

WHITE TERROR GHOSTS: Legislators slam actions of military police and ministry

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New Power Party legislators, from third left, Freddy Lim, Hung Tzu-yung and Hsu Yung-ming, hold a news conference yesterday in Taipei regarding the alleged search of a private residence by military police without a warrant.

Photo: Fang Pin-chao, Taipei Times

Legislators from across party lines yesterday blasted the Taipei Military Police for confiscating White Terror era-related documents seized in a search of a civilian's residence.

The Legislative Yuan's Foreign and National Defense Committee put aside its scheduled agenda to question officials over the affair, passed resolutions condemning the military police's actions and demanded the preservation of all documents relating to the White Terror era.

"[The documents] were not classified and had already become historical documents," Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Johnny Chiang (蔣經國) said, questioning whether their presence on an online auctioning site was urgent enough to justify military police acting directly instead of referring the case to a public prosecutor.

"Even if investigations are allowed to be conducted without the permission of a prosecutor, personnel from the Ministry of Defense should not have gone with the military police to meet the suspect because they are not 'judicial police,'" he said, adding that it appeared that the military police had abandoned their neutrality and followed ministry orders.

"The reason this has become such a huge issue is that a judicial and human rights red line has been crossed," Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Lo Chih-cheng (羅智強) said.

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The ministry conducted a “scam operation” by pretending to want to purchase tea to “fish out” the man who posted the documents, Lo said, questioning whether the man had willingly assented to the military police searching his home.

Minister of Defense Kao Kuang-chi (高光奇) apologized for the fear and controversy caused by the incident in response to demands from DPP Legislator Lu Sun-ling (盧森玲) that he do so.

However, he denied that the ministry regularly monitors local Web sites and said that there had been no other similar incidents.

Numerous legislators demanded that all video footage of the encounter between the military police and the suspect, surnamed Wei (魏), and the documents be preserved and released to the public.

New Power Party (NPP) Legislator Freddy Lim (林錫山) said the incident showed that the government was keeping tabs on its own citizens.

“There is no way I can believe the Ministry of Defense statements that personnel ‘just happened’ to see the documents,” he said. “The reason they saw them was not because ministry personnel were surfing the Internet at work and went to an auction site to make a purchase.”

At a news conference, other NPP legislators said they were shocked by the involvement of intelligence personnel in directing the military police’s response, calling for reforms to be enacted that would clearly define the military police’s powers.

“This is not just rash behavior by the military police — there is an intelligence organization that regularly monitors online activity and sends in the military police if it finds something,” NPP Legislator Hsu Yung-ming (許毓仁) said after ministry officials refused to say how many ministry employees are responsible for monitoring the Internet.

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