

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No.104
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ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

28 March 2022: Philippines holds biggest military exercises in seven years with US amid South China Sea tensions

Philippines on Monday held the biggest military exercises in seven years with the United States as China continues to impose its presence over the South China Sea. The annual exercises, called Balikatan, Tagalog for shoulder-to-shoulder, will run up to April 8 with nearly 9,000 navy, marines, air force and army troops, including 5,100 American military personnel, to strengthen the longtime treaty allies' "capabilities and readiness for real-world challenges," US and Philippine military officials said.

<https://www.wionews.com/world/philippines-holds-biggest-military-exercises-in-seven-years-with-us-amid-south-china-sea-tensions-466366>

28 March 2022: South China Sea level has risen by 150 mm since 1900: Study

South China Sea's sea level has risen by 150 mm since 1900, according to researchers from the South China Sea Institute of Oceanology. The study, carried out by the researchers under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and other institutions in the country, focused on Porites coral, a wide-spread coral in the South China Sea with a high growth rate, clear annual growth layer and sensitive response to the change of seawater environment, Xinhua News Agency reported.

<https://theprint.in/world/south-china-sea-level-has-risen-by-150-mm-since-1900-study/891510/>

27 March 2022: Philippine coast guard accuses Chinese ship of risking collision in South China Sea

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has accused its Chinese counterpart of steering one of its ships to within metres of a Filipino patrol vessel in the disputed South China Sea, breaking international rules and risking a collision.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippines-slams-chinese-ships-close-distance-manoeuving-in-south-china-sea>

26 March 2022: Beijing asserts right to develop South China Sea: Report

China in a fresh assertion reiterated that Beijing "has right to develop South China Sea (SCS) Islands as it deems fit" contrary to what it said earlier that it would not transform the artificial islands in the contested waters of SCS to a military base. On March 22, China made the assertions regarding it. Recently Wang Wenbin, spokesperson of Chinese Foreign Ministry asserted that China's deployment of "necessary national defence facilities on its own territory are a right entitled to every sovereign country and it is in line with international law, which is beyond reproach". What China calls its "own territory" are disputed islands in the SCS, reported The HK Post.

<https://theprint.in/world/beijing-asserts-right-to-develop-south-china-sea-report/890183/>

26 March 2022: Aggressive acts by Chinese fishing boats continue in South China Sea

Chinese fishing vessels frequently appear in the South China Sea off the Philippines, apparently with a menacing purpose, a year after more than 200 such vessels were reported to have massed in the waters off the country last March.

<https://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0008391910>

25 March 2022: Coast guard reports more Filipino fishermen in disputed Chinese-controlled shoal

The Philippine Coast Guard said Friday it had seen more Filipino fishermen operating off a rich fishing ground in Manila's exclusive economic zone, describing this as a "significant milestone" because China has effectively controlled South China Sea waters in that area for the past decade.

<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/philippine/more-filipino-fishermen-in-scarborough-shoal-03252022113627.html>

25 March 2022: Funerals held for PLA pilots and crew killed in South China Sea crash

Funerals have been held for at least seven People's Liberation Army pilots and crew who died when a warplane crashed in the South China Sea early this month, according to official reports. The Chinese military has not confirmed the crash, which is believed to have happened southwest of Sanya in Hainan province on March 1.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3171752/funerals-held-pla-pilots-and-crew-killed-south-china-sea-crash>

23 March 2022: The Philippines' pivot toward China could change when Duterte steps down as president

The Philippines has been warming up to China since President Rodrigo Duterte was elected in 2016. As Filipinos head to the polls on May 9 to elect a new leader, observers will be watching closely to see what the new leadership could mean for the Philippines' growing ties with Beijing.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/24/philippine-presidential-election-dutertes-china-pivot-could-change.html>

22 March 2022: Msia wants Vietnam to stop its fishermen encroaching into Msian waters

Malaysia has asked Vietnam to immediately take concrete action to address the issue of Vietnamese fishermen encroaching into Malaysian waters. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the issue had become rampant of late as the fishermen were not just encroaching into Malaysian waters, but also acting aggressive and provocative against Malaysian maritime enforcers and local fishermen.

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2022/03/782233/msia-wants-vietnam-stop-its-fishermen-encroaching-msian-waters>

21 March 2022: Joint Press Statement between the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and Malaysia (20 – 21 March 2022)

The Leaders reiterated ASEAN's consistent position on the South China Sea and reaffirmed the importance of maintaining peace, security, stability, safety, and freedom of navigation and over-flight in and above the South China Sea, and peaceful resolution of disputes without resorting to threat or use of force, in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). They called for the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety, and were encouraged by the progress of the substantive negotiations towards the conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) in accordance with international law, including 1982 UNCLOS. They emphasised the need to maintain and promote an environment conducive to the COC negotiations.

<https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/-/joint-press-statement-between-the-socialist-republic-of-viet-nam-and-malaysia-20-21-march-2022->

22 March 2022: China urges U.S. to stop sowing discord in the South China Sea

The Chinese Foreign Ministry on Tuesday urged the U.S. to stop sowing discord and flexing muscles in the South China Sea as U.S. Indo-Pacific commander earlier claimed in an interview that China has fully militarized three islands in the South China Sea.

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2022-03-22/China-urges-U-S-to-stop-sowing-ddiscord-in-the-South-China-Sea-18Cby6FQbaU/index.html>

22 March 2022: Taiwan says it won't militarize island in South China Sea

Taiwan has no intention of militarizing Taiping Island - the biggest island under its control in the South China Sea - the Defense Minister Chiu Kuo-Cheng said Tuesday.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/taiwan-southchinasea-03222022135636.html>

21 March 2022: China has fully militarized three islands in South China Sea, US admiral says

China has fully militarized at least three of several islands it built in the disputed South China Sea, arming them with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missile systems, laser and jamming equipment and fighter jets in an increasingly aggressive move that threatens all nations operating nearby, a top US military commander said Sunday.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/21/china-has-fully-militarized-three-islands-in-south-china-sea-us-admiral-says>

18 March 2022: Malaysia to host 4 nations for Bersama Shield military drills

Malaysia will host armed forces from Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom in the annual Bersama Shield 2022 training exercise beginning Saturday and running through April 1, the Malaysian Joint Forces said in a statement.

<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/training-exercise-03182022114124.html>

16 March 2022: 'Innocent passage': China defends ship's illegal intrusion in Sulu Sea

The Chinese Foreign Ministry has defended the presence of a Chinese vessel in the Philippines' maritime territory in the Sulu Sea, labeling the illegal intrusion as an "exercise of the right of innocent passage." Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian made the remark after the Philippines summoned Chinese Ambassador Huang Xilian over the People's Liberation Army-Navy's (PLAN's) illegal incursion in the Sulu Sea located in the southwestern area of the Philippines.

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/203040/innocent-passage-china-defends-ships-intrusion-in-sulu-sea#ixzz7NIZiyuY1>

14 March 2020: Philippines summons Chinese envoy over 'illegal intrusion' in inland waters

The Philippines said on Monday it had summoned the Chinese ambassador to protest a Chinese navy ship's "illegal intrusion" in archipelagic waters over which the Southeast Asian country says it has complete sovereignty.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3170441/philippines-summons-chinese-envoy-over-illegal-intrusion-inland>

12 March 2020: Vietnam blocks Sony's action movie 'Uncharted' over South China Sea map

Vietnam has banned Sony's action movie "Uncharted" from domestic distribution over a scene featuring a map that shows a disputed line declared by China to stake its claim to large parts of the South China Sea, state media reported on Saturday.

<https://financialpost.com/pmn/business-pmn/vietnam-blocks-sonys-action-movie-uncharted-over-south-china-sea-map>

10 March 2022: Chinese Military Aircraft Crashed in South China Sea—Taiwan Intel Report

The Chinese military is searching for a patrol plane that crashed into the South China Sea earlier this month, Taiwan's intelligence agency said on Thursday, becoming the first government in the region to officially confirm several days of speculation.

<https://www.newsweek.com/chinese-military-aircraft-crashed-south-china-sea-taiwan-intel-report-1686659>

9 March 2022: South China Sea: New Philippine leader must honour joint exploration agreement with Beijing or face conflict, says Duterte

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has told his successor that Manila must honour an agreement his administration made with China to jointly explore an area in the disputed South China Sea for oil and gas deposits – or face possible conflict.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3169859/south-china-sea-new-philippine-leader-must-honour-joint>

7 March 2022: Vietnam asks China not to violate its exclusive economic zone

Vietnam has urged China to respect its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf after Beijing announced drills in the East Sea. The Hainan Maritime Safety Administration announced March 4 the establishment of a no-go zone for military drills in the East Sea (known internationally as the South China Sea), the southwest of Hainan Island, saying the drills would start from the same day and last until March 15. "Part of the above-mentioned maritime area belongs to Vietnam's exclusive economic zone and continental shelf as determined under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/vietnam-asks-china-not-to-violate-its-exclusive-economic-zone-4435934.html>

7 March 2022: China optimistic on code of conduct, but irks Vietnam with military exercises

China has "full confidence in the prospect of finalizing the Code of Conduct" in the South China Sea, Beijing's top diplomat said Monday, even as China's military conducted maritime exercises that a Vietnamese analyst said could complicate the negotiations.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/southchinasea-code-03072022135801.html>

7 March 2022: Chinese envoy summoned twice last year over encroachment, Dewan Rakyat told

Wisma Putra summoned the Chinese Ambassador twice last year over encroachment of Malaysian territory by Chinese vessels, says Datuk Kamarudin Jaffar. "The first time was on June 3 after 16 planes encroached upon our airspace. "The second was on Oct 4 when Chinese vessels, including a research ship, were present and carrying out activities in our exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off Sabah and Sarawak," the Deputy Foreign Minister said in reply to a supplementary question by Lukanisman Awang Sauni (GPS-Sibuti) in the Dewan Rakyat on Monday (March 7).

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2022/03/07/chinese-envoy-summoned-twice-last-year-over-encroachment-dewan-rakyat-told>

6 March 2022: China announces South China Sea drills near Vietnam coast

China is carrying out more than a week of military drills in the South China Sea in an area between its southern province of Hainan and Vietnam, the government announced, warning shipping to stay away. China claims a large part of the disputed waterway, on which major shipping lanes lie, and has built artificial islands and airfields on some of its reefs and islets, to widespread concern in the region and in the United States.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/China-announces-South-China-Sea-drills-near-Vietnam-coast>

ASEAN AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

23 March 2022: Japan nudges ASEAN chair Cambodia on South China Sea

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Cambodia at the weekend to lobby for regional solutions to the South China Sea disputes, potentially diluting Beijing's influence in Phnom Penh. This was his first bilateral foreign trip since taking office in October 2021.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/japan-southchinasea-03232022143938.html>

7 March 2022: ASEAN must prevent external interference in South China Sea Code of Conduct, says Chinese minister

China on Monday (March 7) said that parties negotiating the South China Sea Code of Conduct (COC) need to prevent "external interference" in the neighbourhood. Beijing and the 10 ASEAN member states have been negotiating such a code for nearly two decades, with an initial target to complete talks by the end of this year. But negotiations have stalled because of the Covid-19 pandemic and differences between ASEAN countries and China on fundamental issues.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/asean-must-prevent-external-interference-for-south-china-sea-code-of-conduct-china>

6 March 2022: Ukraine war leaves ASEAN fretting over South China Sea

In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are nervous about the implications for the South China Sea dispute. As Russia's unilateral attempt to change the status quo overlaps with China's aggressive moves in the South China Sea, they fear that if Russia's actions are tolerated, there could be spillovers in their neighbourhood.

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/highlight/2022/03/06/ukraine-war-leaves-asean-fretting-over-south-china-sea/>

OTHER STATES AND SOUTH CHINA SEA

27 March 2022: Carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, USS Miguel Keith Operating in South China Sea

Aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) is on a Manila port visit in Manila after operating in the South China Sea while Expeditionary Support Base USS Miguel Keith (ESB-6) is in the Philippines for the upcoming U.S-Philippines joint exercise Balikatan 2022, while U.S destroyers conducted firing exercises in the Philippine Sea on Thursday.

<https://news.usni.org/2022/03/27/carrier-uss-abraham-lincoln-uss-miguel-keith-operating-in-south-china-sea>

24 March 2022: US Navy deploys 3 spy ships near China at once 'in support of submarine warfare'

The US Navy has reportedly deployed three spy ships simultaneously to sensitive waters near China over the past week in a provocative move experts said on Thursday aims to boost its submarine and anti-submarine warfare capabilities against the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), after the US "acknowledged its shortcomings" with last year's undersea collision of the USS Connecticut nuclear-powered attack submarine in the South China Sea.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202203/1256713.shtml>

22 March 2022: US expeditionary mobile base enters S.China Sea for 1st time, sending a worrying signal

The USS Miguel Keith expeditionary mobile base, a type of large logistics support and command and control vessel, reportedly entered the South China Sea for the first time on Monday, with Chinese analysts saying on Tuesday that China should pay close attention to this alarming move, as the warship can potentially enable the US military to operate even more extensively in the region.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202203/1256552.shtml>

19 March 2022: India's Modi and Japan's Kishida discussed China and Ukraine conflict: Shringla

When WION asked whether China's aggression border aggression was raised during the meeting, Shringla responded, "Both the PMs discussed China. We informed Japan of the situation in Ladakh, the attempts of amassing the troops, & our talks with China on border-related issues... Japanese PM also briefed us on his perspective vis-a-vis East & South China sea."

<https://www.wionews.com/india-news/indias-modi-and-japans-kishida-discuss-china-and-ukraine-conflict-463860>

18 March 2022: U.S., Japan, Australia Conduct Trilateral Training in South China Sea

The training was designed to address common maritime security priorities and concerns, enhance interoperability and communication, develop mutually-beneficial relationships, as well as promote navigational freedom in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific. The operations were designed to increase collective ability to maintain maritime security and readiness and respond to any regional contingency amongst allies. Professional engagement and cooperation with allies and partners is the foundation of regional stability, which fosters peace and prosperity for all nations.

<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2022/03/trilateral-training-in-south-china-sea/>

8 March 2022: Chinese Specialist Vessel Helped U.S. Pull Crashed F-35 From South China Sea: Reports

Days after the U.S. Navy declared it managed to salvage the wreck of the F-35C fighter jet that plunged into the South China Sea a month ago, reports have emerged that the Navy was aided by a Chinese-made ship for the mission. The U.S. Seventh Fleet said in a statement that the jet was fished out using lift lines from the crane of the Diving Support Construction Vessel (DSCV) Picasso. Picasso, though owned by a Singapore-based firm, was built by China Merchants Heavy Industries (CMHI), reported South China Morning Post, quoting local Chinese media. CMHI is one of the nation's top three state-owned shipbuilders.

<https://www.ibtimes.com/chinese-specialist-vessel-helped-us-pull-crashed-f-35-south-china-sea-reports-3427944>

7 March 2022: Submarines to operate deeper into the Pacific to meet China threat

Australian submarines will be able to operate deeper into the Pacific and find it easier to sail undetected to the South China Sea and East China Sea under the plans to re-establish an east coast base for the proposed nuclear-powered submarine fleet.

<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/submarines-to-operate-deeper-into-the-pacific-to-meet-china-threat-20220307-p5a2cg>

7 March 2022: "We Do Whatever We Can to Deter China": Australia's "Want Peace" Message

Amid rising tensions with China, Australian Defence Minister Peter Dutton has indicated that his country may send weapons to Taiwan in response to any future Chinese military aggression. Dutton's remarks drew a direct comparison to support currently being sent to Ukraine amid its conflict with Russia, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

<https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/china-australia-relations-we-do-whatever-we-can-to-deter-china-australias-want-peace-message-2807413>

4 March 2022: US Navy recovers wreckage of jet that crashed into aircraft carrier from South China Sea

The US Navy on Wednesday recovered from the bottom of the South China Sea the wreckage of a US military stealth fighter jet that crashed into the deck of a US aircraft carrier in January, the US Navy's 7th Fleet announced in a news release Thursday.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/03/politics/navy-military-plane-south-china-sea/index.html>

1 March 2022: South China Sea: EU offers encrypted tool to fight maritime security threats in Indo-Pacific

The European Union is seeking to ramp up its maritime security influence in the Indo-Pacific by offering access to a web-based platform that enables member countries' navies and coastguards to communicate in real-time. Trials of the Indo-Pacific Regional Information Sharing (IORIS) platform are currently under way in the Philippines, where it is being used to conduct joint disaster relief exercises, navy chief Rear Admiral Caesar Valencia told a forum in Manila on Monday. He said the IORIS platform would "contribute to maintaining peace and stability in the region" by allowing the countries using it to act as "each other's eyes and ears" – especially important when deploying supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3168788/south-china-sea-eu-offers-encrypted-tool-fight-maritime-security>