

# Chinese Communist Party expels 9 top generals

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Nine Chinese generals, including He Weidong, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission—the governing body of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA)—were expelled from the Chinese Communist Party and dismissed from the military late last week.

The expulsions at the top levels of the Chinese military are an indication of turmoil not only in the armed forces but also within the party leadership. General He ranked number three in the military after President Xi Jinping, who chairs the Central Military Commission (CMC), and senior vice-chairman General Zhang Youxia. He was also a member of the party’s 24-member Politburo, which is second only to the paramount 7-member Politburo Standing Committee.

No details have made public of the charges against He or the other eight generals. In announcing the expulsions, defence ministry spokesperson Zhang Xiaogang simply said the nine had “seriously violated party discipline and are suspected of serious duty-related crimes involving an extremely large amount of money.”

While the generals are accused of unspecified corruption, an editorial in the *PLA Daily* last Saturday underscored the political character of their expulsion. It stated that the nine had seriously undermined the principle that the military must be loyal to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

“They have seriously damaged the political ecology of the army and dealt a serious blow to the foundation of the political ideology that forged unity and advancement of the army,” the editorial declared.

The CCP, which came to power in 1949 on the back of predominantly peasant armies, has relied heavily on the PLA not only to counter external threats, but to crush internal opposition in times of crisis—in particular during the Mao Zedong’s misnamed Great Proletarian

Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and the mass protests and strikes in 1989 focussed on Beijing’s Tienanmen Square.

The accusations of “disloyalty” and “a total collapse of their beliefs” as party members take on particular significance as the CCP regime confronts the Trump administration’s accelerating preparations for war with China, along with a slowing economy, high unemployment, especially among young people, and rising social tensions.

The announcement that the nine generals would be expelled came on the eve of the fourth plenum of the party’s central committee, which is tasked with discussing the next five-year economic plan as China confronts the US administration’s barrage of tariffs and export restrictions. Xi is due to meet face-to-face with Trump next week in South Korea on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit.

Along with He, who has had not been seen in public since March, those purged included Admiral Miao Hua, who was removed from the CMC in June after being put under investigation for “serious violations of discipline” last November. Miao previously headed the PLA’s Political Work Department. Miao’s deputy, He Hongjun, was also expelled.

The others were also top military officers: Wang Xiubin, former executive deputy director of the CMC’s Joint Operations Command Centre; Lin Xiangyang, former commander of the Eastern Theatre Command; Qin Shutong, former political commissar of the army; Yuan Huazhi, former political commissar of the navy; Wang Houbin, former commander of the Rocket Force (the PLA’s nuclear arm); and Wang Chunling, former commander of the People’s Armed Police Force.

Since being installed in office in 2012, President Xi has repeatedly used extensive anti-corruption purges of

the party, military and state apparatus to consolidate his grip on power. While corruption is undoubtedly rife throughout the regime, including the military, Xi has exploited it as the pretext for removing his factional rivals.

In the lead-up to the 20th CCP Congress in 2022, Xi pushed through constitutional changes to allow him to remain in office beyond the two five-year terms that had become customary over the previous three decades. In assuming office for a third term, Xi installed many of his trusted protégés in top positions in the party, military and state apparatus.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote at the time, the choreographed promotion of Xi at the 20th Congress as a great leader—the “core” of the party—was not a sign of strength, but of weakness. Amid a growing crisis on every front, the regime required a strongman to hold the party together.

“Xi has assumed the character of a Bonapartist leader precariously balancing between the subterranean factions rife within the party amid a slowing Chinese economy, profound social tensions and an accelerating drive by Washington towards war with Beijing,” the WSWs wrote.

In the wake of the 20th Congress, the purges under the banner of “corruption” have continued—not so much of Xi’s rivals, but of his hand-picked appointees. General He himself had ties with Xi stretching back to their overlapping time in office in Fujian and Zhejiang provinces in the late 1990s. In 2022, Xi overlooked more senior generals to install He not only as number three in the Central Military Commission but also in the CCP Politburo.

Other top officials appointed by Xi have suffered a similar fate. In mid-2023, less than a year after being appointed, Foreign Minister Qin Gang was removed from office for unspecified reasons. Also in 2023, Defence Minister General Li Shangfu came under investigation over corruption charges. He disappeared from public view and was finally expelled from the party in mid-2024.

In 2023, the leadership of the PLA Rocket Force, which oversees China’s nuclear arsenal, including its commander Li Yuchao, his deputy Liu Guangbin, and former deputy commander Zhang Zhenzhong, were all removed from their posts and arrested on corruption charges. Now Li’s replacement is among the nine

expelled last week.

The Chinese military has been a particular target. More than 20 top officers have been removed from their posts since the beginning of Xi’s third term in office.

Given the opaque character of the CCP’s internal machinations, the precise reasons for the purging of the latest nine are not clear. The expulsions from the party were confirmed at the plenum of the Central Committee held this week and their cases have referred to military prosecutors for review and prosecution.

Nevertheless, the least that can be said is that the latest purge highlights considerable political tensions within the Chinese regime as it confronts serious economic and political problems, both externally and internally, and is ever more dependent on President Xi to hold the party together.



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