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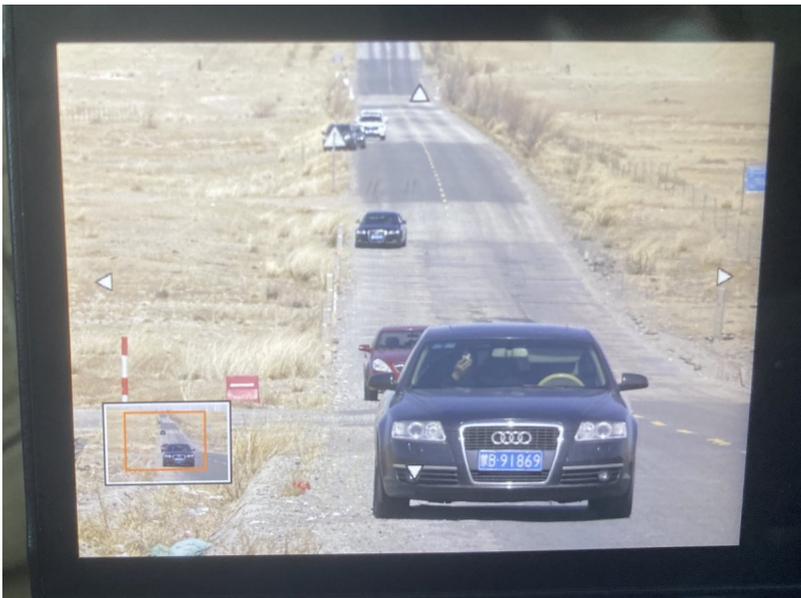
How is to work as a foreign journalist in China these days ? A little ■... (with ■)

Traveling in the country has been increasingly difficult over the last months, mainly through COVID measures. But we still tried to go on reporting trips nonetheless.

One story led us to the town of Baotou in Inner Mongolia. The province has a history of being not particularly inviting to foreign media but previous trips have been manageable even if at times difficult.

We traveled by train from Beijing. We didn't tell anyone in the province that we were going. We had negative COVID tests at hand and our travel app showed a „clear to travel“ symbol.

On arrival it took about 5 minutes until we noticed a handful of cars following us. Inside each car where 4 men and women. As we drive around town the convoy swelled up to 8 cars, constantly as our tail. <https://t.co/10iFoJJueR>



Every time we left our car to Film even harmless shots, like a landscape or a cityscape, a while army of „mindes“ swarmed out to follow us and shield local bystanders to talk to us. <https://t.co/hM67LPFOqN>

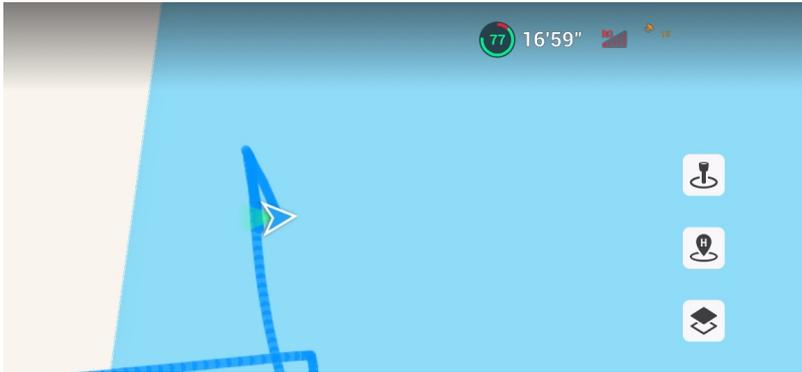


Often they didn't want to identify them and varied between „we are not following you“ to „we do pandemic prevention measures“.

During the height of this „guided tour“ I counted 12 following us. At times our little convoy caused even small traffic jams.

Anyway, here is the link to our report : <https://youtu.be/bLFYChw5c0Y>

The drone shots in the piece also have a story. As I was operating the drone, suddenly the GPS radio signal of the drone dropped off and the drone tried to land, after flying slightly erratic, missing its home point. Most likely our "tail" operated some form of drone jammer. <https://t.co/yvFdGAnfHj>



The area of operation was not officially restricted nor did we pose any danger to humans or infrastructure. Also, they just stood away like a 100 m and could have told us in person that drone operations are not allowed.

In all, I have to say, they were not overall aggressive or intimidating. But they just spammed us with personell this time. Other colleagues in the past had it much worse during their encounters. But it showed how much human resources CN sec has to throw at a "problem".

An old man, who was merely chatting to us as I was setting up for filming the Baotou cityscape was quickly approached by security personell when they caught up with us , told to move on and eventually stopped again and his ID recorded (by the looks of it). <https://t.co/8j8s4Jzkbs>



Just to show that this is not an isolated case. During a trip to **#Xinjiang** province last year, we encountered similar surveillance and even more aggressive pushback for just simply trying to do our work . Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/ZKDwD07wuu8>