

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 58
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ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

26 January 2018: China says no objection to planned US carrier visit if it benefits regional stability

China has no objection to a planned visit by a US aircraft carrier to Vietnam as long as such cooperation benefits regional peace and stability, the country's foreign ministry said.

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/china-says-no-objection-to-planned-us-carrier-visit-if-it-benefits-regional-stability>

25 January 2018: China invites partners for 'combustible ice' research in S.China Sea

"China will speed up industrialization of NGH in 2018, strengthen cooperation with relevant departments and promote the establishment of a pilot site in the South China Sea's Shenhu region. China will also conduct surveys on the environmental evaluation of NGH and organize research and development on core NGH technologies," Wang Yan, deputy director of China Geological Survey at the Ministry of Land and Resources, said.

<http://www.ecns.cn/2018/01-25/289921.shtml>

22 January 2018: Lorenzana defends presence of U.S. warship near Panatag

'International law allows innocent passage even in territorial waters,' says Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/194216-us-warship-panatag-philippines>

21 January 2018: Harry Roque says Philippines won't be embroiled in US-China sea spat

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said that "the United States can take care of its own interest" and added "we do not wish to be part of a U.S.-China intramural" in the disputed South China Sea.

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/philippines-embroiled-us-china-sea-spat-52499821>

21 January 2018: China Urges U.S. to Abandon 'Cold War' Mindset in Bilateral Ties

The statement was in response to a U.S. Defense Department strategy report that singled out China's military modernization and expansion in the South China Sea as key threats to U.S. power.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-21/china-urges-u-s-to-abandon-cold-war-mindset-in-bilateral-ties-jco3k62q>

21 January 2018: China vows action after US warship sails near Scarborough Shoal

China has vowed to take "necessary measures" to protect its sovereignty after a US navy destroyer sailed near a disputed shoal claimed by Beijing in the South China Sea.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/21/china-vows-action-after-us-warship-sails-near-south-china-sea-island>

20 January 2018: China says US warship violated its South China Sea sovereignty

China's foreign ministry said USS Hopper missile destroyer came within 12 nautical miles of Scarborough Shoal. Lu said China "firmly opposes" efforts to use freedom of navigation as an excuse to hurt its sovereignty and urged the United States to "correct its mistakes."

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-says-us-warship-violated-its-south-china-sea-sovereignty-9879690>

15 January 2018: Philippine brass up in arms on the South China Sea

When asked about China's opposition to the plan, the defense minister maintained that, "I don't think they will protest," since the Philippines' "purpose there is peaceful." He said the plan for revamping facilities on Thitu Island "will [certainly] push through."

<http://www.atimes.com/article/philippine-brass-arms-south-china-sea/>

14 January 2018: PH, China to hold second South China Sea dialogue on February

DFA Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said Manila will raise all reported developments in the area during the talks.

<http://www.canadianinquirer.net/2018/01/14/ph-china-to-hold-second-south-china-sea-dialogue-on-february/>

13 January 2018: Palace trusts China's 'good faith'

"The scope of this principle of good faith is in China's commitment not to reclaim new areas or not to build new artificial islands," he said. "And so far, we believe that there has not been any reason why we should doubt China's good faith," he added.

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/2018/01/13/palace-trusts-chinas-good-faith-not-reclaim-west-ph-sea-583761>

11 January 2018: China slams Vietnam for inviting India to invest in South China Sea

"China does not object to the development of normal bilateral relations of relevant countries in our neighbourhood but we firmly oppose relevant party to use it as an excuse to infringe upon China's legitimate rights and impair regional peace and stability," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang said.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/china-slams-vietnam-for-inviting-india-to-invest-in-south-china-sea/story-WuNr8npFE6giZLaUgKsWXXK.html>

10 January 2018: PH steps up island development in China sea

"My plan of action is also to develop all the islands there because they are occupied by us," Lorenzana said.

<http://www.thestandard.com.ph/news/top-stories/255945/ph-steps-up-island-development-in-china-sea.html>

9 January 2018: China's 2nd aircraft carrier's sea trial likely in February

China had launched its second aircraft carrier in April 2017 after it commissioned the first carrier the Liaoning, a re-fitted Soviet Union-made vessel in 2012.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/chinas-2nd-aircraft-carriers-sea-trial-likely-in-february-report/articleshow/62428178.cms>

9 January 2018: Roque, Lorenzana contradict each other on China's promise on man-made islands

Roque, as attested by Malacañang's official transcript, said: "All I'm saying is that there is still no breach of the good faith obligation for as long as China has not embarked on new reclamations." "When we invoke the good faith of China, it is against making further reclamations and not making further works on islands that it had already reclaimed," he also said.

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/193229-roque-lorenzana-contradiction-china-promise-kagitingan-reef>

9 January 2018: Lorenzana says China reneged on a promise not to militarize South China Sea

"The Chinese government said some time ago that they were not going to militarize those reclaimed islands," Lorenzana said, adding that Philippines will make a diplomatic protest to China. "If it is true and we can prove that they have been putting soldiers and even weapons systems, that will be a violation of what they said."

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-philippines-china/philippines-to-protest-to-china-over-apparent-airbase-on-manmade-island-idUSKBN1EY0H8>

9 January 2018: China says construction is "multi-purposed and comprehensive"

"Apart from meeting necessary military defence needs, [the facilities] will serve more for various civilian purposes," the statement said.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2001306/china-building-aircraft-hangars-disputed-islands-south>

9 January 2018: China intensifies military build-up on artificial islands

Newly-broadcast images suggest that Beijing has intensified its construction of bunkers, aircraft hangers and barracks for troops in the contested region.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/01/09/diplomatic-protests-china-shows-militarised-artificial-islands/>

5 January 2018: Philippines insists on dialogue with China amid completed airbase in South China Sea

"The Philippines pursues cordial but frank dialogue with concerned parties on the issue of the South China Sea through various bilateral and multilateral platforms," the Department of Foreign Affairs said.

<http://beta.philstar.com/headlines/2018/01/05/1774949/philippines-insists-dialogue-china-amid-completed-airbase-south-china-sea>

5 January 2018: Duterte reappoints five envoys to China to improve ties

President Rodrigo Duterte has reappointed five special envoys to China to improve ties with Beijing strained by a long-standing maritime dispute over conflicting claims to parts of the South China Sea. <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/duterte-reappoints-five-envoys-to-china-to-improve-ties>

5 January 2018: China's underwater glider completes Indian Ocean, S China Sea missions

China's underwater glider successfully ended its mission to the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, and a Chinese expert said other countries should rationally view China's deep sea explorations.

<http://www.ecns.cn/2018/01-05/287054.shtml>

4 January 2018: Fiery Cross Reef transformed into Chinese airbase, says report

Fiery Cross Reef has been transformed into a fortified airbase complete with military installations.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/01/04/1774601/fiery-cross-reef-transformed-chinese-airbase-says-report>

4 January 2018: China initiates project to enable 'uninterrupted observations of South China Sea'

The project will see the development and launch of 10 remote sensing satellites, the first of which is expected to be placed in orbit in 2019.

<http://www.janes.com/article/76802/china-initiates-satellite-project-to-enable-uninterrupted-observations-of-south-china-sea>

1 January 2018: China develops underwater surveillance networks in Indian Ocean, South China Sea

The system, which has already been launched, works by gathering information about the underwater environment, particularly water temperature and salinity, which the navy can then use to more accurately track target vessels as well as improve navigation and positioning

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-develops-underwater-surveillance-networks-in-indian-ocean-south-china-sea/articleshow/62326410.cms>

29 December 2017: China-Built World's Largest Amphibious Aircraft Makes Maiden Flight

According to the AG600s chief designer, the aircraft can make round trips without refueling from Hainan to James Shoal.

<https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/china-built-worlds-largest-amphibious-aircraft-makes-maiden-flight/>

27 December 2017: Palace and Defense contradict about China expansion

Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque told reporters that the government "[doesn't] know where these works are." However, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana had a different response, the government has a "West Philippine Sea Task Force" that monitors the developments in the disputed waters.

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

28 December 2017: China build nuclear power plant on artificial island to "conquer" disputed SCS

The nuclear power plant aims to primarily provide power for people living in the city of Sansha but construction of the energy resource has infuriated surrounding countries who also believe they have a claim to the maritime area, as well as the US.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/897243/south-china-sea-dispute-news-latest-nuclear-power-plant-xi-jinping-military-us-trump>

24 December 2017: China island expansion moves ahead in South China Sea

China built 290,000 sq m (29ha) of facilities, including underground storage, administrative buildings and large radar installations. With last month's introduction of the new super-dredger Tianjing, and other "magical machines" soon to come, "the area of the SCS's islands and reefs will expand a step further".

<http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/china-island-expansion-moves-ahead-in-south-china-sea>

ASEAN AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

27 January 2018: ASEAN, India call for binding code of conduct in South China Sea

"In this regard, we support the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and look forward to an early conclusion of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC)," the joint statement dubbed as Delhi Declaration read.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/01/27/1781929/india-asean-call-binding-code-conduct-south-china-sea>

22 January 2018: China appreciates Indonesia's position on South China Sea issue

Ryacudu said that the situation in the South China Sea has eased, and the status quo needs to be maintained. Indonesia, he noted, appreciates China's goodwill in opening itself.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/22/c_136915561.htm

12 January 2018: Cambodian and Chinese leaders applaud cooperation on South China Sea

"Both sides expressed their satisfaction over the stability and continued sound momentum of the situation in the South China Sea," read the statement.

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/50101668/leaders-applaud-cooperation-south-china-sea/>

10 January 2018: Indonesia takes Asean lead on S.China Sea dispute

"Indonesia shall actively strive so that Asean and China could produce a practical and effective COC," Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/world/1392970/indonesia-takes-asean-lead-on-s-china-sea-dispute>

OTHER STATES AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

29 January 2018: Japan, Malaysia coastguards hold joint drill

Japanese and Malaysian coastguards held a joint anti-piracy drill aimed at strengthening cooperation.

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20180129_19/

27 January 2018: India PM backs UNCLOS, rules-based order in seas

"India shares ASEAN's vision for a rules-based order for the oceans and seas. Respect for international law, notably UNCLOS, is critical for this," Modi said.

<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/01/27/1781816/india-pm-backs-unclos-rules-based-order-seas>

25 January 2018: US to send aircraft carrier to Vietnam

The announcement of the proposed visit, that could bring the most U.S. forces to the country since the conflict ended in 1975 came during a two-day visit by U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to Hanoi.

<http://www.businessinsider.com/us-to-send-aircraft-carrier-to-vietnam-in-a-post-war-first-2018-1/?IR=T>

23 January 2018: Mattis accepts Indonesia renaming what was once part of S China Sea

"We can help maintain maritime domain awareness in the South China Sea, the North Natuna Sea," Mr Mattis added. "This is something that we look forward to doing."

<https://www.todayonline.com/world/Mattis-accepts-Indonesia-renaming-of-North-Natuna-Sea>

22 January 2018: Eyeing China, U.S. moves to strengthen Indonesian defense ties

An aide noted that Indonesia was also considering purchasing Lockheed Martin Corp's F-16 fighter jets.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-indonesia-military/eyeing-china-u-s-moves-to-strengthen-indonesian-defense-ties-idUSKBN1FB25X>

20 January 2018: US destroyer sails near Scarborough Shoal

The officials said the patrol was in line with international law and was an "innocent passage," in which a warship effectively recognizes a territorial sea by crossing it quickly, without stopping.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/china-says-us-warship-violated-its-south-china-sea-sovereignty-9879690>

10 Januar 2018: Canberra: Tribunal ruling reflects international law, should be implemented

"We believe that [ruling] reflects international law and we support a rules-based international order," Australian Ambassador Amanda Gorely said.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/canberra-tribunal-ruling-on-south-china-sea-reflects-international-law-should-be-implemented/>

10 January 2018: Australia launches scathing attack on China's 'useless' Pacific projects

Australia has sharply criticised China's efforts to build influence in the Pacific, accusing Beijing of

"duchessing" politicians and pumping money into useless infrastructure projects.

<http://www.todayonline.com/world/australia-launches-scathing-attack-chinas-useless-pacific-projects>

9 January 2018: US to continue freedom of navigation ops in disputed South China Sea

"We fly, sail, and operate wherever international law permits," Hook said.

<http://news.abs-cbn.com/overseas/01/09/18/us-to-continue-freedom-of-navigation-ops-in-disputed-south-china-sea>