

China says it foiled terror plot

by UPI

BEIJING - Chinese officials' thin account of foiling a terrorist hijacking plot this month has some China-watchers expressing skepticism about what actually happened. Nur Bekri, chairman of the Xinjiang regional government, has said only that the intent of the two to four suspects, who may have been possessed gasoline, was to "create an air disaster," Time magazine reported Monday. The alleged highjacking, which surely would have affected the upcoming 2008 Summer Olympic Games, was planned by separatists from the Muslim-majority province of Xinjiang, according to the official. Time said initial reports stated that China Southern flight CZ6901 had made an emergency landing in Lanzhou after an apparent attempt to blow up the aircraft. The plane was en route from the Xinjiang capital of Urumqi to Beijing. Steven Tsang, a China specialist at St. Anthony's College, said the Chinese government's story doesn't ring true. "There's no way any anti-terrorism police would have released the plane and passengers to fly on without extensive interviews of the passengers, forensic examination of the plane and so on," Tsang said. Russell Leigh Moses of the China Center in Beijing said the incident may have been an opportunity for the communist government to show it would quell any political resistance in such places as Xinjiang or Tibet.

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