uyghur ‘activist’”).

The documents released last Sunday by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists do appear to give a glimpse of the oppressive regime inside China’s detention centres in Xinjiang, but they do not represent a vast trove nor are they comprehensive in any sense. They include a nine-page telegram from Chinese security officials concerning the running of the centres emphasizing the need to prevent escapes and manage every aspect of the life of detainees; four short intelligence briefings pointing to the mass surveillance of suspected Uyghurs; and a public court document concerning the trial and sentencing of a Uyghur man for inciting “ethnic hatred” and “extreme thoughts.”

The *New York Times* “cache” of documents is of a different character, focusing on the CCP’s internal discussion which highlights the genesis of the surveillance and “re-education” program in the escalating violent attacks by Uyghur extremists. President Xi visited Xinjiang in April 2014 following a particularly bloody attack on travellers and employees at Kunming railway station in southern China. Eight attackers armed with knives and meat cleavers killed 29 people and injured more than 130 others. Amid public outrage, Xi called for a “struggle against terrorism, infiltration and separatism,” declaring that officials must be harsh and “show absolutely no mercy.”

The *New York Times* editorial board expresses “surprise” that Xi “appeals to Western examples to excuse himself” and urges Chinese officials to study how the US responded to the September 11 terrorist attacks. In reality, Xi simply confirms that the US “war on terror” became the model for autocratic regimes around the world. The Bush administration seized on the 2001 attacks not only as the excuse for its illegal invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, but also to develop its own detention and torture centres in both countries. It also established the notorious Guantanamo Bay hellhole where so-called enemy combatants were held indefinitely without charge.

The criminal activities of US imperialism underline the rank hypocrisy of its latest “human rights” campaign against China. Not only is the Guantánamo Bay prison camp still in operation, but the US runs a network of more than 200 detention centres for immigrants and refugees whose only “crime” is to seek a better life for themselves and their families. In the fiscal year 2018, on a daily basis more than 40,000 people were in detention in the US and nearly 400,000 people over the year. At least 166 people died in custody between 2003–16.

Washington has a long record of drumming up “human rights” campaigns to justify regime change operations, military provocations and wars, while carrying out its own gross abuses and ignoring those of key allies. Indeed, when the Bush administration needed China’s support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, it turned a blind eye to Beijing’s own “war on terror” in Xinjiang. Now as the Trump administration ratchets up its trade war and military build-up in Asia against

China, it is ramping up its propaganda campaign over Uyghur oppression aimed at weakening and eventually breaking up China.

The targeting of Xinjiang is not accidental. Not only is the western province resource-rich and strategically positioned, but it is also a focus of President Xi’s Belt and Road Initiative—a massive infrastructure plan aimed at linking the Eurasian landmass with Africa and the Middle East and undermining US efforts to encircle China. By whipping up international outrage and encouraging, or even fomenting, opposition and unrest in Xinjiang, the US calculates that it can disrupt Beijing’s plans.

The CIA and US State Department not only have close, longstanding links to the Uyghur diaspora in Europe and the United States via organisations such as the World Uyghur Congress and the American Uyghur Association, but have forged new ties with Uyghur Islamist extremists fighting in the Middle East. The CIA and US military have relied on Al Qaeda-linked fighters in the dirty war in Syria, nominally targeted against Islamic State, but, in reality, aimed primarily at toppling the Assad regime backed by Russia and Iran.

According to a 2017 policy brief by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague, thousands of Uyghur extremists have been fighting in Syria. While some joined Islamic State, the largest contingent belongs to the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) which has been operating under the umbrella of Al Qaeda’s Jabhat al-Nusra. From 2017, Uyghur militia in Syria increasingly made China, rather than the Middle East, a focus of their propaganda. Amid Al Qaeda and Islamic State videos calling for a jihad against China, TIP leader Abdul Haq declared: “China is not only our enemy, but the enemy of all the Muslims.”

The coincidence between this declaration of jihad and the escalation of the aggressive US propaganda campaign over the past two years is suggestive. Just as US imperialism exploited right-wing Islamists including Al Qaeda in the 1980s to mire the Soviet Union in an unwinnable war in Afghanistan, so there are undoubtedly sections of the CIA and Pentagon that are at the very least considering whether to back and assist a new “holy war” in Xinjiang to undermine the CCP regime in Beijing.

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