

# China sanctioned for Uyghur Muslim persecution

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—The Biden administration is getting tough on China for persecuting Uyghur Muslims in the country's western province of Xinjiang.

On Dec. 16, the Department of Commerce imposed new sanctions on several Chinese biotech and surveillance companies by barring those companies from trading or exchanging products with the United States.

Also, Congress passed a bill barring imports from China's Xinjiang region unless businesses can prove they were produced without forced labor.

Included on the list of companies the United States may not trade with is China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences and its 11 research institutes. The United States particularly is concerned China is developing biometric surveillance and tracking of Uyghurs using drones and facial recognition software.

"The scientific pursuit of biotechnology and medical innovation can save lives. Unfortunately, the PRC (People's Republic of China) is choosing to use these technologies to pursue control over its people and its repression of members of ethnic and religious minority groups," Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said.

"We cannot allow U.S. commodities, technologies, and software that support medical science and biotechnical innovation to be diverted toward uses contrary to U.S. national security."

Previously, the White House announced a [diplomatic boycott](#) of the

upcoming Winter Olympics in Beijing, citing China's "egregious human rights abuses and atrocities in Xinjiang." Athletes will be allowed to compete, but no U.S. dignitaries will attend.

Earlier this year, the Biden administration declared China's treatment of - Uyghur Muslims a genocide in an annual human rights report.

Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang region have been imprisoned in camps, coerced to have abortions, raped, tortured and otherwise denied the freedom to practice their faith, according to multiple accounts from journalists and human rights groups. China denies abuses in Xinjiang.

U.S. policy already bars exports to China of technology with military applications and also forbids investment in some companies the government says support China's military.