

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 35
February 2016

ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

27 February 2016: Philippines insists on 'rule of law' in S. China Sea

"Sustainable peace and security are made possible by a rules-based regime, generally accepted by countries, that equalizes powerful actors and their less influential ones," a statement released by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in Manila Friday quoted Rebong as saying.

<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/137053/ph-insists-on-rule-of-law-in-s-china-sea#ixzz41TOLYzM1>

26 February 2016: China CNOOC tenders 18 offshore blocks, mostly in South China Sea

The blocks have a total size of 52,257 square km, including three blocks in the Bohai Bay area, one in East China Sea and 14 in the northern part of the South China Sea.

<http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews/idAFL3N16449J>

26 February 2016: CNOOC Taps First Ultradeepwater Gas Discovery In South China Sea

The report didn't give any estimate of gas flows at Lingshui 18-1-1, but said the discovery has been certified by the Ministry of Land & Resources.

<http://www.epmag.com/cnooc-taps-first-ultradeepwater-gas-discovery-south-china-sea-840091>

26 February 2016: South China Sea defenses 'really needed' in face of U.S. militarization: Beijing

China "really needs" its defenses in the South China Sea in the face of a militarization process being pushed by the United States, and can deploy whatever equipment it wants on its own soil, China's Defense Ministry said.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/02/26/asia-pacific/south-china-sea-defenses-really-needed-face-u-s-militarization-beijing/#.VtLv8UXXenN>

25 February 2016: China criticizes Philippines over South China Sea dispute

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the decision by Philippine leaders to lodge a case with a tribunal in The Hague was "irresponsible to the Filipino people and the future of the Philippines."

<http://m.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/feb/25/china-criticizes-philippines-over-south-china-sea/?page=all>

24 February 2016: China sends fighter jets to contested island in South China Sea

China has deployed fighter jets to a contested island in the South China Sea, the same island where China deployed surface-to-air missiles last week.

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/02/23/exclusive-china-sends-fighter-jets-to-contested-island-in-south-china-sea.html>

23 February 2016: Beijing defends deployments in SCS as no different to US defence of Hawaii

"China's deploying necessary, limited defensive facilities on its own territory is not substantively different from the United States defending Hawaii," Hua added.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/23/beijing-says-us-defence-of-hawaii-no-different-to-its-deployments-in-south-china-sea>

22 February 2016: China Appears to Have Built Radar Facilities on Disputed South China Sea Islands

Fresh satellite imagery suggests that China has been building radar facilities on some of the artificial islands it built in the South China Sea, in a move that would improve its military power in the region.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/china-appears-to-have-built-radar-gear-in-disputed-waters-1456198634?mod=djemalertAsianews>

21 February 2016: Vietnam bulks up military as China stirs South China Sea tensions

Tiny Vietnam was the world's eighth-largest arms importer from 2011-2015 — a huge leap from the previous five-year period when it was in 43rd place.

<http://www.marketwatch.com/story/vietnam-bulks-up-military-as-china-stirs-south-china-sea-tensions-2016-02-21>

20 February 2016: China Accuses US of Militarizing South China Sea

Chinese FM spokesman said that patrols by US, along with joint exercises involving regional partners were the true reason why concerns were growing over peace and stability.

<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2016/02/20/china-accuses-us-of-militarizing-south-china-sea.html>

19 February 2016: Vietnam protests China missile deployment

"Vietnam is deeply concerned about the actions by China. These are serious infringements of Vietnam's sovereignty over the Paracels, threatening peace and stability in the region as well as security, safety and freedom of navigation and flight," Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh said in a statement.

<http://www.thanhniennews.com/politics/vietnam-protests-china-missile-deployment-59432.html>

18 February 2016: PHL sends ship to fetch fisherman rescued off South China Sea island

The Philippine Navy has sent one of its ships to a Vietnamese-occupied island in the South China Sea to fetch a Filipino fisherman who was rescued there by Vietnamese authorities.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/555813/news/nation/phl-sends-ship-to-fetch-fisherman-rescued-off-south-china-sea-island#sthash.MO5d2LEA.dpuf>

18 February 2016: China: Rejection of Philippines' arbitration "in line with law"

"China is actually following international law by not accepting arbitration regarding sovereign and maritime entitlements. Because after joining UNCLOS in 2006, China issued a declaration according to the rights given to China by Article 298 of the UNCLOS" said Wang Yi.

<http://english.cntv.cn/2016/02/18/VIDEN2AdpN9EmAhWPGP2fbB6160218.shtml>

18 February 2016: China: Missiles have been on South China Sea island for years

China's Defense Ministry said that sea air and sea defense systems had existed on the islands for year.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/02/16/asia/china-missiles-south-china-sea/>

17 February 2016: Beijing deploys 'necessary defenses', says in line with intl law

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said: "The limited and necessary self-defense facilities China has built on islands and reefs by Chinese personnel is consistent with the self-defense and self-preservation China is entitled to under international law."

<https://www.rt.com/news/332716-south-china-sea-missiles/>

17 February 2016: China warns Australia over challenge to South China Sea activities

China's foreign ministry spokesman, Hong Lei, said Australia "should not selectively evade" the facts.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/17/australia-to-challenge-china-over-south-china-sea-activities>

16 February 2016: Vietnam PM wants stronger U.S. role in South China Sea

Premier Nguyen Tan Dung suggested to U.S. President Barack Obama that Washington uses a stronger voice and "more practical and more efficient actions", in comments likely to rile China.

<http://news.yahoo.com/vietnam-pm-wants-stronger-u-role-south-china-131806266.html>

16 February 2016: China sends surface-to-air missiles to contested island in provocative move

The imagery shows two batteries of eight surface-to-air missile launchers and a radar system on Woody Island.

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/02/16/exclusive-china-sends-surface-to-air-missiles-to-contested-island-in-provocative-move.html>

15 February 2016: US anti-missile system threatens China's interests: Beijing

"We are firmly opposed to the relevant country's attempts to damage China's strategic and security interests, with the nuclear issue as an excuse," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei told reporters.

<http://presstv.ir/Detail/2016/02/15/450464/US-antimissile-system-China-interests>

13 February 2016: China Manufactures Land at New Sites in the Paracel Islands

Satellite images show dredging and land filling by China at two new sites, both in the Amphitrite group of the Paracel Islands. Also newly visible is a helicopter base under construction at Duncan Island.

<http://thediplomat.com/2016/02/satellite-images-china-manufactures-land-at-new-sites-in-the-paracel-islands/>

12 February 2016: Philippines Considers Two-Way Sea Talks with China — If Wins Case at the Hague

"When the conclusion of the arbitration is handed down, and if it is in our favor, I think we should initiate a bilateral because we already have a platform by which we can solidly approach the negotiating table. If it's not in our favor, they will approach us" del Rosario said.

<http://jakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/international/philippines-considers-two-way-sea-talks-china-wins-case-hague/>

11 February 2016: China warns on South China Sea as U.S., India consider patrols

"Countries from outside the area must stop pushing forward the militarization of the South China Sea, cease endangering the sovereignty and national security of littoral countries in the name of 'freedom of navigation' and harming the peace and stability of the region," spokesman Hong Lei said.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-idUSKCN0VK0WQ>

8 February 2016: Philippines' Top Diplomat Resigns With South China Sea Verdict Looming

Del Rosario has been a tireless voice drawing attention to China's assertiveness within ASEAN as well as in other international fora, including at the Arbitral Court at the Hague last year. A verdict on the case is expected later this year.

<http://thedi diplomat.com/2016/02/philippines-top-diplomat-resigns-with-south-china-sea-verdict-looming/>

3 February 2016: China reiterates its indisputable right over the South China Sea

In response to the amendment of Sanya's Flight Information Area by International Civil Aviation Organization's as per Vietnam's request, Lu pointed out that markers on the relevant aeronautical chart are to facilitate effective air control and flight guidance and maintain security and order of international civil air transport.

<http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/0203/c90000-9013276.html>

1 February 2016: Taiwan President Issues Remarks on Itu Aba

He argued that Itu Aba is not a rock, but an island, and meets the criteria for an island as specified in Article 121 of UNCLOS.

<http://mobileen.president.gov.tw/ENewsDetail.aspx?id=36616&UnID=98e53159-930e-47c1-94f0-2e93d8ca73c3&page=1>

1 February 2016: Vietnam respects right of innocent passage

Answering reporters' questions on Vietnam's response to the US Navy's FONOP within 12 nautical miles of Tri Ton Island, spokesperson Le Hai Binh stated that Vietnam respects the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea conducted in accordance with relevant rules of international law, in particular the UNCLOS (Article 17).

http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/tt_baochi/pbfn/ns160131221102

31 January 2016: Beijing Accuses US Destroyer of Violating China's Territorial Waters

The patrolling near the Paracel Islands archipelago, conducted by a US Navy destroyer, is unlawful as such action can only be allowed with the permission of the Chinese authorities, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying said.

<http://sputniknews.com/asia/20160130/1033980734/china-us-disputed-waters.html#ixzz3yoeSFGr8>

ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

27 February 2016: ASEAN says seriously concerned about rising South China Sea tensions

"Ministers remained seriously concerned over recent and ongoing developments," the 10-members ASEAN said in a statement after a regular meeting of the group's foreign ministers in Laos.

<http://mobile.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN0W00BG>

24 February 2016: China, Cambodia Hold First Naval Exercise Amid South China Sea Fears

According to Cambodia's deputy navy chief Vice Admiral Vann Bunneang, 70 Cambodian sailors will join 737 of their Chinese counterparts for what he said would constitute the first and biggest-ever naval training exercise with Beijing.

<http://thedi diplomat.com/2016/02/china-cambodia-hold-first-naval-exercise-amid-south-china-sea-fears/>

22 February 2016: Indonesia has nothing to do with South China Sea, Jokowi Says

Jokowi however, supported the conflict's resolution through the Code of Conduct, which is now under discussion between ASEAN member states.

<http://examinergazette.com/2016/02/22/indonesia-has-nothing-to-do-with-south-china-sea-jokowi-says.html>

16 February 2016: Asean wants peaceful resolution to South China Sea issue, says Najib

Asean leaders have reiterated their stand on wanting a peaceful resolution to the overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea, said Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/asean-wants-peaceful-resolution-to-south-china-sea-issue-says-najib#sthash.nbxybsil.dpuf>

16 February 2016: Widodo pushes for dialogue to resolve South China Sea conflict

Widodo called for the strict implementation of the Declaration of Conduct among parties in the South China Sea signed by Asean and China in 2002.

<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/136563/widodo-proposes-dialogue-to-resolve-south-china-sea-conflict#ixzz40K3ggRGU>

12 February 2016: Cambodia's Hun Sen Wants a South China Sea Apology

"Is now not the time that those who attacked Cambodia or me personally apologize to me and repay my justice?" he asked rhetorically.

<http://thediplomat.com/2016/02/cambodias-hun-sen-wants-a-south-china-sea-apology/>

6 February 2016: Cambodian PM Slams South China Sea Criticism

"What is the benefit for me to choose this one, and give up that one? I told John Kerry that it is time to stop misrepresenting our view on the South China Sea dispute," Mr. Hun Sen said.

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/21080/pm-slams-south-china-sea-criticism/>

5 February 2016: Cambodia reiterates stance over South China Sea ahead of summit

"Vietnam and China should negotiate with each other; China and the Philippines should negotiate with each other," Hun Sen said.

<http://www.bignewsnetwork.com/news/241022285/cambodia-reiterates-stance-over-south-china-sea-ahead-of-summit>

MAJOR POWERS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

26 February 2016: Australia boosts defence spending with eye on South China Sea tensions

Australia plans to spend GBP 26 billion [\$AUD50 billion] on a fleet of 12 new submarines in what will be one of the world's biggest defence contracts.

<http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2016/02/26/399184/australia-boosts-defence-spending-with-eye-on-south-china-sea-tensions-the-telegraph.html>

24 February 2016: U.S. to boost freedom of navigation moves in South China Sea: admiral

"We will be doing them more, and we'll be doing them with greater complexity in the future and ... we'll fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows," Admiral Harry Harris said.

<http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/latestnews/2016/02/24/US-Navy-plans-more-freedom-navigation-moves-South-China-Sea-Admiral-Harry>

22 February 2016: Visiting US admiral urges Australia to challenge China's claims in South China Sea

United States has called on Australia to follow America's lead by launching "freedom of navigation" naval operations within 12 nautical miles of contested islands in the South China Sea.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-22/aus-should-challenge-claims-in-south-china-sea-says-admiral/7189598>

21 February 2016: Julie Bishop says missile launchers shouldn't deter flights

Commercial planes should continue flying despite the risk of "miscalculation" from the apparent placement of surface-to-air missile launchers in the disputed region, Julie Bishop has said.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/21/south-china-sea-julie-bishop-says-missile-launchers-shouldnt-deter-planes>

19 February 2016: Washington in favour of more Australian planes and ships in South China Sea

While it is unclear if any formal request has been made, Washington sources said the Obama administration had privately communicated its position and said it would look favourably upon Australia doing more so-called "freedom-of-navigation" exercises by water and air.

<http://www.afr.com/news/world/washington-in-favour-of-more-australian-planes-and-ships-in-south-china-sea-20160218-gmy845#ixzz40b2KQn9M>

18 February 2016: US and EU warn China on need to respect South China Sea ruling

Amy Searight said the United States, the European Union, and allies like Australia, Japan and South Korea must be ready to make clear that the court's ruling must be binding and that there would be costs to China for not respecting it if it lost the case.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/us-and-eu-warn-china-on-n/2525558.html>

18 February 2016: US Wants Expanded Naval Protocol amid China's South China Sea Assertiveness

Vice Admiral Joseph Aucoin, the commander of the Japan-based U.S. Seventh Fleet, said in Singapore that expanding CUES to cover non-military ships would be a wise move.

<http://thediplomat.com/2016/02/us-wants-expanded-naval-protocol-amid-chinas-south-china-sea-assertiveness/>

18 February 2016: Japan's maritime force conducts joint drills with Vietnam's navy in SCS base

The Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force conducted joint exercises with the Vietnamese navy for three days through Thursday in the Southeast Asian country and nearby waters.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/1913923/japans-maritime-force-conducts-joint-drills-vietnams-navy-south>

18 February 2016: India for peace and security in South China Sea

"The External Affairs Minister conveyed India's consistent support to peace and security in South China Sea," official sources said. She also conveyed to him that the dispute must be settled on the basis of recognised international law.

<http://www.siasat.com/news/india-peace-security-south-china-sea-919361/>

18 February 2016: Australia, New Zealand urge restraint in South China Sea

"We urge all claimants in the South China Sea to refrain from any building of islands, any militarisation of islands, any land reclamation," Turnbull said in a joint press conference with his New Zealand counterpart John Key in Sydney.

<http://news.yahoo.com/australia-warns-beijing-over-threat-conflict-south-china-034425205.html>

18 February 2016: Kerry slams Beijing's increased 'militarisation' in South China Sea

"There is every evidence, every day, that there has been an increase of militarisation of one kind or another. It's of a serious concern," Kerry told reporters.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/kerry-slams-beijing-s/2524996.html>

17 February 2016: U.S. expects 'very serious' talks with China after missile reports

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said the United States expects to have "very serious" talks with China about militarization of the South China Sea after reports that Beijing deployed advanced surface-to-air missiles to a disputed island.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/southchinasea-china-missiles-idUSKCN0VP2UT>

16 February 2016: Obama, ASEAN discuss South China Sea tensions, but no joint mention of China

U.S. President Barack Obama said he and leaders of Southeast Asian countries agreed that any territorial disputes there should be resolved peacefully and through legal means. But the joint statement did not include the specific mentions Washington had been seeking.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-asean-idUSKCN0VP1F7>

16 February 2016: Obama offers veiled reprimand of China in South China Sea dispute

Without mentioning China by name, President Obama offered an implicit reprimand of Beijing, suggesting China's construction of artificial islands and naval bases in the contested South China Sea was destabilizing the region and vowing to keep the sea open to international traffic.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/feb/16/obama-offers-veiled-reprimand-of-china-in-south-ch/>

15 February 2016: U.S. Concerned by Non-Navy Chinese Boats in South China Sea

"We have all types of senior level engagements with the Chinese PLAN, that we meet pretty routinely," Aucoin said, referring to China's navy. He said he had a "greater fear" about other actors, "whether it's coast guard or what we refer to as white shipping or cabbage ships, not sure about their professionalism."

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-02-15/u-s-concerned-by-china-using-non-navy-boats-in-south-china-sea>

14 February 2016: US: 'Intl Tribunal Ruling on South China Sea Case Will Test China's Commitment to Rule of law'

"I think it is the acid test of whether China will be seen as a nation that abides by international law or whether China is prepared to be seen as an outsider that flouts international law," Daniel Russel said.

<http://www.chinatopix.com/articles/76971/20160214/tribunal-ruling-south-china-sea-china.htm#ixzz40Dz9qEoY>

14 February 2016: Australia to query Chinese government over South China Sea claims

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop plans to issue a "please explain" to Beijing over its massive island-building program in the South China Sea, amid fears the reclaimed structures could be militarised by the Chinese.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/australia-to-query-chinese-government-over-south-china-sea-claims-20160214-gmtw0c.html#ixzz407xGTwYM>

12 February 2016: US: No Joint Maritime Patrol with India in the South China Sea

"At this time, I can say there are no plans for any joint naval patrols," State Department Deputy Spokesman Mark Toner told reporters.

<http://dailyasianage.com/news/10793/no-joint-maritime-patrol-with-india-in-south-china-sea-us>

11 February 2016: No Indo-US naval patrol in South China Sea, defence ministry says

"Such reports are highly speculative. Whatever concrete bilateral discussions took place between defence minister Manohar Parrikar and his American counter Ash Carter in the US are reflected in the joint statement issued on December 11," said a highly-placed MoD source.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/No-Indo-US-naval-patrol-in-South-China-Sea-defence-ministry-says/articleshow/50938927.cms>

10 February 2016: U.S. & India consider joint patrols in South China Sea - U.S. official

The United States and India have held talks about conducting joint naval patrols that a U.S. defense official said could include the disputed South China Sea.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-india-usa-idUSKCN0VJ0AA>

9 February 2016: Japan, U.S., Australia, Philippines coast guards to huddle over China activities

The four-way meeting of top coast guard officers, the first of its kind, is expected to discuss a future framework for working together to enhance maritime security, including cooperating in equipment procurement and holding joint drills.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/02/09/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-australia-philippines-u-s-coast-guards-huddle-china-activities/#.VrrmkPI96Uk>

3 February 2016: RAAF patrols over disputed South China Sea facing more regular resistance from Chinese military

According to Defence Department figures a total of 30 RAAF "freedom of navigation" operations have taken place in the contested territory in the past 12 months, a small increase on recent years.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-03/raaf-patrol-flights-facing-more-regular-resistance-from-chinese/7138100>

3 February 2016: US open to joint patrols with Philippines in South China Sea

"We do discuss that principle (joint patrols) with the Philippines and so I am not discarding that possibility," U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg said.

<http://atimes.com/2016/02/us-open-to-joint-patrols-with-philippines-in-south-china-sea/>

3 February 2016: India, Brunei discuss South China Sea dispute

An Indian military source in Brunei said the defence cooperation will provide both sides the institutional foundation for more collaborative work on maritime security and secure India's energy lanes to Brunei.
<http://www.indiansnews.com/2016/02/03/india-brunei-discuss-south-china-sea-dispute/>

31 January 2016: US Commander: Those islands do not belong to China

"We talked about opportunities to decrease tensions between US and Chinese forces in the region," Harris said, but noted "they are pretty rigid in their view of the ownership of islands in the South China Sea and the resources that can be gained from them. I made clear my personal view that those islands do not belong to China, and that their actions in the region are increasing tensions and are provocative."
<http://tankler.com/u-s-commander-those-islands-do-not-belong-to-china-4200>

31 January 2016: Australia knew of US patrol of South China Sea

"It is important to recognise that all states have a right under international law to freedom of navigation and freedom of overflight, including in the South China Sea. Australia strongly supports these rights", Payne said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/australia-knew-of-us-patrol-of-south-china-sea-20160131-gmi345.html>

31 January 2016: U.S. Warship Sails Near Island Claimed by China

The USS Curtis Wilbur navigated within 12 nautical miles of Triton Island in the Paracel island chain in the South China Sea, a senior U.S. defense official confirmed.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-warship-sails-near-island-claimed-by-china-1454131157?mod=djemalertAsianews>