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ACTS OF CLAIMANT

28 August: Vietnam demands end to activity in Paracels after report of Chinese construction

Vietnam said on Friday it strongly opposed all foreign activities in the Paracels archipelago in the disputed South China Sea, following a report earlier this week of new Chinese construction on an islet there.

Reuters reported on Tuesday that new installations had been sighted on Yagong Island, called Ba Ba Island by Vietnam, citing satellite imagery, with security analysts saying it could be the start of an early-warning radar facility.

"Vietnam resolutely opposes this, has made serious representations and affirmed its position on the matter, and demands an immediate end to such activities and that they not be repeated," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Pham Thu Hang told Reuters in an emailed statement.

Hang said Vietnam has sufficient historical evidence and legal grounds to affirm its sovereignty over the Paracels in accordance with international law.

"Vietnam reiterates that all foreign activities in the Paracel Islands, including at Ba Ba Island and at Hai Sam Reef, conducted without Vietnam's permission are completely illegal and null and void," she said, using Vietnam's name for Antelope Reef.

https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/vietnam-demands-end-to-activity-in-paracels-after-report-of-chinese-construction

27 August: China deploys record number of ships around Taiwan as pressure grows

China deployed a record number of coast guard, scientific research and other ships in Taiwan's waters in July, the island's coast guard has said, as Beijing dials up pressure on Taipei.

Taiwan's coast guard warned of an increasingly severe situation, as analysts say the increased activity is part of China's bid to map the region for submarine warfare.

https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/china-deploys-record-number-of-ships-around-taiwan-as-pressure-grows

25 August: Satellite images hint at China adding radar 'eyes' near emerging South China Sea base

New installations have been sighted on an islet near Antelope Reef in the Paracels archipelago of the disputed South China Sea where analysts believe China is building its largest military base, according to satellite imagery reviewed by Reuters.

Security analysts say while it is too early to gauge definitively the likely function of the three-pronged construction on Yagong Island, it could be the start of an early warning radar facility to support eventual installations on Antelope Reef.

Vantor, a commercial provider of satellite images, said it took the latest image on Aug 17, noting in other images that construction started in March and April.

While the purpose of the buildings was not certain, "several structures on Yagong Reef resemble other military radar/early warning facilities seen elsewhere in the South China Sea and are likely associated with the ultimate military functions of nearby Antelope Reef", a Vantor spokesman said.

https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/new-installations-emerge-on-islet-as-china-accelerates-south-china-sea-build-up

23 August: AFP to China: We will never abandon BRP Sierra Madre

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) rejected the Chinese Embassy's latest claims regarding the BRP Sierra Madre at [Second Thomas Shoal], saying no binding commitment was made to remove the grounded Philippine Navy vessel from the disputed feature.

In a statement Saturday, AFP spokesperson for the [South China Sea] (SCS) retired Rear Adm. Roy Vincent Trinidad said Beijing was attempting to "rewrite history" while overlooking what the military described as China's own record of deceptive narratives in the SCS.

"The AFP rejects the recent statement from the Chinese Embassy in Manila attempting to rewrite history regarding the presence of the BRP Sierra Madre at [Second Thomas Shoal]," Trinidad said. He pointed to China's occupation of Panganiban Reef, internationally known as Mischief Reef, in 1995.

China initially described structures built on the feature as shelters for fishers and said they had no military purpose, Trinidad said.

The structures have since been transformed into a large military installation with an airstrip, radar facilities and naval infrastructure.

"Mischief Reef stands as a permanent, concrete monument to their deceptive strategy in the [South China Sea]," he said.

Trinidad maintained that the presence of the BRP Sierra Madre at [Second Thomas Shoal] is a lawful sovereign deployment.

The Philippine Navy deliberately grounded the World War II-era landing ship on [Second Thomas Shoal] in 1999 to serve as a military outpost.

China has repeatedly demanded the removal of the vessel and claimed the Philippines had made commitments to do so, an assertion Manila has consistently denied.

"No binding commitment was made to remove the BRP Sierra Madre from [Second Thomas Shoal]," Trinidad said.

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1282452

21 August: Taiwan warns off, shadows Chinese research ship sailing to its west

Taiwan's coast guard said on Aug 21 it warned off and shadowed a Chinese research ship sailing in sensitive waters to the island's west, the third time the vessel has appeared since May in what Taipei sees as ongoing maritime provocation.

The coast guard said the ship, the Tongji, which was commissioned only in 2025, appeared late on Aug 20 24.9 nautical miles north-west of the Penghu islands, which lie in the strait and are home to major Taiwanese military bases.

The ship was not observed deploying or towing any instruments, and the coast guard said it sent one of its patrol boats to sail alongside the Tongji and broadcast "strong" warnings for it to leave.

As of the morning of Aug 21, the ship was 28 nautical miles west-south-west of Taiwan's Liuqiu island, a popular tourist destination at the bottom part of the strait, continuing to sail south-east, the coast guard said in a statement.

Taiwan's coast guard said it would proactively deploy its ships to respond to Chinese vessels, "firmly defending national sovereignty and ensuring the safety of our nation's waters".

https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/taiwan-warns-off-shadows-chinese-research-ship-sailing-to-its-west

21 August: PLA warns off 3 Philippine aircraft over [Scarborough Shoal] airspace

The People's Liberation Army mobilized its air and naval forces on Friday to monitor and warn off three Philippine planes that illegally flew into China's territorial airspace over the South China Sea.

Senior Colonel Li Jianjian, spokesman for the PLA Southern Theater Command's air force, said in a statement that three small Philippine aircraft — an Islander, a C-208 and a PA-31T — intruded into China's territorial airspace over [Scarborough Shoal] without approval from the Chinese government.

The PLA Southern Theater Command deployed naval and air forces to track and monitor the aircraft, and issued radio warnings in accordance with laws and regulations, Li said.

The Philippine side's actions have seriously violated China's sovereignty and could easily lead to misunderstanding and miscalculation, he added.

"We demand that the Philippine side immediately stop its infringing and provocative acts. Our command's forces always maintain a high state of alert at all times and will resolutely defend our national sovereignty and security, as well as regional peace and stability," the spokesman said.

https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202608/21/WS6a8844e1a3106bc57421cd20.html

20 August: China to build environmental monitoring station near disputed Scarborough Shoal

Beijing's ecological initiatives around the South China Sea flashpoint have been a growing source of tension with Manila and Washington

China has approved the construction of a marine environmental observation station to monitor an area that includes the disputed Scarborough Shoal, a persistent flashpoint in tensions with the Philippines in the South China Sea.

The Zhongsha Islands Marine Ecological and Environmental Field Observation and Research Station, proposed by the South China Sea Institute of Oceanology (SCSIO) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, was given the green light on July 31, the SCSIO announced on Tuesday.

The approval reflects the Chinese Academy of Sciences' commitment to "leveraging science and technology to support the national strategy in the South China Sea", according to the SCSIO statement.

It said the planned station would "fill a key gap" in marine monitoring in the Zhongsha Islands, supplement the institute's existing stations in the Paracel and Spratly islands – known as the Xisha and Nansha islands in Chinese – and complete China's ecological observation network across the entire South China Sea.

https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3364581/china-build-environmental-monitoring-station-near-disputed-scarborough-shoal

19 August: Malaysia raises concerns over US-backed Philippine military base

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim pledged to bolster Malaysia's defences, citing concerns over a US-backed Philippine military outpost just kilometres from Malaysia's eastern state of Sabah.

Anwar singled out Balabac island in southern Palawan, where the Philippines has been upgrading strategic facilities and building a 3km airstrip.

The island is one of nine Philippine sites covered by the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), which gives American forces access to designated locations and allows Washington to fund infrastructure.

"As a neighbouring country closely affected by claims over Sabah, we are somewhat concerned with the tension, even though our bilateral relations with the Philippines remain very good," Anwar said at a budget event on Aug 18 in the capital Putrajaya.
Anwar said Malaysia could not match the scale of the military and air facilities being developed on Balabac, but needed to strengthen its basic defensive capabilities, given the increasingly complex security environment shaped by competition between the US and China.
https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysia-raises-concerns-over-us-backed-philippine-military-base

15 August: PCG arrests 8 aboard fishing vessel over suspected oil pilferage near Tingloy Island

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) arrested eight individuals aboard a fishing vessel suspected of being involved in oil pilferage or unauthorized transfer of petroleum products near Tingloy Island in Batangas on Saturday.
According to the PCG, its personnel responded after the fishing vessel was found drifting near the shoreline of Barangay Makawayan in Tingloy due to engine trouble.
During inspection, one of the crew members admitted that the vessel and its petroleum cargo had no proper documentation.
This prompted the PCG to conduct a deeper investigation into the crew's suspected unauthorized activity involving the illegal transfer of fuel at sea.
https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/regions/2026/8/16/pcg-arrests-8-aboard-fishing-vessel-over-suspected-oil-pilferage-near-tingloy-island-1140

15 August: Beijing issues ecological report to solidify South China Sea claims amid US row

In new assessment, China blames Philippines for environmental harm and coral loss at disputed Sandy Cay and Second Thomas Shoal
China has published ecological assessment reports on nine disputed South China Sea features, amid an escalating row with Washington over Beijing's establishment of a "national nature reserve" in the contested waters.
On Friday, the Ministry of Natural Resources' South China Sea Bureau issued its 2025 marine ecological early-warning and monitoring bulletin, alongside a separate marine ecological protection and restoration report for the region. The releases were announced via an article posted on the ministry's official social media account.
While the full reports have not yet been made public, the ministry stated that the bulletin represented "the first comprehensive assessment" of overall ecological conditions across the Paracels, known in Chinese as the Xisha Islands, and the Spratlys or Nansha Islands, as well as the Macclesfield Bank and surrounding reefs, part of what China calls the Zhongsha Islands.
https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3364152/beijing-issues-ecological-report-solidify-south-china-sea-claims-amid-us-row

11 August: Philippine president says joint oil and gas exploration with China a 'distinct possibility'

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said on Friday that there was a "distinct possibility" that the Philippines and China could undertake joint oil and gas exploration despite their long-running disputes in the South China Sea.
Marcos told foreign journalists that progress was being made in talks with China as Manila seeks to bolster its energy security.

Recent energy supply disruptions and price spikes had added urgency to efforts to tap potential offshore resources, he said.
"We have to find new ways... this discussion has gained prominence. And where we are now, I think we have moved forward," Marcos added.
"The sense that I get is that all parties involved want it to succeed, and that is always a very good sign."
Marcos said the Philippines needed additional oil and gas supplies and was working through the outstanding issues with China, including the terms of reference for any eventual arrangement.
"I can see the distinct possibility that there will be such joint exploration," Marcos said.
https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/philippines-marcos-confident-on-economic-cooperation-with-china-despite-rows

11 August: Vietnam starts building largest domestic-made anti-submarine warship
Vietnam has begun construction of what it describes as the country's largest and most advanced domestically made anti-submarine frigate, a military-owned newspaper reported.
The vessel, being built at the Defence Ministry's Song Thu shipyard in Danang city, will also have most of its weapons and military equipment developed or assembled in the country, the Quan Doi Nhan Dan newspaper said late on Aug 10.
Vietnam, which has long been involved in maritime disputes with China and other claimants to the South China Sea, has been seeking to expand its domestic defence manufacturing capabilities while reducing reliance on imported military hardware sourced largely from Russia.
The project underscores Vietnam's policy of developing a defence industry that is "autonomous, self-reliant, self-strengthening, dual-use and modern", according to a government statement. Military-run telecoms and technology group Viettel, along with other defence research and manufacturing units, would work closely with the navy and Song Thu during the construction of the vessel, including the development and installation of weapons and equipment, the report said.
Vietnam's navy has undergone a major modernisation drive over the past decades, with the purchase of Russian-built Kilo-class submarines and Gepard-class frigates, alongside a growing fleet of domestically built missile boats and patrol vessels.
https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/vietnam-starts-building-largest-homemade-anti-submarine-warship

6 August: China confirms first deaths in South China Sea clash in decades
China has posthumously honoured two coast guard officers who died while "safeguarding maritime rights" in the South China Sea in 2025, appearing to confirm the first Chinese fatalities from a clash in the contested waters since a collision with a US aircraft in 2001.
The People's Armed Police, which oversees the China Coast Guard, recognised Yi Xinyu and Cheng Long as "martyrs" this week, according to an official website.
https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/two-chinese-coast-guard-personnel-marked-as-martyrs-after-south-china-sea-collision-last-year

2 August: Philippines deposits [Scarborough] Shoal chart with UN, despite China control
The Philippines has formally deposited its official nautical chart of Scarborough Shoal and its surrounding waters with the United Nations, setting the maritime limits to its claim over this [South China Sea] feature on the international record despite China's continued control over

the area. The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said on Friday that the chart was deposited with the UN Secretariat on July 29, nearly two years after China had done the same.
The DFA said the deposit complied with Article 16 of the 1982 UNCLOS, which requires coastal states to give due publicity to official charts or geographical coordinates showing the baselines from which the breadth of their territorial seas and exclusive economic zones (EEZs) are measured.
https://www.inquirer.net/483058/ph-deposits-panatag-shoal-chart-with-un-despite-china-control/

1 August: China conducts naval, air patrols around disputed shoal near the Philippines
China's military and China Coast Guard conducted joint air and naval combat drills around the disputed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea, according to Chinese state media reports. The drills were held in the airspace and territorial waters around the shoal, which China calls Huangyan Dao. The Chinese military described the exercise as a necessary response to actions by "certain countries" it said were undermining regional peace and stability.
https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/china-conducts-naval-air-patrols-around-disputed-shoal-in-south-china-sea

1 August: China issues management rules for Huangyan Dao National Nature Reserve
China on Saturday issued the management measures for the Huangyan Dao National Nature Reserve [at Scarborough Shoal], a key step in safeguarding the diversity, stability and sustainability of the Huangyan Dao natural ecosystem.
Under the rules, a routine patrol system will be established to promptly investigate and handle violations in accordance with the law. Violators will be held accountable under relevant laws and regulations.
The rules were jointly issued by the Ministry of Natural Resources, the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, the China Coast Guard, and the Hainan provincial government, with clear responsibilities assigned and a coordination mechanism to address major issues.
The 16-article measures focus on management mechanisms, conservation measures, and legal liabilities, providing a comprehensive regulatory framework for the reserve.
According to the rules, the nature reserve shall be subject to strict protection. Without prior approval, any activities such as fishing, mining, and the extraction of corals, coral reefs or giant clams that damage rare marine species and the natural ecosystem are prohibited.
No individual or organization may enter the reserve, except as otherwise provided by laws and regulations or for activities organized for conservation and management purposes.
https://english.news.cn/20260801/b0ea8ece30a245719aa0217843bd5025/c.html

31 July: China rebuts Philippines' move on [Scarborough Shoal]
China has firmly rejected the Philippines' delimitation of the so-called "baselines of the territorial sea" of Huangyan Island/Scarborough Shoal, calling the move "a grave infringement upon China's territorial sovereignty and a serious violation of international law".
The move "is illegal, null and void. China firmly rejects and will never accept it", the Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Friday.
https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202607/31/WS6a6cc01ca310986e2b468709.html

29 July: Philippines presents claim on extended continental shelf [in SCS] before UN body
The Philippines has officially presented its partial submission on its extended continental shelf (ECS) in the [South China Sea] before the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on Wednesday said.

The country's submission, covering the West Palawan Region, is the second of its kind for an ECS entitlement following its 2009 partial submission on the Philippine Rise.
Foreign Affairs spokesperson for Maritime Affairs Rogelio Villanueva Jr., who is part of the delegation that presented the submission, described it as a "demonstration of the Philippines' steadfast commitment to the United Nations Charter and the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)," and as a sign of trust in a rules-based maritime order.
"The presentation further underscored that the submission was part of the country's responsibility to secure a peaceful South China Sea through the rule of law in order to sustain the livelihoods of Filipinos, foster trade, protect marine biodiversity, and unite coastal and littoral States," the DFA said on Wednesday.
https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1280620

OTHER STATES AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

23 August: US hands over two Marine Protector-class patrol boats to PCG

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said on Sunday, Aug. 23, that it has formally received two 27-meter Marine Protector-class patrol vessels from the United States (US), a move seen to bolster the country's maritime safety, environmental protection, and domain awareness operations.
The vessels are the former US Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) Marlin (WPB-87304) and USCGC Bluefin (WPB-87318), which were turned over to the PCG on Aug. 20 at the Waterfront Operational Training Center in Baltimore, Maryland.
The two Marine Protector-class patrol boats are expected to arrive in Manila in October 2026 where they will be commissioned into the PCG fleet as BRP Pag-asa (PATS-2701) and BRP Patag (PATS-2702).
"BRP Pag-asa and BRP Patag will strengthen the Philippine Coast Guard's operational efficiency in safeguarding the country's vast waters," PCG spokesperson Commodore Noemie Cayabyab said.
"They will enhance our ability to conduct maritime safety operations and respond to emergencies at sea, including oil spills and other marine environmental protection challenges," she added.
https://mb.com.ph/2026/08/23/us-hands-over-two-marine-protector-class-patrol-boats-to-pcg

20 August: Taiwan proposes record US$35b defence budget for 2027 as PLA's pressure grows

Taiwan has unveiled a record NT$1.12 trillion (US$35 billion) defence budget for 2027, with sharp increases in spending on weapons, ammunition and military operations amid growing pressure from Beijing.
The proposed spending – the first to cross the NT$1 trillion threshold – is NT$173 billion, or 18.2 per cent, higher than this year's allocation, according to the government budget approved by the cabinet on Thursday.
It accounts for about 28.6 per cent of the government's proposed NT$3.93 trillion expenditure next year, meaning nearly NT$29 of every NT$100 would go towards defence and related security spending.
The increase comes amid mounting military pressure from the People's Liberation Army and repeated calls from Washington for Taipei to spend more on its own defence.
Taiwanese leader William Lai Ching-te has pledged to raise overall defence spending to 5 per cent of gross domestic product by 2030 to strengthen the island's deterrence.

Under the proposed budget, military investment would rise by NT$97.5 billion to NT$259.1 billion, accounting for the biggest part of the increase.
Officials said that much of the extra funding was needed to meet payment schedules for US arms purchases as several major programmes entered periods of intensive payments and deliveries, including F-16V Block 70 fighters and Himars multiple-launch rocket systems.
Operations and maintenance spending will rise by NT$25.7 billion to NT$224.7 billion, largely to replenish ammunition, weapons components and other supplies for frontline forces.
Personnel expenditure will increase by NT$7.3 billion to NT$208.1 billion, reflecting increased recruitment of volunteer service members and a planned 4 per cent pay rise for military personnel, civil servants and teachers.
The government said its broader priorities included building the "Taiwan Shield" or "T-Dome", expanding uncrewed combat capabilities, restructuring the armed forces and advancing locally developed naval programmes.
https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3364713/taiwan-proposes-record-us35b-defence-budget-2027-plas-pressure-grows?module=top_story&pgtype=section

8 August: 'Dubious pretexts': US slams Chinese actions in South China Sea
The United States on Aug 8 accused China of "destabilising" activity near the disputed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea, saying it is using "dubious" environmental explanations to advance its territorial claims.
Scarborough Shoal is a fish-rich reef formation 240km from the main Philippine island of Luzon and hundreds of kilometres away from mainland China. Both Beijing and Manila claim the flashpoint coral atoll.
"The United States rejects China's ongoing attempts to enforce its destabilising 'national nature reserve' at Scarborough Reef and deny Filipino fishermen access to their traditional fishing ground," State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said.
"This is yet another unilateral attempt by China to use dubious environmental and legal pretexts, backed by coercion, to advance its sweeping territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea at the expense of its neighbours," Pigott said in a statement.
https://www.straitstimes.com/world/united-states/dubious-pretexts-us-slams-chinese-actions-in-south-china-sea