

White House has dismissed China's attempts to change how American airlines refer to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau in their public materials as "Orwellian nonsense".

The Chinese Civil Aviation Administration has asked 36 foreign air carriers - including a number of American airlines - to refrain from referring to the three destinations as separate countries.

Taiwan is China's most sensitive territorial issue. Beijing considers the self-ruled, democratic island a wayward province. Hong Kong and Macau are former European colonies that are now part of China but run largely autonomously.



US Airways Flights (Image: via Vacclav/Shutterstock)

"This is Orwellian nonsense and part of a growing trend by the Chinese Communist Party to impose its political views on American citizens and private companies," White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement.

[Read: China hits back on White House's 'Orwellian nonsense'](#)

In January, Delta Air Lines, following a demand from China over listing Taiwan and Tibet as countries on its website, apologized for making "an inadvertent error with no business or political intention" and said it had taken steps to resolve the issue.

Also in January, China suspended Marriott International's Chinese website for a week, punishing the world's biggest hotel chain for listing Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau as separate countries in a customer questionnaire.

Several international companies - including at least one US airline - have already changed how they refer to the regions, under pressure from Beijing. Zara, Qantas, and Delta Air Lines all pulled references to Taiwan as a separate country from their websites in January, after being publicly reprimanded by Chinese authorities.

The news also comes amid increased tensions between the US and China over the militarization of the South China Sea.

China has reportedly deployed its first missile to the Spratly Islands - fortified outposts west of the Philippines, over which several countries claim sovereignty. Sanders said last week that the White House was “well aware” of the move and that China would face “near-term and long-term consequences”.

Sources: *The Guardian, CNN, Independent UK*

Zachary Ballif

The Kootneeti Team - White House Watch

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