

**SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.92**  
**March 2021**

**ACTS OF CLAIMANTS**

**29 March 2021: Wary of Beijing, Taiwan Doubles Down on South China Sea Island**

Taiwan's military has stepped up training of troops and added defensive weaponry on the contested South China Sea's biggest natural island to prepare for any attack by Beijing, analysts believe.

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/wary-beijing-taiwan-doubles-down-south-china-sea-island>

**28 March 2021: Philippine fighter jet flies over Chinese boats in South China Sea**

The Philippine military is sending light fighter aircraft to fly over hundreds of Chinese vessels in disputed waters in the South China Sea, its defence minister said, as he repeated his demand the flotilla be withdrawn immediately.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3127316/philippines-sends-fighter-aircraft-over-chinese-boats>

**27 March 2021: Taiwan reports largest ever incursion by Chinese air force**

Twenty Chinese military aircraft entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone on Friday, in the largest incursion yet reported by the island's defence ministry.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/world/united-states-canada/article/3127218/taiwan-reports-largest-ever-incursion-chinese-air>

**26 March 2021: NATO countries must cease South China Sea troubles: spokesperson**

A Chinese military spokesperson on Thursday urged certain members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to stop stirring up troubles in the South China Sea. Ren Guoqiang, a spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defense, made the remarks when asked for comment on the recent dispatch of, or announcement of dispatching, warships to the South China Sea by certain NATO countries for the so-called "freedom of navigation" mission.

<http://www.ecns.cn/news/2021-03-26/detail-ihaitayy1356584.shtml>

**25 March 2021: Philippines sends navy on 'sovereignty patrols' to South China Sea amid fears Whitsun Reef is 'Scarborough Shoal 2.0'**

The Philippine military has ordered more navy ships to be deployed for "sovereignty patrols" in the South China Sea, where a Chinese flotilla has surrounded a disputed reef and ignored Manila's demand to leave the area.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3126997/philippines-sends-navy-sovereignty-patrols-south-china-sea-amid>

**25 March 2021: Philippines, Vietnam press China over vessels massing in South China Sea**

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte expressed concern to China's ambassador about Chinese vessels massing in the South China Sea, his spokesman said, as Vietnam urged Beijing to respect its maritime sovereignty.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-china-southchinasea-idUSKBN2BH13R>

**24 March 2021: South China Sea: Beijing has extended another Spratly Islands reef, photos show**

China has reclaimed land to extend a reef in the Spratly Islands, in the disputed South China Sea, satellite images show. Photographs taken by American space technology company Maxar showed that Subi Reef – which is also claimed by the Philippines and Vietnam – had new land added to it that had not been visible in a satellite photo taken on February 20. The new rectangle of land, about 2.85 hectares (7 acres) in size, had been added to the southern edge of the ring-shaped coral atoll, which encloses a lagoon and has a channel for vessels to enter and leave.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3126656/south-china-sea-beijing-has-extended-another-spratly-islands>

**21 March 2021: Philippines says 220 Chinese boats have encroached in South China Sea**

The Philippines urged China on Sunday to recall more than 200 Chinese boats it said had been spotted at a reef in the South China Sea, saying the presence of the vessels violated its maritime rights as it claims ownership of the area.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-china-southchinasea/philippines-says-chinese-militia-boats-in-south-china-sea-violate-its-maritime-rights-idUSKBN2BD0DE>

**17 March 2021: China blasts U.S.-Japan statement ahead of Alaska talks**

China on Wednesday said it “lodged solemn representations” with the United States and Japan over a statement by top officials from both countries that raised concerns about Beijing's behaviour in Hong Kong, Xinjiang and the South China Sea.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-asia-japan-statement-china-idUSKBN2B90W6>

**16 March 2021: Taiwan bolsters South China Sea deployments, gets U.S. submarine parts approval**

Taiwan's newly-appointed defence minister said on Wednesday it has strengthened deployments in the disputed South China Sea and that the United States has approved the export of sensitive technology to equip Taiwan's new submarine fleet.

<https://kfgo.com/2021/03/16/taiwan-bolsters-south-china-sea-deployments-gets-u-s-submarine-parts-approval/>

**15 March 2021: China holds naval drills in three maritime areas amid US military threats**

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) recently held combat-oriented naval exercises featuring different types of warships in three major sea areas, at a time when the US secretary of defense is rallying allies in the region and attempting to foster "credible deterrence" against China.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202103/1218437.shtml>

**12 March 2021: Taiwan nabs smuggled cigarettes near disputed South China Sea island**

The Coast Guard Administration (CGA) found 1.63 million packs of smuggled cigarettes with a street value of more than NT\$100 million (US\$3.54 million) on a ship near the disputed Pratas Islands in the South China Sea, reports said Friday (March 12). The catch, just west of the islands, was made on a Togolese-registered freighter on March 6, CNA reported. The cigarettes are suspected to be counterfeit Chinese brands.

<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4149157>

**7 March 2021: US is disrupting security in South China Sea: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi**

China's top diplomat has accused the United States and other Western nations of disrupting regional stability in the South China Sea, even as he urged South-east Asian countries to "press ahead" with the negotiations on a code to manage maritime and territorial disputes in the contested waters.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/the-us-is-disrupting-security-in-south-china-sea-chinese-foreign-minister>

**4 March 2021: Hainan to create a genebank for the conservation of biodiversity in the South China Sea**

China's Hainan began building a germplasm storage facility to conserve biodiversity in the South China Sea. According to the Hainan Daily, the gene bank of flora and fauna will be finally formed by 2023. The total investment in this project reaches 22 million yuan (about \$ 3.4 million). Experts have already set out on scientific expeditions to collect biological samples in the coastal waters of Hainan and the evergreen mangrove forests that grow in the island's tidal strip. In the future, the expedition will be equipped for deep-sea research.

<https://tass.com/science/1263229>

**3 March 2021: Taiwan Begins Missile Tests Amid Chinese Military Drills in South China Sea**

Taiwan began the first of six missile tests on Wednesday, a day after the Chinese military revealed it had conducted an amphibious landing exercise as part of its month-long drills in the South China Sea.

<https://www.newsweek.com/taiwan-begins-missile-tests-amid-chinese-military-drills-south-china-sea-1573382>

**28 February 2021: China to hold month-long military drills in South China Sea**

China has announced that it will hold military exercises in the South China Sea for the whole of March, at a time when the US military has been frequently sending reconnaissance aircraft and ships to the region and a French warship group is on its way.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202102/1216821.shtml>

**ASEAN AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA**

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

### **30 March 2021: French naval ships on way to South China Sea stop by Indian port**

French naval ships Tonnerre, an amphibious assault ship, and Surcouf, a Frigate Class ship, stopped at Kochi on Tuesday on its way to the South China Sea to underscore freedom of navigation in international waterways. The ships are going to South China Sea as part of Mission Jeanne D'arc 2021 and will reach Japan after transiting the South China Sea twice.

<https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay?newsID=818741>

### **28 March 2021: Japan and Indonesia defense chiefs opposed to assertive moves by China**

The defense ministers of Japan and Indonesia on Sunday agreed to send messages to the rest of the world that the two countries will strongly oppose any action by China that could escalate tensions in regional waters.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/03/28/national/indonesia-china-south-china-sea-defense/>

### **24 March 2021: China embassy takes swipe at 'fusty' Japan over South China Sea**

China's embassy in the Philippines has blamed "some external countries" for stoking tensions in the region, in remarks aimed at Japan after its ambassador stressed the need for peace and stability and in the South China Sea.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-china-southchinasea-japan/china-embassy-takes-swipe-at-fusty-japan-over-south-china-sea-idUSKBN2BG1KS?il=0>

### **24 March 2021: US backs Philippines in standoff over South China Sea reef**

The United States said Tuesday it's backing the Philippines in a new standoff with Beijing in the disputed South China Sea, where Manila has asked a Chinese fishing flotilla to leave a reef. China ignored the call, insisting it owns the offshore territory.

[http://www.elpasoinc.com/news/ap\\_wire/international/us-backs-philippines-in-standoff-over-south-china-sea-reef/article\\_0d8c2a10-7956-5089-8446-5f3e1c262824.html](http://www.elpasoinc.com/news/ap_wire/international/us-backs-philippines-in-standoff-over-south-china-sea-reef/article_0d8c2a10-7956-5089-8446-5f3e1c262824.html)

### **16 March 2021: Japan, U.S. Share Serious Concerns Over Tensions in South China Sea: Kishi**

Japan and the United States have shared serious concerns over rising tensions in the East and South China Seas, Japanese defence minister Nobuo Kishi said on Tuesday. Kishi made the comments after talks with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who is visiting Tokyo. Their discussions centered on China, but also included North Korean issues, Kishi told reporters after the meeting.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021-03-16/japan-us-share-serious-concerns-over-tensions-in-south-china-sea-kishi>

### **11 March 2021: Resolutions introduced in US to condemn China's actions in South China Sea**

Influential US Senators have introduced a slew of resolutions in the Senate, condemning China's rising actions to militarise the South China Sea and also to tackle Beijing's economic practices that distort global markets and hurt the American businesses.

Introduced by Senators Rick Scott, Josh Hawley, Dan Sullivan, Thom Tillis and Roger Wicker on Wednesday, the first resolution applauded the American Navy and Coast Guard for their efforts to ensure freedom of navigation operations and send a clear message that the US will not tolerate Communist China's extension of power in waters beyond its legitimate territorial sea boundaries.

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/resolutions-introduced-in-us-to-condemn-china-s-actions-in-south-china-sea-121031100407\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/resolutions-introduced-in-us-to-condemn-china-s-actions-in-south-china-sea-121031100407_1.html)

**10 March 2021: 'Quad' leaders meet: PM Modi to meet US president Joe Biden virtually on 12 March**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed with his Japanese counterpart Yoshihide Suga on Tuesday to boost bilateral cooperation and also strengthen ties through the India, Japan, US, and Australia grouping for a free and open Indo-Pacific. The talks between Modi and Suga came ahead of a summit of the leaders of the Quad nations, a grouping of the US, India, Australia and Japan, which support a free and open Indo-Pacific. The talks will be held on Friday as part of the focus of the administration of US President Joe Biden on reinforcing the group and countering China.

<https://www.livemint.com/news/world/ahead-of-quad-india-japan-discuss-south-china-sea-freedom-of-navigation-11615302874855.html>

**9 March 2021: Chinese Air Force did not pose threat to Navy ships in South China Sea: US military**

“The Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group closely monitored all People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) and Air Force (PLAAF) activity, and at no time did they pose a threat to US Navy ships, aircraft, or sailors,” the Pacific Command said in a statement.

<https://www.wionews.com/world/chinese-air-force-did-not-pose-threat-to-navy-ships-in-south-china-sea-us-military-369057>

**5 March 2021: India-Philippines BrahMos pact: A deal that sends message to China**

India has taken a major step towards becoming an arms exporter. India has signed a key pact with the Philippines for the sale of "defence material and equipment", which are likely to include BrahMos cruise missiles. This is a significant development for two reasons. One the Philippines could be India’s first client for its missile system and second those Indian arms could protect the Philippines against Beijing in the South China Sea.

<https://www.wionews.com/india-news/india-philippines-brahmos-pact-a-deal-that-sends-message-to-china-368326>

**4 March 2021: U.S. calls German warship's plan to sail South China Sea support for rules-based order**

The United States on Wednesday hailed plans by NATO ally Germany to sail a warship across the contested South China Sea, calling it welcome support for a “rules-based international order” in the region, something Washington says is threatened by China.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-germany-usa/u-s-calls-german-warships-plan-to-sail-south-china-sea-support-for-rules-based-order-idUSKCN2AW016>

**3 March 2021: Beijing to Berlin: respect South China Sea sovereignty during frigate visit**

Beijing has called on Germany not to infringe on the sovereignty of South China Sea claimants, in response to Berlin's plans to send a frigate to the region in August. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Wednesday that all countries enjoyed freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea, but "this should not be used as an excuse to endanger the sovereignty and security of littoral countries".

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3123951/beijing-berlin-respect-south-china-sea-sovereignty-during>

**3 March 2021: German warship to sail through South China Sea, officials say**

A German frigate will set sail for Asia in August and, on its return journey, become the first German warship to cross the South China Sea since 2002, senior government officials in Berlin said on Tuesday (March 2). The ship will not pass within what officials called the "12-nautical-mile", officials in the foreign and defence ministries added, in a reference to contested areas in the crowded sea.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/german-warship-to-sail-through-south-china-sea-officials-say>