Residents, come back home. We need you.

Tourists, come visit New Orleans again.

Don't mind the Humvees that roll down the streets or the cammo-clad, armed troops on patrol. Everything's fine, come on down.

New Orleans is a big, entangled mixed message. Businesses are coming back, conventions are coming back, but Mayor Ray Nagin needs the National Guard and extra State Police to patrol the violent streets.

The call to extra arms a call Gov. Kathleen Blanco answered follows a weekend incident that involved the murder of five teenagers. It's senseless tragedy that easily sparks a sense of uneasiness, but the National Guard?

This is either a big overreaction or Nagin and New Orleans officials have scant control over post-Katrina New Orleans.

As we see, military troops of any kind should not patrol city streets in "martial-law" style except in the most extreme cases like after Katrina, in time of war or the total breakdown of civil authority.

New Orleans Police Superintendent Warren J. Riley said his department could control crime. "This is not a situation where anything is out of control," Riley said.
If the city and its crime are not out of control, National Guardsmen should not be on patrol.

The number of New Orleans police officers has decreased from 1,750 before Hurricane Katrina to 1,375 (a 21.4 percent drop). Meanwhile, the city's population is down 50 percent, or more.

Post-Katrina New Orleans certainly has problems and challenges beyond "normal." Policing is different and the legal system, like much of the city, is not at full function. Still, this solution seems extreme, especially when city officials said they would consider overtime for police to increase patrols. That should happen before Guard time.

Now officials are working to reinstate a curfew to help target problems with juveniles. That adds to the out-of-control perception.

What will happen if the city's population continues to grow?

What does sending in the armed troops say to the thousands of librarians descending on the city for the American Library Association's national convention, or other conventions on tap?

What does it say to the displaced New Orleans-area residents contemplating a return home?

New Orleans leaders either overreacted in calling for the National Guard or they are not in control of their city.

Either way, it seems like a black eye for the Big Easy and Louisiana.