

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE MAY 2015

ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

29 May 2015: Vietnam: China must immediately halt construction

Vietnam demands China to immediately stop the construction currently underway on the Paracels and Spratlys, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Le Hai Binh said with regard to China's erection of two lighthouses on the Spratly islands.

<http://en.vietnamplus.vn/Home/China-must-immediately-halt-construction-on-Vietnamese-islands-Spokesman/20155/66250.vnplus>

26 May 2015: China to construct two large lighthouses in the South China Sea

China held a groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of two lighthouses in the disputed South China Sea.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-05/26/c_134271434_2.htm

26 May 2015: China's army plays down South China Sea island-building

China's military compared its controversial island-building in the South China Sea to ordinary construction such as road-building going on elsewhere in the country, trying to deflect criticism over an issue seen as inflaming tensions in the region. At the same venue, however, the Defense Ministry issued a report reaffirming China's more assertive approach to national defense that has put its neighbors on guard.

http://www.omaha.com/news/world/china-downplays-south-china-sea-island-development/article_23fa3796-ab22-5ba6-a874-71367d3f5d6f.html

26 May 2015: Taiwan Proposes Plan to Ease South China Sea Tensions

Taiwan's initiative calls on "all parties concerned" to uphold the "freedom and safety of navigation and overflight" and avoid unilateral action that would escalate tension, according to a statement from the foreign ministry. It also suggests regional cooperation in developing the region's resources.

http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/05/25/world/asia/ap-as-taiwan-south-china-sea.html?_r=0

25 May 2015: Philippines to fly usual routes over SCS despite China's challenges

Philippine military and commercial aircraft will keep flying over disputed areas in the South China Sea despite Chinese warnings over the airspace, President Benigno Aquino said.

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/05/25/aquino-says-philippines-to-fly-usual-routes-over-south-china-sea-despite-china/>

25 May 2015: PH-China talks on sea row pushed

Two senators on Sunday urged Malacañang to reconsider bilateral talks with China amid new tensions in the area over the issue of United States reconnaissance flights over disputed islands.

<http://www.chinanationalnews.com/index.php/sid/233163853>

18 May 2015: Philippines President Seeks to Defuse Tension with China

Amid escalating tension, Philippine President has moved to rein in his rhetoric as fears grow of conflict with Beijing.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b3199ff8-fd25-11e4-9e96-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3adhQWajs>

18 May 2015: China is not backing down in the South China Sea

Chinese military officials say their massive land reclamation in the South China Sea is all about establishing peace and stability.

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/18/south-china-sea-kerry-beijing/>

18 May 2015: Vietnam opposes Chinese fishing ban in disputed sea

"They know it's illegal, violating Vietnamese and international laws but still do it, mostly to turn someone else's thing into theirs or into a disputed thing," said Nguyen Viet Thang, chairman of the Vietnam Association of Fisheries.

<http://news.yahoo.com/vietnam-opposes-chinese-fishing-ban-disputed-sea-024009166.html>
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/18/us-vietnam-china-fish-idUSKBN0020PF20150518>

15 May 2015: Vietnam welcomes global efforts in maintaining peace in the South China Sea

Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Le Hai Binh made the statement at a regular press conference in Hanoi while responding to reporters' questions about Vietnam's position on US Senate hearing regarding the South China Sea situation a day earlier.

<http://en.vietnamplus.vn/Home/Vietnam-welcomes-global-efforts-in-maintaining-peace-in-East-Sea/20155/65565.vnplus>

14 May 2015: Vietnam defends construction in disputed South China Sea

The infrastructure improvement projects are meant to meet the basic needs of residents on the Spratly Islands managed by Vietnam, said Mr Binh. He also urged all parties involved against further actions that could threaten regional stability.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/vietnam-defends/1847516.html>

14 May 2015: AFP chief backs US proposal to deploy ships, aircraft in South China Sea

Armed Forces of the Philippines chief-of-staff Gen. Gregorio Pio Catapang expressed his support for the US proposal to deploy ships and aircraft in the South China Sea to ensure freedom of navigation in the vital waterway.

<http://www.interaksyon.com/article/110560/afp-chief-backs-us-proposal-to-deploy-ships-aircraft-in-south-china-sea>

9 May 2015: Philippines says important to uphold rights over South China Sea

"It is in our interest to uphold the freedom of navigation and overflight in South China Sea, a region that is of vital importance not only to Southeast Asia but also to the rest of the global community," Aquino said.

<http://www.firstpost.com/world/philippines-says-important-to-uphold-rights-over-south-china-sea-reuters-2235552.html>

8 May 2015: Vietnam asks China to End Land Reclamation

Asked to comment on reports that China recently sent diplomatic notes to other countries' permanent missions asserting its sovereignty and relevant claims on the South China Sea, the spokesman said that these points of view are inaccurate and have no whatsoever legal, historical and factual grounds. On April 30, the Vietnamese Permanent Mission to the UN sent diplomatic notes to all countries' permanent missions to the UN to reject the Chinese points of view, he added.

<http://en.vietnamplus.vn/Home/Vietnam-requires-China-end-violations-of-Vietnamese-sovereignty/20155/65291.vnplus>

8 May 2015: China does land reclamation to implement international obligations, say spokeswoman

"In February 1987, the 14th Session of the Assembly of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO in Paris, France adopted a global sea level observing plan, entrusting the Chinese side with the building of five out of the 200 ocean observation stations across the world, including those on the Nansha Islands. As for the scale of construction, China, as a major country, assumes due international responsibility and obligation. The scale of China's construction work should be commensurate with its responsibility and obligation as a major country and meet actual needs."

http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1261981.shtml

8 May 2015: China: Philippines and Vietnam's land reclamation is massive

"A few countries, such as the Philippines and Vietnam, have long been undertaking large scale construction and land reclamation activities, and building fixed facilities including airports on the maritime features."

http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1261981.shtml

8 May 2015: Images show Vietnam reclaiming land in South China Sea

Images showed that Vietnam had reclaimed about 65,000 square meters (699,654 square feet) of land at West London Reef and 21,000 square meters (226,042 square feet) at Sand Cay. This compared to 900,000 square meters (9.6 million square feet) reclaimed by China at a single reef, Fiery Cross.

<http://uk.mobile.renhuters.com/article/idUKKBNONT04E20150508?irpc=932>

7 May 2015: China is ordering Philippine military planes to get away from disputed areas of the South China Sea

In the past three months, China has warned Philippine air force and navy planes at least six times to leave areas around the disputed South China Sea, the Philippine military commander responsible for the region told a Senate hearing on Thursday.

<http://www.businessinsider.com/china-orders-philippine-military-to-leave-disputed-areas-of-south-china-sea-2015-5#ixzz3ZXrU8a5r>

5 May 2015: China beefs up international law expertise to help return fugitives, tackle territorial disputes

The foreign ministry established an international law committee, including Shi Jiuyong, a former judge at the International Court of Justice; Rao Geping, a law professor at Peking University; Huang Jin, president of the China University of Political Science and Law; and Liu Nanlai, a professor at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Wu Shicun, president of the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, said China was seeking to justify its territorial claims through legal means and needed more experts to do so. "If we can count on talented people with experience ... we may be able to [satisfactorily] submit our claims to arbitration."

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1786638/china-beefs-international-law-expertise-help-return>

5 May 2015: China urges Philippines to stop provocation on sea disputes

China on Monday urged the Philippines to stop "malicious hyping and provocation" on territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-05/05/c_134209610.htm

5 May 2015: China: Philippines carried out massive construction on islands and reefs for years

The Foreign Ministry spokesperson further stressed that "the Chinese side has never taken "activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability", nor will it do so in the future". It urged the Philippines to "end the malicious hyping and provocation in no time, meet China and a majority of ASEAN countries halfway, and jointly uphold peace and stability of the South China Sea."

http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1260672.shtml

1 May 2015: DFA: China's accusations hard to believe

China is trying to deflect international criticism about its massive reclamation in the South China Sea by accusing the Philippines and Vietnam of carrying out large-scale construction in the disputed islands and reefs, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said. Jose said the DOC signed in 2002 should be considered the "benchmark."

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/05/01/1449908/dfa-chinas-accusations-hard-believe>

ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

19 May 2015: ASEAN, China should 'expeditiously' agree on South China Sea code of conduct: Ng Eng Hen

Asean and China should "expeditiously" ink an agreement that is aimed at easing the tensions in the South China Sea, urged Singapore Defence minister Ng Eng Hen.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/news/singapore/more-singapore-stories/story/asean-china-should-conclude-pact-ease-tensions-south-chi#sthash.Zchut4Pe.dpuf>

12 May 2015: ASEAN States to Conduct Joint Patrol in the South China Sea

Singapore media outlets reported that Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia are in discussions to extend joint patrols to the lower reaches of the South China Sea to tackle piracy. According to Singapore Chief of Navy Rear-Admiral Lai Chung Han, the states were hoping to start the patrols "sooner rather than later," and Singapore is "more than ready to move on this."

<http://thediplomat.com/2015/05/asean-joint-patrols-in-the-south-china-sea/>

7 May 2015: Cambodia says ASEAN should stay out of South China Sea fracas

Cambodia threw its support on Thursday behind China's position on settling South China Sea disputes, arguing that territorial conflicts should be tackled between claimants and not involve the regional ASEAN grouping.

<http://news.yahoo.com/cambodia-says-asean-stay-south-china-sea-fracas-094010145.html>

MAJOR POWERS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

28 May 2015: China, U.S. engage in war of words over disputed islands

The standoff between the U.S. and China over disputed territory in the South China Sea is escalating into a war of words and renewed pledges of military maneuvers in the area.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/28/politics/china-ashton-carter-south-china-sea-islands/>

27 May 2015: Pentagon chief urges end to island-building in South China Sea

Carter said China's island-building efforts were "out of step" with the regional consensus and that U.S. military aircraft and warships would continue to operate in the area as permitted under international law.

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/05/27/uk-asia-usa-pentagon-idUKKBN0OC2P420150527>

23 May 2015: U.S. to continue patrols in South China Sea; China says U.S. actions 'dangerous'

China said on May 22 it was "strongly dissatisfied" after a U.S. spy plane flew over part of the South China Sea this week near where China is building artificial islands, and called on the United States to stop such action or risk causing an accident.

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/china/AJ201505230025>

22 May 2015: China says U.S. actions in South China Sea 'irresponsible, dangerous'

Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said the Chinese military drove away the U.S. aircraft, in accordance with relevant regulations, labeling the U.S. action a security threat to China's islands and reefs.

<http://www.aol.com/article/2015/05/22/china-says-u-s-actions-in-south-china-sea-irresponsible-dange/21186234/>

21 May 2015: U.S. Navy documents new islands being built in South China Sea

A Chinese navy dispatcher demanded eight times Wednesday that a U.S. Air Force P8-A Poseidon surveillance aircraft leave the area as it flew over Fiery Cross Reef, where China has conducted extensive reclamation work on what it claims as sovereign territory.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/la-fg-us-china-vid-20150521-premiumvideo.html>

20 May 2015: US: South China Sea Reclamations Stoke Instability

China's land reclamation around reefs in the disputed South China Sea is undermining freedom and stability, and risks provoking tension that could even lead to conflict, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken told a conference in Jakarta.

<http://www.voanews.com/content/us-says-south-china-sea-reclamations-stroke-instability/2779182.html>

20 May 2015: Chinese Navy Warns US Surveillance Plane To Abort Scouting Mission In South China Sea, Report Says

Chinese naval officials warned a United States surveillance aircraft eight times Wednesday to vacate the area around a series of manmade islands that China has built near contested territory in the South China Sea. The surveillance plane conducted a scouting mission to assess China's progress in building military installations on the islands, a practice Beijing undertook despite the U.S. government's objections.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/chinese-navy-warns-us-surveillance-plane-abort-scouting-mission-south-china-sea-1932179>

19 May 2015: US says navy ship met Chinese vessel on South China Sea patrol –

A United States combat ship used agreed codes for unplanned encounters when it met a Chinese vessel during a recent patrol of the contested South China Sea, according to the vice chief of naval operations.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/news/asia/east-asia/story/us-says-navy-ship-met-chinese-vessel-south-china-sea-patrol-20150519#sthash.AakPOPnt.dpuf>

18 May 2015: US, China Set for High-Stakes Rivalry in Skies Above South China Sea

The USS Fort Worth, one of the most modern ships in the US navy, dispatched a reconnaissance drone and a Seahawk helicopter to patrol the airspace, according to a little-noticed statement on the navy's website.

<http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/us-china-set-for-high-stakes-rivalry-in-skies-above-south-china-sea-764066>

18 May 2015: U.S., China Clash Over South China Sea Disputes

John Kerry and his Chinese counterpart gave no ground over the issue of territorial disputes in the South China Sea during his weekend visit.

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-s-china-clash-over-south-china-sea-disputes-n360321>

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2015/05/16/us-china-refuse-to-budge-over-south-china-sea-activity/>

16 May 2015: U.S., China clash over disputed South China Sea

After a private meeting with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi showed no sign of backing down despite Kerry urging China to take action to reduce tension in the South China Sea.

<http://news.yahoo.com/u-china-clash-over-disputed-south-china-sea-082407940.html>

14 May 2015: PH, US officials meet on South China Sea row

Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario says the US pivot to Asia 'is not as focused and as strong as it should be'.

<http://www.rappler.com/nation/93137-philippines-us-officials-south-china-sea>

14 May 2015: China cautions U.S. Navy on patrols in South China Sea

While Beijing supports freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, the U.S. must be careful in how it uses that right, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said in the report. "Freedom of navigation does not give one country's military aircraft and ships free access to another country's territorial waters and airspace," Hua is quoted as saying in the Xinhua report.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/13/politics/south-china-sea-us-surveillance-aircraft/index.html>

13 May 2015: China lashes out over U.S. plan on South China Sea

"We are severely concerned about relevant remarks made by the American side. We believe the American side needs to make clarification on that," said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying.

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/china-lashes-out-over-us-plan-on-south-china-sea-2015-05-13-211035135>

13 May 2015: Kerry to take tough approach in China over South China Sea

U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense David Shear told a Senate hearing the United States had right of passage in areas claimed by China. "We are actively assessing the military implications of land reclamation and are committed to taking effective and appropriate action," he said, but gave no details.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/13/us-usa-china-southchinasea-idUSKBN0NY1PP20150513>

12 May 2015: Pentagon mulls sending planes, ships near disputed South China Sea islands

The Pentagon is considering sending U.S. military aircraft and ships to assert freedom of navigation around growing Chinese-made artificial islands in the disputed South China Sea, a U.S. official said.

<http://news.yahoo.com/pentagon-mulls-sending-planes-ships-near-disputed-south-230126170.html>

10 May 2015: US 'distorted' report on China's South China Sea reclamation, says Beijing

Chinese defence ministry spokesman Geng Yansheng was quoted by Xinhua as saying: "The US defence department's report on China's military and security development situation distorts facts and continues to play up the 'China military threat' cliché."

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1791771/us-distorted-report-chinas-south-china-sea-reclamation>

http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2535_665405/t1262651.shtml

11 May 2015: RI pushes stability in South China Sea

"Indonesia has continued to push peace efforts in the South China Sea, one of which is to push for the immediate completion of the CoC agreement between China and ASEAN," said the ministry's ASEAN Cooperation director I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja.

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/05/11/ri-pushes-stability-south-china-sea.html#sthash.SJMKmgXV.dpuf>

11 May 2015: Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia Joint Maritime Patrol in South China Sea

Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia are in discussions to extend joint patrols to deal with a resurgence of piracy in the South China Sea piracy hotspots, said Singapore's Chief of Navy Rear-Admiral Lai Chung Han.

<http://www.marinelink.com/news/singapore-indonesia390996.aspx>

11 May 2015: Australia Urges China Not to Create South China Sea Air Zone

Australia urged China not to create a proprietary air zone over the disputed South China Sea, with defusing tensions in the waters a priority, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-05-11/australia-urges-china-not-to-create-south-china-sea-air-zone>

9 May 2015: China Advances Threaten Erosion of U.S. Edge, Pentagon Says

The report includes a “special topics” section highlighting China’s land reclamation at five of its outposts in the Spratly Islands, the South China Sea archipelago claimed by both China and its neighbors. It has expanded from 500 acres reclaimed as of December to more than 2,000 acres today, according to a defense official who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-05-08/china-advances-threaten-erosion-of-u-s-advantage-pentagon-says>

9 May 2015: Japan, EU to warn against China’s maritime ambitions

Japan and the European Union are considering warning against China’s expansion in its maritime operations in a communique to be adopted at their upcoming summit meeting.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/05/09/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-eu-to-warn-against-chinas-maritime-ambitions/#.VVBhKpNlaYg>

9 May 2015: Japanese destroyers in Manila for port call

Asked if maritime disputes with China will be discussed during the courtesy call, Lincuna said discussion are “likely to focus on tactical matters.”

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/484474/news/nation/japanese-destroyers-in-manila-for-port-call-naval-exercise>

8 May 2015: Japan, Philippines to hold first naval drill in South China Sea: sources

The May 12 maritime safety exercise, which will practice the code for unplanned encounters at sea, known as CUES, is part of an agreement signed by Japan and the Philippines in January aimed at tightening security cooperation.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/08/us-southchinasea-philippines-japan-idUSKBN0NT11J20150508>

3 May 2015: U.S. keeps watchful eye as China builds 'Great Wall of Sand'

These missions have taken on new urgency as the U.S. military keeps a closer eye on China's increasingly assertive territorial claims, including an unprecedented island-building campaign in the nearby South China Sea

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/05/03/us-navy-patrol-watches-china-build-islands-in-south-china-sea/26506617/>

2 May 2015: US rejects China’s offer over disputed South China Sea islands

“Building facilities on reclaimed land in disputed areas will not contribute to peace and stability in the region,” Rathke told reporters. Beijing should “work with existing multilateral mechanisms for humanitarian and disaster relief,” such as one under the umbrella of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

<http://www.themalaymailonline.com/world/article/us-rejects-chinas-offer-over-disputed-south-china-sea-islands#sthash.leHplW7a.dpuf>

1 May 2015: China says US welcome to use bases built in disputed areas of South China Sea

“[We] welcome international organisations, the United States and relevant countries to use these facilities in the future when conditions are right, to have co-operation on humanitarian search and rescue and disaster relief,” Wu said.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1783156/china-says-us-welcome-use-bases-built-disputed-areas>