

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.77
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ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

29 January 2019: China accuses US of ‘ill intentions’ in South China Sea

“The US ship’s deliberate provocation during the traditional lunar Chinese New Year festival, which harbored ill intentions, is a naked act of navigational hegemony,” Senior Colonel Li Huamin, spokesman for the People’s Liberation Army’s southern command, said in a statement Tuesday. “China has indisputable sovereignty over the South China Sea and its islands, and no matter how the US deliberately schemes, comes up with new tricks, provokes and stirs up trouble, its efforts will be fruitless.”

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/01/29/china-accuses-us-of-ill-intentions-in-south-china-sea.html>

28 January 2020: Locsin blames US for loss of Panatag shoal to China

Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. blamed the United States Obama administration for why the Philippines lost control of Panatag (Scarborough Shoal) off Zambales province to China, in 2012.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/184585/locsin-blames-us-for-loss-of-panatag-shoal-to-china#ixzz6CHknfAo3>

24 January 2020: ‘Let time heal,’ Duterte says of South China Sea dispute

President Rodrigo Duterte said he would prefer to “let time heal” rather than make a fierce stance on the continuing territorial dispute over the South China Sea. In an interview aired Friday by Russian television network RT, the President cautioned the response may not be “contained” should the Philippines make a “reckless move” like Vietnam.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1219171/let-time-heal-duterte-says-of-south-china-sea-dispute#ixzz6C82OvoIv>

21 January 2020: PH Navy eyes Hanjin's Subic shipyard as submarine base

The Philippine Navy (PN) plans to construct the base of its proposed submarine arm inside the facility of the cash-strapped Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction (HHIC-Phils) in Subic Bay, Zambales.

<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1091472>

21 January 2020: Fishers who exposed Chinese hunt for Scarborough clams go missing

Authorities on Tuesday flew over the West Philippine Sea in search of 7 missing fishermen, 2 of whom were among those who raised the alarm on China's alleged mass pillaging of giant clams in the resource-rich waterway last year

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/01/21/20/7-fishers-who-exposed-chinese-hunt-for-scarborough-clams-go-missing>

19 January 2020: China likely to step up coastguard port calls as part of South China Sea soft power play, analysts say

Beijing is likely to send more coastguard vessels on port calls to try to take the rough edges off the service's image as part of a militia fleet used to press territorial claims in the South China Sea, analysts said.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3046500/china-likely-step-coastguard-port-calls-part-south-china-sea>

17 January 2020: Fishing vessels from Rembang ready to depart for Natuna

Some 35 vessels weighing more than 75 gross tons owned by fishermen from Rembang, Central Java, are set to leave for the Natuna Sea following President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's instruction to utilize Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for the welfare of Indonesian fishermen.

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/01/17/fishing-vessels-from-rembang-ready-to-depart-for-natuna.html>

15 January 2020: Philippine, Chinese Coast Guards Stage Joint Drill in South China Sea

Philippine and Chinese ships on Wednesday staged the first joint drill between their coast guards in waters off Manila in the South China Sea, where both countries have rival territorial claims, officials said. A Chinese Coast Guard ship with pennant number 5204 and the BRP Tubbataha, a 44-meter (144-foot) multi-role response Philippine vessel, took part in the exercises aimed at achieving "interoperability at sea," the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said.

<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/philippine/coast-guards-joint-drill-01152020135718.html>

13 January 2020: Chinese coast guard and fishing vessels still trespass Indonesian EEZ

Three Indonesian naval ships found many Chinese coast guard and fishing vessels remain in Indonesia's exclusive economic zone near Natuna waters on Saturday or four days after President Joko Widodo's recent visit to Natuna District in Riau Islands Province.

<https://en.antaranews.com/news/139568/chinese-coast-guard-and-fishing-vessels-still-trespass-indonesian-eez>

10 January 2020: PH Coast Guard: No proof Chinese boats in West PH Sea are part of militia

Philippine Coast Guard commandant Admiral Joel Garcia on Friday argued that there was no sufficient evidence to prove that Chinese fishing boats in the West Philippine Sea are serving as part of a maritime militia.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/183056/ph-coast-guard-no-proof-that-chinese-boats-in-west-ph-sea-are-part-of-militia#ixzz6B3zMI6Kd>

9 January 2020: AFP: Dozens of Chinese vessels spotted near Pag-asa Island

Chinese fishing vessels continue to stay near Pag-asa (Thitu) Island in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea). Western Command chief Vice Adm. Rene Medina said Wednesday there were 38 stationary Chinese boats surrounding the sandbars of Pag-asa as of Tuesday night.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/182982/afp-dozens-of-chinese-vessels-spotted-near-pag-asa-island>

9 January 2020: President Jokowi plays down stand-off with China in the Natunas to ease tensions

President Joko Widodo wrote on Facebook: "I asked the Indonesian military (TNI) Commander, are there foreign ships entering Indonesian territorial sea? As it turns out, none. In this zone (EEZ), international ships can pass freely, and Indonesia has the rights over the natural resources and to exercise its rule of law including capturing or chasing away vessels trying to "illegally exploit the natural wealth".

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/president-jokowi-plays-down-standoff-in-the-natunas-with-china-to-ease-tensions>

9 January 2020: Chinese Vessels Withdraw from Disputed Waters, Indonesia Says

Chinese fishing vessels and coast guard ships accused of intruding into waters near the Natuna Islands withdrew on Thursday, a day after Indonesian President Joko Widodo visited the area and asserted the country's rights over the disputed waters.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-09/chinese-vessels-withdraw-from-disputed-waters-indonesia-says>

8 January 2020: Indonesia deploys fighter jets amid stand-off with China

Indonesia's air force deployed four fighter jets to the South China Sea yesterday amid a stand-off with Beijing after Jakarta protested against Chinese violation of its exclusive economic zone.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesia-deploys-fighter-jets-amid-stand-off-with-china>

8 January 2020: Indonesia's president visits Natuna island in waters disputed by China

President Joko Widodo visited an island in waters disputed by China on Wednesday (Jan 8) to assert Indonesia's sovereignty amid a standoff between Indonesian and Chinese vessels.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/indonesia-joko-widodo-natuna-islands-visit-china-dispute-12243770>

7 January 2020: Not about sovereignty: Luhut explains Natuna spat with China

Coordinating Maritime Affairs and Investments Minister Luhut Pandjaitan told reporters in Jakarta: "We shouldn't be too quick to say that we are selling out our sovereignty [to China]. Let me be clear that the EEZ [exclusive economic zone] has to do with the economy and not sovereignty – these are two very different beasts."

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/01/07/not-about-sovereignty-luhut-explains-natuna-spat-with-china.html>

7 January 2020: PH rolls out red carpet for China at sea as other neighbors protest incursions

While the country's neighbors have been recently pushing back against Beijing's extensive maritime claims, the Philippines has chosen to roll out the red carpet for the Asian superpower. The Philippine and Chinese coast guards will hold maritime exercises next week, Philippine Coast Guard spokesperson Capt. Arman Balilo said on Tuesday (Jan. 7).

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/182931/ph-rolls-out-red-carpet-for-china-at-sea-as-other-neighbors-protest-incursions#ixzz6AOhxwoty>

6 January 2020: Indonesia deploys 4 additional warships to Natuna amid standoff with Chinese vessels

Indonesia on Monday (Jan 6) deployed four additional warships to the Natuna Islands, after Chinese vessels refused to leave the area. The warships will join four other vessels that are currently patrolling in the Natuna area, near the disputed South China Sea.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/indonesia-china-natuna-islands-dispute-south-china-sea-12237456>

5 January 2020: Indonesia beefs up patrols after China boat spat

Indonesia is stepping up sea and aerial patrols of islands near the disputed South China Sea, an official said Saturday, following a diplomatic spat over "trespassing" Chinese vessels. Military aircraft and three warships with some 600 navy, army and air force personnel have been deployed to waters around the Natuna islands, which border the South China Sea.

<https://theaseanpost.com/article/indonesia-beefs-patrols-after-china-boat-spat>

1 January 2020: Indonesia rejects China's claims over South China Sea

Indonesia said on Wednesday it rejected China's claims over a disputed part of the South China Sea as "having no legal basis", after two days earlier protesting to Beijing over the presence of a Chinese coastguard vessel in its territorial waters.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-china-southchinasea/indonesia-rejects-chinas-claims-over-south-china-sea-idUSKBN1Z01RE>

ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

17 January 2020: ASEAN ministers vow to cooperate on Rohingya, South China Sea issues

Southeast Asian foreign ministers ended talks in Vietnam on Friday with pledges to continue cooperating on key issues, including facilitating the repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar and reducing South China Sea tensions. A statement issued after the two-day informal meeting by Vietnamese Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh said that besides those issues, the ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations also considered plans for a special summit with the U.S. President Donald Trump.

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2020/01/d1c936282abf-update1-asean-ministers-vow-to-cooperate-on-rohingya-s-china-sea-issues.html>

OTHER STATES AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

28 January 2020: U.S. Navy sails warship near disputed islands in South China Sea for first time in 2020

A spokesman for the U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet told The Japan Times that the USS Montgomery, an advanced littoral combat ship, had "asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the Spratly Islands, consistent with international law." The latest FONOP "upheld the rights, freedoms and lawful uses of the sea," 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Joe Keiley said, adding that the Montgomery had "challenged the restrictions on innocent passage imposed by China, Vietnam, and Taiwan." The Montgomery passed near the Chinese-held Fiery Cross Reef, home to a 3,000-meter military-grade runway, and Johnson Reef, Pentagon photos showed.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/01/28/asia-pacific/us-navy-warship-disputed-islands-south-china-sea-first-2020/#.XjDIV2gzaUk>

26 January 2020: Japan and China vie for influence in Indonesia

Indonesia is seeking to curb Chinese influence over its fishing waters in the South China Sea with help from Japan. Yet, at the same time, Tokyo must ensure the plans do not endanger its own rapprochement with Beijing.

<https://www.dw.com/en/japan-and-china-vie-for-influence-in-indonesia/a-52156813>

17 January 2020: US Navy warship Shiloh sails through Taiwan Strait on 'routine transit' after island's election

A US Navy warship sailed through the Taiwan Strait on Thursday, Taiwan's defence ministry and the US Navy confirmed, in the wake of the island's presidential election last weekend. Joe Keiley, a spokesman for the US 7th Fleet, on Friday said the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Shiloh conducted a "routine Taiwan Strait transit" in a demonstration of "the US commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific".

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3046502/us-navy-warship-sails-through-taiwan-strait-routine-transit>

15 January 2020: Chinese delegates cut South China Sea references from resolution

Chinese delegates at an international summit in Canberra have successfully removed references to the disputed South China Sea in a resolution promoting freedom of navigation in the region. The wording was this week watered down in negotiations at Parliament House, where more than 300 representatives from about 30 countries gathered for the 28th Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/chinese-delegates-cut-south-china-sea-references-from-resolution-20200115-p53rm2.html>

15 January 2020: Japan urges stronger action on South China Sea

Japan has urged much stronger action from countries in the region to counter China's aggressive move into the South China Sea, describing China's island building as a threat to peace in the Asia Pacific.

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6580767/japan-urges-region-to-stronger-action-on-south-china-sea/?cs=14264>

10 January 2020: Indonesia asks Japan to invest in Natuna islands following stand-off with China

Indonesia's President Joko Widodo on Friday (Jan 10) asked Japan to step up investment in fisheries and energy in the Natuna islands following a stand-off with China in waters near the disputed South China Sea. Widodo made the request during a visit to Jakarta by Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, the president's office said in a statement. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/indonesia-asks-japan-to-invest-in-natuna-south-china-sea-12249996>

7 January 2020: Japan and Vietnam vow to uphold rule of law in South China Sea as top diplomats meet

Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and his Vietnamese counterpart, Pham Binh Minh, on Monday underscored the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation and the rule of law in the South China Sea, taking aim at China's militarization of outposts in disputed areas of the sea. At a meeting in Hanoi, Motegi and Minh also agreed to coordinate Japan's push for a free and open Indo-Pacific with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' efforts to promote stable growth in the region, according to the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/01/07/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-vietnam-rule-of-law-south-china-sea/#.XhUrlUczaUk>