

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE – MAY 2013

ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

29 May 2013: PLA review warns 'strategic uncertainties' loom large for China

A PLA think tank yesterday issued a report warning that the nation faces increasing "strategic pressure" for the first time since the 1990s collapse of the communist bloc, with the Asia-Pacific region now a "new global centre" for "geopolitical, economic and military competition".

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1248585/pla-review-warns-strategic-uncertainties-loom-large-china>

29 May 2013: China ignores RP Demand for Ships' Withdrawal

China had ignored Philippine government calls for the withdrawal of state-owned vessels in Ayungin Shoal which is well within the country's territorial boundaries as two surveillance vessels in the area had not shown signs as of yesterday of an imminent pullout, according to Col. Edgard Arevalo, spokesman for the Navy on the West Philippine Sea. Arevalo admitted that the Navy troops at Ayungin are feeling "discomfort" over the continued presence of Chinese ships in the area. "There's the feeling of discomfort and tension." "We hope that the protest we filed at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (for repeated Chinese incursions in Philippine maritime territory) will be resolved immediately," he added.

<http://www.tribuneonline.org/index.php/headlines/item/14698-china-ignores-rp-demand-for-ships-withdrawal>

28 May 2013: South China Sea tension mounts near Filipino shipwreck

The Philippine government is accusing China of encroachment after three Chinese ships, including a naval frigate, converged just 5 nautical miles from an old transport ship that the Philippines deliberately ran aground on a reef in 1999 to mark its territory.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/28/us-philippines-china-idUSBRE94R0YS20130528>

28 May 2013: Withdraw ships, Philippines tells China

China should withdraw its ships from Ayungin Shoal (Second Thomas Reef) because that area of the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) is an "integral part" of the Philippines' national territory, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said Monday.

<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/75823/withdraw-ships-philippines-tells-china#ixzz2UYpzmXVv>

27 May 2013: PLA Navy's three fleets meet in South China Sea for rare show of force

China's navy has carried out a rare joint exercise, involving its three fleets, in the South China Sea as regional tensions over territorial disputes mount. The combined drill was carried out in southern waters by warships, submarines and the naval air force from the People's Liberation Army's North Sea, East Sea and South Sea fleets, national broadcaster CCTV reported on Saturday. Chinese analysts said the South China Sea drill by the three fleets, which finished on Friday, was the first since 2010 when Beijing staged a similar exercise to protest against the involvement of the aircraft carrier USS George Washington in a joint anti-submarine drill with the South Korean navy in the Yellow Sea.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1246897/pla-navys-three-fleets-meet-south-china-sea-rare-show-force>

27 May 2013: Taiwan protests Philippine naval ships in S.China Sea

Taiwan on Saturday protested to the Philippines over naval ships it sent to disputed South China Sea islands in the latest diplomatic spat between the two governments. "Taiwan expresses its serious concern and firm opposition over the Philippines' dispatching of naval vessels to the Ren'ai (Second Thomas) Shoal in the Nansha Islands," it said in a statement. Taiwan's government "denies all unlawful claims to sovereignty over, or occupation of, these areas by other countries," it said. The statement did not say when or how many Philippine ships were allegedly sent to the area or for how long. The Philippine government and military spokespeople declined to comment.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/784488.shtml>

27 May 2013: Vietnam accuses China of ramming fishing boat, damaging its hull in South China Sea clash

Vietnam has accused China of damaging a fishing boat in the latest escalation of tension in the disputed South China Sea. The Foreign Ministry said a Chinese vessel slammed into a Vietnamese fishing boat while it was operating in Vietnamese waters on May 20. It damaged the ship's hull and risked the lives of 15 crew members. Ministry spokesman Luong Thanh Nghi said in a statement that the ministry lodged a protest Monday with the Chinese embassy.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Vietnam+accuses+China+ramming+fishing+boat+damaging+hull+South/8441781/story.html#ixzz2UYotWFz5>

26 May 2013: Philippines boost Spratlys border patrols

The Philippine government is looking to buy additional air assets to beef up its border patrols amid fresh intrusion by Chinese fishing boats backed by two warships near Ayungin Reef, a part of the Kalayaan Island Group on Spratly Islands in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea). This was disclosed on Sunday by President Aquino's deputy spokesman, Abigail Valte, who confirmed in an interview over the state-run Radyo ng Bayan that after the acquisition of BRP *Ramon Alcaraz*, a Hamilton-class cutter used by the US Navy for over four decades, the Philippines is also negotiating to purchase helicopters to augment its Armed Forces border patrols.

The President earlier indicated he favored forging fisheries agreements with neighboring countries with overlapping exclusive economic zones to avert further conflicts in the region. But, he said, the government would pursue this only after resolving a row with Taipei.

<http://businessmirror.com.ph/index.php/news/top-news/14050-govt-boosts-spratlys-border-patrols>

24 May 2013: China's satellite data network reaches South China Sea

A satellite data receiving station was launched on Friday enabling China to now obtain observation information about the South China Sea. The station, in Sanya in south China's island province of Hainan, was launched by the Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth under the Chinese Academy of Sciences. China will now be able to obtain satellite remote

sensing data of the country's southern territorial waters for civil use directly from its ground-based receiving facilities, according to an institute statement.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-05/24/c_124761812.htm

24 May 2013: CNOOC completes Asia's biggest deepsea platform

China National Offshore Oil Corp — the country's largest offshore oil producer — said on Thursday it has completed construction of Asia's biggest deepwater platform in the South China Sea, marking a breakthrough for the company. The project, known as the Liwan 3-1 natural gas central offshore platform, will have an annual processing capacity of 12 billion cubic meters after completion and will be put into operation by the end of the year, CNOOC said.

http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2013-05/24/content_16526676.htm

23 May 2013: Successful dive confirmed in South China Sea

The China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association said on Thursday that Qianlong No1 completed a successful dive of 4,159 meters in the South China Sea in May. The dive was a major boost to efforts to explore the ocean floor and carry out research. Qianlong No1 is 4.6 meters long and 1.6 meters wide, weighing about 1,500 kilograms. The submersible is designed with a maximum diving depth of 6,000 meters and a continuous traveling time of 24 hours. The vehicle can survey the sea floor and collect deep-sea data.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-05/23/content_16526004.htm

23 May 2013: Philippines weighs move on China incursion

The Philippines is weighing what course of action to take in the wake of the latest Chinese incursion in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) even as the country asserted its capability to defend its exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said on Wednesday that it was already coordinating with the Philippine Coast Guard and the Philippine Navy to plan a response to the presence of Chinese military and fishing vessels around the Ayungin Shoal

<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/75355/philippines-weighs-move-on-china-incursion#ixzz2U6T6kY2b>

22 May 2013: China sends ships to another Phl shoal

The Philippines has filed a protest against what it describes as the “provocative and illegal” deployment of Chinese ships around Ayungin Shoal, which is part of the Kalayaan Island Group off Palawan. Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin also revealed a Chinese naval ship has been escorting fishing boats involved in illegal fishing off Ayungin Reef.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2013/05/22/944871/china-sends-ships-another-phl-shoal>

19 May 2013: Philippines vow defense of exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea

Philippine Ambassador to the United States Jose L. Cuisia made this statement during the annual Meeting of the World Affairs Council of Greater Hampton Roads on Friday (Washington time). “When another country declares that it owns about 75 percent of what the Philippines owns as exclusive economic zone, we are duty bound to stand up and protect it,” Cuisia said.

“When another country stations its boats on a shoal that is a mere 120 miles from our mainland and more than 400 miles from theirs, the Philippines cannot just keep quiet,” he added.

<http://www.businessmirror.com.ph/index.php/news/top-news/13707-phl-vows-defense-of-exclusive-zone-in-south-china-sea>

17 May 2013: Taiwan thanks China for condemning PH over fisherman's death

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council responsible for relations with China Thursday urged Beijing to stay out of the row the island has with the Philippines over the shooting death of a Taiwanese fisherman by the Philippine coast guard in the South China Sea.

The council thanked Beijing for condemning Manila's behavior, which the council described as "belligerent, irrational and violates international law

<http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/global-filipino/world/05/17/13/taiwan-thanks-china-condemning-ph-over-fishermans-death>

15 May 2013: Taiwan recalls Philippine envoy over shooting

Taiwan has recalled its ambassador to the Philippines and announced it has frozen the hiring of Philippine workers to protest against the killing of a Taiwanese fisherman, rejecting an apology over the incident as inadequate.

Taipei said earlier that the Philippines had apologised over the incident, but that President Ma Ying-jeou insisted on Wednesday that Manila offer a formal apology and compensation, apprehend the killer and launch talks on the fishing industry.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2013/05/201351544057410475.html>

9 May 2013: Taiwan-Philippines' dispute erupts after fisherman's killing

Taiwan and the Philippines are embroiled in a major diplomatic dispute after the Philippines coast guard fatally shot a Taiwanese fisherman in disputed waters earlier this month.

Taiwan has imposed sanctions on the Philippines, withdrawn its representative from Manila and frozen visas for Filipino workers. It also has conducted naval drills in response to the May 9 incident that killed 65-year-old Hong Shi-cheng..

The attack has created a diplomatic headache for the United States, which has mutual defense treaties with Taiwan and the Philippines. The State Department has urged both sides to settle the conflict peaceably

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/may/20/taiwan-philippines-dispute-erupts-after-fishermans/>

2 May 2013: China imposes fishing restriction

Surveillance ships deployed by China in the Panatag Shoal are imposing a 24-kilometer wide ban on fishing in the area, according to some fishermen in Masinloc, Zambales.

“We were warned not to sail within 15 nautical miles from the shoal,” said Mike, one of the men whose fishing boat was recently intercepted and barred by a Chinese surveillance ship from entering Panatag. Mike’s sister Jen said the Chinese fishing restrictions in and around Panatag have greatly affected their livelihood because of reduced catch.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2013/05/02/937248/china-imposes-fishing-restrictions-around-panatag>

ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

23 May 2013: Neutral ASEAN members can do more on South China Sea issues

The countries chosen for Foreign Minister Wang's visit were deliberate choices for China. Indonesia and Singapore are non-claimants in the South China Sea but have been notably active in trying to propose solutions after the failure in Cambodia. Brunei has claims that overlap with China's but the chair of the group has been self-restrained on the issue.

These four countries can serve as the core of ASEAN opinion on the issue. To do so, they must aim to ensure the group's unity while responding actively but neutrally. ASEAN must help strike a balance that allows the claimant states to buy in, while maintaining China's trust. Further progress on the issue is possible, although by no means guaranteed.

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/opinion/Neutral-Asean-members-can-do-more-on-South-China-S-30206727.html>

17 May 2013: EU-ASEAN Meeting discusses South China Sea disputes

At a meeting between senior officials of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) held in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam on May 14 and 15, the EU reiterated support for the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

<http://www.dfa.gov.ph/index.php/newsroom/dfa-releases/8120-peace-stability-and-rules-based-settlement-of-disputes-in-south-china-sea-important-for-eu-supports-asean-progress-on-human-rights>

5 May 2013: China FM's visit to Brunei – Joint Statement

The current disputes are not an issue between China and ASEAN and they should be peacefully resolved through friendly consultations and negotiations between the parties directly concerned. All parties should implement the Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in a comprehensive and effective way, carry out and strengthen maritime practical cooperation, advance the Code of Conduct (COC) progress in a step by step manner during the implementation of the consensus. In this process, all parties should increase communication, build consensus, promote mutual trust and confidence. The two sides agreed to continue to hold the SOM on implementation of the DOC; hold the Joint Working Group meeting on the implementation of the DOC in Thailand in May this year; and discuss how to advance the COC process under this framework. The two sides also agreed to establish an Eminent Persons and Experts Group (EPEG) on COC and that discussions under the EPEG and the Joint Working Group would reinforce and complement each other.

<http://www.mofat.gov.bn/index.php/press-release/item/779-joint-press-release-of-china-and-brunei-darussalam>

<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t1037620.shtml>

3 May 2013: China FM's visit to Singapore – Press Release

On the South China Sea issue, both sides agreed on the need for ASEAN and China to work actively on the way forward for an early conclusion of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea on the basis of consensus.

http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media_centre/press_room/pr/2013/201305/press_2013_0503_01.html

2 May 2013: Chinese FM's visit to ASEC – Press Release

SG Minh and Foreign Minister Wang Yi also exchanged views on the issue of the South China Sea. They emphasised the importance of ensuring full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and moving towards the conclusion of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC). They reaffirmed that maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea and the region continues to be of paramount importance.

http://www.asean.org/news/item/foreign-minister-of-the-people-s-republic-of-china-visits-asean-secretariat?category_id=27

2 May 2013: Chinese FM's visit to Indonesia – Press Release

China has always remained open to discussions on the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea, Wang said, adding China and ASEAN members have long shared the view of eventually concluding the COC on the basis of consensus reached by all parties through consultations, which has been included in the DOC. From implementing the DOC to concluding a COC is a step-by-step process, Wang admitted. The consensus reached by China and Indonesia this time is that all parties shall work together, expand common ground and remove disturbances and discuss and steadily promote the COC procedure while implementing effectively the DOC in an all-round way. Wang stressed that China has the resolve and ability to build the South China Sea together with the ASEAN into a sea of peace, friendship and cooperation. At the same time, we should keep vigilant against potential disturbances of some countries for their own interests, Wang added.

Wang noted that China is willing to continue to hold high-profile meetings on the implementation of the DOC, and agrees to discuss the promotion of the COC procedure under the framework of the joint working group on DOC implementation. China also wished to set up a panel group on the COC as soon as possible so that the two groups can complement each other.

<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t1037682.shtml>

MAJOR POWERS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

29 May 2013: Indian navy vessels to cross South China Sea

India has dispatched four warships, including a frontline destroyer and a stealth frigate, on a long overseas deployment through the strategic Malacca Strait to Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines. The deployment will see the warships transit through the contentious South China Sea, where China is locked in territorial disputes with its neighbours.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/On-overseas-deployment-Navy-vessels-to-cross-South-China-Sea/articleshow/20321068.cms>

23 May 2013: Japan supports Philippines' initiation of arbitration

Prime Minister Abe manifested the Japanese Government's support for the Philippines' initiation of arbitral proceedings last January, pursuant to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in its bid to clarify maritime zones and entitlements in the South China Sea.

Secretary del Rosario expressed the Philippines' appreciation for Japan's stance, stressing the crucial role of international law in attaining a durable resolution to international disputes based on a level playing field.

<http://www.dfa.gov.ph/index.php/newsroom/dfa-releases/8151-japanese-prime-minister-shinzo-abe-receives-foreign-secretary-albert-del-rosario>

19 May 2013: India-China Joint Statement Negotiation Gets Tough

Negotiations on the joint statement have been far more tough, leading to more exclusions in a bid to arrive at a common understanding. China, for instance, wanted the statement to endorse its position on South China Sea in the context of security in the Asia Pacific, which meant recognising that the disputes there were internal issues of each country and ought to be resolved bilaterally. It made a strong pitch, but India turned it down saying these were international waters where accepted laws of sea apply.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/manmohanli-talks-pm-takes-tough-line-on-incursion-issue/1118109/>

11 May 2013: Indian Defence Minister Makes Strong Assertions

Voicing concerns over China's actions in the South China Sea region, the Indian Defence Minister addressing media persons on May 11, 2013 made the following assertions:

- "There should be freedom of navigation as per the UN conventions."
- "India has commercial interests and though it is not a party to the dispute, it believes that disputes should be settled as per UN laws."
- "The protection of Sea-Lanes of Communication is becoming more and more important. Economic development, trade and commerce depend on the security of Sea Lanes of Communication"

Taken at face value, the assertions made by the Indian Defence Minister's may not count much and may not be counted as strong assertions. But coming from the Indian Defence Minister who is noted for his reticence and measured words, there are a lot of implicit messages for China on its aggressive postures on the South China Sea issues.

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/20052013-south-china-sea-indian-defence-minister-makes-strong-assertions-analysis/>