

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 32
November 2015

PHILIPPINES V. CHINA

25 November 2015: China criticizes Philippines over South China Sea arbitration

According to spokesman Hong Lei, the move by the Philippines was not an attempt to solve disputes, but "political provocation in legal clothing."

<http://english.cntv.cn/2015/11/25/ARTI1448450757289106.shtml>

25 November 2015: PH points out China's 'baseless' claims at the Hague

At the hearing, Professor Bernard Oxman raised the "unlawfulness of China's claim to the South China Sea beyond its maritime entitlements under the UNCLOS,"

<http://www.mb.com.ph/ph-points-out-chinas-baseless-claims-at-the-hague/#8y5oXJwzvbbodl1f.99>

25 November 2015: PH in The Hague: China robs us of right to fish

Reichler pointed out that China's 9-dash line is baseless under UNCLOS.

<http://www.rappler.com/nation/113937-philippines-hague-tribunal-china-right-fish>

21 November 2015: Aquino: Philippines remains committed to pursuing arbitration

"The Philippines remains committed to pursuing arbitration to its final conclusion, and will abide by its decisions," he said. The final ruling on the case may be issued in June next year.

<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/132563/asean-cant-let-any-country-claim-entire-south-china-sea#ixzz3s7vNRQkC>

11 November 2015: China says Philippines must heal rift over SCS

The arbitration case "is a knot that has impeded the improvement and development of Sino-Philippine relations", a statement on the Foreign Ministry's website cited Wang as saying in Manila. "We do not want this knot to become tighter and tighter, so that it even becomes a dead knot". "As for how to loosen or open the knot, (we'll) have to look at the Philippines."

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/11/us-southchinasea-china-philippines-idUSKCN0T007F20151111#JG55mLFY4HeO7BR1.99>

10 November 2015: Oral arguments in PHL-China case set for November 24 to 30

In a statement, DFA confirmed that the oral hearings for the merits of the case will begin later this month at The Hague, the Netherlands.

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/2015/11/10/oral-arguments-arbitration-case-set-november-24-30-440701>

1 November 2015: Vietnam reserves its rights, legal interests, foreign ministry says

Vietnam keeps a close watch on the process of the case and reserves the right to use all suitable and necessary peaceful measures to protect its rights and legal interests, the foreign ministry said.

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/politics/vietnam-reserves-its-rights-legal-interests-in-east-sea-foreign-ministry-says-53147.html>

ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

30 November 2015: Vietnamese fisherman shot dead by foreign ship

A Vietnamese fisherman was killed last week by an unidentified foreign ship while fishing near the Spratlys.

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/society/vietnamese-fisherman-shot-dead-by-men-from-foreign-ship-54344.html>

28 November 2015: VN demands China halt aggressive action

Vietnam strongly objects to the use of or threat to use force against its boats and vessels, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Le Hai Binh said.

<http://vietnamnews.vn/society/279142/vn-demands-china-halt-aggressive-action.html>

28 November 2015: Chinese warship threatens Vietnamese vessel with guns in SCS

When several Vietnamese sailors used their phones to take photos and videos of the warship, it deployed more than ten soldiers to the deck who pointed their rifles at the Vietnamese crew, and removed the protective tarpaulin of their 37-mm gun.

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/politics/chinese-warship-threatens-vietnamese-vessel-with-guns-in-east-sea-report-54279.html>

28 November 2015: Philippines Gets 2 New Fighter Jets Amid S. China Sea Tensions

The Philippines received two new fighter jets from South Korea, marking what the military calls a "return to the supersonic jet age."

<http://www.voanews.com/content/philippines-new-jets-south-china-sea/3078530.html>

25 November 2015: Philippine Front-Runner Poe Backs Aquino's Stance On China

Poe said the Philippines should continue arbitration, but should also engage other ASEAN members "for a constructive dialogue and to see how we can uphold the rule of law especially with regard to our territorial waters."

<http://www.ibtimes.com/south-china-sea-philippine-front-runner-poe-backs-aquinos-stance-china-2200114>

24 November 2015: Chinese army launches largest-ever ship to support South China Sea military garrison

China's army launched its biggest waterborne military vessel, in a move that reflects the country's increasingly aggressive claims on the South China Sea as well as its commitment to maintaining a permanent, forward-deployed force within striking distance of other contested islands in the region.

<https://www.hongkongfp.com/2015/11/24/chinese-army-launches-largest-ever-ship-to-support-south-china-sea-military-garrison/>

24 November 2015: President Ma to visit South China Sea island next month

Ma will also inaugurate a new wharf if its construction is completed in time. Ma and his entourage will fly to the island on a C-130H military transport aircraft.

<http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201511240004.aspx>

22 November 2015: Beijing Says Military Facilities in the South China Sea Are Needed for China's Defense

"Building and maintaining necessary military facilities, this is what is required for China's national defense and for the protection of those islands and reefs," Bloomberg quoted Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin.

<http://time.com/4123851/south-china-sea-asean-islands-militarization/>

22 November 2015: Li raises five-pronged proposal for peace, stability in South China Sea

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang raised a five-pronged proposal to uphold and promote peace and stability in the South China Sea, calling on countries outside the region to refrain from taking actions that may cause tension in the region.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-11/22/c_134841875.htm

18 November 2015: China appreciates Malaysia's "quiet diplomacy" in handling SCS issue

"In another word, they like our non-confrontational approach by using diplomacy as a channel to resolve a complex issue," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said after a bilateral meeting with China's President, Xi Jinping.

<http://english.astroawani.com/malaysia-news/china-appreciates-malaysias-quiet-diplomacy-handling-south-china-sea-issue-81280>

17 November 2015: China says has been restrained in SCS, could have taken back other islands

"The Chinese government has the right and the ability to recover the islands and reefs illegally occupied by neighbouring countries," Liu said. "But we haven't done this. We have maintained great restraint with the aim to preserve peace and stability in the South China Sea."

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-says-has-been-restrained-in-south-china-sea-could-have-taken-back-other-islands/articleshow/49814007.cms>

17 November 2015: Philippines, Vietnam boost ties as South China Sea feuds fester

The Philippines and Vietnam signed a strategic partnership deepening security ties in the face of Beijing's increased assertiveness in the disputed South China Sea.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippines-vietnam-boost-ties-as-south-china-sea-feuds-fester>

17 November 2015: Vietnamese fishing boats report 'terrifying' attack by Chinese vessels

Crew members of five Vietnamese fishing boats on Monday reported that they were attacked by a fleet of large Chinese vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin.

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/society/vietnamese-fishing-boats-report-terrifying-attack-by-chinese-vessels-53794.html>

14 November 2015: Malaysian Deputy PM says must defend sovereignty in South China Sea dispute

Without directly referring to China, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi questioned why land was being reclaimed on coral areas close to Malaysia's shores. "If our country is threatened or being encroached, we Malaysians should rise to defend our country."

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/14/us-southchinasea-asean-idUSKCN0T30LU20151114#s5ZU2kvTz1yHXjwT.99>

12 November 2015: China has no objection to Indonesia's sovereignty over the Natuna islands

Chinese spokesperson said that "the Indonesian side has no territorial claim to China's Nansha Islands. The Chinese side has no objection to Indonesia's sovereignty over the Natuna islands. China stays committed to peacefully resolving disputes over territory and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea through negotiations and consultations with countries directly concerned on the basis of respecting historical facts and international law."

http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1314306.shtml

11 November 2015: Philippines, China: No sea row talks at APEC

"We recognize that APEC is not the proper forum to discuss this issue," Charles Jose, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) spokesman, told reporters.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2015/11/11/1520650/philippines-china-no-sea-row-talks-apec>

9 November 2015: China's President Xi Jinping to attend Apec summit in Manila amid South China Sea tensions

That ended weeks of speculations suggesting that Mr Xi would skip the Apec summit.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/chinas-president-xi-jinping-to-attend-apec-summit-in-manila-amid-south-china-sea>

9 November 2015: Chinese FM to visit to Philippines amid South China Sea row

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will make a rare visit to the Philippines, days after Manila's petition over its maritime dispute with China was admitted by a UN tribunal.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/chinese-fm-to-visit-to-philippines-amid-south-china-sea-row-115110900673_1.html

7 November 2015: China's President Xi: South China Sea is Chinese territory

The South China Sea is Chinese territory, Chinese President Xi Jinping said in a speech in Singapore Saturday, according to Chinese state-run media.

<http://cnnphilippines.com/world/2015/11/07/Xi-South-China-Sea-is-Chinese-territory.html>

5 November 2015: Vietnam to Visiting Xi: Don't 'Militarize' South China Sea

Vietnamese Communist Party chief Nguyen Phu Trong asked visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping "not to militarize" and to "maintain peace" in the South China Sea.

<http://www.voanews.com/content/chinese-president-n-mends-fences-in-vietnam/3037906.html>

1 November 2015: Armed Chinese Fighter Jets Train Over Controversial Spratly Islands

Chinese authorities released photos of armed Chinese naval aircraft training over the South China Sea.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/south-china-sea-dispute-2015-armed-chinese-fighter-jets-train-over-controversial-2164263>

ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

23 November 2015: ASEAN leaders harshly criticize China over South China Sea actions

During the meeting, Indonesia's president Joko Widodo and South Korea's president Park Geun-hye and other ASEAN leaders all criticized China's actions in the South China Sea.

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2015/11/23/world-view-asean-leaders-harshly-criticize-china-over-south-china-sea-actions/>

21 November 2015: ASEAN anxious over South China Sea disputes

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman said the ministers reaffirmed the importance of peace, security, stability and freedom of navigation. "In this regard, the ministers remain seriously concerned about the ongoing developments and urge all parties to exercise self-restraint," he said.

<http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2015/11/21/Asean-anxious-over-disputes-Anifah-Ministers-call-for-restraint-in-handling-of-friction-over-South-C/>

21 November 2015: Singapore PM: SCS has become a test of ASEAN unity and effectiveness

"We must continue to urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint, refrain from provocative actions or the use of force, and commit to accident prevention measures and the non-militarisation of land features in the SCS." Mr Lee also said Singapore will be a "transparent and objective coordinator" for ASEAN-China Dialogue relations – a role it has assumed in August.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/asean-needs-to-deepen/2281154.html>

12 November 2015: Indonesia Asks China to Clarify South China Sea Claims

"The position of Indonesia is clear at this stage that we do not recognise the nine-dash line because it is not in line with ... international law," Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman Armanatha Nasir told reporters. "We asked for clarification on what they mean and what they mean by the nine-dash line. That has not been clarified."

<http://www.marinelink.com/news/indonesia-clarify-china400763.aspx>

11 November 2015: Indonesia says could also take China to court over South China Sea

Indonesia could take China before an international court if part of Indonesian territory is not resolved through dialogue, Indonesia's security chief said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/indonesia-says-could-also/2252584.html>

5 November 2015: Asean meeting ends without statement amid South China Sea row

Defence ministers meeting in Malaysia failed to agree on a closing statement for their summit.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34718196>

4 November 2015: ASEAN Sets Up New Hotline Amid South China Sea Tensions

Southeast Asian defense ministers agreed Tuesday to establish a hotline enabling them to communicate quickly and securely in a crisis situation on the sidelines of a regional retreat in Malaysia.

<http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/asean-sets-up-new-hotline-amid-south-china-sea-tensions/>

FON IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

24 November 2015: No patrols, but Japan helping in South China Sea in other ways

Japan has no plans to conduct freedom-of-navigation patrols near islands claimed by China and other nations in the South China Sea but is contributing to stability in the area in other ways, the country's defense minister said.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/no-patrols-but-japan-helping-in-south-china-sea-in-other-ways-1.380451>

23 November 2015: Abe rules out joining South China Sea operations days after telling Obama he would consider it

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said the Self-Defense Forces will not join U.S. freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea, just days after telling President Obama he would consider the move.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/11/23/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-rules-joining-south-china-sea-operations-days-telling-obama-consider/#.VlQhVnYrJdg>

17 November 2015: Malcolm Turnbull absolutely behind US in South China Sea

Malcolm Turnbull has pledged Australia's absolute support for the United States in its campaign against China's incursions in the South China Sea which are posing threats to freedom of navigation.

<http://www.afr.com/news/politics/election/malcolm-turnbull-absolutely-behind-us-in-south-china-sea-20151117-gl1ae2#ixzz3rpgUKXeQ>

16 November 2015: U.S. Navy destroyer USS Fitzgerald patrols South China Sea

Fitzgerald is the most recent vessel to conduct a patrol operation in the region, following U.S. B-52 bombers coming within 12 nautical miles of the disputed Spratly Islands on Friday, and guided missile destroyer USS Lassen also traveling within 12 nautical miles of Subi reef.

http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2015/11/16/US-Navy-destroyer-USS-Fitzgerald-patrols-South-China-Sea/4921447691245/

12 November 2015: US B-52 bombers flew near disputed islands in South China Sea, says Pentagon

In the latest mission, which occurred overnight on 8-9 November, the bombers flew "in the area" of the Spratly Islands but did not come within the 12-nautical-mile zones that China claims as territory around islands it has built in the chain, said Commander Bill Urban, a Pentagon spokesman.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/13/us-b-52-bombers-flew-near-disputed-islands-in-south-china-sea-says-pentagon>

8 November 2015: US Navigation Moves in South China Sea Will Continue: Ash Carter

"We've done them before, all over the world," Carter said. "And we will do them again."

<http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/us-navigation-moves-in-south-china-sea-will-continue-ash-carter-1241261>

4 November 2015: China warns US against further South China Sea patrols

Chang stressed that the US should not pursue any other dangerous actions that threaten China's security interests.

<https://www.rt.com/news/320712-china-us-security-threat/>

3 November 2015: Malaysia's defense chief welcomes American 'freedom of navigation' movements in disputed waters

Malaysian Defense Minister said the U.S. patrol in the South China Sea was "very important" and that countries with a stake in the region should exercise their right to operate in "international waters." He said Malaysia supported the American missions as long as China and the U.S. worked together to ensure there was no risk of escalation.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/support-grows-for-u-s-approach-in-south-china-sea-1446545714>

3 November 2015: U.S. Navy plans two or more patrols in South China Sea per quarter

"That's the right amount to make it regular but not a constant poke in the eye. It meets the intent to regularly exercise our rights under international law and remind the Chinese and others about our view," the official said.

<http://news.yahoo.com/u-navy-eyes-two-more-patrols-south-china-201727639.html>

1 November 2015: European Union Backs US On South China Sea Patrol, Says It's 'Freedom Of Navigation

"The U.S. are exercising their freedom of navigation," Reuters quoted a senior EU official as saying at a briefing, adding that the union is concerned about China's building of islands in the contested waters in the South China Sea.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/european-union-backs-us-south-china-sea-patrol-says-its-freedom-navigation-2163760>

1 November 2015: Abe backs U.S. operation in South China Sea

"In order to protect the free, open and peaceful sea, we will cooperate with the international community, including the United States, our ally," Abe said.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/28/world/politics-diplomacy-world/u-s-warship-passage-contested-south-china-sea-gets-abe-nod-sail-pasts-works/#.VjXuJ7crK70>

MAJOR POWERS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

24 November 2015: Park appeals to Beijing on South China Sea

On a final leg of a three-nation tour, Park stressed that more than 90 percent of Korea's crude oil imports and 30 percent of total trade bypass the area's strategic waterways, and warned Beijing to abide by the Declaration of the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.

<http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3011908>

20 November 2015: Japan to consider Philippines requests for large ships to patrol South China Sea

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe may consider a request from the Philippines for large coastguard ships to patrol the disputed South China Sea, after the two allies reached a deal on defence equipment and technology.

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/11/20/uk-philippines-japan-idUKKCN0T90EC20151120>

18 November 2015: Obama Calls on Beijing to Stop Construction in South China Sea

Mr. Obama directly confronted the disputed Chinese claims over islands in the critical waterway. He urged the Chinese to stop military activities there and endorsed a process of arbitration to settle differences between Beijing and its Southeast Asian neighbors.

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/19/world/asia/obama-apec-summit-south-china-sea-philippines.html?_r=0

17 November 2015: Obama to give 2 US ships to Philippines

Obama said the pair of ships — one U.S. Coast Guard cutter, one research vessel — were part of a broader American plan to scale up assistance to naval forces in Southeast Asia.

<http://www.startribune.com/in-signal-to-china-obama-to-give-2-ships-to-philippines/350932181/>

10 November 2015: Japan Warships Could Visit Vietnam Naval Base in 2016

Japan Maritime Self Defense Forces (MSDF) vessels will be allowed to make port calls in Cam Ranh Bay, a deep-water harbor in central Vietnam that is alongside the South China Sea. Hanoi is currently building a facility for foreign vessels which is scheduled to open next year.

<http://thediplomat.com/2015/11/japan-warships-could-visit-vietnam-naval-base-near-south-china-sea-in-2016/>

8 November 2015: US defence chief warns of conflict in South China Sea

US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter warned that land reclamation efforts and a military buildup in the South China Sea could lead to conflict between nations in the region.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/us-defence-chief-warns-of/2246080.html>

8 November 2015: Abe to raise South China Sea issues at G-20, other global meetings

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to raise issues concerning the South China Sea at international meetings in coming weeks involving the Group of 20 major countries, and Southeast Asian nations and their dialogue partners.

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/politics/view/abe-to-raise-south-china-sea-issues-at-g-20-other-global-meetings>

7 November 2015: Asia-EU foreign ministers' summit urges peaceful resolution of disputes

The chair's statement agreed on the importance of "refraining from the use or threat of force, of abstaining from unilateral actions and of resolving maritime disputes through peaceful means in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law."

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/11/07/national/veiled-reference-south-china-sea-asia-eu-foreign-ministers-summit-urges-peaceful-resolution-disputes/#.VkFUoIRLfkW>

5 November 2015: India can play constructive, positive role in South China Sea, says China

"We hope that countries who really care about freedom of navigation in the South China Sea (SCS) can play a constructive and positive role" in peace and stability of the region, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying told a media briefing here in response to a question.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-can-play-constructive-positive-role-in-South-China-Sea-says-China/articleshow/49676106.cms>

5 November 2015: India calls for early conclusion of S China Sea code of conduct

"This is natural since freedom of navigation in international waters, the right of passage and overflight, unimpeded commerce and access to resources in accordance with recognised principles of international law including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, are of concern to all of us," Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar said.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-calls-for-early-conclusion-of-south-china-sea-code-of-conduct/#sthash.NrHrJs7d.dpuf>

5 November 2015: Pentagon chief to visit U.S. aircraft carrier in South China Sea

Carter will visit the USS Theodore Roosevelt with Malaysian Defense Minister Hishammuddin Hussein, U.S. officials said.

<http://news.yahoo.com/pentagon-chief-visit-u-aircraft-carrier-south-china-232955976.html>

2 November 2015: U.S., Japan push for mention of South China Sea in defence forum statement

"We've been very clear along with many other like-minded countries that South China Sea language should be included but there are members who feel differently," said the U.S. defence official, adding China was the main obstacle.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/03/us-asean-malaysia-idUSKCN0SS07F20151103>

2 November 2015: Japan's Abe says wants US, South Korea cooperation over South China Sea

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told South Korea's president he wanted cooperation between the two countries and the United States in maintaining an open and peaceful South China Sea, a Japanese government spokesman said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/japan-s-abe-south-china/2232892.html>

2 November 2015: South Korea Calls for South China Sea Rights

"It is our stance that freedom of navigation and freedom of flight should be ensured in this area, and that any conflicts be resolved according to relevant agreements and established international norms," South Korean Defense Minister Han Min-Koo said.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/south-korea-calls-for-south-china-sea-rights-1446461006>

1 November 2015: China, Japan, South Korea Meets amid South China Sea Tension

Ms. Park, who is playing host at this year's forum, appeared eager to avoid antagonizing China, an important player in maintaining peace on the Korean Peninsula.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/china-japan-south-korea-meet-amid-tensions-over-south-china-sea-1446355289>

1 November 2015: Japanese and US Navies Hold Exercise in South China Sea

The Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) and the U.S. Navy are holding a joint naval exercise in the South China Sea. The exercise marks the first bilateral U.S.-Japan exercise in the area.

<http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/a-first-japanese-and-us-navies-hold-exercise-in-south-china-sea/>

1 November 2015: China Warns Japan PM Shinzo Abe to Stay Out Of Dispute with US

"I wonder what Japan has to do with the South China Sea," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters in Seoul one day before the two countries' leaders were scheduled to meet as part of a summit with South Korean President Park Geun-hye.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/south-china-sea-controversy-china-warns-japan-pm-shinzo-abe-stay-out-dispute-us-2163908>