

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.88
November 2020

ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

26 November 2020: China's First Homemade Aircraft Carrier Is Nearly Ready for War

China's first home-built carrier will soon fire weapons, launch fighter jets and coordinate with other surface warships in the South China Sea on a high-profile deployment, a move signaling the rapid growth of the country's expansionist Naval ambition to project greater amounts of global power.

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/china%E2%80%99s-first-homemade-aircraft-carrier-nearly-ready-war-173385>

26 November 2020: Malaysian navy vessels, Chinese ship reported in South China Sea standoff

The China Coast Guard (CCG) and Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) are reportedly involved in a standoff over hydrocarbon exploration 44 nautical miles off the coast of Sarawak in the South China Sea. The incident comes after two weeks of increasing tensions between the navy and the CCG in the area. According to a report by the Asia Maritime Transparency Institute (AMTI), the "CCG 5402" ship harassed a drilling rig and its supply ships on Nov 19, and the navy responded by deploying a vessel that continued to tail the ship.

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2020/11/26/malaysian-navy-vessels-chinese-ship-reported-in-south-china-sea-standoff/>

25 November 2025: Unified ASEAN can avert South China Sea conflict - Philippine minister

Tensions in the South China Sea will increase due to a U.S.-China rivalry that could be kept in check, if only Southeast Asian countries took a united stand to influence the status quo, a top Philippine security official said on Wednesday. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was caught up in the battle for regional influence but it could do more to ensure stability and should take a common approach, Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana told a security forum. "Where is the ASEAN in this superpower rivalry? Despite its avowed ASEAN centrality, it is anything but," Lorenzana said.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-southchinasea-philippines/unified-asean-can-avert-south-china-sea-conflict-philippine-minister-idUKKBN2851IQ?il=0>

23 November 2020: US provides missiles, renews pledge to defend Philippines

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration provided precision-guided missiles and other weapons to help the Philippines battle Islamic State group-aligned militants and renewed a pledge to defend its treaty ally if it comes under attack in the disputed South China Sea. National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien represented Trump in Monday's ceremony at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila, where he announced the delivery of the missiles and bombs to the Philippine military. Trump pledged to provide the \$18 million worth of missiles in a phone conversation with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte in April, Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. said.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/us-provides-missiles-renews-pledge-to-defend-philippines/2020/11/23/8fc1ec6a-2d56-11eb-9dd6-2d0179981719_story.html

23 November 2020: Indonesia to deploy navy force near South China Sea

The Indonesian Navy will move the headquarters of its combat squad to Natuna islands bordering the South China Sea, said an official on Monday. Speaking at a news conference, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Yudo Margono said the naval combat force (Guspurla) Command Fleet I, which is currently deployed in the capital Jakarta, will be permanently transferred to Natuna. The force is in charge of conducting marine combat and amphibious operations to support sea control and achieve strategic objectives in order to enforce law and uphold sovereignty in territorial sea.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/indonesia-to-deploy-navy-force-near-south-china-sea/2053026>

22 November 2020: Philippines set to be first buyer of India-Russia cruise missile

India and Russia are looking to export to the Philippines their jointly developed BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, a move that may unnerve Beijing, given its border standoff with New Delhi and territorial disputes with other neighbors in the South China Sea.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Philippines-set-to-be-first-buyer-of-India-Russia-cruise-missile>

22 November 2020: China's autonomous underwater monitoring system completes sea trial

Two sets of China's indigenously-developed autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) "Sea Whale-1000" have completed sea trial for acceptance and long-range test, according to the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). The "Sea Whale-1000" series was jointly developed by the Shenyang Institute of Automation of the CAS, the Ocean University of China, the South China Sea Institute of Oceanology of the CAS, the Second Institute of Oceanography of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Shanghai Jiao Tong University and the Sun Yat-sen University.

http://www.china.org.cn/china/2020-11/22/content_76936273.htm

14 November 2020: China's 'aircraft-carrier killer' missiles successfully hit target ship in South China Sea, PLA insider reveals

The two "aircraft-carrier killer" missiles that China launched in August travelled thousands of kilometres and hit their designated target, a moving ship, near the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, according to a Chinese military expert.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3109809/chinas-aircraft-carrier-killer-missiles-successfully-hit-target>

11 November 2020: In rare move, Taiwan confirms U.S. Marines' presence for training

In what was reportedly the first such public acknowledgment in 40-plus years, Taiwan's naval command has confirmed the arrival of U.S. Marines on the island to train Taiwanese forces. Responding to media reports about the Marines' presence, Taiwan's

Defense Ministry confirmed the move in a short statement on its website Monday. “In order to maintain regional peace and stability, the military and security cooperation and exchanges between Taiwan and the U.S. are proceeding normally,” it said without elaborating.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/11/11/asia-pacific/taiwan-us-marines-training/>

4 November 2020: Indonesia worried about China's arms use plan

Indonesia's foreign minister has expressed concern about Chinese draft legislation that would allow China Coast Guard to fire on foreign ships in waters it considers to be under its jurisdiction.

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20201111_10/

9 November 2020: Taiwan-US team finish underwater survey

A team of Taiwanese and US researchers last month overcame challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic and rough seas to complete an underwater sound survey near the South China Sea. The expedition from Oct. 14 to 19 aboard the research vessel Legend, operated by the Taiwan Ocean Research Institute (TORI), set out to investigate undersea sound propagation in relation to internal waves and shelf breaks, said Lin Ying-Tsong, a Taiwanese-American scientist with the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) in Massachusetts.

<https://taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/11/09/2003746623>

6 November 2020: India, Philippines vow to strengthen defence engagement, maritime cooperation

India and Philippines on Friday resolved to strengthen defence engagement and maritime cooperation, especially in military training, as well as in procurement of defence equipment. The resolve by the two nations to deepen defence and maritime ties comes in the backdrop of China's growing expansionist behaviour in eastern Ladakh, South China Sea and Indo-Pacific region. The fourth meeting of the India-Philippines joint commission on bilateral cooperation, co-chaired by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Philippines counterpart Teodoro Locsin Jr. L, was held online on Friday.

<https://www.deccanherald.com/national/india-philippines-vow-to-strengthen-defence-engagement-maritime-cooperation-912214.html>

6 November 2020: Vietnam Wary of New Chinese Legislation Allowing Weapons Use

Vietnam's foreign ministry has expressed concern regarding Chinese legislation, which would allow Beijing's coast guard to use weapons in waters which it considers being under its jurisdiction, reported NHK World. At a news conference on Thursday, a deputy spokesperson for Vietnam's foreign ministry mentioned the names of the islands in the South China Sea that are claimed by both countries.

<http://www.businessworld.in/article/Vietnam-wary-of-new-Chinese-legislation-allowing-weapons-use/06-11-2020-339805/>

6 November 2020: China Coast Guard Law May Raise Risk of Clash in Disputed Seas

China is considering legislation that would clarify its coast guard powers to fire on foreign vessels in some circumstances, a move that could fuel the risk of military miscalculation in disputed waters in the region. The coast guard would be allowed to use “all necessary means” -- including weapons -- to stop or prevent threats from foreign vessels, according to a bill released by the National People’s Congress, China’s parliament. Coast guard personnel would be permitted to board and inspect foreign ships operating in China’s “jurisdictional waters” -- some of which are also claimed by other countries.

<https://www.bloombergquint.com/global-economics/china-coast-guard-law-may-raise-risk-of-clash-in-disputed-seas>

4 November 2020: ‘We are not at war with China’: Philippines’ fishermen militia plan put on pause

Plans to deploy Filipino fishermen as militia forces in the South China Sea have been put on hold by the Philippines’ government as “we are not at war with China”, presidential National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon said on Wednesday.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3108475/we-are-not-war-china-philippines-fishermen-militia-plan-put>

4 November 2020: Philippines Greenlights Oil Drills in Disputed Sea Without China

The Philippines said oil exploration in the disputed South China Sea can proceed without China, in what could be a further sign of the Southeast Asian nation’s tougher stance against Beijing. Philippine Energy Secretary Alfonso Cusi said PXP Energy Corp. can survey Reed Bank in the disputed sea even without partnering with China National Offshore Oil Corp. A unit of the Philippine oil exploration company, which is in talks with CNOOC, holds the right to drill for oil and gas in the area under Service Contract 72, one of the five such contracts allowed to resume exploration. “If they can do it by themselves, go ahead,” Cusi said at a virtual briefing Wednesday, when asked if PXP should seek China’s permission to proceed with a survey. “If they can’t do it and they need a partner, they have to partner with China.”

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-11-04/philippines-greenlights-oil-drills-in-disputed-sea-without-china>

2 November 2020: It’s not just the South China Sea: Vietnamese vessels in Indonesian waters show extent of maritime disputes in Asean

An activist group has called on Jakarta to take action against the increasing encroachment of Vietnamese fishing boats into Indonesia’s territorial waters, highlighting the complex nature of maritime disputes in the region that go beyond China’s claim to most of the South China Sea. Vietnamese ships made up 21 of the 31 foreign-flagged vessels that carried out illegal fishing in Indonesia’s North Natuna Sea from June to October, according to Destructive Fishing Watch (DFW) Indonesia. None were found to have originated from China.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3108079/its-not-just-south-china-sea-vietnamese-vessels-indonesian>

ASEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

20 November 2020: East Asia Summit voices concern over S.China Sea

The East Asia Summit has expressed "serious concern" about the South China Sea, where China has increased its maritime presence. The use of the strong wording was the first by the summit in five years. This year's meeting of 18 countries including those of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Japan, the United States and China, was held online on November 14, with Vietnam serving as chair. The chairman's statement was released on Friday.

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20201120_22/

15 November 2020: Asia-Pacific leaders voice concern over South China Sea as tensions persist

Asia-Pacific leaders voiced concern over the situation in the resource-rich South China Sea at a regional summit on Saturday, a Japanese government official said, as security tensions between the United States and China have shown no sign of easing. The virtual meeting of the 18-member East Asia Summit took place for the first time following the U.S. presidential election earlier this month. Many Asian countries have begun to consider how to build ties with the upcoming administration of Democrat President-elect Joe Biden.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/11/15/national/asia-pacific-asean-south-china-sea/>

14 November 2020: US, ASEAN reaffirm importance of rule of law in South China Sea

The U.S. National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien emphasized the importance of agreed principles in the South China Sea at the 8th ASEAN - U.S. Summit on Saturday. O'Brien, the ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi, and leaders of 10 member countries expressed their concern over the potential risks undermining peace, security, and stability in the South China Sea, and actions countering international law that complicated the situation, caused instability and regional concern, Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated in a press release. The leaders underscored the significance of the rule of law, dialogue, trust-building, non-militarization, self-restraint, and peaceful solution of disputes in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982) as a legal basis for all maritime actions.

<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/us-asean-reaffirm-importance-of-rule-of-law-in-south-china-sea-4191742.html>

12 November 2020: 'We must act with haste:' Duterte presses ASEAN on code of conduct in South China Sea

President Rodrigo Duterte made a fresh call to pass a code of conduct to govern behavior in the disputed South China Sea at a summit of Southeast Asian leaders on Thursday, saying it was an urgent concern. "As I have said before, the South China Sea issue is ASEAN's strategic challenge. How we deal with this matter lays bare our strengths and

weaknesses as a community. We must act with haste," Duterte said during his remarks before the virtual summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on Thursday.

<https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/11/12/Duterte-South-China-Sea-ASEAN-Summit-act-with-haste.html>

12 November 2020: ASEAN eyes code of conduct for disputed South China Sea

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on Thursday expressed its hope for an “effective and substantive” code of conduct for all activities in the South China Sea. Addressing the opening ceremony of the 37th ASEAN Summit as the current chair, Vietnam’s Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc reaffirmed the bloc's determination to maintain “peace, stability, and security” in the South China Sea. “ASEAN has also expressed consistently its principled position and a strong commitment to turning the South China Sea, a critical sea lane of the region and the world, into a sea of peace, stability, security and safety for the free flow of goods, where differences and disputes are settled through peaceful means, where the law is fully respected and observed, and common values are upheld,” he said.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/asean-eyes-code-of-conduct-for-disputed-south-china-sea/2041388>

11 November 2020: Foreign ministers reiterate ASEAN’s resolve to resume South China Sea talks

ASEAN foreign ministers reiterated the bloc’s resolve to resume negotiations on a code of conduct in the South China Sea (known as East Sea by Vietnam) with China during the 22nd ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Council Meeting held online on Tuesday. At the meeting held ahead of the 37th ASEAN Summit slated for November 12-15, the ministers expressed pleasure at the new developments of the APSC despite a range of difficulties, as well as the adverse impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/international/foreign-ministers-reiterate-aseans-resolve-resume-south-china-sea-talks>

10 November 2020: No hasty decisions by Asean over South China Sea, says Hishamuddin

Asean will not be emotional during the 37th Asean Summit on matters involving the security and sovereignty of Asean countries and risk starting a war, says Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Hishamuddin Hussein. He said on Tuesday (Nov 10) that the South China Sea issue would be discussed at the summit to be hosted by Vietnam, adding that it was unlikely to see a solution at the summit.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2020/11/10/no-hasty-decisions-by-asean-over-south-china-sea-says-hishamuddin>

OTHER STATES AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

27 November 2020: Prime Minister Scott Morrison ‘enhances co-operation’ with Europe over ‘destabilising’ South China Sea

Prime Minister Scott Morrison made a veiled swipe overnight at China over the country’s concerning actions in the South China Sea, but blink and you’d miss it. Late on Thursday night, a joint press release from the PM’s office detailed a virtual meeting held that day

between Mr Morrison, President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen. Among the 17 points discussed included the leaders reconfirming “their resolve to work together to fight the COVID-19 pandemic” and committing “to ensure universal, equitable and early access to safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines”. But further down the list, was a pointed note surrounding the troubles in the South China Sea, in which China is a key player. “The leaders agreed to enhance co-operation to promote shared interests in security and prosperity in Asia and the Pacific, spanning the Indian and Pacific oceans,” the statement reads. “The leaders expressed serious concern about the unilateral and destabilising actions in the South China Sea and underlined the importance of upholding international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).”

<https://www.news.com.au/finance/work/leaders/prime-minister-scott-morrison-enhances-cooperation-with-europe-over-destabilising-south-china-sea/news-story/20ae48f137072499c15f1dbc6b19e2bd>

23 November 2020: South China Sea: US vows support to Philippines and Vietnam over row with China

US President Donald Trump's administration is stepping up its challenges to Beijing's maritime claims in the dispute-rife South China Sea. The national security adviser of the United States, Robert O'Brien on Monday assured the Philippines and Vietnam, countries both locked in maritime rows with China, that Washington has their backs and would fight to keep the Indo-Pacific region free and open.

<https://www.wionews.com/world/south-china-sea-us-vows-support-to-philippines-and-vietnam-over-row-with-china-344931>

18 November 2020: Canada opposes military build-up in South China Sea

Canadian defense minister Harjit Sajjan has made it clear that his nation is against militarization in the South China Sea. "Canada opposes unilateral actions that have escalated tensions in the region and undermined stability in the South China Sea. We are against the threat or use of force, large-scale land reclamation, building outposts on disputed entities and using them for military purposes in the sea," he said. The Canadian Minister of National Defense was speaking at the 12th South China Sea International Conference held November 16-17 in Hanoi. Vietnam calls the waterway the East Sea.

<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/canada-opposes-military-build-up-in-south-china-sea-4193631.html>

17 November 2020: Japan, Australia reach security pact amid fears over disputed South China Sea

Japan and Australia agreed on a breakthrough defence pact on Tuesday allowing reciprocal visits for training and operations, and voiced concern over the disputed South China Sea, where China is extending its military influence. It is Japan's first agreement covering foreign military presence on its soil since a status of forces agreement in 1960 that allowed the United States to base warships, jets and troops in Japan as part of an alliance that Washington describes as the bedrock of regional security.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-australia/japan-australia-reach-security-pact-amid-fears-over-disputed-south-china-sea-idUSKBN27X131?il=0>

15 November 2020: India expresses concern over South China Sea development & calls for respecting territorial integrity

India on Saturday expressed concerns over incidents and actions in the South China Sea (SCS) that erode trust in the region and emphasised on the importance of adhering to international law, respecting territorial integrity and sovereignty, and promoting a rules-based global order in what can be described as a veiled message to China following its aggressive posturing.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-expresses-concern-over-south-china-sea-development-calls-for-respecting-territorial-integrity/articleshow/79228661.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

6 November 2020: Biden-led US likely to uphold PH arbitral win in South China Sea – envoy

The Philippines is expected to continue to enjoy the United States' support in its stake in the West Philippine Sea even if a new American president emerges from this week's elections, the country's envoy said Friday. Manila can maintain close ties with the US should incumbent President Donald Trump or his Democratic rival Joe Biden win, Philippine Ambassador in Washington, DC Jose Manuel "Babe" Romualdez told CNN Philippines' The Source, and will continue to benefit with support against China's sweeping claims in the disputed waters.

<https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/11/6/Biden-US-arbitral-win-West-Philippine-Sea.html>

30 October 2020: Pompeo in Vietnam warns Beijing over South China Sea

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is wrapping up a tour of Southeast and South Asia in Vietnam, where he again sought to counter the growing influence of China, only days before President Donald Trump faces challenger and former Vice President Joe Biden in the U.S. presidential election.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Pompeo-in-Vietnam-warns-Beijing-over-South-China-Sea>

30 October 2020: Pompeo lashes out at China

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was in Indonesia on Thursday and took aim at Chinese aggressiveness in the South China Sea, where it has advanced maritime and territorial claims over the objections of its neighbors, over its handling of the coronavirus pandemic and its repression of religious minorities.

<https://www.nwaonline.com/news/2020/oct/30/pompeo-lashes-out-at-china/>