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Turmoil in China; U.S. Says 200,000 Troops Are Near Chinese Capital

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES JUNE 8, 1989

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An Administration official estimated today that up to 200,000 troops of the Chinese People's Liberation Army are now in or around Beijing and that troop movement into the vicinity of the capital "has apparently not yet ended."

The official said the estimate was based on "calculations made from a variety of sources," implying that this included satellite coverage. The official declined to say whether the troops were reinforcements for units already there, or new units.

On Tuesday, officials in Washington estimated that the number of troops in and around Beijing was between 100,000 and 150,000. Officials said today that the new estimate did not necessarily mean there was a sharp rise overnight. It could be that troops already there had just been identified, one official said. Few

Further Details on Troops

The official would not give the origins or extent of the troop movement or their mode of transportation. Both State and Defense Department spokesmen have officially declined to give estimates of numbers or troop dispositions.

On the broader, political front, the White House conceded today that it has no idea who is running the Beijing government, and urged Americans to leave China "at once" because the situation was becoming "increasingly dangerous."

Administration officials said they have no reason to believe that the senior Chinese

leader, Deng Xiaoping, is dead or seriously ill, as some reports have suggested. Some official analysts even believe that Mr. Deng himself may have spread such rumors to make it appear as though he could not have been responsible for the bloody crackdown in Tiananmen Square Saturday.

As long as Mr. Deng is alive, Administration officials assume he is exerting influence, but whether he is predominant any longer and how he is interacting with the other senior leaders in the Chinese hierarchy is simply unknown. 'Who Is Making the Decisions?'

"Decisions are being made in China," the White House spokesman, Marlin Fitzwater, said during a briefing with reporters. "Announcements are coming forth every day of Government actions and decisions. Obviously they have a structure for doing that. The question is, do we know who is making the decisions and how? The answer to that is, we do not. That is very clearly the design of the Chinese. They simply don't want anyone to know."

Members of the United States intelligence apparatus explained that there were several reasons for the Administration's lack of knowledge.

"All of the top leaders have gone underground to their bunkers," said one official. "Satellites can take pictures of tanks but not individuals who are hiding. Add to that the fact that the situation is confusing even for the Chinese. They don't know what is happening themselves, so why should we?"

Decisions in Beijing are apparently being made at small meetings between and within factions, leaving little opportunity for electronic message interception, the officials said. Moreover, because power has been fragmented to such a degree, and the normal flows of inter-governmental information interrupted, even those informants the United States may have cultivated in the Chinese bureaucracy cannot speak definitively about what is happening overall.

Finally, even if the United States had a source in Deng Xiaoping's inner circle, it would probably be impossible to contact him now, the officials said, given the way in which the leadership has disappeared. 'We Don't Know Where They Are'

Mr. Fitzwater said that as far as he knew the Embassy has been unable to talk to any "top leaders."

"The truth is," said Mr. Fitzwater, "we don't know where they are. We simply surmise that based on historical patterns that some of the leaders have gone to other locations within the city or on the outskirts of the city. But we have no confirmation of that."

A senior White House official said the President was trying to stay abreast of developments in Beijing through intelligence briefings, contacts with the embassy, live news reports and discussions with allies.

Much of what the White House knows, Mr. Fitzwater told reporters, "is dependent on the news organizations. In fact, you have more people there in more key positions and in more areas of the city that are able to watch than the U.S. Government." Official Visit Canceled

The Administration lost what might have been its best opportunity to get a first-hand report on the situation from the Chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, who was scheduled to visit Washington June 12. The Chinese Embassy informed the State Department Tuesday night that the visit was canceled and gave no explanation, the State Department spokeswoman, Margaret D. Tutwiler said.

"The visit would have given us the opportunity to convey to the Chinese leaders our view of the tragic and brutal actions that have taken place and to urge that a policy of restraint and dialogue be reinstated," said Ms. Tutwiler. "However, under current circumstances, we agree that such a visit should not take place."

Mr. Qian arrived in Cuba today for the first official visit by a Chinese Foreign Minister to that country. The Cuban Government has expressed support for the Chinese crackdown on the pro-democracy movement, which Havana has described as "counterrevolutionary."

In view of the fact that the situation in China has become, in the State Department's words, "volatile, uncertain and increasingly dangerous," the Administration decided to evacuate all dependents of United States government employees and non-essential government personnel, Mr. Fitzwater said. U.S. Charters Planes

"We have urged all other Americans in China to leave at once," he added. To aid their departure, the Administration has chartered commercial aircraft to fly to Beijing and Shanghai. The first two charters, a Boeing 747 from United Airlines and a DC-10 from Continental Airlines, will arrive in Beijing Thursday.

The State Department said its 24-hour China Task Force has been receiving about 8,000 calls a day from Americans with friends and relatives in China, where about 8,800 United States citizens were living before the latest crisis. U.S. Rejects Chinese Protests

On the diplomatic front, the Administration rejected a Chinese Foreign Ministry declaration that President Bush's decision to stop arms sales and military

contacts was a "detriment to bilateral relations."

"The Chinese statement is unwarranted," said Ms. Tutwiler. "Human rights violations, such as the ones that occurred in Beijing, are properly the concern of the entire international community, including the United States."

The Administration also dismissed Beijing's condemnation of Washington for providing refuge in the American Embassy to Fang Lizhi, a physicist and prominent dissident. Mr. Fang and his wife, Li Shuxian, a physics professor, have been residing in the United States diplomatic compound since Monday. In February, the 53-year-old Mr. Fang was barred by Chinese authorities from attending a dinner given by President Bush during his February visit to Beijing.

"Mr. Fang came to our Embassy and asked for temporary refuge," said Mr. Fitzwater. "He indicated that he was fearful for his safety. Our embassy accepted him on those terms."

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