

Trump Seeks out Personal Meeting With Xi Jinping to Resolve Hong Kong Crisis



Protesters occupy the departure hall of the Hong Kong International Airport during a demonstration in Hong Kong on August 12, 2019. (Anthony Kwan/Getty Images)

“I know President Xi of China very well. He is a great leader who very much has the respect of his people. He is also a good man in a ‘tough business,’” Trump wrote on Twitter on Aug. 15.

He added: “I have ZERO doubt that if President Xi wants to quickly and humanely solve the Hong Kong problem, he can do it. Personal meeting?”

The Hong Kong crisis centers around a suspended but not withdrawn government bill that would allow any government, including mainland China, to request the extradition of anyone passing through Hong Kong.

Hongkongers fear that the bill threatens the city's judicial independence, leaving everyone vulnerable to be trialed in China's courts, which are notorious for the absence of the rule of law.



Protesters march on a street during a rally against a controversial extradition bill in Hong Kong on June 9, 2019. (Anthony Kwan/Getty Images)

Since June 9, millions of Hongkongers have taken to the streets demanding that their local government fully withdraw the bill.

Ten weeks later, what the government viewed as a simple piece of legislation has backfired into a leadership crisis, with public anger rising over the police's use of excessive force to disperse protesting crowds who say that their concerns have not been addressed by the government.

Most recently on Aug. 11, local riot police fired rubber bullets towards protesters at close range against protocol. They also fired tear gas inside the enclosed area of a metro station, risking lethal effects for those protesters.

Meanwhile, Beijing has sided with the pro-CCP majority local government headed by Carrie Lam, blaming the "radical" protesters for damaging Hong Kong's

prosperity and the rule of law.

More recently on Aug. 12, Beijing stepped up its rhetoric to label the Hong Kong protests “budding terrorism.” Some observers, including Human Rights Watch, have said that such language could indicate that the Chinese Communist Party could implement its anti-terror laws and use extensive powers against protesters.

The NGO said in an Aug. 14 statement that Beijing’s claim of “terrorism” in Hong Kong is the same used previously to justify the use of repressive measures, including those used in Xinjiang. The statement called on Hong Kong police to stop using excessive force against protesters.

Also on Aug. 12, hawkish state media, Global Times posted a video on Twitter showing Chinese armored police vehicles gathering in Shenzhen, a city bordering Hong Kong. Two days later, China’s Eastern Theater Command, one of the five regional divisions of the Chinese military, posted a veiled threat on its WeChat social media account saying, “The Shenzhen Bay Sports Center is 56 kilometers (34.8 miles) away from the Hong Kong airport. Troops only need 10 minutes to arrive at the Hong Kong [border].”

Trump also took notice of the Chinese troops gathering in southern China. In a Twitter post on Aug. 13, he wrote, “Our Intelligence has informed us that the Chinese government is moving troops to the border with Hong Kong.”

Colorado-based tech company Maxar released satellite images taken on Aug. 12 showing over 500 Chinese military vehicles stationed at a sports stadium in Shenzhen.

Calls for Restraint

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) took to Twitter to Aug. 14 to say that the protesters have the support of both Democrats and Republicans in the United States.

“The escalating use of force perpetrated against the #HongKong protestors is extremely alarming. In the Congress, Democrats & Republicans continue to stand united with the people of Hong Kong in demanding their right to a hopeful, free & democratic future,” she wrote.

Pelosi also tweeted on Aug. 13, urging Lam to meet with protest leaders.

On Aug. 14, Senator Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) warned Beijing against intervening in Hong Kong.

“Global leaders should stand ready to condemn any intrusion by mainland China that would violate the handover agreement. Leaders in Beijing must understand that intervention against the people of Hong Kong will harm China’s relationship with the U.S. and other democratic nations for years to come,” Johnson wrote in a press release.

He added: “China should exercise restraint and allow the citizens of Hong Kong to settle their differences without interference.”

German chancellor Angela Merkel called for a peaceful solution in Hong Kong while speaking to reporters in Berlin on Aug 14, according to German broadcaster Deutsche Welle. “Everything must be done to prevent violence and to find possibilities for a solution within the framework of dialogue,” she said.

Trump added on Aug. 14, “I hope it works out for liberty. I hope it works out for everybody, including China.”

More mass protests and rallies are being organized in Hong Kong over the coming days.

Civil Human Right Front, the main opposition group behind the Hong Kong protests, has planned a march in the city’s financial district of Central for Aug. 18.

Source:

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