

**Will People’s Liberation Army be deployed on streets to stabilise Hong Kong? Mixed signals and varying opinions**

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People’s Liberation Army’s Hong Kong garrison is planned as a low-key unit ready to step in to maintain order in city

Mixed signals are flashing on the fearsome possibility that the Chinese Communist Party may order its troops to stabilise Hong Kong. The chief spokesman of the Ministry of National Defence has said radical protestors are challenging Peking’s authority. He pointedly stated Hong Kong’s Garrison Law authorises Chinese troops to intervene if requested to do so. An eminent China scholar says the Party will do the minimum. Another says Peking doesn’t have to act. “After all the Central Government has time on its side.”

The Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, an arm of the State Council, China’s cabinet, will give a press briefing on Hong Kong in Peking today. This is its first since the 1997 Hand-over. The announcement of the planned briefing said, “It will give its stance and views on Hong Kong’s current situation”. Lau Siu-kai, head of China’s top think-tank in Hong Kong, said the office will want to emphasise Peking’s support of Hong Kong police.

The chief spokesman of the Ministry of National Defence said, “The behaviour of some radical protestors challenges the Central Government’s authority, touching the bottom-line principle of ‘one country two systems'”. Colonel Wu Qian said, “That absolutely cannot be tolerated.” He cited the Garrison Law which allows China’s military to intervene, if asked to do so by Hong Kong’s leaders. “That is a warning,”said Hong Kong political observer Willy Lam. “Beijing divulged the information as an ultimatum to the protestors.”

China’s state-run media has been publicising some aspects of the Hong Kong protests while suppressing others. The vandalism of the Chinese Liaison Office here was widely reported in China. State TV called the damage to the Liaison Office “a humiliation to our country’s dignity.”

“There is a Chinese saying: bad things should not happen more than three times,” Song Xiaozhuang, a professor at Shenzhen University, said. “If the Hong Kong authorities aren’t able to handle the situation, the Central Government will take action.”

**Scholar Robert Lawrence Kuhn, who wrote the book “What China’s Leaders Think”, said on CNN today the Community Party will do the minimum. Kuhn qualified that by saying Peking will not tolerate the chaos going on and on, nor will the Party allow any move towards separatism. The primacy of the Chinese Communist Party is paramount. Kuhn writes in the book that “democracy is anathema to the Party, because they equate it with chaos”.**

State media in China has said in the past week the violent protesting is an attempt to destabilise Hong Kong. Peking may be forced to step in, but they have stopped short of saying there is immediate need for intervention. Professor Song, who is quoted above, said the Party may continue to manage tensions in Hong Kong as they arise. “After all the Central Government has time on its side.”

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