

**SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 50**  
**May 2017**

**ACTS OF CLAIMANTS**

**29 May 2017: China plans undersea observation system 'for science and national security'**

The 2 billion yuan seabed observation systems is said to provide real-time information about the environmental conditions and seabed activities in the South China Sea.

<http://www.todayonline.com/chinaindia/china/china-plans-undersea-observation-system-science-and-national-security>

**28 May 2017: China 'strongly dissatisfied' with G-7 statement South China Sea**

China is "strongly dissatisfied" with the mention of the East and South China Sea issues in G-7 statement, and the G-7 allies should stop making irresponsible remarks, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia-east-asia/china-strongly-dissatisfied-with-g-7-statement-on-east-south-china-seas>

**28 May 2017: China says fighter jets' intercept of US plane over South China Sea was 'safe'**

"The Chinese military aircraft carried out identification in accordance with law. The operations were professional and safe," the Chinese defence ministry said.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia-east-asia/china-says-fighter-jets-intercept-of-us-plane-over-south-china-sea-was-safe>

**27 May 2017: Chinese jets intercept U.S surveillance plane**

The official said initial reports showed that the U.S. P-3 Orion surveillance plane was 150 miles southeast of Hong Kong in international airspace when the Chinese aircraft carried out the unsafe intercept. One Chinese aircraft flew in front of the American plane, restricting its ability to maneuver.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-military-idUSKBN18M25L>

**26 May 2017: Vietnam requests Taiwan to stop repeated drills in the Spratlys**

Taiwan's repeated drills around Itu Aba threaten peace, stability, safety and maritime security, create tensions and complicate the situation in the South China Sea, Vietnam's foreign ministry spokesperson Le Thi Thu Hang said.

<http://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/vietnam-requests-taiwan-to-stop-repeated-drills-in-the-spratlys-3590931.html>

**23 May 2017: Vietnam, Indonesia to probe reported skirmish in disputed waters**

"Whether it was rammed or not, we have agreed to investigate," Hardijanto said. "We have agreed to settle this incident through diplomatic means."

<http://news.trust.org/item/20170523113159-gublz/>

**23 May 2017: Vietnam, Indonesia clash at sea over alleged fish poachers**

Indonesia's Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries said that the Vietnamese fishing boats were stopped in Indonesian waters but Vietnam claims the fishermen were in its own waters during the incident.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/vietnam-indonesia-clash-at-sea-over-alleged-fish-poachers>

**21 May 2017: Philippine official downplays alleged China war threats**

Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano told reporters that the context of frank talks in China "was on how to avoid conflict" and "how to increase trust and mutual respect."

<http://www.sacbee.com/news/business/article151893017.html>

**20 May 2017: China deploys surface-to-air missiles on Hainan Island**

Satellite imagery captured two HQ-9 launchers, a radar center and three launchpads on a controlling hill located in the south of Hainan Island.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/05/20/asia-pacific/china-deploys-surface-air-missiles-hainan-island-bid-create-south-china-sea-no-fly-zone-report/#.WSI2WuuGOUk>

**20 May 2017: PH, China review experiences on contentious issues**

The Bilateral Consultation Mechanism will comprise of equivalent officials from the respective foreign ministries and, and will meet alternately in the Philippines and China once every six months.

<http://news.mb.com.ph/2017/05/20/ph-china-review-experiences-on-contentious-issues/>

**20 May 2017: Taiwan: No to militarization of South China Sea**

"We should have joint development, joint exploration, and turn the conflict in the South China Sea into a peaceful, win-win situation," Taiwan Rep. Dr. Gary Song-Huann Lin said in a press briefing in Manila.  
<https://www.msn.com/en-ph/news/world/taiwan-no-to-militarization-of-south-china-sea/ar-BBBixvR?li=BBR8Mkn>

**19 May 2017: Xi Threatens War if Philippines Drills South China Sea: Duterte**

"Please do not do that because that is ours," Duterte quoted Xi as saying. He said he replied, "But I have the arbitral (award)." Xi then said: "Yes, but ours is historical and yours is legal of recent memory. We had that since the Ming dynasty." Duterte said he replied that "that's too far away" and it is "almost alien to us to hear those words because we were never under Chinese jurisdiction." Xi reportedly responded "We will go to war. We will fight you."

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Xi-Threatens-War-if-Philippines-Drills-South-China-Sea-Duterte-20170519-0015.html>

**18 May 2017: China says Japan-New Zealand meeting on South China Sea inappropriate**

"We have to ask, what does Japan truly care about? Is it concerned about the stability of the South China Sea, or is it afraid of China-Philippines and China-ASEAN relations developing as the situation stabilizes," Hua said.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/18/c\\_136295791.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/18/c_136295791.htm)

**18 May 2017: China succeeds in mining combustible ice in South China Sea**

This is China's first success in mining flammable ice at sea, after nearly two decades of research and exploration, the minister said at a trial mining site in the Shenhu area of the South China Sea.

<http://www.shanghaidaily.com/nation/China-succeeds-in-mining-combustible-ice-in-South-China-Sea/shdaily.shtml>

**17 May 2017: Abella: South China Sea exploration with China, Vietnam to be 'carefully considered'**

"It's not something that we can just enter into lightly. It's something that has to be carefully considered," said Abella.

<http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2017/05/17/south-china-sea-exploration-with-china-vietnam-to-be-carefully-considered.html>

**17 May 2017: Manila wants South China Sea outpost to be tourism draw**

Officials say the Chinese have stopped harassing supply runs to the Philippines' outposts in the Spratly Islands chain since President Rodrigo Duterte visited China last October. That allowed the Philippine navy to ship cement, wood and steel to Thitu.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/manila-wants-s-china-sea-outpost-to-be-tourism-draw>

**17 May 2017: China installs rocket launchers on disputed Spratlys**

China has installed rocket launchers on a disputed reef in the South China Sea to ward off Vietnamese military combat divers, according to a state-run newspaper.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-installs-rocket-launchers-on-disputed-spratlys-in-south-china-sea-report>

**16 May 2017: Philippines' Duterte open to South China Sea deals**

"If we can get something there with no hassle at all, why not," Mr Duterte said when asked about a proposal for jointly exploring the sea with China and Vietnam.

<http://www.businesstimes.com.sg/government-economy/philippines-duterte-open-to-south-china-sea-deals>

**15 May 2017: China building on another disputed island in South China Sea**

An image of North Island in the Paracels group taken shows recent work including land clearing and possible preparation for a harbour to support what may be eventual military installations.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2079100/china-building-another-disputed-island-south-china-sea>

**15 May 2017: China, Vietnam agree to keep South China Sea tensions in check**

China and Vietnam will manage and properly control their maritime disputes, avoiding actions to complicate or widen them, so as to maintain peace in the South China Sea, the two nations said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china--vietnam-agree-to-keep-south-china-sea-tensions-in-check-8848264>

**15 May 2017: PH eyes defense equipment from China**

"It's not yet a document. It's a letter of intent to deal with them because they're offering us a lot, a wide array of defense equipment," Lorenzana said.

<http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/05/15/17/ph-eyes-defense-equipment-from-china>

**14 May 2017: PH Coast Guard officers sent to China for seminar, training**

The Philippine Coast Guard sent 20 of its officers to China for a two-week training led by the Chinese Coast Guard.

<http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/05/14/17/ph-coast-guard-officers-sent-to-china-for-seminar-training>

**14 May 2017: Duterte envoy De Venecia proposes joint development with China**

"It is obvious as members of the ASEAN family that today, with China, we must find ways and means to jointly develop the area's hydrocarbon potential to help lessen our common dependence on distant petroleum sources in the Middle East," De Venecia said.

<http://www.rappler.com/nation/169801-jose-de-venecia-joint-oil-gas-development-south-china-sea>

**13 May 2017: Manila, Beijing to open South China Sea talks next week: Official**

"We will inaugurate the bilateral consultative mechanism on issues of particular concern to each side. This is where the sensitive issues will be discussed," Ambassador Jose "Chito" Santa Romana said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/manila-beijing-to-open-south-china-sea-talks-next-week-official-8844346>

**12 May 2017: Duterte follows Xi's lead with military build-up in South China Sea**

Plans are underway to reinforce and upgrade facilities on Pagasa Island, in the Spratly Islands chain, senior Philippine military officials said.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/12/asia/philippines-south-china-sea-pagasa/>

**12 May 2017: China deploys new aircraft to South China Sea**

China has deployed its latest airborne early warning and control aircraft to an air base on the fringes of the disputed South China Sea, according to exclusive satellite imagery.

<http://www.defensenews.com/articles/satellite-image-shows-chinese-deployment-of-new-aircraft-to-south-china-sea>

**11 May 2017: China says has 'positive' talks with Vietnam on South China Sea**

"It was discussed but the main tone was very positive," Liu said. Both agreed to follow their consensus to continue stabilizing the situation and to keep pushing talks, as well as continue joint resource exploration in less sensitive areas, like the Gulf of Tonkin, he added.

<http://www.businessinsider.com/r-china-says-has-positive-talks-with-vietnam-on-south-china-sea-2017-5?IR=T&r=US&IR=T>

**11 May 2017: Vietnam reacts to Delphin Lorenzana's visit to Thi Tu**

"Vietnam asks involved parties to respect Vietnam's sovereignty over the Truong Sa archipelago, fully and seriously implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea (South China Sea), exercise restraint and refrain from actions that cause tension and further complicate the situation, and settle disputes by peaceful means in accordance with international law," said the spokesperson.

<http://en.cand.com.vn/Politics/Vietnam-reaffirms-sovereignty-over-Truong-Sa-archipelago-440620/>

**11 May 2017: Chinese submersible Jiaolong completes dives in South China Sea**

With a maximum depth of 2,980 meters, the submersible named 'Jiaolong' was underwater for nine hours and 54 minutes in its seventh dive in the second stage of China's 38th ocean scientific expedition.

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2017/may/07/china-submersible-explores-seabed-in-south-china-sea-1602170.html>

**9 May 2017: China to expand fishing, research in disputed South China Sea waters**

The agreement will also see the testing of fishing technology in the region as well as the "creation of seafood brands" and "training of scientific and technological personnel," according to the document.

<https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/supply-trade/china-to-expand-fishing-research-in-disputed-south-china-sea-waters#sthash.gQEClKkd.dpuf>

**8 May 2017: China shows naval air exercises above sea**

China's state broadcaster has shown navy fighter bombers taking part in exercises over the South China Sea, including one involving the detection and expulsion of foreign military surveillance aircraft.

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/recent-developments-surrounding-south-china-sea-47270418>

**8 May 2017: Taiwan seeks inclusion in South China Sea talks**

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen reiterated her position that Taiwan had to take part in all discussions on the South China Sea because it claimed one of the largest islands in the contested territory.

<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/156213/taiwan-seeks-inclusion-south-china-sea-talks#ixzz4h8yPVsg0>

**6 May 2017: Jiaolong discovers collection of polymetallic nodules in South China Sea**

Jiaolong discovered a collection of polymetallic nodules in Puyuan Seamount in the South China Sea.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1045651.shtml>

**10 May 2017: Vietnam Protests China's Fishing Ban**

"Vietnam vehemently opposes China's unilateral ban on fishing as it violates Vietnam's authority over Hoang Sa archipelago and its legitimate rights and interests regarding its seas," the foreign spokesperson said. The action goes against the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Vietnam Sea (DOC) signed by ASEAN and China in 2002, she continued.

<http://tuoitrenews.vn/politics/40834/hanoi-rebukes-chinas-fishing-ban-in-east-vietnam-sea>

**2 May 2017: China tells DFA: Chinese forces didn't harass Filipino fishermen off Union Bank**

"We have asked them to continue the investigations and to share the results with Philippine authorities," Bolivar added.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/609217/china-tells-dfa-chinese-forces-didn-t-harass-filipino-fishermen-off-union-bank/story/#sthash.anxQVS04.dpuf>

**2 May 2017: Duterte visit to Chinese warships highlights fast-warming ties**

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has visited Chinese warships docked in his hometown and raised the prospect of future joint exercises.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/duterte-visit-to-chinese-warships-highlights-fast-warming-ties>

**ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA****21 May 2017: Malaysia wants South China Sea CoC to be finalised soon**

"Although this CoC for the South China Sea is not legally binding, it will be a guideline for the security and peace of all those involved," Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman said.

<http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/05/21/msia-wants-south-china-sea-coc-to-be-finalised-soon-anifah-china-also-keen-to-have-framework-sorted/#2T4IJg8HSRS2gbej.99>

**20 May 2017: PHL envoy welcomes completion of draft COC framework for South China Sea**

"Many, many countries wanted it to be legally binding. But I'm saying let's start with it being binding, gentlemen's agreement," DFA Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/989503>

**20 May 2017: Jokowi observes massive Indonesian military exercise near South China Sea**

For the second time in seven months, President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo observed a massive military drill around the resource-rich Natuna Islands.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/jokowi-observes-massive-indonesian-military-exercise-near-south-china-sea>

**19 May 2017: Philippines calls for 'gentlemen's agreement' between Asean, China on South China Sea**

South-east Asian nations and China should start with a "gentleman's agreement" on the busy South China Sea waterway because no mechanism exists to legally enforce any deal, the Philippine Foreign Minister said (May 19).

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippines-calls-for-gentlemens-agreement-between-asean-china-on-south-china-sea>

**18 May 2017: China, ASEAN agree on framework for South China Sea code of conduct**

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin said the framework was comprehensive and took into account the concerns of all sides.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-philippines-idUSKCN18E1FS>

**14 May 2017: Indonesia seeks assurances from China on code of conduct for South China Sea**

Indonesia has asked China to make good on its promise to conclude the COC, as Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi met her counterpart Wang Yi in the Chinese capital.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesia-seeks-assurances-from-china-on-code-of-conduct-for-south-china-sea>

**6 May 2017: Singapore FM: Asean focused on code of conduct in S. China Sea**

"What we want is a rules-based world order that complies with international law and has access to peaceful ways of resolving differences," Dr Balakrishnan said.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/world/united-states/vivian-asean-focused-on-code-of-conduct-in-s-china-sea>

**5 May 2017: PM Prayut calls for South China Sea to be zone of peace**

"I support the ASEAN decision to finalize the Code of Conduct in the middle of this year. It is very important to put in place a common regulation for the peaceful use of the South China Sea," Prayut said.

<http://thaiembdc.org/2017/05/08/pm-prayut-calls-for-south-china-sea-to-be-zone-of-peace/>

**2 May 2017: China welcomes ASEAN summit declaration on South China Sea**

"Since last year, with the joint efforts of China and ASEAN countries including the Philippines, temperatures in the South China Sea situation have gone down and things have eased up. I think this accords with the interests of countries in the region," Geng said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-welcomes-asean-summit-declaration-on-south-china-sea-8811574>

**2 May 2017: DFA: No leader brought up sea row during ASEAN Summit**

"During the plenary and summit there was no leader that mentioned inclusion or made reference to the land reclamation, militarization and arbitration. That was what we are trying to reflect in the chairman's statement," Patron told reporters.

<http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/05/02/17/dfa-no-leader-brought-up-sea-row-during-asean-summit>

**1 May 2017: Duterte, ASEAN leaders pull back from South China Sea dispute**

"We cannot stop China from doing its thing. Even the Americans were not able to stop them," Duterte said after ASEAN dropped the references to "land reclamation and militarization" in its final statement.

[http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2017/05/01/Duterte-ASEAN-leaders-pull-back-from-South-China-Sea-dispute/3771493657969/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2017/05/01/Duterte-ASEAN-leaders-pull-back-from-South-China-Sea-dispute/3771493657969/)

**MAJOR POWERS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA**

**28 May 2017: G7 leaders send strong statement on South China Sea**

The G7 urged all parties to pursue demilitarization of disputed features in the region.

<http://www.philstar.com:8080/headlines/2017/05/29/1704721/unlike-asean-g7-leaders-send-strong-statement-south-china-sea>

**24 May 2017: US & Japan show force together in South China Sea**

Ships from the U.S Navy and Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) completed a "passing" exercise, or PASSEX, in the South China Sea.

<http://www.scout.com/military/warrior/story/1643832-us-japan-counter-china-in-south-china-sea>

**23 May 2017: U.S. transfers boats to Vietnam for South China Sea patrol**

The United States is supplying Vietnam with six Metal Shark patrol boats, a week ahead of a summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and the Vietnamese prime minister.

[http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2017/05/23/US-transfers-boats-to-Vietnam-for-South-China-Sea-patrol/5691495589083/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2017/05/23/US-transfers-boats-to-Vietnam-for-South-China-Sea-patrol/5691495589083/)

**18 May 2017: India, Singapore kick off major naval exercise in South China Sea**

India and Singapore kicked off a major naval exercise "SIMBEX" in the contentious South China Sea.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/india-singapore-kick-off-major-naval-exercise-in-south-china-sea/articleshow/58736322.cms>

**15 May 2017: Ships from Thailand, Singapore Joins US Navy in SCS drills**

Ships from the navies of Thailand and Singapore completed a three-day exercise with the U.S. in the South China Sea aimed at boosting their ability to work together on a broad range of maritime tasks.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/recent-developments-surrounding-the-south-china-sea/2017/05/15/be673a02-394e-11e7-a59b-26e0451a96fd\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.6f0d10578d8d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/recent-developments-surrounding-the-south-china-sea/2017/05/15/be673a02-394e-11e7-a59b-26e0451a96fd_story.html?utm_term=.6f0d10578d8d)

**8 May 2017: Philippines, US begin smaller-scale joint military exercises**

Philippine and U.S. troops kicked off joint exercises that are smaller in scale than in years past, focusing on disaster response and counterterrorism while excluding defense operations and maritime security.

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/philippines-us-begin-smaller-scale-joint-military-exercises-47267649>

**6 May 2017: Japan to donate patrol aircraft to Malaysia**

Tokyo plans to offer decommissioned P-3C patrol aircraft, the Nikkei business daily said, quoting an unnamed official at the Defence Ministry.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/japan-to-donate-patrol-aircraft-to-malaysia-report>

**US FON OPERATION**

**25 May 2017: Vietnam supports freedom of navigation**

"As a South China Sea littoral states and a member of the United Nations Convention Law of the Sea 1982 (UNCLOS), the consistent policy of Vietnam is that all countries are entitled to freedom of navigation and aviation in accordance with the provisions of international law, especially the 1982 UNCLOS ", Le Thi Thu Hang said at a press briefing.

<https://home.vn.city/en/viet-nam-binh-luan-viec-tau-my-tuan-tra-gan-da-vanh-khan-o-truong-sa.html>

**25 May 2017: China says U.S patrol severely disrupts South China Sea negotiations**

China said that the United States risked severely disrupting negotiations between stakeholders in the SCS after a U.S. Navy warship sailed within 12 nautical miles of an artificial island built up by China.

<https://www.aol.com/article/news/2017/05/25/china-says-us-patrol-disrupts-south-china-sea-negotiations/22108996/>

**25 May 2017: China 'warned' US warship after it sailed near South China Sea reef claimed by Beijing**

The Chinese navy "warned" a US warship to leave waters near a reef in the South China Sea, Beijing said. "China has undisputable sovereignty over the Nansha Islands and their surrounding waters. We strongly oppose such practice of the US military, which shows off its might, promotes regional militarization and easily causes unexpected air and sea accidents."

[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-05/25/content\\_29498126.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-05/25/content_29498126.htm)

**24 May 2017: U.S. Warship Sails Near Island Claimed by Beijing in South China Sea**

A Pentagon official involved in the operation said the American warship did a "man overboard" rescue drill while passing by the island. The particular exercise was intended to show China that the United States would operate anywhere on the high seas in accordance with international law, the official said.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/24/world/asia/south-china-sea-us-navy-warship-spratly-islands.html?smprod=nytcore-iphone&smid=nytcore-iphone-share&r=0>

**10 May 2017: US patrols challenging Beijing in SCS will continue, says US Navy commander**

The United States' naval patrols in the South China Sea will continue as part of Washington's aim to challenge "excessive maritime claims" in the disputed waters, the US Navy commander says.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2093686/us-continuing-naval-patrols-challenging-beijing-south>