

**SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.87**  
**October 2020**

**ACTS OF CLAIMANTS**

**26 October 2020: China Lurks Around Disputed South China Sea Features For Months on End**

China's coastguard and maritime militia are nothing if not persistent when it comes to making their presence felt around hotly disputed reefs and islets in the South China Sea. Ship-tracking data and satellite imagery reviewed by Radio Free Asia shows that Chinese vessels have lurked for five months, with little interruption, at the Scarborough Shoal off the Philippines; for three months at Vanguard Bank off Vietnam's southern coast; and seven months at the Union Banks, where both China and Vietnam have outposts.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/southchinasea-lurking-10262020174503.html>

**23 October 2020: Lorenzana: No budget for deployment of maritime militias in West Philippine Sea**

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana on Friday said there is no budget yet as regards the plan to deploy maritime militias in the West Philippine Sea. Lorenzana told reporters that President Rodrigo Duterte had said there are no resources yet for the plan so it is better if it will not push through yet.

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/761113/lorenzana-no-budget-for-deployment-of-maritime-militias-in-west-philippine-sea/story/>

**22 October 2020: South China Sea missile drills to blame for Taiwanese plane being turned back at Hong Kong, source says**

Missile drills in the South China Sea and aeronautical limitations were the reasons a Taiwanese aircraft was denied entry into Hong Kong airspace en route to the Pratas Islands last week, according to a military insider. "The People's Liberation Army [PLA] was conducting an air-to-air missile exercise in the South China Sea in the morning [on Thursday] when the Taiwanese aircraft was heading to the Dongsha Islands," a Beijing-based military source close to the PLA said, using the Chinese name for the group of three atolls.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3106532/south-china-sea-missile-drills-blame-taiwanese-plane-being>

**20 October 2020: Philippines' PNOC and CNOOC to start South China Sea venture by 2021**

The Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) reportedly said that it aims to start an energy exploration venture with China's state-owned CNOOC in the South China Sea by next year.

<https://www.offshore-technology.com/news/pnoc-cnooc-to-start-south-china-sea-venture/>

**19 October 2020: Philippines' PXP Energy in talks with CNOOC on South China Sea development**

The Philippines' PXP Energy Corp said it was in ongoing negotiations with China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC) relating to a memorandum of understanding

between Manila and Beijing on joint oil and gas development in the South China Sea. In a market disclosure, PXP said on Monday (Oct 19) the talks were being handled by Forum (GSEC 101), a subsidiary of its unit Forum Energy, but the parties had yet to agree on any disclosable definitive agreement.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/philippines-pxp-energy-in-talks-with-cnooc-on-south-china-sea-13311716>

### **16 October 2020: China hopes to work with Philippines on S.China Sea energy projects**

China hopes it can work together with the Philippines in jointly developing energy projects in the South China Sea, foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a daily briefing on Friday. Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte has lifted a moratorium on petroleum exploration in the South China Sea, paving the way for three projects to resume, including a possible joint venture with China.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/southchinasea-philippines-energy-idUSB9N2G504A>

### **15 October 2020: Philippines' Duterte approves resumption of energy projects in South China Sea**

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte has lifted the moratorium on petroleum exploration in the South China Sea, paving the way for three projects to resume, including a possible joint venture with China. Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi said on Thursday that service contractors were notified to resume energy-related activity in the area, which had been suspended from 2014 due to territorial disputes.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-philippines-energy/philippines-duterte-approves-resumption-of-energy-projects-in-south-china-sea-idUSKBN2701VP>

### **13 October 2020: AFP chief contradicts Lorenzana: South China Sea 'becoming more tense'**

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief General Gilbert Gapay said that the South China Sea situation "remains volatile and uncertain" – quite different from the picture painted by Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana just the day before. "The situation in South China Sea remains volatile and uncertain. We have seen aggressive actions in the part of China in reclaiming the area and deploying warships there and coast guards are very visible in the area as their maritime militias there," Gapay said at a Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP) forum on Tuesday, October 13.

<https://www.rappler.com/nation/afp-chief-contradicts-lorenzana-south-china-sea-more-tense>

### **13 October 2020: China warns Asian countries to be vigilant on U.S strategy**

The Chinese government's top diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi, on Tuesday urged Asian countries to remain "vigilant" over the risk of U.S. strategy stoking geopolitical competition in the South China Sea and other parts of the region.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-malaysia-china-wang-yi-idUKKBN26Y0JZ>

### **12 October 2020: Navy militias to patrol PH waters, protect Filipino fishers amid dispute with China**

The Philippine Navy is building up its own maritime militia force to keep an eye on the country's territorial waters. "These are our counterparts for Chinese maritime militia," said Navy Chief Vice Admiral Giovanni Carlo Bacordo at a Senate budget hearing on Monday (Oct. 12). He told senators the Philippine Navy militia would patrol areas in the West Philippine Sea and Bajo de Masinloc.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/191519/navy-militias-to-patrol-ph-waters-protect-filipino-fishers-amid-dispute-with-china#ixzz6auFaLrXv>

### **12 October 2020: China urges Malaysia to 'fairly investigate' held fishermen**

China on Monday (Oct 12) called on Malaysia to "fairly investigate" the cases of Chinese fishermen held for allegedly operating illegally in Malaysian waters. China has sent personnel to visit detained crew members from six boats seized on Friday and provide them with personal protective equipment and other assistance, foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told reporters.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/malaysia-chinese-fishermen-boats-detained-south-china-sea-13263428>

### **11 October 2020: China's push lets foreign poachers steal our fish, say experts**

China's dominance in the South China Sea, and the big power rivalry in the area, has led to foreign fishing vessels poaching in Malaysia's rich marine resources, say experts and fishermen. Thomas Benjamin Daniel, of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), told FMT: "The pervasiveness of the South China Sea dispute, and China's dominating role in it, has impacted coastal fishermen in Sabah and Sarawak. "Besides reports of illegal Chinese fishing in Malaysian waters, China has also forced Vietnamese fishermen to fish further south and into our waters. Malaysia's capacity to constantly monitor such a huge stretch of water is also limited."

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2020/10/11/chinas-push-lets-foreign-poachers-steal-our-fish-say-experts/>

### **10 October 2020: Malaysia captures 60 Chinese nationals and 6 vessels for trespassing**

Malaysian authorities have detained nearly 60 Chinese nationals for trespassing into the Southeast Asian country's waters. Along with these Chinese nationals, six Chinese registered fishing vessels were also seized by the maritime authorities. The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) informed the local media that the trespassers were detained in off the shore of the southern state of Johor.

<https://www.wionews.com/world/malaysia-captures-60-chinese-nationals-and-6-vessels-for-trespassing-334288>

### **9 October 2020: China urges US military to stop provocations in South China Sea**

China urges the United States to immediately stop provocations, strictly manage and control its maritime and air military operations so as to avoid any eventuality, said Senior Colonel Zhang Nandong, spokesperson for the Southern Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), in a written statement on Friday.

[http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-10/09/content\\_9915398.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-10/09/content_9915398.htm)

**8 October 2020: South China Sea: Malaysia to stick with ‘quiet diplomacy’ towards Beijing in dispute, analysts say**

Malaysia is likely to maintain its “quiet diplomacy” in dealing with China’s sweeping maritime claims instead of heeding calls to be more aggressive, with Kuala Lumpur wary of Beijing’s tendency to enact punitive measures against those that challenge it openly.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3104748/south-china-sea-malaysia-stick-quiet-diplomacy-towards-beijing>

**7 October 2020: Indonesia foreign minister says vaccine cooperation with China won’t influence Jakarta’s position on South China Sea**

While Indonesia is currently cooperating with China to secure COVID-19 vaccines for its citizens, this initiative will not influence its position on the South China Sea, said Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi on Tuesday

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/indonesia-natuna-south-china-sea-covid-19-vaccine-retno-marsudi-13212760>

**4 October 2020: Cambodian deputy PM urges outsiders to avoid "provocation" over South China Sea issue**

Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Hor Namhong has called on outsiders to avoid "provocation" over the South China Sea issue, saying that any disputes should be peacefully settled by parties directly concerned.

[http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-10/04/c\\_139418502.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-10/04/c_139418502.htm)

**30 September 2020: South China Sea: Vietnam seeks talks on Paracel Islands dispute**

The president of Vietnam called for talks on competing claims to the South China Sea during a call with his Chinese counterpart on Tuesday, according to Vietnamese state media. As Beijing continued military drills near the Paracel Islands – which both countries claim – Nguyen Phu Trong suggested to Xi Jinping the two countries should “work together to address their existing problems, especially on maritime issues”, according to Vietnamese communist party newspaper Nhan Dan.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3103704/south-china-sea-vietnam-seeks-talks-paracel-islands-dispute>

**30 September 2020: Duterte’s UN address opened doors for ‘wider’ engagement on South China Sea dispute — Palace exec**

President Rodrigo Duterte’s remarks on the South China Sea dispute at the United Nations General Assembly last week opened the doors for “wider” engagement with stakeholders on the issue, a Malacañang official said Wednesday.

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/757838/duterte-s-un-address-opened-doors-for-wider-engagement-on-south-china-sea-dispute-palace-exec/story/>

**ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA**

**21 October 2020: Japan to Help ASEAN States Secure Coasts Amid South China Sea Tensions**

Tokyo has agreed to supply Southeast Asian governments with patrol boats – Indonesia and Vietnam in particular – so they can secure their coasts amid tensions in the South China Sea, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said in Jakarta on Wednesday. Japan strongly supports preservation of the rule of law in international waterways and is troubled by some recent activities in the South China Sea that go against maritime law, the new prime minister said.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/vietnam/coasts-10212020182137.html>

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

### **29 October 2020: Pompeo to find 'new ways' to cooperate with Indonesia in South China Sea**

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday said Washington would find new ways to cooperate with Indonesia in the South China Sea and respected Jakarta's efforts to safeguard its own waters while rejecting China's "unlawful" claims in the area.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-asia-indonesia/pompeo-to-find-new-ways-to-cooperate-with-indonesia-in-south-china-sea-idUSKBN27E0CF>

### **27 October 2020: India, US say South China Sea Code Should Not 'Prejudice' Any Nation**

India on Tuesday joined the U.S. in calling for the South China Sea Code of Conduct being negotiated by China and the Southeast Asian bloc to adhere to international law. The comment came in a joint statement issued after the top diplomats and defense officials of the U.S. and India held a so-called "2 + 2" meeting in New Delhi. The statement "emphasized that the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea should not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of any nation in accordance with international law."

<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/india-scs-10272020182725.html>

### **26 October 2020: Japan and U.S. begin major military exercise as concern about China grows**

Japan and the United States on Monday began air, sea and land exercises around Japan in a show of force in the face of increased Chinese military activity in the region. The Keen Sword exercise is the first big drill since Yoshihide Suga became Japan's prime minister last month with a vow to continue the military build-up aimed at countering China, which claims Japanese-controlled islands in the East China Sea.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-japan-usa-defence/japan-and-u-s-begin-major-military-exercise-as-concern-about-china-grows-idUKKBN27B1HI>

### **19 October 2020: U.S., Japan, Australia conduct trilateral naval exercises in South China Sea**

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain (DDG 56) joined the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) in the South China Sea for multinational exercises, Oct. 19.

<https://www.cpf.navy.mil/news.aspx/130753>

### **19 October 2020: Japan PM opposes any step to heighten South China Sea tension**

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said on Monday Tokyo opposes any steps to raise tension in the South China Sea, and that disputes should be resolved through peaceful means. "Japan strongly opposes any behaviour that heightens tension in the South China Sea," Suga said in his speech in Hanoi.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-southeastasia-suga-southchinase-idUSKBN2740QV>

### **19 October 2020: Japan, Vietnam leaders affirm defense, economic cooperation**

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc on Monday affirmed defense and economic cooperation between their countries, as China's growing influence continues to make its neighbors jittery. Meeting the press after summit talks with Phuc in Hanoi, Suga, who is on his first overseas trip since becoming prime minister, called Vietnam a linchpin in efforts to realize a "free and open Indo-Pacific" and vowed Japan's "continued contribution to peace and prosperity in the region."

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2020/10/f8536e95c87d-update2-japan-vietnam-leaders-affirm-cooperation-in-s-china-sea.html>

### **15 October 2020: USS Barry cruises through Taiwan Strait after Beijing blasts McCain's South China Sea transit**

A Navy destroyer passed through the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday, nearly a week after the Chinese military challenged another U.S. destroyer's presence in the nearby South China Sea. The USS Barry cruised through the strait in accordance with international law, according to a statement from U.S. Pacific Fleet. It was the 10th such transit by a U.S. warship this calendar year. The last was made Aug. 30 by another guided-missile destroyer, the USS Halsey.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/uss-barry-cruises-through-taiwan-strait-after-beijing-blasts-mccain-s-south-china-sea-transit-1.648607>

### **13 October 2020: Japan Exercises with US Navy in South China Sea after Port Call in Vietnam**

Japan has joined the U.S. for an exercise in the South China Sea, after engaging in a bit of defense diplomacy with Indonesia and Vietnam that was not welcomed by the region's other key power – China. Three ships of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, or JMSDF, joined the U.S. Navy for a series of drills in the contested waterway that started Monday and will continue through this week.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/japan-vietnam-us-10132020182956.html>

### **10 October 2020: Japan sends three vessels to South China Sea in anti-submarine exercise**

The Maritime Self-Defense Force conducted anti-submarine drills in the South China Sea on Friday, deploying three vessels including a helicopter aircraft carrier and a submarine, according to the Japanese Defense Ministry.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/10/10/national/japan-south-china-sea-military/>

### **7 October 2020: Cambodian PM Says Ream Naval Base Not Just for China**

China would not have exclusive access to a Cambodian naval base, Prime Minister Hun Sen said Wednesday, despite Beijing chipping in for upgrades after a US-funded facility was razed at the site last month. The Ream base is strategically located in the Gulf of Thailand, providing ready access to the fiercely contested South China Sea — a key global shipping route.

<https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/10/07/cambodia-naval-base/>

**6 October 2020: US, Australia, India, Japan discuss China's growing power**

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Tuesday that China's increasingly assertive actions across the region make it more critical than ever for four Indo-Pacific nations known as the Quad to cooperate to protect their partners and their people from Chinese “exploitation, corruption and coercion.”

[https://martinsvillebulletin.com/news/world/us-australia-india-japan-to-discuss-chinas-growing-power/article\\_49377ae7-6853-5c32-bca4-3d0463166009.html](https://martinsvillebulletin.com/news/world/us-australia-india-japan-to-discuss-chinas-growing-power/article_49377ae7-6853-5c32-bca4-3d0463166009.html)

**5 October 2020: U.S.-Brunei partnership remains strong during CARAT 2020**

U.S. military and Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) are partnering in the 26th annual Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) maritime exercise, commencing off the coast of Brunei, Oct. 5.

<https://www.cpf.navy.mil/news.aspx/130741>