



China Reform Monitor No. 1424

July 20, 2020 **Joshua Eisenman**

Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; China; Europe; Hong Kong; North America; Taiwan

CHINA PASSES HONG KONG NATIONAL SECURITY LAW

Beijing has issued a new national security law for Hong Kong, prompting international criticism and fear among pro-democracy figures in the former British colony. The swiftly enacted legislation grants Beijing broad new powers to quell protest and dissent. The new law, which had been shrouded in secrecy since it was first announced in May, carries severe penalties for vaguely defined crimes against the state, effectively ending many of the special freedoms that citizens of the territory long enjoyed. Mainland Chinese security agents, who are not subject to Hong Kong's legal jurisdiction, will now be officially deployed to the city and the central government will establish a national security office in the territory. Beijing can now prosecute "complex" cases, and hold closed-door trials. Alan Leong, the leader of the pro-democracy Civic Party and former chair of the Hong Kong Bar Association, called the new measure "the worst form of authoritarian rule by law." (*TIME*, July 1, 2020)

HUNDREDS ARRESTED ON FIRST DAY OF NEW SECURITY LAW...

In the first day following the enactment of the new national security law, thousands of Hong Kong residents took the streets to hold an annual march marking the anniversary of the territory's 1997 handover from the UK. Hong Kong police responded with water cannons and tear gas, and made 370 arrests. The police said 10 of those arrested had breached the new law for allegedly carrying independence signs and chanting independence slogans. Hong Kong police had previously banned the annual July 1st march, citing a coronavirus social distancing regulation that prohibits the gathering of more than 50 people. Police said seven officers were injured while on duty. (VOA, July 2, 2020)

...AND HONG KONG DENIES BAIL TO FIRST DEFENDANT

Tong Ying-kit, 23, has become the first person to be denied bail under Hong Kong's new security law. Tong, who is accused of driving his motorbike into police, was arrested last week carrying a sign that read "Liberate Hong Kong." He appeared in court in a wheelchair and was charged with inciting secession and engaging in terrorism. Under article 42 of the new security law, a judge may deny bail if he or she believes the defendant would continue to endanger national security. (VOA, July 6, 2020)

BRITISH PM OFFERS 3 MILLION HONG KONGERS A PATH TO CITIZENSHIP

Following China's imposition of the new Hong Kong security law, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has offered 3 million Hong Kong residents the chance to live and work in the UK. On July 1st, Johnson told Parliament that the law was a "clear and serious breach" of the 1985 Sino-British joint declaration. "We made clear that if China continued down this path we would introduce a new route for those with British National Overseas (BNO) status to enter the U.K., granting them limited leave to remain with the ability to live and work in the U.K. and thereafter to apply for citizenship. And that is precisely what we will do now," Johnson said. Hong Kong residents were able to register for a BNO passport from 1987 until June 30, 1997, the last day before Hong Kong's unification with China. The 350,000 BNO passport holders, and their 2.6 million dependents, currently have restricted rights and are only allowed to come to UK without a visa for six months. Under the UK's new plans, Hongkongers with a BNO passport and their dependents will be able to remain in England for five years with the right to study and work. After that, they can apply for settled status and, after another year, seek citizenship. (*TIME*, July 1, 2020)

U.S. ARMY RELEASES FILM ON JOINT MILITARY EXERCISES WITH TAIWAN

The U.S. 1st Special Forces Group has revealed rare 44-second promotional video showing its joint training exercises, codenamed "Excellence," with Taiwan special forces. The video shows U.S. special forces instructors paired up with Taiwan's special operations officers and training together for a search and attack mission and evacuation simulation using a Black Hawk helicopter. For years, the United States military has traveled to Taiwan to assist the island's army in combat training. However, details of the training program have remained classified. Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense confirmed the accuracy of the video, and announced that the U.S. and Taiwan regularly hold joint military exercises, but would not comment further. "Excellence" began in February 2019. (*China Post*, June 29, 2020)