

**SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.73**  
**August 2019**

**ACTS OF CLAIMANTS**

**28 August 2019: Vietnam, Malaysia issue joint statement**

Both sides underlined the importance of maintaining peace, stability, security and the rule of law in the region, which includes the safety, security and freedom of navigation and over-flight in the South China Sea and expressed serious concerns over recent developments in the South China Sea. The two sides agreed that disputes shall be resolved through peaceful means, including full respect for legal and diplomatic processes, without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with the principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS.

<https://en.nhandan.org.vn/politics/item/7856902-vietnam-malaysia-issue-joint-statement.html>

**28 August 2019: Statement by the Spokesperson of the European Union on recent developments in the South China Sea**

“Unilateral actions during the past weeks in the South China Sea have resulted in mounting tensions and a deterioration of the maritime security environment which represents a serious threat to the peaceful economic development of the region.

It is crucial for all parties in the region to exercise self-restraint, take concrete steps towards reverting to the status quo ante, refrain from militarising the region and resolve disputes through peaceful means in accordance with international law, notably the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The parties could also seek third party assistance in the form of mediation or arbitration to facilitate the settlement of their respective claims, if deemed useful.”

[https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-Homepage/66749/statement-spokesperson-recent-developments-south-china-sea\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-Homepage/66749/statement-spokesperson-recent-developments-south-china-sea_en)

**28 August 2019: Palace accepts apology of Chinese shipowner in Recto Bank incident**

“In relation to this, we accept the recent apology extended by the owner of the Chinese vessel to our fishermen affected by the incident,” President Palace spokesman Salvador Panelo said. “We likewise welcome the owner’s humility to take responsibility and acknowledgment that compensation must be provided to cover the actual loss,” he added.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/179399/palace-accepts-apology-of-chinese-shipowner-in-recto-bank-incident#ixzz5xxDyXjjX>

**28 August 2019: Ahead of Duterte's China visit, Chinese shipowner apologizes over Recto Bank allision**

“An accidental collision between a Chinese and a Philippine fishing boat in the waters of Reed Bank, Nansha Island Group on the evening of 9 June, caused damage to a Philippine fishing boat. It was fortunate that there were no casualties. I feel deep regret that this accident had to happen and I would like to express my deep sympathy to the Filipino fishermen. The shipowner of the Chinese fishing boat involved, through our Association, would like to express his sincere apology to the Filipino fishermen”.

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/08/28/19/china-apologizes-over-recto-bank-allision>

**27 August 2019: Vietnam, Malaysia to work closely to ensure peace in South China Sea**

“As two friendly neighbours in South China Sea, we agree to work closely with other ASEAN members to respect diplomatic and legal processes and to refrain from the use of force or threats and militarisation.

“.... to fully and strictly adhere to the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and to achieve a substantive, effective and legally binding code of conduct (CoC),”

<https://www.theborneopost.com/2019/08/27/vietnam-malaysia-to-work-closely-to-ensure-peace-in-south-china-sea/>

**26 August 2019: Philippines: Standing its ground amid great power competition**

President Rodrigo Duterte heads to China this week for his fifth trip there since becoming president. He has promised to raise the 2016 United Nations tribunal ruling in the Philippines case against China, which largely found in the Philippines' favour, during his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/philippines-standing-its-ground-amid-great-power-competition>

**25 August 2019: Sino-Philippine bonhomie here to stay**

According to the Department of Finance of the Philippines, five agreements will be signed during Duterte's upcoming visit to China, his fifth official trip to the regional powerhouse since he took office. The deals would cover trade, infrastructure development, border control, etc and are meant to deepen cooperation between the two sides.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1162609.shtml>

**25 August 2019: Beijing not likely to change position on South China Sea – Chinese foreign ministry spokesman**

“First of all, China’s position on the South China Sea arbitration has not changed a bit. Facts have proven that if we handle this issue properly, it will be good for regional peace and stability,” Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Geng Shuang said in a press briefing in the Chinese capital over the weekend.

<https://news.mb.com.ph/2019/08/25/beijing-not-likely-to-change-position-on-south-china-sea-chinese-foreign-ministry-spokesman/>

**24 August 2019: Chinese ship inches closer to Vietnam coastline amid South China Sea tensions**

A Chinese survey vessel on Saturday extended its activities to an area closer to Vietnam’s coastline, ship tracking data showed, after the United States and Australia expressed concern about China’s actions in the disputed waterways.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-china-southchinasea/chinese-ship-inches-closer-to-vietnam-coastline-amid-south-china-sea-tensions-idUSKCN1VE068>

#### **24 August 2019: Chinese Survey Ship Seen Operating Inside Philippine-Claimed Waters, Again**

With another act of maritime defiance against one of its South China Sea neighbors, the Chinese research vessel “Zhang Jian” has again entered the Philippines exclusive economic zone (EEZ) on Friday, Aug. 23. This latest intrusion comes just days after the Philippine government issued a warning that foreign ships will be met with an “unfriendly” response if they decide to pass through Philippine territorial waters.

<https://www.ibtimes.com/chinese-survey-ship-seen-operating-inside-philippine-claimed-waters-again-2817442>

#### **22 August 2019: China, Vietnam Coast Guard Ships Face Off Near Indian Oil Block in South China Sea**

An unnamed Vietnamese government source said, “This is the second intrusion by the Chinese this year, and it began on Aug. 13 at 1500 hours local time.” The source added that the latest intrusion involved six coast guard ships, 10 fishing ships and two service ships along with an H6 bomber, fighter aircraft and mid-air refuelers that had been spotted flying over the economic zone.

<https://www.ibtimes.com/china-vietnam-coast-guard-ships-face-near-indian-oil-block-south-china-sea-2816593>

#### **21 August 2019: ‘Whether you like it or not’: Duterte insists citing arbitral win in talks with Xi**

“Sabi nila hindi pag-usapan, sabi ko no. If I’m not allowed as a president of a sovereign nation to talk whatever I want to talk about then let us not rather talk altogether. ‘Wag na. Do not control my mouth because that is a gift from God,” Philippines’ President Rodrigo Duterte said during an inauguration of an energy plant in Romblon. “So whether you like it or not, it will make you (China) happy or not, angry or otherwise, I’m sorry. But we have to talk about the arbitral ruling.”

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/08/21/19/whether-you-like-it-or-not-duterte-insists-citing-arbitral-win-in-talks-with-xi>

#### **20 August 2019: Philippines' Duterte warns of 'unfriendly' greeting for uninvited warships**

"All foreign vessels passing our territorial waters must notify and get clearance from the proper government authority well in advance of the actual passage," Mr Panelo Salvador, spokesperson of President Rodrigo Duterte said in a statement, quoting Mr Duterte. "Either we get a compliance in a friendly manner or we enforce it in an unfriendly manner," he added.

<https://www.todayonline.com/world/philippines-duterte-warns-unfriendly-greeting-uninvited-warships>

#### **14 August 2019: Chinese survey ship returns to disputed waters claimed by Vietnam**

A Chinese survey vessel has re-entered disputed waters in the South China Sea, according to ship tracking analysis, after a tense month-long standoff in the same area that inflamed tensions between Vietnam and China.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/chinese-survey-ship-returns-disputed-waters-claimed-vietnam-190814045746276.html>

**12 August 2019: Only China interested in oil deal – Locsin**

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. on Sunday said “no other country” wants to conduct joint oil exploration with the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea (WPS or South China Sea) except China.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/only-china-interested-in-oil-deal-locsin/598790/>

**10 August 2019: China won’t budge on sea ruling – envoy**

“Our position has been clearly stated at the very beginning of the filing of the arbitration,” Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Zhao said in a chance interview. “When the result of the arbitration (came out)... we also expressed that we will not accept it and we will not recognize it.”

[www.philstar.com/headlines/2019/08/10/1942161/china-wont-budge-sea-ruling-envoy#bXIWPj7k91ODByc4.99](http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2019/08/10/1942161/china-wont-budge-sea-ruling-envoy#bXIWPj7k91ODByc4.99)

**9 August 2019: Philippines to protest Chinese ships presence amid troubled ties**

The Philippines will lodge a protest over the unannounced presence of two Chinese research vessels in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ), one of at least three diplomatic challenges in recent weeks amid a souring of relations.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-china-southchinasea/philippines-to-protest-chinese-ships-presence-amid-troubled-ties-idUSKCN1UZ0JQ>

**8 August 2019: Chinese Ship Moves Out Of Vietnamese-Claimed EEZ After Standoff**

Devin Thorne, a senior analyst at the Center for Advanced Defense Studies (C4ADS), referring to data gathered by the maritime analytics company called Windward, said that “Ship tracking data show that China’s survey ship has exited the Vietnamese EEZ for now, but at least two of its coast guard escorts remain in the area of the survey.”

“Vietnamese ships pursued Haiyang Dizhi 8 as it returned to Fiery Cross Reef and now appear to be loitering just outside of Vietnam’s EEZ,” Thorne added. It is not known if China plans to return to Vietnam’s EEZ. Windward data indicated that the ship was conducting seismic activity surveys on Vietnam’s offshore oil blocks.

<https://www.ibtimes.com/chinese-ship-moves-out-vietnamese-claimed-eez-after-standoff-2811597>

**8 August 2019: South China Sea: Chinese ship leaves Vietnamese zone, but is it only refuelling?**

“If Beijing has intended to end the stand-off by pulling out the survey ship, why would the ship not return to its home port for good, and pass by Fiery Cross?” said Collin Koh, a research fellow with the Maritime Security Programme at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, noting that coastguard vessels were still there. “So a likely hypothesis is that the Fiery Cross stop is just for refuelling and this means the ship may return to Vanguard Bank.”

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3021916/south-china-sea-chinese-ship-leaves-vietnamese-zone-it-only>

### **7 August 2019: Philippines' Duterte to raise South China Sea ruling with Xi**

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte plans to meet his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping to discuss a 2016 arbitration case over the South China Sea as domestic pressure grows on him to stand up to Beijing.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/philippines-duterte-raise-south-china-sea-ruling-xi-190806082914329.html>

### **6 August 2019: Vietnam police disperse protest at Chinese embassy over South China Sea standoff**

Vietnamese police on Tuesday broke up a brief protest outside the Chinese embassy in Hanoi against Beijing's maritime survey of an offshore block in the southeast Asian nation's exclusive economic zone.

<https://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKCN1UW0GM>

### **5 August 2019: China to hold illegal military drills in South China Sea amid rising tensions**

Hainan Province's Maritime Safety Administration announced Monday its plan to hold military drills near Paracel Islands on 6-7 August. It said the first military training exercise will be held 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesday, August 6, and the second from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday. The exercise will be held in the vicinity of Paracel Islands in the South China Sea.

<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/china-to-hold-illegal-military-drills-in-south-china-sea-amid-rising-tensions-3963117.html>

### **4 August 2019: South China Sea: Worries about bloodbath intensifies as Malaysia confronts Beijing**

Speaking after the ASEAN summit Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah raised concerns about the actions of Chinese warships in the South China Sea. He commented: "We should lessen the presence of warships in the disputed waters to ensure peace and stability, safety and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1161540/South-China-Sea-news-World-War-3-Beijing-Malaysia-dispute-Chinese-Xi-Jinping>

### **3 August 2019: China rebukes accusation of militarizing the South China Sea**

China rejected to be labeled as militarizing the South China Sea, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said. Wang said, with the joint efforts of China and ASEAN countries, the situation of the South China Sea has generally maintained stable and has been improving. "However, to our regret, against the wishes of countries in the region to pursue peace and cooperation, a certain non-regional great power continues to showcase muscles and create tension in the South China Sea, so as to make excuses to boost outpost military manoeuvring in the region," Wang said.

[http://www.china.org.cn/world/2019-08/03/content\\_75062274.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/world/2019-08/03/content_75062274.htm)

## **ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA**

### **23 August 2019: US and ASEAN to hold first joint naval drills near South China Sea**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is holding its first joint military exercise with the U.S. Navy in the Gulf of Thailand early next month.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/US-and-ASEAN-to-hold-first-joint-naval-drills-near-South-China-Sea>

### **18 August 2019: National Day Rally 2019: Singapore wants to remain good friends with US, China; must always be principled in approach, says PM Lee**

"We must always be principled in our approach, and not swayed by emotions," Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in his Mandarin speech at the National Day Rally. "When we can agree with either major power, we will do so. When we cannot, we must maintain and explain our stand."

<https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/national-day-rally-2019-spore-wants-to-remain-good-friends-with-us-and-china-must-always-be>

### **5 August 2019: Malaysia Voices Trust in South China Sea Pact**

Malaysia is confident it can reach an agreement with China to settle tensions in the South China Sea after its neighbors warned that incidents in the disputed waters had "eroded trust". The country is "very hopeful" that a code of conduct for the area will be completed within the three-year deadline or earlier. "We are very hopeful that within three years or perhaps even earlier we can come up with a better understanding of things," Malaysia's Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah said in the interview in Bangkok after the Asean Foreign Ministers Meeting. "We are also hopeful that the U.S. and other superpowers will respect the COC once its implemented."

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-08-04/malaysia-voices-trust-in-south-china-sea-pact-amid-trade-worries>

### **2 August 2019: ASEAN ministers object to coercive South China Sea actions**

Foreign ministers attending the East Asia Summit have expressed deep concern and objection to sovereignty assertions via coercive actions.

<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/asean-ministers-object-to-coercive-south-china-sea-actions-3962158.html>

## **OTHER STATES AND SOUTH CHINA SEA**

### **29 August 2019: US sails warship near contested islands in South China Sea amid tensions with China**

The guided-missile destroyer USS Wayne E. Meyer "sailed within 12 nautical miles of Fiery Cross and Mischief Reef in order to challenge excessive maritime claims and preserve access to the waterways as governed by international law," US Navy Cmdr. Reann Mommsen, a spokesperson for the US 7th Fleet, told CNN in a statement.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/08/28/politics/us-navy-south-china-sea/index.html>

### **28 August 2019: Stop the Bully in the South China Sea**

The State Department weighed in forcefully last week on China's harassment of Malaysian and Vietnamese oil and gas operations in the South China Sea. Spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus blasted Beijing's "Continuing interference with Vietnam's longstanding oil and gas activities," which "calls into serious question China's commitment...to the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes."

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/stop-the-bully-in-the-south-china-sea-11567033378>

### **27 August 2019: Outgoing Navy chief explains how the US is challenging Chinese imperialism**

"I think what has changed there is ... we've kind of normalized our presence there, right? ... it has been our consistent message that we are going to be present."

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/outgoing-navy-chief-explains-how-the-us-is-challenging-chinese-imperialism>

### **26 August 2019: China Escalates Coercion Against Vietnam's Longstanding Oil and Gas Activity in the South China Sea**

"The Department of Defense is greatly concerned by China's continued efforts to violate the rules-based international order throughout the Indo-Pacific. Recently, China resumed its coercive interference in Vietnam's longstanding oil and gas activities in the South China Sea (SCS), directly contradicting Chinese Minister of Defense Wei Fenghe's pledge at the Shangri-La Dialogue that China would "stick to the path of peaceful development." China's actions stand in contrast to the United States' vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region, in which all nations, large and small, are secure in their sovereignty, free from coercion, and able to pursue economic growth consistent with accepted international rules and norms."

<https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/1943953/china-escalates-coercion-against-vietnams-longstanding-oil-and-gas-activity-in/>

### **23 August 2019: South China Sea: US military sends navy ship through strategic Taiwan Strait**

US NAVY chiefs sailed one of their warships through the strategic and highly sensitive Taiwan Strait today in a move bound to fan the flames of one of a growing number of flashpoints in Washington's increasingly hostile relationship with Beijing.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1169529/south-china-sea-news-usa-taiwan-strait-us-navy-ship-beijing-world-war-3>

### **23 August 2019: Vietnam and Australia oppose 'disruptions' to South China Sea oil and gas projects**

During a meeting in Hanoi on Friday between Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc, the leaders expressed "serious concerns" about developments in the South China Sea, including land reclamation and militarisation of disputed features. "They also expressed concern about disruptive activities in relation to long-standing oil and gas projects in the South China Sea," a joint statement said.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3024151/vietnam-and-australia-oppose-disruptions-south-china-sea-oil>



**23 August 2019: US raps China for 'escalation' in South China Sea**

"The United States is deeply concerned that China is continuing its interference with Vietnam's long-standing oil and gas activities in its EEZ," State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said. "This calls into serious question China's commitment ... to the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes".

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/us-raps-china-for--escalation--in-south-china-sea-11834424>

**23 August 2019: Japan builds an island 'wall' to counter China's intensifying military, territorial incursions**

Every day, around the clock, Japan scrambles fighter jets and dispatches coast guard vessels to counter some new Chinese provocation and ward off the intruding boats and planes. It is also building a "wall" of defensive installations, including missile bases, along the chain of subtropical, touristed islands that make up the archipelago's southwestern arc.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/japan-builds-an-island-wall-to-counter-chinas-intensifying-military-territorial-incursions/2019/08/20/802bc282-ae11-11e9-9411-a608f9d0c2d3\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/japan-builds-an-island-wall-to-counter-chinas-intensifying-military-territorial-incursions/2019/08/20/802bc282-ae11-11e9-9411-a608f9d0c2d3_story.html)

**22 August 2019: Australia, Vietnam to talk South China Sea**

Rising tensions in the South China Sea are set to feature when Scott Morrison meets his Vietnamese counterpart during his visit to the southeast Asian nation.

<https://7news.com.au/politics/vietnam-ties-never-been-stronger-morrison-c-410976>

**21 August 2019: White House accuses China of 'bullying' in South China Sea**

"China's recent escalation of efforts to intimidate others out of developing resources in the South China Sea is disturbing," President Donald Trump's national security advisor John Bolton tweeted. "The United States stands firmly with those who oppose coercive behavior and bullying tactics which threaten regional peace and security."

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/179182/white-house-accuses-china-of-bullying-in-south-china-sea#ixzz5xNz0aZGI>

**20 August 2019: 'Five Eyes' on China: US allies + Malaysia conduct exercises**

The U.S. Navy and Coast Guard launched joint drills with Malaysia's navy last week, while U.S. forces joined with those from Australia, Canada and New Zealand for training in the U.S. territory of Guam.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/08/19/five-eyes-on-china-us-allies-malaysia-conduct-exercises/>

**20 August 2019: Goldfein: No 'let-up' in freedom of navigation operations in South China Sea**

Speaking to reporters in Manila on Friday, Gen. Dave Goldfein said, "There will be no let-up in our willingness or our ability to fly or sail where we need to and when we need to."



<https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2019/08/19/goldfein-no-let-up-in-freedom-of-navigation-operations-in-south-china-sea/>

**18 August 2019: U.S. Air Force vows 'no let up' in South China Sea patrols**

"I'll just tell you that there's no let up in our willingness or our ability to fly or sail where we need to and when we need to, and there will be no let up in the future. That's our commitment to the region," General David Goldfein, US Air Force Chief of Staff, said when asked about the degree of deterrence US air and naval patrols are able to provide against China's expansionist actions.

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/237981-united-states-air-force-vows-no-let-up-south-china-sea-patrols>

**13 August 2019: Two U.S. Warships, Marines Denied Port Visits to Hong Kong Amidst Protests**

Chinese officials are denying two U.S. warships port visits to Hong Kong amidst ongoing protests against the government in Beijing

<https://news.usni.org/2019/08/13/two-u-s-warships-marines-denied-port-visits-to-hong-kong-amidst-protests>

**6 August 2019: US carrier sails into South China Sea amid new territorial flare-ups**

A US aircraft carrier has sailed through the disputed South China Sea in the latest show of America's military might amid new territorial flare-ups involving China and three rival claimant states. The US Navy flew a small group of Philippine generals, officials and journalists on Tuesday (Aug 6) to the USS Ronald Reagan, where fighter jets landed and took off by catapult with thunderous blasts.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/us-carrier-sails-into-disputed-waters-amid-new-flare-ups>

**5 August 2019: EU criticises 'militarisation' of South China Sea**

The "militarisation" of the South China Sea is threatening peace in the contested waterway, the EU's top diplomat Federica Mogherini said Monday (Aug 5) in Hanoi, echoing warnings from the US as pressure mounts against Beijing's ambitions in the region. "We believe that this tension, this militarisation, is definitely not conducive to a peaceful environment," she added.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/eu-criticises--militarisation--of-south-china-sea-11782836>

**3 August 2019: Australia joins South China Sea protests**

The Morrison government has joined with the United States and Japan to issue a pointed condemnation of China's increasingly aggressive behaviour in waters to Australia's north, with Beijing pushing ahead on a new front in the contest for dominance over the South China Sea.

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6308132/australia-joins-south-china-sea-protests/?cs=14264>

**1 August 2019: Pompeo blasts Chinese 'coercion' in South China Sea**

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo criticized Chinese “coercion” in the disputed South China Sea, highlighting a divide with Beijing at a meeting of Southeast Asian nations with world powers.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-asean-thailand-pompeo/pompeo-blasts-chinese-coercion-in-south-china-sea-idUSKCN1UR4D2>