

**SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 55**  
**October 2017**

**ACTS OF CLAIMANTS**

**28 October 2017: China to deliver drone to South China Sea islands**

From Sanya on Hainan Island, the drone could reach the Paracel Islands in just an hour, Scarborough Shoal in three hours, the Spratly Islands in four hours and James Shoal in about five hours.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2117438/drone-could-deliver-cargo-islets-south-china-sea-makes>

**26 October 2017: China stresses lawful, justified island building in S.China Sea**

"China's construction in the area is also aimed at maintaining regional peace and navigation safety. Most of the infrastructure projects are for civil purposes," Wang said.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1072198.shtml>

**26 October 2017: China to broaden, deepen pragmatic cooperation with Philippines**

"China seeks to enhance strategic mutual trust with the Philippines, properly handle differences, and push for sustained and healthy relationships between our two countries, as we are neighbors," Chang said where he paid a visit to President Duterte.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/26/c\\_136706834.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/26/c_136706834.htm)

**25 October 2017: Xi Jinping just made it clear where China's foreign policy is headed**

Xi doubled down on China's provocative behavior in the South China Sea and counted "South China Sea reef and island construction" among his top accomplishments and boasted of his "successful prosecution of maritime rights."

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/10/25/xi-jinping-just-made-it-clear-where-chinas-foreign-policy-is-headed/?utm\\_term=.9d7880e8e2a7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/10/25/xi-jinping-just-made-it-clear-where-chinas-foreign-policy-is-headed/?utm_term=.9d7880e8e2a7)

**21 October 2017: China's South Sea Fleet gets new unit**

The Chinese South Sea Fleet has set up a new marine rescue squadron as part of moves by the People's Liberation Army to step up its battle readiness and deploy more submarines to the region.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2116412/chinas-south-sea-fleet-gets-new-unit-pla-looks-boost>

**19 October 2017: Beijing says US should 'abandon biased views' of China**

"We hope the US side can look at China's development and role in the international community in an objective way, and abandon its biased views of China," foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/beijing-says-us-should--abandon-biased-views--of-china-9324980>

**19 October 2017: Duterte 'not in a hurry' to solve sea row with China**

"The South China Sea is one but we are not in a hurry. And as a matter of fact, what we did was really the correct step and to avoid confrontational talks with almost all of the parties concerned, just ask for a limited time to solve the problem and sharing of the resources if it could be done," he said.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/630160/duterte-not-in-a-hurry-to-solve-sea-row-with-china/story/>

**18 October 2017: Xi urges stronger Chinese stand against 'grim' challenges**

President Xi Jinping struck a nationalistic line throughout his speech, calling for the party not only to safeguard China's sovereignty but also to revitalize Chinese culture, oppose "erroneous" ideology and promote religion that is "Chinese in orientation."

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/xi-chinas-prospects-bright-challenges-severe-50549526>

**13 October 2017: Foreign Minister: China's claims in S. China Sea not recognised by Malaysia**

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman said China's claims were inconsistent with international law including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 (UNCLOS).

<https://www.theborneopost.com%2f2017%2f10%2f13%2fchinas-claims-in-s-china-sea-not-recognised-by-malaysia>

**12 October 2017: Vietnam supports freedom of navigation in the South China Sea**

"As a sovereign state over Hoang Sa Archipelago and as a member of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Vietnam has repeatedly affirmed its consistent stance that every country has the right to enjoy freedom of navigation and aviation in the East Sea in accordance with the provisions of international law, especially UNCLOS," Le Thi Thu Hang said.

<http://english.vov.vn/politics/vietnam-calls-for-positive-contributions-to-east-sea-stability-360259.vov>

#### **11 October 2017: China complains after U.S. destroyer sails through South China Sea**

China urges the United States to respect China's territory, ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-military-ministry/china-complains-after-u-s-destroyer-sails-through-south-china-sea-idUSKBN1CG0R4?il=0>

#### **11 October 2017: Philippines: 10 Navy men liable for deaths of Vietnamese fishermen**

The committee concluded that the deaths were "an act of unnecessary inadvertence (oversight) on the part of Navy operatives" when the Navy gunner miscalculated and struck Le Van Liem, 41, and Le Van Reo, 41, when the shots, meant to be just a warning, instead hit the bow of the boat.

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/937016/10-navy-men-liable-for-viets-deaths#ixzz4vAesSKOm>

#### **6 October 2017: Statement on South China Sea was my personal view, not the government's position, says Nur Jazlan**

He said the statement had been reported inaccurately and "simplified" to the point that it appeared that he was advocating for a joint development of resources in the South China Sea.

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2017/10/288131/statement-south-china-sea-was-my-personal-view-not-governments-position>

#### **5 October 2017: Philippines official says presence of Chinese ships 'natural'**

"It's natural that you can see a lot of ships there. It doesn't mean that the ships are doing illegal things or harassing other people but they are just there to also maybe pursue their own missions according to the claims of the Chinese," Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/628379/phl-china-officials-say-chinese-ships-in-west-phl-sea-natural/story/>

#### **5 October 2017: Chinese Ambassador insists on right of China to fish around Thitu**

Chinese ambassador to the Philippines Zhao Jianhua insisted on the rights of the Chinese to fish near Thitu amid protests against their presence around sandbars.

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/184358-china-pagasa-south-china-sea>

#### **5 October 2017: China gives guns to Philippines**

China gave 3,000 assault rifles to the Philippines as a gesture of "friendly and cooperative relations", the second shipment of rifles to the Philippines this year.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-gives-guns-to-philippines-to-show-it-s-a-friend--not-a-foe-9282688>

#### **4 October 2017: Countries involved in South China Sea disputes need to talk: Nur Jazlan**

"All resources (in the South China Sea), need to be shared equally to ensure that it can be well-developed," Deputy Home Minister Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed said.

<http://www.thesundaily.my/news/2017/10/04/countries-involved-south-china-sea-disputes-need-talk-nur-jazlan>

#### **3 October 2017: Duterte Reaches out to U.S. Amid South China Sea Harassment**

President Rodrigo Duterte made a surprise announcement that he wanted to be "friendly" with the U.S., a view which contrasts to earlier statements.

<http://maritime-executive.com/editorials/duterte-reaches-out-to-us-amid-south-china-sea-harassment>

#### **3 October 2017: Chinese forces harass Filipino ships near Pag-asa**

"They are harassing our patrolling vessels by continuously sounding their sirens to signify their opposition to our vessels visiting or patrolling the sandbars," Alejano said in a statement.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/10/03/1745160/chinese-forces-harass-filipino-ships-near-pag-asa-says-alejano>

#### **3 October 2017: China's new manned submersible completes deep sea testing**

The manned submersible named Shenhai Yongshi, or deepsea warrior, reached a depth of 4,500 meters to test its functions and performance during an over 50-day expedition.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/03/c\\_136656491.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-10/03/c_136656491.htm)

### **2 October 2017: Chinese Vessels Keeping Close Eye on U.S. Ships in South China Sea**

Two Chinese frigates watched the USS Ronald Reagan, the U.S.'s Japan-based aircraft carrier as it conducted routine drills. In addition, the Reagan's officers described "frequent close quarter surveillance" from Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy ships in international waters.

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/10/02/chinese-vessels-close-eye-ships-south-china-sea/>

### **2 October 2017: China turns Malaysia's East Coast Rail Link into reality**

The ECLR will connect the South China Sea to the Straits of Malacca, potentially altering key international trade routes in the process.

<http://www.railway-technology.com/features/featurechina-turns-malaysias-east-coast-rail-link-into-reality-5938409/>

### **1 October 2017: China sets condition on lifting of moratorium on oil/gas exploration**

The Chinese government will concur to the lifting of the moratorium on exploration of oil and gas resources within the so-called "disputed areas" if joint commercial development of the petroleum blocks would be agreed upon by both governments, Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Zhao Jianhua said.

<https://business.mb.com.ph/2017/09/30/china-sets-condition-on-lifting-of-moratorium-on-oilgas-exploration/>

### **1 October 2017: Philippine Navy at fault in death of 2 Vietnamese fishermen, probe finds**

The Philippine Navy is at fault in the death of two fishermen during a sea chase in the waters of Pangasinan on September 22, a source privy to the investigation of the incident said.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/10/01/1744485/philippine-navy-fault-death-2-vietnamese-fishermen-probe-finds>

### **29 September 2017: Philippines To Explore For Oil And Gas With China Near Disputed Waters**

Cusi said he had put forward the Calamian project of PNOC Exploration Corp, a unit of state-owned Philippine National Oil Company, in partnership with CNOOC and Jadestone Energy Inc. to President Rodrigo Duterte for his approval.

<https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/philippines-to-explore-for-oil-and-gas-with-china-near-disputed-waters-1756424>

### **29 September 2017: Philippines Plans Low-Key Upgrades in Disputed Spratly Islands**

Money from the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Modernization Program will fund the paving of a 1,300-meter-long gravel and dirt runway on Thitu Island, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/philippines-upgrades-spratly-islands/4049381.html>

## **ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA**

### **25 October 2017: Lorenzana: China did not oppose ASEAN concerns in South China Sea**

The Chinese Defense Minister did not oppose to the issues raised by his ASEAN counterparts regarding the disputed South China Sea during their meeting on Tuesday, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/10/25/1752343/lorenzana-china-did-not-oppose-asean-concerns-south-china-sea>

### **24 October 2017: Joint China-Asean naval exercise a way "to build trust"**

China and Southeast Asian navies aim to hold an inaugural joint maritime exercise next year. "Singapore supports it". "We'll work out the details. See the logistics... and find a suitable area where ASEAN and China navies can exercise together," Dr Ng said as Singapore also took over the chairmanship of the Asean Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in a ceremony. Ng said the United States and Japan also welcomed the idea of exercises.

<http://www.todayonline.com/chinaindia/china/joint-china-asean-naval-exercise-to-build-trust>

### **24 October 2017: ASEAN defense mins discuss terrorism, South China Sea**

The ministers jointly reaffirmed “the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, safety and freedom of navigation in and over-flight above the South China Sea, as well as the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea”.

<http://aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/asean-defense-mins-discuss-terrorism-south-china-sea/945861>

#### **24 October 2017: US, Singapore take softer stance on South China Sea**

Unlike last year under the Obama administration, the joint statement between the US and Singapore has taken a softer stance on the disputed South China Sea by not mentioning China's move to build artificial islands and establish military outposts.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/10/24/1752017/us-singapore-take-softer-stance-south-china-sea>

#### **23 October 2017: Mattis Confers With ASEAN Counterparts on Defense, Security Challenges**

Participants at the meeting also emphasized the importance of continued ASEAN unity to address shared security challenges facing Southeast Asia and the broader Asia-Indo-Pacific region, she said.

<https://www.defense.gov/news/article/article/1351264/mattis-confers-with-asean-counterparts-on-defense-security-challenges/>

#### **20 October 2017: As ASEAN chairman next year, Singapore is an "honest broker" and not the "commander-in-chief": PM Lee**

"We have no claims. So we do not take sides on those claims: Who owns which island," he said. "But we do have an interest in freedom of navigation, in the rule of international law, in the peaceful resolution of dispute, and in ASEAN having a role in an issue which is this important in our neighbourhood." As ASEAN chairman next year, Singapore is an "honest broker" and not the "commander-in-chief", Mr Lee added, and said that the country's role was to bring parties together to help produce a consensus.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/lee-hsien-loong-singapore-united-states-9326784>

#### **3 October 2017: Chinese navy hails Cambodian support**

“Cambodia is one of the best neighbours of China,” Admiral Shen said.

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/5084271/chinese-navy-hails-cambodian-support/>

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

#### **26 October 2017: Japan expects Asean meet to tackle South China Sea row**

"We'd expect to discuss regional issues such as the South China Sea, [as well] as other regional cooperation, would be discussed in the Asean Related Leaders' Summit meeting," Takehiro Kano said.

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/2017/10/26/japan-expects-asean-meet-tackle-south-china-sea-row-571501>

#### **18 October 2017: Rex Tillerson called for stronger ties with India, chided China over 'provocative actions' in the South China Sea**

Tillerson was pointed in his criticism of China. He says its "provocative actions" in the South China Sea challenge international norms that the US and India both stand for.

<http://www.businessinsider.com/ap-tillerson-seeks-stronger-ties-with-india-chides-china-2017-10/?IR=T>

#### **17 October 2017: US Admiral Harry Harris: China needs to end its own 'provocative' maritime actions**

Adm Harris added that the Chinese are building up combat power and positional advantage in an attempt to assert de facto sovereignty over disputed maritime features, fundamentally alter the physical and political landscape and erode the rules-based international order.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/us-admiral-harry-harris-china-needs-to-exert-more-pressure-on-n-korea-end-its-own>

#### **11 October 2017: U.S. warship sails near islands Beijing claims in South China Sea - U.S. officials**

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Chafee, a guided-missile destroyer, carried out normal maneuvering operations that challenged “excessive maritime claims” near the Paracel Islands, among a string of islets, reefs and shoals over which China has territorial disputes with its neighbors.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-military/exclusive-u-s-warship-sails-near-islands-beijing-claims-in-south-china-sea-u-s-officials-idUSKBN1CF2QG>

**11 October 2017: Britain steers away from US-style South China Sea exercises**

Britain has no plans to conduct deliberate freedom-of-navigation exercises in the South China Sea, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/britain-steers-away-from-usstyle-south-china-sea-exercises-20171010-gyy9fz.html>

**30 September 2017: US carrier Ronald Reagan navigates South China Sea**

On Saturday, as F-18 Super Hornet jet fighters roared from the decks of the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier during routine drills deep in the South China Sea, two Chinese frigates maintained a constant line-of-sight vigil.

<http://indianexpress.com/article/world/us-carrier-ronald-reagan-navigates-south-china-sea-as-north-korea-tensions-mount-4868795/>