

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 勞師動衆

*lao2 shi1 dong4 zhong4*

Daredevils walked a high rope spanning an abyss at the peak of the Lion Rock Mountain. They would occasionally slip off and dangle in mid-air, saved from certain death only by a thin strap, as a terrified small crowd watched.

The act is said to be called "highlining," described as "an extreme version of "slacklining, itself a close relation of tightrope walking." Whatever its name, it looked extremely dangerous, at least to the laymen.

Some are upset, saying the slackliners are willfully risking their lives and therefore must not "勞師動衆" (*lao2 shi1 dong4 zhong4*) to call emergency services should they get into trouble.

"勞" (*lao2*) is "to work," "to labor," "to trouble," "師" (*shi1*) "teacher," "the troops," "the army," "動" (*dong4*) "to mobilize," "to engage" and "衆" (*zhong4*) "a crowd," "the public,"

"many." Literally, "勞師動衆" (*lao2 shi1 dong4 zhong4*) is "mobilize the troops and a lot of people," "to mobilize too many troops," "to drag in lots of people."

Another version of the idiom is "興師動衆" (*xing1 shi1 dong4 zhong4*), which has the same meaning – "to muster large forces," "to get a great number of people involved in carrying out some task."

The idiom is usually used in situations in which substantial effort and manpower are expended unnecessarily. Rescuing slackliners or wind surfers in a typhoon, according to critics, are in this category; sending rescue workers to help earthquake victims is not.

But a slack-liner said people were just over-reacting as their gears are of a high quality and the activity was no more dangerous than riding a "racing green minibus."

### Terms containing the character "衆" (*zhong4*) include:

眾人 (*zhong4 ren2*) – everybody; all the people

公眾 (*gong1 zhong4*) – the public; the community

小眾 (*xiao3 zhong4*) – non-mainstream; the minority

眾多 (*zhong4 duo1*) – numerous