

**SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No. 138**  
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**ACTS OF CLAIMANT**

**31 March: China's CNOOC discovers 100 mln-ton oilfield in South China Sea, Xinhua says**

The China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) has discovered an oilfield in the South China Sea with proven reserves exceeding 100 million tonnes, Xinhua news agency reported on Monday.

The oilfield, around 170 km (106 miles) off the coast of Shenzhen, sits at an average water depth of 100 metres, the report said, adding that test drilling has yielded a daily production of 413 barrels of crude oil and 68,000 cubic metres of natural gas.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/chinas-cnooc-discovers-100-mln-ton-oilfield-south-china-sea-xinhua-says-2025-03-31/>

**29 March: China conducts military patrol in South China Sea, warns Philippines**

China's military said it had conducted a patrol in the South China Sea on March 28, the day US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth reaffirmed Washington's commitment to Manila, which disputes some of Beijing's claims in the waterway.

A spokesman for the Southern Theatre Command of China's People's Liberation Army said on March 29 that the Philippines frequently enlisted foreign countries to organise "joint patrols" and "disseminated illegal claims" in the region, destabilising the area.

Mr Hegseth met his counterpart Gilberto Teodoro and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr on March 28 in Manila, the first stop on a tour of Asia that also includes Japan. The same day, the US, Japan and the Philippines held naval drills in the South China Sea.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/china-conducts-military-patrol-in-south-china-sea-warns-philippines>

**25 March: MMEA to deploy RM304m Turkish mothership, boosting South China Sea security off Sarawak**

The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) will deploy a Turkish-made multipurpose mission ship (MPMS), worth US\$68.8 million (RM304.29 million), in the waters of Sarawak.

Its director-general, Admiral Maritime Datuk Mohd Rosli Abdullah, today said that deploying significant maritime assets in Sarawak can strengthen the security and sovereignty of the state's waters, particularly in the South China Sea.

He said that the effort is also to ensure sufficient assets for the vast water areas in addition to supporting search and rescue operations.

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/03/25/mmea-to-deploy-rm304m-turkish-mothership-boosting-south-china-sea-security-off-sarawak/170825>

**22 March: China's cable cutter could sever 95% of world communications, work at extreme depths**

In a move that could disrupt crucial undersea communication networks and energy infrastructure worldwide, a Chinese scientific body has unveiled a compact device that can cut cables and power lines located deep in the ocean.

Developed by the China Ship Scientific Research Centre (CSSRC) and its State Key Laboratory of Deep-sea Manned Vehicles, the device targets armoured cables—made of steel, rubber, and polymer—that carry 95% of global data transmission.

Originally developed for civilian salvage and seabed mining, the tool's dual-use potential raises concerns for other nations. For instance, cutting cables near strategic chokepoints like Guam—vital to the US military's second island chain defense strategy—could disrupt global communications signalling a geopolitical crisis, the South China Morning Post reports.

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/china-cable-cutter-could-sever-110825048.html>

### **21 March: Chinese milk tea franchise Chagee under probe in Vietnam over controversial nine-dash line map**

Vietnamese police are investigating a Chinese tea brand over an online map featuring Beijing's disputed claims in the South China Sea, authorities said.

Police in commercial hub Ho Chi Minh City are investigating Chagee about a map on its website showing the "nine-dash line" marking Beijing's claims in the South China Sea.

The city's Department of Culture and Sports said late yesterday that, together with city police, they have been "working with Chagee Vietnam to clarify the matter".

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/money/2025/03/21/chinese-milk-tea-franchise-chagee-under-probe-in-vietnam-over-controversial-nine-dash-line-map/170402>

### **13 March: Vietnam targets toys featuring South China Sea map used by Beijing**

Vietnam is stepping up inspections of particular children's toys over concerns that imagery on the model's face resembles a map China uses to stake competing territorial claims in the South China Sea.

The investigation was launched after local media reported that a version of Baby Three toys, many of which are made in China, featured a design similar to a map of the disputed South China Sea and were being widely sold, according to a statement on the Agency for Domestic Market Surveillance and Development's website – a unit of the trade ministry.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3302205/vietnam-targets-toys-featuring-south-china-sea-map-used-beijing>

### **10 March: Indonesia to Ratify Exclusive Economic Zone Deal with Vietnam in April**

President Prabowo Subianto told Vietnam's ruling Communist Party leader To Lam on Monday that Indonesia would ratify the much-awaited deal on exclusive economic zone, or EEZ, with Vietnam next month, thus paving the way for the two countries to settle a decade-long issue on the maritime boundaries.

The ex-defense minister also gave the visiting party chief his word that he would sign the implementing agreement when he makes a state visit to Hanoi in the near future.

<https://jakartaglobe.id/news/indonesia-to-ratify-exclusive-economic-zone-deal-with-vietnam-in-april>

### **6 March: Philippine defense chief warns allies will fight if China restricts flights over South China Sea**

The Philippines and its security allies would take measures to counter any attempt by China to impose an air defense zone or restrict freedom of flights over the South China Sea, Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said Wednesday, following confrontations between Chinese aircraft and those of his country, Australia and the United States.

Teodoro told The Associated Press in an interview that China's increasing aggression in the disputed waters was now considered the greatest threat to the national security of the Philippines and should also be regarded as a global threat because it could choke a key trade route crucial for global supply chains.

<https://apnews.com/article/philippines-south-china-sea-defense-secretary-gilberto-teodoro-air-defense-zone-4c63b28b674c63b1730a22dc9faa5f22>

#### **4 March: China Deep-Sea Laboratory in South China Sea Sparks Concerns**

China has approved the construction of a deep-sea research facility in the South China Sea, a move that signals the country's expanding role in global maritime exploration and underscores its strategic interests in the region.

The station, set to be built at a depth of 6,560 feet, will not only serve scientific purposes but also enhance China's presence in contested waters.

Located in the disputed South China Sea, the research facility reflects China's intent to reinforce its influence in the region. Beyond its scientific goals, the station will be integrated into a broader surveillance network, combining unmanned submersibles, surface ships, and seabed observatories to create a sophisticated maritime monitoring system.

<https://stratnewsglobal.com/asia/china-deep-sea-laboratory-in-south-china-sea-sparks-concerns/>

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

#### **29 March: US, Japan, Philippines stage navy drills in disputed South China Sea as a Chinese ship keeps watch**

The United States, Japan and the Philippines on Friday staged joint naval drills to boost crisis readiness off a disputed South China Sea shoal as a Chinese military ship kept watch from a distance.

The Chinese frigate attempted to get closer to the waters, where the warships and aircraft from the three allied countries were undertaking maneuvers off the Scarborough Shoal in an unsettling moment, but it was warned by a Philippine frigate by radio and kept away.

"There was a time when they attempted to maneuver closer but, again, we challenged them," Philippine navy Commander Irvin Ian Robles told reporters on board the frigate BRP Jose Rizal.

<https://apnews.com/article/south-china-sea-japan-united-states-philippines-joint-naval-drills-d02ec750e9c7a5443baf510f4c0b1158>

#### **22 March: US defence chief Pete Hegseth to visit Philippines, Japan in first visit to Asian treaty allies**

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is scheduled to visit the Philippines, the first stop in his first trip to Asia next week, for talks that will include increasing deterrence against aggression in the disputed South China Sea, a Philippine official said Friday (Mar 21).

Hegseth will be in Manila on Mar 28 to Mar 29 to meet his Philippine counterpart Gilberto Teodoro and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Talks will touch on increasingly assertive actions by Beijing in the South China Sea and "more significant support" to Philippine security forces by the Trump administration, Philippine Ambassador to the US Jose Manuel Romualdez told The Associated Press.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/us-defence-chief-pete-hegseth-visit-philippines-japan-south-china-sea-5017356>

#### **15 March: G7 condemns China's "illicit, dangerous" maritime actions in Indo-Pacific**

Foreign ministers of the G7 nations have condemned China's actions that have posed risks to regional stability, while expressing concern over efforts to restrict freedom of navigation and overflight through "force" and "coercion" in the South China Sea.

This was conveyed on Friday in the Declaration on Maritime Security and Prosperity by G7 foreign ministers following their meeting in La Malbaie, Canada this week.

"We condemn China's illicit, provocative, coercive and dangerous actions that seek unilaterally to alter the status quo in such a way as to risk undermining the stability of regions, including through land reclamations, and building of outposts, as well as their use for military purpose," the declaration read.

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/world/939389/g7-ministers-condemn-china-s-coercive-actions-south-china-sea/story/>

***Follows-up: 15 March: China lashes out at G7 over statements on maritime security***

China has lashed out at accusations it is endangering maritime safety made by top diplomats from the Group of 7 industrialised democracies in a joint statement, saying on Saturday (Mar 15) the G7 members are "filled with arrogance, prejudice and malicious intentions".

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/east-asia/china-lashes-out-g7-maritime-security-statements-arrogance-5002581>

**10 March: Britain concerned with Beijing's 'dangerous' South China Sea activity**

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy slammed "dangerous and destabilising" activity by Beijing in the disputed South China Sea on Monday, following a weekend visit to the Philippines.

"We're concerned about dangerous and destabilising activities by China in this region," Lammy said in a video partly filmed alongside a vessel belonging to the Philippine Coast Guard, which has frequent tense confrontations with its Chinese counterpart.

"The Philippines is at the sharp end of this, facing frequent challenges to freedom of navigation and international law," Lammy added.

[https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2025/03/10/britain-concerned-with-beijing039s-039dangerous039-south-china-sea-activity-and-says-the-philippines-is-facing-the-sharp-end#goog\\_rewarded](https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2025/03/10/britain-concerned-with-beijing039s-039dangerous039-south-china-sea-activity-and-says-the-philippines-is-facing-the-sharp-end#goog_rewarded)

**7 March: U.S., EU and Japan increase naval deployments in South China Sea**

The U.S., European Union countries and Japan have increased the deployment of warships in the South China Sea in the last year to send "a message" to Beijing to respect territorial sovereignty and international law amid an escalation of confrontations in the disputed waters, according to diplomats.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/South-China-Sea/U.S.-EU-and-Japan-increase-naval-deployments-in-South-China-Sea>