

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.76
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ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

29 November 2019: Vietnam, China agree to keep talking in South China Sea dispute

Vietnam and China agreed on Friday (Nov 29) to keep talking and take steps towards peacefully resolving the conflict over the South China Sea, which has seen tensions rising in the region in recent months.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/vietnam-china-agree-to-keep-talking-in-south-china-sea-dispute>

29 November 2019: China Can Switch Off Philippines' Power Grid, Official Says

A Philippine senator has urged for a probe into the implications of China's part-ownership of the national grid after an energy official said China could remotely switch off the country's power supply.

https://www.theepochtimes.com/china-can-switch-off-philippines-power-grid-official-says_3153619.html

28 November 2019: China slams U.S. warships' trespassing in South China Sea

A spokesperson for China's Ministry of National Defense on Thursday slammed U.S. warships and military aircraft's willful and repeated trespassing into the adjacent waters and airspace of China's islands and reefs in the South China Sea.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/28/c_138590727.htm

27 November 2019: Philippines' new 'maritime tsar' keen to promote ties with China

"We are confident that the [new] commandant, a man of vast knowledge, competence and integrity, will continue to lead and advance the [Philippine Coast Guard] to greater heights," said Philippine presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo, hailing the country's incoming "maritime tsar". The country's newly appointed commandant, vice-admiral Joel Sarsiban Garcia, who replaced Admiral Elson Hermogino in late October, is an unorthodox official. Carrying a slew of postgraduate degrees, he is outspoken, spirited and often waxes scholarly on matters of maritime international law with passionate certitude.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3038950/philippines-new-maritime-tsar-keen-promote-ties-china>

26 November 2019: South China Sea issue not discussed during Duterte-Moon meet — Lorenzana

President Rodrigo Duterte and his South Korean counterpart Moon Jae-in did not discuss the South China Sea dispute in their bilateral meeting on Monday, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Tuesday.

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/716851/south-china-sea-issue-not-discussed-during-duterte-moon-meet-lorenzana/story/>

26 November 2019: Indonesia looks to Hawaii, Guam for inspiration to develop South China Sea outpost

Indonesia is looking to Guam and Hawaii for inspiration as it seeks to develop Natuna Islands into an international geotourist location while fortifying its northernmost borders in the contentious South China Sea at the same time.

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/11/26/indonesia-looks-to-hawaii-guam-for-inspiration-to-develop-south-china-sea-outpost.html>

25 November 2019: China tests 2nd naval carrier in South China Sea

China's second aircraft carrier successfully sailed through the Taiwan Straits on Sunday and headed toward a designated area in the South China Sea for testing and training, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy announced on Monday.

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/china-tests-2nd-naval-carrier-in-south-china-sea/>

22 November 2019: China makes representation to U.S. over ships in South China Sea

China lodged stern representations with the United States after U.S. navy ships sailed in the South China Sea near islands claimed by Beijing, foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a daily briefing on Friday.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-southchinasea-mofa/china-makes-representation-to-us-over-ships-in-south-china-sea-idUSKBN1XW0MX>

20 November 2019: South China Sea not a place for super powers' tussle

The South China Sea should be turned into an area to strengthen cooperation, boost connectivity and firm up ties among regional communities, said Defence Minister Mohamad Sabu

<https://themalaysianreserve.com/2019/11/21/south-china-sea-not-a-place-for-super-powers-tussle/>

20 November 2019: Indonesia to build frontier military HQ near South China Sea

Indonesia is planning to fortify its borders by setting up three new Indonesian Military (TNI) headquarters around its northern and eastern fronts, including one in Riau Islands province to keep a watchful eye on developments in the disputed South China Sea "on a much larger scale".

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/11/19/indonesia-to-build-frontier-military-base-near-south-china-sea.html>

18 November 2019: Beijing tells US to stop 'flexing muscles' in South China Sea as it sends new carrier

China's Defense Minister told his US counterpart that Washington must stop "flexing its muscles" in the South China Sea when the two met Monday, according to a spokesman for Beijing.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/11/18/asia/south-china-sea-intl-hnk/index.html>

18 November 2019: China says aircraft carrier on way to South China Sea after Taiwan passage

China's first domestically-built aircraft carrier is on its way to the South China Sea for tests and to take part in exercises, the Chinese navy said on Monday, after sailing through the Taiwan Strait in a mission denounced by Taipei as intimidation.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-taiwan-military/china-says-aircraft-carrier-on-way-to-south-china-sea-after-taiwan-passage-idUSKBN1XS0B0>

17 November 2019: Mohamad Sabu: Growing presence of big powers challenging maritime landscape in South China Sea

The growing presence of big powers in South China Sea has contributed to a challenging maritime landscape which could immensely affect the region, said Defence Minister, Mohamad Sabu today.

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2019/11/17/mohamad-sabu-growing-presence-of-big-powers-challenging-maritime-landscape/1810704>

12 November 2019: Vietnam's war on China's illegal South China Sea map has turned to navigation apps

Hanoi plans to inspect pre-installed navigation apps on Chinese smartphones such as Huawei and Xiaomi to make sure the maps used by their navigation apps do not include China's controversial "nine-dash line," Bloomberg reported recently, citing Vietnam's Tuoi Tre newspaper. Since October, Vietnam has also been barring models of Chinese cars for sale that come with navigation apps displaying that line, which China uses to lay claim to large swathes of the sea and its resources.

<https://qz.com/1746061/vietnams-war-on-chinas-south-china-sea-map-has-turned-to-maps/>

10 November 2019: South China Sea likely to be high on Asean agenda when Vietnam takes the chair

Territorial disputes over the resource-rich South China Sea are expected to feature prominently in engagements between China and Asean next year as Vietnam prepares to take over as chairman of the regional body.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3037028/south-china-sea-likely-be-high-asean-agenda-when-vietnam-takes>

9 November 2019: China Warns Vietnam to Not 'Complicate' South China Sea Dispute By Seeking Legal Arbitration

Vietnam "needs to avoid taking actions that may complicate matters or undermine peace and stability in the South China Sea as well as our bilateral relations," Geng Shuang, a spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said on Friday, responding to a question on Vietnam possibly pursuing arbitration. "The core of the South China Sea issue is territory, a matter related to the occupation of China's Nansha Islands by Vietnam and other countries concerned. I hope the Vietnamese side will face up to the historical fact, keep to our high-level consensus and resolve differences through dialogue and consultation," he also said. China refers to the Spratly Islands as the Nansha Islands.

<https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/china-warns-vietnam-to-not-complicate-south-china-sea-dispute-by-seeking-legal-arbitration/>

9 November 2019: South China Sea: Top secret underwater drone tested in disputed waters by Beijing

The Chinese Academy of Sciences said the autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) - dubbed Sea-Whale 2000 - has completed a non-stop 37-day sea trial covering a distance of 1,250 miles. Its mission path remains top-secret but defence analysts said the drone's range means it could easily cover the Paracel and Spratly islands – claimed by China but also neighbouring Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines – and return to base in Sanya, Hainan.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1202224/south-china-sea-spratly-islands-paracel-underwater-drone-sea-whale-2000>

8 November 2019: Jackie Chan cancels Vietnam charity visit after South China Sea backlash

Martial arts film star Jackie Chan's planned visit to Vietnam for a charity has been cancelled following an online backlash related to Beijing's expansive claims in the disputed South China Sea.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3036933/jackie-chan-cancels-vietnam-charity-visit-after-south>

7 November 2019: Vietnam mulls legal action over South China Sea dispute

Speaking at a conference in Hanoi, deputy foreign minister Le Hoai Trung said Vietnam preferred negotiations but did have other options for the disputed waterway. "We know that these measures include fact-finding, mediation, conciliation, negotiation, arbitration and litigation measures," Trung said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-southchinasea/vietnam-mulls-legal-action-over-south-china-sea-dispute-idUSKBN1XG1D6>

6 November 2019: PH resumes stamping Chinese passports with disputed 9-dash line

Ending a 7-year protest, the Philippine Bureau of Immigration said on Wednesday, November 6, that it will now resume stamping Chinese passports that bear China's invalid "nine-dash line" claim over the West Philippine Sea.

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/244254-philippines-resumes-stamping-chinese-passports-disputed-9-dash-line>

6 November 2019: Duterte, Abe: COC crucial in South China Sea

President Duterte and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe discussed the South China Sea issue, particularly the need for a Code of Conduct, as the way to go to address tensions in the region.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2019/11/06/duterte-abe-coc-crucial-in-south-china-sea/>

5 November 2019: South China Sea Tsunami Advisory Center starts full operation

The South China Sea Tsunami Advisory Center (SCSTAC) started full operation on Tuesday, providing service for nine nations.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/05/c_138530806.htm

5 November 2019: China fired warning flares at PHL planes, general tells House panel

China has fired warning flares against Philippine military aircraft conducting maritime patrols in the West Philippine Sea, a military official told a House committee on Tuesday. <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/714325/china-fired-warning-flares-at-phl-planes-general-tells-house-panel/story/>

1 November 2019: Navy wraps up 10 days of training with Brunei in South China Sea

U.S. and Brunei armed forces finished their 25th annual maritime training exercise Thursday at Muara Naval Base, Brunei, after more than a week of operations in the South China Sea. <https://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/navy-wraps-up-10-days-of-training-with-brunei-in-south-china-sea-1.605451>

30 October 2019: Manila, Beijing Establish Joint Body for Energy Exploration in South China Sea

Manila and Beijing have formed a joint inter-governmental body to coordinate an exploration deal for tapping energy resources in the South China Sea, Philippine officials announced Wednesday, in a move that President Rodrigo Duterte earlier had said could ease tensions in the disputed waters. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/energy-10302019161901.html>

ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

17 November 2019: US Defense Sec. Esper slams China in meeting with ASEAN counterparts

US Defense Secretary Mark Esper rebuked China's behavior in the South China Sea in a meeting Sunday with his Southeast Asian counterparts. Esper, speaking at the ASEAN-US ministerial meeting of the annual ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus, also cast doubts on Beijing's sincerity in forging a "meaningful" Code of Conduct with the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations. "China's activities there are a threat not only to other claimants and to many Southeast Asian nations, but to all trading nations who value freedom of the seas, and the peaceful settlement of disputes," Esper said at the meeting.

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/overseas/11/17/19/us-defense-sec-esper-slams-china-in-meeting-with-asean-counterparts>

15 November 2019: Beijing's South China Sea stance and US 'truancy' set to headline ASEAN defence meeting

Fears about China's increasingly bellicose actions in the South China Sea and the "truancy" of senior US leaders from recent Southeast Asian diplomatic events will be among the key talking points at this weekend's meeting of regional defence chiefs, analysts said, despite host nation Thailand's hopes participants will steer clear of controversial issues.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3037872/beijings-south-china-sea-stance-and-us-truancy-set-headline>

6 November 2019: South China Sea alert: Trump's no show sparks furious diplomatic row with ASEAN leaders

ASEAN heads of state were deeply disappointed that Donald Trump chose not to attend the summit and sent a low-level diplomatic delegation instead, headed by Trump's national security adviser Robert O'Brien. In a sign of their anger, many ASEAN states including key American allies and partners, skipped the annual ASEAN-US summit. As a result, they missed Mr O'Brien speech, in which he reaffirmed the US' commitment to maintain freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1200605/south-china-sea-news-world-war-3-asean-donald-trump-china-philippines-cambodia-vietnam>

4 November 2019: China says U.S. Should not 'Gesticulate' about the South China Sea Issue

China's foreign ministry said on Monday that the United States should not "gesticulate" about the South China Sea issue.

<https://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/China-says-US-should-not-gesticulate-about-South-China-Sea-issue-606781>

4 November 2019: US envoy decries Chinese 'intimidation' in South China Sea

"Beijing has used intimidation to try to stop ASEAN nations from exploiting the off-shore resources, blocking access to 2.5 trillion dollars of oil and gas reserve alone," US envoy Robert O'Brien told on Monday the ASEAN-US summit in a speech in Bangkok, Thailand.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/envoy-decries-chinese-intimidation-south-china-sea-191104050635259.html>

3 November 2019: Beijing says 'ready to work' with ASEAN on South China Sea rules

Beijing said Sunday it is "ready to work" with Southeast Asian nations on a code of conduct in the flashpoint South China Sea, where it is accused of bullying fellow claimants and building up military installations.

<https://www.france24.com/en/20191103-beijing-says-ready-to-work-with-asean-on-south-china-sea-rules>

3 November 2019: Duterte in ASEAN: Let's exercise 'self-restraint' in South China Sea

While calling for the enforcement of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), President Rodrigo Duterte urged leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on Saturday, November 2, to exercise "self-restraint" in effecting their claims.

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/244019-duterte-to-asean-exercise-self-restraint-south-china-sea>

3 November 2019: Beijing pledges 'long term peace' in South China Sea where its ASEAN neighbours also stake claims

China is hopeful for “new progress” to be made in ongoing talks with the Asean bloc for a code of conduct governing the disputed South China Sea, Premier Li Keqiang said at a summit on Sunday, as other regional leaders called for countries to exercise restraint over the row.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3036097/beijing-pledges-long-term-peace-south-china-sea-where-its>

3 November 2019: Duterte calls on ASEAN to discuss resolving South China Sea dispute

President Rodrigo Duterte on Saturday called on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to discuss the territorial dispute over the South China Sea as it keeps on creating uncertainty and instability among its members.

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/713984/duterte-calls-on-asean-to-discuss-resolving-south-china-sea-dispute/story/>

OTHER STATES AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

28 November 2019: Abbott says 'it's time' for naval exercises in the South China Sea

Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott says "it's probably time" the navy performed freedom of navigation exercises in the highly contested South China Sea, a move that would provoke serious conflict with our largest trading partner.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/abbott-says-it-s-time-for-naval-exercises-in-the-south-china-sea-20191128-p53f02.html>

25 November 2019: US to rev up sea, air operations in SCS

The United States military intends to further increase sea and air activities over the disputed South China Sea in keeping with its resolve to keep the vital sea lane free and open to maritime and air navigation. Admiral Philip Davidson, commander of the Hawaii-based US Indo-Pacific Command, declared this before the Halifax International Security Forum in Nova Scotia, Canada where he was one of the key speakers last Saturday.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2019/11/25/1971619/us-rev-sea-air-operations-scs>

24 November 2019: Russia Has No Reliable Info on 'Nuke Blast' in South China Sea, Trying to Check Claims – Official

Director of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) Sergey Naryshkin has stated that Moscow doesn't have reliable information about an alleged underwater nuclear blast in the South China Sea. He added that Russia is currently trying to verify these reports through various sources.

<https://sputniknews.com/asia/201911231077384237-russia-has-no-reliable-info-on-nuke-blast-in-south-china-sea-but-trying-to-check-claims--official/>

22 November 2019: U.S. warships sail in disputed South China Sea, angering China

U.S. Navy warships twice sailed near islands claimed by China in the South China Sea in the past few days, the U.S. military told Reuters on Thursday, at a time of heightened tension between the world's two largest economies.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-southchinasea-military/u-s-warships-sail-in-disputed-south-china-sea-angering-china-idUSKBN1XV2NS>

20 November 2019: U.S. to provide ship to Vietnam to boost South China Sea patrols

The United States announced on Wednesday it will provide Vietnam with another coast guard cutter for its growing fleet of ships, boosting Hanoi's ability to patrol the South China Sea amid tensions with China.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-usa-military/us-to-provide-ship-to-vietnam-to-boost-south-china-sea-patrols-idUSKBN1XU0UP>

20 November 2019: The Navy has 2 new ships operating in the South China Sea to send a message to China

The US Navy is strengthening its presence in the South China Sea by deploying two Independence-class ships specialising in near-shore operations.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/navy-littoral-combat-ships-south-china-sea-message-to-china-2019-11>

19 November 2019: Esper urges 'very public posture' on Chinese sea claims

The U.S. defense chief has urged governments affected by China's sweeping territorial claims in the South China Sea "to take a very public posture" and assert their sovereign rights, adding that acting collectively is the best way to send a message "to get China on the right path."

<https://www.yourvalley.net/stories/esper-urges-very-public-posture-on-chinese-sea-claims,116028>

19 November 2019: India committed to free, open South China Sea: Rajnath

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh here on Tuesday met Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore Heng Swee Keat and said India was committed to an open and free South China Sea.

<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/india-committed-to-free-open-south-china-sea-rajnath/1666326>

19 November 2019: US vows more support to govt amid South China Sea tensions

US Defence Secretary Mark Esper yesterday vowed more support for the Philippines in efforts to modernise the country's military and improve maritime security as tensions build over the disputed South China Sea.

<https://www.gulf-times.com/story/648044/US-vows-more-support-to-govt-amid-South-China-Sea->

19 November 2019: US Navy sends littoral combat ships to 'bolster attack strength in South China Sea'

The US Navy is strengthening its presence in the South China Sea by deploying two Independence-class ships specialising in nearshore operations.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3038450/us-navy-sends-littoral-combat-ships-bolster-attack-strength>

19 November 2019: We often go to South China Sea as international 'law of the sea' is at risk there: French Navy Chief

French Navy Chief Admiral Christophe Prazuck said in New Delhi, "I don't think that Chinese Navy is hiding anything about their global appreciation and global ambition." "There are different behaviours in South China Sea. First, why do we go there six, seven or ten times a year? We go there because international law of the sea is at risk in this area of the world. We don't want to participate in to the regional contexts about the islands," he added

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/we-often-go-to-south-china-sea-as-international-law-of-the-sea-is-at-risk-therefrench-navy-chief/articleshow/72120924.cms>

14 November 2019: US Defence Secretary Mark Esper starts second Indo-Pacific tour with bid to counter Chinese power

US Defence Secretary Mark Esper is making his second tour of the Indo-Pacific as the United States looks to reaffirm its commitment to the region and put pressure on China.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3037784/us-defence-secretary-mark-esper-starts-second-indo-pacific>

13 November 2019: US warship sails through Taiwan Strait in 'routine' operation

A US Navy warship sailed through the Taiwan Strait on Tuesday in what it called a "routine" operation, continuing an exercise by Washington to exert influence in the region and in a tense period ahead of Taiwan's critical presidential election.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3037486/us-warship-sails-through-taiwan-strait-routine-operation>

12 November 2019: U.S. and China to hold joint drills despite trade war and tensions

The Chinese military's official website announced Tuesday that "the People's Liberation Army (PLA)'s Eastern Theater Command and the US Army Pacific (USARPAC) will hold a joint humanitarian rescue and disaster relief exercise in Hawaii from November 14 to 24." The annual training, which was held around this same time last year, was established by "consensus reached by the Chinese and US militaries," the Chinese side wrote.

<https://www.newsweek.com/us-china-joint-drills-tensions-1471258>

12 November 2019: Confront Beijing in South China Sea: Top Defence and DFAT bureaucrat

Former head of the Defence and Foreign Affairs and Trade departments, Dennis Richardson, has set the cat among the pigeons, calling on Australia and the Royal Australian Navy in particular to take the fight to China in the South China Sea in defiance of Beijing and in support of the global 'rules based order'.

<https://www.defenceconnect.com.au/maritime-antisub/5130-confront-beijing-in-south-china-sea-top-defence-and-dfat-bureaucrat>

11 November 2019: To gauge France's South China Sea intentions, look at what it does, not what it does not say

As he scrambled to help French businesses win lucrative contracts and protect the European Union's commercial interests ahead of a possible solution to the trade war between China and the United States, President Emmanuel Macron of France was careful not to publicly raise objections to Chinese policy in the South China Sea during his recent trip to Shanghai and Beijing.

<https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3036790/gauge-frances-south-china-sea-intentions-look-what-it-does-not-what>

31 October 2019: South China Sea fury: US deploys Coast Guard for first time since Cold War to halt Beijing

As part of its deployment the USCG will carry out joint exercises with regional partners. Admiral Karl Leo Schultz, commandant of the USCG, told Asia Times in a recent interview that: "There are ongoing discussions, ongoing planning efforts" to support the US Indo-Pacific Command's (INDO-PACOM) operations in the South China Sea.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1197951/south-china-sea-news-world-war-3-donald-trump-us-navy-vietnam-philippines-beijing>