

**SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE  
FEBRUARY 2015**

**ACTS OF CLAIMANTS**

**26 February 2015: China Rebuffs Request to Halt Island Work**

"The construction and infrastructure maintenance on the reefs and islands in the South China Sea are legitimate and conducted in accordance with law. Other countries have no right to point fingers at such construction activities."

<http://freebeacon.com/national-security/china-rebuffs-u-s-request-to-halt-s-china-sea-island-work/>

**26 February 2015: China concerned at Manila decision on Chinese power workers**

"(We) hope that the Philippines side can fairly and justly handle the relevant issue, earnestly uphold the legal rights of the Chinese company operating in the Philippines and create a good investment environment for foreign investors," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei told reporters.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-concerned-at-manila/1682238.html>

**26 February 2015: Philippines Expels China Experts Amid South China Sea Concerns**

Philippine Energy Secretary Carlos Jericho Petilla said that the government would not renew the work visas of 16 Chinese experts employed by the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) when they expire in July 2015.

<http://thediplomat.com/2015/02/philippines-expels-china-experts-amid-south-china-sea-concerns/>

**26 February 2015: PH gives mixed signals on Recto Bank drilling**

Two Philippine government agencies gave mixed signals on whether the Philippines will allow oil drilling activities in the Reed Bank. The Philippines' Department of Energy (DOE) said it will suspend the permit of Forum Energy to explore. DFA spokesman Charles Jose, on the other hand, said "Philippine development activity in the West Philippine Sea will take place in accordance with the national interest, following Philippine laws, and in conformity with international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)."

<http://www.rappler.com/nation/85082-philippines-recto-bank-oil-drilling>

**24 February 2015: Philippines halts explorations to give way for possible talks with China to resolve dispute**

Energy Secretary Carlos Jericho Petilla said concerned government agencies, including the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), have agreed that exploration activities in Recto Bank should be shelved until summer of this year. Petilla said the moratorium will give way for possible talks between the Philippine and Chinese governments to resolve the dispute.

<http://www.manilatimes.net/govt-halts-explorations-in-south-china-sea/165488/>

**24 February 2015: China completes fishery survey in South China Sea**

China has completed a survey of fishery resources in the middle and southern regions of the South China Sea after two years of research. The survey showed the area around the Spratly Islands has fishery reserves of about 1.8 million tonnes, with about half a million tonnes available for fishing.

<http://www.ecns.cn/2015/02-24/155584.shtml>

**19 February 2015: China to project power from artificial islands in South China Sea**

China's creation of artificial islands in the South China Sea is happening so fast that Beijing will be able to extend the range of its navy, air force, coastguard and fishing fleets before long, much to the alarm of rival claimants to the contested waters.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/19/us-southchinasea-reefs-china-idUSKBN0LN0J820150219>

**18 February 2015: China Expands Island Construction in Disputed South China Sea**

The images provide the first visual evidence that China has built an artificial island covering 75,000 square yards—about 14 football fields—and including two piers, a cement plant and a helipad, at a land formation called Hughes Reef, according to experts who have studied the pictures. The reef, which is above water only at low tide, lies about 210 miles from the Philippines and 660 miles from China.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/china-expands-island-construction-in-disputed-south-china-sea-1424290852?tesla=y>

**17 February 2015: South China Sea Land Reclamation: Satellite Images Show China's Progress on Man-Made Islands**

According to images, the land mass is being constructed by China at Hughes Reef in the Spratly Islands. The images show expansion of the land into Johnson South Reef and Gaven Reefs. China's military has been dredging the resource-rich ocean over the past three months to create the artificial island, which is now approximately 3,000 meters (9,842 feet) long and about 300 meters (984 feet) wide.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/south-china-sea-land-reclamation-satellite-images-show-chinese-progress-man-made-1818986>

**15 February 2015: China has no historical claim to the South China Sea, says Philippines judge**

China has no historical claim to the South China Sea, as it gave up that right when it became a signatory to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), according to a Philippine Supreme Court judge.

<http://news.asiaone.com/news/asia/china-has-no-historical-claim-south-china-sea-says-philippines-judge#sthash.KAs4XOmu.dpuf>

**13 February 2015: Philippines, Vietnam Expand Ties to Counter China Threat**

Philippines-Vietnam relations have been on an upward trend since October 2010, following the state visit to Hanoi by Philippine President Benigno Aquino and subsequent visits to the Philippines by Vietnam's president in 2011 and prime minister in 2014.

<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/15087/philippines-vietnam-expand-ties-to-counter-china-threat>

**12 February 2015: China Must Abide by Sea Ruling, Philippine Justice Carpio Says**

"It doesn't matter if China doesn't appear, if the tribunal finds that there is jurisdiction, the tribunal will proceed," Carpio said. "We don't want anyone, any state to resort to armed force in settling this dispute.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-02-12/china-must-abide-by-sea-ruling-philippine-justice-carpio-says>

**9 February 2015: Justice Carpio explains Itu Aba issue in the PH suit vs China**

If the U.N. Tribunal favors the Philippine government's assertion that Itu Aba is not capable of human habitation or economic life of its own, Carpio said the tribunal will then declare that Palawan has a full 200 nautical mile EEZ.

<https://ph.news.yahoo.com/blogs/the-inbox/justice-carpio-explains-itu-aba-issue-in-the-ph-222531318.html>

**9 February 2015: Chinese rig finds huge gas reserve in South China Sea**

CNOOC 981, China's first deepwater drilling rig, discovered a gas field in the South China Sea with reserves of more than 100Bn m<sup>3</sup>, announced China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC). The annual output of the Lingshui 17-2 field, which is located 150km south of South China's Hainan Province, is expected to reach 3.5Bn m<sup>3</sup> to 4Bn m<sup>3</sup>, Xie Yuhong, a manager with the CNOOC, told local media.

<http://www.ihsmaritime360.com/article/16545/chinese-rig-finds-huge-gas-reserve-in-south-china-sea>

**6 February 2015: Taiwan turns to Chinese shipper for help with port in disputed waters**

Taiwan had to use a mainland Chinese shipper to get vital materials to a \$100 million port it is building on a disputed island in the South China Sea last month after it couldn't find a local firm to do the job, Taiwanese officials said.

<http://townhall.com/news/politics-elections/2015/02/06/taiwan-turns-to-chinese-shipper-for-help-with-port-in-disputed-waters-n1953729>

#### **6 February 2015: At China Sea Impasse, Manila Bolsters Navy**

The Philippine Navy is upgrading its capabilities at a time of continuing tensions with China over disputed territory in the South China Sea.

<http://www.voanews.com/content/philippines-upgrades-navy-amid-china-sea-standoff/2631658.html>

#### **5 February 2015: China Starts Dredging at Mischief Reef**

China has started dredging around the disputed Mischief Reef in the South China Sea, a Philippine navy commander said, signalling Beijing may be preparing to expand its facilities in the area.

<http://www.maritime-executive.com/article/china-starts-dredging-at-another-disputed-reef>

#### **5 February 2015: China Defends Ship's Action in South China Sea**

"After acquiring knowledge from the relevant departments, [we found] many Philippines fishing vessels illegally lingered in the shallow waters area surrounding the Scarborough Shoal on January 29 and they did not abide by the Chinese management. China's coast guard sent a dinghy to drive them away according to the law and slightly bumped one of the fishing vessels," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei told media. "We ask that the Philippines strengthen education and indoctrination of its fishermen to prevent such incidents from happening again," Hong added.

<http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-china-defends-ships-action-in-south-china-sea/2629934.html>

#### **4 February 2015: PH sends two protest notes to Chinese Embassy over Scarborough Shoal incidents**

Philippines DAF handed over two protest notes to representatives of the Chinese Embassy in Manila, in connection with recent incidents in the vicinity of Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal where three Philippine-flagged fishing vessels, namely F/V OG Barbie, F/V Ocean Glory 2 and F/V Ana Marie, were intentionally rammed by Chinese Coast Guard Vessel 3412, causing damage to the vessels and endangering the lives and safety of the Filipino fishermen on board.

<http://www.interaksyon.com/article/104405/afp-awaits-report-on-chinese-vessels-ramming-of-pinoy-fishing-boats-on-panatag-shoal>

#### **3 February 2015: Reports that China is building second aircraft carrier deleted from websites**

A firm has won a contract to supply cabling for a second Chinese aircraft carrier, comments by local authorities suggested in the latest sign that Beijing is boosting its maritime power, although news of the development was swiftly deleted online.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/02/reports-that-china-is-building-second-aircraft-carrier-deleted-from-websites>

#### **3 February 2015: Vietnam and the Philippines to form Strategic Partnership**

Worried over the rise of China and, in particular, Beijing's increasingly belligerent actions in pursuit of its own territorial claims, Hanoi and Manila are banding together.

<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/made-china-vietnam-philippines-axis-12174>

#### **2 February 2015: China is 'quietly' consolidating presence in SCS**

"China is now quietly consolidating its presence in the South China Sea through land reclamation, an increased presence of fishing fleets and larger mother ships, larger Coast Guard vessels and more military exercises by the People's Liberation Army Navy."

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/politics/china-is-quietly-consolidating-presence-in-east-sea-analyst-38304.html>

#### **2 February 2015: Philippines and Taiwan reached deal on maritime cooperation**

The deal, though basic in terms of content, not only closes the 2013 dispute but serves as a model for getting along in the wider South China Sea. It would commit both sides to shunning violence when responding to illegal fishing, inform each other of any legal action and return violators as soon as possible.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/ralphjennings/2015/02/02/from-a-bitter-dispute-comes-a-model-for-south-china-sea-cooperation/>

## **ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA**

### **18 February 2015: China Nixes South China Sea Discussions at Defense Meeting**

*Jane's* reports that China "declined the proposal by ASEAN countries to have the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea on the discussion agenda of the ADMM-Plus meeting."

<http://thediplomat.com/2015/02/china-nixes-south-china-sea-discussions-at-defense-meeting/>

### **9 February 2015: Philippine, Indonesian leaders to discuss territorial spats**

The Philippines will raise its concerns over China's land reclamation in disputed reefs and discuss Manila's new peace deal with Muslim rebels with Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo.

<http://www.wral.com/philippine-indonesian-leaders-to-discuss-territorial-spats/14432695/#kQciYtkOay8jOrgT.99>

### **6 February 2015: Malaysia passes critical first test as ASEAN chair**

Malaysia passed the first test commendably at the Asean foreign ministers' retreat. Half of the points contained in Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman's statement on the "exchange of views on regional and international issues" pertain to the South China Sea. The statements were crafted in an objective manner without assigning blame or responsibility towards any parties. Nevertheless, it was evident that a reference on land reclamation pointed to the Philippines' protest over China's reclamation works on the Johnson South Reef.

<http://news.asiaone.com/news/malaysia/malaysia-passes-critical-first-test-asean-chair#sthash.jkRZxE8D.dpuf>

### **5 February 2015: Singapore Prime Minister on the South China Sea conflict**

"We have a declaration of conduct, which was agreed between ASEAN and China, and it says all the things the parties promised to abide by and to some extent, they do. From time to time, people do things. That happens. "We are trying to work towards a code of conduct which is going to be binding and which will be more effective. We are in the process of talking about this code of conduct with the Chinese but I think it will take some time. I do not think any of the countries will likely agree to bind themselves.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/pm-lee-on-religious/1635964.html>

## **MAJOR POWERS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA**

### **26 February 2015: US Navy flies new plane over disputed South China Sea**

As disputes over South China Sea islands continue, the US Navy has acknowledged flying its most advanced scout aircraft over the area, from a base in the Philippines, during the first three weeks of February.

<http://rt.com/usa/235895-navy-plane-china-sea/>

### **26 February 2015: China 'aggressively' expanding into South China Sea says US**

China is expanding its outposts in the South China Sea to include stationing for ships and potential airfields as part of its "aggressive" effort to exert sovereignty, the US intelligence chief said.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/27/china-aggressively-expanding-into-south-china-sea-says-us>

### **26 February 2015: China Has More Submarines Than the U.S., Says Admiral**

China's submarines now outnumber the U.S. fleet after an ambitious shift in strategy, according to a U.S. Admiral.

<http://www.newsweek.com/china-has-more-submarines-us-says-admiral-309764>

### **24 February 2015: Japan eyes naval exercises with Philippines**

The commander of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force arrived in the Philippines on Monday for a four-day visit that includes meetings with defense and military officials, and a scheduled tour at a military camp close to the South China Sea.

<http://rp1.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/02/24/15/japan-eyes-naval-exercises-philippines>

**18 February 2015: US to base four warships in Singapore as China flexes military muscles**

The “rotational deployment” of the vessels, called littoral combat ships (LCS), comes as China continues to flex its muscles in the South China Sea and tensions remain on the Korean Peninsula.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/18/us-to-base-four-warships-in-singapore-as-china-flexes-military-muscles>

**15 February 2015: India and Singapore take stance in South China Sea row**

"We call on all parties to avoid the threat or use of force and pursue resolution of territorial and maritime disputes through all peaceful means, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including [UNCLOS]," New Delhi's joint pronouncement with Washington says.

<http://www.marinelink.com/news/singapore-stance-india385898.aspx>

**13 February 2015: US – Singapore Joint Statement mentioned SCS**

The two countries emphasized the importance for all countries to resolve their disputes by peaceful means in accordance with international law, including UNCLOS. They urged all parties to exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities, including land reclamation, in the South China Sea.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/02/237495.htm>

**13 February 2015: US, Japan may give China an excuse to establish ADIZ over S China Sea**

After the suggestion made by Rear Admiral Robert Thomas, the commander of the US Seventh Fleet, that Japan begin aerial patrols over the disputed South China Sea, China may establish a second Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the region, according to Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, a defense expert said.

<http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20150213000113>

**11 February 2015: SK Innovation partners with CNOOC for oil exploration in South China Sea**

South Korea's top oil refiner SK Innovation Co. said Wednesday it will partner with the state-run China National Offshore Oil Corporation to conduct oil and gas exploration in two blocks in the South China Sea, tapping the region for the first time. The blocks owned by China's largest producer of offshore crude oil and natural gas are located near the Pearl River Mouth Basin, covering a total of 7,686 square kilometers.

<http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150211001045>

**4 February 2015: Japan says South China Sea security impacts national interests**

"We currently do not patrol there or have a plan to do so, but we are deepening our cooperation with the U.S. and the situation in the South China Sea has an impact on our national security, and we are aware that we will need to consider our response," Defence Minister Gen Nakatani told reporters on Tuesday.

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/02/04/uk-southchinasea-japan-idUKKBN0L80KJ20150204>

**4 February 2015: Japan to Mull Expanding Navy Patrols to South China Sea**

The Japanese government said it would consider conducting air and sea patrols in the South China Sea, a move that would risk fresh tensions with China as its neighbor steps up its military presence in the region.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-02-04/japan-to-consider-expanding-navy-patrols-to-south-china-sea>

**1 February 2015: Japan, PH renew vow to strengthen maritime security cooperation**

Philippine Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin and his Japanese counterpart, Defense Minister General Nakatani, renewed vows to strengthen cooperation maritime security at a time when China's reclamation in the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea) raises concern among ASEAN countries. The two countries also aim for strengthened cooperation in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) and defense equipment and technology.

<http://www.rappler.com/nation/82595-japan-philippines-defense-ministers-meeting>