

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No. 132
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ACTS OF CLAIMANTS

30 September: Crew of Vietnamese fishing boat injured in an attack in the South China Sea, state media say

A Vietnamese fishing boat was attacked in the South China Sea near the Paracel Islands, claimed by both China and Vietnam, and 10 crew members were injured, Vietnamese state media said Monday.

The Vietnamese boat radioed Sunday to report the attack, saying three fishermen suffered broken limbs and seven others received other injuries, the Tien Phong newspaper quoted a local official at Binh Chau commune in Quang Ngai province as saying.

It was not clear what country's boat attacked the Vietnamese vessel, and commune officials told The Associated Press they had nothing to add to the newspaper report.

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/crew-vietnamese-fishing-boat-injured-095842148.html>

25 September: Philippines says aircraft shadowed by Chinese helicopter during patrol

The Philippines said on Wednesday its fisheries bureau aircraft was shadowed and approached by a Chinese navy helicopter while on patrol near the disputed Scarborough Shoal, in another face-off between two countries locked in a bitter row over territory.

The Philippine National Security Council said the incident took place on Monday and its aircraft was still able to complete its mission.

It was the latest in the series of air and sea encounters between the two countries sparring over contested areas of the South China Sea, including the Scarborough Shoal, one of Asia's most contested features, which has been occupied by China's coast guard for more than a decade.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/South-China-Sea/Philippines-says-aircraft-shadowed-by-Chinese-helicopter-during-patrol>

24 September: Philippines says record 251 Chinese ships spotted in its waters in 1 week

The Philippine Navy on Tuesday said the number of Chinese ships in the West Philippine Sea – an area in the South China Sea the Philippines claims as its territorial waters – reached a record high for this year at 251.

This is the highest concentration of Chinese ships in the West Philippine Sea so far this year, Philippine Navy spokesman Rear Admiral Roy Vincent Trinidad said in a press briefing.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3279781/south-china-sea-philippines-says-record-251-chinese-ships-spotted-its-waters-one-week>

21 September: Malaysian king tells Xi Jinping nation will work with China to keep South China Sea peace

Malaysia will work with China to keep peace in the South China Sea, Malaysia's king told Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, according to mainland state media on Friday.

Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar made the pledge during his visit to Beijing in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of bilateral relations, the first trip to China by a Malaysian monarch in 10 years.

"Malaysia would like to join hands with China to contribute constructively to the maintaining of peace and stability of the South China Sea," mainland state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) quoted Sultan Ibrahim as saying.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2869643/malaysian-king-tells-xi-jinping-it-will-work-with-china-to-keep-peace-in-south-china-sea>

18 September: Philippines eyes taking sea dispute with China to UN General Assembly

The Philippines is currently studying the possibility of taking its long-running maritime dispute with China to the United Nations General Assembly.

During Wednesday's (September 18) budget plenary debates at the House of Representatives, the lawmaker sponsoring the budget of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said it has not ruled out the filing of a UN General Assembly resolution on the country's territorial claims in the West Philippine Sea.

"The DFA really plans to file a resolution with the UN General Assembly on the Philippines' territorial claims in the West Philippine Sea," Rep. Joseph Gilbert Violago (Nueva Ecija, 2nd District) said during the budget hearing for the DFA.

The DFA's decision will be based on "necessity and prudence," the lawmaker said.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/09/18/2386194/philippines-eyes-taking-sea-dispute-china-un-general-assembly>

15 September: Philippines vessel from contested South China Sea shoal returns to port

Manila will send a replacement for a Philippine coastguard ship that headed home on the weekend after a five-month deployment at a fiercely contested shoal in the South China Sea. The National Maritime Council of the Philippines said on Sunday that the BRP Teresa Magbanua, a 97-metre (318-foot) Philippine Coast Guard ship, was sailing back to its home port from Sabina Shoal with its "mission accomplished".

"After more than five months at sea, where she carried out her sentinel duties against overwhelming odds, BRP Teresa Magbanua is now sailing back to her homeport with her mission accomplished," Lucas Bersamin, executive secretary and chairman of the National Maritime Council said in a statement.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/philippines-vessel-contested-south-china-sea-shoal-returns-port-4609596>

12 September: Philippines says had 'frank, candid' talks with China on South China Sea

The Philippines reaffirmed its position on Sabina Shoal in the South China Sea even as it agreed with China to explore ways to lower the tension in area, its foreign ministry said on Thursday.

Manila and Beijing held another round of talks under its bilateral consultation mechanism in China on Sept 11, where the two nations also "agreed to continue discussions on areas of cooperation, especially on hotline mechanisms, coast guard cooperation, and marine scientific and technological cooperation," the ministry said in a statement.

The Chinese foreign ministry, in a statement on the talks it issued on Wednesday night, said it reiterated its demand for the immediate withdrawal of a Philippine vessel and vowed to "firmly uphold its sovereignty"

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/philippines-says-had-frank-candid-talks-with-china-on-south-china-sea>

10 September: Philippines logs record 203 Chinese vessels near its shores in 1 week

The Philippines logged a record 203 Chinese maritime militia vessels and warships operating within waters it claims as its own between August 27 and September 2 – an unprecedented surge that intensifies concerns centred around Sabina Shoal, a newly emerged flashpoint in the ongoing South China Sea dispute.

Analysts describe the increased Chinese maritime activity, which was logged by the Philippine Navy in the country's exclusive economic zone, as "a critical development", consistent with Beijing's long-standing strategy of "swarming" in contested waters. The surge follows a series of confrontations at Sabina Shoal, where the Philippine coastguard has stationed the BRP Teresa Magbanua in response to reports of Chinese reclamation efforts in the area.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3277831/south-china-sea-philippines-logs-record-203-chinese-vessels-near-its-shores-1-week>

10 September: Malaysia shadows Chinese research ship, asserting energy rights

Malaysia has reportedly begun shadowing Chinese vessels operating within its claimed waters, in what observers call a bold assertion of its maritime rights amid Beijing's attempts at obstructing oil-exploration efforts.

The Ke Xue San Hao – a Chinese research vessel accused of conducting unauthorised surveys at Ardasier Bank, 150 nautical miles (278km) from Kota Kinabalu – was closely monitored by Malaysian patrol ship the KD Sundang, according to Stanford University's Gordian Knot Centre for National Security Innovation in a Saturday report.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/economics/article/3277915/south-china-sea-malaysia-shadows-chinese-research-ship-asserting-energy-rights>

9 September: Philippines 'will not allow' Beijing to remove vessels

Beijing-based strategist Hu Bo, director of the South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative, suggested towing the BRP Teresa Magbanua was "one of the options" being considered by Beijing.

Deployed to Sabina Shoal more than four months ago, the Teresa Magbanua is a symbol of Manila's determination to counter Chinese expansionism in a region fraught with historical tensions.

The ship was stationed at the disputed shoal 146km west of the Philippines' Palawan island – and around 1,200km from the nearest major Chinese land mass – to deter China from carrying out island-building efforts similar to those elsewhere in the disputed waterway.

In the escalating game of tit-for-tat that is playing out in the South China Sea, Manila has drawn a bold line in the sand: no Philippine vessel will be removed by force.

But as tensions rise, analysts warn that the spectre of armed conflict looms – potentially drawing the United States into the showdown.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3277751/south-china-sea-philippines-will-not-allow-beijing-remove-vessels>

4 September: Malaysia to investigate leak of Chinese diplomatic note over South China Sea row

Malaysia's Foreign Ministry called Wednesday for a police investigation into a leaked diplomatic note from China over the South China Sea dispute.

The ministry said details of a Feb. 18 diplomatic note from China's Foreign Ministry to the Malaysian Embassy in Beijing was published by a Filipino media outlet on Aug. 29. It didn't give details but alluded to the South China Sea row in its statement.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer had published a diplomatic note in which Beijing reportedly demanded that Malaysia immediately halt all activities in an oil-rich maritime area off Sarawak state on Borneo island.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/malaysia-investigate-leak-chinese-diplomatic-note-south-china-113383751>

3 September: China warns Malaysia to immediately cease activities in oil-rich waters off Sarawak

Beijing has demanded Malaysia to immediately halt all activities in an oil-rich area off Sarawak waters, despite softer diplomatic tones from Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in an attempt to soothe its giant neighbour amid overlapping claims in the South China Sea.

The demand was made in a protest note sent to the Malaysian embassy in China last week, according to the Philippine Daily Inquirer, which also published the document.

The document accused Malaysia of encroaching on areas covered by the 10-dash line, The area is known to Malaysians as Gugusan Beting Raja Jarum, but referred by China as "Nankang Ansha" and "Beikang Ansha".

This is despite the fact that the reefs are only 100 km from Sarawak and almost 2,000 km from mainland China.

<https://www.malaysianow.com/news/2024/09/03/china-warns-malaysia-to-immediately-cess-activities-in-oil-rich-waters-off-sarawak-says-report>

Follows-up: 5 September: Malaysia will not stop South China Sea exploration despite China protests, PM says

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said on Thursday the country will not stop its oil and gas exploration in the South China Sea despite claims by Beijing that Malaysia was infringing on its territory.

Anwar, speaking from Russia where he is on an official trip, said Malaysia's exploration activities were within its territory and were not intended to be provocative or hostile towards China, with whom it has friendly relations.

"Of course, we will have to operate in our waters and secure economic advantage, including drilling for oil, in our territory," Anwar said in a televised press conference in Vladivostok.

"We have never denied the possibility of discussion (with China). But it doesn't mean we have to stop the operation in our area."

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/malaysia-will-not-stop-south-china-sea-exploration-despite-china-protests-pm-2024-09-05/>

OTHER STATES AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

28 September: Philippines, US, Australia, Japan, New Zealand to hold joint maritime activity in South China Sea

Australia and the Philippines said their militaries would conduct a joint maritime activity with Japan, New Zealand and the United States in the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines, which covers one of Asia's most sensitive sites.

"The Maritime Cooperative Activity demonstrates our collective commitment to strengthen regional and international cooperation in support of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific," Australia's Department of Defence said in a statement on Saturday (Sep 28).

Navy ship HMAS Sydney and a Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft will operate with the partner nations to boost "cooperation and interoperability between our armed forces", the statement added.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/philippines-australia-us-japan-new-zealand-south-china-sea-maritime-activity-4644206>

27 September: Japan sails warship in Taiwan Strait for first time

A Japanese warship has sailed through the Taiwan Strait between Taiwan and China for the first time, prompting Beijing to lodge complaints with Tokyo.

The JS Sazanami, a naval destroyer, travelled south through the strait on Wednesday, accompanied by ships from Australia and New Zealand.

It was on its way to military exercises in the South China Sea, Japanese media reported government ministers saying.

The passage is a significant move by Japan, which is thought to have avoided sailing its ships through the strait in order not to upset China, which claims self-governed Taiwan and the strait.

Japan's government has declined to comment on the ship, citing military operation discretion.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm28yd04xxno>

22 September: Biden says China's aggressive behaviour continues in S.China Sea, Taiwan Strait

US President Joe Biden said on Saturday that China continues to "behave aggressively" in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait and President Xi Jinping is using diplomacy to advance his country's interests.

"China continues to behave aggressively, testing this all across the region, and it's true in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, South China, South Asia and the Taiwan Straits," Biden said during the Quad Leaders Summit in Wilmington, Delaware, in comments that were carried on the event's official feed after the press was asked to leave the room where leaders from India, Japan, Australia and the United States were convening.

"We believe Xi Jinping is looking to focus on domestic economic challenges and minimise the turbulence in China diplomatic relationships, and he's also looking to buy himself some diplomatic space, in my view, to aggressively pursue China's interest," Biden said.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2870053/biden-says-chinas-aggressive-behaviour-continues-in-s-china-sea-taiwan-strait>

17 September: Australia to boost South China Sea presence by joining Philippines' maritime defence patrols

Australia will strengthen its presence in the South China Sea through joint maritime defence activities with the Philippines, a move analysts have said reflects Canberra's strategic interest in securing vital trade routes even at the risk of inviting economic backlash from Beijing.

Australian Ambassador to the Philippines HK Yu recently told reporters that her country would be increasing its maritime cooperative activities (MCA) with Manila.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3278894/australia-boost-south-china-sea-presence-joining-philippines-maritime-defence-patrols>

15 September: American and Chinese military leaders discuss South China Sea and more

Military leaders from the U.S. and China met in Beijing for routine talks that only resumed in January after being suspended for two years as ties between the two countries soured. The meetings ended on Sunday and officials discussed ongoing issues such as Taiwan, the Russia-Ukraine war and clashes in the South China Sea.

Michael Chase, deputy assistant secretary of defense for China, Taiwan and Mongolia, led a delegation to engage in the bilateral Defense Policy Coordination Talks, which were last held in January. While the talks weren't expected to resolve long-standing differences in stances over issues ranging from South China Sea claims to Taiwan, the U.S. has continued to push for the discussions as a way to avoid conflict.

The meetings were held after Chase attended the Xiangshan Forum in Beijing, a defense forum that is China's answer to the Shangri-La Dialogue.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/US-China-tensions/American-and-Chinese-military-leaders-discuss-South-China-Sea-and-more>

12 September: Warships in South China Sea signal Germany's willingness to counter China's threats

Two German naval vessels are en route from South Korea to the Philippines through the South China Sea in what analysts describe as a show of Berlin's resolve to confront Chinese threats that now extend as far as Europe.

Two ships left the South Korean port city of Incheon on Tuesday bound for Manila, said the South Korean navy. They are expected to pass through the Taiwan Strait, according to Reuters, before the ships dock in Manila.

A spokesperson for the German Defense Ministry told VOA on Friday confirming that "the next port of call will be Manila, where the ships will moor September 16."

The spokesperson continued, "In accordance with the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, but also for safety reasons, operational details such as the routes of our ships will not be announced in advance."

<https://www.voanews.com/a/warships-in-south-china-sea-signal-berlin-s-willingness-to-counter-beijing-s-threats-/7782259.html>

11 September: US military warns Beijing against 'dangerous' South China Sea moves

A senior US military official warned his Chinese counterpart against Beijing's "dangerous" moves in the South China Sea during the first talks of their kind between the commanders.

Samuel Paparo, Commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command, and Wu Yanan, head of the Chinese army's Southern Theater Command talked via video call on Tuesday China time.

Paparo "underscored the importance of sustained lines of communication between the US military and the PLA," a statement from his command said.

"Such discussions between senior leaders serve to clarify intent and reduce the risk of misperception or miscalculation," he said. He also raised recent "unsafe interactions with US allies" by the Chinese side.

Paparo "urged the PLA to reconsider its use of dangerous, coercive, and potentially escalatory tactics in the South China Sea and beyond," the statement said, referring to the Chinese military by its official name.

<https://hongkongfp.com/2024/09/10/us-military-warns-beijing-against-dangerous-south-china-sea-moves/>

06 September: German warships aim to secure sea lanes in Indo-Pacific

A rare cruise by two German warships in the Indo-Pacific region will demonstrate a commitment to open navigation, the admiral in charge of the naval task force said on Friday (Sep 6), but he declined to confirm if they would transit the contested Taiwan Strait.

"Safe and secure sea lanes, especially from Southeast Asia as well as to Europe and America, are a prerequisite for a prosperous economy of all our countries," Rear Admiral Axel Schulz said in a speech to a reception held on the flight deck of the frigate FGS Baden-Württemberg during a port visit in the South Korean city of Incheon.

Asked later whether the task force would cross the Taiwan Strait on its way to its next stop in Manila, Schulz told reporters that to telegraph the ships' plans would violate operational security.

While the US and other countries have sent warships through the narrow strait in recent weeks, it would be the German navy's first such passage since 2002.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/east-asia/german-warships-aim-secure-south-china-sea-lanes-indo-pacific-admiral-china-south-korea-4591436>

5 September: Poland open to joining Manila in military exercises in South China Sea

POLAND is open to participating and observing joint military exercises with the Philippines and its allies in the South China Sea amid China's growing assertiveness in the waterway, according to the chargé d' affaires at its embassy in Manila

"We discussed this issue (joint exercises) with Defense Secretary (Gilberto Eduardo Gerardo C.), but we are welcome, we are open," Jarosław Szczepankiewicz, chargé d' affaires at the Embassy of Poland in Manila, told BusinessWorld on the sidelines a security forum in Taguig City on Thursday.

He said his country is also willing to help the Philippines train its personnel in cybersecurity and other ways to boost the country's technological capabilities.

<https://www.bworldonline.com/the-nation/2024/09/05/618983/poland-open-to-joining-manila-in-military-exercises-in-south-china-sea/>

2 September: EU 'condemns dangerous actions' by China against Philippines ship

The European Union accused China on Sunday of taking "dangerous actions" against the Philippines, as Beijing and Manila blamed each other for deliberately ramming their coastguard ships.

The collision marks the latest in a spate of similar incidents in recent weeks in the South China Sea, where Beijing claims almost all of the economically vital body of water despite competing claims from other countries and an international court ruling that its assertion has no legal basis.

"The EU condemns the dangerous action by Chinese coastguard vessels against lawful Philippine maritime operations in the area of the Sabina Shoal," said Nabila Massrali, spokeswoman for the EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell, in a statement.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3276784/eu-condemns-dangerous-actions-china-against-philippines-ship>