# Hong Kong police brand mobile game as tool for armed revolution under national security law



Hong Kong's police have recently intensified their scrutiny of digital platforms, marking a significant escalation in their ongoing efforts to suppress dissent. On Tuesday, authorities publicly accused a mobile game application, "Reversed Front: Bonfire," of promoting armed revolution and secessionist activities linked to Hong Kong and Taiwan. This marks a notable moment as it is the first time a gaming app has been publicly denounced in such a manner, raising critical concerns about freedom of expression under Hong Kong’s national security laws.

According to police statements, downloading or sharing the application could lead individuals to violate the stringent national security laws imposed by Beijing, which have been increasingly enforced since the 2019 anti-government protests. The police warned that possessing the app may be viewed as holding a publication that harbours seditious intent. The game, developed by ESC Taiwan, allows players to embody various rebel factions—such as those representing Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Tibet—whose goal is the overthrow of the Chinese Communist regime. Authorities have described the app as a tool that disguises its violent intentions under the facade of entertainment.

Critics of the police's actions have expressed concern over the implications for creative freedom. Kuo Hao Fu, a player from Taiwan, argued that the game employs satire to tackle serious political issues and allows users to assume roles in representing China. “The Hong Kong police's actions demonstrate how Hong Kong's democratic freedoms have been controlled by the Chinese Communist Party,” he stated, highlighting the stifling environment for artistic expression.

The controversy surrounding "Reversed Front: Bonfire" sheds light on a broader pattern of control over digital media and the expression of dissent in Hong Kong. In 2019, Apple removed a map application that aided protesters by providing real-time police locations after criticism from Chinese state media. This trend indicates how international companies struggle to balance compliance with Chinese government demands while maintaining market access. The Hong Kong government, supported by Beijing, contends that such measures are necessary to restore stability and order following widespread civil unrest.

The introduction of the national security law has profoundly affected the political landscape in Hong Kong, resulting in the erosion of freedoms previously enjoyed by its citizens. Since its enactment, many dissenting voices have been silenced through arrests and prosecutions, creating a chilling atmosphere for activists and those seeking to engage in political commentary, even through art and gaming.

This latest development comes amid ongoing concerns regarding Hong Kong's diminishing democratic freedoms and the growing control exerted by Beijing. Both governments maintain that the security laws are essential for protecting the public and ensuring social stability after the unrest of 2019. However, critics argue that these measures only serve to quash dissent and silence opposition, further entrenching a system of state control over public discourse.

As the discussion surrounding the implications of creative platforms like "Reversed Front: Bonfire" unfolds, it raises critical questions about the future of artistic expression in a climate increasingly defined by fear of reprisal and legal repercussions. The case highlights the intersection of technology, politics, and personal agency in an environment marked by systemic repression.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/hong-kong-taiwan-google-play-bonfire-beijing-b2767379.html), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/5746284653544ab21a787becf05a86cf)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/hong-kong-taiwan-google-play-bonfire-beijing-b2767379.html), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/5746284653544ab21a787becf05a86cf), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/04/hong-kong-protests-mobile-game)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://time.com/5696854/apple-hong-kong-map-app-removed/), [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/cf006aa1f92ddcef3700682df6d1bccd)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/hong-kong-taiwan-google-play-bonfire-beijing-b2767379.html), [[7]](https://www.ft.com/content/aeb83a5c-9e7b-4665-8908-51ea6bea98c9)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/hong-kong-taiwan-google-play-bonfire-beijing-b2767379.html), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kongs-top-court-quashes-convictions-pro-democracy-tiananmen-group-2025-03-06/), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/5746284653544ab21a787becf05a86cf)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/hong-kong-taiwan-google-play-bonfire-beijing-b2767379.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/5746284653544ab21a787becf05a86cf> - On June 10, 2025, Hong Kong police accused the mobile game app 'Reversed Front: Bonfire' of promoting armed revolution and secessionist agendas, including advocating for the independence of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Authorities warned that sharing or downloading the app could violate national security laws. Developed by ESC Taiwan, the game allows players to assume roles of various rebel factions aiming to overthrow the Chinese communist regime. The app was removed from Google Play for not restricting hateful language but remained available on Apple's App Store. Critics argue that the game uses satire to address serious political issues and that the police's accusations threaten creative freedom. China considers Taiwan its own territory, and both Hong Kong and Beijing governments defend the security laws as necessary for maintaining stability after the 2019 protests. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/5746284653544ab21a787becf05a86cf?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kongs-top-court-quashes-convictions-pro-democracy-tiananmen-group-2025-03-06/> - In March 2025, Hong Kong's top court unanimously overturned the convictions of three former members of a pro-democracy group that organised annual vigils for the Tiananmen Square massacre. The court cited procedural injustices, stating that key facts were misrepresented, depriving the appellants of a fair trial. This decision marked a rare victory for Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, which has faced numerous arrests and exiles under the national security law imposed by Beijing. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/china/hong-kongs-top-court-quashes-convictions-pro-democracy-tiananmen-group-2025-03-06/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://time.com/5696854/apple-hong-kong-map-app-removed/> - In 2019, Apple removed the HKmap.live app from its App Store after Chinese state media criticised the company for aiding Hong Kong protesters by providing real-time police locations. Apple stated that the app jeopardised police operations and public safety, a claim disputed by the app's developers. Despite its removal from the App Store, the desktop version of HKmap.live remained accessible. This decision was part of a broader trend of international companies grappling with Chinese government pressure while trying to maintain their market presence in China. ([time.com](https://time.com/5696854/apple-hong-kong-map-app-removed/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/04/hong-kong-protests-mobile-game> - In 2014, the Hong Kong-based company nxTomo developed 'Love and Peace', a mobile game inspired by the pro-democracy protests. The game, a complex reinterpretation of the classic arcade game Snake, allowed players to lead a protest against an oppressive regime, reflecting the reality of Hong Kong's political climate. The game's release coincided with significant pro-democracy demonstrations, highlighting the role of digital media in Hong Kong's political activism. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/04/hong-kong-protests-mobile-game?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://apnews.com/article/cf006aa1f92ddcef3700682df6d1bccd> - In December 2024, Ng Chi-hung, the mastermind behind a failed bomb plot targeting police during the 2019 anti-government protests in Hong Kong, was sentenced to nearly 24 years in prison. This marked the first case under Hong Kong’s anti-terrorism law. Ng had pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit bombing and possessing arms with intent to endanger life. The plot involved planting bombs and shooting officers at a rally, amidst accusations of police brutality. The case drew significant attention due to the invocation of the U.N. Anti-Terrorism Measures Ordinance. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/cf006aa1f92ddcef3700682df6d1bccd?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/aeb83a5c-9e7b-4665-8908-51ea6bea98c9> - In December 2024, a Hong Kong court sentenced 45 pro-democracy activists to prison terms of up to 10 years in a landmark security trial. Benny Tai received the most severe sentence, with others like Joshua Wong and Australian citizen Gordon Ng also receiving lengthy sentences. This was the largest case under the National Security Law imposed by Beijing following the 2019 anti-government protests. The accused were arrested for conspiring to commit subversion related to an unofficial primary election in 2020. The crackdown has raised concerns about the rule of law in Hong Kong and severely impacted the city's international reputation. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/aeb83a5c-9e7b-4665-8908-51ea6bea98c9?utm_source=openai))