

**SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.89**  
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**ACTS OF CLAIMANTS**

**30 December 2020: Suspected Chinese underwater drone caught by Indonesian fisherman**

The fisherman apparently hauled up the drone last Sunday (Dec. 20) near the Selayar Islands, an Indonesian archipelago in the South Sulawesi province, according to Naval News. He then turned it over to the local police, who then handed it over to the Indonesian military. According to Indonesian outlet detikNews, the unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV) measures 225 centimeters in length, with a 50 cm wingspan, an 18-cm-long tail, and a 93-cm-long trailing antenna. Indonesian based security and defense poster @Jatosint pointed out its similarities to the Chinese Sea Wing UUV, made by the state-run Chinese Academy of Sciences' Shenyang Institute of Automation.

<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4090128>

**24 December 2020: China sends second ship to trial amid rising tensions in South China Sea**

China's navy has started trials on its second trademark warship as tensions between the Communist nation and the US continue to rise in the fiercely contested South China Sea. The People's Liberation Army has ordered a total of eight Type 075 assault ships, which are capable of carrying 30 attack helicopters and 900 troops, according to a Newsweek report. On Tuesday, a second Type 075 was seen departing the Hudong Zhonghua Shipyard in Shanghai, just four months after the maiden voyage of the first vessel.

<https://nypost.com/2020/12/24/china-second-warship-to-trial-as-south-china-sea-tensions-rise/>

**22 December 2020: Chinese military says it "expelled" US naval ship from South China Sea**

China's military on Tuesday claimed to have "expelled" a US Navy destroyer which sailed through the disputed South China Sea challenging Beijing's claims over the area. US naval ships regularly sail through the disputed South China Sea (SCS) in a bid to assert freedom of navigation in the region. China claims almost all of the 1.3 million square mile South China Sea as its sovereign territory. China has been building military bases on artificial islands in the region also claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/chinese-military-says-it-expelled-us-naval-ship-from-south-china-sea/1997589>

**21 December 2020: South China Sea: PLA's new dry dock in Hainan big enough for Type 002 aircraft carriers, analysts say**

A dry dock being built at China's naval complex on the island province of Hainan in the South China Sea will be big enough to accommodate the country's new generation of aircraft carriers, military analysts say. Satellite images found this month via the Earth Explorer website show the facility under construction at the Yulin Naval Base in Sanya, where China's first domestically developed aircraft carrier, the Shandong, was commissioned in December last year.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3114634/south-china-sea-plas-new-dry-dock-hainan-big-enough-type-002>

**20 December 2020: Taiwan sends ships, aircraft as Chinese carrier passes island**

Taiwan's navy and air force were deployed on Sunday as a Chinese aircraft carrier group led by the country's newest carrier, the Shandong, sailed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait, the day after a U.S. warship transited the same waterway.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/taiwan-china/taiwan-sends-ships-aircraft-as-chinese-carrier-passes-island-idUSKBN28U0F6?il=0>

**19 December 2020: Taiwan set for live-fire drill in 'potential flashpoint' Pratas Islands**

Taiwan's staging of a live-fire drill in the Pratas Islands on Sunday has highlighted the chain's strategic importance and potential to be a flashpoint in the South China Sea, analysts said.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3114533/taiwan-set-live-fire-drill-potential-flashpoint-pratas-islands>

**19 December 2020: Locsin, Pompeo talk about reinforcing 'binding' South China Sea arbitral ruling**

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro "Teddy Boy" Locsin, Jr. and his US counterpart recently talked about reinforcing the "binding nature" of the Philippines' arbitration win in the South China Sea dispute, the US Department of State disclosed on Saturday.

<https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/12/19/locsin-pompeo-south-china-sea-arbitral-ruling.html>

**17 December 2020: Beijing Upgrading Naval Bases To Strengthen Grip On South China Sea**

A few days ago the Chinese Navy, formally known as the PLAN (People's Liberation army Navy), conducted a live fire exercise over the South China Sea. Harbin Z-9 helicopters took off from a base at Sanya on the southern tip of Hainan and fired anti-ship missiles at simulated targets. The Z-9, a license built variant of the Eurocopter AS365 Dauphin, is a standard shipboard helicopter of the PLAN. The exercise itself sends a signal, but more critical is the base where they took off. That has been massively improved over the past year.

<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2020/12/beijing-upgrading-naval-bases-to-strengthen-grip-on-south-china-sea/>

**15 December 2020: Philippines, Japan affirm close cooperation over South China Sea**

President Rodrigo Duterte and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga agreed Monday to closely cooperate over issues related to the South China Sea, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said, as Beijing continues its military buildup in the waters despite the concerns of neighboring countries. During their 20-minute telephone conversation, Suga voiced eagerness to further develop the strategic partnership between Japan and the Philippines and work together to realize a "free and open Indo-Pacific," the ministry said.

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/12/15/20/philippines-japan-affirm-close-cooperation-over-south-china-sea>

**12 December 2020: Maritime rescue drill held in South China Sea**

A comprehensive maritime search and rescue drill was held Friday in the sea off Haikou, capital of south China's Hainan province. The drill, which saw the participation of eight rescue vessels and a rescue helicopter, is the largest of its kind in China's territorial waters in the South China Sea this year, according to rescue authorities. The drill highlighted the integrated maritime rescue capabilities, including aerial and underwater search, maritime personnel and property rescue, as well as maritime fire-fighting.

[http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-12/12/c\\_139582809.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-12/12/c_139582809.htm)

**9 December 2020: How China's Offshore Oil Driller Will Keep Grip in Disputed Sea Despite US Sanctions**

The United States imposed sanctions this month on a major Chinese offshore oil driller that Washington considers aligned with the Chinese military. But some regional experts say the oil and gas company, which counts U.S. citizens among its investors and does billions of dollars of work including in the contested South China Sea, will find ways to remain China's commercial flagbearer.

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/how-chinas-offshore-oil-driller-will-keep-grip-disputed-sea-despite-us-sanctions>

**8 December 2020: Taiwan says faces daily threats as US notifies of \$280m arms sale**

Taiwan faces daily military threats from "authoritarian forces", President Tsai Ing-wen said on Tuesday, as the United States announced a new \$280m arms sale package to the Chinese-claimed island, the sixth this year.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/8/taiwan-says-faces-daily-threat-as-u-s-notifies-of-new-arms-sale>

**7 December 2020: China increased patrols in disputed sea during pandemic: report**

The Chinese Coast Guard increased its frequency of patrols in Scarborough Shoal and other areas in the disputed South China Sea amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a US-based think tank said in a report published Friday.

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/12/06/20/china-increased-patrols-in-disputed-sea-during-pandemic-report>

**5 December 2020: South China Sea: how a Spratlys radar system could give the PLA an information edge**

China's sweeping communications network in the Spratlys will have a decisive role to play in Beijing's crisis management plans to deal with its increasing tensions with the US in the South China Sea, according to military reports and analysts. Several scenarios under consideration in Beijing feature the seven artificial islands which cover about 1,300 hectares (3,200 acres) of coral reefs in the disputed Spratly archipelago.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3112402/south-china-sea-how-spratlys-radar-system-could-give-pla>

#### **4 December 2020: Vietnam condemns China, Taiwan's "illegal" acts in South China Sea**

Vietnam on Thursday condemned China and Taiwan's recent "illegal excursion", including operating tourist cruises and organising live fire drills, into its rightful waters in the South China Sea. Spokesperson for the foreign ministry Lê Thị Thu Hằng during a press briefing in Hanoi said that Chinese Taipei's holding of military live ammunition exercises around the Ba Bình (Taiping) island on November 24 as part of Việt Nam's Trường Sa (Spratly) archipelago constituted a "grave violation of Vietnamese territory, sovereign rights."

<https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2020/12/04/vietnam-condemns-china-taiwan039s-illegal-acts-in-south-china-sea>

#### **3 December 2020: Taiwan's Ocean Affairs Council can order counterattack in South China Sea**

If Taiwanese ships are attacked near disputed South China Sea islands, the right to order return fire lies with the head of the Cabinet-level Ocean Affairs Council (OAC), reports said Thursday. In the event that communication is cut off between Taiwan and the Pratas islands or Itu Aba Island, the highest-ranking local officer can also make the decision to fire back at assailants, UDN reported. The changes were made to regulations Wednesday during the OAC's review of proposals made in June. The amendments had become necessary because of increased threats at sea, according to defense officials.

<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4068699>

#### **2 December 2020: New PLAN hospital ship deploys to the South China Sea**

China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) commissioned a new 4,000-tonne hospital ship on 30 November for service in the South China Sea, state-owned broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) reported the following day. Named Nanyi 13, it is one of two vessels of a new class built at the Rongcheng Shidao shipyard near Weihai on the Yellow Sea coast. Nanyi 12 was launched in November 2017 and Nanyi 13 in March 2018.

<https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/new-plan-hospital-ship-deploys-to-the-south-china-sea>

#### **1 December 2020: Chinese media threatens 'evil' Australia's warships in South China Sea**

An editorial published by the jingoistic Global Times tabloid newspaper said Prime Minister Scott Morrison had "lost his diplomatic manner" after China's Foreign Ministry had published a fake image slurring Australian soldiers over alleged war crimes in Afghanistan.

<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/chinese-media-threatens-evil-australia-s-warships-in-south-china-sea-20201201-p56jfb>

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

**11 December 2020: South China Sea: Beijing 'ready to work with Asean', defence chief says**

China's defence minister pledged to work with Southeast Asian nations to safeguard peace and stability in the South China Sea, ahead of talks with 17 regional counterparts, including from the US, on Thursday.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3113412/south-china-sea-beijing-ready-work-asean-defence-chief-says>

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

##### **24 December 2020: India sends warship to deliver aid to Vietnam, conduct exercise in South China Sea**

An Indian warship reached Ho Chi Minh City on Thursday with 15 tonnes of humanitarian relief supplies for people affected by floods in central Vietnam as part of New Delhi's efforts to assist countries in the region amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The visit by the corvette INS Kiltan is also aimed at enhancing maritime cooperation between the two navies and contributing to regional security and stability. On its departure from Ho Chi Minh City, the warship will undertake a "passing exercise" with the Vietnam People's Navy in South China Sea during December 26-27.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-sends-warship-with-aid-for-flood-hit-in-vietnam-and-to-conduct-exercise-in-south-china-sea/story-2pJFzUdjbDcVmPtunaZKjK.html>

##### **25 December 2020: John S. McCain conducts Christmas Eve FONOP in South China Sea**

The U.S. Navy warship John S. McCain conducted a freedom of navigation operation, or FONOP, Christmas Eve in the South China Sea, its second such operation this week. The guided-missile destroyer "asserted navigational rights and freedoms near Vietnam in the vicinity of the Con Dao Island in the South China Sea" on Thursday, according to the Japan-based U.S. 7th Fleet. "The ship conducted normal operations within Vietnam's claimed territorial seas to challenge excessive maritime claims and preserve access and navigational freedoms consistent with international law," the command said in a statement.

<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2020/12/24/john-s-mccain-conducts-christmas-eve-fonop-in-south-china-sea/>

##### **24 December 2020: India sends warship to deliver aid to Vietnam, conduct exercise in South China Sea**

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<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-sends-warship-with-aid-for-flood-hit-in-vietnam-and-to-conduct-exercise-in-south-china-sea/story-2pJFzUdjbDcVmPtunaZKjK.html>

**22 December 2020: US destroyer sails near disputed chain in South China Sea again**

The U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain steamed Tuesday past the Spratly Islands, a disputed chain in the South China Sea west of the Philippines, in another demonstration of freedom of maritime navigation, according to a 7th Fleet spokesman.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/us-destroyer-sails-near-disputed-chain-in-south-china-sea-again-1.656071>

**21 December 2020: South China Sea, defence cooperation — What India, Vietnam discussed at virtual summit**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc Monday discussed mostly issues concerning China's increasing assertion in the region, and vowed to further strengthen their defence and security cooperation.

<https://theprint.in/diplomacy/south-china-sea-defence-cooperation-what-india-vietnam-discussed-at-virtual-summit/571352/>

**18 December 2020: U.S. Blacklists More Than 60 Chinese Firms, Including SMIC**

The U.S. Commerce Department announced its blacklisting Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp., drone maker SZ DJI Technology Co. and more than 60 other Chinese companies "to protect U.S. national security." "This action stems from China's military-civil fusion doctrine and evidence of activities between SMIC and entities of concern in the Chinese military industrial complex," the Commerce Department said in a statement.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-18/u-s-to-blacklist-smic-and-dozens-more-china-firms-reuters-says>

**18 December 2020: Biden to follow Trump's lead in South China Sea**

With the impending US transition from Donald Trump to Joe Biden, there are few signs that either America or China intends on backing down in the South China Sea including over the future of Taiwan. The incoming Biden administration has already signaled it will tighten the screws on China, hewing closer to the Trump administration's tough policies on China than its Democratic predecessor under Barack Obama, who is now widely accused of soft-pedaling on early signs of China's expansionist designs for the region.

<https://asiatimes.com/2020/12/biden-to-follow-trumps-lead-in-south-china-sea/>

**17 December 2020: New U.S. Maritime Strategy Sets Sights on China**

The Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard released their clearest argument yet for what they need to do to be prepared to take on China – not in a hypothetical future scenario, but in the day-to-day competition happening now on the seas.

The chief of naval operations and the commandants of the Marine Corps and Coast Guard signed a tri-service maritime strategy – Advantage at Sea; Prevailing with Integrated All-Domain Naval Power – that was released today and is the first of its kind since the 2015 Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower.

<https://news.usni.org/2020/12/17/new-u-s-maritime-strategy-sets-sights-on-china>

**16 December 2020: Japan strongly supports German warship dispatch plan**

Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi on Tuesday expressed his strong support for Germany's plan to send a warship to the Indo-Pacific region. In an online meeting with his German counterpart, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Kishi expressed hopes for the vessel's possible navigation in the South China Sea, where China is increasing its territorial claims, and joint drills with the Self-Defense Forces. Kishi stressed that China is "strengthening its attempts to unilaterally change the status quo with force in the background."

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/16/national/japan-german-warship-dispatch/>

#### **14 December 2020: U.S., Singapore militaries join for amphibious training during CARAT exercise**

U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps and the Republic of Singapore Navy partnered in the 26th annual Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) maritime exercise, in international water of the South China Sea and on Changi Naval Base, Singapore, Dec. 9-14.

<https://www.cpf.navy.mil/news.aspx/130783>

#### **8 December 2020: Donald Trump's parting gift to Philippines: defence equipment worth US\$29 million**

The Philippines on Tuesday received an unexpected parting gift from the outgoing administration of US President Donald Trump: US\$29 million worth of defence equipment.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3113101/trumps-parting-gift-philippines-us29-million-defence-equipment>

#### **8 December 2020: Acting Pentagon Chief Visits Indonesia, Philippines Amid South China Sea Tensions**

The acting U.S. defense secretary on Tuesday wrapped up a visit to Indonesia and the Philippines, during which he emphasized Washington's commitment to enhancing their defense capabilities as well as ensuring a free and open South China Sea and Indo-Pacific.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/visits-12082020143632.html>

#### **7 December 2020: Japan, U.S. conduct joint military drills amid China's assertiveness**

Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force and the U.S. military on Monday invited the media to view a large-scale joint drill in southwestern Japan while launching another exercise northwest of Tokyo amid China's growing assertiveness in the East and South China seas.

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2020/12/6b6af6fa2d2b-japan-us-conduct-joint-military-drills-amid-chinas-assertiveness.html>

#### **6 December 2020: Japan, France and U.S. plan their first joint military drills for May**

Japan, France and the United States will hold joint military drills on land and sea for the first time in May next year as the Chinese military steps up activity in the region, the Sankei newspaper said Sunday. The exercises, to be conducted on one of Japan's

uninhabited outlying islands, will focus on providing relief efforts during a natural disaster, but parts could also form the basis for a defense against attack, the paper said, without citing sources.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/12/06/national/japan-france-us-military-drills/>

### **6 December 2020: UK to send aircraft carrier strike group to waters near Japan**

The British navy will dispatch an aircraft carrier strike group to waters near Japan as soon as early next year, Japanese government sources said Saturday, in a rare development that comes amid the growing maritime assertiveness of China in the region.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/UK-to-send-aircraft-carrier-strike-group-to-waters-near-Japan>

### **3 December 2020: US plans to restore Navy's 1st Fleet in rebuff to China in South China Sea**

US President Donald Trump's administration is seeking to finalise a build-up in the US Navy's presence in vital Pacific and Indian Ocean seaways to Australia's north, to ward off any further expansion of China's interests. With only seven weeks left in power, the President's Naval Secretary, Kenneth Braithwaite, announced he would reform the Navy's 1st Fleet for the first time in more than four decades. The fleet will dedicate more American ships and sailors to waters off South-East Asia and west to the Indian Ocean, including the Strait of Malacca through which much of the region's oil and cargo supplies transit by sea.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-03/us-plans-to-restore-navys-1st-fleet/12946076>

### **1 December 2020: Pakistan says to support China on South China Sea, Taiwan, Xinjiang and Tibet**

Pakistani President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan met with visiting Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister Wei Fenghe in Islamabad on Tuesday. Noting that Pakistan and China are dear brothers and partners with a long friendship, Alvi said Pakistan will continue to support China on issues related to the South China Sea, Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet, and his country hopes to work with China to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the construction of Pakistan-China Economic Corridor, and sectors including defense and security.