《中国政府再出反腐重拳：禁止军队经商》

PLA bans commercial activities as anti-graft drive gains momentum

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It was late afternoon in a second-hand electronics and auto parts market in Xiasha district, Hangzhou, East China’s Zhejiang Province, and He Hong (pseudonym), a shop owner, disenchanted by the days’ slack business, decided to close his shop early.

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The market is shrouded in gloom not just because of the ongoing economic downturn, but also the fact that the land which the market is built on belongs to the Chinese military, whose commercial activities are now undergoing reform. Rumors have been spreading among He and other tenants that the military might want to end the market’s lease and take the land back soon.

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For those who are commercially involved with the Chinese military, worries like this have been on the rise after the Central Military Commission (CMC) said it in a document in March that plans to gradually terminate all paid services in the military. The move, part of China's ongoing military reform, is expected to take three years to complete.

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According to the document, military units will no longer be allowed to launch new commercial programs or sign new contracts regarding paid services, and expired contracts may not be extended, the Xinhua News Agency reported. This is seen by many as an effort to modernize China's armed forces and fight against military corruption.

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"This is an important decision made by the CPC Central Committee, the CMC and President Xi Jinping, and it will help to purify the troops' morale, keep the true quality and nature of the military and also focus more on core military capacity building," said Yang Yujun, spokesperson of China's Ministry of Defense, in a press conference in March.

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An officer from the Beijing Military Region, who declined to be named, told the Phoenix Weekly that this is expected to be the toughest ban on the military's commercial dealings to date. "The duty of the army is getting ready for wars. How can they battle if they are shooting on the training ground, and at the same time calculating how much money they can make from a contract they just signed?" he said.

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