

## US Marine deployment raises brows

By Zhang Yuwei  
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The United States said on Tuesday it welcomes the rise of China and wants to work constructively with Beijing, as it signed a deal to deploy 2,500 Marines to Australia, which is seen as part of the US "rebalance" to Asia.

After signing the agreement at the Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) in Sydney, US Secretary of State John Kerry said Washington was not interested in conflict with China.

"We welcome the rise of China as a global partner, hopefully as a powerful economy, as a full participating constructive member of the international community," Kerry said. "We are not seeking conflict and confrontation. And our hope is that China will likewise take advantage of the opportunities that are in front of it and be that cooperative partner."

Ted Galen Carpenter, a senior fellow for defense and foreign policy studies at Washington-based Cato Institute, said despite of Kerry's "conciliatory comments", China or any other nation must base its judgment of another country's intentions on its actions.

"Many of Washington's actions over the past several years, including the deployment of Marines to Australia, hint at a containment policy directed against Beijing," said Carpenter.

"Unless those actions - especially the US support for nations challenging China's territorial claims in the South China Sea and the implicit backing of Japan's stance regarding the Diaoyu Islands - change significantly, the Obama administration will have a difficult time convincing China that a containment policy is not being pursued," he added.

Sharing a similar view, Zhiqun Zhu, director of the China Institute at Bucknell University, said any move that reflects the "trust deficit" between the US and China forms the "biggest obstacle to future relationship".

"What Kerry said all sounds good and politically correct, but the fundamental US policy toward China remains unchanged: engagement plus hedging against what is perceived as 'Chinese aggressiveness'," said Zhu.

Carpenter said Kerry and other US officials must be more "specific" about their concept of China being a "cooperative partner".

"It has to be something more reasonable than always expecting Beijing to support Washington's position on a given security or economic issue," said Carpenter. "If US leaders truly want China to be a cooperative partner, there has to be a reasonable amount of compromise in the relationship."

Australia's Foreign Minister Julie Bishop earlier defended the deal to bring US Marines and Air Force personnel to the Northern Territory, denying it was aimed at China.

"That's not what it is directed to do at all. It's about working closely with the United States to ensure that we can work on regional peace and security," she told a radio program. "The United States is rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific, so it's a way we can work together to support economic development as well as security and peace."

AFP contributed to this story.