

## SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No. 142

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*Compiled by CIL Ocean Law and Policy Team*

### ACTS OF CLAIMANT

#### **29 July: Malaysia's Navy executes landmark missile and torpedo firings, strengthens defence posture in South China Sea, says defence minister**

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin said the exercise involved the firing of Exocet MM40 missiles by KD Lekiu and KD Lekir, as well as the firing of Exocet SM39 missiles in coordination from the submarine KD Tunku Abdul Rahman.

He said the exercise also made history as it involved submarine KD Tun Razak firing a Black Shark torpedo in a war configuration for the first time.

“For the Exocet missile, the firing was carried out at a distance of more than 30 kilometres while for the Black Shark torpedo, it was at a distance of less than 10 kilometres. The exercise is necessary for us to improve the readiness and capabilities of our armed forces.

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/07/29/malaysias-navy-executes-landmark-missile-and-torpedo-firings-strengthens-defence-posture-in-south-china-sea-says-defence-minister/185673>

#### **12 July: China rejects Philippines' statement on South China Sea ruling**

The Chinese Foreign Ministry issued the statement after the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs marked the ninth anniversary of the tribunal decision.

“China's position on the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea is consistent and clear,” a ministry spokesperson said. “The award is nothing but a piece of waste paper. It is non-binding and will not affect China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights in the South China Sea in any way.”

Beijing emphasized that it would continue to defend its claims in the contested waters, regardless of international pressure or legal rulings it does not recognize.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/china-rejects-philippines-statement-on-south-china-sea-ruling/3629297>

#### **11 July: Malaysia's South China Sea defences set for fighter jet boost in 'quiet' military build-up**

The United States' approval of Malaysia's purchase of dozens of fighter jets is set to bolster the Southeast Asian country's air capabilities – especially in the South China Sea – as part of a strategy to “quietly” build deterrence while also preserving cordial ties with China.

Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) chief General Tan Sri Asghar Khan Goriman Khan confirmed during a June 17 briefing that Washington had approved Malaysia's request to acquire up to 33 used F/A-18C/D Hornet fighter jets from Kuwait.

The move, which requires congressional sign-off under the US Arms Export Control Act, comes after years of negotiations that began in 2017. Malaysian Deputy Defence Minister Adly Zahari has said the deal is expected to be finalised this year.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3317779/malaysias-south-china-sea-defences-set-fighter-jet-boost-quiet-military-build>

#### **9 July: Philippines doubles down on 2026 target for South China Sea code of conduct**

The Philippines wants Asean to do everything in its capacity to conclude the long-delayed code of conduct for the South China Sea by 2026, its foreign secretary, Maria-Theresa Lazaro, said today.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 58th Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Lazaro said the 2023 declaration by Asean foreign ministers to complete the CoC within three years showed clear political will, and that momentum must be sustained.

She said her country believed "we should do everything in our capacity" to finish the code of conduct, together with China, in 2026 in accordance with the decision made by the foreign ministers in 2023.

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/07/09/philippines-doubles-down-on-2026-target-for-south-china-sea-code-of-conduct>

### **7 July: Chinese Consulate Pressures NZ Festival to Drop Filipino Documentary**

After being pulled from a Manila festival due to "external pressure" from Chinese investors, the Filipino documentary Food Delivery: Fresh from the West Philippine Sea is now facing renewed interference in New Zealand, with the Chinese Consulate and Embassy urging the Doc Edge Festival to cancel its nationwide screenings.

The documentary focuses on the lives of ordinary Filipinos caught in the crossfire of maritime tensions in the South China Sea. It centres on the Philippines' 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ), as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which the Filipinos called - West Philippine Sea.

<https://www.asiamediacentre.org.nz/chinese-consulate-pressures-nz-festival-to-drop-filipino-documentary>

### **Follows-up: 13 July: Filipino film on South China Sea tensions wins in New Zealand despite Chinese pressure**

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/lifestyle-culture/article/3317872/filipino-film-south-china-sea-tensions-wins-new-zealand-despite-chinese-pressure>

### **3 July: Response to survey activities in Vietnam's EEZ by Chinese ships**

Spokeswoman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pham Thu Hang made the statement at the ministry's regular press conference in Hanoi on July 3 in response to a reporter's query about Vietnam's reaction to the information that a Chinese vessel is carrying out illegal survey activities in Vietnam's exclusive economic zone and continental shelf.

Vietnamese authorities are closely monitoring developments in the East Sea and taking appropriate measures in accordance with international law and Vietnamese law to protect the country's legal and legitimate rights and interests, a Spokeswoman affirmed.

<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/vietnamese-authorities-keep-close-watch-on-developments-in-east-sea-spokeswoman-4909801.html>

### **1 July: PH operationalizes Japan's 'one-theater' concept for Indo-Pacific**

The Philippines is now operationalizing Japan's proposed "one-theater" concept which envisions the South China Sea, East China Sea, and the Korean Peninsula as a single and integrated theater of operations in wartime.

Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. said the "one-theater" concept will involve synergy in operations, domain awareness, intelligence exchange, and mutual reinforcement of each country's strengths among the Philippines, Japan, United States, South Korea, and Australia.

<https://mb.com.ph/2025/07/01/ph-operationalizes-japans-one-theater-concept-for-indo-pacific>

### **1 July: China sanctions former Philippine senator on maritime claims**

China sanctioned former Philippine senator Francis Tolentino on Tuesday and barred him entry, citing "egregious conduct" on matters such as the disputed South China Sea a day after the end of his six-year term. The sanctions prohibit Tolentino from entering the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macau, the ministry said.

Tolentino, who lost his bid for a second term in midterm elections, had canvassed on his efforts to bring in laws last year defining the country's sea lanes and maritime zones, which China opposed.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-sanctions-former-philippines-senator-foreign-ministry-says-2025-07-01/>

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

### **31 July: India sends warships to Philippines for joint South China Sea patrol**

India's deployment of three naval warships to the Philippines in the lead-up to a joint patrol in the South China Sea has raised hope that Manila is not alone in its long-standing stance against Beijing's assertiveness in the region.

Currently docked at the Port of Manila, the Indian Navy warships – INS Mysore, a guided missile destroyer; INS Kiltan, an anti-submarine warfare corvette; and INS Shakti, a fleet tanker – are slated to take part in the joint sail from August 4-8, including in waters contested by Manila and Beijing.

The drill is set to coincide with a scheduled visit by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr to India, where he and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi plan to hold talks. On Marcos' itinerary during his first visit to India since assuming office are meetings with Indian President Droupadi Murmu and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3320258/india-sends-warships-philippines-joint-south-china-sea-patrol>

### **30 July: Indian, Philippine Navies to Hold First South China Sea Joint Patrol**

India's latest operational deployment to the South China Sea will feature its first joint patrol with the Philippines in the contested waters.

India's Eastern Fleet flotilla, which includes guided-missile destroyer INS *Mysore* (D 60), anti-submarine corvette INS *Kiltan* (D 30) and replenishment vessel INS *Shakti* (A 57), docked at the Port of Manila today for goodwill activities ahead of the maritime cooperative activity. While Indian warships have previously visited the Philippines, their arrival comes amid New Delhi's increased support for Manila's military modernization efforts and the South China Sea.

"After the port visit, a Maritime Cooperative Activity will be conducted to further strengthen the robust maritime relationship between the Philippine Navy and the Indian Navy,"

Philippine Navy Capt. John Alcos told USNI News.

<https://news.usni.org/2025/07/30/indian-philippine-navies-to-hold-first-south-china-sea-joint-patrol>

### **23 July: China rejects U.S. accusations on South China Sea at UN Security Council debate**

China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Fu Cong on Tuesday firmly rebutted U.S. accusations against China regarding the South China Sea during a high-level open debate at the UN Security Council on multilateralism and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Fu emphasized that China holds indisputable sovereignty over the islands in the South China Sea and their adjacent waters, with solid historical and legal foundations backing its territorial claims and maritime rights and interests. He reiterated China's position on the South China Sea arbitration case, stressing that China does not recognize the so-called "ruling" nor any actions or claims based on it.

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2025-07-23/China-rejects-U-S-accusations-on-South-China-Sea-at-UN-debate-1FeAIxhyV9e/p.html>

**See also: Remarks by the US at a UN Security Council Open Debate on Multilateralism and Peaceful Settlement of Disputes**

<https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/remarks-at-a-un-security-council-open-debate-on-multilateralism-and-peaceful-settlement-of-disputes/>

### **16 July: US will build repair facilities for the Philippine navy near the disputed South China Sea**

The U.S. Navy will construct two facilities for the repair and maintenance of Philippine military boats in a province facing the South China Sea, where confrontations between the Philippine and Chinese coast guards have flared.

The U.S. Embassy said Wednesday the project will take place at Oyster Bay and Quezon town in western [Palawan province](#). It said in a statement that it underscored the treaty allies' aim to maintain a "free, open and resilient Indo-Pacific."

<https://apnews.com/article/us-philippines-palawan-boats-south-china-sea-37f8012c949f40cf043478a9c8cc7cc1>

### **12 July: US issues statements on the 9th Anniversary of the Philippines-China South China Sea Arbitral Tribunal Ruling**

Since the 2016 ruling, China has ignored the decision, continuing to assert unlawful and expansive maritime claims and taking increasingly aggressive actions against its neighbors. Beijing's expansive claims directly infringe on the sovereign rights and jurisdictions of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia, and undermine peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

The United States supports a free and open Indo-Pacific. We seek to preserve peace and stability, uphold freedom of navigation and overflight, maintain the free flow of trade, and oppose coercion to settle maritime disputes. The United States calls on China to abide by the 2016 arbitral ruling and to cease its dangerous and destabilizing conduct.

<https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/07/on-the-9th-anniversary-of-the-philippines-china-south-china-sea-arbitral-tribunal-ruling>

### **6 July: Japan to export used destroyers to Philippines to deter China**

Japan will export used navy destroyers to the Philippines to strengthen its deterrence against China's maritime expansion, the Yomiuri newspaper reported on Sunday (Jul 6), as the two US allies increase cooperation to counter Beijing.

The export plan involves six Abukuma-class destroyer escorts in service by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force for more than three decades, the Japanese daily said, citing multiple unnamed government sources.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/japan-export-used-destroyers-philippines-deter-china-report-5222836>

### **3 July: US aircraft carrier makes Philippines port call as the allies increase defence cooperation**

The nuclear-powered US carrier George Washington arrived off the Philippine capital on July 3 for a port visit, as the two allies increase defence cooperation aimed at contesting China's sweeping claims in the South China Sea.

The Nimitz-class vessel's port call came the same day that China's first domestically produced aircraft carrier, the Shandong, sailed into Hong Kong.

"The US Navy, along with our allies and partners, are committed to a free and open Indo-Pacific," the ship's spokesman, Lieutenant-Commander Mark Langford, told AFP by e-mail, without offering further details about the visit.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/us-aircraft-carrier-makes-philippines-port-call>

## **2 July: Lithuania's defence chief praises Philippine campaign about Beijing's aggression in South China Sea**

"I believe that, in this case, revealing to the world how China is harassing the Philippine's navy and fishermen of the Philippines in their own waters is very important because it shatters the illusion of China being a peaceful and friendly neighbour," Defence Minister Dovilė Šakalienė said.

"It's nothing peaceful when you see water cannons being used against peaceful fishermen and there's nothing peaceful about ramming the ships of Philippines in the territorial waters of the Philippines."

Šakalienė expressed support to former Filipino senator Francis Tolentino while in the capital for talks aimed at deepening defence ties between the two countries.

<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/07/02/lithuanias-defence-chief-praises-philippine-campaign-about-beijings-aggression-in-south-ch>