

The South China Sea and Beijing's Rebuttal: US Stennis Aircraft Carrier Denied Entry to Hong Kong

By [Minnie Chan](#)

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Refusal comes after US defence chief Ash Carter visited the USS Stennis in South China Sea



USS John C. Stennis

Beijing denied a US aircraft carrier permission to make a port call in Hong Kong, a US consulate official says, a rejection that comes amid escalating tensions in the South China Sea.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry told the US on Thursday night the visit by the USS John C. Stennis would not be allowed, said the official, who requested anonymity.

US defence chief Ash Carter visited the Stennis earlier this month.
[The ministry] needs to approve every ship coming into Hong Kong

US CONSULATE OFFICIAL

"[The ministry] needs to approve every ship coming into Hong Kong. [They] said 'no' to the carrier," the official said, adding the reason for the denial was not clear.

In a written reply to the *South China Morning Post's* inquiry, the ministry said on Friday night that port calls made by US warships and military aircraft were examined on a "case by case basis in accordance with sovereignty principles and specific circumstances".

Carter flew to the nuclear-powered carrier for a two-hour visit on April 15, as it sailed about

100km west of the Philippine island of Luzon. Experts said the move likely irritated Beijing as Carter was accompanied by his Philippine counterpart, Voltaire Gazmin.

[China to build up atoll in contested South China Sea, source says](#)

Last week, the US Pacific Command revealed they had sent six powerful A-10 Thunderbolt aircrafts near the Scarborough Shoal, which China occupies but Manila also claims.

The Chinese Defence Ministry had expressed concern over the flight.

It's not the first time China has turned down port calls by US warships. During the Thanksgiving holidays in 2007, Beijing rejected the USS Kitty Hawk's visit to Hong Kong after Washington announced an advanced missile deal with Taiwan and US President George W. Bush met the Dalai Lama.

However, the Kitty Hawk was allowed to dock in the city five month later in April 2008, as Sino-US military relations returned to normal.

The Stennis carrier strike group is currently operating in the South China Sea, where China has territorial disputes with the Philippines, Vietnam and other Asian countries.

The consulate said it had originally arranged public tours aboard the Stennis for next Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Cancellation notices had been sent out to invitees, the consulate official said.

Meanwhile, the USS Blue Ridge, the Japan-based flagship of the US Seventh Fleet, is in Hong Kong, where it is a regular visitor.

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