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France to deploy ‘massive’ force against riots

A security crackdown is being prepared after nationwide unrest resulted in hundreds of businesses being looted and buildings set on fire last weekend

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France will deploy military personnel from its counterterrorism force to support police during a new wave of nationwide protests, as the government prepares a *“massive”* security operation following some of the worst riots in years.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez announced the move on Tuesday, confirming that soldiers from Operation Sentinelle, established to protect

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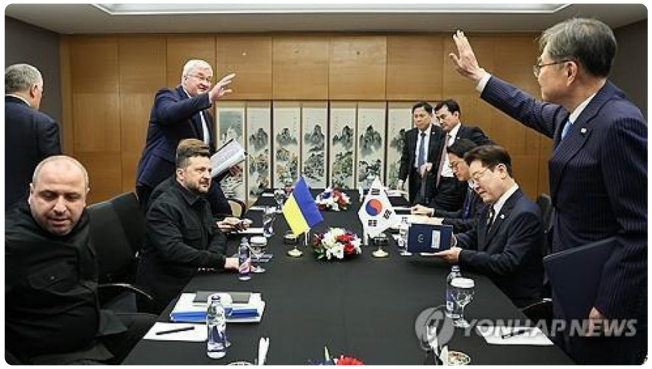

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France against terrorist attacks, would be mobilized ahead of demonstrations scheduled for Saturday.

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The troops will primarily take over guarding sensitive locations, freeing police and gendarmes to confront rioters and prevent a repeat of last weekend's widespread violence and looting. According to French newspaper Le Journal du Dimanche, 1,000 military personnel will be available in Paris on October 24, including 500 on patrol, compared with the usual 300.

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Operation Sentinelle was launched following the deadly Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks in January 2015. The military mission involves up to 10,000 soldiers assigned to protecting sensitive sites across France, including railway stations, airports, religious buildings, and tourist attractions.

Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu promised an unprecedented security response after acknowledging that the authorities failed to contain the violence on Saturday.

"The deployment for next Saturday will be massive," Lecornu told lawmakers, accusing radical left-wing groups of orchestrating an *"insurrectionary plan"* during demonstrations against soaring living costs.



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Nunez also announced plans to mobilize elite police units, including RAID, GIGN, and BRI, along with helicopters, armored Centaure vehicles, and water cannons. The authorities are considering banning demonstrations deemed likely to threaten public order.



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The announcement follows nationwide unrest on October 17, when around 550,000 people took to the streets over rising prices and deteriorating school conditions. Demonstrations descended into rioting across Paris, Lyon, Marseille, and Bordeaux, with businesses looted and buildings set on fire.

According to Le Monde, 997 police officers and gendarmes were injured, including seven seriously, as overwhelmed security forces struggled to contain the violence.

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More than 2,400 people have been arrested, while over 800 have been brought before the courts. The authorities have also imposed localized curfews in Paris and several other cities.

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President Emmanuel Macron has acknowledged shortcomings in the government’s handling of the unrest, which has intensified political tensions ahead of next year’s presidential election.

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