

# Trump signs bills in support of Hong Kong; China furious

BEIJING (AP) - China reacted furiously to President Donald Trump's signing of two bills on Hong Kong human rights and said the U.S. will bear the unspecified consequences.

A foreign ministry statement Thursday repeated heated condemnations of the laws and said China will counteract. It said all the people of Hong Kong and China oppose the move.

It's still unclear, however, how China will respond exactly.

Trump signed the bills, which were approved by near-unanimous consent in the House and Senate, even as he expressed some concerns about complicating the effort to work out a trade deal with China's President Xi Jinping.

"I signed these bills out of respect for President Xi, China, and the people of Hong Kong," Trump said in a statement. "They are being enacted in the hope that Leaders and Representatives of China and Hong Kong will be able to amicably settle their differences leading to long term peace and prosperity for all."

Congress approved the bills last week following months of unrest in the semi-autonomous Chinese city. Before Wednesday's signing announcement, Trump would only commit to giving the measures a "hard look."



Office workers and pro-democracy protesters hold up their hands to represent their five demands wanted from the government as protests continue in Central district of Hong Kong, Wednesday, Nov. 27, 2019. A major tunnel in Hong Kong reopened Wednesday as a weeklong police siege of a nearby university campus appeared to be winding down, closing one of the more violent chapters in the long-running anti-government protests in the Chinese territory. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)

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China's foreign ministry called the laws a "naked hegemonic action" that seriously interfered in Hong Kong and China's internal affairs, violated international law and "fundamental norms of international relations."

"The U.S. side ignored facts, turned black to white, and blatantly gave encouragement to violent criminals who smashed and burned, harmed innocent city residents, trampled on the rule of law and endangered social order," the statement said.

The laws' basic intent is to undermine Hong Kong's prosperity and stability along with the "historical progress of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

It called the measures "extremely evil in nature and dangerous in motive."

“We advise the U.S. not to act incautiously, otherwise China will be required to counteract resolutely and all the consequences created by this will have to be borne by the U.S. side,” the statement said.

The two countries are currently locked in a trade war and have deep differences over China’s claims to the South China Sea and Taiwan, human rights issues and accusations of Chinese industrial espionage.

The first bill Trump signed mandates sanctions on Chinese and Hong Kong officials who carry out human rights abuses and requires an annual review of the favorable trade status that Washington grants Hong Kong.

Another bill prohibits export to Hong Kong police of certain nonlethal munitions, including tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, water cannons, stun guns and tasers.

The munitions bill was passed unanimously, while Republican Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky was the sole House member to oppose the human rights bill.

Trump acknowledged last week that he was weighing the ramifications of signing the bill.

“Look, we have to stand with Hong Kong,” Trump said in an interview on “Fox & Friends.” He continued: “But I’m also standing with President Xi. He’s a friend of mine. He’s an incredible guy.”

Democratic and Republican lawmakers applauded the signing of the bills. Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., said it “finally sends a clear and unequivocal message to the people of Hong Kong: We are with you.”

Sen. Jim Risch, an Idaho Republican, and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said the bills are “an important step forward in holding the Chinese Communist Party accountable for its erosion of Hong Kong’s autonomy and its repression of fundamental human rights.”

Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., who sponsored the House human rights bill, said Xi “should understand that the U.S. is not kidding about human rights. Beating, torturing, and jailing of democracy activists is wrong and this historic legislation lets China know that respecting fundamental human rights is paramount.”

Activists hailed Trump's action.

"I know that many people in Hong Kong are happy that the U.S. government has passed a new bill," said Figo Chan, a 23-year-old Hong Kong protester who was honored with the John McCain Prize for Leadership at the Halifax International Security Forum in Canada last weekend.

"No one wants to die and no one wants to be hurt," Chan said. "I hope that citizens of many different countries can in their own way fight for democracy."

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Associated Press writers Amer Madhani in Washington and Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed to this report.



President Donald Trump gestures after speaking at a campaign rally Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2019, in Sunrise, Fla. (AP Photo/Brynn Anderson)

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