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Defense

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST  
10 MAY 1992

# 6 military sites will go to PLA

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BRITAIN has offered to hand over a third of its military sites in Hongkong for use by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) after 1997, senior Chinese sources have revealed.

But Beijing has already rejected the offer, insisting it is a "matter of national sovereignty" that all of the 18 to 19 sites - which the British forces currently have use of - be turned over to them.

Instead China has held out an olive branch, with suggestions some of the sites can still be put to commercial use, even before 1997.

A highly-placed mainland official said not all sites would be needed by the future PLA garrison, and Beijing could allow some to be put to other uses, providing China's sovereignty over them had been recognised.

Britain is understood to have so far only agreed to hand over up to six of the disputed sites.

The revelations came as discussions between Joint Liaison Group experts ended in deadlock over the issue last week.

Foreign Office sources said no specific progress had been made during the two days of talks.