

# 1997 troops 'of poor quality'

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**T**he future Hong Kong garrison of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is rife with internal political and discipline problems, and is not the shining example of military "spit and polish" its leaders believe it to be, reports in the territory have alleged.

In a five-part series on the Hong Kong garrison, the *Tin Tin Daily News* has alleged that the preparatory working group for the post-1997 garrison has already had to remove a number of candidates for not meeting the stringent requirements of the future posting.

Among the problems cited were influence-peddling, adultery and assault.

The Central Military Commission, chaired by President Jiang Zemin, has ordered all potential recruits to satisfy strict political and moral requirements on six points, the reports quoted "authoritative sources" as saying.

The six requirements include: political correctness, military toughness, outstanding morality, strict discipline, physical fitness and the ability to meet any challenge.

There are height and physical requirements as well.

However, in reality the force is falling far short of these ideals, the reports said, as it detailed three main problems at the garrison training-bases in Guangzhou.

The reports claimed that the soldiers selected to be in the Hong Kong garrison were of "poor quality", and rather than working to improve themselves, they used their status to push other people around.

The paper cited an incident when troops boarded a train from Shenzhen to Dongguan without a ticket and proceeded to fight with conductors who told them they should buy tickets like anyone else.

The reports also alleged that one of the members of a PLA air force division, to be based in Hong Kong, had an adulterous affair, and that a number of sons and daughters of top officials were appointed to the garrison, without having met its strict requirements.

The *Tin Tin Daily News* reports about disciplinary problems were questioned by a Western diplomat, who, speaking on condition of anonymity, blamed the incidents on a lack of adequate training, rather than merely poor discipline.

The diplomat also said the stringent recruiting requirements for the garrison have made it difficult for Beijing to fill the required number of places with top quality soldiers.

Meanwhile, the reports predicted the garrison will consist of approximately 20,000 troops after 1997, and would be led by Major-General Liu Zhenwu.

Other sources have predicted that the job will go to Major-General Tang Xinqiu, currently the deputy commander of the 42nd Group Army unit in Huizhou, Guangdong.

Of the 20,000 troops which will make up the garrison, the paper said, fewer than 10,000 will be based in Hong Kong, while the remainder will stay across the border in Shenzhen, to provide logistics support and relief.

The Hong Kong garrison will include one engineering corps, three infantry corps, an armoured unit, one artillery corps and a naval-patrol unit. The size of the naval unit was not mentioned. The report also said that troops from the PLA's Second Artillery will be posted in Hong Kong.

The unit is in charge of China's strategic nuclear missiles.