

Sino-American Showdown in Taiwan Strait: Chinese Navy Confronted USS Kitty Hawk

By [Global Research](#)

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A Chinese attack submarine and destroyer confronted the U.S. carrier Kitty Hawk and its battle group in the Taiwan Strait, sparking a tense 28-hour standoff that brought both sides to a battle-ready position.



The American ships were heading to Japan following China's sudden cancellation of a scheduled Thanksgiving port call in Hong Kong when they encountered the Chinese vessels, according to the Navy Times, which cited a report in a Chinese-language newspaper in Taiwan.

The Times reported that the encounter caused the carrier group "to halt and ready for battle, as the Chinese vessels also stopped amid the 28-hour confrontation."

The encounter ended without incident, however, and the U.S. ships continued on to Japan. The two Chinese vessels were also headed for a port call in Japan.

The Chinese destroyer, Shenzhen, is armed with anti-ship missiles, while the Song-class attack sub is equipped with anti-ship missiles and a variety of torpedoes.

China has expressed "grave concern" to the U.S. over the Kitty Hawk's transit through the Taiwan Strait, the Times notes. Beijing claims Taiwan is Chinese territory.

But Admiral Timothy Keating, head of the U.S. Pacific Command, told reporters Tuesday: "We don't need China's permission to go through the Taiwan Strait. We will exercise our free right of passage whenever and wherever we choose."

Shortly before the Kitty Hawk battle group was denied entry to Hong Kong, China had refused safe harbor for two U.S. Navy minesweepers seeking refuge from a storm.

As Newsmax has reported, some U.S. politicians have rung alarm bells about China's increased military spending and technological revamping of its armed forces.

China's military budget had an average annual growth rate of nearly 16 percent from 1994 to 2004, and China's reported 2006 military budget is about \$35 billion, according to Beijing.

But Pentagon sources have said these numbers fail to demonstrate the true scope of the growth, and the real 2006 figure could be as much as \$105 billion.

In recent years China has upgraded its nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles; bought state-of-the-art warships, fighter planes and submarines from Russia; and begun development of a number of so-called "asymmetrical" weapons, including informational warfare and anti-satellite systems.

In November, Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda warned that China's continuing military buildup could eventually pose a "major threat" if the Chinese government decides to exercise its power.

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For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca