

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS UPDATE No. 62
May 2018

ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

28 May 2018: China calls U.S. warships in South China Sea 'a provocation'

Chinese officials reacted angrily to the presence of two U.S. Navy warships calling it a "provocation" and "a serious infringement on China's sovereignty."

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/china-calls-u-s-warships-south-china-sea-provocation-n877961>

27 May 2018: China Warns 2 American Warships in South China Sea

The Chinese confronted the American ships and warned them to leave, the Ministry of National Defense said in a statement posted on its website.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/27/world/asia/china-us-navy-paracel-islands.html>

27 May 2018: Philippines starts upgrading main S. China Sea outpost

Ongoing repairs on Thitu are "consistent with our national sovereignty and jurisdiction", Harry Roque said in a text message. Minor improvements, meanwhile, were seen on three other Philippine outposts.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/philippines-starts-upgrading-main-s-china-sea-outpost>

26 May 2018: China's aircraft carrier pilots complete first night missions

J-15 fighter jets took off and landed in the darkness. Nighttime missions on aircraft carriers are considered far more difficult and dangerous than those in the daytime.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2147914/chinas-aircraft-carrier-pilots-complete-first-night>

25 May 2018: Vietnam's leader urges more active role for Japan in South China Sea

The president said Japan can help to resolve tensions in the South China Sea. Coordinated action between Japan and his country will be necessary, he said.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-Relations/Vietnam-s-leader-urges-more-active-role-for-Japan-in-South-China-Sea>

24 May 2018: Beijing's South China Sea building boom fuels concerns

Facilities on Subi, Mischief and Fiery Cross could each hold a regiment - between 1,500 and 2,400 troops while Subi could be the future location of People's Liberation Army marines, as well as a possible administrative hub as China cements its claim with a civilian presence.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/south-china-sea-building-boom-10271592>

24 May 2018: China put 400 buildings on one of the disputed islands

Satellite imagery shows that China has put nearly 400 buildings on Subi Reef in the South China Sea. Data shows that the number of buildings on Subi Reef is about double that on China's other large outposts in the hotly contested region, known as the Spratly Islands.

<https://www.businessinsider.sg/china-400-buildings-subi-reef-south-china-sea-2018-5/?r=US&IR=T>

22 May 2018: Beijing denies 'militarisation' of South China Sea

Lu said moving the bombers into the area was "part of the normal training for the Chinese military", and that the US "sending its own warships and planes to the region... poses a danger to other countries".

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/beijing-denies--militarisation--of-south-china-sea-10254834>

22 May 2018: Beijing's South China Sea bombers fly in the face of protests

The planes are believed to have landed on Woody Island, China's largest base in the Paracel Islands which is also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/beijings-south-china-sea-bombers-fly-in-the-face-of-protests>

22 May 2018: China's navy and coastguard stage first joint patrols near South China Sea

Vessels from the navy, coastguard and local authorities, took part in the five-day patrol, said the report.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2147154/chinas-navy-and-coastguard-stage-first-joint-patrols>

21 May 2018: China's two domestically-made submersibles explore cold seep in South China Sea

It is the first time two domestically-made deep-sea submersibles, the unmanned submersible Seahorse and manned submersible Shenhai Yongshi, have been used in a single expedition.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/21/c_137195650.htm

21 May 2018: Philippines vows to protect 'every single inch' of its territory

A spokesman for President Rodrigo Duterte said that the state expresses serious concerns over the Chinese bombers' presence in the South China Sea.

<https://www.rt.com/news/427274-philippine-s-china-sea-protest/>

21 May 2018: Vietnam says Chinese bombers in disputed South China Sea increase tensions

"Vietnam demands that China stop these activities, cease militarization of the area, and strictly respect Vietnam's sovereignty over the Hoang Sa islands," Hang said, referring to the Paracels.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-china-southchinasea/vietnam-says-chinese-bombers-in-disputed-south-china-sea-increase-tensions-idUSKCN1IM1MZ>

21 May 2018: China's manned submersible conducts night dive in South China Sea

The submersible Deep Sea Warrior returned to the oceanic research vessel Tansuo-1 after carrying out a night dive of about 1,400 meters deep in the Pearl River mouth basin in the South China Sea.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/21/c_137194856.htm

20 May 2018: Duterte says Philippines won't oppose China on activity in South China Sea

Mr Duterte said there was no assurance that the United States would remain on its side if war broke out. A more feasible solution would be to forge a joint exploration pact with China, he said.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/duterte-says-philippines-wont-oppose-china-on-activity-in-south-china-sea>

19 May 2018: China lands bomber on South China Sea island for first time

A statement from the Defense Ministry late Friday said the exercise was conducted on an island reef at a "southern sea area." It involved several H-6Ks taking off from an air base then making a simulated strike against sea targets before landing, the ministry said.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/19/china-lands-bomber-on-south-china-sea-island-for-first-time.html>

19 May 2018: Beijing Issues Warning against Rosneft's Vietnam Unit Drills,

"We urge relevant parties to earnestly respect China's sovereign and jurisdictional rights and not do anything that could impact bilateral relations or this region's peace and stability," Lu said.

<http://jakartaglobe.id/international/rosnefts-vietnam-unit-drills-disputed-area-south-china-sea-beijing-issues-warning/>

18 May 2018: CNOOC, Husky sign PSCs for exploration blocks in the South China Sea

CNOOC signed two production sharing contracts with Husky Oil Operations (China) Limited for Block 22/11 and 23/07, in the South China Sea. Block 22/11 and 23/07 are located in the Beibu Gulf of the South China Sea. Once entering the development phase, CNOOC has the right to participate in up to 51% of the participating interest in any commercial discoveries of the blocks.

<http://www.worldoil.com/news/2018/5/18/cnooc-husky-sign-pscs-for-exploration-blocks-in-the-south-china-sea>

18 May 2018: China's first home-built aircraft carrier completes sea trials

The still-unnamed ship completed all assigned tasks before returning to its construction yard in the northern port of Dalian.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-aircraft-carrier-liaoning-new-sea-trials-chinese-navy-fleet-flagship-a8357096.html>

17 May 2018: Vietnam says conducts maritime oil operations under international law

"As we have repeatedly asserted, all of Vietnam's maritime economic activities, including oil and gas activities, have been licensed and carried out in maritime zones entirely under Vietnamese sovereignty and jurisdiction," foreign ministry spokeswoman Le Thi Thu Hang said.

<https://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL3N1SO46E>

17 May 2018: Vietnam reasserts sovereign rights amid 'nine-dash line' shirt incident

Le Thi Thu Hang said Vietnam has full legal basis and historical evidence to assert its sovereignty over the islands, as well as its sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the surrounding waters in accordance with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/vietnam-reasserts-sovereign-rights-amid-nine-dash-line-shirt-incident-3751073.html>

17 May 2018: Rosneft says South China Sea drilling is within Vietnam waters

"The Company conducts its operations on the shelf of Vietnam in a strict accordance with the license obligations and compliance with the subsoil use legislation of Vietnam".

<https://www.reuters.com/article/rosneft-vietnam-southchinasea/rosneft-says-south-china-sea-drilling-is-within-vietnam-waters-idUSL3N1SO39Z>

17 May 2018: Vietnam unit of Russia's Rosneft fears Beijing backlash over South China Sea drilling

Rosneft Vietnam BV is concerned that its recent drilling in an area of the South China Sea that is claimed by China could upset Beijing.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/vietnam-unit-of-russias-rosneft-fears-beijing-backlash-over-south-china-sea-drilling>

16 May 2018: We are not giving up West Philippine Sea rights – Duterte

Instead of fighting Beijing, Duterte said he would make the best out of it for the country – referring to the joint exploration with China.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/05/16/1815714/we-are-not-giving-west-philippine-sea-rights-duterte#IQvPKw8TdI8RMVWT.99>

16 May 2018: Chinese tourists ordered to remove controversial t-shirts

Airport officials stopped the group, who removed their coats as they passed through security, revealing the controversial T-shirts featuring the nine-dash line.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/chinese-tourists-tshirts-south-china-sea-map-remove-vietnam-airport-security-a8354421.html>

15 May 2018: PLA navy tests ship-borne choppers in S.China Sea targets

A People's Liberation Army navy flotilla recently conducted live-fire drills for ship-borne helicopters in the South China Sea to test attacking targets at sea.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1102415.shtml>

15 May 2018: Duterte: Xi Jinping won't allow moves to remove me from office

"The assurances of Xi Jinping were very encouraging... 'We will not allow you to be taken out from your office, and we will not allow the Philippines to go to the dogs,'" Duterte said.

<http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2018/05/15/rodrigo-duterte-xi-jinping-south-china-sea-ouster.html>

14 May 2018: China to deliver world's largest amphibious aircraft by 2022

China developed the AG600 amid a more muscular approach to the South China Sea disputes.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-defence-airplane/china-to-deliver-worlds-largest-amphibious-aircraft-by-2022-xinhua-idUSKCN1IF06Y>

13 May 2018: China 'ready to build bigger warships'

"China will speed up on shipbuilding and narrow the gap ... we will build a large carrier in the future," Li said.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2145890/chinas-first-domestically-built-aircraft-carrier-begins>

12 May 2018: China's first home-built aircraft carrier starts sea trials

China's second aircraft carrier set sail from its dock in the Dalian shipyard to conduct a sea trial mission, Xinhua said.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/12/chinas-first-home-built-aircraft-carrier-starts-sea-trials.html>

11 May 2018: Taiwan to hold emergency rescue drill in South China Sea

Several government agencies will hold a joint exercise in the South China Sea to test Taiwan's disaster relief and emergency response at sea, according to the Coast Guard Administration.

<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3427319>

10 May 2018: Philippines to Launch First Missile-Firing Assault Vessels

The Philippine navy will deploy its first-ever missile-firing assault vessels in about three months, likely for territorial defense, anti-insurgency strikes and deterrence, but it remains "centuries" behind the naval might of Asian countries such as China, the navy chief said Thursday.

<https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2018/05/10/world/asia/ap-as-philippines-navy-missiles.html>

10 May 2018: China sends military plane to third South China Sea airstrip

Subi Reef hosts one of three runways China has built as part of a massive dredging and reclamation operation in the Spratlys chain since 2013, and was the last of three where military aircraft had been observed.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-sends-military-plane-to-third-south-china-sea-airstrip>

8 May 2018: Vietnam asks China to withdraw military equipment from South China Sea

"Vietnam requests that China, as a large country, shows its responsibility in maintaining peace and stability in the East Sea," Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Le Thi Thu Hang said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-missiles/vietnam-asks-china-to-withdraw-military-equipment-from-south-china-sea-idUSKBN1I922M>

7 May 2018: China committed to peaceful settlement of bilateral disputes over South China Sea: Premier Li Keqiang

Chinese premier Li Keqiang said China is committed to peaceful settlement of bilateral disputes.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/china-committed-to-peaceful-dispute-settlement-over-south-china-sea-despite-differing>

3 May 2018: China installs cruise missiles on South China Sea outposts

China has installed anti-ship cruise missiles and surface-to-air missile systems on three of its outposts in the South China Sea.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-missiles/china-installs-cruise-missiles-on-south-china-sea-outposts-cnbc-report-idUSKBN1I336G>

2 May 2018: Beijing explores South China Sea where 'flammable ice' is found

Two of the country's latest underwater vessels – which can dive to a depth of 4,500m – were used for the three-day mission.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2144385/beijing-explores-energy-rich-area-south-china-sea-where-flammable>

ASEAN AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

7 May 2018: Jokowi: ASEAN will maintain and even improve the achievement

Jokowi, speaking alongside Li after their talks, did not mention the South China Sea, only saying that over the 50 years since its creation, ASEAN contributed a lot to "creating stability in the region," and that "we will maintain and even improve the achievement."

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180507/p2g/00m/0in/106000c>

OTHER STATES AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

27 May 2018: U.S. warships sail near South China Sea islands claimed by Beijing

The U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Higgins guided-missile destroyer and the Antietam, a guided-missile cruiser, came within 12 nautical miles of 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/exclusive-us-warships-sail-near-south-china-sea-islands-claimed-by-beijing-idUSKCN1IS07W>

24 May 2018: US: We have strong evidence China deployed missiles, bombers in Spratlys

"We have strong evidence that China has deployed anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missile systems, and electronic jammers to contested features in the Spratly Islands region of the South China Sea," Pentagon spokesperson Lt. Col. Christopher Logan said in a statement.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/05/24/1818226/us-we-have-strong-evidence-china-deployed-missiles-bombers-spratlys#UvLkwPQItzdfzv.99>

24 May 2018: China slams U.S. for linking exercise cancellation to South China Sea

China has sovereign rights in the South China Sea and it is not realistic for the United States to use this kind of action to try to coerce it, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-military-exercise-kang/china-slams-u-s-for-linking-exercise-cancellation-to-south-china-sea-idUSKCN1IP118>

23 May 2018: US Excludes China From Military Drill Over South China Sea Actions

The United States has disinvited China from a major international maritime exercise, saying Beijing's "destabilizing behavior" in the South China Sea is inconsistent with the principles of the U.S.-led drill.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/us-excludes-china-rim-pac-military-drill-south-china-sea/4406716.html>

22 May 2018: Julie Bishop raises objections to China's activities in South China Sea

Julie Bishop has raised objections to China's militarisation of the South China Sea after weekend reports that a Chinese bomber capable of carrying a nuclear warhead had been on the disputed Paracel Islands.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/22/julie-bishop-raises-objections-to-chinas-activities-in-south-china-sea>

17 May 2018: China militarization of sea raises 'great concern' in US

"Some of the recent reports of militarization would suggest that past commitments are being violated," W. Patrick Murphy said.

<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/167011/china-militarization-sea-raises-great-concern-us#ixzz5G800RCAR>

9 May 2018: PH, US hold drills amid fresh South China Sea concerns

At a naval base facing the South China Sea, hundreds of Philippine and US marines retake a "threatened" area as part of their annual military drills.

<http://globalnation.inquirer.net/166766/ph-us-hold-drills-amid-fresh-south-china-sea-concerns-south-china-sea-balikatan-afp-military-drill#ixzz5F496luTm>

8 May 2018: US: Short of war, China now controls South China Sea

"The only thing lacking are deployed forces. Once occupied, China will be able to extend its influence thousands of miles to the south and project power deep into Oceania," warned the American admiral. "In short, China is now capable of controlling the South China Sea in all scenarios short of war with the United States."

http://www.atimes.com/article/short-of-war-china-now-controls-south-china-sea/?fb_comment_id=1918021938242698_1919469078097984#f25e503ff45ec4c

4 May 2018: China 'deploys missiles' in South China Sea, Australia warn of consequences

"If the media reports are accurate then the Australian Government would be concerned because this would be contrary to China's stated aspiration that it would not militarise these features," Ms Bishop said.

<http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/2018-05-04/china-deploys-missiles-in-south-china-sea-us-australia-warn-of-consequences/1753992>

3 May 2018: White House warns China: There will be 'consequences' for militarization of South China Sea

"We're well-aware of China's militarization of the South China Sea," Sanders told reporters. "There will be near-term and long-term consequences."

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/03/white-house-china-faces-consequences-for-militarization-of-south-china-sea.html>