

TAR party chief praises security forces' role in recent unrest

(AP) Tibet Autonomous Region's (TAR) Communist Party Secretary has praised the security forces' handling of recent unrest in the region, an official newspaper reports. Party and government officials, the military and police will form a *"Great Wall of steel"* against security threats, Zhang Qingli was quoted as saying by the Tibet Daily. Zhang made the comments during a meeting with the deputy commander and deputy political commissar of the People's Armed Police (PAP). Zhang reiterated claims that the protests were orchestrated by followers of the Dalai Lama, as part of a plot to destabilize the country, win Tibet's independence and sabotage the Beijing Olympics. Deputy PAP commander Lt. Gen. Huo Yi was quoted as thanking Zhang for his support and described the protests as *"a type of exercise, a test and a chance to upgrade"*. Huo was shown in an accompanying photograph wearing combat fatigues and shaking Zhang's hand. The government says security forces responded to protesters with a high level of restraint, but has conceded units fired live ammunition at demonstrators outside Lhasa. Officials have refused to confirm any injuries or deaths.

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