

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE JANUARY 2015

ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

28 January 2015: Malaysia Eyes Submarine Base Expansion near South China Sea

Malaysian defense minister Hishammuddin Hussein announced that Malaysia would look to equip its naval base close to the South China Sea with an air defense system.

<http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/malaysia-eyes-submarine-base-expansion-near-south-china-sea/>

24 January 2015: China Conducted Seismic Surveys in the Vanguard Bank

The *Hai Yang 4*, guarded by four escort vessels, spent two weeks conducting seismic surveys in the area. The Vietnamese authorities appear to have decided not to force a showdown.

<http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21640403-two-case-studies-disputed-sea-oil-troubled-waters>

23 January 2015: The Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam Race to South China Sea Defense Modernization

Malaysia's defense budget would be increased to \$5.4 billion in 2015, a hike of ten percent. The Philippines spent \$885 million for the procurement of three guided missile fast attack craft, two guided missile stealth frigates, and two anti-submarine helicopters. Vietnam has been involved in an intense round of defense diplomacy with various regional states in addition to Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

<http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/the-philippines-malaysia-and-vietnam-race-to-south-china-sea-defense-modernization/>

23 January 2015: China to small countries: Stop 'unreasonable demands'

"We are against the bullying of small countries by big countries. At the same time, we also believe that small countries should not make unreasonable demands," Hua said.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/414890/news/nation/amid-sea-row-china-to-small-countries-stop-unreasonable-demands>

23 January 2015: PH to exhaust legal, diplomatic means vs China reclamation

"We have chosen the legal and the diplomatic track and we will stick to that. We will exhaust all means under those two tracks to address the problem," deputy presidential spokesperson Abigail Valte said.

<http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/01/23/15/ph-exhaust-legal-diplomatic-means-vs-china-reclamation>

22 January 2015: Vietnam asked China to Stop Reclamation Activities

Deputy Spokesperson Pham Thu Hang replied the media regarding Vietnam's viewpoints following to deep concerns raised by the US and the Philippines on China's upgrade activities in the SCS.

<http://www.talkvietnam.com/2015/01/vn-asks-china-to-stop-erroneous-activities-in-east-sea/>

22 January 2015: Philippines slams China island building as Beijing hits back

Albert del Rosario repeated a warning that Beijing was reclaiming land around isolated reefs in the South China Sea to turn them into islands which could hold fortified positions or even airstrips.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/philippines-slams-china/1608684.html>

21 January 2015: Manila: China's Reclamation in Disputed Reefs Now Massive

"These are not small adjustments. These are huge activities that are obviously designed to change the status quo," Garcia said in a joint news conference with Russel. The Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia have protested the reclamation on Johnson South Reef and other reefs. The reclaimed areas could be used by Beijing as a military base and a resupply and refueling hub, according to military officials.

<http://news.yahoo.com/manila-chinas-reclamation-disputed-reefs-now-massive-093703232.html>

15 January 2015: China builds Massive Coast Guard Ships

China's Coast Guard is building a series of cutters that will displace some 10,000 tons while the US Coast Guard's largest open ocean ship only bests the Chinese crafts by a mere 500 tons.

<http://www.engineering.com/DesignerEdge/DesignerEdgeArticles/ArticleID/9378/Chinas-Massive-Coast-Guard-Ships.aspx>

13 January 2015: China slams Philippines for criticising island project in S China Sea

China on Monday hit back at the Philippines for criticising Beijing's ongoing reclamation project in the disputed South China Sea, saying that its actions were within the scope of Chinese sovereignty.

<http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2015/01/13/china-slams-philippines-for-criticising-island-project-in-s-china-sea/#KkJOORqXkGBPr6S1.99>

11 January 2015: Beijing creates armed militia to enforce S China Sea claims

Despite protests from the Vietnamese government, China has established a department of the People's Armed Forces in the disputed South China Sea on Jan. 6, according to Hong Kong Economic Journal.

<http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20150111000012&cid=1101>

10 January 2015: New platform workboat to serve for South China Sea drilling

Christened the "Huahu," literally "Chinese tiger," the workboat will serve offshore tugging and freight transportation services and assist offshore oilfield drilling operations in the South China Sea.

<http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20150110000035&cid=1205&MainCatID=12>

9 January 2015: Philippines to buy two C130 transport planes from U.S. Navy

The Philippine military signed a pact with the U.S. Navy to buy two secondhand C-130 transport planes to boost its capability to fan out quickly for territorial defence and humanitarian operations.

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/world/philippines-to-buy-two-c130-transport-planes-from-us-navy-37438.html>

9 January 2015: DFA releases Filipino primer on South China Sea

In a statement, DFA spokesperson Charles Jose said the primer comes in the national language, Filipino, "to further facilitate understanding by ordinary Filipinos."

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/01/09/1411138/dfa-releases-filipino-primer-west-philippine-sea>

8 January 2015: 'China to finish construction of airstrip in West PH Sea this year'

They will likely finish that this year. They're fast," said one of the sources.

<http://www.rappler.com/nation/80085-china-airstrip-west-philippine-sea>

7 January 2015: China's reclamation on West PH Sea reef halfway done – Catapang

China's reclamation on Fiery Cross Reef, part of Palawan's Kalayaan Island Group municipality, is halfway done, Armed Forces chief of staff General Gregorio Pio Catapang said.

<http://www.interaksyon.com/article/102569/chinas-reclamation-on-west-ph-sea-reef-halfway-done---catapang>

6 January 2015: CNOOC reports new South China Sea gas discovery

The new discovery has not only opened up a new exploration chapter in deepwater area of the northern South China Sea, but also further proven the good exploration prospects in deepwater area of C basin, said CNOOC.

<http://www.offshore-mag.com/articles/2015/01/cnooc-reports-new-south-china-sea-gas-discovery.html>

5 January 2015: Vietnam leery as China's infamous oil rig heads for Indian Ocean

The Vietnamese Directorate of Fisheries said the rig has been escorted by a small fleet of vessels. The Vietnamese Maritime Police Force said they have been kept a close tab on the rig to "brace for possible bad developments".

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/politics/vietnam-leery-as-chinas-infamous-oil-rig-heads-for-indian-ocean-37198.html>

5 January 2015: China Is Building A New Fleet Of Guided Missile Destroyers

Part of a new generation of guided missile destroyers, the Jinan will help the PLAN to expand its ability to operate in the open ocean away from China's coasts. This could allow China to further press its territorial ambitions throughout the Pacific and the South China Sea, and to use its navy as a counterweight to US influence in the region.

<http://www.businessinsider.com/china-unveiled-newest-warship-2015-1#ixzz3O1miUoxF>

5 January 2015: China sends new vessel to supply South China Sea islands

The ship is the largest and most advanced vessel yet to supply and commute between Hainan Island and islets in the South China Sea.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-01/05/c_133898494.htm

4 January 2015: PLA doubles size of Amphibious Mechanized Infantry Division

The People's Liberation Army has doubled the size of its Amphibious Mechanized Infantry Division (AMID) to boost its combat capabilities in the event of a conflict with Taiwan or in the East or South China seas, reports our Chinese-language sister paper Want Daily.

<http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20150104000117>

2 January 2015: International law the great equalizer, says PH envoy to US

"By taking the legal route, we are showing the world that States have other viable options to resolving disputes other than in an asymmetrical negotiation where the big and militarily strong nation will dominate the smaller nation in the negotiating table," Cuisia said.

<http://www.interaksyon.com/article/102678/international-law-the-great-equalizer-says-ph-envoy-to-us-as-he-justifies-arbitration>

ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

28 January 2015: ASEAN Countries Urged To Stand Up To China Over South China Sea

Their statement came after the topic was brought up at a ministers' retreat in Malaysia. "The retreat shared the concern raised by some foreign ministers on land reclamation in the South China Sea," Malaysia's Foreign Minister Anifah Aman said at a press conference following the two-day meeting. Anifah's statement did not specify which countries raised the concerns.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/asean-countries-urged-stand-china-over-south-china-sea-1797766>

28 January 2015: Asean wants swift solution to South China Sea dispute

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman says Asean maintains that any territorial dispute be resolved under international law. Asean ministers also wanted their senior officials to work vigorously towards an early conclusion of the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea (COC), according to Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman.

<http://www.therakyatpost.com/news/2015/01/28/asean-wants-swift-solution-south-china-sea-dispute/#ixzz3QDJ5ZdMJ>

24 January 2015: US hopes Malaysia's Asean chairmanship could prompt maritime Code of Conduct

The United States is hoping that Malaysia's chairmanship of Asean will spur the establishment of a long-delayed maritime Code of Conduct (CoC), aimed at resolving territorial disputes between China and neighbouring countries in the South China Sea.

<http://www.nst.com.my/node/70815>

23 January 2015: Philippines to inform ASEAN about China's fortification of seven submerged shoals in South China Sea

The Philippines will inform nine other member countries that China's reclamation project has enlarged submerged shoals in the South China Sea.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/world/philippines/philippines-to-inform-asean-about-china-s-fortification-of-seven-submerged-shoals-in-south-china-sea-1.1445580>

22 January 2015: US: Asean should resolve problem of overlapping claims in the South China Sea

“This is not an issue exclusively for the Philippines and the US but for all ten Asean countries, to see the importance of finding rules-based, peaceful resolution (in the South China Sea),” US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel said after holding the fifth bilateral talks with Philippine officials.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/world/philippines/asean-should-resolve-problem-of-overlapping-claims-in-the-south-china-sea-1.1445081>

16 January 2015: Indonesian Air Force to bolster presence in South China Sea

Moeldoko said competition in the South China Sea was getting tougher and that the Air Force had the important task of securing Indonesia’s air territory and trading lines in the area.

<http://m.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/01/16/air-force-bolster-presence-south-china-sea.html#sthash.fxomhyd0.dpuf>

13 December 2014: Malaysia keen to play role in solving South China Sea issue

Malaysia, assuming rotating ASEAN chairmanship in 2015, is to play a positive role on the South China Sea issue, a Malaysian observer said in Hong Kong on Saturday.

http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2014-12/13/content_19080986.htm

10 December 2014: ASEAN splits on South China Sea dispute

The 10-nation ASEAN summit could agree only on a loosely worded expression of concerns.

http://apdforum.com/en_GB/article/rmiap/articles/online/features/2014/12/10/asean-sea-split

3 December 2014: China and Indonesia’s Maritime Agendas Closely Aligned

“I can see three areas where our own maritime development agenda actually fills in or overlaps with the Maritime Silk Road ideas of President Xi Jinping,” Rizal Sukma, the presidential adviser for foreign policy, said. “Both ideas or doctrines, if you like, are about connectivity, safety and diplomacy. They are not about power supremacy,” he says.

<http://thejakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/news/china-and-indonesias-maritime-agendas-closely-aligned/>

MAJOR POWERS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

29 January 2015: U.S. would welcome Japan air patrols in South China Sea

The United States would welcome a Japanese extension of air patrols into the South China Sea as a counterweight to a growing fleet of Chinese vessels pushing China's territorial claims in the region, a senior U.S. Navy officer told Reuters.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/29/us-japan-southchinasea-idUSKBN0L20HV20150129>

27 January 2015: China refutes Barack Obama's remarks on South China Sea dispute

Refuting US President Barack Obama's remarks on upholding freedom of navigation in the disputed South China Sea, China asserted that there has never been a problem of navigation in the area and relevant issue should be resolved through talks by parties directly concerned.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-china-refutes-barack-obama-s-remarks-on-south-china-sea-dispute-2056012>

26 January 2015: Joint declaration on South China Sea may irk Beijing

The joint strategic vision reaffirmed the same, saying regional prosperity depended on security.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Joint-declaration-on-South-China-Sea-may-irk-Beijing/articleshow/46016003.cms>

22 January 2015: China urges U.S. to be impartial in South China Sea

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson on Thursday urged non-parties to stick to an objective and impartial stance over the South China Sea issue.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-01/22/c_133939681.htm

21 January 2015: US concerned over Chinese reclamation in South China Sea

Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel said China's actions is "an ongoing concern" not only for the claimants, but for all Pacific nations, particularly the US, "that rely on freedom of navigation and sealanes and the principle of unimpeded and lawful commerce."

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/412713/news/nation/phl-us-concerned-over-chinese-reclamation-in-south-china-sea>

13 January 2015: China, US holding joint drill in South China Sea

China and the United States started a joint drill on Monday on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) to further improve military-to-military ties, long regarded as the least developed part of the overall bilateral relationship. The drill between the two militaries and a symposium will be held from Jan 12-19 in Guangzhou of Guangdong province, and Haikou of Hainan province, according to China's Ministry of National Defense.

http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-01/13/content_19302803.htm

7 January 2015: UK Envoy: We Support International Law

"We don't take a view of who is right or wrong. We support international law," he said. Todd said that UK, not being a party to the dispute, can nevertheless offer expertise on conflict resolution, particularly with their experience in Ireland.

<http://www.interaksyon.com/article/102537/code-of-conduct-on-south-china-sea-good-way-for-asean-to-resolve-territorial-dispute---uk-envoys>