

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 56
November 2017

ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

24 November 2017: Chinese air force patrols over South China Sea

A team of Chinese air force bombers carried out a series of patrols over the disputed South China Sea, in an exercise the People's Liberation Army said showed its capability to breach the cold war era line of containment.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2121411/chinese-air-force-patrols-over-south-china-sea-show>

22 November 2017: Duterte says lifting ban on South China Sea exploration possible

"I will only lift it when I think the higher interest of the Philippines is served," the president said.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/11/22/1761460/duterte-says-lifting-ban-south-china-sea-exploration-possible-...>

21 November 2017: Philippines Ends Naval Patrols Near Scarborough Shoal

"This is a clear attempt to hide the fact that we have long ceased our efforts to strengthen our claims on the disputed areas," Alejano said.

<http://www.benarnews.org/english/news/philippine/sea-patrol-11212017115555.html>

21 November 2017: Cayetano says warm relations with China won't affect legal victory

"Warm relations with China will not affect our legal victory. We have gain[ed] a lot, right now our fishermen are back in Scarborough," Cayetano said.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/633920/cayetano-says-warm-relations-with-china-won-t-affect-legal-victory/story/>

16 November 2017: China, Philippines agree to avoid force in South China Sea dispute

The joint statement said there should be no violence or threats of violence and the dispute should be resolved via talks between the "relevant sovereign countries.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china--philippines-agree-to-avoid-force-in-south-china-sea-dispute-9412028>

15 November 2017: Vietnam inks gas purchase deals to boost supplies post-2023

The 'Blue Whale' project is amoving ahead, government officials and companies said, meaning Vietnam's gas output could triple within eight years.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-energy-gas/vietnam-inks-gas-purchase-deals-to-boost-supplies-post-2023-idUSKBN1DF0I6>

14 November 2017: China's new manned submersible to be used to explore South China Sea: expert

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

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1075218.shtml>

14 November 2017: China premier says will protect South China Sea freedom of navigation

"Li said China is the largest country in the South China Sea and a major nation that uses the lanes in the sea, thus China shows more interest in safeguarding peace, stability, and navigation freedom in the South China Sea than any other country in the world," Xinhua said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-premier-says-will-protect-south-china-sea-freedom-of-navigation-9405768>

13 November 2017: Philippines, China open SCS communication line

China offered to donate radio and video conferencing equipment necessary for 24/7 communication.

<http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/11/13/17/philippines-china-open-s-china-sea-communication-line>

13 November 2017: Vietnam, China avoid quarrel over South China Sea during visit

China and Vietnam agreed to properly handle maritime issues and strive to maintain peace and stability.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-china/vietnam-china-avoid-quarrel-over-south-china-sea-during-visit-idUSKBN1DCOP7>

11 November 2017: Xi Jinping calls on China, Vietnam to work together to settle SCS disputes

The parties must seek a fundamental and durable solution through friendly consultation, he said.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2119245/xi-jinping-calls-china-vietnam-work-together-settle>

11 November 2017: Duterte on South China Sea dispute: It's not time for aggression

"We never surrendered anything. Just say, I do not want to talk about this for the moment. It is not time for aggression, it is not time for violence," he said.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/161853/duterte-south-china-sea-xi-jinping-bilateral-meeting-vietnam-maritime-dispute-west-philippine-sea#ixzz4yH9PJ27B>

9 November 2017: China to launch commercial rocket from South China Sea: Report

"The South China Sea would be an option for a launch site," said Mr Hu.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-to-launch-commercial-rocket-from-south-china-sea-report>

8 November 2017: Philippines halts building in contested South China Sea after Beijing protest

"We tried to put some structures in one of the sandbars near our island and the Chinese reacted," Lorenzana told a diplomatic forum in Manila, adding that Duterte later ordered, "Let's pull out."

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/11/08/asia-pacific/philippines-halts-building-contested-south-china-sea-backing-beijing-protest/#.WgO6tVuCyUk>

7 November 2017: Duterte holds onto Xi's Promise

Duterte said he is holding on to Chinese President Xi Jinping's promise not to build an island on Scarborough Shoal (Panatag Shoal).

<http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/11/07/17/duterte-on-west-ph-sea-ill-be-frank-with-china>

7 November 2017: Palace on new Chinese dredger: We need to rely on good faith

"Well, the president recognizes the principle of good faith in international relations. China has told the president, they do not intend to reclaim Scarborough and we leave it at that," Roque said.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/11/07/1756558/palace-new-chinese-dredger-we-need-rely-good-faith>

7 November 2017: PH hopes to finish beaching ramp in Spratlys by early 2018

When the beaching ramp is constructed, the government can further improve the rest of the facilities in the island, including the repair of the runway.

<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/161508/west-philippine-sea-south-china-sea-pagasa-island-thitu-island-beaching-ramp-spratlys#ixzz4xpQJ6TI9>

6 November 2017: Philippines to keep wary eye on new Chinese dredger in South China Sea

The Philippines said it would track its activities closely, despite Beijing's assurances it would not develop areas where it has competing claims with Manila.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippines-to-keep-wary-eye-on-new-chinese-dredger-in-south-china-sea>

5 November 2017: China tests new dredger capable of South China Sea projects: state media

China is testing a new dredger ship that will greatly enhance its land reclamation capabilities.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-dredger/china-tests-new-dredger-capable-of-south-china-sea-projects-state-media-idUSKBN1D503S>

4 November 2017: China to Create Its Own International Courts for Maritime Claims

China is continuing with its plan to create two Chinese-controlled international maritime courts.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/china-to-create-its-own-international-courts-for-maritime-claims_2349946.html

3 November 2017: Beijing unveils giant vessel that can reclaim land with incredible speed and is set to be sent to South China Sea

The enormous ship, called Tiankun, can dredge 6,000 cubic meters of mud every hour. It's more efficient than Tianjing, China's current flagship for construction on the South China Sea.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5047041/Beijing-s-giant-island-building-machine-South-China-Sea.html#ixzz4xi4addf6>

1 November 2017: China near completion of offshore nuclear reactor to boost South China Sea claim

Plan fuels concerns that Beijing will use atomic power in the disputed South China Sea.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2117711/china-close-completing-first-offshore-nuclear-reactor>

1 November 2017: Duterte hopeful China will stop expansion in disputed sea

"China has committed to us not to build anything there and I hope that they would honor that commitment to us," Duterte said.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/11/01/1754586/duterte-hopeful-china-will-stop-expansion-disputed-sea>

1 November 2017: Beijing seen poised for fresh South China Sea assertiveness

China has quietly undertaken more construction and reclamation, recent satellite images show.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china/beijing-seen-poised-for-fresh-south-china-sea-assertiveness-idUSKBN1D00Y0>

ASEAN AND COC

21 November 2017: ASEAN navies focus on marine environment

ASEAN Navy commanders-in-chief pledged to boost cooperation to protect the maritime environment and combat piracy by setting up an early warning system that links the navies of all member countries.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/regional/2017/11/21/asean-navies-focus-on-marine-environment/#oSYM4dCpByshkwJ7.99>

21 November 2017: Singapore in 'good condition' to oversee Code of Conduct drafting —Cayetano

"Singapore will be in a great position next year they are very good at this, they are good at no-nonsense negotiation," Cayetano said. "Singapore is [in] a good condition to oversee the drafting of the COC as a non-claimant," he added.

<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/633924/singapore-in-good-condition-to-oversee-code-of-conduct-drafting-cayetano/story/>

16 November 2017: ASEAN calls for 'non-militarisation' of South China Sea

The statement emphasised the importance of non-militarisation". The leaders "reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, security, stability, maritime safety and security, rules-based order and freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea".

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/asean-calls-for-non-militarisation-of-south-china-sea>

16 November 2017: Harry Roque: Legally-binding South China Sea code key to regional peace

"I think the aspiration is that it should be somehow be binding because that is the key to stability in the region," said Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque. "If it's merely aspiration, then it will not promote the kind of peace and stability that they are hoping for," he added.

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/2017/11/16/legally-binding-south-china-sea-code-key-regional-peace-575073>

15 November 2017: Duterte says China keen on South China Sea code of conduct

'Do not just hurry up.' But we will consider really fast tracking this code of conduct," Duterte added.

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/2017/11/15/duterte-says-china-keen-south-china-sea-code-conduct-574807>

14 November 2017: South China Sea code of conduct talks to be 'stabiliser' for region: China premier

" We will strive under the agreement, to reach a consensus on achieving early implementation of the code of conduct," Mr Li said.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/south-china-sea-code-of-conduct-talks-to-be-stabiliser-for-9404290>

14 November 2017: Calm in South China Sea cannot be taken for granted—Asean

"We should continue to build confidence and trust through practical maritime cooperation," Prime Minister Lee said.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/162303/calm-south-china-sea-cannot-taken-granted-asean#ixzz4yYzAKyu3>

14 November 2017: ASEAN, China agree to start talks on South China Sea code

The Department of Foreign Affairs announced that an outcome of the ASEAN-China Summit presided by President Rodrigo Duterte is to commence the crafting of the code of conduct.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/11/14/1758610/asean-china-agree-start-talks-south-china-sea-code>

11 November 2017: Talks on South China Sea code of conduct likely "next year": Philippine official

Formal talks on the code of conduct (COC) would likely take place "sometime next year", Philippine foreign ministry spokesman, Robespierre Bolivar said.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/talks-on-south-china-sea-code-of-conduct-likely-next-year-philippine-official>

1 November 2017: China, Asean hold joint naval drills as tensions ease

China and ASEAN have held their largest-ever joint maritime rescue exercise. The drill simulated a collision between a Chinese passenger ship and a Cambodian cargo vessel off south China's Guangdong province. It involved about 1,000 rescuers aboard 20 ships and three helicopters. China, Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Brunei took part, with Vietnam notably absent.

<http://www.todayonline.com/world/china-asean-hold-joint-naval-drills-tensions-ease>

MAJOR POWERS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

26 November 2017: Trump administration backs Australia white paper

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matt Matthews said the US welcomed the paper and would work with Australia to uphold order in the Indo-Pacific.

<http://www.afr.com/news/policy/foreign-affairs/trump-administration-backs-australia-white-paper-20171125-gzsxlv#ixzz4zb8Bj5E2>

23 November 2017: China slams Australian white paper remarks on South China Sea

The remarks on the South China Sea issue were irresponsible, and we have expressed severe concerns, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said. "Australia is particularly concerned about the unprecedented pace and scale of China's activities," read the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1076947.shtml>

23 November 2017: Japan says Australian input on South China Sea 'critical'

The Japanese ambassador to -Australia says Canberra's involvement in a new US, Australia, Japan and India dialogue is -"critical" to ensure freedom of navigation and trade in the South China Sea.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/foreign-affairs/japan-says-australian-input-on-south-china-sea-critical/news-story/1645544a321145c9e6dbdb72c7f498a8>

14 November 2017: India supports rules-based security architecture, says PM Modi

"India assures the Asean of its steady support towards achieving a rules-based regional security architecture that best attests to the region's interests and its peaceful development," he said.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/south-china-sea-dispute-india-supports-rules-based-security-architecture-says-pm-modi/articleshow/61644829.cms>

14 November 2017: Philippines US releases statement on the South China Sea

Both sides reiterated their commitment to uphold their principles including the freedom of navigation and overflight. They stressed the importance of peacefully resolving disputes in the South China Sea, in accordance with international law, as reflected in the Law of the Sea Convention.

<http://www.eaglenews.ph/palace-releases-phl-us-joint-statement-on-duterte-trump-bilaterals-south-china-sea-north-korea-human-rights-discussed/>

12 November 2017: Vietnam-US Statement Emphasizes Lawful Uses of the Sea

The two sides called for all South China Sea claimants to clarify and comport their maritime claims in accordance with the international law of the sea as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and to implement their international legal obligations in good faith in managing or resolving these disputes.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/11/12/joint-statement-between-united-states-america-and-socialist-republic>

12 November 2017: Trump offers to mediate in South China Sea dispute

"If I can help mediate or arbitrate, please let me know," Trump said to Vietnam's president, Tran Dai Quang. "I'm a very good mediator and arbitrator," he added.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/trump-offers-to-mediate-in-south-china-sea-dispute-9398824>

10 November 2017: Beijing urged Tokyo to not 'make noise' about South China Sea in leaders' talks

The Chinese government has urged Japan through diplomatic channels for the past several months not to emphasize maritime issues to the detriment of bilateral relations.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/11/10/national/politics-diplomacy/beijing-urged-tokyo-not-make-noise-south-china-sea-issue-leaders-talks-sources/#.WgkRbluCyUk>

10 November 2017: Philippines Won't Seek US Help Over South China Sea Dispute With Beijing: Duterte

"No, I will not ask military help to wage war against China. "China is a friend. A friend in need is a friend indeed. You will not be able to force them out there except to go to war," Duterte said.

<http://www.benarnews.org/english/news/philippine/philippines-spratlys-11102017144552.html>

9 November 2017: U.S. has 'frank' exchange on South China Sea during Trump visit

"We insist on upholding freedom of navigation, that claimants be consistent with international law and that claimants should stop construction and militarization of outposts in order to maximize prospects for successful diplomacy," Tillerson added.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-trump-asia-china-southchinasea/u-s-has-frank-exchange-on-south-china-sea-during-trump-visit-idUSKBN1D910E?il=0>

3 November 2017: China says hopes U.S. can 'help, not cause problems' in South China Sea

"We hope that as an external party, the United States can plant more flowers and fewer thorns, help and not cause problems". Zheng said. There is no issue with freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and China opposed any parties using it as an "excuse" to harm China's sovereignty and security interests, he added.

<http://www.todayonline.com/world/china-says-has-agreement-vietnam-managing-south-china-sea-dispute>

31 October 2017: China to US: Mind your own business on South China Sea disputes

The United States should butt out of territorial disputes in the South China Sea, a Chinese official said ahead of President Donald Trump's inaugural visit to the region.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/china-to-us-mind-your-own-business-on-south-china-sea-disputes-1.495369>