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CRACKDOWN IN BEIJING; Civil War For Army?

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American military specialists say a serious rift has developed within the Chinese armed forces as a result of the Beijing Government's crackdown on the students over the weekend.

An Administration official confirmed reports of an armed clash on the outskirts of Beijing between units of the People's Liberation Army, which was said to involve shooting between soldiers of the 16th and 27th Armies.

Senator William Cohen, Republican of Maine and Vice Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, today painted a grim picture of the situation in Beijing, saying, "It is citizen against citizen and army against army."

Both the 16th and 27th Armies were brought into Beijing to break up the demonstrations after the 38th Army, which is stationed in Beijing, refused to use armed force against the students. Soldiers of the 16th Army are said to have joined the Beijing garrison in its refusal to break up the demonstrations with force. But the 27th Army, reportedly commanded by a nephew of President Yang Shangkun, opened fire on the students over the weekend and now occupies Tiananmen square and much of downtown Beijing with armored forces. Four Armies Near Capital

Details of the military situation in and around Beijing remain sketchy and confused to military analysts here despite extensive American satellite coverage of

China. But the specialists say at least four armies, each with a total strength of about 45,000, are deployed in the area.

Reports of heavy air traffic into Nanyuan military airfield south of the city, where the shooting among the soldiers was reported to have taken place today, may mean additional forces are being flown into the city.

There are also unconfirmed reports that units as far away as Shanghai were moving toward Beijing.

Three of the four army units confirmed to be in the capital belong to the Beijing Military Region, which is made up of five provinces including Inner Mongolia, where it is believed the 27th Army was stationed. The Beijing region is one of seven in China, but only the 38th Army is normally located in the vicinity of the city.

The fourth army now identified as being in Beijing is the 39th Army, brought in from the Shenyang military region. It is not clear whether the commanders of this army support a hard-line approach.

Robert Ross, a specialist on China at the Brookings Institution in Washington, said that Chinese soldiers in units stationed in areas remote from Beijing are not sophisticated enough to identify with the democratic aspirations of the students and are likely to believe explanations by the authorities that the students are counter revolutionaries. Links to Students

The 38th Army, on the other hand, has close ties with the students, many of whom served in the unit before attending Beijing University. Members of the the 38th Army also know many of the students because it conducts summer training for those students who are army reservists.

There is uncertainty among the specialists here about the role Deng Xiaoping, the foremost Chinese leader, played in the decision to crack down on the students. According to some reports, Mr. Deng has been hospitalized with a serious illness, but some analysts say this may be a cover story concocted by Mr. Deng's supporters while he secretly went around the country to drum up support among provincial military leaders for the use of force against the student demonstrations. According to Mr. Ross, the Chinese leader "has a lot of senior officers indebted to him around China and may have called in a few chips."

The specialists say it is clear that President Yang, who is also vice chairman of the central military commission, supported a hard line and probably gave the actual order to move.

Experts on the Chinese military agree that the Chinese officer corps is probably appalled that the army had to be used against the people. A Pentagon officer who recently returned from an extended assignment in China said, "The P.L.A. has its roots among the people and the mystique of it being truly a people's army is an integral part of its tradition. To use it against the students was a wrenching experience for its commanders." **Opposition to Crackdown**

A. Doak Barnett, another expert on China, has stressed the apolitical nature of the army and said that important elements of its top leadership opposed martial law.

Questioned about the status of senior Chinese officers who opposed the use of force, an Administration official replied, "They are no longer players." He said this included Qin Jiwei, the Minister of Defense; Yang Dezhi, former army Chief of Staff, and Zhang Aiping, former Minister of Defense.

All of China's senior officers have had extensive contact with the American military and the most promising of its colonels have attended courses at American military schools. Emerging Chinese military thinking is based on the American model and China's modernization program is largely dependent upon American technology and equipment.

American military officers say the involvement of the People's Liberation Army in internal security tasks or the possibility of civil war between Chinese military units are the last things their military leaders want regardless of how they may feel about the student demonstrations.

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