
China military

Chinese aircraft carrier visits Hong Kong in show of force

Liaoning's arrival projects Beijing's sovereignty over semi-autonomous territory



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YESTERDAY by: Ben Bland in Hong Kong

China's first aircraft carrier arrived in Hong Kong on Friday in a show of force to project Beijing's sovereignty over the semi-autonomous territory and its naval dominance over [rivals](#) in the disputed South China Sea.

The [Liaoning](#) has invited 2,000 Hong Kongers on board this weekend to inspect the ship and its complement of J-15 fighters in the first such public tour since the former Soviet vessel was commissioned into the People's Liberation Army Navy in 2012.

Although its technology is outdated, with western analysts arguing it is more of a training ship than a combat-ready vessel, the port call in Hong Kong is still a significant symbol of the growing power of China's navy, as it moves from coastal defence to securing China's interests in the oceans beyond.

It comes amid tensions with neighbours in the South and East China Seas, and a growing rejection of China's rule in Hong Kong.



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Taiwan, the self-governing island that China claims as its own, scrambled military jets and ships to monitor the Liaoning after it passed close to its waters last weekend on the way to Hong Kong.

Yue Gang, a military affairs analyst and retired PLA colonel, said the display of the Liaoning in Hong Kong would show the

world that China was becoming a “blue-water power” and that the nation’s rise was “all round and not only economic”.

Several thousand Hong Kongers queued up this week to get a ticket for the Liaoning tour, which comes a week after the 20th anniversary of the handover of the former British colony and a visit by Chinese president Xi Jinping.

“It is great for Hong Kongers to see the military power of our country,” said Albert Yeung, a 66-year-old retiree. “We want to know the level of the Chinese military compared with world standards.”

Peter Fung, another retiree relishing the chance to board the Liaoning, said that the port call “shows China’s sovereignty and helps ensure Hong Kong’s stability and prosperity”.

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Beyond Hong Kong, Beijing wants to showcase its rapidly increasing military power, with a second aircraft carrier, the first it built domestically, [launched](#) in April.

Euan Graham, a security analyst at the Lowy Institute, a think-tank in Sydney, said that the Liaoning

was not advanced enough to represent a threat to US naval dominance in the Asia-Pacific and was unable to launch aircraft with more than basic defensive armaments.

But he said it was a stepping stone to help China train naval aviators and had “coercive and intimidation value when dealing with smaller, [rival](#) claimant nations in the South China Sea”.

Additional reporting by Nicolle Liu

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