

HONG KONG STUDY

ANNEX J

DEFENCE AND INTERNAL SECURITY

Present Situation

1. HMG have responsibility for the defence and internal security of Hong Kong. The Governor, while nominally Commander-in-Chief, is advised by the Commander British Forces (CBF) who is responsible to the Chief of Defence Staff, but who also sits on the Hong Kong Executive Council. The CBF exercises full operational command over all British Forces in the area in event of an emergency.

2. The Garrison totals over 8,000 men (20% UK, 60% Gurkha and 20% Hong Kong Chinese). At present there are 5 Infantry Battalions (4 Gurkha, 1 British), a Gurkha Engineer Regiment, 5 Naval patrol craft, two squadrons of helicopters and appropriate support from all three Services. In addition, the Royal Hong Kong Regiment (The Volunteers) and the Royal Hong Kong Auxiliary Air Force come under CBF's command when called out. There is provision for short-term reinforcement from both UK and Brunei.

3. The current Defence Costs Agreement between the Ministry of Defence and the Hong Kong Government came into effect on

1 April 1981. It lasts initially for 7 years and will be renewable for further periods of 5 years on the same terms unless either Government wishes to vary them. Under the Agreement, Hong Kong contributes 75% of the costs of the Garrison including a number of indirect expenses.

4. The Garrison is responsible for Hong Kong's external defence, but the territory is not defensible against a determined full-scale attack from China. The primary role of the Garrison is therefore internal security in support of the civil power. British Forces have not had to be employed in this role for many years but they would be essential to deal successfully with any major threat to internal security or breakdown in law and order, given possible problems over the reliability of the Royal Hong Kong Police Force in such circumstances. The Hong Kong population almost certainly accept the significance of the Garrison in this context; it is thus important to sustaining their confidence. In recent years the main operational activity of the Garrison has been the prevention of illegal immigration from China.

5. The Garrison consists mainly of Units from the Brigade of Gurkhas; four of the six Gurkha battalions now serve in Hong Kong. The Gurkha battalion in Brunei is available for reinforcement, and about half of the Hong Kong Garrison's training takes place in the State. For geographical reasons, the Garrison has provided most of the British element in exercises under the auspices of the Five-Power Defence Arrangements; and a small detachment is sent as an Honour

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Guard for the Commonwealth Liaison Mission in Korea. Since withdrawal from our main commitments East of Suez the Garrison has had no wider strategic role, but its very presence provides valuable cover for UK and Allied intelligence activity.

Possible Changes

6. British Forces can serve overseas under a variety of arrangements. Although garrisons are usually maintained only on British territory there is no constitutional objection to their maintenance on foreign territory (eg Federal Republic of Germany, Belize, Brunei). But in such cases their duties and roles are governed by agreements between Britain and the countries concerned. There is no recent precedent for a British garrison on foreign soil having an acknowledged role in internal security. British Forces may also be stationed abroad on an individual basis. In practice where large numbers of personnel are so stationed (eg Oman) they become an integral part of the local forces.

Recognition of Chinese sovereignty with continuing British administration

7. If an agreement was reached whereby Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong was conceded in return for continued British administration after 1997 there would be no reason in British law to prevent the stationing of British Forces in Hong Kong. The continued presence of the Garrison would be very important in maintaining confidence in the new arrangements. If HMG
/retained

retained responsibility for external affairs and defence, the position of the Garrison would be easier to justify in the UK and internationally, notwithstanding that the traditional threat from China had been removed. If however HMG exercised responsibility only for local administration including law and internal security, the position of the Garrison would be more anomalous. In either case, but particularly in the latter we should need to consider carefully

- (a) the role of the Garrison;
- (b) its command and control;
- (c) its financing,

and to reach clear agreement with the PRC on such matters. This would be difficult.

8. There must be real doubt whether the Chinese would be able to accept a continuing British military presence. They might suggest that Chinese forces should replace or supplement British ones. A substantial and permanent PLA presence would raise major difficulties and be hard to reconcile with British administration. Special arrangements for Chinese visiting forces might however be negotiable. Regular liaison arrangements, possibly including the stationing in Hong Kong of a Chinese liaison officer might prove a way of soothing some PRC susceptibilities.

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Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region (SAR)

9. If Hong Kong became formally a Special Administrative Region of the PRC the continued presence of a British garrison would probably be even more difficult, and perhaps impossible to negotiate. Provided that ultimate British control remained, one possible way of meeting Chinese objections would be to establish a local force, responsible to the Hong Kong Government rather than military authorities in the UK, with its own uniform, insignia etc. Even with a significant expatriate element, such a force would be much less satisfactory, both on military grounds and politically. The expatriate element might be provided by specially recruited Gurkhas although this would have to be undertaken outside the 1947 Tripartite Agreement and could damage the continued operation of that agreement.

10. Whether a British garrison was retained or a local force was established, HMG would need to keep ultimate responsibility for the security of Hong Kong, including the right to deploy forces there if necessary.

THE POLICE

Present Situation

11. The Royal Hong Kong Police Force (RHKPF) is made up of some 22,500 officers and 4,800 civilians. Some 4%, including the Commissioner and a high proportion of the senior

officers, are expatriates, most of them British. There is also a part time auxiliary force (the Royal Hong Kong Auxiliary Police Force) of about 5,000, used as an emergency reserve and for daily constabulary duties.

12. The RHKPF carries out the normal functions of a metropolitan police force in maintaining law and order in Hong Kong and on its land and sea borders. It assists the Garrison in the control of illegal immigration. It also has some paramilitary capability to meet internal security requirements in times of emergency. Experience has shown that it is an effective public order force only if it has British forces in support.

13. There were serious disciplinary problems in the RHKPF at the end of 1977, resulting from over-rapid expansion, failures in management, and investigations into organised corruption within the Force. Measures taken since then have restored discipline and improved morale; though some problems remain the RHKPF is currently an effective and efficient force.

Possible Changes

Recognition of Chinese Sovereignty with continuing British administration

14. A fully effective Police Force would be essential to the maintenance of local and international confidence in any
/new

new arrangement for the administration of Hong Kong. There seems no reason why the Chinese should seek other than cosmetic changes in the RHKPF (eg, the dropping of the prefix 'Royal') as part of an agreement on the continuation of British administration after 1997 in return for acknowledgement of Chinese sovereignty. Nor should there be any adverse effect on recruitment (expatriate and local) or the morale of the force.

Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region (SAR)

15. If Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of the PRC the Chinese might demand more substantial changes in the force. Much more would depend on what these were, but any serious distortion of the present character of the RHKPF would cast doubt on Chinese guarantees about continuing future administration and would undermine confidence. The transfer of responsibility for law and order and internal security to the Chinese authorities, and the transformation of the RHKPF into an organ of the Chinese Public Security Bureau would of course be completely unacceptable.

16. Even if the Chinese agreed that the responsibilities and character of the RHKPF should remain eventually unchanged there could be changes in the attitudes and loyalties of local officers which could inhibit the effectiveness of the force in controlling disturbances or carrying out other internal

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security functions. There might also be difficulty in retaining senior expatriate and Hong Kong Chinese officers; recruitment would be seriously affected.

17. The continuation of the Hong Kong Special Branch, with its present functions and in anything like its present form, would present particular difficulties. The safety of Hong Kong Chinese officers now or previously employed in it could be at risk.

COMMUNICATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

18. A recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong, and in particular the conversion of Hong Kong into a Special Administrative Region of the PRC, might also have a significant effect on HMG's communications and intelligence operations in the territory. This is considered in greater detail in a separate paper outside the scope of this study.

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A SPECIAL STUDY

BY THE FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

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FUTURE OF HONG KONG

SPECIAL STUDY

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- O. Crown Land Leases in the New Territories
- P. Illustrative Questions and Answers following the Prime Minister's Visit to China



PRIME MINISTER
FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY

FUTURE OF HONG KONG

SPECIAL BRIEFING

To Be Retained

Do Not Destroy

FUTURE OF HONG KONG

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