

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.74

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ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

29 September 2019: Vietnam's foreign minister warns of escalation in the South China Sea in thinly veiled warning to China

Unilateral actions risk escalating tensions in the South China Sea, Vietnamese Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh said at the United Nations General Assembly, comments aimed at China that avoided mentioning China directly.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3030810/vietnams-foreign-minister-warns-escalation-south-china-sea>

28 September 2019: Chinese Coastguard Ships Scream Out Their Presence In Disputed South China Sea Waters

Chinese Coast Guard vessels that regularly patrol the South China Sea are trying a new tactic in what may be an attempt to assert sovereignty over some disputed areas rich with oil and natural gas reserves. That "tactic" is to make themselves deliberately visible to onshore observers and other ships by turning on their internal tracking signals.

<https://www.ibtimes.com/chinese-coastguard-ships-scream-out-their-presence-disputed-south-china-sea-waters-2835267>

28 September 2019: Malaysia PM says can't provoke Beijing on South China Sea, Uighur issue

Malaysia does not want to take a confrontational stance towards China over the disputed South China Sea and Beijing's alleged mistreatment of its minority Uighur Muslims, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said in an interview published on Saturday.

<https://in.reuters.com/article/malaysia-china/malaysia-pm-says-cant-provoke-beijing-on-south-china-sea-uighur-issue-idINKBN1WD0CQ>

26 September 2019: China Is Building Supersonic Drones to Spy on Navy Aircraft Carriers

A new, apparently very fast drone type made its first public appearance at a rehearsal for a national celebration in Beijing on Sept. 21, 2019. The long, narrow unmanned aerial vehicle, reportedly designated DR-8, appears to be configured for supersonic flight. It likely is a reconnaissance craft.

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/china-building-supersonic-drones-spy-navy-aircraft-carriers-83466>

25 September 2019: Built in six months and new threat to Taiwan - China launches 35,000 ton carrier

China has launched a new amphibious assault carrier in move which defence analysts believe transformed the People's Liberation Army Navy the minute it entered the water. The warship allows marines to capture beaches and land supplies on enemy territory and will operate alongside an increasingly powerful fleet of aircraft carriers, air defence destroyers and underwater drones.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1182575/china-People-s-Liberation-Army-Navy-warship-taiwan-threat>

25 September 2019: China packs coast guard with navy personnel

China has filled its coast guard command with naval personnel in an apparent attempt to shore up its armed presence in contested waters.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/China-packs-coast-guard-with-navy-personnel>

25 September 2019: China Christens 14,000-ton Medical Rescue Ship to Shore up its International Image

China has finished work on a 14,300-ton medical vessel, dubbed the "Peace Ark," that can rescue distressed foreign boats, possibly in Asia's most heavily disputed sea, and help improve Beijing's tattered reputation among regional governments.

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/china-christens-14000-ton-medical-rescue-ship-shore-its-international-image>

24 September 2019: China CNOOC to start pumping at large deepsea gas field at end-2021: official

China's national offshore producer CNOOC Ltd expects its major deepwater gas field Lingshui 17-2 in the South China Sea to start its first gas production at the end of 2021, a company executive said on Tuesday.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-cnooc-gas-deepwater/china-cnooc-to-start-pumping-at-large-deepsea-gas-field-at-end-2021-official-idUSKBN1W918J>

23 September 2019: Exxon's South China Sea Oil Project Tests Chinese Influence

Vietnam's foreign ministry this month sought to shoot down rampant speculation that Exxon will sell its 64% stake in the country's largest offshore energy project Ca Voi Xanh, or Blue Whale, a joint venture with state-owned Vietnam Oil & Gas Group some 80 kilometers (50 miles) from the coast of Danang. While the project sits just outside of China's claims in a nine-dash map of the waters, it would tap the same basin that Beijing is seeking to develop.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-09-23/exxon-s-south-china-sea-oil-project-tests-chinese-influence>

23 September 2019: China criticized for blocking resupply to Navy ship at South China Sea shoal

"Of course, it's objectionable," presidential spokesman Salvador S. Panelo said in mixed English and Filipino at a briefing. He added that the Chinese had no valid reason to block the Philippine ship because it was only trying to bring food.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/china-criticized-for-blocking-resupply-to-navy-ship-at-south-china-sea-shoal/>

19 September 2019: 'Futile' to raise PH, China maritime dispute before UN: Palace

"For one, it's futile exercise. Why? Because UN has no enforcement force," Spokesman of President Rodrigo Duterte Salvador Panelo said.

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/09/19/19/futile-to-raise-ph-china-maritime-dispute-before-un-palace>

18 Sep 2019: Malaysia Seeks Non-Militarization of South China Sea

“In its relations with major powers, Malaysia will practice the non-aligned policy and approach,” the first Pakatan Harapan comprehensive foreign policy document said, underscoring that Prime Minister Mahathir had proposed “non-militarization of the South China Sea and for the regional waters to be turned to a region of peace, friendship and trade.”

<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/malaysia-china-09182019171217.html>

19 September 2019: South China Sea threat: Beijing building new military facilities in disputed region

The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, part of Washington’s Centre for Strategic and International Studies, said new satellite images revealed missile shelters and radar and communications facilities were under construction on Fiery Cross, Mischief and Subi Reefs in the Spratly Islands.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1179276/south-china-sea-militarisation-spratly-islands-china-v-usa>

17 September 2019: All the reasons ExxonMobil may leave Vietnam

While the sea tensions unfold, US energy giant ExxonMobil finds itself increasingly intertwined in the geopolitical row, amid rising speculation Chinese pressure may drive it from a \$10 billion natural gas project in Vietnam-claimed waters.

<https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/09/article/all-the-reasons-exxonmobil-may-leave-vietnam/>

17 September 2019: Del Rosario urges PH gov't to raise arbitral win to 74th UN General Assembly

"The UN General Assembly is an excellent venue because all countries will listen and the Philippines can present a case for the UN to reassert that right is might and the rule of law must be upheld," Albert Del Rosario said in a statement released Monday.

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/09/17/19/del-rosario-urges-ph-govt-to-raise-arbitral-win-to-74th-un-general-assembly>

16 September 2019: China’s New Transport Ship Will Help Fortify Islands in Disputed Sea

The Sansha No. 2 transport ship that passed trial in August can “cover the whole South China Sea,” Chinese state-run Xinhua News Agency reports. The vessel with a displacement of over 8,000 metric tons will help civilian and military work, Xinhua says.

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/chinas-new-transport-ship-will-help-fortify-islands-disputed-sea>

16 September 2019: Copy of rare 18th-century Philippine map sold for \$1 million

The map, first published in 1734 by Jesuit cartographer Pedro Murillo Velarde, drew Scarborough Shoal - referred to back then as Panacot - as part of the Philippines' territories. The shoal lies 358km west of the country's main Luzon island. The tribunal in The Hague sided with the Philippines and struck down China's claim to the South China Sea in 2016. It upheld the Philippines' rights to more than 200 nautical miles of "exclusive economic zone", which included Scarborough. China, however, has ignored the ruling.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/copy-of-rare-18th-century-philippine-map-sold-for-1-million>

13 September 2019: China, Malaysia seek to resolve South China Sea disputes with new dialogue mechanism

"Tensions in the South China Sea have dropped recently. Littoral states and China are committed to appropriately handling the South China Sea issue and jointly safeguarding peace and stability there," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said. "To this end, our two sides have agreed to set up a bilateral consultation mechanism for maritime issues. A new platform for dialogue and cooperation."

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3026957/china-malaysia-seek-resolve-south-china-sea-disputes-new>

12 September 2019: Duterte hasn't given up claim in South China Sea

"He did not say that the Philippines will drop the claim," presidential spokesman Salvador S. Panelo told reporters, referring to Mr. Duterte's discussion with Chinese President Xi Jinping during his recent visit to Beijing. What the president meant was that "the arbitral ruling is still subject to peaceful talks," he added.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/duterte-hasnt-given-up-claim-in-south-china-sea/>

11 September 2019: Duterte says Chinese President Xi Jinping offering gas deal if Philippines sets aside South China Sea arbitration ruling

"Set aside your claim," Mr. Duterte said, quoting Mr Xi. "Then allow everybody connected with the Chinese companies. They want to explore. If there is something, they said, we will be gracious enough to give you 60 per cent, only 40 per cent will be theirs. That is the promise of Xi Jinping."

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippines-duterte-says-xi-offering-gas-deal-if-arbitration-case-ignored>

10 September 2019: Beijing deploys drones for South China Sea surveillance

A network of drones has been deployed by Beijing to watch over the islands and reefs of the disputed South China Sea. The network, run by the Ministry of Natural Resources, covers the uninhabited, hard-to-reach islands as well as the vast open waters of the area, according to the ministry's South Sea Bureau. The drone communication chain has "extremely enhanced our dynamic surveillance of the South China Sea, and expanded our reach to the high seas", the bureau said on its official website.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3026577/beijing-deploys-drones-south-china-sea-surveillance>

6 September 2019: South China Sea ‘likely to top agenda’ when Malaysian foreign minister visits Beijing next week

Malaysia’s foreign minister will visit China next week, Beijing said, with one observer suggesting the trip could provide a fillip for the negotiations on the creation of a code of conduct for the South China Sea.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3026081/south-china-sea-likely-top-agenda-when-malaysian-foreign>

5 September 2019: China Ups the Ante in South China Sea, Giant Crane Vessel Spotted Inside Vietnam-Claimed Waters

The vessel was tracked by Marine Traffic, a website where information on vessel movement can be found. The crane ship left the Chinese coastal city of Zhanjiang last month and arrived just 90 km off the shore of Quang Ngai, located in the middle of Vietnam’s lengthy eastern coastline facing the South China Sea. Named the Lan Jing, the crane ship is thought to be the largest one in the world. It belongs to state-owned China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) and sails under the Hong Kong flag. It has a 7,500-metric ton capacity crane, an additional 4,000-ton crane and an auxiliary 1,600-tonne hook. China has used it before in the South China Sea to install large oil rigs and other offshore structures.

<https://www.ibtimes.com/china-ups-ante-south-china-sea-giant-crane-vessel-spotted-inside-vietnam-claimed-2822461>

4 September 2019: ‘Any suggestion?’ Duterte asks after Xi reaffirms sea claims

“They’re claiming it as their own and the bad part is that they are claiming it as their historical right and they have the control over the property,” Duterte said. “That’s our problem... If you can help by suggesting, is there any other suggestion? Or have you heard of any sane solution short of going to war with China saying, ‘we will not budge’”?

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/any-suggestion-duterte-asks-after-xi-reaffirms-sea-claims/2019/09/04/338cd890-cf80-11e9-a620-0a91656d7db6_story.html

4 September 2019: Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei navies stage drills near South China Sea

The Philippines conducted naval drills with Vietnam and Brunei in the waters adjacent to the South China Sea, while en route to the site of the first-ever maritime exercises between the Association of Southeast Nations (Asean) and the United States

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/179664/philippines-vietnam-brunei-navies-stage-drills-near-south-china-sea>

2 September 2019: OVL seeks 2-year extension for exploring Vietnamese oil block

Officials said ONGC Videsh Ltd, the overseas arm of Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) has applied for a sixth extension to explore Block-128, the licence for which was valid till June 15, 2019.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/ovl-seeks-2-year-extension-for-exploring-vietnamese-oil-block/1693781/>

1 September 2019: Vietnam Says South China Sea Tensions Causing Global Concerns

Many countries and organizations are expressing their stance, which indicate they are worried about threats to peace, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Le Thi Thu Hang said in an email on Sunday. She was responding to a statement by the U.K., France and Germany on Thursday, which called for restraint in the South China Sea without mentioning any parties.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-09-01/vietnam-says-south-china-sea-tensions-causing-global-concerns>

1 September 2019: How Rodrigo Duterte's latest Beijing visit marks a crossroads for China, the Philippines and Asia

The Philippine ambassador to China revealed that the two sides have agreed to common terms of reference for the joint oil and gas exploration deals. Following the Duterte-Xi meeting, the two countries have established a "joint steering committee" as well as a "joint entrepreneurial working committee", involving all relevant officials and energy company leaders, to iron out the details of specific resource-sharing agreements. The final framework will not be completed until at least November. But the devil is in the detail. As the Philippine envoy admitted, the agreement would have to be consistent not only with international law, but also with the Philippine and Chinese constitutions, which have conflicting claims in the South China Sea.

https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3025170/how-rodrigo-dutertes-latest-beijing-visit-marks-crossroads?utm_medium=email&utm_source=mailchimp&utm_campaign=enlz-scmp_china&utm_content=20190902&MCUID=cf7776827f&MCCampaignID=4309102041&MCAccountID=3775521f5f542047246d9c827&tc=11

1 September 2019: Duterte, Xi agree to 'fast track' code of conduct in South China Sea — Palace

"Acknowledging the importance of a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea to regional peace and stability, the two Presidents expressed determination to fast track negotiations for the conclusion of an effective and substantive COC at the soonest possible time," the Palace said in a statement.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/179600/duterte-xi-agree-to-fast-track-code-of-conduct-in-south-china-sea-palace#ixzz5yKWpS9rJ>

31 August 2019: Beijing tells Duterte it won't honor South China Sea ruling

Duterte told Xi that the 2016 ruling of an international arbitration panel in The Hague, in which China had refused to participate, "is final, binding and not subject to appeal." "In response, President Xi reiterated his government's position of not recognizing the arbitral ruling as well as not budging from its position," Philippine leader's spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/09/01/beijing-tells-duterte-it-wont-honor-south-china-sea-ruling/>

30 August 2019: Xi Jinping tells Rodrigo Duterte to ‘put aside’ South China Sea dispute and focus on oil and gas deal

Chinese President Xi Jinping has urged his Philippine counterpart Rodrigo Duterte to “put aside” the maritime dispute between the two countries and instead focus on pushing forward a deal to jointly explore oil and gas in the South China Sea.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3025165/xi-jinping-tells-rodrigo-duterte-put-aside-south-china-sea>

ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

25 September 2019: Philippines’ Teodoro Locsin says Beijing’s South China Sea code is like ‘a manual for feeding a dragon in your living room’

“[Such an agreement would be] implicit recognition of Chinese hegemony,” he said. “In short, a manual for living with a hegemon or the care and feeding of a dragon in your living room.”

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3030230/philippine-foreign-secretary-teodoro-locsin-says-beijings>

18 September 2019: Mahathir to update Malaysia’s foreign policy, including on South China Sea and international Muslim cooperation

“Essentially, the South China Sea should be a sea of cooperation, connectivity and community-building and not confrontation or conflict. This is in line with the spirit of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). Malaysia will actively promote this vision in ASEAN,” New Guiding Framework for Malaysia Foreign Policy.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3027949/mahathir-update-malaysias-foreign-policy-including-south-china>

11 September 2019: What Beijing really wants from South China Sea code of conduct

Speaking at a news conference in Bangkok after the annual China-ASEAN foreign ministers meeting on July 31, Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, Wang Yi attributed the momentum to the “sincerity and resolve of all parties.” “It marks new, major progress in the COC consultations and an important step toward the goal of concluding the consultations within three years,” Wang said. Wang stressed that the first stage of work on the code of conduct, which will regulate activities by China and ASEAN in the South China Sea, has been completed ahead of schedule.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Comment/What-Beijing-really-wants-from-South-China-Sea-code-of-conduct>

9 September 2019: Cambodia not a claimant state in South China Sea dispute

Stating this exclusively to Khmer Times during a recent interview, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said: “Cambodia has to protect its own interest in some matters and its pro-China stance on the South China Sea dispute is understandable.”

“We should not be judging Cambodia’s stance from afar, although a united front on this dispute would be preferable,” he added. “It depends on the claimants and how they manage to convince Cambodia to back their cause.”

<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50641384/cambodia-not-a-claimant-state-in-south-china-sea-dispute/>

5 September 2019: US, ASEAN float together in the South China Sea

The inaugural ASEAN-US Maritime Exercise, (AUMX) covers a vast sea area stretching from Thailand's Sattahip naval base to Vietnam's Gulf of Tonkin and Cape Cà Mau and down to Singapore, a global maritime hub where American Littoral Combat Ships (LTC) are permanently based. As many as 1,260 military personnel, eight warships, and four aircraft from 11 nations are scheduled to participate in the inaugural drills. They will form a combined task force (CTF) for organizing for the current and possible future naval drills in the South China Sea.

<https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/09/article/us-asean-float-together-in-the-south-china-sea/>

OTHER STATES AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

28 September 2019: Extension of defense pact with Singapore will enable US roil S.China Sea waters

Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and US President Donald Trump on September 23 renewed the 1990 Memorandum of Understanding Regarding United States' Use of Facilities In Singapore, a key defense pact between the two countries, and extended it by another 15 years to 2035. How will this move influence security in the Asia-Pacific region? Will peace and stability in the South China Sea be affected? Global Times reporter Li Qingqing talked to two Chinese experts on the issues.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1165806.shtml>

20 September 2019: South China Sea threat: US intervenes in region over Beijing's 'provocative' actions

David Stilwell, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, told the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee White House was committed to its efforts throughout the region. He said: "In Southeast Asia, there is great potential to further expand cooperation with treaty allies Thailand and the Philippines, and with important partners such as Vietnam, Indonesia and Singapore."

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1180741/south-china-sea-usa-southeast-asia-philippines-beijing-indo-pacific-strategy>

17 September 2019: All the reasons ExxonMobil may leave Vietnam

While the sea tensions unfold, US energy giant ExxonMobil finds itself increasingly intertwined in the geopolitical row, amid rising speculation Chinese pressure may drive it from a \$10 billion natural gas project in Vietnam-claimed waters.

<https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/09/article/all-the-reasons-exxonmobil-may-leave-vietnam/>

15 September 2019: South China Sea: US Navy Warship Conducts Freedom of Navigation Operation Near Paracel Islands

On Friday, a U.S. Navy guided missile destroyer conducted a freedom of navigation operation near islands claimed by China and Vietnam in the South China Sea. According

to the U.S. Navy, Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Wayne E. Meyer sailed near unspecified Chinese-held islands in the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea.

<https://thediplomat.com/2019/09/south-china-sea-us-navy-warship-conducts-freedom-of-navigation-operation-near-paracel-islands/>

10 September 2019: Canadian Navy frigate makes transit through Taiwan Strait

For the second time in less than three months, the Royal Canadian Navy carried out a transit of the Taiwan Strait while heading towards the South China Sea.

<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3773725>

10 September 2019: Liberal MP Gladys Liu refuses to say China's actions in South China Sea unlawful

The Liberal MP Gladys Liu was asked multiple times if she believes China's claim to the South China Sea was unlawful, but she refused. "My understanding is that a lot of countries (are) trying to claim ownership, sovereignty of the South China Sea, because of various reasons and my position is with the Australian government," she said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/sep/10/liberal-mp-gladys-liu-refuses-to-say-chinas-actions-in-south-china-sea-unlawful>

10 September 2019: 'Hostile action!' China sends dire threat to UK warships over South China Sea stunt

The chilling warning comes after suggestions the Royal Navy might send its new aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth with US jets onboard to seas off the contested Spratly Islands. The planned mission will see F-35 stealth jets from the US Marine Corps deployed on the 65,000 ton ship. But China's ambassador to the UK, Liu Xiaoming, said Britain "should not do this dirty job for somebody else".

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1176084/china-news-uk-south-china-sea-royal-navy-aircraft-carrier-hms-queen-elizabeth>

8 September 2019: India challenging China's influence in the South China Sea with outreach to Russia and other regional powers, analysts say

India is challenging Chinese influence in the South China Sea with its outreach to regional powers, including Russia, with which it has agreed to launch a maritime route that would partly go through the hotly contested waters, analysts said.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3026120/india-challenging-chinas-influence-south-china-sea-outreach>

5 September 2019: US, China diplomats spar over South China Sea at Indian Ocean Conference in Maldives

US Ambassador to South Korea Harry Harris on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on China in his address at the Indian Ocean Conference in Maldives, leading to a tense environment which saw a Chinese diplomat in the crowd rebutting his claims. He said, "We do not take sides in territorial disputes. What we do believe though is that the great body of water that is called the South China Sea is international water. That the military bases that China has created...(with) literally a great wall of sand in the middle of the South China Sea are all illegal," he said while responding to a question, before Wei

Hongtian's interjection. The moderator tried to defuse the situation by letting China's Ambassador of Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs know that it wasn't the right forum for bilateral rebuttals, but Wei insisted on responding to the US Ambassador's claims. "About the militarisation, freedom of navigation...in the South China Sea, China has indisputable sovereignty over the Nansha Islands (Spratly Islands) in the South China Sea and adjacent waters...."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/us-china-diplomats-spar-over-south-china-sea-at-indian-ocean-conference-in-maldives/videoshow/70986482.cms>

3 September 2019: US destroyer conducts 'freedom of navigation' sail in China Sea

The USS Wayne E. Meyer "sailed within 12 nautical miles of Fiery Cross and Mischief Reefs (on Wednesday) in order to challenge excessive maritime claims and preserve access to the waterways as governed by international law," Cmdr. Reann Mommsen, spokeswoman for the Navy's 7th Fleet in Japan, said in an email.

<https://americanmilitarynews.com/2019/09/us-destroyer-conducts-freedom-of-navigation-sail-in-china-sea/>