

《谋杀13名中国船员缅甸毒梟被判死刑》

一名缅甸毒梟和他的三名下属因去年在湄公河谋杀13名中国船员被中国法庭判处死刑

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A Chinese court has sentenced a drug lord from Myanmar and three of his subordinates to death for the murder of 13 Chinese sailors on the Mekong River last year.

Another two members of drug lord Naw Kham's gang, identified by their Chinese names Zha Bo and Zha Tuobo, received the death sentence with a reprieve, and eight years in prison respectively, according to a verdict handed down by the Intermediate People's Court of Kunming in Southwest China's Yunnan province on Tuesday.

Zha Bo and Zha Tuobo are also from Myanmar.

The six convicted criminals, comprising five people from Myanmar, Thailand and Laos and one stateless person, faced charges of intentional homicide, drug trafficking, kidnapping and hijacking or a combination of those offenses. The criminals were ordered by the court to pay compensation to victims' families totaling 6 million yuan (\$960,000).

All six defendants said they will appeal Tuesday's verdict.

Naw Kham and his gang were found to have masterminded and colluded with Thai soldiers in an attack on two Chinese cargo ships, the Hua Ping and Yu Xing 8, on Oct 5, 2011, on the Mekong River, the court said in an investigative report.

Under Naw Kham's instructions, several of his subordinates were also found to have kidnapped Chinese sailors and hijacked cargo ships in exchange for ransom money in early April 2011, according to the report.

Chinese sailors were tied up and brutally beaten, and the ship owner was forced to pay a ransom of 25 million yuan before the sailors were released.

The crime ring was busted earlier this year, in a joint operation by police from China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand, after the brutal murders triggered an outcry in China.

Naw Kham was arrested in Laos in May, and transferred to China on a chartered plane.

about 300 people were present at Tuesday's sentencing, including relatives and friends of the victims, diplomats from Laos and Thailand and the press. Simultaneous translations were provided.

"Considering the serious consequence of the crime, we will seriously punish them in accordance with Chinese laws," Yan Hui, the presiding judge, said in court.

"It's the first time foreign suspects who committed crimes against Chinese nationals outside China have been brought to China to stand trial, and will face the death sentence," Zhou Andong, a judge from the criminal tribunal of the court, said during a news conference after the verdict was delivered.

"The trial reflected China's determination to fight cross-border crime, and its confidence to protect the legitimate rights of its citizens overseas," Nie Tao, director of legal department under the Yunnan provincial public security bureau said.

Lin Li, Naw Kham's lawyer, said her rights to meet the defendant and access his files were guaranteed during the detention.

"I visited him three times in the Yunnan detention center during the three months when he was detained there," she said. "Naw Kham asked me about Chinese criminal laws and regulations. He sometimes stared blankly during my visits," said Lin.

Nie said Thai police and prosecuting departments are speeding up the judicial process regarding the nine Thai soldiers, who are suspected to have colluded with Naw Kham's criminal gang to plot the murder.

"We are intensifying judicial operations with Thai police, and actively providing them with relevant evidence to identify Thai soldiers' crimes," he said.

Liu Jiayi, a criminal lawyer at a law firm, said it's legally appropriate to sentence Naw Kham and the other three core members of the gang to death.

Liu said that according to the national criminal procedure law, the maximum sentence for the three crimes charged, including intentional homicide, transporting drugs, and kidnapping, is the death sentence.

Liu said it's the first time in Chinese judicial history that six police officers and 10 witnesses from Thailand appeared in court to identify Naw Kham's gang's crimes, which is "a breakthrough for judicial operations between China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand."

"The operation will be set as an example for future cross-border crimes targeting overseas Chinese," he said.

"Security on the Mekong River has improved after the tragedy," Guo Zhiqiang, owner of Yu Xing 8, said.