

UK to send Royal Navy warship through disputed South China Sea in challenge to Beijing

Written by vuquangtiep

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A Royal Navy warship will sail through the South China Sea in an effort to assert freedom of navigation rights in waters where Beijing is increasingly extending its control.



HMS Sutherland, a Type 23 frigate, will travel through the key trading lane after concluding a visit to Australia, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson announced.

Mr Williamson made the announcement during a visit to Australia to meet his counterpart Marise Payne in Sydney, where they discussed North Korea, cyber warfare and terrorism. The trip was also designed to push Australia to buy the UK's Type 23 replacement, the BAE-built Type 26.

He told The Australian: “[Sutherland] will be sailing through the South China Sea and making it clear our Navy has a right to do that.

“World dynamics are shifting so greatly. The US can only concentrate on so many things at once. The US is looking for other countries to do more. This is a great opportunity for the UK and Australia to do more, to exercise leadership.”

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