

STORIES BY RISHAB REVANKAR
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Rome, Italy

In Jan. 2012, the Costa Concordia ran aground off a small Italian island, killing 32 passengers and injuring others on board. Ship captain Francesco Schettino is now on trial for manslaughter and abandoning ship. Schettino claims that at the time of shipwreck, "the ship was literally falling on top of him and he fell into the lifeboat," according to CNN. Schettino's crew members contend otherwise. "Francesco Schettino jumped into the lifeboat," Stefano Iannelli, a crew member who allegedly followed Schettino, testified at a court in Grosseto, Italy.

Armenia, Colombia

In the rural communities of Colombia, educators like Myriam Mazzo teach children of various ages and grade levels — all in a single classroom. But Mazzo's approach, dubbed Escuela Nueva, enables students to work in small groups at their own pace, rather than having teachers stand by a blackboard and address the whole class. In a region where poverty runs rampant and culture often gives importance to work over school, Escuela Nueva's flexible program encourages dropout students to return to school and make inroads in education at their own pace.

Gulf of Guinea, Nigeria

An analyst declared "extreme danger" after two U.S. sailors were kidnapped by armed pirates off the coast of Nigeria on Oct. 23. Nearly three weeks later, the U.S. Department of State has confirmed release and rescue of the sailors, both believed to be U.S. citizens. Infiltrated by criminal gangs who account for over 200 incidents involving piracy in 2013, the Gulf of Guinea is the top kidnap hot-spot in the world, the International Maritime Bureau reports.

Cebu, Philippines

Some say 2,000 or 2,500, others 10,000. It may be weeks, maybe months, before the death toll is finalized, but what's certain is that Typhoon Haiyan has killed too many to count. Described by storm survivors as "worse than hell," Haiyan wrecked the Philippine islands from the East, displacing at least 800,000 people. On Nov. 12, four days after the storm made landfall, Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Paul Kennedy called for a dispatch of U.S. Navy amphibious ships, CNN reports. Kennedy intends for the specialized vessels to carry helicopters, small boats, trucks and equipment to produce potable water.



Tiananmen Square vehicle crash gives rise to smoke, suspicions, allegations

BY RISHAB REVANKAR
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Beijing is on alert. On Oct. 28, a 4x4 vehicle lurched through a crowd of tourists at Tiananmen Square, eventually slamming into a guardrail and bursting into flames.

After the incident left five dead and 38 injured, witnesses and police agreed that the crash was deliberate.

But nearly three weeks afterward, many continue to wonder whether the incident was an act of terror or a final cry of desperation?

Chinese authorities have given their answer.

"The attack in Beijing was organized and premeditated," China's security chief Meng Jianzhu told Phoenix Television. "The instigator behind the scenes is the East Turkestan Islamic Movement terrorist organization that operates in Central and West Asia."

"Activists from the western province of Xinxiang are playing some kind of role in the incident," Ryong Oh, editorial director of the Asia Journalist Association, told The Guilfordian in a phone interview.

Commonly associated with the Uighur Muslim ethnic minority, the ETIM hails from Xinxiang and faces the blame for nearly 200 acts of terrorism.

"After 9/11, China managed to convince the U.S. government and the U.N. that ETIM



Tiananmen Square, made famous by the 1989 protests, may be the site of another political incident.

is a terrorist group," Chien-peng Chung, author of "China's 'War on Terror' and Uighur Separatism," told The Guilfordian in a phone interview.

"But are they a force to be reckoned with? Are they responsible for the Tiananmen crash? I really don't know," Chung said.

Although the Chinese government indicated ETIM as the perpetrator within 24 hours of the incident, many, like Chung, fail to see the evidence linking ETIM to the violence.

"Beijing is trying to link the attack with terrorism, because it provides better justification for their initiative to suppress Muslim groups," said Professor of Political

Science George Guo.

Umberto Bacchi, journalist for International Business Times, expressed a similar sentiment in an email to The Guilfordian.

"Branding an attack as the work of jihadists and Muslim terrorists makes it easier for Chinese authorities to justify the quelling of dissent in Xinxiang," Bacchi said.

As Bacchi suggests, Beijing's pointing a finger at ETIM may be the result of a long and complicated relationship with Muslim groups in Xinxiang.

"The extremely exciting developments in China have disproportionately benefitted the Han Chinese compared to the Uighur

people," said Associate Professor of Religious Studies Eric Mortensen.

"So even if the Uighurs or ETIM are responsible, there's justification for the discontent," Mortensen said. "They're very hard-pressed politically, religiously and economically. The situations in the back alleys of cities in Xinxiang are pretty desperate."

Mortensen studied abroad in Beijing as an undergraduate and has spent months living with nomadic communities during his travels to China.

Zhonghao Cui, a native of Kunming, China, and Guo both believe that dissent played a role in instigating the attack.

"You see incidents like these recurring in China," Guo said. "I think it could be anyone voicing dissatisfaction and deciding to retaliate against the government."

"This was clearly amateurish," said Cui, who currently studies at The University of Texas at Austin, in an email interview. "It's likely a protest against the corrupt government by some private citizen."

While the rest of the world awaits evidence to confirm the attackers' identities, Chinese security forces are addressing an issue of their own.

"This was an attack that shook a symbolic and tightly controlled place like Tiananmen Square," Bacchi said. "It's not often you see smoke billowing next to the portrait of Chairman Mao at the Tiananmen Gate."