

# EAST SEA (SOUTH CHINA SEA) STUDIES



## E S N A P S H O T

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### In this issue

- Activities of the Claimants
- Regional Snapshots
- Commentaries and Analyses

### Highlights

**“Without Viet Nam’s consent, all activities by parties concerned in this area constitute a violation of the sovereignty of Viet Nam”**

*(Vietnam urges international law compliance in East Sea, p.2)*

**“With the theme “ Securing our people, our future together”, ADMM 7 looks to raise consciousness on common security and defence challenges and increasing publicity and transparency to boost mutual trust among members”**

*(ASEAN Defence Ministers aim for stronger cooperation, p.6)*

**“When the situation arises in which ASEAN cannot catch up with China, that will be the time when peaceful dispute settlement is no longer plausible.”**

*(ASEAN’s procrastination in the South China Sea*

*By Yerima Lalisang, p.8)*



# ACTIVITIES OF THE CLAIMANTS

## China

### China's largest oil platform heading to South China Sea

7<sup>th</sup> May | CNTV

China largest deep-sea oil drilling platform was dispatched from the eastern city of Qingdao on Sunday, heading to its service destination in the South China Sea. The platform, with a length at 182 metres and height at 68 metres, weighs 32,000 tons. It took 21 months to build. The oil drilling platform is estimated to arrive in the South China Sea in early June, and start service after a series of tests.



[Source](#)

### Chinese fishing fleet sets illegal sail for Spratly Islands

7<sup>th</sup> May | China Daily

A fleet including 30 fishing vessels - each weighing more than 100 metric tons - set illegal sail from Hainan province for the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea on May 6<sup>th</sup>. After leaving from Danzhou in Hainan, the fleet will arrive at the first fishing ground after four days' sailing, according to the department, which did not disclose details of the locations. Chen Rishen, general manager of Hainan Jianghai Industries Co Ltd, one of the organizers of the operation, said the fleet has a 4,000-ton supply ship and a 1,500-ton transport ship to supply the fishing vessels.

[Full report](#)

### Chinese maritime law enforcement to double air patrols

9<sup>th</sup> May | China Daily

China intends to double its offshore air patrols by 2015, according to a government report released on May 8<sup>th</sup>. China's Ocean Development Report (2013), which was released by the China Institute for Marine Affairs under the State Oceanic Administration, emphasizes the importance of offshore air patrols to the country's maritime law enforcement. According to the report, by 2015 the country's marine surveillance force will include fixed-wing aircraft with a range of more than 4,500 kilometers. By 2020, a variety of aircraft with different ranges will be available for different purposes, according to the report. The strategic adjustment of foreign powers in the Asia-Pacific region will exert lasting and significant influence on China's maritime security, but China's maritime security policies have not fundamentally changed, [the report](#) said.

[Full report](#)



## **Jiaolong submersible poised for South China Sea mission**

*9<sup>th</sup> May | Xinhua*

Three oceanauts of China's manned submersible, the Jiaolong, are studying geographic and biodiversity data of the South China Sea as they prepare for the sub's first scientific deep-sea mission in June. The crew are expected to leave Qingdao, a port city in east China's Shandong Province, for the 103-day mission on June 5<sup>th</sup>.

[Full report](#)

## **China's navy forms 1st carrier-borne jet force**

*10<sup>th</sup> May | Xinhua*

A carrier-borne aviation force has been formally established as part of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy, military sources said on May 10<sup>th</sup>. The forming of the force, approved by the Central Military Commission (CMC), demonstrates that the development of China's aircraft carriers has entered a new phase, the sources said. The force comprises carrier-borne fighter jets, jet trainers and ship-borne helicopters that operate anti-submarine, rescue and vigilance tasks.

[Full report](#)

## **Taiwan dispatches fleet to protect fishing boats**

*13<sup>th</sup> May | China Daily*

Taiwan authorities decided on Sunday to dispatch a fleet to conduct regular patrol in waters to the south of the island to guard fishing boats following the shooting-death of a Taiwan fisherman by the Philippine side at sea. The fleet is made up of three coast guard ships loaded with cannons and machine guns, as well as a naval vessel carrying a S70-C helicopter.

[Full report](#)

# **Vietnam**

## **Vietnam urges international law compliance in East Sea**

*9<sup>th</sup> May | Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam*

Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Luong Thanh Nghi said all activities of parties in the East Sea must comply with international law, especially the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, respect sovereignty and the sovereign and jurisdiction rights of concerned nations. Nghi made the statement at the ministry's regular press briefing in Hanoi on May 9 in response to reporters' queries on Vietnam's reaction to China's deployment of 32 fishing boats to Truong Sa archipelago area on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Viet Nam affirms its sovereignty over Truong Sa (Spratly) Archipelago. Without Viet Nam's consent, all activities by parties concerned in this area constitute a violation of the sovereignty of Viet Nam. Nghi said. He said Vietnam will closely monitor all developments relating to the issue.

[Source](#)

# ***The Philippines***

## **Philippines checking if Chinese fleet is in disputed Spratlys territory**

*7<sup>th</sup> May | GMA Network*

The Philippines is on the lookout for the 30-ship fishing fleet sent by China to the disputed Spratly Islands reportedly to harvest marine resources for more than a month, a Malacañang spokesperson said Tuesday. Deputy presidential spokesperson Abigail Valte said the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is currently verifying if the Chinese fishing fleet has reached parts of the Spratly Islands being claimed by both China and the Philippines. "We will wait for confirmation from the Armed Forces or the Philippines [and] Coast Guard about that fleet and about that reported movement," Valte said at a press briefing May 7<sup>th</sup>. **On May 8<sup>th</sup>**, Navy spokesman Colonel Edgardo Arevalo said Philippine Navy ships were patrolling the area and Chinese fleet "shall serve as our eyes and ears." "But as of now, it's too early to comment on what to do if they will enter Philippine territory as that remains to be a contingency as of the moment," he said. Arevalo acknowledged the Philippines' "limitations" in naval capabilities, but assured that they will stay "steadfast in performing their mandate to secure our maritime and territorial domains."

[Full report](#)

## **Aquino Warns Big-Brother China on Trade Fallout Over Sea Spat**

*9<sup>th</sup> May | Bloomberg*

Philippine President Benigno Aquino said China may harm relations with its trading partners if it fails to respect a United Nations-backed arbitration ruling over its claims in disputed waters with oil and gas reserves. "Hopefully they will see that it is in their interest to be fair," Aquino said in an interview in Manila yesterday, when asked about the chances China would comply with an international ruling. "Continued growth on their part means access to markets and resources. When you become fearful of relationships with them, access to both becomes hampered." "Unless China appears to be prepared to use military force anytime soon in these disputes, we don't see any clear sign that there is an economic containment policy against China in the region," he added.



[Full report](#)

## **Chinese ships sighted off disputed waters**

*10<sup>th</sup> May | Philippine Daily Inquirer*

The Philippine Western Command is monitoring the presence of two Chinese military surveillance vessels that were reported to have been stationary since May 7<sup>th</sup> near the Philippine-occupied Co May Reef (Ayungin Shoal) in the disputed Spratly's region. The two Chinese vessels were identified by other defense sources, who asked not to be identified, as "maritime surveillance vessels." Wescom spokesperson Lt. Cherry Tindog confirmed that the regional military command has received reports

about the Chinese vessels but declined to issue additional information concerning the reported intrusion.

[Full report](#)

### **Philippines sea patrol checks out Chinese ships**

*10<sup>th</sup> May | Manila Standard Today*

The Philippine Navy on May 9<sup>th</sup> deployed three of its ships in the Spratly islands (Kalayaan Group of Islands) following reports that a Chinese navy frigate and two civilian ships were seen approaching a reef and a shoal in the area. A highly-placed source said the Navy deployed the PN PS36, a Peacock Class offshore patrol, a frigate-type (PS 74) and a personnel carrier vessel (PS 71) to the Co May Reef (Ayungin Reef) and Hasahasa islet to monitor the presence of the Chinese vessels. The source said that the Chinese frigate has yet to arrive at the Co May Reef (Ayungin Reef), while the two civilian ships were fast approaching the reefs.

[Full report](#)

### **Philippines seeks UN arbitration over South China Sea disputes**

*11<sup>th</sup> May | South China Morning Post*

Manila is determined to pursue arbitration through the United Nations in the dispute over maritime territory in the South China Sea because it is "the last resort", the Philippine foreign minister said on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said during a media briefing: "As far as we are concerned, the train has left the station. Either China is on board or they are not. But as I said [of] the compulsory arbitration, the word will come down whether China is there [or not]." However, even as the arbitration continues, he left the door open for an alternative resolution. "I think, yes, we will entertain bilateral discussions," Del Rosario said.

[Full report](#)

## **India**

### **Indian Defence Minister warns over China**

*11<sup>th</sup> May | NDTV*

In an interview, Indian Defence Minister A K Antony said that a territorial dispute in the South China Sea should be settled as per the provision of the United Nations Convention of the Sea of 1982. India is not party to the party to this dispute, but it has two oil blocks (Blocks-127 ..128) in the Phu- Khanh basin in the South China Sea in the Vietnam Coast.

[Full report](#)



# **The U.S**

## **U.S. shift to Asia on track despite budget cuts**

*7<sup>th</sup> May | Channel NewsAsia*

Plans to expand the American naval presence in the Pacific with new ships and hi-tech weaponry will go ahead despite steep budget cuts, the U.S. Navy chief said before a trip to the region. Admiral Jonathan Greenert told AFP in an interview he will seek to "reassure" partners during a nine-day trip to Japan, Singapore and South Korea that mounting pressure on military spending will not derail Washington's much-publicized shift towards Asia. Of the Navy's current fleet of 283 ships, 101 are deployed and 52 are in Pacific waters, with plans to increase the US presence in the region to 62 ships by 2020, he said.

[Full report](#)

## **U.S. report on Chinese military modernisation**

*U.S. Department of Defense*

Annual Report of U.S. Department of Defense to Congress named Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2013 says that China will continue pursue a long-term, comprehensive military modernization program designed to improve the capacity of its armed forces to fight and win shortduration, high-intensity regional military conflict. The Report also highlights Chinese efforts in improving capabilities in nuclear deterrence and long-range conventional strike; advanced fighter aircraft; limited regional power projection undersea warfare; improved command and control; and more sophisticated training and exercises across China's air, naval, and land forces.

[Report](#)

# REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS

## **ASEAN Defence Ministers aim for stronger cooperation**

*7<sup>th</sup> May | Vietnamplus*

The 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM 7) kicked off in Brunei's capital city of Bandar Seri Begawan on May 7<sup>th</sup>, discussing measures and actions to be taken to further intensify defence and security cooperation in the 10-nation bloc. With the theme "Securing our people, our future together", ADMM 7 looks to raise consciousness on common security and defence challenges and increasing publicity and transparency to boost mutual trust among members. In the [Joint Declaration](#) after the meeting, ASEAN Member States reaffirmed the commitment of fully and effectively implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), and ASEAN's Six-Point Principles on the South China Sea, and mindful of the Joint Statement of the 15th ASEAN-China Summit on the 10th Anniversary of the DOC, and support our Leaders' commitment at the 22nd ASEAN Summit for ASEAN to work actively with China towards the early conclusion of a code of conduct (COC) in the South China Sea to promote peace and stability.



[Full report](#)

## **Vietnam, China need to focus on key joint projects**

*11<sup>th</sup> May | Vietnamplus*

Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Thien Nhan has said Vietnam and China needed to boost their economic co-operation and focus on key joint projects. Nhan made the statement during his meeting with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on May 10<sup>th</sup> in Beijing where he headed a high-ranking delegation to attend the sixth meeting of the Steering Committee for Vietnam-China Bilateral Cooperation. He said the two countries needed to focus on building their relations based on three pillars: they were traditional neighbours so they needed to conduct straightforward and sincere discussions; they shared similarities in political regimes; they were both members of the United Nations so they needed to respect international laws and conventions.

[Full report](#)

## **Vietnam, China boost bilateral cooperation**

*11<sup>th</sup> May | Vietnamplus*

Vietnam and China reached a broad common perception on promoting the comprehensive strategic cooperation between the two countries during the 6th session of the Steering Committee for Vietnam-China Bilateral Cooperation in Beijing on May 11<sup>th</sup>. The event was co-chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Thien Nhan, chairman of Vietnam subcommittee, and Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi, head of China subcommittee. Both sides agreed that strengthening the strategic trust and tightening

comprehensive cooperation are suitable to the basic and long-term interests of the two peoples. The two sides affirmed to seriously realise the common perception reached by Vietnamese and Chinese leaders and the agreement on basic principles guiding the settlement of sea-related issues between the two countries, through negotiations and friendly consultations to settle the disputes peacefully.

[Full report](#)

# COMMENTARIES & ANALYSES

## ASEAN's procrastination in the South China Sea

By *Yeremia Lalisang*

This highlights the urgency for ASEAN to push China to make significant progress in addressing the territorial disputes in the South China Sea for at least three reasons. *First*, with regard to its slowing economic might, Beijing should be concerned with preventing any potential conflict on its periphery that could negatively impact its economic performance. In line with its significant role as a source of legitimacy, China's economic development is still the priority of the Communist regime in Beijing. *Second*, any non-cooperation measure leading to the failure of maintaining peace and stability in the region would allow other major powers, such as the US and Japan, to intensify their influence in the region, at the expense of Beijing's leadership and position in the regional balance of power. Moreover, internationalizing the dispute is something that Beijing has always tried to avoid. *Finally*, it would be better for ASEAN to accelerate its progress now before China grows even bigger, as its demand for energy will also increase to support its economic wheel. The South China Sea, with its potential energy reserves, would certainly be regarded by China as a strategic interest in its energy security framework. With both internal and external limitations facing policymakers in Beijing, ASEAN still appears reluctant to issue the kind of strong statements necessary to show its commitment to making significant progress in managing the dispute. This strategy of buying time, from the perspective of ASEAN-China relations, will not result in peaceful dispute settlement. China is continuing to grow larger both militarily and economically. Any further delay in settling this dispute will only allow China to raise its bargaining power relative to ASEAN's. When the situation arises in which ASEAN cannot catch up with China, that will be the time when peaceful dispute settlement is no longer plausible.

[Full article](#)

## South China Sea Disputes: Strategic Implications And Perspectives On Conflict Resolution

By *Dr Subhash Kapila*

South China Sea disputes and conflicts for far too long have been viewed from the narrow perspective of being a territorial dispute over the legality and sovereignty over the Parcel and Spratly Islands and associated land forms that dot the Sea between a military overbearing China and the militarily weaker ASEAN claimants in the South China Sea dispute. ASEAN as the prominent regional grouping of South East nations has been found wanting in maintaining a solid collective front against China and deterring it from aggression against ASEAN'S littoral nations on the South China Sea. However, continued ASEAN disunity contrived by China in the furtherance of its strategic aims may ultimately unravel ASEAN. The South China Sea conflicts today stand graduated to a much higher strategic level where this region stands transformed into a checkerboard for international



power-play and strategic rivalries for control of the Western Pacific between China and the United States. The recently declaration of Russia's strategic pivot to Asia Pacific introduces a new and stronger chess player in this region with consequent impact on the on-going conflicts. United States commitment to stability and security of the South China Sea region needs to be unambiguous, credible and declaratory in form. Should the United States falter in this direction because of its 'China Hedging Strategy' and "Risk Aversion" policy approaches against China, the United States then might as well write off its strategic embedment in the Asia Pacific. The South China Sea conflicts seem headed towards initiating another global Cold War, this time in Asia Pacific. This new Cold War initiated by China's aggressiveness and brinkmanship, devoid of ideological underpinnings, but dominated by an on-going strategic tussle initially for mastery of the Western Pacific, promises to be more intense and conflictual.

[Full analysis](#)

### **America and the South China Sea Challenge**

By *Patrick M. Cronin* and *Alexander Sullivan*

Chinese escalating actions in the South China Sea such as asserting its claims, using naval flotillas, white-hulled coastal defense ships, fishery vessels, and even cruise ships to sail into contested waters... has directly undermined the United States' strategic goals in the region including the peaceful resolution of disputes, unfettered freedom of navigation, open sea lines of communication, and the construction of an open, rules-based system for governance of these crucial global commons. Because diplomacy is not likely to be a sufficient means of quelling tensions in the South China Sea, the United States needs to consider what else it can do to preserve the peace and promote further regional prosperity. However, any strategy must include comprehensive engagement across the military, political/diplomatic, and economic realms. *First*, the US may help raising the capacity of allies and partners to provide a minimum credible defense against aggression. *Second*, the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard should provide training to partner militaries and maritime services that can mitigate the risk of accidents or miscalculations. *Third*, organizing and promoting confidence-building measures between relevant militaries. *Fourth*, including China in regional military efforts. *Fifth*, the US must ratify UNCLOS. *Sixth*, countinuing its support for the Philippines' bid for arbitration of its disputes as an important regional precedent. *On diplomatic front*, the US should strengthening ASEAN's central leadership role in determining the South China Sea's fate, and pressing for a Code of Conduct on the South China Sea as well as deepening the comprehensive partnership with Indonesia in particular, and promote its role as a regional stakeholder. *On economic front*, the US should completing Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations this year and balacing development disparities within ASEAN. As a leading power in Asia, the United States must make the hard choices and put forth the concerted effort necessary to ensure that the South China Sea remains peaceful in 2013 and beyond, and to construct durable institutions to address further disputes.

[Full commentary](#)

## The South China Sea: the evolving dispute between China and her maritime neighbours

By Robert Beckman



Whereas Malaysia, the Philippines and Viet Nam seem to be taking steps to bring their claims into conformity with UNCLOS, China's policy with respect to its claims in the South China Sea seems to be one of 'deliberate ambiguity' as it refuses to respond to continued calls to clarify its sovereignty and maritime claims. Even more worrying, China seems to be moving to assert maritime claims based not just upon UNCLOS, but also upon history. This is especially worrying because most international law experts would agree that there is no basis for historical claims of this nature in UNCLOS or in customary international law. The main source of controversy about China's claim in the South China Sea is the extent to which its claims are not based on claims from the disputed islands, but based on the infamous nine-dash line (or u-shape line). This line is depicted on the map China attached to diplomatic notes it sent to the United Nations Secretary-General in May 2009 protesting the extended continental shelf claims of Malaysia and Viet Nam. A major cause of concern is that China's actions since 2009 are evidence that it is pursuing its claims in the South China Sea along three tracks. First, it is claiming sovereignty over the islands and their adjacent waters, which presumably refers to the territorial sea. Second, it is asserting that the islands are entitled to an EEZ and continental shelf of their own. Third, it is at the same time asserting rights, jurisdiction and control over the resources in and under the waters inside the nine-dash lines based on some form of historic rights. It is not possible for the other claimant states to accept China's position that it has historic rights and jurisdiction over the natural resources in and under the waters inside the nine-dash line as these claims have no basis in international law. Therefore, unless China is willing to bring its maritime claims into conformity with UNCLOS and limit its claims to maritime zones measured from islands, it will continue on a legal collision course with its ASEAN neighbours.

[Full analysis](#)