



ARTS & CULTURE

Vietnam Bans 'Barbie' Movie over Disputed South China Sea Map

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Vietnamese state media reported on Monday that Vietnam has banned the movie *Barbie* from being released in the Southeast Asian country.

Vietnam banned the movie because of a moment in the film showing a map of China's claimed territory in the South China Sea.

The map shows the “nine-**dash** line” used by China to claim almost all of the South China Sea. The claim was rejected in an international court ruling in The Hague, Netherlands in 2016. But China refuses to recognize the ruling.

The Chinese claim includes areas of what Vietnam and several Southeast Asian countries consider part of their country. Vietnam has repeatedly accused China's ships of entering its territory without permission. Vietnam has also permitted oil companies to explore and gather oil resources in this territory.

Barbie is the latest movie to be banned in Vietnam for showing China's disputed nine-dash line. In 2019, the Vietnamese government pulled DreamWorks' film *Abominable* and last year it banned Sony's action movie *Uncharted* for the same reason. The online film and show service Netflix also removed an Australian spy drama *Pine Gap* in 2021.

At the same time, China has also banned or forced Hollywood studios to cut moments in movies that did not follow the Communist Party's directions. They included *Seven Years in Tibet*, *World War Z*, *Christopher Robin*, and several others.

Barbie is a movie starring Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling. State-run newspaper *Tuoi Tre* said it was first set to open in Vietnam on July 21, the same date as in the United States.

“We do not **grant license** for the American movie 'Barbie' to release in Vietnam because it contains the **offending** image of the nine-dash line,” the paper reported Vi Kien Thanh saying. He is the head of the Department of Cinema, a government agency in charge of licensing and **censoring** foreign films.

Warner Bros, the producer of *Barbie*, did not respond to a request for comment from Reuters.

I'm Jill Robbins.

Phuong Nguyen reported this story for Reuters. Gregory Stachel adapted it for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

dash – *n.* a punctuation mark — that is used especially to show a break in thought or in the structure of a sentence (as in “We don't know where—or how—the problem began.”)

grant – *v.* to agree to do, give, or allow (something asked for or hoped for)

license – *n.* an official document or card that gives you permission to do, use, or have something

offending – *adj.* causing disapproval

censor – *v.* to examine books, movies, or letters in order to remove things that are considered to be offensive, immoral, or harmful to society

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