

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 57
December 2017

ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

24 December 2017: China's AG600 makes a successful one-hour maiden flight

The world's largest amphibious aircraft, China's AG600, has made a successful one-hour maiden flight. It has firefighting and marine rescue duties but also military applications, which could be put to use in the disputed South China Sea region.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-42471045>

20 December 2017: Philippines, China to hold next South China Sea talks in early 2018

"Both sides are discussing when to hold the second one, and the original plan was to hold it in December, but there are some scheduling problems," Sta. Romana said, citing that the discussions will still be held at the undersecretary level.

<http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/12/02/17/philippines-china-to-hold-next-south-china-sea-talks-in-early-2018>

18 December 2017: China Plans Remote Sensing Satellites over South China Sea

China's southern island province of Hainan has unveiled a satellite launch plan to assist remote sensing coverage over the South China Sea. The Sanyan Institute of Remote Sensing said the mission would start in 2019, when it would launch three optical satellites.

http://english.cas.cn/newsroom/china_research/201712/t20171218_188002.shtml

18 December 2017: PH, China take up SCS Code of Conduct in security cooperation talks at Aguinaldo

"The talks also emphasized the importance of the South China Sea for the region's economic growth and development. Along this line, both sides expressed support for the peaceful settlement of disputes thereat through lawful, non-coercive, and transparent means," Andolong said.

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2017/12/18/ph-china-take-up-scs-code-of-conduct-in-security-cooperation-talks-at-aguinaldo/>

18 December 2017: Vietnam follows Beijing with South China Sea upgrades of its own

Images taken by DigitalGlobe satellites show new facilities, including a possible dry dock, at West London Reef in the Spratly Island chain that could allow boats to stop for maintenance and patrol for longer periods.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/12/18/asia-pacific/vietnam-follows-beijing-south-china-sea-upgrades/#.WjiWLVWwAU>

17 December 2017: PH to raise South China Sea issues in upcoming bilaterals with Beijing: Cayetano

Cayetano said he is aware of reports about "certain activities" in the strategic waterway, but assured that the Department of National Defense and the Armed Forces of the Philippines are always on a close watch. "If it's brought up in multilateral, 'di tayo aatras (we will not back off) from discussing it and coming up with a solution," he added.

<http://www.interaksyon.com/ph-to-raise-south-china-sea-issues-in-upcoming-bilaterals-with-beijing-cayetano/>

16 December 2017: China plans remote sensing satellites over South China Sea

China is planning to launch satellites from its southern Hainan province to assist round-the-clock remote sensing coverage over the South China Sea as Beijing seeks to cement its hold on the disputed area.

<https://arunachaltimes.in/index.php/2017/12/16/china-plans-remote-sensing-satellites-over-south-china-sea/>

15 December 2017: Beijing bolsters South China Sea war platform

China has created military facilities about four times the size of Buckingham palace on contested islands in the South China Sea, a new report has said, calling the build-up a "slow-moving crisis" in one of the world's most dangerous flashpoints.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/15/militarisation-beijing-south-china-sea-islands>

14 December 2017: China Is Still Building on Disputed Islands in the South China Sea

AMTI has identified all the permanent facilities on which China completed or began work since the start of the year. These include buildings ranging from underground storage areas and administrative buildings to large radar and sensor arrays. These facilities account for about 72 acres, or 290,000 square meters, of new real estate at Fiery Cross, Subi, and Mischief Reefs in the Spratlys, and North, Tree, and Triton Islands in the Paracels.

<https://amti.csis.org/constructive-year-chinese-building/>

14 December 2017: Beijing sends warning to US with a new aircraft carrier to patrol South China Sea

Beijing has said that its new aircraft carrier will “thwart” attempts by foreign forces to seize disputed territories in the South China Sea.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/world/beijing-sends-warning-to-us-with-a-new-aircraft-carrier-to-patrol-south-china-sea-rs20mz0sg>

4 December 2017: Yun-9 'ready for combat' after training in S.China Sea

The domestic-made medium-sized military transport aircraft Yun-9 is ready for combat mission, which will boost China's effort in safeguarding maritime rights, military experts said on Sunday after the aircraft completed exercises in the South China Sea.

http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-12/04/content_7853904.htm

4 December 2017: Chinese aircraft conduct airdrop drill in South China Sea

A fleet of Chinese Y-9 aircraft has conducted an airdrop drill over an island in the South China Sea, according to a statement from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-12/04/content_35199115.htm

4 December 2017: PLAAF seeks to regularise combat aircraft deployments to South China Sea

Recently broadcast video footage showing Shenyang Aircraft Corporation J-11B fighters on Chinese-controlled Woody Island suggests that Beijing is seeking to regularise deployments of combat aircraft to the contested Paracel Islands in the South China Sea.

<http://www.janes.com/article/76130/plaaf-seeks-to-regularise-combat-aircraft-deployments-to-south-china-sea>

2 December 2017: China confirms deployment of fighters to South China Sea island for first time

While fighter jets had been spotted on the island in 2016 and in April this year, the footage was the first time Beijing had confirmed the deployments. It was aired by China Central Television (CCTV) on Wednesday as part of a report on the air force's expanding capabilities.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/12/02/asia-pacific/china-confirms-deployment-fighters-south-china-sea-island-first-time/#.WiYq6VWWaUk>

ASEAN AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

27 December 2017: Indonesia's Foreign Minister Calls for Code of Conduct in South China Sea

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno L.P. Marsudi has stressed the need for Southeast Asian nations and China to quickly come out with a legally binding agreement, known as a Code of Conduct, to create peace and prevent open conflict in the South China Sea.

<http://jakartaglobe.id/news/indonesias-foreign-minister-calls-for-code-of-conduct-in-south-china-sea/>

14 December 2017: China, S'pore vow to boost military exchanges in latest sign of improved relations

RAAdm Jiang said the two countries' military ties had "developed smoothly" in recent years, adding that China looked forward to taking relations to "a new level". China also supported Singapore in its role as chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations next year, he said.

<http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/china-singapore-vow-boost-military-exchanges-latest-sign-improved-relations>

5 December 2017: Mr Balakrishnan: proposed code of conduct is no panacea

Citing the South China Sea territorial disputes as an example, Mr Balakrishnan said the proposed code of conduct, though a positive step, is no panacea. “It is not going to be solved overnight... And there will be other issues, I am sure, in the future that could derail (the situation)... But we have got to keep the longer-term interests at stake,” he said.

<http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/spore-help-asean-ride-digitalisation-wave-balakrishnan>

3 December 2017: Singapore backs peaceful resolution of sea dispute

“We want a rules-based world order where international law counts. Not just because international law itself is something so powerful, but because international law provides avenues for the peaceful resolution of disputes,” Balakrishnan said. “But of course you have to leave it to the individual claimants to settle all these differences,” he added.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/12/03/1764831/singapore-backs-peaceful-resolution-sea-dispute>

MAJOR POWERS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

18 December 2017: US hits China on new SCS structures

“And we have differences, such as the South China Sea and China’s building of structures, militarization of these structures, and how that affects our allies in the region as well in terms of free and open trade,” Tillerson said.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/12/18/1769536/us-hits-china-new-scs-structures>

15 December 2017: China tells Australia off over disputed sea stance

"But in the last year the Australian military's series of actions in the South China Sea have run counter to the general trend of peace and stability," the ministry cited Shen as saying, without pointing to any specific examples.

<http://www.news.com.au/world/breaking-news/china-warns-australia-over-south-china-sea/news-story/c20450fe5dd8b69dd828f8e343890ee4>

14 December 2017: China summons Australia’s ambassador amid spat over political meddling

China summoned Australia’s ambassador in Beijing to lodge a complaint last week amid friction between the two nations after Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull’s government accused the Asian powerhouse of political meddling.

<http://www.todayonline.com/world/china-summons-australias-ambassador-amid-spat-over-political-meddling>

5 December 2017: Australia to ban foreign political donations amid fears of growing Chinese influence on politicians

Australia, concerned about rising Chinese influence, will ban foreign political donations as part of a crackdown aimed at preventing external interference in domestic politics, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/australianz/australia-to-ban-foreign-political-donations-amid-fears-of-growing-chinese>