

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 52
July 2017

ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

29 July 2017: China produces gas from "flammable ice" under South China Sea

Flammable ice consists of methane trapped within water crystals, and has been identified as a potential new gas source for China, with the South China Sea thought to contain some of the world's most promising deposits.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-produces-gas-from--flammable-ice--under-south-china-sea-9075978>

28 July 2017: Vietnam says others should respect its right to drill for South China Sea oil

"Vietnam's petroleum-related activities take place in the sea entirely under the sovereign rights and jurisdiction of Vietnam established in accordance with international law," Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Le Thi Thu Hang said in a statement sent to Reuters.

<http://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL3N1KJ3Z2>

26 July 2017: Beijing sees joint energy venture with Manila as a 'model' for resolving South China Sea disputes

"The biggest significance is that many regional countries that also have maritime disputes with China can follow Manila's move – to set aside the dispute and explore their recourse together."

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2104097/beijing-sees-joint-energy-venture-manila-model>

25 July 2017: China backs joint energy development with Philippines in disputed sea

China's foreign minister on Tuesday said he supported the idea of joint energy ventures with the Philippines in the disputed South China Sea, warning that unilateral action could cause problems and damage both sides.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-china-idUSKBN1AA10L?il=0>

25 July 2017: China urges halt to oil drilling in disputed South China Sea

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said China had indisputable sovereignty over the Spratly Islands, which China calls the Nansha islands, and jurisdiction over the relevant waters and seabed. "China urges the relevant party to cease the relevant unilateral infringing activities and with practical actions safeguard the hard-earned positive situation in the South China Sea," Lu said at a regular briefing, when asked if China had pressured Vietnam or the Spanish company to stop drilling. He did not elaborate.

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/china-urges-halt-oil-drilling-disputed-south-china-101151985--sector.html>

24 July 2017: China Research Vessel Continues Expedition in South China Sea

The unmanned submersible will carry the domestically-developed raman spectrometer to collect marine physical and chemical parameters and take camera images of marine benthos' activities.

http://english.cas.cn/newsroom/news/201707/t20170724_180961.shtml

24 July 2017: China says it wants to 'maintain stability' in disputed South China Sea

Wang said China would like to "maintain stability in the South China Sea, abiding by the terms that have been agreed on the Declaration of Conduct and Code of Conduct in near future".

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-says-it-wants-to--maintain-stability--in-disputed-south-china-sea-9058290>

24 July 2017: Vietnam says Indonesian navy shot its fishermen in South China Sea

Indonesia's navy shot and wounded four Vietnamese fishermen aboard a fishing boat in the South China Sea at the weekend, Vietnamese authorities said. The Vietnamese boat was about 245km south-east of Vietnam's Con Dao island when the fishermen were shot on Saturday (July 22) night, the Binh Dinh provincial search and rescue committee said on its website.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/vietnam-says-indonesian-navy-shot-its-fishermen-in-south-china-sea>

23 July 2017: South China Sea: Vietnam halts drilling after 'China threats'

According to the industry source, Repsol executives were told last week by the government in Hanoi that China had threatened to attack Vietnamese bases in the Spratly Islands if the drilling did not stop.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/40701121>

23 July 2017: China opens movie theater on disputed island in South China Sea

China began allowing tourist cruises to the area in 2013. China said it plans to build hotels, villas and shops on the Crescent group.

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/07/23/asia-pacific/china-opens-movie-theater-disputed-island-south-china-sea/#.WXaac4SGOUk>

14 July 2017: PHL talking with other South China Sea claimants for oil, gas exploration

"The DFA [Department of Foreign Affairs] is pursuing the agreements on the undisputed areas. We are not discounting future agreements in the disputed areas but any agreement has to conform to our domestic law and our Constitution," Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/618005/phl-talking-to-other-south-china-sea-claimants-for-oil-gas-exploration/story/>

14 July 2017: China lauds PH move on territorial dispute

Shuang said the two sides have "come back to the right track of settlement through dialogue, consultation and negotiation, established the China-Philippines bilateral consultation mechanism on the South China Sea issue, and successfully held the first meeting of such mechanism in May." "China stands ready to continuously work with the Philippines to properly solve the South China Sea-related issues through dialogue and negotiation, and further create sound atmosphere for the development of China-Philippines relations and relevant cooperation," Shuang added.

<http://news.mb.com.ph/2017/07/14/china-lauds-ph-move-on-territorial-dispute/>

14 July 2017: China hits out at South China Sea critics

China's ambassador to ASEAN, Xu Bu, stated that the issue of the hotly contested waters in the South China Sea had, in recent years, been "manipulated by a few countries to poison the atmosphere of cooperation in the region and undermine China-ASEAN relations".

<http://www.news.com.au/world/breaking-news/china-hits-out-at-south-china-sea-critics/news-story/d24197034aec2c9aef6269e6a2929406>

12 July 2017: Gov't cites benefits from being regional peacemaker in South China Sea

The Philippines may resume drilling for oil and natural gas on the Reed Bank in the South China Sea before the end of the year, as the government prepares to offer new trade blocks to investors, according to a statement by a Philippine energy official.

<https://worldview.stratfor.com/situation-report/philippines-energy-exploration-resume-south-china-sea>

12 July 2017: DFA says PHL's approach to South China Sea issue 'led to great benefits'

"Through the adoption of positive neighbourly relations, our fishermen are back exercising their livelihood in Scarborough Shoal," the DFA added. "We have received investment and financial assistance commitments upwards of USD30 Billion from our partners in the region."

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/617762/dfa-says-phl-s-approach-to-south-china-sea-issue-led-to-great-benefits/story/>

12 July 2017: Envoy defends PH's two-track approach in South China Sea issue

"The differences remain but at least we were able to talk about it in amicable and civil manner. That's the basic change in the approach. So at least we have restored all the bilateral mechanism: foreign ministers are talking again, the two coast guards have formed joint committee for areas of cooperation and then, in the coming months, they will restore the joint commission for defense and security," Sta. Romana said.

<http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1000392>

11 July 2017: Palace: Philippines, China in dialogue a year after Hague ruling

"Philippines and China have reviewed experience on the West Philippine Sea issue, exchanged views and current issues of concern to either side and they have agreed that they will further discuss mutually acceptable approaches," Abella said, even describing the dialogue as "excellent."

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/07/11/1718585/palace-philippines-china-dialogue-year-after-hague-ruling>

11 July 2017: PH, China agree to explore areas of cooperation in 2nd half of 2017

"We have the second meeting [of the bilateral consultation mechanism] coming up within the bilateral, the bilateral meets and I'm sure items like that will be considered," Abella said, when asked about the difficulties of some fishermen to venture into the contested waters due to possible harassment by China patrols.

<http://news.mb.com.ph/2017/07/11/ph-china-agree-to-explore-areas-of-cooperation-in-2nd-half-of-2017/>

10 July 2017: China criticizes US sending bombers in overflight mission

China's foreign ministry criticized the US decision to send a pair of B-1B Lancer long-range strategic bombers flying over the South China Sea, calling that a case of "flexing of military muscles" in a manner seen as threatening to Beijing.

<http://www.philstar.com:8080/headlines/2017/07/10/1718269/china-criticizes-us-sending-bombers-overflight-mission>

9 July 2017: China breaks combustible ice extraction world records in South China Sea

China has extracted more than 300,000 cubic meters of combustible ice from the South China Sea in 60 days, breaking a world record for the total amount extracted and the length of time it took, the People's Daily reported Sunday.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1055603.shtml>

7 July 2017: Philippine police arrest rare sea turtle poachers

"We suspect that these two are dealing with Chinese poachers," Bagona said.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippine-police-arrest-rare-sea-turtle-poachers>

7 July 2017: China says opposes overflight after US bombers fly over South China Sea

China opposes the use of freedom of overflight as an excuse to harm its security, the country's foreign ministry said, after two U.S bombers flew over the disputed South China Sea.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-says-opposes-overflight-after-us-bombers-fly-over-south-china-sea-9012530>

6 July 2017: China to increase patrolling in South China Sea following latest USN FONOP

"The Chinese military will increase various defence capabilities as well as the number of sea and air patrols in the region based on the level of threat that the nation faces. It will also resolutely protect national sovereignty and security," Wu Qian, a spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defense said.

<http://www.janes.com/article/72092/china-to-increase-patrolling-in-south-china-sea-following-latest-usn-fonop>

6 July 2017: Vietnam renews India oil deal in tense South China Sea

Vietnam granted Indian oil firm ONGC Videsh a two-year extension to explore oil block 128.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/vietnam-renews-india-oil-deal-in-tense-south-china-sea-9010682>

5 July 2017: Vietnam drills for oil in South China Sea

An oil industry consultant told the BBC that a drilling ship on contract to international firm Talisman-Vietnam was working off Vietnam's south-east coast.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-40493277>

3 July 2017: 'Serious military provocation': China angered by US presence in South China Sea

The passage of a US warship close to a disputed island in the South China Sea was a "serious political and military provocation", Beijing said, one that could further strain relations between the superpowers.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/03/serious-military-provocation-china-angered-by-us-presence-in-south-china-sea>

2 July 2017: China accuses U.S. of 'serious provocation' as Navy destroyer sails near disputed island

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the Stethem had "trespassed" there, entering the waters "without China's approval."

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-navy-destroyer-south-china-sea-20170702-story.html>

ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

15 July 2017: Indonesia establishes updated Indonesian map to reflect SCS award

The updated Indonesian map has also implemented the international arbitration courts ruling on South China Sea dispute between China and the Philippines. "The ruling has an international law jurisprudence which states that small island or coral island in the sea that is not part of an islands country will not deserve the 200 miles of the economic exclusive zone," Arif Havas Oegroseno remarked.

<http://www.antaranews.com/en/news/111862/government-establishes-updated-indonesian-map>

14 July 2017: Asserting sovereignty, Indonesia renames part of South China Sea

Indonesia renamed the northern reaches of its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea as the North Natuna Sea on Friday, the latest act of resistance by Southeast Asian nations to China's territorial ambitions in the maritime region. "Certain countries' so-called renaming is totally meaningless," China reacted.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/asserting-sovereignty--indonesia-renames-part-of-south-china-sea-9032702>

MAJOR POWERS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

27 July 2017: Britain plans to send warship to South China Sea in move likely to irk Beijing

Britain plans to send a warship to the disputed South China Sea next year to conduct freedom of navigation exercises, Defence Minister Michael Fallon said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/britain-plans-to-send-warship-to-south-china-sea-in-move-likely-to-irk-beijing-9069714>

22 July 2017: Trump signs off on plan to allow US Navy more freedom to patrol in South China Sea, report says

US President Donald Trump has -reportedly approved a plan to give the United States Navy more freedom to carry out patrols in the South China Sea.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2103718/trump-signs-plan-allow-us-navy-more-freedom-patrol>

7 July 2017: U.S. bombers challenge China in South China Sea flyover

Asked about the flight by the two U.S. bombers, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said there was no problem with freedom of navigation or overflight for the East and South China Seas. "But China resolutely opposes individual countries using the banner of freedom of navigation and overflight to flaunt military force and harm China's sovereignty and security," he said.

<https://sg.news.yahoo.com/u-bombers-challenge-china-south-china-sea-flyover-043839588.html>

2 July 2017: Pentagon sails destroyer near disputed island in South China Sea, officials say

The USS Stethem, a guided-missile destroyer based in Japan, sailed within 12 nautical miles of Triton Island, which is part of the Paracel Islands located in the South China Sea between China and Vietnam.

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2017/07/02/exclusive-pentagon-sails-destroyer-near-disputed-island-in-south-china-sea-officials-say.html>

1 July 2017: Philippines, US hold joint patrol in dangerous waters

"These patrols enhance regional peace and stability," the US naval commander, Rear Admiral Don Gabrielson said, according to the statement. "Our at-sea operations with the Philippine Navy demonstrate our commitment to the alliance and deter piracy and illegal activities," he said.

<https://sg.news.yahoo.com/philippines-us-hold-joint-patrol-dangerous-waters-150608266.html>