

SOUTH CHINA SEA NEWS No. 145
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Compiled by CIL Ocean Law and Policy Team

ACTS OF CLAIMANT

30 Oct: Vietnam steps up reclamation work on strategic reef in South China Sea in island-building efforts

Vietnam is accelerating land reclamation efforts on a strategic reef located in the northern Spratly archipelago in the South China Sea, just a few kilometres from a Philippine-occupied island.

The hitherto little-discussed South Reef, known as Da Nam to the Vietnamese, was originally a low-tide elevation that is submerged at high tide, with two pillbox structures that served as military outposts.

Reclamation has proceeded rapidly over the past two years and the reef now covers a land area of more than 60ha, making it one of the largest Vietnam-occupied features in the Spratlys.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/vietnam-steps-up-reclamation-work-on-strategic-reef-in-s-china-sea-in-island-building-efforts>

28 Oct: Philippines to take ASEAN chair with focus on South China Sea

Malaysia handed over the chairmanship of Southeast Asia's regional bloc to the Philippines on Tuesday (Oct 28), with territorial disputes in the South China Sea set to [dominate its agenda](#) when Manila takes charge in 2026.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who will remain chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) until the end of the year, symbolically passed the gavel to Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos at the close of a summit in Kuala Lumpur.

"On the first day of 2026, ASEAN will begin a new chapter," Anwar said.

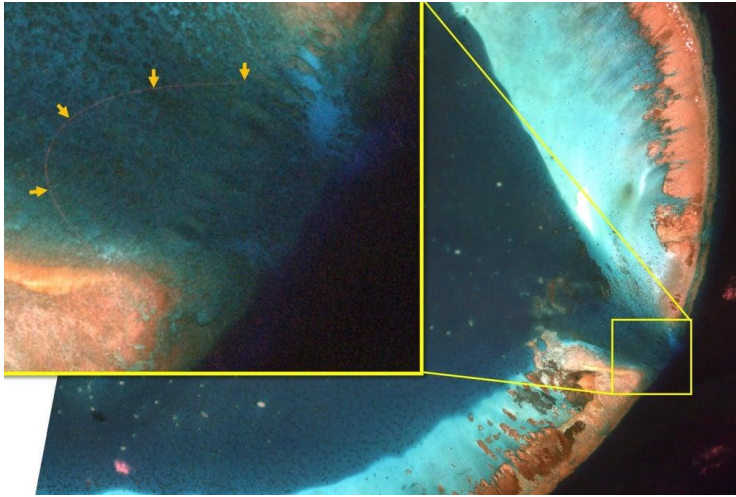
<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/philippines-asean-chair-2026-south-china-sea-5429731>

22 Oct: China deploys new floating barrier at Scarborough Shoal, satellite image shows

China has installed a new floating barrier at [Scarborough Shoal](#), according to satellite imagery, as tensions rise between Beijing and Manila over the disputed atoll in the [South China Sea](#).

The barrier was seen blocking the entrance to the lagoon at the shoal in the image obtained by Satellogic, a geospatial company headquartered in Montevideo, Uruguay.

"New satellite imagery shows an illegal floating barrier installed by the People's Republic of China at the mouth of Scarborough Shoal," Luke Fischer, the CEO and co-founder of SkyFi, a US-based app for satellite data, wrote on social media.



<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3329955/china-deploys-new-floating-barrier-scarborough-shoal-satellite-image-shows>

17 Oct: China begins drills near Scarborough Shoal on final day of US-Philippine naval exercises

Tensions in the South China Sea remained high on Friday as China launched military exercises near the disputed [Scarborough Shoal](#), a move coinciding with the final day of a series of joint naval drills between the United States, [the Philippines](#) and other nations. The exercise – set to run from noon until 7pm – took place in a limited area in the waters southwest of the [disputed shoal](#) – known in China as Huangyan Island. The triangle-shaped formation of reefs and rocks controlled by Beijing and located about 120 nautical miles (220km or 136 miles) west of the Philippine island of Luzon has become a flashpoint in tensions between the two sides.



<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3329400/china-begins-drills-near-scarborough-shoal-final-day-us-philippine-naval-exercises>

12 Oct: China, Philippines trade blame over boat collision in disputed sea

The Philippines said a Chinese ship deliberately rammed one of its government vessels in the disputed South China Sea on Sunday (Oct 12), although Beijing blamed Manila for the incident.

The Philippines said a Chinese coast guard ship "fired its water cannon" at the BRP Datu Pagbuaya, a vessel belonging to Manila's fisheries bureau, at 9.15am on Sunday.

"Just three minutes later ... the same (Chinese) vessel deliberately rammed the stern" of the Philippine boat, "causing minor structural damage but no injuries to the crew", the Philippine coast guard said in a statement.

It said the incident took place near Thitu Island, part of the Spratly Islands, where Beijing has sought to assert its sovereignty claims for years.

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/east-asia/china-philippines-trade-blame-boat-collision-south-china-sea-5396871>

8 Oct: PLA announces South China Sea drill with Malaysia as Japan-Philippines exercise begins

[The People's Liberation Army](#) said on Wednesday it would carry out a joint drill with Malaysia around the [South China Sea next week](#), announcing the manoeuvres a day after the Philippine and Japanese air forces began a joint exercise over the disputed waters. This year's joint drill, Aman Youyi-2025, is the sixth time the exercise has been held, with the first taking place in 2014.

According to the PLA's Southern Theatre Command, more than 1,000 personnel will take part, with equipment including unmanned systems, naval vessels and helicopters.

The exercise near Malaysian waters would focus on "humanitarian assistance", "disaster relief" and "maritime security", the PLA said, adding that other Southeast Asian countries would be invited to observe.

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3328244/pla-announces-south-china-sea-drill-malaysia-japan-philippines-exercise-begins>

6 Oct: Chinese Ships Expelled from Disputed Waters

[Taiwan](#) claims it expelled three Chinese Coast Guard vessels from waters near the contested Pratas Island in the [South China Sea](#).

Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration said it detected two Chinese Coast Guard vessels outside what Taipei considers restricted waters around Pratas shortly before 7 a.m. on September 30.

The Chinese ships then entered restricted waters at 8:22 a.m. The Taiwanese cutter *Tainan* sailed parallel to their path about 29 nautical miles (33 miles) south of Pratas Island, repeatedly broadcasting warnings to leave the area, according to the statement. The ships departed the vicinity shortly after 6 p.m.

A third Chinese coast guard vessel entered the so-called restricted waters around Dongsha Island just after 6 a.m. on Thursday. This time, the cutter *Taipei* was deployed to intercept the ship.

<https://www.newsweek.com/chinese-ships-expelled-from-disputed-waters-10832408>

3 Oct: Philippines says important that China does not militarise disputed Scarborough Shoal

The Philippines is closely watching Beijing's plans for a nature reserve at the [disputed Scarborough Shoal](#)

in the South China Sea, its chief of armed forces said on Oct 3, adding that it was important that the shoal does not become militarised.

Manila has called September's announcement by China of plans for a reserve at the shoal a "clear pretext for occupation".

Philippines Armed Forces Chief General Romeo Brawner said his country "will not allow" what happened at Mischief Reef to happen to Scarborough Shoal.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/philippines-says-watching-chinas-actions-on-south-china-sea-nature-reserve>

OTHER STATES AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

27 Oct: US Navy helicopter and fighter jet crash in separate incidents in the South China Sea

A US Navy helicopter and a fighter jet went down Sunday during separate routine operations over the South China Sea, and all crew members were safely rescued, the Navy's Pacific Fleet said.

The Navy said on social media Sunday evening that a MH-60R Seahawk helicopter, assigned to the "Battle Cats" of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 73 went down around 2:45 p.m. local time "while conducting routine operations from the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz." Search-and-rescue crews rescued three crew members, the Navy said.

After the incident, at 3:15 p.m., an F/A-18F Super Hornet fighter assigned to the "Fighting Redcocks" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 22 also went down while conducting routine operations from Nimitz. Both crew members successfully ejected and were safely recovered, the Navy said.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2025/10/26/politics/navy-aircraft-crash-south-china-sea>

25 Oct: Asean unity vital in addressing Myanmar, South China Sea disputes

Future Asean chairs must continue to demonstrate resolve and determination in addressing unresolved crises in the region.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, in his welcoming remarks at the Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting today, said this includes the situations in Myanmar and the South China Sea dispute.

He added that an open, yet firm and consolidated engagement must be the driving force of the bloc's approach to resolving the issue.

"As Asean Country Coordinator for China from August 2024 to July 2027, Malaysia remains committed to advocating for our collective interests, particularly in advancing the Code of Conduct (CoC) in the South China Sea. "We look to all parties involved, both member states and Asean Dialogue Partners, to remember that geography binds us all," he said.

In August, it was reported that the Asean-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea had [intensified negotiations](#) to finalise the CoC with a target of completion by or before July 2026.

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/10/1301478/asean-unity-vital-addressing-myanmar-south-china-sea-disputes>

17 Oct: Carrier USS Nimitz Transits Singapore Strait, Operates in South China Sea

The Nimitz Carrier Strike Group (CSG) transited the Singapore Strait on Friday and is now operating in the South China Sea following a three-month stint in the Middle East.

The Nimitz CSG briefly joins the George Washington CSG in the Western Pacific. The forward-postured George Washington CSG is scheduled to return Saturday to its homeport of Yokosuka, Japan, according to the Yokosuka City Council.

<https://news.usni.org/2025/10/17/carrier-uss-nimitz-transits-singapore-strait-operates-in-south-china-sea>

14 Oct: US condemns China over South China Sea vessel clash with the Philippines

The United States condemned China on Monday after Washington's ally the Philippines and China traded accusations over a maritime confrontation near disputed islands in the South China Sea.

"The United States condemns China's October 12 ramming and water cannoning of a Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources vessel close to Thitu Island in the South China Sea," the U.S. State Department said in a statement.

"We stand with our Philippine allies as they confront China's dangerous actions which undermine regional stability," the department added.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/us-condemns-china-over-south-china-sea-vessel-clash-with-philippines-2025-10-13/>

Follows-up: 15 Oct: Beijing calls Washington biggest source of risk in South China Sea

China said on Wednesday that the United States is the biggest source of risks undermining regional stability, stressing that any threat or provocation in the South China Sea will never succeed, after Washington condemned Beijing for allegedly using water cannons to attack and ram Philippine vessels in the South China Sea.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian made the remarks at a regular news briefing after the US Department of State in its statement issued on Monday claimed that China's "coercive and unlawful" actions undermine regional peace and violate commitments to resolve disputes peacefully.

<https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202510/15/WS68ef83caa310f735438b52dc.html>

8 Oct: U.S. and Philippine Forces Drill Near South China Sea Flashpoint

Washington and Manila kicked off the latest iteration of the Sama Sama naval drills on Monday in the vicinity of a western Philippine province located near South China Sea hotspots.

Sama Sama, a Tagalog word that translates to "together," originally began as a series of maritime security drills in 2017. Since then, the U.S.-Philippine co-hosted exercise [has grown to include](#) more combat activities, as well as anti-piracy and humanitarian missions, amid Manila's naval modernization efforts.

Participants and observers for 2025's iterations include the U.S., Philippines, Australia, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, Thailand, Italy, Canada and New Zealand. BRP *Antonio Luna* (FF-151), BRP *Valentin Diaz* (PS-177), USS *Cincinnati* (LCS-20) and JS *Ōnami* (DD-111) are among the vessels confirmed to participate in the exercise, which is set to run Oct. 6-17.

<https://news.usni.org/2025/10/08/u-s-and-philippine-forces-drill-near-south-china-sea-flashpoint>

30 Sep: Pentagon Awards Contract to Upgrade Philippine Naval Base Near South China Sea

The Pentagon awarded a contract to upgrade the Philippine Navy's primary base near the South China Sea to support small boats and unmanned surface vessels.

New Mexico-based contractor Ace Builders, Inc. was selected last week for a \$975,000 design-build project of a small boat maintenance facility at Naval Detachment Oyster Bay in Western Palawan.

Documents [released in recent months have noted](#) that the facility should be able to support Philippine Navy unmanned surface vessels. Washington previously supplied five American-made Maritime Tactical Systems drones to Manila under maritime domain awareness support efforts last year

<https://news.usni.org/2025/09/30/pentagon-awards-contract-to-upgrade-philippine-naval-base-near-south-china-sea>