

**SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.80**  
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**ACTS OF CLAIMANTS**

**30 March 2020: Satellite image shows Chinese military plane on Kagitingan Reef**

A Chinese military plane landed on Kagitingan Reef (Fiery Cross Reef) in the West Philippine Sea on Saturday, March 28, a satellite image showed. In a tweet on Sunday, March 29, the Israel-based satellite imaging service company ImageSat International said a Chinese military Y-8 transport aircraft landed on the artificial island, "probably bringing supplies." "Routine operation of transport aircraft in the South China Sea area could indicate that the Chinese military is hardly affected by the country's health crisis," ImageSat said in the tweet.

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/256421-satellite-image-shows-chinese-military-plane-kagitingan-reef-march-2020>

**26 March 2020: Respect Vietnam's sovereignty over Spratly Islands, China told**

Vietnam has demanded China respects its sovereignty over the Truong Sa archipelago following reports two research stations on its reefs have become operational.

"All activities on the Truong Sa (Spratly) and Hoang Sa (Paracel) Islands must receive Vietnam's approval. Vietnam asks that China respects its sovereignty and refrain from actions which could escalate tensions, complicate the situation and affect peace and stability in the East Sea and the region, as well as efforts of countries in the negotiation process for the South China Sea Code of Conduct (COC)," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Le Thi Thu Hang said Thursday. The East Sea is known internationally as the South China Sea.

<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/respect-vietnam-s-sovereignty-over-spratly-islands-china-told-4075332.html>

**26 March 2020: China conducts second methane hydrate test in the South China Sea**

China extracted 861,400 cubic metres of natural gas from methane hydrate, known as "flammable ice", during an one-month trial production in the South China Sea, state television reported on Thursday, citing the land and resources ministry.

<https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/china-conducts-second-methane-hydrate-test-in-the-south-china-sea-cctv-2020-03-26>

**24 March 2020: Chinese Maritime Militia on the Move in Disputed Spratly Islands**

A fleet of Chinese ships has been moving this month through the Union Banks, a collection of small land features disputed between China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan. Among the most significant features in this area are the Chinese-controlled Hughes Reef and Johnson Reef, and Vietnam's Sin Cowe Island and Collins Reef. These ships were identified as part of China's infamous maritime militia by the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative in January 2019.

<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/philippine/philippines-china-03242020174342.html>

### **24 March 2020: Chinese warplanes to get new coatings to make them harder to detect**

Chinese military aircraft are to be painted with “low observable” coatings and standardised markings under new guidelines, a move observers say will assist with operations near Taiwan and in the East and South China seas. The guidelines require markings including the national flag and service insignia to be gradually standardised on both active and future warplanes, the official PLA Daily newspaper said earlier this month.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3076335/chinese-warplanes-get-new-coatings-make-them-harder-detect>

### **23 March 2020: Taiwan Coast Guard Reports Chinese Speed Boat Harassment Near Kinmen**

Taiwan’s Coast Guard Administration (CGA) has reported that one of its vessels was damaged by Chinese speed boats last week. On Friday, the CGA said that an incident took place on March 16 involving the 9th Offshore Flotilla of the Taiwanese coast guard, based at Kinmen.

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/03/taiwan-coast-guard-reports-chinese-speed-boat-harassment-near-kinmen/>

### **21 March 2020: Chinese naval planes conduct anti-submarine drills in South China Sea**

Chinese military aircraft recently conducted an anti-submarine drill over the South China Sea, the People’s Liberation Army said on Friday, amid a growing number of patrols and exercises by US warships in the region. The drill, which involved two aircraft, was conducted earlier this month, not long before the US naval and marine units took part in expeditionary strike force training in the disputed waters, the PLA Navy said in a report. While acknowledging the difficulties involved in such an operation, the report said the aircraft successfully identified several suspicious objects. “Anti-submarine exercises are like trying to find a needle in a haystack. It’s difficult, the underwater hydrological conditions are complex,” Yu Yang, the captain of one of the aircraft, was quoted as saying.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3076273/chinese-naval-planes-conduct-anti-submarine-drills-south-china>

### **20 March 2020: New research stations come into operation on Nansha Islands**

Two new research stations under the Integrated Research Center for Islands and Reefs of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) have been officially put into operation. The Yongshu research station and Zhubi research station, with a number of laboratories on ecology, geology and environments, can support scientists in field investigation, sampling and scientific research on Nansha Islands, according to a source of the CAS. The Yongshu station has built several real-time monitoring systems for coral reef ecosystem, vegetation ecology and freshwater conservation. The Zhubi station has completed the project design of monitoring systems for geological disaster and freshwater conservation.

<http://en.people.cn/n3/2020/0320/c90000-9670724.html>

### **12 March 2020: China to roll out warship even as it battles Covid-19**

Chinese state-run media reported that the country was all set to launch its second Type 075 amphibious assault ship soon with an eye on combating Taiwan. The second Type 075 amphibious assault ship, being built in Hudong Zhonghua shipyard in Shanghai, is about to be launched, as its construction, including the hull and flight deck, is already complete, according to The Global Times, an English-language newspaper. "An amphibious assault ship is a type of warship which analysts believed will play a crucial role in reunifying the island of Taiwan by force, if it comes to that, and even more are needed," The Global Times reported, quoting unnamed Chinese analysts.

[https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-to-roll-out-warship-even-as-it-battles-covid-19/articleshow/74587189.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-to-roll-out-warship-even-as-it-battles-covid-19/articleshow/74587189.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

### **11 March 2020: Hainan's research vessel headed to South China Sea**

South China's Hainan has begun conducting bottom research in the deep-sea part of the South China Sea. According to [www.chinanews.com](http://www.chinanews.com), the Tanso-1 research vessel will be conducting the scientific work. The project is carried out with the participation of the Chinese Academy of Sciences' specialists. During its implementation, it is planned to test the manned bathyscaphe "Shanghai Yunshi" ("Deep Warrior"), which is able to study resources, flora and fauna with immersion up to 4.5 km below sea level. "We intend to study the seamounts and plains in the South China Sea, as well as the geology and degree of environmental pollution," said a leading specialist in the field of deep-sea research at Sun Yat-sen University.

<https://tass.com/science/1129299>

### **12 March 2020: Silent running: China embraces undersea warfare**

The challenge of undersea warfare has never been the forte of the Chinese navy. Once reliant on the imported Russian Kilo-class diesel submarines, the Middle Kingdom's nuclear subs are considered noisy, with their "boomers" [Jin class SSBNs] only recently taking up an actual "deterrent patrol."

<https://asiatimes.com/2020/03/china-embraces-uuvs-in-undersea-warfare/>

### **12 March 2020: China slams US for warship sailing in disputed waters**

Beijing yesterday accused the United States of a "provocative" act by sending a warship into disputed territorial waters in the South China Sea. The USS McCampbell missile destroyer sailed near the Paracel Islands on Tuesday without authorisation, according to the People's Liberation Army.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/china-slams-us-warship-sail-disputed-waters-1879444>

### **10 March 2020: PH mission to UN asserts tribunal ruling junking China's nine-dash line claims in South China Sea**

The Philippines has quietly put forward to the United Nations an international tribunal ruling which found no basis for China's claim to virtually the entire South China Sea but which the Duterte administration has set aside.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/186062/ph-mission-to-un-asserts-tribunal-ruling-junking-chinas-nine-dash-line-claims-in-south-china-sea#ixzz6GOX9oqgZ>

### **9 March 2020: DFA list shows 45 diplomatic protests filed vs China for aggression in West Philippine Sea**

The Philippine government has sent at least 45 diplomatic protests over Chinese actions in the West Philippine Sea since President Rodrigo Duterte assumed office in 2016.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/185940/dfa-list-shows-45-diplomatic-protests-filed-vs-china-for-aggression-in-west-philippine-sea>

### **5 March 2020: Indonesia detains 'illegal' Vietnamese fishing boats in islands off South China Sea**

Indonesia says it has detained dozens of crew from Vietnamese boats fishing illegally in waters that were the scene of a diplomatic spat with China earlier this year. The maritime ministry said five fishing boats and some 68 crew members were seized after being intercepted on Sunday near Indonesia's Natuna islands, which border the South China Sea, most of which is claimed by Beijing.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3065270/indonesia-detains-illegal-vietnamese-fishing-boats-islands>

### **4 March 2020: Chinese Search-and-Rescue Ship Moves to Fiery Cross Reef**

A Chinese rescue ship recently showcased with patriotic zeal in the nation's state media has started operating in and around Fiery Cross Reef, a land feature disputed between China, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Vietnam in the South China Sea, Radio Free Asia has learned. The Nan Hai Jiu 115, according to the Office of Naval Intelligence's navy recognition guide, is operated by China's Ministry of Transportation, and is responsible for rescue and salvage services at sea. The presence of China's maritime rescue service and ships in the area reinforces the official narrative that Beijing has benign intentions in its creation of artificial islands and other infrastructure in the South China Sea where its expansive claims are disputed by neighboring nations. But the ship could also play a support role for Chinese maneuvers that put pressure on other claimants.

<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/philippine/philippines-china-03042020113532.html>

### **2 March 2020: PH military spots 136 Chinese vessels near Pag-asa Island since January 2020**

More than 100 Chinese vessels have been spotted near the Philippine-occupied Pag-asa (Thitu) Island in the West Philippine Sea since the start of the year, in what could be a sign that Beijing has all but ignored Manila's diplomatic protests and consultative talks to continue its aggression in the area. Vice Adm. Rene Medina, head of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) Western Command (Wescom), said they have monitored 136 Chinese fishing vessels near Pag-asa from Jan. 1 to Feb. 25.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/185765/ph-military-spots-136-chinese-vessels-near-pag-asa-island-since-january-2020#ixzz6FXljz5AC>

#### **ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA**

##### **20 March 2020: Coronavirus: ASEAN summit in Vietnam postponed until end-June**

A summit of South-east Asian and other international leaders scheduled in Vietnam early next month has been postponed until end-June due to worries about coronavirus, Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Thursday (March 19). Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc has informed leaders of other South-east Asian countries about the postponement, the ministry said.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/asean-summit-in-vietnam-postponed-until-end-june-over-coronavirus>

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

##### **27 March 2020: US military aircraft activity near Taiwan increasing**

Planes from the US Seventh Fleet have been sighted frequently above the South China Sea in the past several days, and a US Navy EP-3 reconnaissance plane was seen flying close to Taiwanese airspace southwest of Kaohsiung yesterday, according to posts by the Twitter account Aircraft Spots.

<https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2020/03/26/2003733390>

##### **26 March 2020: US warship sails through Taiwan Strait during virus spat**

The US Pacific Fleet sent a tweet on Thursday (Mar 26) confirming the USS McCampbell, a guided missile destroyer, had transited the strait a day earlier. Taiwan's defence ministry said the vessel was on a "routine mission" through the waterway separating the self-ruling island from Chinese mainland. The ship's passage comes at a time of heightened political tensions between the US and China - and after Beijing has repeatedly buzzed Taiwan with military jets and ships despite the global COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/us-warship-sails-through-taiwan-strait-during-virus-spat-12577834>

##### **24 March 2020: US Navy launches live-fire missiles in 'warning to China'**

In the drill in waters east of the Philippines on Thursday, the guided-missile destroyer USS Barry launched a medium-range Standard Missile-2, the US Seventh Fleet said on its Facebook page. It was accompanied by the guided-missile cruiser USS Shiloh, which also launched an SM-2 during the drill.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3076768/us-navy-launches-live-fire-missiles-warning-china?fbclid=IwAR2hqIZa0CKW8hT200-t0dbrmJm3EOcsQ3e6Riqw94DYGE4YWseAMfjBueA>

##### **22 March 2020: Navy sends coronavirus test kits to warships in the Pacific**

The U.S. Navy said Saturday it has sent coronavirus test kits to forward-deployed warships in the Western Pacific. It's the first time the Navy has announced it has moved COVID-19 test kits to ships at sea. The Navy's 7th Fleet said in a statement the kits have

been sent to the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt and the amphibious assault ship USS America underway in the South China Sea.

<https://www.foxnews.com/world/navy-sends-coronavirus-test-kits-to-warships-in-the-pacific>

**17 March 2020: US intrusions in S.China Sea can be stopped by electromagnetic weapons: experts**

To counter US' repeated trespasses into Chinese territorial waters, the Chinese military has the option of using new approaches, including the deployment of electromagnetic weapons, Song Zhongping, a Chinese military expert and commentator, told the Global Times on Tuesday. Firing at US warships is not a good choice unless the US fires first, and that would result in the start of a China-US military conflict, Song said, noting that bumping into US ships might also not be a good counter, as lessons have been learned from the Black Sea bumping incident between the Soviet Union and US in 1988. But the use of electromagnetic weapons, including low-energy laser devices, could be viable, as they can temporarily paralyze US ships' weapon and control systems without visible conflict but can send a strong warning, according to Song. Electromagnetic weapons can emit electromagnetic waves that can potentially jam electronic devices of target vessels and will not cause casualties, military observers said.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1182886.shtml>

**17 March 2020: Theodore Roosevelt, America strike groups conduct expeditionary strike force training**

The Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group, America Expeditionary Strike Group and 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) conducted expeditionary strike force operations March 15-18. The training, the second that the two strike groups have conducted since February, put the full spectrum of the Navy-Marine Corps team on display, demonstrating their ability to effectively plan and conduct operations across the broad, dynamic spectrum of naval disciplines.

<https://www.cpf.navy.mil/news.aspx/130567>

**6 March 2020: The Marines want a missile to chase down moving ships in the South China Sea and other contested waterways**

The US Marine Corps says it needs ground-launched missiles that can seek out and eliminate enemy ships sailing in contested waterways. "Part of the homework that the Navy and Marine Corps have done over the past six months is how we think we're going to need to operate in the future as an integrated naval force," Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday.

<https://www.businessinsider.sg/the-marines-want-missiles-that-can-chase-down-moving-ships-2020-3?r=US&IR=T>

**6 March 2020: China rejects report it fired laser at US Navy plane**

China's Defense Ministry says a report one of its navy ships fired a laser last month at a U.S. Navy surveillance plane circling overhead does not "accord with reality." However, ministry spokesman Ren Guoqiang was quoted as saying Friday that the ministry

“refuted” the report and said a Chinese squadron was conducting routine exercises in international waters on Feb. 17 when the incident allegedly happened.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/03/07/asia-pacific/china-rejects-report-fired-laser-u-s-navy-plane/#.XmXxVagzaUk>

#### **04 March 2020: What Does a Second Aircraft Carrier Visit Mean for US-Vietnam Relations?**

This week, a U.S. aircraft carrier will make a port call in Vietnam’s coastal city of Da Nang – just the second visit of its kind since the end of the Vietnam War, following the first in early 2018. Though the move has long been in the works and is just a single engagement, it nonetheless bears noting given its significance for U.S.-Vietnam ties and Washington’s regional approach more generally.

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/03/what-does-a-second-aircraft-carrier-visit-mean-for-us-vietnam-relations/>

#### **3 March 2020: Aircraft Carrier Roosevelt Will Visit Vietnam This Week**

USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) is expected to pull into Da Nang, Vietnam, for a port visit this week, U.S. Indo-Pacific commander Adm. Phil Davidson confirmed on Tuesday. Theodore Roosevelt’s visit to Vietnam marks the second time a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier has visited the nation since the end of the Vietnam War. In 2018, USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70) visited Da Nang. U.S. destroyers began making port calls in Vietnam in 2004.

<https://news.usni.org/2020/03/03/aircraft-carrier-roosevelt-will-visit-vietnam-this-week>