

China soldiers sent onto streets of Hong Kong for first time since protests began - to help clear protest debris

Saturday 16 November 2019, by [CREERY Jennifer](#), [CHENG Kris](#), [CHEUNG Tony](#), [McCARTHY Simone](#), [VICTOR David](#)
(Date first published: 16 November 2019).

Contents

- [Chinese army help clear \(...\)](#)
- [PLA soldiers sent onto streets](#)

Chinese army help clear protest debris at Hong Kong Baptist University

<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/11/16/breaking-chinese-army-help-clear-debris-made-protesters-hong-kong-baptist-university/>

by **Kris Cheng & Jennifer Creery (HKFP)**

Chinese army personnel have helped to clear debris left by protesters at Hong Kong Baptist University in Kowloon Tong.

The cleanup operation began at 1pm on Saturday as community groups moved bricks and barricades which had accumulated on Junction Road over the past week.

According to District Councillor Ho Hin-ming, who helped to organise the effort, the group began to clear Renfield Road at around 4pm when – half an hour later – at least 50 personnel from the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) emerged from the nearby barrack with buckets and brooms to shift the remaining items.

It is the first time troops have been seen on the streets since the protests began in June. The soldiers were accompanied by a cameraman who filmed the exercise.

A man who appeared to be a commander, but declined to reveal his identity, said no one had requested the action. *“Stopping violence and riots are the responsibility of each person,”* he told reporters.

Hong Kong’s 24th week of unrest sparked by a now-withdrawn extradition agreement proposal with China was marked by clashes between pro-democracy protesters and police at university campuses across the city. Multiple roadblocks had been set up around Baptist University, obstructing traffic.

Some of the crowd cheered as the soldiers cleared the area.

Three women on the scene told HKFP they were not asked to join the cleanup effort but did so voluntarily. They added that they were not residents in the district.

When asked if they had seen any call to clear the roads on messaging apps beforehand, they

declined to respond.

Hong Kong riot police and firefighters arrived to help for a few minutes while the soldiers were clearing the debris. They did not respond to reporters' questions about why they only appeared after the PLA.

Article 9 of the law stipulates that the garrison shall not interfere in the local affairs of Hong Kong, whilst Article 11 states that the garrison shall notify the local government in advance of any military activities, such as training exercises and manoeuvres if the public interest is affected.

Pro-democracy lawmakers issued a joint statement strongly condemning the incident, saying the incident violated the Basic Law.

"The SAR government must immediately explain to Hong Kong residents as to whether it has, in accordance to article 14 of the garrison law, asked the central government to request the garrison in Hong Kong to assist in maintaining social order and conduct relief work," they said. "If yes, the SAR government has continued to fall, escaping from resolving political problems by political means." They added that the government and the garrison have ignored laws restricting military involvement in Hong Kong.

"They want to gradually rationalise the PLA's actions in Hong Kong," the lawmakers said.

'Voluntary' deployment

Last year, 600 people from the local PLA garrison, the Chinese foreign ministry in Hong Kong, the China Liaison Office and state-owned enterprises helped clear fallen trees from the MacLehose Trail, after Typhoon Mangkhut swept the city. The group included 400 soldiers in uniforms.

It was the first such action by the Hong Kong garrison since the 1997 Handover. But at the time, Chief Secretary Matthew Cheung said that the public should not over-interpret the incident, as the soldiers were volunteering and the Hong Kong government did not request their help.

PLA soldiers sent onto streets of Hong Kong for first time since protests began - to help clear roadblocks near Kowloon Tong garrison

<https://scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3038049/pla-soldiers-sent-streets-hong-kong-first-time-protests>

by Tony Cheung, Victor Ting & Simone McCarthy (SCMP)

One soldier says action has nothing to do with the Hong Kong government

More than 400 soldiers were deployed just over a year ago to help clear-up operation following Typhoon Mangkhut.

Soldiers from the Chinese army have been deployed for the first time in more than five months of civil unrest in Hong Kong, as dozens marched from their Kowloon garrison on Saturday to help clear roadblocks.

It was also the first time in more than a year that the People Liberation's Army local garrison had been involved in public community work. In October last year, more than 400 soldiers were also sent in batches to Hong Kong's country parks to help remove trees felled during Typhoon Mangkhut a month earlier.

The soldiers, mostly in green T-shirts and black shorts, and carrying red buckets, ran out of the PLA's Kowloon Tong barracks at about 4pm to clear obstacles on Renfrew Road, near Baptist

University's campus.

A soldier said their action had nothing to do with the Hong Kong government.

"We initiated this! 'Stopping violence and ending chaos' is our responsibility," he said, quoting a phrase coined by President Xi Jinping.

Firefighters and police officers also joined in later to help.

Before the soldiers showed up, about 20 people clearing the roadblocks. They brought with them trolleys to move bricks and other objects onto the pavement.

Last year, Secretary for Security John Lee Ka-chiu said the PLA could freely decide on whether to send soldiers in to perform volunteer services outside military sites and the local government had no record of how many times this had happened.

Under the city's Garrison Law, and the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution, the PLA must not interfere in local affairs but troops can be called out to help with disaster relief or maintain public order if requested by the local government.

Such a request has never been made since the city returned to Chinese rule 22 years ago.

The Garrison Law also states the Hong Kong government should be notified if the army plans to conduct any military activities, such as training exercises, which may affect the public interest.

Outside the University of Hong Kong, hundreds of residents and alumni arrived at about 3pm and started to clear obstacles which had been blocking Pok Fu Lam Road since Tuesday. The operations were largely peaceful, though a fight broke out when a man got into an argument with another person outside HKU. Separately, a petrol bomb was also thrown from a footbridge above Pok Fu Lam Road.

Some volunteers, wearing construction gloves and masks, also brought with them metal poles to dismantle a cement mount and brick wall built by protesters.

Some protesters shouted: *"Hurry up!"* as they watched the obstacles being removed.

Maxine Yao Jie-ning, a district council election candidate, was an organiser of the campaign. She cited the need for Hong Kong residents, including cancer patients, to reach the hospital, as a key reason she called on Hong Kong alumni to help clear the road.

Yao is running in the Southern district's Pok Fu Lam constituency, against pro-Beijing candidate Siu Wai-chung and incumbent district councillor Paul Zimmerman.

By 4pm, ambulances, cars and taxis were starting to use the section of the road for the first time in the last few days and the volunteers cheered and applauded.

Among those clearing the roadblocks was former Executive Council member Franklin Lam Fan-keung. *"It's easy to destroy, but hard to build,"* he said.

There were several tense moments between those clearing the road and a group of protesters who remained on the street, sitting in a line in front of one of the barricades.

"We have to help Hong Kong, and we have to help ourselves," said Pauline Ho, 54, who came from Kowloon to help out and said she was not an alumni.

At Chinese University, a graduate had been on the campus since noon helping to clear bricks off the roads.

"I don't have a car so it's not very useful if I help with packing up food or medical materials, but I still think we should help restore the campus," he said.

But at the Polytechnic University, the Cross-Harbour Tunnel remained closed as no one was clearing the roadblocks.

Additional reporting by Kinling Lo

Links

- [1] https://twitter.com/hashtag/HongKongProtests?src=hash&ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw
- [2] <https://t.co/qi9Miwndnl>
- [3] https://twitter.com/SCMPHongKong/status/1195621497789804544?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw
- [4] https://twitter.com/hashtag/HongKongProtests?src=hash&ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw
- [5] <https://t.co/qi9Miwndnl>
- [6] https://twitter.com/SCMPHongKong/status/1195621497789804544?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw
- [7] https://twitter.com/hashtag/HongKongProtests?src=hash&ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw
- [8] <https://t.co/2hjk3lLPNv>
- [9] https://twitter.com/SCMPHongKong/status/1195622450844684288?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw