

**SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 45**  
**December 2016**

**ACTS OF CLAIMANTS**

**22 December 2016: China begins daily civil charter flights to South China Sea outpost**

China has begun daily civilian charter flights to Woody Island in the disputed South China Sea after approved the airport there for civil operations.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-idUSKBN14B0UJ>

**21 December 2016: 'Joint exploration in South China Sea not government policy'**

Presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella reiterated that there is no policy yet that provides for joint oil exploration with Beijing. "I'm just saying that... there is no government policy regarding the matter, covering that matter at this stage. But I suppose what he's saying, what he was referring to, is the possibility of business-to-business partnerships," he added.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/12/21/1655535/joint-exploration-south-china-sea-not-government-policy>

**21 December 2016: Manila criticized China for seizing the glider and raising tensions**

While Manila chided the United States, saying it should consider other countries' interests and security when carrying out such activities, it also criticized China for seizing the glider and raising tensions. The USNS Bowditch was 50 nautical miles from Subic Bay, well within the EEZ of the Philippines.

<http://www.manilatimes.net/meets-eye-south-china-sea/302943/>

**19 December 2016: Yasay reiterates: Duterte will not deviate from tribunal ruling on South China Sea**

"This notwithstanding, the Philippine government reaffirms its respect for and firm adherence to this milestone ruling and will be guided by its parameters when tackling the issue of maritime claims in the South China Sea. I also wish to reiterate what the President has stated in the past that he will not deviate from the four corners of the ruling," he added

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/150895/yasay-duterte-wont-deviate-south-china-sea-ruling#ixzz4TQqWXWmt>

**19 December 2016: Beijing Welcomes Philippines' Stance on South China Sea Dispute**

"We noticed the reports about Duterte's statements and we welcome them. We think that Duterte's policy on South China Sea tribunal complies with fundamental interests of both countries. The policy also reflects more profound political trust and friendship between the countries", the Foreign Affairs Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said.

<https://sputniknews.com/asia/201612191048735481-beijing-philippines-south-china-sea/>

**19 December 2016: Malaysia calls for Asean support against Beijing over South China Sea**

"Alone, we cannot face them, but as a coalition of 10 countries, I am confident that even China cannot take us lightly or ignore our stand," said the Minister. Mr Hishammuddin also said Royal Malaysian Navy Chief Admiral Ahmad Kamarulzaman Ahmad Badaruddin has been appointed as Malaysia's representative in the territorial disputes. "He will be our point person with a direct line to both the United States and China."

<http://www.todayonline.com/world/asia/malaysia-calls-asean-support-against-beijing-over-s-china-sea>

**17 December 2016: Malaysia to seek explanation from China over military build-up in South China Sea**

Defence Minister Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said he would soon write to his Chinese counterpart, General Chang Wanquan regarding the matter.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/malaysia-to-seek-explanation-from-china-over-military-build-up/3373960.html>

**17 December 2016: Philippines to 'set aside' tribunal ruling to avoid imposing on Beijing**

'I will not impose anything on China' despite fresh report showing militarisation of disputed reefs', said the President.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/17/philippines-to-set-aside-south-china-sea-tribunal-ruling-to-avoid-imposing-on-beijing>

**17 December 2016: Philippines' Duterte to U.S. on aid issue: 'Bye-bye America'**

America, you might also be put to notice. Prepare to leave the Philippines, prepare for the eventual repeal or the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement," he said, referring to a 1998 accord that governs American forces visiting the Philippines for joint combat exercises.

<http://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/philippines-duterte-to-us-over-aid-issue-bye-bye-america-232776>

**15 December 2016: Manila putting SCS dispute 'on the back burner': Philippine Foreign Secretary**

Manila's disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea are on the back burner for now, said Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Perfecto Yasay. Instead, the Philippines is focused on improving other areas of its relationship with the Asian giant, including trade, commercial and political affairs.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/manila-putting-south-china-sea-dispute-with-beijing-on-the-back/3370160.html>

**15 December 2016: China Installs Weapons in South China Sea, Satellites Show**

China has installed anti-aircraft guns and other weapons on all seven of the artificial islands it has built in a disputed part of the South China Sea.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/china-installs-weapons-in-south-china-sea-satellites-show-1481771066>

**15 December 2016: China says S. China Sea military overflights 'routine'**

The flights were "routine", Chinese Air Force spokesman Shen Jinke said. "The overflight is about the mission and responsibility of the Chinese Air Force, and is legitimate, reasonable and justified," it reported him as saying.

<https://sg.news.yahoo.com/china-says-china-sea-military-overflights-routine-100905304.html>

**14 December 2016: Vietnam protests Chinese stamps featuring South China Sea images**

Vietnam's Ministry of Information and Communications issued a statement on its website calling for China to, as the newspaper reported, "respect the historical truth" and withdraw the stamps.

<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/news/breakingnews/30302088>

**12 December 2016: Chinese admiral opposes 'unsafe' actions in South China Sea**

Admiral Wu Shengli said China opposes unprofessional and unsafe acts by ships or aircraft in the South China Sea as well as attempts to use "freedom of navigation and flight" as an excuse to compromise sovereignty and to destabilize the region.

<http://news.asiaone.com/news/world/chinese-admiral-opposes-unsafe-actions-south-china-sea#sthash.DWPOQbzz.dpuf>

**12 December 2016: China to give weapons to boost Philippine security**

"I don't know if I should tell you this, but China is pressing me. The firearms are already available and they are asking me to accept them," Duterte said.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/12/12/1652751/china-give-weapons-boost-philippine-security>

**11 December 2016: Philippines curtails military exercises with U.S**

For the first time in 34 years, the U.S. and Philippines will not hold the annual amphibious joint exercise PHIBLEX in 2017.

<http://www.militarytimes.com/articles/no-phiblex-in-2017>

**11 December 2016: Vietnam invites India to explore energy in South China Sea**

Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, Chairwoman of National Assembly of Vietnam extended invitation to India to explore energy in South China Sea and supported India's multilateral membership plans.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Vietnam-invites-India-to-explore-energy-in-South-China-Sea/article16791449.ece>

**10 December 2016: China to launch cruise ship in South China Sea for tourism**

Nanghai Zhi Meng, the new cruise ship with a capacity of 893 people, will start its maiden voyage in late December.

<http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-china-to-launch-cruise-ship-in-south-china-sea-for-tourism-2281463>

**10 December 2016: Beijing reiterates right over S China Sea islands amid Vietnam activities**

"We hope and urge the relevant country can earnestly respect China's sovereignty and rights, stop illegal occupation and illegal construction activities, do not take any actions that could worsen the situation, meet China in halfway, make joint and due efforts to protect peace in the region of the South China Sea," Lu Kang said.

<http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2016/12/10/497239/China-Vietnam-South-China-Sea>

**10 December 2016: Tsai says 'resolute' on South China Sea territorial claim**

The government would do so on the basis of international law and international maritime law, and with an emphasis on peace, human rights, ecological preservation and sustainability, she said.

<http://news.asiaone.com/news/world/tsai-says-resolute-south-china-sea-territorial-claim#sthash.JPxRYJka.dpuf>

**10 December 2016: China Flexes Its Muscles, Flies Nuke-capable Bomber in South China Sea**

The Chinese H-6 bomber flew along the disputed "Nine-Dash line", which surrounds the South China Sea and dozens of disputed Chinese islands, many claimed by other countries in the region. It was the first long-range flight of a Chinese bomber along the U-shaped line of demarcation since March 2015, according to the officials.

<http://legalinsurrection.com/2016/12/china-flexes-its-muscles-flies-nuke-capable-bomber-in-south-china-sea/>

**9 December 2016: Duterte may discuss South China Sea with Cambodian PM: DFA**

The two leaders may take up the issue "under the ambit of regional defense and security issue," said Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Charles Jose.

<http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/12/09/16/duterte-may-discuss-south-china-sea-with-cambodian-pm-dfa>

**8 December 2016: Manila Says Will Not Help US on Patrols in South China Sea**

Delfin Lorenzana said U.S. ships and aircraft could use bases in Guam, Okinawa or fly from aircraft carriers to patrol the disputed waters.

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/manila-us-patrols-south-china-seas-44053048>

**8 December 2016: Vietnam begins dredging on South China Sea reef**

Vietnam has begun dredging work on Ladd Reef in the South China Sea, satellite imagery shows.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-vietnam-idUSKBN13X0WD>

**3 December 2016: China says has defeated 'conspiracy' to stir up South China Sea trouble**

China's success at turning around relations with the Philippines under its new president Rodrigo Duterte show the "conspiracies" of certain countries to stir up trouble in the South China Sea have been defeated, China's foreign minister said.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-philippines-idUSKBN13S05C>

**2 December 2016: Philippines thanks China for rescuing two fishermen in South China Sea**

"We thank the Chinese Coast Guard for the assistance. This act demonstrates that the Philippines-China relationship is now back on friendly footing after the recent successful visit of President (Rodrigo) Duterte to China, and we expect the ties between the two countries to further improve in the years ahead," Andanar said.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-12/02/c\\_135877100.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-12/02/c_135877100.htm)

**2 December 2016: China rescues Filipinos near disputed South China Sea shoal**

China's coastguard rescued two Filipino fishermen from a capsized boat near a disputed South China Sea shoal.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-philippines-china-idUSKBN13R0CW>

**1 December 2016: Vietnamese envoy for 'outside powers' contribution to South China Sea stability**

Vietnamese Ambassador to India Ton Sinh Thanh welcomed the countries outside the South China Sea littoral to contribute to the peace and stability of the region.

[http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/vietnamese-envoy-for-outside-powers-contribution-to-south-china-sea-stability-116120101541\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/vietnamese-envoy-for-outside-powers-contribution-to-south-china-sea-stability-116120101541_1.html)

## **ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA**

### **21 December 2016: Indonesia, Japan to cooperate on maritime security**

The agreement is aimed at helping Indonesia strengthen its capacity in maritime security and promote economic development of remote islands, a foreign ministry official said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/japan-indonesia-to-cooperate-on-maritime-security/3384418.html>

### **13 December 2016: Indonesia joins India in urging China to respect UN law**

In a veiled message to China, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indonesian President Joko Widodo called for self-restraint in military activities in the heavily contested waters. They also suggested that parties avoid unilateral actions that could result in further escalation of tensions there.

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/india-indonesia-urge-china-respect-un-law-south-china-sea-row-1596219>

### **10 December 2016: South China Sea should not become battlefield between big nations: Indonesian President Joko Widodo**

"We do not want this region to become a battlefield between big countries. Economic costs will be too expensive if there is a conflict (in this region)," Widodo said.

[http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/55909946.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/55909946.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

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

### **22 December 2016: China says don't read too much into US drone case**

"The facts are really simple and clear," Hua said, repeating the defence ministry's line that they had discovered an unidentified object and out of safety concerns took it for verification.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/world/china-says-dont-read-too-much-into-us-drone-case-4440035/>

### **20 December 2016: US condemns "unlawful" seizure as China Returns Drone**

The Pentagon said the vehicle had been handed over to the guided missile destroyer USS Mustin near where it had been "unlawfully seized". It called on China to comply with international law and refrain from further efforts to impede lawful U.S. activities.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-says-it-has-handed-over-us-drone-taken-in-south-china-sea/3381218.html>

### **19 December 2016: China says returning undersea drone to US**

"After friendly consultations between the Chinese and U.S. sides, the handover work for the U.S. underwater drone was smoothly completed in relevant waters in the South China Sea at midday," the ministry said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/beijing-sees-us-drone-as-part-of-south-china-sea-spying-efforts/3378378.html>

### **18 December 2016: US says China will return underwater drone; Trump slams Beijing**

"We have registered our objection to China's unlawful seizure of a US unmanned underwater vehicle operating in international waters in the South China Sea. Through direct engagement with Chinese authorities, we have secured an understanding that the Chinese will return the UUV to the United States," Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook said in a statement.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/17/politics/china-drone-donald-trump/index.html>

### **16 December 2016: U.S. Demands Return of Drone Seized by Chinese Warship**

"We call upon China to return" the underwater vehicle "immediately," Peter Cook, the Pentagon press secretary, said in a statement, "and to comply with all of its obligations under international law."

<http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/12/16/us/politics/us-underwater-drone-china.html>

**16 December 2016: China 'seizes US vessel' in S China Sea**

The Chinese navy seized the US underwater research vessel in the South China Sea, the US alleges. The incident took place just as the USNS Bowditch, an oceanographic survey ship, was about to retrieve it. The device, dubbed an "ocean glider", was used to test water salinity and temperature, officials say.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-38347221?SThisFB>

**14 December 2016: US to fly F-22 Raptors in and out of Australia amid South China Sea tensions**

The US will begin flying its deadliest fighter plane, the F-22 Raptor, out of northern Australia next year, the most senior American commander in the Pacific has revealed as he warned of a need to show strength to deter aggression in the region.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/us-to-fly-f22-raptors-in-and-out-of-australia-amid-south-china-sea-tensions-20161214-gtb2uh.html>

**14 December 2016: US ready to confront Beijing on South China Sea: Admiral**

The commander of US forces in the Pacific said his country won't allow China to shut off access to the South China Sea. He also said other countries should join freedom of navigation exercises in region but the decision is up to individual nations.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/world/united-states/us-ready-to-confront-beijing-on-south-china-sea-admiral>

**13 December 2016: Britain's two new aircraft carriers unlikely to launch "freedom of navigation" operations in disputed waters**

"The UK does not conduct Freedom of Navigation operations, although it will continue to exercise its right to navigate through internationally-recognized air ways and international waters as needed," the spokesperson said.

<http://www.atimes.com/article/china-investments-make-uk-think-twice-south-china-sea/>

**5 December 2016: US Coast Guard seeking bigger role in South China Sea patrol**

Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Paul Zukunft says his fleet could be the face of U.S. military presence without appearing too threatening — the same way China has increasingly assigned its coast guard ships to protect a string of man-made islands and Chinese fishing boats from rival claimants in the resource-rich waters.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/recent-developments-surrounding-the-south-china-sea/2016/12/04/1ccdc61e-ba84-11e6-ae79-bec72d34f8c9\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.401da4a3b023](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/recent-developments-surrounding-the-south-china-sea/2016/12/04/1ccdc61e-ba84-11e6-ae79-bec72d34f8c9_story.html?utm_term=.401da4a3b023)

**2 December 2016: British fighters to overfly South China Sea; carriers in Pacific after 2020: envoy**

British fighter planes visiting Japan will fly over the South China Sea and Britain will sail aircraft carriers in the Pacific once they are operational in 2020, given concerns about freedom of navigation there, Britain's ambassador to the United States said.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-southchinasea-fighters-idUSKBN13R00D>