

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 51
June 2017

ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

30 June 2017: Beijing's South China Sea outposts nearly set for missile deployment

"Major construction of military and dual-use infrastructure on the 'Big 3' ... is wrapping up, with the naval, air, radar and defensive facilities that AMTI has tracked for nearly two years largely complete," AMTI said. "Beijing can now deploy military assets, including combat aircraft and mobile missile launchers to the Spratly Islands at any time."

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/beijing-s-south-china-sea-outposts-nearly-set-for-missile-8990610>

28 June 2017: China hails "golden period" in relations with Philippines

"Our two countries have set up a bilateral consultation mechanism on the South China Sea issue and also a mechanism for cooperation between the coast guards," Wang said. "If anyone wants to reverse the current progress it will harm the interests of the Philippine people and that is not what we would like to see," he said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/china-hails--golden-period--in-relations-with-philippines-8988478>

29 June 2017: Palace still open to joint military drills with China

"The relationship of China and the Philippines, it has improved during the President's time. And of course, for the Philippines, the President had been very vocal about this: That the Philippines wanted to engage with China not only on economics and trade but also in security and defense, if and when," Banaag told Palace reporters. "We welcome whatever assistance that the Chinese government can provide," she added.

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/2017/06/29/palace-still-open-joint-military-drills-china-550166017:%20China%20launches%20new%20class%20of%20naval%20destroyer>

29 June 2017: Chinese boats attack Vietnamese fishermen in South China Sea

Vietnamese newspaper Tuổi Trẻ reported Thursday two Chinese ships assailed a Vietnamese fishing boat near the disputed Paracel Islands in the South China Sea.

http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2017/06/29/Chinese-boats-attack-Vietnamese-fishermen-in-South-China-Sea/8561498755312/

28 June 2017: China Launched New Class of Naval Destroyer

China's military launched what it calls the most advanced and largest warship in Asia, the latest addition to the country's rapidly expanding navy.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-launches-new-destroyer>

<https://amti.csis.org/chinas-sam-shelters-spratlys/>

28 June 2017: De Venecia stresses need for South China Sea to be declared zone of friendship

Philippine Special Envoy for Intercultural Dialogue Jose de Venecia Jr. stressed the need for the South China Sea zone to be established as a zone of friendship. He said territorial disputes can be resolved by a joint exploration of the area.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/616146/de-venecia-stresses-need-for-south-china-sea-to-be-declared-as-zone-of-friendship/story/>

28 June 2017: China open to joint military exercises with PH

Chinese Ambassador Zhao Jianhua said Beijing was exploring the possibility of the Chinese military holding joint military training and exercises, and intelligence sharing with the Philippines.

<http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/06/28/17/china-open-to-joint-military-exercises-with-ph>

26 June 2017: China Deploys Advanced Anti-Submarine Warfare Aircraft to South China Sea Air Base

Imagery shows at least four Shaanxi Y-8 anti-submarine warfare variants (Y-8Qs) with tail magnetic anomaly detectors clearly visible.

<http://thediplomat.com/2017/06/china-deploys-advanced-anti-submarine-warfare-aircraft-to-south-china-sea-air-base/>

26 June 2017: Philippine, Vietnam navies play sports on South China Sea island

Philippine and Vietnamese navies have been playing soccer, volleyball and tug-of-war games together on a South China Sea island.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/philippine--vietnam-navies-play-sports-on-south-china-sea-island-8977086>

23 June 2017: China asks India, US not to disturb peace in South China Sea

China asked India and the US not to disturb peace and play a “constructive role” in the disputes.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/world/modi-trump-summit-china-asks-india-us-not-to-disturb-peace-in-south-china-sea-4718789/>

23 June 2017: Chinese Sub-Hunting Aircraft, Drones Now Patrolling South China Sea

Unmanned aircraft and China’s newest Y-8X maritime patrol aircraft – equipped with a seven-meter long Magnetic Anomaly Detector to detect magnetic signatures of submarine hulls – have been deployed to Hainan Island, on the fringes of the South China Sea.

<https://sputniknews.com/asia/201706231054929541-sub-hunter-drones-patrol-scs/>

21 June 2017: China Cancels Military Meeting With Vietnam Over Territorial Dispute

The Chinese delegation had unexpectedly cut short a trip to Vietnam after tempers flared during a closed-door discussion on disputed territories in the South China Sea.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/21/world/asia/china-vietnam-south-china-sea.html>

21 June 2017: China to digitize data collected from scientific probes and investigations in SCS

The project will collect and digitalize collected materials including hydrometeorological data, marine chemical data and geologic environmental data of the South China Sea and its affiliated islands and coral reefs, the report said, adding that a comprehensive digital database will be built, and a series of books will be published when the project is finished.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1052783.shtml>

15 June 2017: Vietnam urges China to act responsibly in South China Sea

Vietnam is urging China to take responsible and constructive actions in the disputed South China Sea following a Pentagon report that highlighted Beijing military’s buildup in the strategic waters.

<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/158022/vietnam-urges-china-act-responsibly-south-china-sea#ixzz4ljSgel74>

14 June 2017: Philippines special envoy pushes joint oil drilling with China

De Venecia said that the proposal he was introducing was patterned from the oil drilling agreement introduced in the North Sea between Norway, Germany and the United Kingdom.

<http://www.ibtimes.sg/philippines-special-envoy-pushes-joint-oil-drilling-china-11379>

14 June 2017: China hopeful of breakthrough in drilling mission

A Chinese drilling mission assisted by an advanced US vessel in the resource-rich South China Sea will lead to a breakthrough in gas, oil and methane exploration besides providing a new insight into the continental shelf break-up, experts have said.

<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/RGgfYMC9yTjJfcmFtajHjL/South-China-Sea-Chinese-experts-hopeful-of-breakthrough-in.html>

12 June 2017: China reports smooth production of gas from ‘flammable ice’ under the sea

China’s exploration of flammable ice in the South China Sea is proceeding well, with almost 7,000 cubic metres of the potentially huge energy source produced each day, according to the Chinese government.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2097941/china-reports-smooth-production-gas-flammable-ice-under>

9 June 2017: China says it is vigilant as two US bombers fly over South China Sea

"China always maintains vigilance and effective monitoring of the relevant country's military activities in the South China Sea," the ministry said in a statement. "China's military will resolutely safeguard national sovereignty, security and regional peace and stability," it said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/china-says-it-is-vigilant-as-two-us-bombers-fly-over-south-china-sea-8932646>

6 June 2017: China builds 24 fighter-sized hangars on S. China Sea outposts: U.S.

"China's Spratly Islands outpost expansion effort is currently focused on building out the land-based capabilities of its three largest outposts -- Fiery Cross, Subi and Mischief Reefs -- after completion of its four smaller outposts early in 2016," the Pentagon said.

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2017/06/e22899fde51f-china-builds-24-fighter-sized-hangars-on-s-china-sea-outposts-us.html>

5 June 2017: China upset at Mattis' 'irresponsible remarks' on South China Sea

Hua Chunying said China's construction of facilities in the Spratly archipelago in the South China Sea was aimed at improving working conditions for people stationed there, maintaining sovereignty and fulfilling China's international responsibilities.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/china-upset-at-mattis--irresponsible-remarks--on-south-china-sea-8912356>

3 June 2017: Malaysia maintains stand opposing any militarisation of islands in South China Sea

"We opposed the militarisation of the artificial island. The Chinese had told us the island will not be militarised," said Malaysian Minister of Defence.

<http://www.thesundaily.my/news/2017/06/03/malaysia-maintains-stand-opposing-any-militarisation-islands-south-china-sea>

31 May 2017: China approves plan to build observation network in South China Sea

"The planned physical platform can help us understand the complicated submarine world and provide a technical basis and the physical conditions for exploration and application of resources under the ocean," Li Jie said.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1049212.shtml>

MAJOR POWERS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

29 June 2017: Australia, United States begin their biggest joint military exercise

The exercises involving 33,000 U.S. and Australian troops on board battleships equipped with strike jets, comes as tension over China's more assertive activity has raised fears of confrontation.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-4649610/Australia-United-States-begin-biggest-joint-military-exercise.html>

28 June 2017: US admiral slams China over South China Sea

Admiral Harris said the US won't allow 'shared domains to be closed down unilaterally' and resolutely opposed the use of coercion and intimidation to advance claims.

<http://www.skynews.com.au/news/world/asiapacific/2017/06/28/us-admiral-slams-china-over-south-china-sea.html>

27 June 2017: India, US call for freedom of navigation amid South China Sea disputes

India and the US today called for freedom of navigation and resolving of territorial and maritime disputes peacefully in accordance with international law.

<http://m.economictimes.com/news/defence/india-us-call-for-freedom-of-navigation-amid-south-china-sea-disputes/articleshow/59333510.cms>

26 June 2017: Skepticism abounds as US envoy assures Vietnam of Trump administration's commitment

"Our policy with regard to this part of the world has much more continuity than change in it," Ambassador Ted Osius said.

<http://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/skepticism-abounds-as-us-envoy-assures-vietnam-of-trump-administration-s-commitment-3604067.html>

20 June 2017: ASEAN officers take South China Sea tour aboard MSDF's Izumo helicopter carrier

Southeast Asian military officers have embarked on a four-day tour of the South China Sea on the Maritime Self-Defense Force's Izumo helicopter carrier in the latest sign Japan is stepping up efforts to counter growing Chinese influence.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/20/national/asean-officers-take-south-china-sea-tour-aboard-msdfs-izumo-helicopter-carrier/#.WU8tOoVRWaM>

19 June 2017: Vietnam, Japan Coast Guards Hold First-Ever South China Sea Drill on Illegal Fishing

The Japanese coast guard vessel participating in the exercise was the Echigo, a 3,100-ton patrol vessel capable of carrying one light helicopter. The exercise reportedly involved a cutter that the Japan provided to Vietnam as well.

<http://thediplomat.com/2017/06/vietnam-japan-coast-guards-hold-first-ever-south-china-sea-drill-on-illegal-fishing/>

16 June 2017: U.S., Japan conclude joint drills in disputed South China Sea

The Defense Ministry announced that the Maritime Self-Defense Force's largest warship, the Izumo helicopter carrier, wrapped up three days of joint drills with the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan in the disputed South China Sea.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/16/national/u-s-japan-conclude-joint-drills-disputed-south-china-sea/#.WUdFTuuGOUk>

15 June 2017: Freedom of navigation exercise in South China Sea part of strategy: Defense Secretary James Mattis

"I authorised the Freedom of Navigation -- those voyages to continue and get underway and that's what you saw was the first. Now there's a programme inside a coherent strategy that support Secretary Tillerson's view of foreign policy, engaging in that part of the world," ..

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/59155812.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

14 June 2017: US Navy Commander's Philippines Voyage Reaffirms Alliance in Duterte Era

The commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, Admiral Scott Swift, visited the Philippines this week and met with key government officials.

<http://thediplomat.com/2017/06/us-navy-commanders-philippines-voyage-reaffirms-alliance-in-duterte-era/>

12 June 2017: Japan seeks to expand arms deals with Southeast Asia

Hideaki Watanabe, head of the Defense Ministry's Acquisition Technology and Logistics Agency, said Japan will host a meeting Thursday with defense officials from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to discuss the sharing of equipment and technology.

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/technology/article155632629.html>

9 June 2017: U.S. sends bombers on 10-hour mission to South China Sea from Guam

Two U.S. Air Force B-1B bombers flew a 10-hour mission Thursday from Guam through the disputed South China Sea in an operation with a Navy guided-missile destroyer, the U.S. military said.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/09/asia-pacific/u-s-sends-bombers-10-hour-mission-south-china-sea-guam/#.WTyqbVKp3Vo>

7 June 2017: Japan pledges to bolster Vietnam's coastal patrol capabilities

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced Tuesday that Japan would help bolster Vietnam's coastal patrol capabilities with new patrol boats and defense equipment.

<http://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/japan-pledges-to-bolster-vietnam-s-coastal-patrol-capabilities-3595956.html>

3 June 2017: Malcolm Turnbull warns Asian leaders of 'a coercive China'

"A coercive China would find its neighbours resenting demands they cede their autonomy and strategic space, and look to counterweight Beijing's power by bolstering alliances and partnerships, between themselves and especially with the United States," he said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jun/03/malcolm-turnbull-warns-asian-leaders-of-a-coercive-china>

3 June 2017: Mattis Says China's Militarization of Man-Made Islands Unacceptable

"We cannot accept Chinese actions that impinge on the interests of the international community, undermining the rules-based order that has benefited all countries here today (at the forum), including, and especially China," Mattis said.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/mattis-china-militarization-man-made-island-unacceptable/3885335.html>