

亡命之徒

wang2 ming4 zhi1 tu2

A suspected smuggler engaged in a midnight high-speed chase with Marine Police boats off Tuen Mun. When the suspect realized that he could not outrun the police, he turned his boat around and rammed a police small boat, sinking it. The four officers on board were thrown into the water.

The suspect's boat was cornered by another police vessel and the suspect arrested. A Chinese newspaper used the term “亡命” (wang ming4) to describe the behavior of the suspect.

“亡” (wang2) is “to die,” “to flee” and “命” (ming4) “life.” “亡命” (wang ming4) means “to flee,” “life in exile” or “to disregard one's life,” and the suspect in this case can be described as a “亡命之徒” (wang2 ming4 zhi1 tu2).

“徒” (tu2) is “an apprentice,” “a follower of a religion,” or “such people.” “亡命之徒” (wang2 ming4 zhi1 tu2) is, literally, “a fleeing person.” It means a “fugitive,” “a desperate criminal.”

Idiom by Lon Yan

Criminals risking their life are described as “亡命” (wang ming4). Another idiom about risking one's life is “奮不顧身” (fen4 bu2 gu4 shen1).

“奮” (fen4) is “to exert oneself,” “奮勇” (fen4 yong3) is “dauntless,” “to do something with one's utmost courage.” “不顧” (bu2 gu4) is “to disregard,” “without giving any thought to” and “身” (shen1) means “body,” “life.”

“奮不顧身” (fen4 bu2 gu4 shen1) means to do something regardless of one's personal safety. This idiom describes altruistic acts, like firemen who risk their lives to fight a fire, not the desperate acts of fugitives.

Terms containing the character “徒” (tu2) include:

匪徒 (fei3 tu2) – a gangster

門徒 (men2 tu2) – a disciple; a follower

暴徒 (bao4 tu2) – a rioter

賭徒 (du3 tu2) – a habitual gambler