

Pelosi's Potential Taiwan Provocation Raises South China Sea Tensions

NSC Spokesman Kirby says there's no evidence Beijing is planning military action against Taiwan

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As Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is preparing to lead a Congressional delegation on a tour of Asia, which may include a stop in Taiwan, tensions between Washington and Beijing in the South China Sea are increasing.

After a port call in Singapore, the USS Ronald Reagan has [returned](#) to the South China Sea where earlier this month it was conducting war drills. *South China Morning Post* [reported](#) that satellite imagery showed the carrier, on Thursday, traveling 185 kilometers (115 miles) from the contested Fiery Cross Reef in the disputed Spratly Islands chain. Two Chinese ships, a frigate and a destroyer, were identified between 23-27 kilometers away. The USS Ronald Reagan and its strike group is now heading northeast possibly towards the Taiwan Strait.

After drilling in Hainan province, the PLA Navy is carrying out routine exercises near Guangdong, along the Chinese southern coast. According to the *Post*, "An area in the South China Sea about 89km from Macau will be closed to ships on Saturday for military exercises, according to a notice issued by China's Maritime Safety Administration. The Gulf of Tonkin off southwestern Guangdong will also be a no-go zone on Tuesday and Wednesday while gunnery exercises are carried out."

Song Zhongping, a former PLA instructor, suggests the USS Ronald Reagan might escort Pelosi to Taiwan. The *Associated Press* [reported](#) this week, if Pelosi goes to Taiwan, ships, jets, and additional assets will be providing protection for the military plane flying her there. Song adds "At the same time, before the potential visit, the US will increase surveillance of People's Liberation Army activities around Taiwan - meaning that the US would deploy a large number of reconnaissance aircraft."

Song predicts the “region will be tense for a while,” and China will correspondingly reciprocate with more surveillance flights eyeing the carrier strike group. He said the PLA will likely warn off U.S. ships and aircraft in the area, and perhaps intercept Pelosi’s plane.

On Friday, despite the hype, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters there is [no evidence China is planning to act militarily against Taiwan](#). “(We’ve) seen no physical, tangible indications of anything untoward with respect to Taiwan,” Kirby said.

Officials in President Joe Biden’s administration are concerned if Pelosi visits the island it will spark a major crisis in the Taiwan Strait. As House Speaker, she is number three in line to replace the president. This follows a series of [hawkish former Donald Trump administration officials](#), [Congressional delegations](#) and other high level officials’ [visits](#) to Taiwan, which have [deliberately](#) goaded Beijing.

Earlier this week, Pelosi [invited](#) other lawmakers to join her in Taipei. Reportedly, House Foreign Affairs Chairman Gregory Meeks (D-NY) will [join her small delegation](#).

Biden has said the military warned him Pelosi going to Taiwan is “[not a good idea](#).” During a call on Thursday, Chinese President Xi Jinping [told](#) Biden that China will resist “interference by external forces” on the island, adding those “who play with fire will perish by it.” Xi said he hopes “the US will be clear-eyed about this.” On Friday, when reporters asked Pelosi about Xi’s comments she smiled, laughed, and [declined](#) to comment.

Pelosi told reporters on Friday “we want Congress to be a part of” the Biden administration’s Indo-Pacific policy. Since entering office, Biden has vastly ramped up military provocations with China. Last year, Biden sailed warships through the Taiwan Strait [almost every month](#). He nearly [doubled](#) the number of air craft carrier strike groups deployed to the South China Sea, and flew [more than 2,000 sorties](#) of reconnaissance aircraft in the South China Sea, East China Sea, and Yellow Sea.

Beyond Biden’s three “gaffes” which has committed Americans to Taiwan’s defense, [seemingly doing away with the One-China policy](#) which has kept the peace for decades, US troops are now openly [deployed](#) to the island, training local forces for war with the mainland.

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