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China invokes Waco siege in condemning Dalai Lama

BEIJING, Oct 31 (Reuters) - Chinese state media condemned the Dalai Lama on Monday for his views on reincarnation, saying that the exiled Buddhist monk was trying to revise history, compounding his crimes as a separatist.

The Dalai Lama had argued in September that he or other Tibetan leaders should be the ones to decide on his reincarnation, not the Chinese governments.

"The Dalai Lama not only is attempting to bury long established historical tenets of Tibetan Buddhism with him when he dies, but is adding another criminal charge to his teachings of separatism, which damages Tibet and Buddhism," the *People's Daily*, the official voice of the Chinese government, said in a commentary.

China has ruled that it has the final say in all reincarnations of living Buddhas, or senior religious figures in Tibetan Buddhism, and that it has to agree to the selection of the next Dalai Lama.

In 1995, after the Dalai Lama claimed that a boy in Tibet was the reincarnation of the previous Panchen Lama, the second highest figure in Tibetan Buddhism, the Chinese government revoked the announcement and installed what it determined to be the correct one.

Now 75, the Dalai Lama, who regularly defies Chinese authority, has asserted he will not be reborn in China if Tibet is not free.

"The Dalai Lama's goal in denouncing the Chinese government's right to supervise reincarnation is to preserve his clique's grasp on the symbol of the next reincarnation and serve his political separatist aims," the commentary said.

To help make its point, the commentary borrowed from recent American history, when U.S. federal agents raided the headquarters of David Koresh's Branch Davidian religious sect in Waco, Texas, amid allegations of child abuse, statutory rape and underage marriage.

"At that time, David Koresh called himself Jesus, ensnared large groups of followers, publicly opposed national law, and in 1993 he was eliminated by federal agents who even used tanks," the paper said.

The Dalai Lama denies allegations that he seeks to split from China, repeating that he wants only autonomy for the Tibet Autonomous Region.

China has held authority over Tibet since it took control in 1950. The Dalai Lama departed to India in 1959 following an attempted uprising. Occasional unrest has continued since.

China's Foreign Ministry has said the government would take tough measures to ensure stability after a number of self-immolations, allegedly in protest at Chinese control in a heavily Tibetan part of Sichuan province, which borders Tibet.

Ten people have set fire to themselves in Tibetan parts of China in recent months, mostly in Aba in Sichuan, allegedly in protest against Chinese rule and what some claim are restrictions on their culture and faith.

Tibetan leaders in exile have asserted that China's firm position has forced Tibetans to take such desperate steps. (Reporting by Michael Martina; Editing by Ken Wills, Nick Macfie and Russ Hunt)

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Some questions:

Do the writers for Reuters think the Dalai Lama is admirable? What makes you think so?

Do the writers think China is justified in opposing his views?

What do you think was the point of the Chinese *People's Daily's* reference to Waco?

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The Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Tibetan spiritual leader in September said he or other Tibetan leaders should be the ones to decide on his reincarnation, not Beijing.

"The Dalai Lama not only is attempting to bury long established historical tenets of Tibetan Buddhism with him when he dies, but is adding another criminal charge to his teachings of separatism, which damages Tibet and Buddhism," the *People's Daily*, the mouthpiece of the ruling Communist Party, said in a commentary.

China contends that it has the final say in all reincarnations of living Buddhas, or senior religious figures in Tibetan Buddhism, and that it has to sign off on the selection of the next Dalai Lama.

In 1995, after the Dalai Lama named a boy in Tibet as the reincarnation of the previous Panchen Lama, the second highest figure in Tibetan Buddhism, the Chinese government put that boy under house arrest and installed another in his place.

Now 75, the Dalai Lama, a regular target of Chinese denunciations, has said he will not be reborn in China if Tibet is not free.

"The Dalai Lama's goal in denouncing the Chinese government's right to supervise reincarnation is to preserve his clique's grasp on the symbol of the next reincarnation and serve his political separatist aims," the commentary said.

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"At that time, David Koresh called himself Jesus, ensnared large groups of followers, publicly opposed national law, and in 1993 he was eliminated by federal agents who even used tanks," the paper said.

The Dalai Lama rejects allegations that he seeks to split from China, insisting that he wants only real autonomy for his homeland, which Beijing calls the "Tibet Autonomous Region".

China has ruled Tibet since Communist troops seized control in 1950. The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 following a failed uprising, and sporadic unrest has continued since.

China's Foreign Ministry has said the government would take tough measures to ensure stability after a spate of self-immolations in protest at Chinese controls in a restive, heavily Tibetan part of Sichuan province, which borders Tibet.

Ten people have set fire to themselves in Tibetan parts of China in recent months, mostly in Aba in Sichuan, in protest against Chinese rule and what they say are restrictions on their culture and faith.

Tibetan leaders in exile have blamed China's hard-line position for forcing Tibetans to take such desperate steps. (Reporting by Michael Martina; Editing by Ken Wills and Nick Macfie)

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