

**SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 34**  
**January 2016**

**ACTS OF CLAIMANTS**

**29 January 2016: Vietnam calls on Taiwan to respect sovereignty**

Vietnam resolutely opposes the actions and requests that Taiwan immediately end its violations of Vietnam's sovereignty as well as refrain from repeating similar actions, which accelerates tensions and complicates the situation in the South China Sea, Binh said.

<http://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/281842/vn-calls-on-taiwan-to-respect-sovereignty.html>

**29 January 2016: Ma defends his South China Sea visit**

President Ma Ying-jeou dismissed concerns that his visit to Itu Aba in the South China Sea could further escalate tensions in the region, saying the visit was aimed at promoting peace and preventing the island from being downgraded.

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/01/29/2003638328>

**28 January 2016: Philippines warns Taiwan for creating tensions in disputed sea**

"We remind all parties concerned of our shared responsibility to refrain from actions that can increase tension in the South China Sea," Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Charles Jose said in a statement.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/01/28/1547246/philippines-warns-taiwan-increasing-tensions-disputed-sea>

**27 January 2016: China says Taiwan, mainland have common duty to safeguard South China Sea sovereignty**

China and Taiwan have a common duty to safeguard sovereignty in the South China Sea, the mainland's Taiwan Affairs Office said, after Taipei said President Ma Ying-jeou planned to visit Itu Aba island.

<http://www.thestar.com.my/news/world/2016/01/27/china-says-taiwan-mainland-have-common-duty-to-safeguard-south-china-sea-sovereignty/>

**25 January 2016: Taiwan uses water cannon to drive off Vietnamese boat in South China Sea**

Taiwan's coastguard said that one of its vessels used water cannon to drive off a Vietnamese fishing boat in the South China Sea. The two Taiwanese coastguard boats, which have been deployed there since December to replace smaller vessels, scrambled to drive off the Vietnamese boats.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/taiwan-uses-water-cannon-to-drive-off-vietnamese-boat-in-south-china-sea>

**22 January 2016: China's Navy Chief Affirms Readiness to Defend Islands in S China Sea**

China's PLA Navy is determined and capable of defending the sovereignty and security of the islands and reefs in the South China Sea, Wu added.

<http://sputniknews.com/military/20160122/1033571537/china-disputed-waters-defense.html#ixzz3y4nwGDhN>

**21 January 2016: China says South China Sea militarisation depends on threat**

"We will certainly not seek the militarisation of the islands and reefs, but we won't not set up defences. How many defences completely depends on the level of threat we face," Wu said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-says-south-china/2442774.html>

**20 January 2016: Ma reaffirms value of South China Sea Peace Initiative**

"This pragmatic approach saw the inking of an agreement on bilateral cooperation in fisheries law enforcement between Taiwan and the Philippines in November 2015, setting an example for resolving decadeslong regional disputes by peaceful means," he said.

<http://www.taiwantoday.tw/ct.asp?xItem=241465&ctNode=2194&mp=9>

**19 January 2016: Vietnam Warns China Over Oil Rig Activities**

Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh said in a statement that Vietnam had raised concerns with China over the movement of the Haiyang Shiyou oil rig and has demanded that China stop any drilling and remove the oil rig from the area where the two countries' continental shelves overlap.

<http://www.voanews.com/content/vietnam-warns-china-oil-rig-south-china-sea/3153895.html>

**19 January 2016: China: Philippines Exaggerates South China Sea Tensions**

"The Philippines' comments are just frightening words to scare people, deliberately exaggerating regional tensions with treacherous intent, and its plots will not succeed," Hong said, when asked about the warning to the Philippine aircraft.

<http://www.marinelink.com/news/exaggerates-tensions403644.aspx>

**19 January 2016: Vietnam requests ICAO to correct Sanya FIR map**

Vietnam has requested ICAO to correct the Sanya FIR map. The map writes Chinese words "Sansha city – China" and draws a symbol of an airport on Fiery Cross Reef.

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/politics/vietnam-requests-icao-correct-sanya-fir-map-in-east-sea-58231.html>

**18 January 2016: Philippine plane warned as it flies near South China Sea island**

Philippine officials said that they received two intimidating radio warnings identified as from the Chinese navy when they flew a Cessna plane close to a Chinese-constructed island in the South China Sea.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/philippine-plane-warned-as-it-flies-near-south-china-sea-island-1.389340>

**16 January 2016: Taiwan president-elect calls for freedom of navigation in S.China Sea**

Taiwan president-elect Tsai Ing-wen called for freedom of navigation in the disputed South China Sea and for a peaceful resolution of the dispute. She also said Taiwan will continue to strengthen the island's ties with Japan.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3402469/Taiwan-president-elect-calls-freedom-navigation-S-China-Sea.html#ixzz3xUSwO5qf>

**15 January 2016: China Will Start Civilian Flights to South China Sea in 2016**

Sansha's Deputy Mayor Feng Wenhai said that the city has plans to provide more civilian services to both inhabited and uninhabited islands in the South China Sea. Inhabited islands will be outfitted by piers, Feng said, while also promised to "complete construction of seabed optical cable and put it into use and provide access to WIFI to all inhabited islands and reefs." Uninhabited features will be outfitted with wharves, Feng said.

<http://thediplomat.com/2016/01/official-china-will-start-civilian-flights-to-south-china-sea-in-2016/>

**15 January 2016: China seeks investment for disputed islands, to launch flights**

China will invite private investment to build infrastructure on islands it controls in the disputed South China Sea and will start regular flights to one of them this year, state media said, moves likely to anger other claimants.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-seeks-investment/2429014.html>

**15 January 2016: China rejects Vietnam's accusations of threatening civilian air traffic**

China is shocked and confused by Vietnam's argument that the test flights at a newly built airport in the South China Sea have threatened civilian air traffic, a foreign ministry spokesperson said. Besides the notifications by competent authorities, China also made specific contact with Vietnam's diplomatic authorities for technical notification and explanation, he said

[http://www.china.org.cn/world/2016-01/15/content\\_37582733.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/world/2016-01/15/content_37582733.htm)

**13 January 2016: Vietnam accuses China of threatening civilian flights over South China Sea**

The notification from the Chinese Embassy "cannot substitute China's notification to the appropriate air traffic services units of Vietnam in order to ensure the safety and regularity of flight operations," the Civil Aviation Authority of Vietnam said in a statement.

<http://www.ctvnews.ca/world/vietnam-accuses-china-of-threatening-civilian-flights-over-south-china-sea-1.2735046>

### **13 January 2016: Vietnam to step up South China Sea reconnaissance missions**

Vietnam's Minister of Science and Technology Nguyen Quan said a test flight of the drone was "completed successfully" and that it is "ready to fly over the South China Sea."

[http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2016/01/13/Vietnam-to-step-up-South-China-Sea-reconnaissance-missions/3081452735113/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2016/01/13/Vietnam-to-step-up-South-China-Sea-reconnaissance-missions/3081452735113/)

### **13 January 2016: China refutes Philippines' protest against test flights**

"China enjoys the freedom of overflight in the South China Sea as other countries do," said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei at a routine press briefing.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/13/c\\_135006303.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/13/c_135006303.htm)

### **13 January 2016: Philippines files protest against China's test flights on island in disputed South China Sea**

Mr Jose said the test flights were "provocative actions" that will restrict the freedom of navigation and overflights in the South China Sea. "These actions by China have elevated tensions and anxiety in the region and are in violation of the spirit and letter of the Asean-China Declaration on the Conduct of parties in the South China Sea," he added.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippines-files-protest-against-chinas-test-flights-on-island-in-disputed-south-china>

### **13 January 2016: China to deploy a new giant coast guard ship in the disputed South China Sea,**

China Coast Guard vessel 3901, with a 12,000 ton displacement, will carry 76 mm rapid-fire guns, two auxiliary guns and two anti-aircraft machine guns, the paper reported, citing unidentified people and photos posted on the Internet. It will be the second of China's mega-cutters that are the largest in the world.

[http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/13/asia-pacific/china-fleet-blurs-line-navy-coast-guard-giant-new-floating-fortress/#.Vpc\\_8fl96U](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/13/asia-pacific/china-fleet-blurs-line-navy-coast-guard-giant-new-floating-fortress/#.Vpc_8fl96U)

### **12 January 2016: Philippine Supreme Court declares military deal with the US constitutional**

The Philippine Supreme Court declared a security deal with the United States constitutional, allowing an increased US military presence in its former colony as tensions rise in the South China Sea.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippine-supreme-court-declares-military-deal-with-the-us-constitutional>

### **11 January 2016: China Defends Test Flights in South China Sea Area**

Mr. Hong said, contrary to Vietnam's assertions, that the flights are exempt from international civil-aviation rules because they were "totally within China's sovereignty."

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/china-defends-test-flights-in-south-china-sea-area-1452518556>

### **10 January 2016: Vietnam calls on international community to condemn China for compromising air safety**

Vietnam asked ICAO to apply measures and solutions to prevent the Chinese moves that have imperiled the safety of international aviation.

<http://tuoitrenews.vn/politics/32672/vietnam-calls-on-international-community-to-condemn-china-for-compromising-air-safety>

### **9 January 2016: Vietnam Says China's Flights to South China Sea a Threat to Air Safety**

Vietnam authorities claim 46 instances of Chinese planes flying unannounced through Vietnam's area of responsibility in first week of January

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/vietnam-says-chinas-flights-to-south-china-sea-a-threat-to-air-safety-1452334018>

### **7 January 2016: PHL warns of Chinese air defense zone over South China Sea**

"We are very concerned about the fact that China had already flown their flights to Fiery Cross Reef and we are also concerned that there are plans to do more," Del Rosario said at a joint press conference with British Foreign Minister Philip Hammond. - See more at:

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/550338/news/nation/phl-warns-of-chinese-air-defense-zone-over-south-china-sea#sthash.15IZ4vPh.dpuf>

### **7 January 2016: Vietnam circulated notes at UN to protest China's test flight**

The Permanent Mission of Vietnam to the United Nations sent a diplomatic note to the UN Secretary-General asking for circulation of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs' diplomatic notes to protest against China's flights to Fiery Cross Reef.

<http://www.vietnambreakingnews.com/2016/01/vietnam-requests-icao-to-correct-sanya-fir-map-in-east-sea/>

### **7 January 2016: Vietnam protests China's second test flight in South China Sea**

"This is a serious violation of Vietnam's sovereignty, threatening peace and regional stability, threatening security, safety and freedom of navigation and aviation in the East Sea," foreign ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh said, using the name by which Vietnam refers to the South China Sea.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/vietnam-protests-chinas-second-test-flight-in-south-china-sea/article28047750/>

### **7 January 2016: China again lands planes on disputed island in South China Sea: Xinhua**

China landed two test flights on an island it has built in the South China Sea, four days after it angered Vietnam with a landing on the same runway in the disputed territory, the Xinhua state news agency said.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-idUSKBN0UK1HT20160106>

### **4 January 2016: China defends test flight in South China Sea after Vietnam objects**

Hua Chunying, China's foreign ministry spokesperson, said that a civilian aircraft used by the Chinese government conducted a test flight at the new airport on Fiery Cross Reef in the Spratly Islands. Hua said the activity is "entirely within the range of China's sovereignty concerns."

<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/03/asia/china-vietnam-south-china-sea/index.html>

### **2 January 2016: China restructures military as Xi eyes 'strong army'**

The changes announced will see a new army unit set up to oversee China's arsenal of strategic missiles.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-restructures/2393084.html>

### **2 January 2016: Vietnam protests after China lands plane on disputed Spratlys**

Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh called it "a serious infringement of the sovereignty of Vietnam on the Spratly archipelago, contrary to the common perception of high-ranking leaders of the two countries and (to) an agreement on the basic principles for directly solving maritime issues between Vietnam and China". Vietnam handed a protest note to China's embassy and asked China not to repeat the action, Binh said.

<http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN0UG0FA20160102>

### **1 January 2016: South China Sea Update: Chinese Military Building Second Aircraft Carrier Amid Spratly Island Controversy**

Chinese officials confirmed the military is building a second aircraft carrier as part of its expanded military effort in the South China Sea.

<http://www.ibtimes.com/south-china-sea-update-chinese-military-building-second-aircraft-carrier-amid-spratly-2245363>

## **ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA**

### **27 January 2016: Cambodia distances itself from SCS dispute**

Cambodia's Deputy Prime Minister Hor Namhong told reporters that Cambodia's position on the South China Sea was unchanged — specifically, that individual countries should settle disputes among themselves without the involvement of ASEAN.

<http://www.todayonline.com/world/cambodia-distances-itself-s-china-sea-dispute>

### **25 January 2016: Laos wants to see maritime rights respected and avoid a military build-up in the South China Sea**

Laos is the 2016 chair of ASEAN and hosts a summit later in the year that will include the leaders of the United States and China.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-asia-laos-idUSKCN0V300A>

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

### **29 January 2016: China spokesman: Astonished by Harris' Remarks on SCS**

Yang said negotiations with "countries directly related" is China's consistent stance, and China does not need others to intervene in the issues with ignorant words. He also said Harris needs to learn more carefully the history of the South China Sea before giving his irresponsible personal view.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/video/2016-01/29/c\\_135057541.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/video/2016-01/29/c_135057541.htm)

### **28 January 2016: US South China Sea FONOPs to Increase in Scope, Complexity: Commander**

Admiral Harry B Harris Jr., the commander of the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), confirmed that U.S. FONOPs can be expected to not only become greater in number, but also more broader in scope as well as more complex. He declined, however, to provide more details about future operations

<http://thediplomat.com/2016/01/us-south-china-sea-fonops-to-increase-in-scope-complexity-commander/>

### **28 January 2016: Japan, Brunei agree on peaceful resolution of South China Sea rows**

The ministers also discussed the situation in the South China Sea, where China has engaged in massive, fast-paced land reclamation and agreed to work closely on the issue.

<https://english.kyodonews.jp/news/2016/01/395039.html>

### **27 January 2016: Australia: Nations will respect tribunal on South China Sea**

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said the ruling will be "extremely important" as a statement of international principle. She said that although Beijing is saying it will not be bound by the ruling, the tribunal's decision "will be embraced and upheld by all other nations."

<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/135643/australia-nations-will-respect-tribunal-on-south-china-sea#ixzz3yX3LKtsN>

### **27 January 2016: China tells US it has right to protect sovereignty in South China Sea**

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China has a right to protect its territorial sovereignty and that Beijing and Washington should manage the issue in a constructive way.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/us-china-must-find-way-forward-on-north-korea-and-south-china-sea-kerry>

### **27 January 2016: U.S. slams Taiwan president's planned visit to contested South China Sea**

"Such an action is extremely unhelpful and does not contribute to the peaceful resolution of disputes in the South China Sea," AIT spokeswoman Sonia Urbom said.

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-taiwan-southchinasea-idUKKCN0V502T>

### **26 January 2016: Turnbull government considering Australian involvement in 'freedom of navigation' exercises challenging China's push into South China Sea**

Australia is examining the risks and rewards of conducting its own 'freedom of navigation' military exercise amid Beijing's artificial islands in the South China Sea.

<http://www.news.com.au/national/turnbull-government-considering-australian-involvement-in-freedom-of-navigation-exercises-challenging-chinas-push-into-south-china-sea/news-story/eefc427d58cfaac02b1b97253ec2380b>

### **25 January 2016: India to build Vietnam satellite data centre**

Indian officials say their country will set up a satellite tracking and imaging centre in Vietnam that will give Hanoi access to pictures from Indian earth observation satellites that cover the region - including China and the South China Sea.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/india-build-vietnam-satellite-data-centre-160125041647767.html>

### **24 January 2016: Obama: Countries should play by same rules in South China Sea**

US President Barack Obama on Sunday said all countries should play by the same rules in international law including freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-countries-should-play-by-same-rules-in-south-china-sea-obama-2169785>

**22 January 2016: Australia calls on South China Sea claimants to stop reclamation, militarization**

"We urge all parties, not just China, to refrain from further construction on those islands or reefs, and to refrain from militarization," Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/01/22/1545218/australia-calls-south-china-sea-claimants-stop-reclamation>

**22 January 2016: China taking 'self-isolating' steps in South China Sea: Pentagon**

"China is taking some steps that I fear are self-isolating, driving towards a result that none of us wants," Carter said, in reference to Chinese measures in the South China Sea.

<http://news.yahoo.com/china-taking-self-isolating-steps-south-china-sea-180403272.html>

**19 January 2016: China urges Japan to be cautious on South, East China Sea comments**

Japan should do more to enhance mutual trust with neighboring countries and promote regional stability, instead of sowing discord, said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/19/c\\_135024522.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/19/c_135024522.htm)

**19 January 2016: British ambassador steps into row over pilot 'intimidation'**

The ambassador said Britain would oppose any attempt to restrict freedom of navigation and overflight in disputed areas of the South China Sea. "If a British aircraft, civilian or military, was intercepted and not allowed to fly over a space which we regard as international, we will simply ignore it".

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/19/south-china-sea-dispute-british-ambassador-steps-into-row-over-pilot-intimidation>

**15 January 2016: India, Vietnam take ties to strategic level against Chinese assertiveness**

India has set up a Data Reception, Tracking and Telemetry Station at Ho Chi Minh City. The latest facility will assist India to track satellites and receive data from them.

<http://southasiamonitor.org/detail.php?type=sl&nid=15252>

**13 January 2016: Philippines, US agree to boost defense alliance to counter China**

The United States and the Philippines have agreed to bolster their defense alliance.

<http://news.yahoo.com/philippines-us-agree-to-boost-defense-alliance-to-024759989.html>

**13 January 2016: PHL eyes joint activities with US in South China Sea - See more at:**

The Philippines raised the possibility of joint operations with the United States in the South China Sea after the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/551112/news/nation/phl-eyes-joint-activities-with-us-in-south-china-sea#sthash.h3EYW7FI.dpuf>

**12 January 2016: Japan Wades Further Into the South China Sea Dispute**

Japanese Defense Ministry said aircraft returning from anti-piracy operations in Africa would refuel in places such as Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines, not in their traditional destinations like Singapore and Thailand, which are far from the disputed maritime zone.

<https://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/japan-wades-further-south-china-sea-dispute>

**8 January 2016: US says China plane landings in South China Sea raise tensions**

"We clearly are concerned by these flights... and we're concerned by all of these activities being conducted by the Chinese in disputed islands in the South China Sea," Pentagon spokesman said.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/550442/news/world/china-plane-landings-in-south-china-sea-raise-tensions-us#sthash.iyNlAnmM.dpuf>

**7 January 2016: UK says South China Sea air freedoms 'non-negotiable'**

"Freedom of navigation and overflight are non-negotiable. They are red lines for us," Hammond told a joint news conference with his Filipino counterpart, Albert del Rosario, in Manila.

<http://news.yahoo.com/uk-says-south-china-sea-air-freedoms-non-080809425.html>

**6 January 2016: Pentagon chief defends Navy patrols near Chinese islands**

In his letter, Carter said the Navy conducted its operations under innocent passage because it is unclear whether any country has a legitimate territorial claim.

<http://thehill.com/policy/defense/264963-carter-explains-south-china-sea-operation-in-letter-to-mccain>