

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.91
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ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

25 February 2021: China and Singapore conduct joint naval exercise in South China Sea to ‘address risks’

The joint military drill between China and Singapore in the South China Sea shows the two countries are jointly addressing risks and challenges with the determination to safeguard regional peace and stability, Chinese military researchers said.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202102/1216628.shtml>

25 February 2021: China protested after Japan planes flew over South China Sea in 2018

China has lodged a protest with Japan after two planes of the country's Maritime Self-Defense Force flew near disputed Mischief Reef in the South China Sea in August 2018, Japanese government sources said Thursday.

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/02/79923ac73aa2-china-protested-after-japan-planes-flew-over-s-china-sea-in-2018.html>

24 February 2021: Chinese Aircraft Carry Out Exercises, Pressure Taiwan in South China Sea Region

Chinese aircraft have conducted multiple exercises in the South China Sea region over the past few weeks, including maneuvers in Taiwan’s air defense identification zone (ADIZ), which experts see as a sustained pressure campaign against Taipei.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/taiwan-bombers-02242021204017.html>

22 February 2021: Philippine Fishermen Call on UN to Invalidate China's Coast Guard Law

The Philippine artisanal fishermen's association Pamalakaya has called on the UN to declare China's new Coast Guard Law "null and void," asserting that Beijing's new rules of engagement for the agency are incompatible with international law.

<https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/philippine-fishermen-call-on-un-to-invalidate-china-s-coast-guard-law>

20 February 2021: Taiwan scrambles air force again after Chinese exercises in South China Sea

Taiwan’s air force scrambled for a second straight day on Saturday after a dozen Chinese fighter aircraft and bombers carried out drills close to Taiwan-controlled islands in the disputed South China Sea, the Defence ministry in Taipei said.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-china-security/taiwan-scrambles-air-force-again-after-chinese-exercises-in-south-china-sea-idUSKBN2AK0HX?il=0>

18 February 2021: PH Not A Target of China’s Coast Guard Law

“The Chinese have reassured us through their spokesman, the Foreign Ministry Spokesman as well as the Chinese Embassy...that they are not targeting the Philippines

or any specific country and that they will not resort to force in the first instance,” Philippine Ambassador to China Chito Sta. Romana said on Tuesday, February 16.

<https://www.asianjournal.com/philippines/across-the-islands/ph-not-a-target-of-chinas-coast-guard-law/>

13 February 2021: Duterte Wants U.S. to Pay to Keep Military Pact with Philippines

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said he wants the U.S. to pay to keep a two-decade-old pact that facilitates joint military exercises, an agreement which he sought to scrap last year. “Well, they have to pay. It’s a shared responsibility, but your share of responsibility does not come free,” Duterte said on Friday about the Visiting Forces Agreement with the U.S. “Because after all when the war breaks out, we all pay,” he said in a speech to Philippine soldiers, referring to any conflict that could escalate in the South China Sea.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-13/duterte-wants-u-s-to-pay-to-keep-military-pact-with-philippines>

11 February 2021: 'China is watching': Philippines won't join naval drills in contested waters - Lorenzana

The Philippines will not join naval drills in the disputed South China Sea, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Thursday, amid calls to push back against Beijing's activities in the area.

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/02/11/21/china-is-watching-philippines-wont-join-naval-drills-in-contested-waters-lorenzana>

11 February 2021: Philippines military keen to keep U.S. troop deal - minister

The Philippines defence apparatus wants to keep a Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) with the United States, its defence minister said on Thursday, as officials met to settle differences over a pact central to Washington’s Asia strategy.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-usa-defence/philippines-military-keen-to-keep-u-s-troop-deal-minister-idUSKBN2AB0GS?il=0>

10 February 2021: Philippines will increase naval presence to protect fishermen in South China Sea, military chief says

The Philippines will strengthen its naval presence in the South China Sea to protect its fishermen, its new military chief said on Tuesday, as concerns grow about the operations of China’s coastguard in disputed waters.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3121227/philippines-will-increase-naval-presence-protect-fishermen>

7 February 2021: Installation of domestically developed gas station starts in South China Sea

A domestically developed deep water semi-submersible oil production and storage facility weighing 100,000 tons arrived at a gas drilling field off the coast of South China's Hainan Province on Saturday and installation work started, marking another crucial step in China's deep sea oil exploration and production.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202102/1215157.shtml>

6 February 2021: China protests against US Navy destroyer entering South China Sea waters

China on Friday protested against a United States destroyer entering into disputed South China Sea waters.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3120800/china-protests-against-us-navy-destroyer-entering-south-china>

5 February 2021: Jokowi, Yassin lay emphasis on stability in South China Sea

Indonesian President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyuddin Yassin expressed hope for stability to be maintained in the South China Sea. "We also exchange ideas on regional stability and security. I emphasize that stability will be created, including in the South China Sea, if all countries respect international law, especially the UNCLOS 1982," President Jokowi stated at the Merdeka Palace, Jakarta, on Friday. President Jokowi conveyed the remark at a joint press statement with Malaysian PM Muhyiddin Yassin during his state visit to Indonesia. "With regard to the situation in the South China Sea, Malaysia has a view that the issue of maritime claims in these waters, and the solution must be based on internationally recognized legal principles, including the 1982 UNCLOS," PM Yassin noted.

<https://en.antaranews.com/news/167418/jokowi-yassin-lay-emphasis-on-stability-in-south-china-sea>

5 February 2021: China 'expels' US warship from South China Sea, a first under Biden presidency

The People's Liberation Army's southern theatre command issued a statement saying it deployed warships and aircraft to warn and drive away USS John S McCain from near the Xisha Island (Paracel Island in English) in the SCS region.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/china-expels-us-warship-from-south-china-sea-a-first-under-biden-presidency-101612530807052.html>

2 February 2021: Alarm raised over Chinese ship intrusion in Philippine waters

A Chinese survey ship, which entered Philippine waters for the second time over the past year without authorisation, has left the country, but observers are increasingly alarmed over the intrusions, amid confusing statements on why it was in the country's seas. Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr confirmed the incident through social media on Tuesday, writing that the government "never gave permission" for the research vessel, Jia Geng, to stay in Philippine waters.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/2/china-survey-ship-enters-philippine-waters-without-permission>

2 February 2021: Embassy tells Manila not to worry about South China Sea coastguard licence to fire

The Chinese embassy in Manila has defended Beijing's controversial coastguard law as "domestic legislation" and said China would continue to seek a negotiated resolution with the Philippines over their disputes in the South China Sea. "China Coast Guard is an

administrative law enforcement agency. The formulation of the coastguard law is a normal domestic legislative activity of China,” the embassy said on its Facebook account, late on Monday night. “Enacting such a coastguard law is not unique to China, but a sovereign right to all,” the statement continued. “Many countries have enacted similar legislation. It was the Philippine coastguard law of 2009 that established the [Philippine Coast Guard] as an armed and uniformed service. None of these laws have been seen as a threat of war.”

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3120201/embassy-tells-manila-not-worry-about-south-china-sea>

1 February 2021: China Accuses Philippines of Spreading Fake Info in Maritime Disputes

Beijing’s embassy here hit out at the Philippines on Monday for what it called “false accusations” about a new law allowing the Chinese coast guard to use force in South China Sea waters claimed by the Asian superpower. In a statement on its Facebook page, the Chinese Embassy in Manila said its Coast Guard Law had been “misinterpreted” and was “a normal domestic legislative activity.” It also claimed that “forces in the Philippines” had “fabricated and spread relentlessly fake news” about the China Coast Guard harassing Filipino fishermen, and “sensationalized” the entry of a Chinese scientific survey ship into Philippine waters as an “intrusion.”

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/pushes-02012021163801.html>

ASEAN AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

25 February 2021: South China Sea: ‘reasonable’ for ASEAN nations to be worried about Beijing’s coastguard law

Southeast Asian countries are rightfully worried about China’s recently enacted coastguard law given that the law heightens the possibility that Beijing’s maritime patrols will use force when they encounter regional counterparts in disputed waters, the South China Morning Post’s China Conference: Southeast Asia heard on Wednesday.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3123139/southeast-asian-countries-understandably-worried-about-chinas>

OTHER STATES AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

20 February 2020: US warns Beijing against using force in South China Sea

The state department voiced “concern” about new legislation enacted by China that authorises its coastguard to use weapons against foreign ships that Beijing considers to be unlawfully entering its waters. The text “strongly implies this law can be used to intimidate the PRC’s maritime neighbours,” state department spokesperson Ned Price said, referring to the People’s Republic of China. “We remind the PRC and all whose forces operate in the South China Sea that responsible maritime forces act with professionalism and restraint in the exercise of their authorities,” Price told reporters. “We are further concerned that China may invoke this new law to assert its unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/20/us-warns-beijing-against-using-force-in-south-china-sea>

20 February 2020: Japan expresses concern about Chinese attempts in East, South China Sea

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Saturday expressed concern about Chinese unilateral attempts to change status quo in East and South China seas in G7 talks, NHK World reported. He said Japan will say what needs to be said and demand action from Beijing. Leaders of G7 nations had teleconference on Friday just after 11 pm Japan time. This was the first G7 conference that included Suga, Joe Biden and Mario Draghi.

<https://www.wionews.com/world/japan-expresses-concern-about-chinese-attempts-in-east-south-china-sea-365042>

19 February 2020: France sends warships to South China Sea ahead of exercise with US and Japan

The French navy said an amphibious assault ship the Tonnerre and the frigate Surcouf had left their home port Toulon on Thursday and would travel to the Pacific on a three-month mission. The website Naval News reported that the ships would cross the South China Sea twice and take part in a combined exercise with the Japanese and US militaries in May. Capt Arnaud Tranchant, commanding officer of the Tonnerre, told Naval News that the French navy would “work to strengthen” France’s partnership with the US, Japan, India and Australia – the so-called Quad.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3122416/france-sends-warships-south-china-sea-ahead-exercise-us-and>

17 February 2021: U.S. ship sails in South China Sea by China-claimed islands

A U.S. Navy warship sailed by islands claimed by China in the South China Sea on Wednesday in a freedom of navigation operation, marking the latest move by Washington to challenge Beijing’s territorial claims in the contested waters. The U.S. Navy’s 7th Fleet said destroyer USS Russell “asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the Spratly Islands, consistent with international law.”

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-usa-china-fonop-idUSKBN2AH0J7>

15 February 2021: India pitches for connectivity from Arabian Sea to South China Sea

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on Monday pitched for connectivity from "The Arabian Sea to the South China Sea" even as India and Japan work together in tandem. Speaking at an event in Guwahati, Assam the EAM said, the "approach to create connectivity to and within Assam, beyond to the North-East, then to neighbouring Myanmar and Bangladesh, but eventually push all the way by road, by sea, by air to Vietnam, to Japan."

<https://zeenews.india.com/india/india-pitches-for-connectivity-from-arabian-sea-to-south-china-sea-2342083.html>

15 February 2021: Japan Debating on Response to China's New Coast Guard Law

Amid the growing belligerence of China in the East and South China Sea following Beijing's enactment of a new coast guard law, Japan is now deliberating on an apt response to the legislation, which is poised to escalate tensions in the region.

<http://www.businessworld.in/article/Japan-debating-on-response-to-China-s-new-coast-guard-law/15-02-2021-377782/>

9 February 2021: French submarine patrols South China Sea, likely angering Beijing

A French nuclear attack submarine was among two navy ships that recently conducted a patrol through the South China Sea, its defence minister announced, in a move likely to anger Beijing, which claims most of the strategic waters as its territory.

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210209-french-submarine-patrols-south-china-sea-likely-angering-beijing>

9 February 2021: Two U.S. carrier groups conduct exercises in South China Sea

Two U.S. carrier groups conducted joint exercises in the South China Sea on Tuesday, days after a U.S. warship sailed near Chinese-controlled islands in the disputed waters, as China denounced the United States for damaging peace and stability.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-usa-carriers/two-u-s-carrier-groups-conduct-exercises-in-south-china-sea-idUSKBN2A90I5>

8 February 2021: Philippines says to meet U.S. to iron out differences on troop deal

The Philippines and the United States will meet this month to iron out differences over a Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), Manila's top diplomat said, amid renewed regional concerns over China's assertive maritime agenda.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-usa-defence/philippines-says-to-meet-u-s-to-iron-out-differences-on-troop-deal-idUSKBN2A809M>

8 February 2021: South China Sea code of conduct 'will never exclude' US: Locsin

The code of conduct in the South China Sea will not prohibit the presence of western powers like the United States in the region, Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr., said Monday. "The first thing I insisted on is this, here is the non-negotiable: a code of conduct will never exclude a western power, well the United States from the area...That's the mutual defense treaty," he told ANC's Headstart. "With that, you have the assurance of a balance of power in the region and then we negotiate how we're going to deal with each other on this and that," he said.

<https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/02/08/21/south-china-sea-code-of-conduct-will-never-exclude-us-locsin>

5 February 2021: USS John S. McCain demonstrates near South China Sea islands a day after Taiwan Strait passage

The guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain steamed past a disputed island chain in the South China Sea on Friday, a day after transiting the Taiwan Strait, moves that challenge Chinese claims in the region. The McCain sailed near the Paracel Islands west of the Philippines in a freedom-of-navigation operation meant to "assert navigational rights and freedoms," according to a statement from 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. Joe Keiley on Friday.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/uss-john-s-mccain-demonstrates-near-south-china-sea-islands-a-day-after-taiwan-strait-passage-1.661111>

3 February 2021: UK, Japan express serious concern over East, South China seas situation

Four ministers from Japan and Britain voiced serious concern on Wednesday about the situation in the East and South China seas and opposed any unilateral attempts to change the status quo, in a apparent reference to China's maritime expansion. The joint statement was issued after an online meeting of Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi of Japan, and their respective British counterparts Dominic Raab and Ben Wallace.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/japan-britain/update-1-uk-japan-express-serious-concern-over-east-south-china-seas-situation-idUSL1N2K91B9>

3 February 2021: Japan conveys 'strong concern' to China over new coast guard law

Tokyo said it conveyed "strong concerns" to Beijing over China's new controversial legislation that allows its coast guard to use military force in waters the country claims, during a video meeting on maritime issues Wednesday.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/02/03/national/china-senkakus-east-china-sea-katsunobu-kato/>

2 February 2021: Chinese Bombers Simulated an Attack on A Us Navy Aircraft Carrier in the South China Sea

Chinese bombers recently simulated an attack on a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier in the South China Sea, the U.S. military said on Friday, confirming earlier reporting from the Financial Times. As the Navy's Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group sailed into the South China Sea this past Saturday, the Chinese military sent eight H-6K bombers, four J-16 fighter jets, and one Y-8 anti-submarine warfare aircraft flying past Taiwan and into the contested waterway.

<https://sofrep.com/news/chinese-bombers-simulated-an-attack-on-a-us-navy-aircraft-carrier-in-the-south-china-sea/>