

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.86
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ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

28 September 2020: China holds simultaneous military drills in four seas, again

China began five military exercises simultaneously along different parts of its coast on Monday, the second time in two months it will have such concurrent drills against a backdrop of rising regional tension.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-china-defence-idUKKBN26J1KC>

25 September 2020: Malaysia will not follow US sanctions against 24 Chinese companies: ambassador

Malaysia will not take sides and follow the US and impose sanctions on 24 Chinese companies the US accuses of advancing China's militarization of the South China, Malaysian Ambassador to China Raja Nushirwan Zainal Abidin told the Global Times in a recent exclusive interview.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1202039.shtml>

24 September 2020: Palace says Duterte's UN remarks on South China Sea a restatement of PH policy

Malacañang on Thursday refused to acknowledge as a "strong statement" President Rodrigo Duterte's raising of the legal victory of the Philippines against China in the South China Sea row before the United Nations Assembly, saying that the remarks were a mere "restatement" of the existing policy of his administration. "I don't think it's a strong statement. It was a restatement of an old, existing policy," Duterte's spokesman Harry Roque said in a televised Palace press briefing.

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1339688/palace-says-dutertes-un-remarks-on-south-china-sea-a-restatement-of-ph-policy#ixzz6Z0smNbBq>

23 September 2020: In UN Speech, Duterte Stiffens Philippines' Stance on the South China Sea

President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines has taken an outspoken position on disputes in the South China Sea, describing a 2016 arbitral tribunal award that struck down virtually all of China's claims in disputed waters as "beyond compromise."

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/09/in-un-speech-duterte-stiffens-philippines-stance-on-the-south-china-sea/>

21 September 2020: Navy welcomes support for South China Sea ruling

VAdm. Giovanni Carlo Bacordo, Navy chief, was referring to the joint note verbale by the European countries, making a stand as state parties to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos), which acknowledges the freedom of passage in international waters. "We welcome the statement of support given by France, Germany and the UK on the narratives of the ruling made by the PCA (Permanent Court of Arbitration) when it ruled in favor of the Philippines," he told reporters.

<https://www.manilatimes.net/2020/09/21/news/top-stories/navy-welcomes-support-for-south-china-sea-ruling/770220/>

20 September 2020: South China Sea: Indonesia on high alert after appearance of Chinese vessel

A Chinese coast guard vessel has imposed itself in Indonesian waters – some 1500km from mainland China – insisting the area belongs to Beijing. Now Indonesia is mobilising more patrols to expel unwanted intruders.

<https://www.news.com.au/technology/innovation/military/south-china-sea-indonesia-on-high-alert-after-appearance-of-chinese-vessel/news-story/e0c2221d4dc363dde9ee1789c203425f>

19 September 2020: PH execs cheer Euro nations’ pushback vs China, but . . .

Former and incumbent government officials welcomed the note verbale the United Kingdom, France and Germany jointly issued to oppose China’s expansive claims in the South China Sea, but remained sharply divided on the next steps to take. Malacañang expressed its gratitude to the three European nations for backing the 2016 arbitral ruling that favored the Philippines and rejected China’s sweeping maritime claims. “We thank these nations, because our win in the arbitral ruling that says China has no legal basis to claim the entire South China Sea cannot be erased, and that the historical claims to maritime territories are baseless,” presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said at a press briefing in Baguio City.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/190999/ph-execs-cheer-3-euro-nations-pushback-vs-china-but#ixzz6Yaf8Ccrq>

16 September 2020: Beijing accuses US Air Force of disguising spy plane missions as Malaysian civilian airliners over South China Sea

China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said that the US Air Force has been flying missions over the South China Sea disguised with Malaysian civil aircraft codes, and that the action is provocative and dangerous.

<https://taiwanenglishnews.com/beijing-accuses-us-air-force-of-disguising-spy-plane-missions-as-malaysian-civilian-airliners-over-south-china-sea/>

16 September 2020: PH will ‘push as hard as it can’ to complete talks on South China Sea code – Locsin

The Philippines will “push as hard as it can” for the completion of negotiations on the South China Sea code of conduct (COC), an accord that seeks to prevent the escalation of tensions in the disputed waterway, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said on Wednesday.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/190908/ph-will-push-as-hard-as-it-can-to-complete-talks-on-south-china-sea-code-locsin#ixzz6YOzudKub>

16 September 2020: Carpio joins team suing Xi Jinping for crimes against humanity in the South China Sea

Former Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario announced Wednesday that Carpio, an expert on the law of the sea, will serve as lawyer in charging Xi for crimes against humanity for Beijing’s illegal moves in the disputed waters. Carpio retired from the Supreme Court in October 2019. Prior to that, he was a key member of the panel which

haled Manila's complaint against China's sweeping territorial claims in the South China Sea to an international tribunal in The Hague, which the country won in July 2016.

<https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/9/16/Antonio-Carpio-ICC-crimes-against-humanity-Xi-Jinping.html>

16 September 2020: Indonesian patrol confronts Chinese ship in economic zone near disputed South China Sea

An Indonesian patrol ship confronted a Chinese coast guard vessel that spent almost three days in waters where Indonesia claims economic rights and are near the southernmost part of China's disputed South China Sea claims.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/indonesian-patrol-confronts-chinese-ship-in-economic-zone-near-disputed-south-china-sea/articleshow/78138691.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

13 September 2020: Duterte to China: Resolve sea row based on international law

President Rodrigo Duterte told a senior Chinese official that disputes in the South China Sea must be resolved in accordance with international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Malacañang said on Saturday.

The President made the statement to China's Defense Minister Wei Fenghe, who paid a courtesy call on him at the Palace on Friday while on a visit to Manila.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/190825/duterte-to-china-resolve-sea-row-based-on-intl-law#ixzz6Y4HWyjQn>

11 September 2020: Indonesia rejects Chinese request for military base

Indonesian Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto told his Chinese counterpart, Wei Fenghe, that his country would not accept a request for a Chinese military base in the country, reports said Friday (Sept. 11). The conversation occurred during a meeting between the two top defense officials in Jakarta on Sept. 8, according to a report by Indonesian publication Kompas. Indonesia occupies a strategic location on the southern edge of the South China Sea and on the main sea route between China and the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4006820>

11 September 2020: China, Philippines defence chiefs discuss South China Sea as Beijing pledges US\$20 million donation

China on Friday pledged to donate US\$20 million worth of non-combat equipment to the Philippines as defence minister Wei Fenghe met his counterpart Delfin Lorenzana as well as President Rodrigo Duterte in Manila. Wei, fresh from a tour of three other Southeast Asian capitals, agreed with Lorenzana on closer cooperation between their militaries and the continuation of dialogue to manage the ongoing South China Sea dispute, statements from both sides said. The defence ministers held a ceremonial signing inside military headquarters Camp Aguinaldo for the donation of equipment to be used for humanitarian and disaster relief operations, the fourth such donation from Beijing since 2017.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3101258/china-and-philippines-agree-closer-military-cooperation>

9 September 2020: Lack of local media coverage on China defence minister's visit here puzzling, says Chin Tong

Former defence deputy minister Liew Chin Tong has highlighted today the lack of local media coverage of China's State Councilor and Defense Minister Wei Fenghe's visit to Malaysia on Monday. The senator said the issue was puzzling, and urged Putrajaya not to take sides in the dispute between the United States and China amid rising tensions on the South China Sea. "I too have no idea why there was no media coverage on the visit. It's a big and important event. "China and the US are two great powers who have importance in the region so I really can't tell you why local media were not given coverage and you guys had to find out from your sources in China," Liew said during a press conference today in Parliament.

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/09/09/lack-of-local-media-coverage-on-china-defence-ministers-visit-here-puzzling/1901593>

8 September 2020: Indonesia, Malaysia Host Chinese Defense Minister

Visiting Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe met with his Indonesian counterpart, Prabowo Subianto, to discuss tensions in the South China Sea and to coordinate efforts against COVID-19, an Indonesian Defense Ministry spokesman said Tuesday. Wei's Indonesia visit came one day after he met Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin in Kuala Lumpur, and ahead of a series of ASEAN ministerial meetings from Wednesday to Saturday, where tensions in South China Sea are expected to be discussed. Prabowo spokesman Dahnil Anzar Simanjuntak said the ministers discussed cooperation in the defense sector. "On the South China Sea, Indonesia is committed to promoting intense dialogue to maintain peace in the region," Dahnil told BenarNews.

<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/defense-ministers-09082020184210.html>

8 September 2020: South China Sea: China's defence minister heads to Brunei, Philippines after visits to Malaysia and Indonesia

China's defence minister Wei Fenghe on Tuesday met his Indonesian counterpart Prabowo Subianto in Jakarta, a day after visiting Malaysia's leader in Kuala Lumpur, as Beijing seeks to balance US influence in the Asia-Pacific amid rising tensions in the South China Sea.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3100602/south-china-sea-chinese-defence-minister-wei-fenghe-turns>

8 September 2020: China continues to improve artificial islands in South China Sea — Lorenzana

Aside from maintaining presence in the South China Sea, Beijing continues to develop its artificial islands in the area, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Tuesday.

Lorenzana confirmed that Chinese troops are always present on China's "big three" islands — Fiery Cross, Mischief and Subi Reefs — in the disputed South China Sea.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/09/08/2040941/china-continues-improve-artificial-islands-south-china-sea-lorenzana>

7 September 2020: Amid Chinese presence, Navy wants to stay in Sangley Point

The Philippine Navy is opposing a plan by the Cavite provincial government to boot the military service command out of Sangley Point in Cavite as part of a P500-billion airport project that is expected to ease congestion at Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) in neighboring Manila. Vice Adm. Giovanni Carlo Bacordo, the Navy's flag officer in command, cited particularly the involvement in the project of China Communications Construction Co. Inc. (CCCC), one of the Chinese companies recently banned by the United States for its alleged role in the illegal construction of artificial islands on maritime features in the South China Sea, including the West Philippine Sea within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

Read more: <https://globalnation.inquirer.net/190707/amid-chinese-presence-navy-wants-to-stay-in-sangley-point#ixzz6XQRx1EGw>

3 September 2020: South China Sea: Beijing warns ASEAN members against backing 'troublemaker' US in region

Beijing has dialled up the pressure on its Southeast Asian neighbours ahead of key talks in the South China Sea dispute, with a senior diplomat warning them against backing US efforts in the region. Luo Zhaohui, China's deputy foreign minister for Asian affairs, also said negotiations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on a code of conduct in the waterway would resume on Thursday after being delayed by the coronavirus pandemic. The talks began in 2002 but have stalled over Beijing's insistence that "countries outside the region" be excluded, an apparent reference to the United States. Asean nations are increasingly torn between the feuding superpowers amid a growing risk of an all-out confrontation in the region.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3100145/south-china-sea-beijing-warns-asean-members-against-backing>

2 September 2020: China envoy says projects in PH 'lawful and beyond reproach'

The participation of Chinese firms in projects in the Philippines is "legitimate, lawful and beyond reproach," Beijing's top diplomat in Manila said Tuesday. China-led projects in the Philippines will all push through as planned, Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Huang Xilian said even after the US announced sanctions against several Chinese firms involved in Beijing's island-building in the South China Sea.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/190561/beyond-reproach-envoy-says-china-projects-in-ph-legitimate-lawful#ixzz6XGbTe8cM>

1 September 2020: South China Sea: Duterte rejects call to drop contracts with Chinese firms

As Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte rejected his foreign secretary's strong recommendation to end business deals with Chinese firms that built artificial islands in the South China Sea, an analyst said banning these companies would make them accountable for their "crime against humanity".

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3099793/south-china-sea-duterte-rejects-call-drop-contracts-chinese>

ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

10 September 2020: AMM-53: Hishammuddin talks on leadership in ASEAN, South China Sea, Rohingya and Palestine

Speaking on the South China Sea, the Foreign Minister said Malaysia remains firm in its commitment to safeguard its sovereignty, sovereign rights, and interests in the area. "As Malaysia has consistently stated, the South China Sea issue must be managed and resolved in a rational manner, through dialogue and consultations, utilising the appropriate fora and diplomatic channels," he said at the session chaired by Vietnam Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh. All parties also must refrain from undertaking activities that would complicate matters in the South China Sea and that the ASEAN Foreign Ministers must look at all avenues and approaches to ensure the region is not complicated further by other powers, he added.

<https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/amm53-hishammuddin-talks-leadership-asean-south-china-sea-rohingya-and-palestine>

10 September 2020: ASEAN summit: South China Sea, coronavirus pandemic cast a shadow

Southeast Asia's top diplomats are holding their annual summit with the coronavirus pandemic and rising tensions in the South China Sea amid escalating rivalry between the United States and China topping the agenda.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/09/asean-summit-south-china-sea-coronavirus-pandemic-cast-shadow-200909074124055.html>

9 September 2020: U.S. becoming driver of militarization in South China Sea, senior China diplomat says

The Chinese government's senior diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi, said on Wednesday the United States is directly intervening in territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea due to its own political needs. It is becoming the biggest driver of militarization in the region, Wang said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-southchinasea/u-s-becoming-driver-of-militarization-in-south-china-sea-senior-china-diplomat-says-idUSKBN2602DV>

9 September 2020: South China Sea Conduct Talks to Resume by November: Philippine Official

Negotiations between Asean countries and China over a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea will resume no later than November, Philippines Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin said during a virtual meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-09/south-china-sea-conduct-talks-to-resume-by-nov-locsin>

OTHER STATES AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

20 September 2020: US Coast Guard report criticises China for illegal fishing and aggressive tactics

The US Coast Guard had harsh words for China in a new report on illegal fishing, calling for like-minded nations to unite against predatory states at sea in a thinly veiled warning

to Beijing. The report, released on Thursday, also criticised China's armed fishing militia, which several studies said Beijing has used to enforce its claims in the highly contested South China Sea by swarming the waters around disputed islands with vessels in order to push out fisherman and soldiers from other claimant countries.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3102212/us-coast-guard-report-criticises-china-illegal-fishing-and>

17 September 2020: France, Germany, UK reject China's sweeping claims in South China Sea in joint note verbale

France, Germany and the United Kingdom filed a joint note verbale with the United Nations in New York, rejecting China's sweeping claims over the South China Sea.

In a note verbale dated Sept. 16, the three nations said that "historic rights" over the South China Sea waters "do not comply" with international law and provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/overseas/09/17/20/france-germany-uk-reject-chinas-sweeping-claims-in-south-china-sea-in-joint-note-verbale>

16 September 2020: Marines practiced taking down a hostile ship in the South China Sea in a 'flex' at China

US Marines conducted a simulated takedown of a hostile ship in the South China Sea last week in a supposed "flex" against Chinese claims in the hotly disputed waters, according to a press release from the service.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/marines-practiced-takedown-hostile-ship-in-the-south-china-sea-2020-9>

10 September 2020: ASEAN nations should not allow themselves to be 'bullied' by Beijing in South China Sea, Pompeo says

UN Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday urged Southeast Asian nations to reconsider deals with Chinese companies blacklisted by Washington for building island outposts he says Beijing is using to "bully" rival claimants in the disputed South China Sea.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/diplomacy/article/3101058/asean-nations-should-not-allow-themselves-be-bullied-beijing>

31 August 2020: US sanctions over South China Sea will not affect blacklisted Chinese construction giant CCCC, company says

The dredging business of state-owned engineering giant China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) will not be adversely affected by fresh US sanctions, but questions remain as to whether there could be reputational damage to its Australian and US subsidiaries, including a marine engineering group in Texas.

<https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3099526/us-sanctions-over-south-china-sea-will-not-affect-blacklisted>